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Gangs, crews, buddies and rappers

Youth, Violence and Citizenship around the Outskirts of
Brasilia

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Youth, Violence and Citizenship around
the Outskirts of Brasilia

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To Patricia and to "Gordo," as representatives of all the young people who contributed to this survey.

Acknowledgements

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Forward

By Manuel Castells

If societies' future is built upon the youth, then our future will be a dark one. A growing alienation in every country on behalf of the young (demographic majority of the planet as a whole) in relation to older people and the society they belong to. We are not talking about that usual rebelliousness from of old, that dynamic attitude without which no possibly social change could happen, but about a cognitive dissonance between the feelings of the young and the values and messages transmitted to them by their families and society.

It has nothing to do with counter-culture, it is something else. Defining the contents and the meaning of this juvenile culture, particularly that belonging to the youth in the lower classes, is not a theoretical issue or a matter of personal opinion. A definition as such can only result from an empirical research, based on rigorous and at the same time sensitive fieldwork, directly in touch with the new reality which is emerging within the outskirts of the world's great metropolises, particularly those of Latin America. And here lies the interest of this book you are holding now, dear reader.

This is a book which registers the voices of the young people of Brasilia's satellite-cities, which seeks to understand the meaning of their own organization and tendency to violence. Transcending mere observation, this book poses a very suggestive analysis of the relations between the new urbanization modalities and the exclusion of wide shares of youths from the social status of citizens. The observation ground is particularly curious, since it refers to the city of Brasilia, this pro-development utopia, a creation of a nationalist president helped by a team of architects of communist inspiration who wanted to escape from a Brazil of urban poverty and economic dependency.

Numerous articles have shown how Brazilian stubborn society avenged itself from being excluded by surrounding Brasilia with a belt of satellite-cities and informal settlements, in adverse conditions in which the greatest share of the metropolitan population dwells . This book penetrates this world and, transcending myth and counter-myth, carefully reconstructs the dynamics of its actual society. It situates, in its own context, the juvenile violence which was born of pure class hatred towards an other youth group – the one belonging to that outer planet called "Plano Piloto," – whose physical proximity makes the social distance all the more unbearable. As a rap song reproduced in this book says: "we have one truth: the outskirts reality." This

reality, reflected in a broader context in the United Nations' Report on Human Development for 1999, is the source of the latent or manifest violence that is threatening to take over the institutional means at any moment.

While we organize, on the surface, a new economic and technological order, underneath, a wide sector of the youth is building an alternative disorder out of their denial to a system that denies them. This is not specific of Brasilia only, it attains planetary scales. Hence, it is indispensable, to actually know the social and cultural mechanisms of this new sort of juvenile nihilism, in order to face the administration of new social problems with no ideological blindness of any sort. Only by rebuilding the bridges that connect us to our youth, no matter in which country, we will be able to properly build our future. And only by knowing how do young people think and live, and why they think like that, we will be able to find out a new language, foundation of a new policy.

This book is a concrete example of how social sciences, without teaching lessons or prescribing formulas, can contribute to the confrontation of the serious social problems that, on the threshold of the third millenium, are arising in our ever-changing world. Doing what is proper to social researchers – investigating with rigour, pertinence and no concessions – we are daring, with this book, to look at in the face of our concrete future now drafted in the eyes of our young people.

Presentation

Although violence is a recaurrent phenomenon in the history of man-
kind, during the last decade, the gravity of its manifestations, its nature, and
its magnitude among the young people in several countries of the western
world have been raised the attention and concern not only of public opinion,
but also of scholars and institutions, both public and private, national and
international.

The Ayrton Senna Institute and UNESCO share this and other con-
cerns regarding youth which nowadays composes the Brazil's largest age
group – outnumbering even the number of children. However, these young
men and women, in average, suffer from low quality education, and, as re-
cent school evaluations show, the few things they have learned in school do
not seem to apply to "real life" where the job world evolves.

It is the young that most kill and most die. They also constitute the
greatest contingent of prisoners. Despite all this, the most creative ideas and
practices for overcoming these very problems come from none other these
youths. Among its several areas of performance, the Ayrton Senna Institute
has set investment in projects that can change society's view on the youth:
from that of a problem into a solution.

In its strategic medium term plan, UNESCO has elected youth as one
of its three great priority topics, and developed a specific program for this
area: "The Youth and the Social Development," focused on promoting coop-
eration among the youth itself, aiming at increasing their active participation
in social life.

UNESCO's approved program for the biennium of 1997/99 reads:
"one of the priorities for the coming years is to 'listen' to the youth and to
work with them so as to strengthen their capacity to meet their individual and
social goals. Thus, UNESCO is now carrying out an international project
called "Crossing the threshold: Listening to the Youth at the Dawn of the
Third Millenium;" as well as multiple special projects such as "The contribu-
tion of the Youth to the Foment of a Better Perception of the Other." UNESCO
has also contributed decisively to the accomplishment of the "World Action
Program for the Youth," approved by the United Nations General Confer-
ence.

The project called "Youth, Violence and Citizenship" is part of this
line of activities and wide scope surveys which the Representation of UNESCO
in Brazil and the Ayrton Senna Institute are developing in partnership. Due

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to this project, an extensive research was carried out among the young people of the Federal District during 1997. It was repeated in another three capitals of the country: Rio de Janeiro, Curitiba and Fortaleza. It was within this framework that was developed the survey which gave birth to this book, if this survey analyzes the emerging modalities of trespassing sociability among the young – the gangs and crews from towns and cities in the outskirts of Brasilia.

It is worth reflecting on the fact that the study of human societies has revealed two apparently simple truths. First: any group of people wanting to sustain itself and survive needs to devote special care to its young generation. It is in order to meet this purpose that, under different frameworks, institutions are being established with the mission of providing support, education and protection for society's younger members. Second: If men want to survive, they need to cultivate peace and reject violence.

However, the simplicity of both these propositions, lies only in their appearance. For right before the eyes of any observer of modern societies, the number of hungry and unprotected children, of teenagers without a home and out of school, of young people turned into victims of violence – be it as objects or subjects, increases day by day. Undoubtedly, all these problems are the outcome of complex structures and situations, in which contradictions are numberless and represent systematic components.

Besides representing a decisive step in understanding Brasilia's young people at this end of century, this book intends to add new elements to the effort to elucidate the problem of juvenile violence, thus helping to face the challenge of solving it.

Introduction

Though violence is no recent phenomenon, the existing surveys call our attention to the proportions its manifestations are taking among the different sectors of the youth. In this sense, special attention is paid to acts of trespassing and of juvenile violence performed by a special kind of group association that bears self identity and is generically defined as "gangs."

In the case Brazil, attempts to explain violence are usually displayed in the discourse of the media, in political analysis, in academic production, and in institutional projects. The analyses indicate an effort to rationalize a not always verbalized or acknowledged feeling of dissatisfaction towards life in great Brazilian urban conglomerates. Besides that, the quest for achieving an understanding of this phenomenon, implies the challenge of articulating macro-level with others of medium and micro levels.

When trying to introduce a minimal organization into this enormous multiplicity of factors listed as "causes," "risk factors," or "determiners" of this modern violence eruption presented in different modalities among the youth, one can sort the existing approaches into three main groups of explanatory hypotheses.

One of these hyphotheses highlights the individual explanation as a determiner for violence and criminality among the youth. These are theories that emphasize the individual structures, the attributes of personality or the different bio-social factors as generators or "keys" to the understanding of "anti-social," deviating or criminal behaviors.

Another set of hypotheses, of a structural character, finds its explanatory ground in the modalities adopted by economic development around the world (Ratinoff, 1996). The acceleration of technological development, together with other factors, would be generating a ever fading capacity of absorbing productively the new (and even the old) human contingents. This provokes the accumulation of a population surplus, especially among the young who, not even in the best conditions of the economic cycle, wouldn't find a chance to enter the market as productive elements.

One should add to this the fact that the process of transition into the adult world today takes a quite longer amount of time than in the past. Due to several facts deriving from our culture, from the media and from this end-of-century technology, the maturation process of our children begins quite earlier, or at least in relation to information and understanding of many problems and of basic phenomena. On the other hand, to enter the world of "ma-

turity" as culturally and socially defined, that is, into the job world and that of financial autonomy, it demands older ages and competence of growing complexity. Longer time of transition, greater demand for proper instruction, and smaller chances of entry would be originating what is now called "loss of idealism" (Ratinoff, 1996). This crisis of a future would be generating propitious conditions for consolidation, among youths, of illegal or criminal alternatives of existence and survival.

In a similar way, the increment of wealth and poverty, which result from new modalities of economic growth, would be generating and consolidating the exclusion and vulnerability of vast sectors of the population which, seriously threatened by poverty, would find in crime and violence their mechanisms of subsistence.

The third group of hypothesis have their explanatory focus on the crisis and collapse of institutional and normative landmarks of modern society. For R. K. Merton (1949), for example, deviance from the norm and delinquency in large scale happen when the social structure prescribes goals that are unattainable to some groups by means of legitimate or socially accepted paths. In Merton own words: "This happens when a system of cultural values exalts, above all else, certain goals for success to the whole population, while its social structure restricts or closes access to these goals, in a legitimate way, to a considerable share of that same population..." (Merton, 1949).

It is in this field that we also find the explanations based on the "crisis" of institutions like family, school, church, community, which are responsible for the instruction and socialization of the youth, for their adjustment to the norms of social relationship.

This crisis is more remarkable in societies that are going through periods of accelerated social transformation, as it is the case of Brazil today. The perception and feeling of stability are substituted by their opposite: nothing is certain about the immediate future and both the acts of individuals and their consequences are unpredictable.

Hence, the result is a feeling of individual impotence to adjust to the world, which is based on the acknowledgement that society's retribution, namely, that coming from other actors and institutions, does not depend on the value or contribution of the individual. Here follows the weakening of the social norms and the tendency to isolation. The inefficiency of behaviors according to the norms leads to the loss of credibility in these very norms, which generates a dynamic of generalized distrust and disbelief that even strike the actors and institutions responsible for their observance, such as the police and the Judiciary.

In addition to this, the ties of solidarity of a wider scope break, and the individuals turn towards themselves in such a way that private loyalties take over the public ones, eroding citizenship relations. The individuals start to count strictly up on themselves facing a social world that presents itself as both unpredictable and hostile.

Public life and social co-existence are characterized by distrust, negative expectations and unexpected obstacles. In such circumstances, private codices of behavior tend to prevail, and these are shared only by small segments of the larger society – subcultures of crime, drugged mini-societies that define right and wrong in their own terms, developing their own codices of values and behavior and growing indifferent towards the codices of the larger society.

In other words, the perception of order is diluted. Social fellowship occurs at the brim of no perspective of a social contract, having sharp impact on the behavior of people in general and dramatic effects on the youth. They grow particularly resentful of their instruction and socialization in contexts like the one above described, characterized exactly by the fragility of their universal values and rules and by the absence of solid references for their behavior.

As Ratinoff (1996) points out, "The relationship between crime, gender and youth is another significant aspect of anomic violence and it points to the importance of socialization. Data suggests that, while delinquency grows the proportion of young men dwelling in socially segregated environments and are converted into victims or victim makers, also grows. Statistics are dramatic and do not require any further comment. Between the ages of 15 and 30 murder is one of their main causes of mortality."

In fact, a recent survey carried out by UNESCO on Youth Mortality (Waiselfisz, 1998) confirms, by large, the dramatic truth of these statistics:

- Between 1979 and 1996, while in regard to the whole population mortality due to murder and other kinds of violence increased 97%, among the youth between 15 and 24 of age this raise reached 135%;
- In the country capitals this growth was even greater: 120% for the total population and 166% for the youth.
- In 1996, 35.1% of the deaths among youths were caused by murder and other types of violence, while for the total population only 5.4% are due to this cause;
- If in a nation-wide perspective 35.1% of the deaths among youths are due to murders and other types of violence, in the capitals this proportion goes up to 41.8%, and within the metropolitan regions it reaches 47.7%;

- Among the 37 countries analyzed in this survey, Brazil is placed in the 3rd rank in the category of murders and other types of violence committed against youth, showing a rate of 46.6 murders for every 100,000 young people, only preceded by Colombia and Venezuela, which present quite higher rates.

According to DATASUS' Mortality Information System, in 1996, Brazil recorded a total of 38,894 deaths by murder. For a population estimated in little over 156 million inhabitants, the country's murder rate in that year was of 24.8 for every 100,000 inhabitants (Waiselfisz, 1998). The Federal District, framework of our present research, though having little more than 1.8 million inhabitants and a record of 698 murders in that same year, presented a significantly higher rate when compared to the national average: 38.5 deaths caused by murder for every 100,000 inhabitants. Both in Brazil and in the Federal District, the panorama depicted by Ratinoff would be described as an "epidemic situation". That is, when you have more than 10 murders per 100,000 inhabitants, criminality becomes an epidemic phenomenon: it escapes completely from society's control. Conventional structures and mechanisms for prevention and repression are so "saturated" that their level of efficiency is either low or void. The number, extension and territorial domain of high criminality spots propitiate the organization of alternative subcultures, which strong locus and territorial domain, that legitimate and foment lawless behavior.

Given the public power's incapacity to control this diversity of situations, social pessimism, fear and a feeling of impotence are spreading throughout the population that, on one hand, reduces its expectations and liberties (to roam around some areas, places, or at a specific day time). And on the other, it takes on the risks and/or costs of self defense (by arming themselves, hiring the services of security private companies etc.). As a consequence, the State loses its monopoly of legitimate use of violence. This monopoly is beginning to be disputed by territorial delinquency (drug dealing organizations, criminal gangs etc.) and by private security. Without alternatives, public powers accept the new "normality" imposed by crime and violence. On one hand, they adopt policies to optimize the few resources available to control and repress lawlessness, and on the other, they allow the institutionalization and legitimization of the growing privatization of the responsibility toward citizens' security. It is within these conditions of that national mechanisms and identity are weakened. Presently, there are serious indicators that there are not only "crises of ideals" or a crisis of expectations or of having a future (legitimate possibilities of any

achievement in life). There is also a kind of active adaptation to new models and identities that, not due to their illegitimacy, are no longer granting opportunities, ways of access, or territorial power. These new affiliations also have to do with personal protection mechanisms in situations where security institutions have lost their effectiveness, bringing about new organizations for "defense and territorial protection." As Ratinoff points out (1996): "this signifies, in actual terms, that the youth who live in areas controlled by criminal bands or organizations must choose between cultures and parallel norms."

It is worth stressing that a central component of the latter proposition is the social space where those who get involved in violent, criminal or simply transgressing activities live and interact pointing to a social-spatial component that would affect the frequency and gravity of violent manifestations. In other words, violence would be more frequent, more ordinary and would involve more serious occurrences in definite areas of the cities. One should question the motives behind this.

There is a quite plausible hypothesis that associates the above discussed institutional fragility with social exclusion. This is understood as an incorporation lack or insufficiency of part of the population into the social and political community, in such a way that citizen rights, such as equality in the eyes of the law and the public institutions are denied to them, either formally or informally, and their access to social opportunities – education, professional training, job, culture, leisure, expression etc. – is hindered or obstructed. Attention should be paid to the multiple dimensions of this concept, which is not restricted to formal aspects nor limited to the economic sphere. Indeed, as Fleury (1998) shows, exclusion can occur either as a legal norm or not. Examples of the former are found in South African apartheid regime, or in the voting right denied to illiterate citizens, as was the case in Brazil until a couple of years ago.

More frequently, however, exclusion is not based on legal grounds, it occurs informally. That is, though rights are theoretically universal, they are not granted to everyone since: (a) institutions do not work in an inclusive way, for example, imposing asymmetrical treatment to individuals of this or that social condition; (b) there are social groups which deny their own members access to basic existential conditions, which is essential to grant them information about their rights, perception of their meaning and even the interest in enjoying them. It has to do with what Rawls (1974, 1993) used to describe as irrationally conferred attributions, resulting in disadvantage to the individuals in the practice of their rights: their social-economic background, some particular ethnical, physical or intellectual features, etc.

In this sense, Santos (1995) warns about the profound differences between inequality and exclusion: "if inequality is a social-economic phenomenon, exclusion, all the more, is a cultural and social phenomenon, a civilization phenomenon. We are talking about a historical process through which a culture, by means of truth discourse, creates the interdiction and then rejects it... Inequality system is settled, paradoxically, on equality's essential character... exclusion's highest level is extermination; inequality's highest level is slavery."

In its limits, exclusion involves privation or negation of the human condition itself, in such a way that, according to H. Arendt (1993), beyond citizenship rights, the excluded are denied own human condition, that is, the possibility of acting, speaking, communicating, things through which individuals are given the possibility to achieve their potential as active agents.

In general terms, the intensification of technological changes, globalization and social exclusion have been increasing during the last ten years. According to Castells (1998), social exclusion is a concept proposed by institutions which formulate social policies for the European Union Commission that are also adopted by the International Labor Organization (ILO). The observatory of the European Commission on National Policies for Fighting Social Exclusion refers to social exclusion as restrictions to the citizen's right to enjoy a basic quality of life standard and to participate in society's occupational and social opportunities. (Room Apud Castells, 1998).

More precisely, for Castells, certain individuals and groups are systematically excluded from any access to positions that would grant them an autonomous life condition according to the social patterns defined by institutions and evaluated within a specific context. Social exclusion is, therefore, a process and not a condition; and who is or is not excluded varies with time, depending on their educational level, demographic features, social prejudices and public policies.

Under this perspective, Fleury calls attention to the importance of the symbolic dimension of the exclusion process, and stresses that urban policy and the media have a central role in creating and broadcasting exclusive norms. He sustains that the great cities' urban and architectural transformations, with the privatization of their public areas and the creation of consumer temples in which specific groups are prohibited to circulate, is an institutional expression of exclusion. In the same way, when denying room to definite social groups in ones day-to-day, or when limiting to mention them in situations associated with violence, the media becomes a powerful instrument of symbolic extermination of entire groups of the population (Negroes, Indians, or simply the poor). On the other hand, following Grompone's observation

(1998), in many cases the excluded groups fight to administer their own identity, internalizing the stigmas by which they are disqualified and transforming them into an emblem or a mechanism of identification.

Due to all of this, social ties are weakened, since solidarity and other ways of identification between individuals cease to operate. Excluded shares of society, with no perspective of being incorporated, have no motives or foundation to develop any solidarity towards the society as a whole. The included groups, however, try to defend themselves of the threat represented by those who show no sympathy towards them. Under such conditions, included and excluded present such a diversity of cognitive orientations that feelings of affinity, sharing and of social belonging can hardly develop. Besides, the seriousness of life conditions in environments of social exclusion produces such a contiguity of links that it limits or impedes even ordered perceptions about a broader society.

This dynamic is the basis of what Reis (1995) calls "a new amoral familism": any sense of community based on these terms grants a close form of belonging and, at the same time, imposes difficulties to the establishment of any links of contractual order, in the broad sense, with the entreaties for dialog, negotiation and confrontation with other interlocutors what, by definition, should exist.

Abstained from these links and of these contractual entreaties, living in an environment of reduced institutional operability, the excluded are left with very few alternatives. The narrowing of the scope for solidarity in environments where institutions are fragile and mistrusted stimulates the transgression of, say, universal norms, and at the same time, stimulates the constitution of restricted spaces of belonging: Mafia organizations, death squadrons, gangs, and the kind.

These modalities of belonging take up greater relevance and a special significance in the light of Castells' verification that social exclusion and insufficient social policies which promote integration lead to some definite forms of production relationships in capitalist informational societies.[1] This configures the so-called "perverse integration," which consists of an integration process into labor based on criminal activities.

It is, therefore, possible to apply this same logic to the formation of gangs, affirming that their members, in a more informal and restricted way, join their groups in search of a "perverse integration," something that will become a way out for them.

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[1] Informational society is the new kind of globalized society – characterized by a revolution in technology and by the transformation of capitalism – in which connections are made through network.

Possibly, this is the explanation for the phenomenon of violence and of juvenile gangs formation in Brazilian urban space. This is the central hypothesis that guides the present survey on the gangs in the outskirts of the Federal District

Field Description and Research Methodology

Objectives

The main starting questions that have oriented this survey were the following:

Do gangs and crews really exist in the Federal District (DF)? If they do, what distinguishes their members from the other youth groups? How are they organized? How do they think? How do they live? What are their expectations? What values guide their actions and decisions? How do they act?

In a more specific way, we tried to:
- Identify the profile of the youths live in the cities around Plano Piloto's outskirts, which are the areas where gangs and crews actuate.
- Characterize the attitudes of these young people towards gangs and crews and towards violence in general.
- Get to know the social representations of violence among the youths belonging to gangs and crews in the Federal District.
- Get to know the practices and forms of sociability that are a part the day-to-day routine of gang and crews members in the Federal District, as well as the representations belonging to their social space, family, work, leisure and institutions of public security.

Methodology

This research began in May 1998 and was completed in June 1999. It comprised two complementary approaches, though different in the features of their results and adopted strategies, namely, the extensive approach and the comprehensive approach, in an attempt to articulate their benefits and overcome the limitations of each one of them when applying them separately.

The quantitative approach, by definition, allows the research to estimate the magnitude of the phenomena and their extension, yet without enabling the exploration of their substantive meaning. On the other hand, its benefits consist of its power of representing and enabling inferences on the analyzed universe.

The advantages of the qualitative techniques, however, focus on their greater power of explaining the phenomena under analysis, yet they do not allow surveys of broader scope and, consequently, more extensive inferences.

The composition of these both approaches has been one of the greatest challenges of the social sciences, implicating the disclosure of the substantive meanings of the obtained information. This task, requires the effort of translating and reading the categories which occur in the quantitative data according to the representations which are brought about in the respondents' speech – their responses to the proposed topics.

Such effort, in its turn, requires the overcoming of two mystics: that of quantity and that of quality, in a way that, without giving priority to a kind of data in detriment of the other, the whole might appear as one integrated body. Thus, it is not only possible to explore the behavior of the variants and to identify the existing relations between them, but also to examine the meanings rendered to them, discovering what makes them significant and able to guide the actions of the protagonists.

Extensive Approach

The extensive approach aims at working with the representativity and inferential grasp of the data, based on an inductive methodology that characterizes research of the survey type.

In this sense, specific questionnaires were formulated and directed towards a sample of the population considered to be relevant for the survey, namely, the young people from the cities of Brasilia's outskirts. And so we must specify our understanding of youth and outskirts.

According to the definitions adopted by the Pan-American Health Organization/World Health Organization – PHO/WHO – adolescence and youth differ by their physiological, psychological and sociological specific features. For PHO/WHO, adolescence is a process fundamentally biological, during which cognitive development and personality structural organization are accelerated. It covers the ages between 10 and 19 and is divided into two phases: pre-adolescence (10 to 14) and adolescence properly said (15 to 19). Yet the concept of youth summarizes a category that is essentially sociologi-

cal, which indicates the preparation process of the individuals to take on their adult roles in society, both on the familiar and the professional levels, so ranging from 15 to 24.

The concept of outskirts, in turn, brings us to a quite more diffused field, without any clear boundaries. Widely used in economy, international affairs, sociology, urbanistics etc., it is a result of an ideal typology – downtown/outskirts – that lead us to the understanding of strongly dichotomized structures, where:

a) one of the poles accumulates the benefits, while the opposite holds the negative dimensions.

b) Both poles become part of the same structure, so that benefits and losses result from the established relations between them;

c) their conceptual definition is characterized as pure or extreme ideal type, so that analyses of concrete situations are carried out by approximating reality to one of the established poles.

In the urbanistic field, where our interest lies, the concept of outskirts denotes those areas or urban spaces that, due to their lack of social infrastructure, are converted into dwelling places for the poorest strata of the urban social structure.

The use throughout this present survey of the term cities in the outskirts is also connected to a formal dimension. Originally, the conglomerates that historically rose around Brasilia's Plano Piloto were named Satellite-Cities. Recently, by a governmental act, these localities were identified as Administrative Regions and were named Cities.

Sample Methodology

The sample size was estimated in 810 cases of young people aged from 15 to 24, residing in the selected areas. We considered the highest possible variation for dichotomous variables ($p=0.5$ and $q=0.5$), with 5% error for a reliable interval of 95%.

Given the survey's focus on the problem of juvenile gangs and crews, we deemed necessary to select geographical areas with a high incidence of such a phenomenon. So, we made a survey at the *Secretaria de Segurança Pública do DF* (DF's Public Security Office), at some civil and military police headquarters and also along with several key-informers connected to the topic. We were searching for two inter-related issues:

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- Cities in the outskirts with the highest incidence of juvenile gangs, and
- Priority areas within these cities where these gangs actuate.

From this survey, three cities were selected as our research field – Ceilândia, Planaltina and Samambaia. On scaled city maps of these cities, we marked the different areas where, in each one of them, and according to the collected information, gangs and crews would mostly actuate.

Residential blocks in each delimited area were numbered in sequential order, obeying a selection that was done by ruffles obeying the following criteria:

- 270 cases per city, in order to total the 810 youth cases set for the sample;
- an average of 10 interviews per block, that is, a selection of 81 blocks, 27 for each city;
- for every marked area, a number of selected blocks that was proportional to the number of the blocks contained in the area.

Facing the lack of a directory basis that would enable a previous selection of the youths who would be interviewed, we adopted a procedure frequently used by research organisms, which enables one to preserve both the sample's problematic features and capacity to control the reliability of the collected data by the staff. The adopted procedure consisted in the following:

a) the interviewer would make a quick census of the number of homes in the selected block, recording, on a specific form, the identification of the residence and of each young person (between 15 and 24) dwelling in it. (Each line of the *ad hoc* worksheet represented one youth). This census was done starting from a pre-established point (the bottom left corner in the map), following a clockwise direction;

b) based on a pre-elaborated ruffle chart, the interviewer would selected the 10 cases to be interviewed in each block (based on the total number of young people living within the block – the chart would show the 10 order numbers of the *ad hoc* worksheet which would belong to the sample.

c) The field supervisors would select 5% of each staff interviews, checking the correctness of the quick census, the selection of the young people and the right application of the questionnaires.

Through this procedure, 810 questionnaires were filled out (270 per city). Since one of the interviews done in Ceilândia had to be annulled due to inconsistencies it presented in its data tabulation, the final sample was composed by a total of 809 young people.

Considering the importance of the topic, we deemed relevant to collect primary information from juvenile delinquents, both convict and not. In order to meet this end, we initially took into consideration the possibility of interviewing in deep the law-breaking young people who were kept at CAJE. This, however, was not possible due to the difficulties CAJE was going through on the occasion our research was being carried out.

Thus, we worked only with secondary data, taken from legal processes of 124 convict young people and 72 temporary prisoners who were awaiting the judge's decision. So, it was possible to collect the following data: gender, age, education level, place of birth, kind of performed infringement and recidivism.

Finally, it is necessary to emphasize the following. Given the survey interest and the adopted methodology, the sample is representative of the youth universe of the people living in zones with high incidence of gangs and crews within the three cities. Inferences to other universes are admissible, provided carefully analyzed in the light of similarity criteria in relation to the analyzed cities.

Questionnaires

The questionnaires prepared for the young approached the following topics: personal data; gender; age; marital status; home mates; job; "what is more important in the youth's life?"; perceptions of his/her city comparing to Plano Piloto; perceptions of violence in general; involvement with the police; use of drugs and alcoholic drinks; perceptions of the gangs and crews.

Collection and Data Processing

Questionnaires were applied during the period between September 25 and October 21, 1998.

Open answers were tabulated by the survey team and the questionnaires were typed, afterwards, into a especially designed "mirror" using Microsoft Access. For the processing and emission of outflow reports we used the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), producing simple and medium tables of frequency and also with crossing of variables.

Comprehensible Approach

The comprehensible approach is concerned with working out the meaning and contents of social life manifestations which are proper to the activity of individuals that interact in accordance to meanings – individual, social, cultural etc. – that are attributed to the action itself or to their relation with the others. In other words, the comprehensive paradigm focuses on the representations, quest for meaning, intentions, motivations and values of the social actors.

Social representations are dynamic sets of knowledge, of ideas that reflect a practice. Therefore, they can be considered a preparation to action. They are understood as a "knowledge of the common sense", mediations that the different actors develop. They are an excellent projective test of a society's values and aspirations, as well as those of a culture or a group. To know the representations of the youth helps us better understand what they think and how do they see their own relation with every day's life and with the institutions.

As Bordieu (1980) stresses, objects are not objective: they are dependant on social and personal characteristics of the interviewed person. In other words, in the comprehensive paradigm, the foundations of the scientific discourse do not take into account variables dependant on the subject, for it focuses the social actors' perceptions, search for meaning, intentions, motivations and values.

As a part of these methodological procedures, group techniques were used with the youth – actors considered relevant for the survey's object – aiming at perceiving their whole set of ideas, values, representations about what it means to be a young, about violence, about existing gangs, about drugs, guns etc. Individual semi-structured interviews were also made with leaders of gangs, crews and with groups of rappers[2].

Focused group is a technique for qualitative investigation that is used in social sciences in order to seek answers to the "whys" and "hows" of social behavior. It is a source of information widely used when one seeks to understand the attitudes, beliefs, and values of a group or community.

This technique was developed with the aims of getting agile, deep and not so arduously drawn information, yielding a significant volume of qualitative information. It enables you to meet the most urgent social needs in a

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[2] groups of rappers are youth groups similar to the crews that gather around to their music.

rigorous and scientific way, allowing you to understand the construction processes of the cultural reality belonging to the members of a specific group.

The work with a focused group do no seek for a consensus, but, mainly, for the emergence of opinions, concerns, priorities, perceptions, and contradictions of the actors, in the way they express them, without censure or discrimination. The individuals pertaining to a focused group should be representatives of the targeted population.

Instead of handling with atomized actors, group techniques enable the establishment of dialogic aspects among them: confrontation of postures, arguments, replies and enforcement, so enormously rich for the interpretation of the different realities that are lived and sensed by them. The artificiality of the encounter is controlled by the dynamics established between the actors, in which they employ their own wording, their categorization, going deep into the topics while they start making associations with the ideas that come up. From focused groups one can identify the perceptions about the tendencies and patterns of dominant behavior.

In general terms, the method contains the following main points:

- Collect the perceptions of the social actors, without preconceived ideas nor hypothesis to be confirmed: the categories and analytic concepts are constructed from the discourses and not ahead of them.
- Understand and explain social behavior, encircling a problematic issue, its causes, its effects;
- Favor the implication of the actors, propitiating them to speak and acknowledging that each person is an expert of his/her own story.

Due to its qualitative character, this technique does not demand a big sample. To determine the necessary number of groups we use the content saturation strategic. This saturation is attained when the content of the interviews start to become repetitive and no longer present new elements.

For our research, we set 33 focused groups of young people and 3 of policemen, thus divided:
- 23 groups of gangs and crews in the schools
- 4 groups of gangs and crews on the streets
- 6 groups of rappers
- 3 groups of policemen.

We interviewed a total number of 192 young people, being 72 in Ceilândia, 65 in Samambaia and 55 in Planaltina. The number of policemen was of 29.

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│  Number of the interviewed: 192 young people │
│                             29 policemen     │
│                                              │
│  72 young people – Ceilândia                 │
│  65 young people – Samambaia                 │
│  55 young people – Planaltina                │
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These groups were divided as follows: six focused groups in schools of Ceilândia, ten focused groups in Samambaia and seven in Planaltina. One group of rappers was interviewed in Ceilândia, three in Riacho Fundo, one in Paranoá and one in Santa Maria. Four group interviews were carried out with gangs and crews on the streets. Besides these, there were also five individual interviews, of which three of the respondents were female, and two were leaders of gangs of graffiters.

We also interviewed the chiefs of police from Ceilândia, Samambaia and Planaltina, as well as the chief of police of the Children and Adolescents Police Station. These interviews were more informal and provided information on the surveyed areas, on the main problems of the regions, the areas where violence was more intense, etc. Three focused groups were carried out among the military and civil police in Ceilândia and Planaltina, of which the most interviewed were recruits and soldiers up to the sublieutenant rank, ages ranging from 25 to 35, career time never below 4 years.

The results of the focused groups' interviews were analyzed and synthesized in order to draw out the main key-messages uttered by the participants, as well as converging and diverging points, the contrasting points of view and the dialogs between the groups of the sample. This analysis was compared with the results of the questionnaires, hence emerging, as it will be shown, coincident and contradictory data.

Field Description

The main difficulty faced during our fieldwork was how to get in touch with the gangs and crews, how to meet them, how to get closer to them. This initial work was hugely facilitated by an informer who, being familiar to the area of one of the cities, opened to the researchers the possibility of communicating with youth groups that had once belonged to gangs/crews and who at that moment were organized in rap groups. So, in the beginning of the fieldwork, a good time was spend in dialoging, meeting, going to places frequently visited by them, visiting their homes, all with the purpose of discovering their logic, learning their language, their way of dressing and of speak-

ing. This initial work enabled us to establish contact with young people of other cities, who, in a later instance, were also interviewed, as they became the components of the focused groups.

This same informer enabled the contact between the researchers and some youth groups of a second city, where our team started visiting with greater frequency. During several weeks there were quite systematic encounters in one of the public squares of this city, a place where these young people used to spend most of their time talking, smoking, looking for drugs or planning a program for the evening.

To make interviews on the streets was no easy task. Many times the informers would set up a meeting time and then arrive quite late, or not even show up. Other times, when they would show up, they were so drugged that they would not even communicate in an intelligible way.

The police, initially, hindered the contact with the groups. There were constant reviews on Saturdays afternoons, no matter who would be present there. These reviews happened in an aggressive way, with full gun ostentation, what provoked discomfort and embarrassment both from the part of the team and the youth, complicating all the more our fieldwork.

Considering these difficulties and hindrances, we decided to talk to the police, explain the purpose of our work and request that reviews might be avoided, at least, while interviews were being carried out. These happenings, on the other hand, worked as a breakthrough among the youth, raising a discussion about the police, about what they do, about citizens' rights and so on.

After many testimonies given by the youth on the police aggressiveness, their negative performance etc, we decided to include the police as a source of information, in order to know their opinion and contrast it with what was being told by the youth.

It was also decided, given the inherent obstacles toward a fieldwork of such nature, that schools would also be a good access avenue to the type of youth that was the object of our research.

From the data our team had already collected from the interviews and informal talks, we learned that, in Brasilia, belonging to a gang was not a synonym of being out of school.

So, contact was made with the Regional Education Offices of the three surveyed cities, in order to identify the school units where the problem of gangs/crews was a remarkable reality. There were rare cases of mistake from the part of the principals and teachers. Thus, within the schools, we were given access to a population which, in other circumstances, would not be so accessible to us, that is, it would have demanded months until an approximation would have been possible.

In these same schools, students were selected to collect the quantitative data. Teachers appointed 27 secondary students, aged between 17 and 21, equally distributed by Ceilândia, Planaltina and Samambaia. They were selected according to their ability to perform this task.

They were also given instructions on the techniques for applying quantitative questionnaires. This decision took into account the advantages represented by these young people, especially their empathy with the other young while sharing the same urban area and same local culture.

It is worth to firstly highlight the importance of the training given to the interviewers, propitiating their empowerment for the job. Secondly, we should call attention to the contribution they brought while facilitating the access to informants of their own environment.

So, there was only one case recorded in which the interviewers faced difficulty and even threat from the part of the drug dealer who operated in the area. We then substituted the block that presented risk by another one.

As you can see in the following chart, the survey produced a data mass of great magnitude and variety. The diversity and variety of the information sources used along the survey, demand brief synthesis of the already presented data in the previous items:

Source	Nr of cases
Questionnaires for the home sample	809 young people
33 focused groups of gangs/crews in schools, on the streets, and of groups of rappers	192 young people
Individual semi-structured interviews with young people	5 young people
Individual informal semi-structured interviews with chiefs of police	5 chiefs of police
3 focused groups with soldiers and recruits of the Military Police	29 policemen
Processes of convict young people (kept at CAJE)	124 young people
Processes of temporary young prisoners (kept at CAJE)	72 young people

Characterization of the Surveyed Area

Our investigation was made in the cities of Ceilândia, Planaltina and Samambaia, between July and October 1998. Available data from IBGE, regarding the census of 1991, show that, from among the 1.6 million inhabitants of the Federal District (DF) population, 22.7% live in Ceilândia, 11.3% in Samambaia and 5.6% in Planaltina.

Their social-economic features are quite similar. Though holding almost 40% of DF's population, their urban infrastructure is deficient and their inhabitants live in precarious conditions, facing great lack of public security and surrounded by high rates of criminality. The average inhabitants have low education, their main occupation being activities of the tertiary sector, especially commerce and services that demand low skill levels. According to Rua (1997), the typical informal economy of these outskirts areas was sharpened by a settlement policy, dissociated from job opportunities, what, given the limitations of the local economy, has stimulated the evolvement of true belts of poverty and unemployment.

Though having similar social-economic features, these cities have distinct historic background, beginning from their date of foundation. Each one, due to the social context in which they grew, have particularities that need to be considered.

Ceilândia was founded in 1971, as a satellite-city. Its creation was due to the need of regularizing the situation of families that had squatted public areas. It lies next to the cities of Taguatinga and Samambaia. It has sheltered the greatest population of the Federal District as it absorbed expelled contingents from other areas as real state prices increased.

The city of Planaltina is the oldest one. It was founded in 1859, and called *Vila de Mestre D'Armas*, receiving the name of Planaltina in 1917. It has a historic nucleus whose features are to be preserved, according to its Director Plan. However, as the federal capital expanded, Planaltina's demographic growth process was intensified, especially through squatter areas and irregular lot distribution, what altered its original features.

Samambaia, the most recent one, was planned in 1978 under the Structural Plan for Territorial Organization of the Federal District, but only in 1985 did it receive its first dwellers, thus designing the Mansions Sector and the popular houses. From 1989 on, the city was amplified by the settlement of about 25,000 families coming from squats scattered throughout Plano Piloto and other regions.

This is the context where our survey on gangs and crews was carried out. Despite of the Federal District specific features, the encountered situation in the surveyed cities can be similar to that of many other Brazilian cities. This allows us to suggest that Brasilia, despite of its specific characteristics, is not unique in terms of problems and violence. Many of the data and results found by this survey can be generalized and applied to other areas and cities, which have great number of common problems with the Federal District.

Chapter I

Urban space, social exclusion and violence

We see poverty from within, revolt without solution,
here the ghettos have no light, only scorn, revolt, the end of the cross.
(Rap group)

This chapter is composed of three axles that are fundamental to the understanding of the gang phenomenon in the urban outskirts of the Federal District. One of them is connected to the social-spatial features of the place where these young people live and establish their relationships. The other one envelops the multiple sides of social exclusion and the way they are perceived by the youths. Finally, the last of these axles has to do with the representations and experiences of youths in relation to violence.

The urban space of these young people was approached quantitatively and qualitatively, starting from issues designed to focus on their level of identification with the cities they live in, their perceptions of the deep differences between these cities and Plano Piloto, and their perceptions of the problems regarding infrastructure in the outskirts. We explored aspects of their sociability, forms of leisure, organization of time/space and the way they fill their free time, given their limited options. What comes out is a picture in which recreational activities have a strong social connotation, expressing exclusion and the precarious living conditions in the outskirts of the Federal District.

Social exclusion was approached based on the perceptions these young people have of poverty, of wealth and of social stratification. This topic, in addition to being specifically approached in this chapter, permeates the whole work, and is expressed in the different manifestations of disgust felt by the youths of the outskirts in the presence of recurrent signs of exclusion. Our analysis focused mainly on their revolt against poverty, on their feeling of being discriminated by the youth from Plano Piloto, on their elaborated images of the latter and on their outrage before the impunity of the rich.

We examined the answers given in the home sample questionnaires applied to young people residing in the marked areas and to focused groups with gangs/crews, beginning with the above mentioned topics.

Violence is another topic that is found throughout the totality of this work, both in its material and symbolic manifestations. Our analysis has fo-

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cused on violence as a routine, on how it becomes natural and matter-of-factly in everyday life. It also focuses on identifying the areas considered more or less violent, on the justifications for the use of violence, and this by means of examining the coincidences and contradictions shown in the results of the focused groups and in the research by sample. In this sense, we tried to learn the representations that the young belonging to gangs/crews have of violence, how the respondents of the home sample experience this phenomenon, and what is their level of involvement and tolerance towards it.

The Asymmetries of the Urban Space

To live in the Federal District, whether in the cities of the outskirts or in Plano Piloto, leads to special representations and meanings since, in its own logic, this urban space shelters a model of segregation different from any other found in most of Brazilian cities. Its spatial morphology is unique, and its main feature is a broader physical separation between the inhabitants from the outskirts and those from Plano Piloto. Indeed, the spatial distances between the urban nucleuses are great, with wide separation gaps, which renders access and traffic between them difficult.

We notice special asymmetry between Plano Piloto and the cities in the outskirts, since political power merges with economic power in the former, defining peculiar ways of access to material and non-material goods. There are also cultural and racial differences, since great shares of the inhabitants of the outskirts' cities are made up of emigrants from the Northeast and of *mestizos*. [1]

This causes social relationships to become segmented, beginning with the very dwelling place, which hinders the existence of common meeting places of the different social classes, which, in general, do not have contact with each other and do not mix with each other in their daily life. These particularities cause social differences and existing contradictions to be artificially hidden or placed on a secondary level.

There is a physical dissociation between the social groups living in distinct cities, with a high concentration of the population of lesser resources in the outskirts – cities for the rich and cities for the poor.

In its original project, Brasilia was conceived to have wide expanses and low demographic density. The social dynamics of the city's growth to-

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[1] According to CODEPLAN data, over 60% of the population of the cities in the outskirts of the Federal District is composed by Northeastern migrants. (*Jornal da Codeplan*, Ano 1, no. 1, abril/maio de 1999, p.1)

gether with the urban occupation provoked the development of a whole series of towns, cities and settlements, overruling the project. The intention was to concentrate the lower income population in these places, which has led to many distinct forms of segregation between the several social strata. "Differently from other cities of the same size, the Brazilian capital expresses the spatial segregation of its population, according to income strata, in an irrefutable way." (Burstztyn and Araújo, 1997).

It is important not to lose sight of the fact that differentiation and social separation are characteristic phenomena of all big cities. DF's greatest problem is the segregation expressed by the impossibility of seeing and meeting each other, the one who is not equal, creating a kind of "dome," a "protected city" where individuals do not come across each other.

According to a research carried out by UNESCO (Waiselfisz et alii, 1997), the youths living in Plano Piloto consider Brasilia to be a dome, a protected city, a city of equals which erases poverty from its daily life. Poverty is the other side, the different side – a city where spatial organization is considered as a distance-keeping factor between the different people.

The cities of the outskirts, on one hand, are seen as more violent places than the Plano Piloto, and, on the other, as places where the interpersonal relations are more friendly and sympathetic, where there is not that constant need for affirmation of economic or political power. However, despite this positive and critical view of Brasilia's social relations, the youths from Plano Piloto do not visit nor know the outskirts. There is a true alienation towards the other youths, and exclusion and difference walk hand in hand with self-absorption, in such a way that the city is controversial both in the context of academic production and in the representations of the media and of its own inhabitants.

Youth's Perceptions of the Urban Space Asymmetries

On the other hand, the young people who were born and grew up in the outskirts – due to the brutal and perverse income difference in the first place – do also question the meaning of the city. They compare themselves with the youths from Plano Piloto and feel discriminated due to several reasons: the fact that they live in the outskirts, they way they look and dress, the difficulties they face to find a job imposed by these very reasons, and due to their racial status.

Their discourse concerning Plano Piloto is build upon the basis of this sentiment of being the other, of finding themselves in a secondary position in society and of having less job, education, and purchase opportunities. For in

addition to being poor, they feel excluded, disrespected, mistreated, seen as different and inferior. Because of this, their perceptions of the moneyed young are violent and full of hatred, exaggeratedly expressed in their vocabulary about middle class young people.

The components of the home sample were asked how they perceived their city when comparing it with Plano Piloto. Over two thirds (69.5%) said their city is worse than Plano Piloto.

What can be verified is that between the youth of the home sample and those interviewed in the focused groups there is an agreement on the fact that, in their cities, the young live more precariously than those in Plano Piloto.

It was among the young from Planaltina that we found the highest percentage of discontent in this comparison. (Graph 1.1). This data was corroborated by the interviews with gangs/crews when we detected references to the fact that this city stands out for having a more violent daily routine than the others have in the speech of the youths of this same city.

Effectively, the perception that living in the outskirts reduces their job opportunities comes up in the focused groups. The fact of living in the outskirts creates stigmas, once the referred cities and settlements– according to the interviewed people – are seen both by the media and the youth groups from Plano Piloto as violent places, dens of delinquents and idle men – of criminals:

> *...sometimes they think you're a thief. Sometimes you come to a new job and they ask: 'Wher' you live?' 'I live in Samambaia,' it embarrasses you, they already think you're a smartass. When I said Samambaia, the guy said: 'You come back later.'* (Interview with leaders of graffiti gangs – Samambaia, school, male, 18)
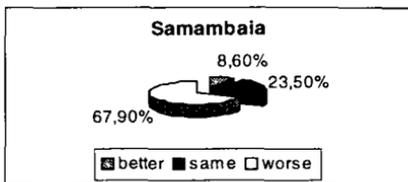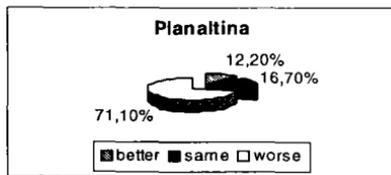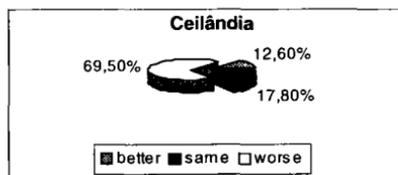
Source: UNESCO, Research Gangs and Crews in the Federal District, 1999

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The lack of opportunities is part of the average profile of youths of the outskirts as presented by our respondents. When compared with the youths from Plano Piloto, they state they have little chance of any kind of social mobility, no chances of going further in their schooling and that the probabilities for them to enter university are almost nonexistent. There is no opportunity of getting a job either, and the lack of an occupational perspective drives them to a criminal life. Their families have no means to place them in an ascendant career, for their parents struggle with financial problems and do not have an education:

He's the heir of an ancestral, of a family that never had nothing: *He lives in a place with no life perspective, 'cause he don't study, don't work (...) Young kid with no life perspective, he can't see anything for him, anything he can do, so he can stop bein' a criminal. Then he ends up in a smartass's life style, 'cause he thinks that's the way he'll make it, see?* (Interview with rappers, Ceilândia – male, 18/21)

These youths perceive themselves as different from those in Plano Piloto, who do not work, drive a car, are not bothered by the police, have money, consider themselves as superior, dress well, study at private schools, their parents guarantee their survival, pay for their education, give them pocket money:

The difference of Plano is that there his father pays out for him to study. Here you have to strive. There the father guarantees the guy (...) not here; the young have to work... That naughty bodinho, his father pays out for him to study. It doesn't matter their age. Here it's different. I'm 25 trying to finish secondary school and it's not at all easy" (individual interview with a crew member – Samambaia, female, 25)

Distinctively, the respondents do not possess these facilities. However, they consider themselves more sympathetic, less individualist, good fellows, and say that they know reality better and are more prepared to face the world: "here, if one needs the other, the other goes there and helps; (...) here everybody wants to share. If there's someone in need, don't worry, 'cause poor people are like this."

According to some respondents, when in contact with people from Plano, they are pejoratively called "Samambaia" "little Samambaia", these words being used as negative qualifiers for the youths from the outskirts. The discrimination does not only occur in relation to Plano Piloto, but also between the cities of the outskirts themselves and within them. Some blocks are considered poorer, more violent or dangerous. Within Samambaia, Ceilândia and Planaltina, there is a kind of area stratification, some are more stigmatized than the others. "Where do you live?" "In ...." "My goodness! There's only heavy's there."

The fact that the majority classifies their city as worse than Plano Piloto becomes more explicit in graph 1.2, in which the respondents of the home sample have pointed out situations of violence, discrimination and poverty. In all the surveyed cities, the majority has stated that they do not have better life, claiming to have fewer opportunities and more poverty, but more sympathy among themselves, in consistency with what we were told in the gangs/crews interviews.

In an analysis by city, one can notice that Samambaia is frequently pointed out by the respondents as the poorest city (94.8%), followed by Planaltina (93.3%) and, lastly, by Ceilândia (88.1%). The fact that Samambaia is mentioned as the poorest is due to its concentration of families that came from squatter areas. Its illiteracy rate, lack of infrastructure and unemployment stand out when compared with the other surveyed areas.

Planaltina, in turn, is the city where the lowest proportions of youths have said that they have more sympathy among friends there, than they find in Plano Piloto. Nevertheless, it is also the city where the highest number of young people described their city as offering fewer opportunities than Plano Piloto.

Yet in Ceilândia, we found the lowest percentage of young people saying they have more poverty there. The rate of those who stated their city offers them fewer opportunities than Plano Piloto is equally low. This could suggest that the youths in Ceilândia have substantially better life standards than the youths living in the other surveyed cities. Apparently, this is not what happens: it is in Ceilândia that those who resent discrimination are greater in number, those who assert that discrimination is stronger there than in Plano Piloto.

Again, it is in the city of Planaltina that young people point out that they have less opportunity (87.4%), compared with Samambaia (86.2%) and Ceilândia (76.6%).

Graph1.2: What does their city have in comparison with Plano Piloto. Federal District – 1999.

Ceilândia	
Stronger Discrimination	67,3
More Violence	87,7
Less	76,8
More	88,1
Better Life	27,3
More sympathy among friends	73,1

Planaltina	
Stronger Discrimination	56,7
More Violence	85,5
Less	87,9
More	93,3
Better Life	20,3
More sympathy among friends	62,4

Samambaia	
Stronger Discrimination	65,8
More Violence	85,4
Less	86,2
More	94,6
Better Life	24,9
More sympathy among friends	71,4
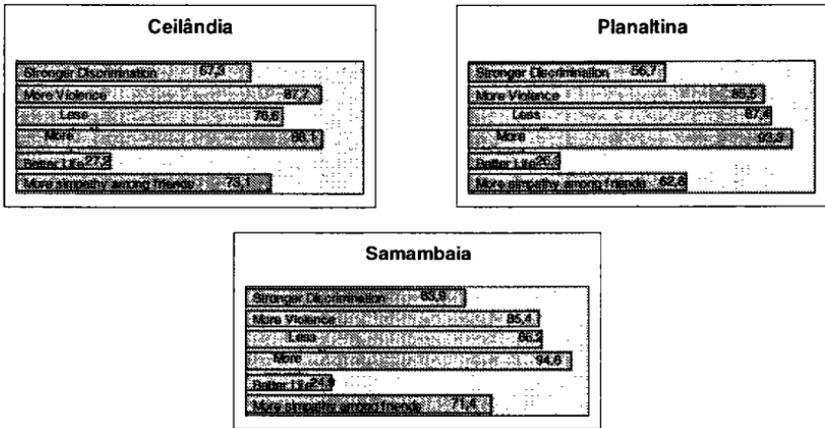
These perceptions are corroborated by the results from the focused groups and interviews. The fact that they are young, added to their social class, makes them seem suspect, guilty of something nobody can clearly explain. They say they are watched, badly attended in commercial establishments, specially in trade mark clothing shops, those expensive ones, where their look denounces their lack of purchase power. "When you enter a shop, just because of your clothes, they already walk after you"; "Keeping an eye on you because of your clothes, they immediately say: 'boy, this one is a smartass.'"

At the same time they affirm sensing these differences, they actually think that there is no way to distinguish them:

> *"To me, it's all the same. If I stood there for a while, I wouldn't be able to see the difference (...) 'cause for me, kids today always dress the same. Short hair? Everybody's wearin' short hair. Black lipstick? Everybody's wearin' black lipstick."* (Individual interview with a crew member – Samambaia, school, female, 16.)

> *"Depending on the place, no-one can tell you're rich. In a nightclub today, you can't tell who's rich or not. His car is outside. But everybody is well dressed, there isn't this thing like clothing for the rich and the poor. There's only poor people insisting in using the same clothing as the rich, in buyin' a suit worth 800."* (Interview – Ceilândia, school, gangs/crews, male, 15/25 years old)

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However, the stories of discrimination in public places, far away from their social environment, are constantly repeated and told by the majority of the respondents. In these testimonies, exaggeration and drama stand out in the first place. Secondly, it becomes evident that they stigmatize themselves, feeling hurt, sometimes even without a reason, thus reinterpreting the discrimination phenomenon in a hurt, live and imaginative way.

Discrimination was another factor also pointed out by the participants on the home sample, showing a restlessness similar to the one present in the discourse of those interviewed in the focused groups. One of the forms of discrimination presented by them is the "style" of the outskirts folks, which is different from the style of those from Plano Piloto. They feel like they are being watched and observed in Plano's public places, specially in the malls, as if they would wear the mark of the outskirts right on their faces. What mark? Their way of dressing, of walking, their gestures, their way of speaking, skin color, way of interacting with their group of friends. Their clothes and way of walking are, at the same time, factors of identifications, distinction, and discrimination for these young people.

Chart 1.1 – Discrimination

Interview – school, street, rapper

One day I was in the Mall, with two friends, I wasn't even watching. A woman, she gazed at me, then I said "are you seeing me stealing anything here?' Nobody saw me stealing anything. I put a spell on them, there was almost death there... (interview – Planaltina, school, gangs/crews, male/female, 16/18.)

Their clothing composed of loose bermudas and a T-shirt, plus a cap, sandals or tennis shoes of well-known brands – original or not – characterizes the look of the interviewed young. This look, style, way of walking, according to the responders, is what causes them to be discriminated, mistaken as smartasses, and the target of constant approach by the police. It also causes a different treatment in malls, shops, eating places, and other public places, where they are suspected to be thieves, robbers, and pickpockets. "That one, huh, he wants something. He came to pick pockets." "That only feeds our revolt." The mall is the public place where the respondents feel even more discriminated.

According to some respondents, in the outskirts, loose short pants, caps and loose shirts are seen by the police, school and community as a

smartass' wear, which is not true of Plano Piloto where young people dress in the same way and are not "labeled as bandits, like we are."

The police, above all, mistrusts the guys dressed like that, because this wear indicates delinquency and allows hiding guns and drugs, which is confirmed by some deponents.

Clothes have great social significance for the youths: it is an important marker in relation to purchase power and is seen as a possibility of looking like or similar to the "other." Though they complain for being imitated, it is through their clothing that they can escape being identified as poor, and that is the reason why fashion changes rapidly, being substituted, "avoiding this unbearable social confusion, and having symbolic means to mark these class differences." (Zaluar, 1985).

If on one hand they are deemed improper because of their way of dressing, some of the respondents feel imitated in their clothes, way of walking and in their music by those of higher status: "the *bodinhos* now want to get involved too, because rap music was only ours. Now the bourgeoisie is enjoying rap."

Even the way they organize their crews – in gangs – would not go beyond mimesis. Young people in general do not feel racially discriminated within their own environment. "At least racism doesn't exist in our circle;" "Everybody takes the other into consideration, there's not such a thing as 'cause he's black, white, or blue." Some are proud of their color.

> *"My worries are about being poor and being black, I have a double worry (...) I am doubly discriminated."*
> "She lives in Ceilândia, so she is poor, and besides - black." (Interview – Ceilândia, school, gangs/crews, male/female, 15/25 years old)

But when they interact in different social environments, the feeling of being discriminated due to the place they live in, their poverty, their color, arises. Skin color is an element of class distinction. The rich have well cared skin, white, never exposed to the sunrays; he is at home or cloistered in his workplace. The poor one, in turn, has dark skin, spoiled, he does not take care of his body, and is "picking up dust everyday on the streets."

This kind of discrimination occurs when they are looking for a job, when the employer has to choose between a Negro and a white man. "A white guy, all neat – who is he gonna choose? The other or me? The other, of course, the damned white one, the neaty – he is gonna forget about the Negro. "

The following chart shows the differences that the youths themselves say exist between them and those living in Plano Piloto. The categories pre-

sented in bold, followed by a positive sign, indicate the side positively evalu-ated in the established dichotomies, by the young people themselves, be-tween their condition and that of those from Plano Piloto.

It is interesting to notice that the discourse of the young people is self-compensating and inverted when it refers to moral values and criteria. Caldeira (1984), when analyzing the discourse of inhabitants from the outskirts of São Paulo on what it means to be rich and to be poor, verifies that one of the basic ways to operate the compensations on wealth, is to attribute positive charac-teristics to poverty, like good feelings, sympathy, honesty, and specially, character. "On the moral level, wealth belongs to the poor, and they are al-ways described on the positive side, while the rich are deemed poor."

Chart 1.2 – Differences between Plano Piloto's young people and young people from the outskirts.

Plano Piloto	Outskirts
Not bothered by the police	Constantly molested by the police
Are arrested but their parents free them/are not arrested	Are arrested and beaten
Think they can do anything	Feel subordinated
Dress well	Are discriminated by the way they dress
Study at private schools	Cannot afford studying at private schools
Their parents pay out their schooling	Their parents do not pay their schooling
Have car	Do not have car
"Richy"	Are seen as slummed, rejected, thieves
Their family gives them everything	Their family does not give them everything
Do nothing	Have to strive
Do not have to work	Have to work (+)
Have money	Do not have money
Get pocket money	Do not get pocket money (+)
Arrogant. They want to be superior, better off.	Humble (+)
Individualist	Not individualist (+)
Snob/like to show off	Simple (+)
Dupe	Smart (+)
Fearful	Courageous (+)
Not sympathetic	Sympathetic/ they share (+)
Not good fellows (not steady)	Good fellows (steady)

In the case of those interviewed in this survey, the values also invert: to be a good fellow, sympathetic, smart, courageous, simple, hard worker are "positive" characteristics of the young people of the outskirts, where the "virtue of poverty" is found in their life style. The young people residing in Plano Piloto are perceived as individualist, dupe, "Richy," snob, characteristics considered as negative from the moral point of view. The discourse compensates, in some ways, the feeling of discrimination also sensed by them.

Urban Infrastructure and the Cities' Lack of Space

The perception of the youth on the urban space, is, alike, mediated by the whole set of conditioning factors of exclusion/discrimination that characterize the forms of relation between Plano Piloto and the outskirts cities. Indeed, differently from Plano Piloto, spaces are filled out in the outskirts and those cities suffer with the dust and the carelessness – for instance, the open meeting places where the youths gather – which has repercussions in the population's daily routine.

In respect to the infrastructure of their cities, the youths were asked to evaluate public services, classifying them into three categories: good, regular, bad. The services most frequently evaluated as good were water supply and garbage collection. Education and health were deemed regular by the greatest share of respondents. Yet, recreation, leisure and security were those graded as bad by a great percentage of youths (graph 1.3).

In the home sample, the perceptions of the young people exhibit affinities with those coming from the focused groups and the individual interviews, all pointing the lack of leisure options, of space, of recreation. Regarding safety, the youths refer constantly to the violent police approaches, the abuses and humiliations they suffer, thus requesting more safety in their areas, and a more efficient police force that would work to defend them from violence.

Graph 1.3: Evaluation of Public Services
Federal District - 1999
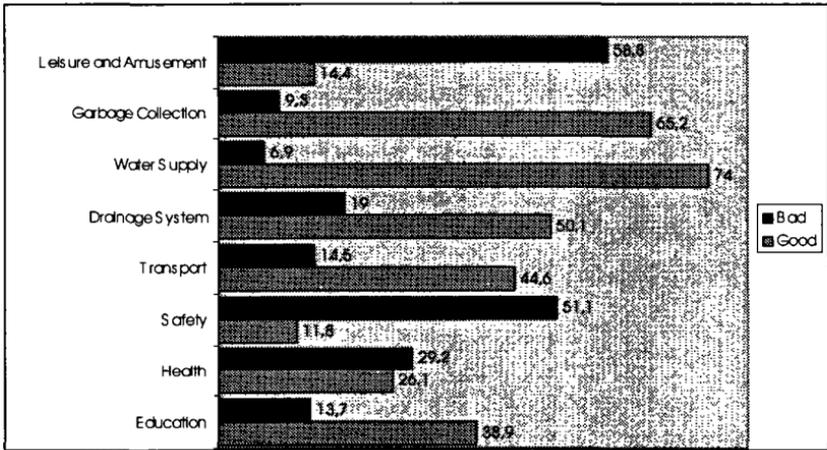
Source: UNESCO, Research Gangs and Crews in the Federal District, 1999.

Because of that, when they talk about their cities, they refer mainly to their problems, to the generalized violence within them, to the drug traffic and to the lack of infrastructure. They also talk about a routine with few alternatives, in which meeting each other, drinking, using drugs and even going to school are referred to as amusement activities.

The respondents from Samambaia were not born there, for it is a quite recent settlement. However, most of them have been living in this town since its foundation, coming from nearby places. Compared with its first years, Samambaia today has heaped many negative aspects. There is much violence in it, cunning, lots of crews, gang fights, deaths, robberies, drinking and drug traffic. It is a dangerous place and the people who live there are fear-stricken. Its infrastructure, not yet accomplished, causes dust clouds to blow around, making room for little sarcasm: "I like the dust;" "tasty dust, this one;" "it has a healthy smell."

Although the majority point out theses traces as being predominant, some stress the tranquility, the fact that everybody knows everyone, and the enthusiasm of the youth as being positive. They speak up in defense of their city, criticizing the media for constantly stressing the violence there, considering that Samambaia is not more violent than other places of the Federal District. "It is pictured by the journalists only as the worst place, that's baloney." "Whoever lives here, knows it's not like that;" "The Samambaia the media speaks of is not here."

In Ceilândia, most of the respondents were born and have been living there for a long time. Several came from other areas of the Federal District and from other states. For some, the city is good to live in, lively, full of fun, while for others, there is nothing to do there, no places to go, no leisure options. Violence is marked out by some of the respondents, but the topic is always polemical: "they say Ceilândia is a dangerous place, full of smartasses. That's baloney, because there's danger everywhere; (...) almost every place is like this."

In Planaltina, the youths interviewed do not live in the traditional sector of the city: they live in the settlements. Most of them were not born in those places, but came from other areas of the Federal District, including rural areas.

Planaltina city is always qualified as highly violent and dangerous. Their violent daily routine is emphatically shown in their discourse, contrary to that noticed among the youths of Samambaia and Ceilândia. Planaltina was the sole case whose respondents asserted their desire to move away, get out, and travel. The city is not defended in any way, and the media is not criticized for speaking about the violence that exists there because they are telling the truth:

"It's bad here, full of violence; right there where I live, if you'd pass by, say, about 10PM, there'll be shooting somewhere. You can hardly venture walking 'til the corner."

"Heavy shooting always. You can't walk to the corner, 'cause you don't know if you gonna come back, if you gonna stay alive, gonna see the people again. You always gotta be careful." (Interview – Planaltina, school, gangs/crews, male/female, 14/16)

In this city, there is much violence, a lot of smartasses, break-ins, robbery, deaths, drugs, traffic, and murder. Some attribute this picture to the unemployment that leaves out for them the sole alternative of robbing and stealing. Other say drugs and traffic are the predominant factors that bring about the reigning violence: "there's only disorder and dust here."

Youth and Leisure

Life in the outskirts imposes an existence marked by routine, with serious limitations concerning leisure activities, be it due to the precarious infrastructure of the cities or to their lack of money. Indeed, these young people count on very few options for amusement, sport, and for developing their creativity. Frequently, few alternatives are left besides practicing illegal

acts and the abuse of drugs and alcoholic drinks, that, at the same time, represent a way of amusement, and build a violent environment that provokes new restrictions to the practice of leisure.

Some youths say they do not have much to do in Samambaia, do not have ways to amuse themselves. Their routine is marked by going to school, gathering with their crew on the streets, going to meetings in some friend's house. "You leave school, drink a little, spend a happy day;" "Same routine: beer, home, food."

Fights between crews, exchange of gunshots and robbery are a daily routine for some young people, as well as police frisks. For leisure, they play soccer, basketball (at school), they ride bicycles, go to flippers, listen to music, join in rap bands, meet their crews, and go to bars and nightclubs, thus summarizing their daily routine: "This belongs to the outskirts."

In Ceilândia, you can see groups of young people on every corner. To meet your friends on the streets and on the blocks that have small public squares is a habit of both those who study and those who do not. Bars are also meeting points:

> *"We just stay there at the bar. Sometimes, on the street corners (...) everything looks alike here, few things change. For instance, there's also a school there, and next to it, the court."* (Individual interview – female, Ceilândia, 23)
> *"We meet to have some laughs. You're used to go there, to chat for a while just for fun. Then you go ahead to another group, then you get there and laugh a while more."* (Interview – Ceilândia, school, gangs/crews, male/female, 15/25 years old)

To go to school, to meet their crew, go out with their friends to have fun, to drink, to ride bicycles, to date, to play soccer, and to go to open air dances on the weekend, is all a part of their routine. Going out to "fool around" or to have a fight is also common practice for some.

In some cases, to smoke marihuana is an important routine in the youth community's life:

> *"To smoke marihuana all day long, to have fun. To stay on the corner intoxicating yourself, many people. You stay there making up your mind, go home to eat, sleep and to hang loose. Because nobody likes funk[2] dancing parties anymore. Besides, you don't have money, nobody is working."*

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[2] In Brasilia, funk dancing party is a rap dancing party.

In Planaltina, to go to school, to go out dancing at "forrós," nightclubs or dancing parties, to drink, to stay at home playing cards or watching TV, or to talk with friends on the corners, is part of their amusements. However, fights and disputes between the crews are pointed out as a typical form of leisure in that city: "Here you get some amusements like this, of no good taste, but you always have it; (...) the crew goes there to have fun, then they exceed – there's always a fight."

Yet some responders say that when they really want to have fun without worries, in a restful way, they leave the town: "it's a mess here; when you have fun outside, you relax. Nobody knows you, nobody teases you."

Exclusion and Social Inequality

In different contexts, exclusion is expressed in formal or informal norms that impede the access of groups or individuals to all or some of their rights, whether economic, political, social or cultural, which are all enjoyed by those who hold full citizenship (Fleury, 1998). If one looks closer at the reality of the youths focused on here, one will notice that exclusion rests upon basic inequality between rich and poor. According to Caldeira (op. cit.): "There are two ways of employing the poor/rich dichotomy: one consists in using only two words to establish an opposition between the groups they name; the other by joining adjectives, adverbs, in order to create hues and establish differences between each group."

Indeed, in their depositions, the respondents present a clear classification of wealth and poverty, considering themselves poor, yet not miserable. Poverty appears as divided into several strata: there are the miserable poor, the "low class" poor, and the "middle class" poor. The miserable poor are the ones deprived of food, clothing, and other goods, with no access to education and health. The others can dress and eat better, have a place to live in, to study, and have access to some purchase goods. The respondents do not consider themselves as miserable poor, since there is always someone with worse life standards than theirs.

> "The poor are like this: if one guy is poor, there's always someone who is poorer than he is. I don't think poverty means just not having money, because all of us here have the means to live. What is poor is the fact that in our society we are more humble." (Interview – Samambaia, school, gangs/crews, male 15/18 years old).

Nevertheless, the youths identify themselves with poverty when they compare the rich with the poor. They get mad at the social differences: they feel discriminated, and state that they live in an unfair society:

> *"To be poor, is to be humiliated. I hate bein' poor, I hate it, cause' the poor suffer so much. To be poor is to want things and not be able to get them, to be socially excluded, not to have a chance in life."*
> *"The rich are protected by society, by everyone. See what happened in the Northeast, people were starving. Everybody who helped was poor. The poor want to help."* (Interview – Ceilândia, school, gangs/crews, male/female, 15/25 years old).

Injustice is perceived on several dimensions: in the lack of job opportunities, in their precarious housing, and mainly, in regard to their situation when compared with that of the rich, who can buy everything, even their freedom when they get arrested:

> *"This is revolting! The injustice in the world revolts us ! Here, if you have money, you're not gonna be arrested, you do whatever you want. Now if you're poor, damned, and don't have a place to live in, don't have an opportunity to work... a heck of a lot of guys here, I'm telling you, here at this very school, are dying to get a job!"* (Interview – Planaltina, school, gangs/crews, male/female, 16/18 years old.)

> *The richy there, if he needs a transplant, they quick' take an airplane to the US, or whatever. The poor are dying, waiting for a clearance that never comes. You wait on a never ending line that goes like this, like in hell."* (Interview with rappers – Riacho Fundo, male, 19/20 years old.)

On the other hand, for some of these youths, the rich have a mistaken image of the poor. They believe they lack culture and are violent, lazy, junkies: "most of them think we don't have education, don't have anything, they think that violence happens because of the poor, that all that is bad comes from him." The poor, in opposition, are considered as fighters, the ones who have to "go get it, battle."

Chart 1.3 points out the main categories by which the youths compare poverty and wealth in a broader way. In chart 1.2, the comparison is made between the young people from Plano Piloto and those from the outskirts,

attributing greater positive qualities to the second group. In contrast, here it is the rich that have greater positive points, always relating to purchase power and social prestige, since what some lack, the others can easily get, such as luxury and privileges.

Chart 1.3 – Differences between being poor and being rich

TO BE POOR	TO BE RICH
Humble	Proud
Poor in spirit	Not poor in spirit (+)
To desire and not to afford	Afford purchasing (+)
To know the hardships of the poor (+)	Ignore the hardships of the poor
Suffer	Not suffer (+)
Be discriminated	Have more rights in everything
Be excluded	To have commanding power/protected by society/ impunity
No chances in life	Easily get everything in life (+)
No money	Money (+)
Be humiliated	Not to be humiliated (+)
Strive, battle, go after things	Afford traveling, enjoy life, do whatever you want to (+)
Dark skin, no body care	White skin/body care/ neat (+)
Be deprived of food	Eat well
Live in the outskirts	Live in Plano Piloto

The need to react to exclusion leads these young to mark their identity by means of a violent rhetoric, seeking to make a room for themselves through their grandiloquence, trying to look bizarre and different.

The "*bodinho*" appears in their discourse as a symbolic inversion of evil. "*Bodinho*" is how the middle class and upper middle class playboys from Plano Piloto and Taguatinga are called. The goat is a stinky, noisy, unpleasant and ugly animal. It is on the "*bodinhos*" that all their class rebellion is focused: "I hate "*bodinhos*." Want to kill them all."

The verbalized hatred toward the youth of high and middle classes is generalized and causes them to be, according to the respondents' discourse, the main target for mugging and robbing. This comes up as a kind of vengeance against social exclusion, a kind of manifest:

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[3] *Bodinho* means "little goat" in Portuguese.

"I'm not gonna rob here in Samambaia, I'm gonna rob in those places where you only find "bodinhos"."
"Most gangs go to the Plano in order to mug, they don't like any "bodinho". If one reacts, he dies right there." (Interview – Samambaia, school, gangs/crews, male, 15/18 years old.)

The *"bodinho"* is also qualified as a sucker and a snob. He is seen as fearful and as someone who only speaks foolish things. He is recognized by the clothes that he wears, choosing only trademark items.

The youths interviewed feel constantly provoked and defied by the *"bodinhos"*, who offensively show off their icons of wealth, such as their clothes, tennis shoes, caps, cars, and motorbike. They think of themselves as being despised, subordinated, maltreated.

Chart 1.4 – the image of the *"bodinho"*

Interview – school, street, rapper

"He dresses differently, hair to the side, long hair, earrings (...).
Here we also wear earrings, but it's different.
When I see a *"bodinho,"* I already know if he is or not. That's his way, you know at once. The way he speaks, dresses –
anything you can think of."

"They love to say: 'I have more than you do,' and go on doing that, showing off: 'I have more than you do, I can afford, you can't' ";
"He's passing by you, as he gets close, he steps on the gas." (Interview – Planaltina, school, gangs/crews, male/female 16/18 years old)

"That's what hurts (...) the people of Plano see you as slummed, despised, a robber. (Interview – Planaltina, school, gangs/crews, male, 16/23 years old)

The feeling of humiliation and of persecution causes these young people, at least in their discourse, to always be ready to repay for what they suffer with robbery, muggings, physical or verbal violence:

"One day I'll go to the Plano with the iron on my waist. If I see a "bodinho" girl passing, I think I'll take her clothes, just out of meanness, just 'cause she's passin' by, humiliating you, 'cause they love to

do that." (Interview – Planaltina, school, gangs/crews, male/ female, 14/15 years old)

Low self-esteem is not based on physical traces – at least, they never describe themselves as uglier or less tidy – but on appearance, the clothes and the representation they think the rich young make of them:

> *"I went to the Plano to buy a pair of sandals at Redley® on my birth-*
> *day. One rich girl passed by, with her cellphone, gazed at me like*
> *this, like humiliating me, just to be mean. I think I could kill her (...)*
> *for her you're a dog."*
> *"You kill him, 'cause he humiliates you. To them we're like worms.*
> *They look down on us..."*
> "We iron our outfits, choose the best looking one we have – when we
> get there, we're put down." (Interview – Planaltina, school, gangs/
> crews, male/female, 14/15 years old)

The lack of humbleness, the exhibitionism, the feeling of superiority attributed to the young people from Plano make some respondents, when placing themselves in the shoes of people with money, assert that wealth would never take away their humbleness, their concern for their neighbor, the feelings of sympathy:

> *"If one day I get to be rich, I won't go about showing it off. If I had a*
> *lot of money, I would help those people under a bridge somewhere,*
> *and not show off to the poor."* (Interview – school, Planaltina, gangs/
> crews, male/female, 16/18 years old)

In their perceptions of the youths from Plano Piloto as a whole, there is also the accusation that they are the greatest drug consumers in Brasilia, even going to pick it up there at outskirts. They are drug pushers, and since the police and the society that protects them from falling in the hands of the law overlook them, they steal and kill at will. The police do not stop their cars, do not check their documents, and do not get near Gilberto Salomão[4] "they give support to the *bodinhos*, relinquish them." Impunity makes them sure they will never be arrested, makes them feel like "immortals." *Bodinhos* are also accused of "robbing for the sake of amusement, adventure, not for necessity."

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[4] Gilberto Salomão is the name of a commercial center in Lago Sul (a rich division of the city of Brasilia) where there are nightclubs, fast food places, bars and restaurants especially visited by upper middle class young people.

The Galdino case[5] is always remembered as an act of cowardice, of extreme violence, a barbarian crime: "No act I have ever witnessed was so violent as the burning of the Indian there at W3. Not only me, I think all of us." The episode is appointed as an example of impunity that exists in the privileged strata of society, in which there are two laws, one for the rich and another for the poor: "that's that thing called social *apartheid*." According to the deponents, had the episode happened with young people of the outskirts, they would all be locked up at CAJE or at Papuda (largest prison in Brasilia).

Chart 1.5 Social Apartheid

Interview – school, street, rapper

"When the *bodinhos* burned the Indian (...) had it been a poor guy doing that, he wouldn't be at Papuda, in a separated cell, sunbathing at a different time.
... This daddy's boy goes burn Indians (...) only 'cause he's got money, he goes and sets fire to burn, what, an Indian.

Limits are imposed on the youths from the outskirts that the privileged know nothing about. According to the respondents, it was due to the lack of limits that the Indian Galdino was killed, due to their certainty they would never be punished:

> "If it happens in the outskirts, the guy won't even have a trial, because the police will catch him, beat, thresh, and kill him (...) never would an episode like this happen in the outskirts. I'm aware of that."
> (Interview – Paranoá, rappers, male, 17/24)

The respondents consider themselves as poor young people of better character than the rich. Therefore, they would never have the courage to perform a violent act like killing a "poor, beggar Indian" as was done in Plano Piloto.

Despite all the discrimination they complain about, their discourse is ambiguous, for what is negative can revert into positive and vice-versa, in such a way that the form of attributing significance is not rigid. In this sense, they recover their own qualities like that of having limits and better character than those from Plano Piloto, though they deem it legitimate to rob and steal those who have more possessions.

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[5] Five middle class boys in Brasilia's Plano Piloto burned an Indian named Galdino.

50

Violence: Experiences and Representations

It is not an easy task to define violence, for it is a term that names a series of social situations that have changed over time, space and through the ages. *Strictu sensu*, violence is understood as physical intervention on the part of an individual or a group against the integrity of other(s) individual(s) or group(s), and also against himself. Such a definition covers suicide, beatings of several kinds, robbery, muggings and murder, and even embodies violence in the traffic, disguised under the name "accident," in addition to all sorts of sexual aggression. Lately, new violence paradigms have been developed, covering new meanings, broadening the concept and including events that before were considered usual practices in social relations.

In this sense, violence ceases to be connected only to criminality and police action. It begins to be the target of concerns linked to misery and political abandonment, adding new forms of social organization such as banditry, organized crime etc. Violence appears also as a problem of social exclusion, with the presence of a new public that finds itself in a situation of "non-integration" with society.

The young people from the home sample were stimulated to point out the several kinds of violence found in their cities. The results presented in Graph 1.4 indicate that, taking the whole sample into consideration, the most mentioned forms were murder/homicide attempts and robbery. We should call attention to the fact that this data does not correspond to police records of the occurrences of violent episodes in the daily lives of these youths. They represent, instead, their perceptions of the incidence of the phenomenon in their own social space, and also, fundamentally, the importance they give to it, due to its impact and relevance. So, if there are more physical aggressions than murders, for the youths, homicides are more "dangerous" or "threatening."

The first data to call attention is the high percentage of young people that mentioned rapes. In Ceilândia, only those that indicate drug traffic surpass this percentage. In the other cities, the indications are also high, though overtaken by other modalities.

The most mentioned types of violence regarding Ceilândia were, in descending order: rape, drug traffic, muggings. In Planaltina, they were aggressions, robbery and stealing, shootings.

In Samabaia, gang fights, fights in general and rapes were mentioned. Murders and attempts were mentioned more often in the cases of Planaltina and Ceilândia than in Samambaia.

Graph 1.4: Kinds of existing violence pointed out by the youth according to SCity Federal District - 1999

Ceilândia
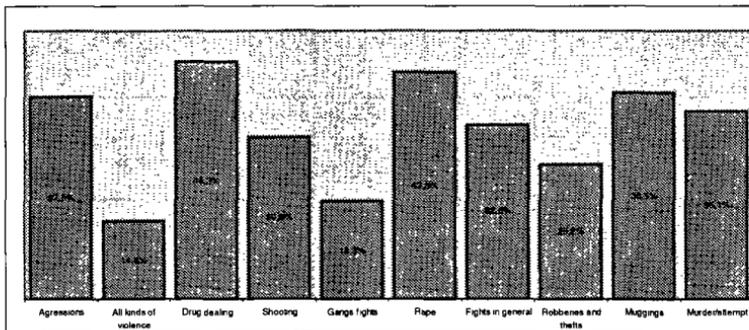
Planaltina
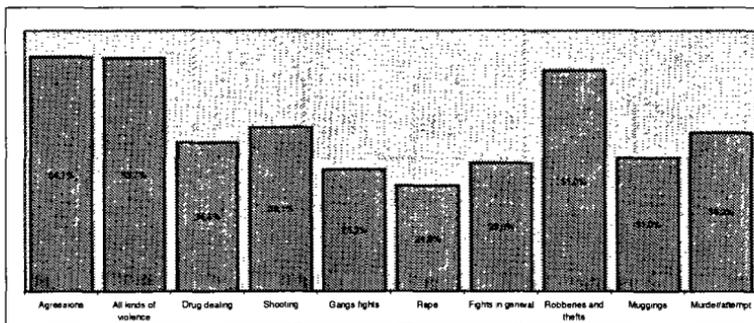
Samambaia
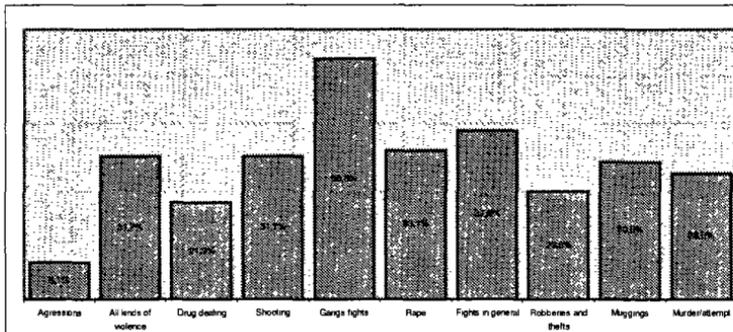
Source: UNESCO, Research Gangs and Crews in the Federal District, 1999.

In the home sample, the analysis by gender as to opinions on the types of violence in the cities they live in, the girls are the ones who most frequently record the occurrence of rapes (66.9%), followed by drug traffic (60.7%) and robbery/stealing (60.5%) as the most significant. Comparatively, fewer times did the boys mention these categories, referring mainly to gang fights (52.1%) and to generic types of violence (51.2%).

The majority of the respondents in the focused groups have already witnessed or experienced a case of violence like muggings, robberies, rape, fights, murder, heavy spanking, and, in some cases, involved as protagonists:

> *"Then, when I got down to tie my shoes, when I got up the guy was holding a knife right here. 'don't run fool, take out your jacket' I took out my jacket, and handed it to him (...) Then when I started to, he was gonna stab me here, then I put my arm, it hit me here.* (Interview – Samambaia, school, gangs/crews, male, 1418 years old)

Thus, it seems that violence has become a routinely dimension of their living. They got used to it, it is present everywhere, it is related to both life and death: "from inside your home 'til the streets;" "Violence is the street, you stand out there for a little while and you'll soon see violence"; "Death walks shoulder to shoulder with us."

Opinions sometimes diverge. To some, violence is a "bad thing," while for others is "cool," "funny" and necessary.

> *"when I use violence, I feel happy;" "For true violence we have to beat him off, leave him bad. You need to trample him to death, to make sure he's not gonna recognize you, he won't even remember."* (Interviews – Ceilândia, Samambaia, scool, gangs/crews, male/female, 14/18 years old)

In some speeches, violence is naturalized, made as part of human nature, the human being being considered very violent. It can be notice a certain disdain towards someone else's life, justifying and making violence trivial. Many times, it cannot be controlled, it happens "unintentionally," almost by instinct, and due to the fact that the person is "nervous," "had lost his/her temper".

Data from the home sample also confirmed how present this phenomenon is. More than 4/5 of the respondents (88.6%) stated that there is violence in the cities they live in, with no significant differentiation between the surveyed cities.

In an attempt to measure the level of violence in their daily life, the young classified as very violent: television,[6] dancing parties, other parties and shows. As little violent, the majority appointed soccer games, the school, the streets. As not violent the highest percentages appoint the family and the school. It is necessary, however, to explore more carefully the significance of these data. In the first place, it can be noticed that major percentages correspond to a sum total of those who record to be surrounded by much or little violence in all dimensions of their daily routine. The only dimension in which the percentage of indications of no violence lies above average is family, with 75.9%. But it is necessary to reflect on the other side of the significance of this datum: 24.1% is the sum of both young people who have considered to have much or little violence in the family, an impressive high percentage given the characteristics of this institution.

The results obtained in the focused groups have corroborated these data, like it will be shown in detail below, being recorded cases of intra-domestic violence, abandonment and difficulty in interpersonal relations

In the sequence comes the school, where it reaches 62.7% the number of those who said there is much or little violence (graph 1.5). In this case too, data warn about the occurrence of violence within an institution where, by definition, it shouldn't happen.

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[6] As far as the media is concerned, UNESCO (Groebel, 1998) has made a survey in 23 countries on the place of the media in the life of the children. They concluded that violence in the media is universal, creating attractive models and important references, that contribute to building an aggressive culture.

Graph 1.5 : Violence rate in different ambits
       Federal District

Much Violence
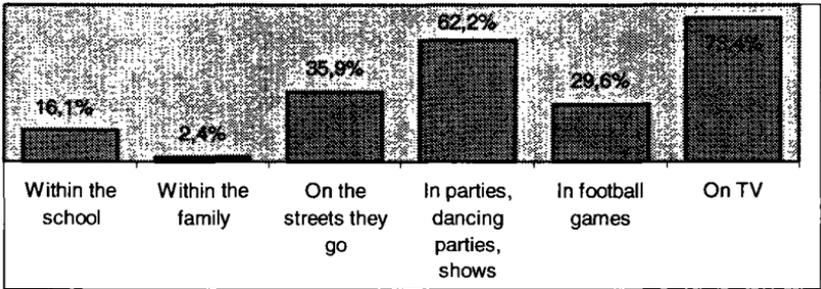
Within the school	Within the family	On the streets they go	In parties, dancing parties, shows	In football games	On TV
16,1%	2,4%	35,9%	62,2%	29,6%	76,6%

Little Violence

Within the school	Within the family	On the streets they go	In parties, dancing parties, shows	In football games	On TV
46,8%	21,8%	45,6%	28,5%	47,5%	23,7%

No violence

Within the school	Within the family	On the streets they go	In parties, dancing parties, shows	In football games	On TV
37,3%	75,9%	20,5%	12,9%	24,4%	7,1%
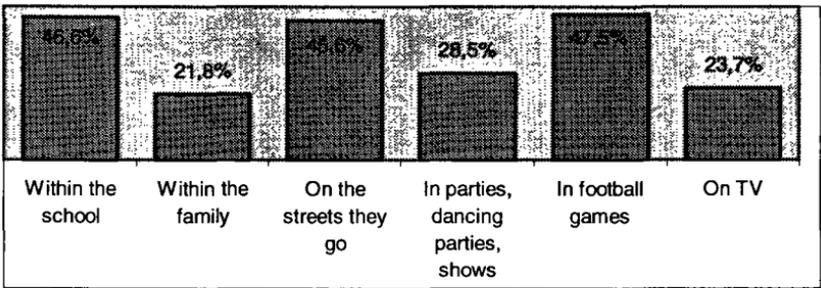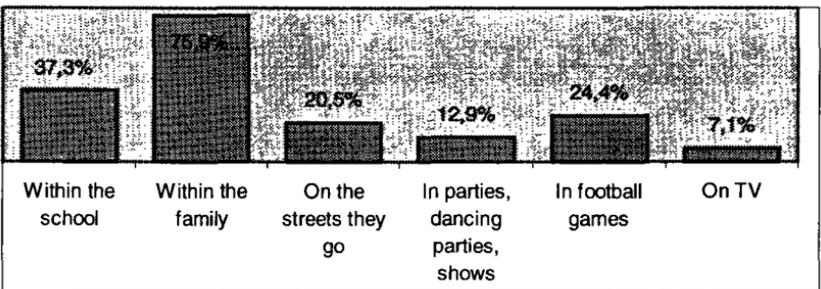
Source: UNESCO, Research Gangs and Crews in the Federal District, 1999.

In the focused groups, in a first instance, when questioned about violence –what it is – the tendency among the young was to define it, exclusively, as all types of bodily or armed confrontation. Violence is, therefore, physical: fighting, spanking, killing, committing suicide, raping, stealing, robbing, shooting, beating, thrashing, "a bleeding guy," "making war at somebody," carrying guns, and participating in gang activities deemed as violent too.

As their speeches progress, the definition for violence tends to acquire a broader significance, beyond the physical one, now including abandonment caused by family problems, lack of love, lack of respect towards the other, toward the human being, drug and alcohol consumption: "Violence are the drugs."

Social discrimination is also perceived as a form of violence, in which, as already stressed, the young from the surveyed cities feel as differentiated from the others.

From among all the interviewed people, those who classify violence explicitly as physical and moral are the rappers. Moral violence is to let a child drug itself without doing anything about it, to have nothing to eat at home, it is the hunger in the Northeast, the misery, to be fooled by the politicians and the government, it is racial discrimination, the overpopulation in the prisons, to wait on never-ending lines to be attended at the hospitals, is not to have a job, it is the impunity. Violence conditions the lives of Brazil's greatest population, the sensationalism of the television, the negligence with the outskirts population. The police is mentioned as an example of both physical and moral violence.

> *Violence that the system imposes on the people, of living there, heaped in the midst of the drainage. Violence is to have to catch your bus at 5 in the morning. You take two rides to go, two to come back, and what you earn are minimal wages to support four or more children. The fare alone takes half of it. This is violence; Violence is the media that doesn't want us here. How many guys like this Galdino did already die (...) how many were also burned without any headlines, they were not given room in any sensationalist paper – nobody appeared there. Every day you are offended verbally by the police: "your vagabond," and so on. This, for me, is already violence. I deem violence an offense, someone saying something tough to me, I think it's already a form of moral violence. Violence is the police on the streets, spanking, breaking people down. Violence is to be labeled a bandit.*
> (Interview – Riacho Fundo, rappers, male,19/20 years old)

Most of the respondents believe that there is always a motive, a justification, for a person to make use of violence. Violence is legitimate in cases of poverty, need, and unemployment: "Before, we used to work, now there is no work anymore, there are some who sell drugs, kill, steal, many things." When a father is desperate for not having means to support his family, when a young guy does not afford to pay his clothes, parties and drugs, then violence can be explained and accepted. The defense of family, friends, "a buddy" are situations in which violence is legitimated.

> *His son appears dead, strangulated. It goes to your head. The guy grasps his gun, gets there and: pah. It justifies the violent act.* (Interview – Riacho Fundo, rappers, male, 19/20 years old)

> *... he killed a friend of mine, I 'm looking for him, until one day he's gonna pass by me...* (Interview – Ceilândia, school, gangs/crews, male, 15/25 years old)

Self defense is also a reason that justifies violence, and it is seen from different angles. As vengeance, response to a provocation, humiliation or an offence. "If I feel offended, for example, there's somebody trying to blow me, trying to be better than me, I will beat him down right away." Also as a reaction when deceived by partners in any robbery. Or, as unavoidable, when a victim in a mugging or aggression reacts. Self defense is explained in this logic: "you kill in order not to die." "Here it goes like this, that's the law of life: you either hand it, or you die, you either stay, or you run."

Provocations that imply reaction, are of several kinds: teasing, touching with your hand, mocking, being insulted, showing off, making fun of somebody. They lead to reactions that range from corporal confrontation to the use of guns:

> Violence brings about violence. If somebody teases you, you don't leave it for free." (Interview – Samambaia, school, gangs/crews, male, 14/18 years old)
> Nowadays, there's no more room for patience. You miss the tune, and the guy already wants to pitch into everybody. Anything is a motive. " (Interview – Samambaia, school, gangs/crews, male, 14/18 years old).
> Rage. That's what happens when there's a guy pissing you off. (Interview – Ceilândia, street, gangs/crews, male, 20/24 years old)

The data from the home sample (graph 1.6) show that a violent act is justified when young people have to defend themselves (65.4%), corroborat-

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ing the discourse of the respondents in the focused groups. However, in contradiction to this same discourse, violence is not justified in the cases of defiance (79.8%) and of robbery for necessity (71.0%).

Graph 1.6: Situations that justify a violent act
Federal District – 1999

Self defense	Defense of friends	Impose respect & authority	Rob for necessity	Be stared at
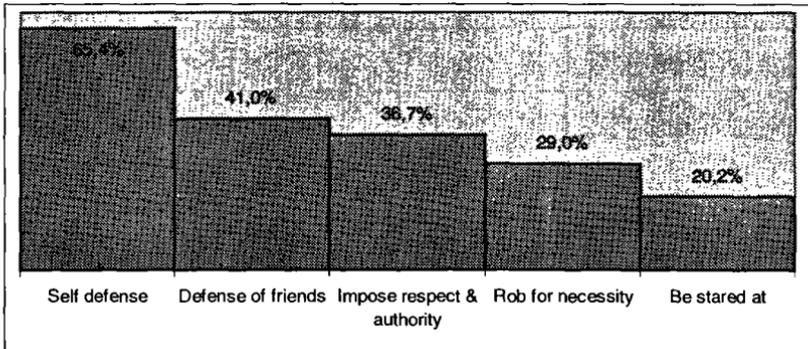
Source: UNESCO, Research Gangs and Crews in the Federal District, 1999.

It is worth noticing that necessity is different from greed. This is also not justifiable, but would explain the adhesion of some people to violence and to a criminal career. "Part of it is greed, there are some who commit crimes for necessity, others just want to get more. It's like this, each case is a case." To be drugged or drunk is seen sometimes as a state that do not justify violence, being then criticized: "He was high! That's not the point, but he blames the drug." And sometimes as a state that legitimates violent behavior because it leads people to act involuntarily: "You're smoking, you don't see anything, you even forget it."

It stands out, in the home sample, the existence of a reduced number of young people involved in situations of violence in the last year. In terms of personal involvement, 6.9% of these youth suffered physical aggression; 5.8% were involved in stealing or muggings. On the other hand, a significant percentage suffered police search, corresponding to 17.4%. (Table 1.1)

Table 1.1: Involvement in violent situations during the last year Federal District – 1999.

Situations:	Personal Involvement		Total	
	Yes %	No %	Nr.	%
Physical Aggression	6.9	43.2	809	100.0
Sexual Aggression	0.3	49.8	809	100.0
Fights over drugs	0.7	49.5	809	100.0
Mugging and Stealing	5.8	44.2	809	100.0
Murder	0.1	50.2	809	100.0
Fights over Man or Woman	4.2	46.1	809	100.0
Fights in the traffic	1.9	48.3	809	100.0
Frisks/police search	17.4	33.3	809	100.0

Source: UNESCO, Research Gangs and Crews in the Federal District, 1999.

The quantitative data do also corroborate what has been appearing in the focused groups: there are more numbers of young men directly involved in situations of violence. From those who already went through a police "frisk," 55.1% are male, and 16.2% female. A more frequent involvement of males in comparison to females repeat in almost all the others modalities of violence.

When the youth of the home sample are asked to classify the situations according to their level of violence, sexual abuse is the most frequently classified (81.6%) as very violent. This datum surprises us, because it calls attention to a serious existing and many times tolerated problem in our society, what was slightly recorded in the focused groups. Next, the second most indicated as very violent is the act of carrying guns (71.7%), what, possibly happens due to the very situation verified in the surveyed cities.

When asked if violence should be combated, 98.2% answered with "yes," what expresses their discomfort with the situation. How to do that? More than 3/5 answered that it is through work and education (62.6%), what coincides with the comments of the respondents from the focused groups on the importance of new job opportunities. To 23.7%, it is necessary to increase the police patrolling. Nevertheless, to put people in jail as a means of combating violence takes the lowest position (1.3%), coinciding with the opinion on the failure of CAJE as a rehabilitating institution expressed both by the young people and policemen interviewed in the focused groups, as it will be seen later. Finally, it is worth highlighting that it is significant the fact that 9.9% have appointed death penalty as the solution for violence.

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Graph 1.7: Evaluation of the grade of violence of different acts
Federal District – 1999
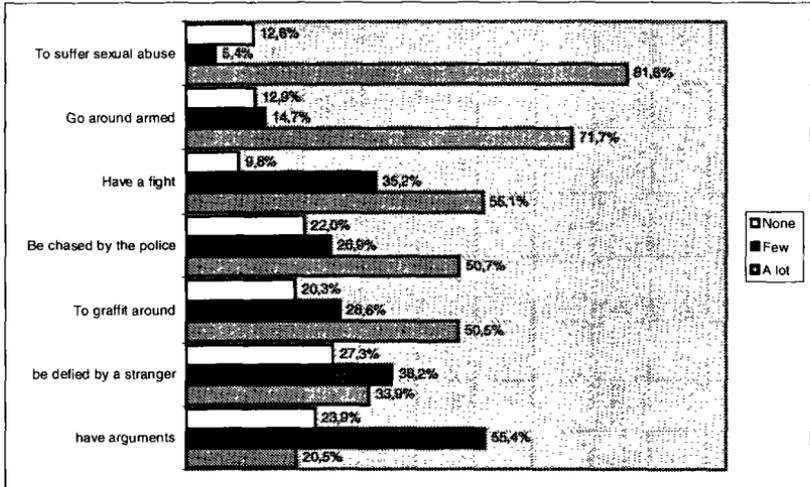
Source: UNESCO, Research Gangs and Crews in the Federal District, 1999.

The whole set of examined data appoint the presence of sharp so-cial-spatial asymmetries, that are expressed by the addition of exclusion and violence dimensions, of great impact on the lives of the young in the Federal District outskirts.

Graph 1.8: What is the most important measure for combating violence?
Federal District – 1999
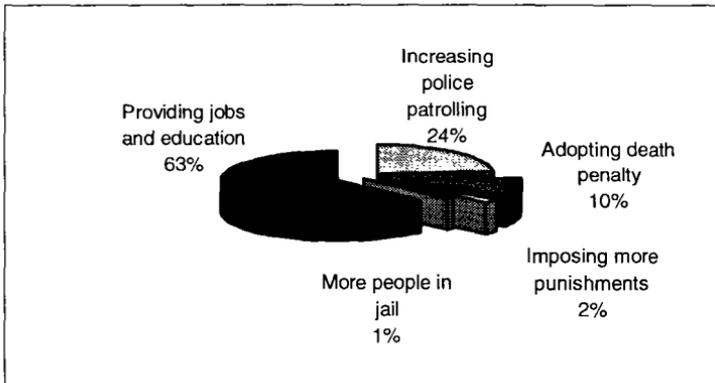
Source: UNESCO, Research Gangs and Crews in the Federal District, 1999.

Chapter II

Family, education and work

Hey brother, think of your life in the outskirts and of your brothers, think of the dream you always longed to come true, dream high, bro, but don't make you mother cry, she needs you, and you need her. House, home, chilly night, milk, nest, and a lift here and there, how many times I dreamed of that... (Rap group)

This chapter aims at examining three dimensions of youth sociability: family, school and work. Beginning from the examination of the quantitative data, we try to identify the profile of the family and its importance in young people's life. Their education level and position in the labor market are also analyzed. Although family and education were aspects of no direct approach in the scripts for the interviews with the focused groups, these topics came about as the young spoke of their everyday lives.

Thus, the meaning of family, its importance, what they call "the broken families," their feelings about their lack of limits and of references are then brought about. Here, we analyze the perceptions and the relationships of young men and women with the family as an institution, and their conceptions of youth itself. We also take a look at their representations of the importance of work, of what it means to be a bandit or a smartass, and what they expect from the future.

The Importance of the Family and Youth's Family Profile

Most of the interviewed people live with their families – father/mother, siblings, relatives – and the young who were married, "living together," or had children were still living in their family's house.

In the home sample, the great majority of the youths come from nucleus families, with the presence of the father, mother and siblings (49.8%). A significant percentage (22.5%) lives only with one parent. This frame appears in the focused groups, showing a growth in the number of women that are heads of family and responsible for the family unit. The relatively large number of young people who are married and/or have children (13.7%) is also outstanding, as well as that of those who do not have a father or a mother figure (10.4%).

Graph 2.1: Family Situation
Federal District – 1999

Live with the spouse and/or children in his/her parents/ realtives house. 13,7%

Live with both parents, siblings and other relatives 49,8%

Live with siblings and/or relatives 10,4%

Other 3,6%

Live only with the mother and siblings/others 18,3%

Live only with the father and siblings/others 4,2%
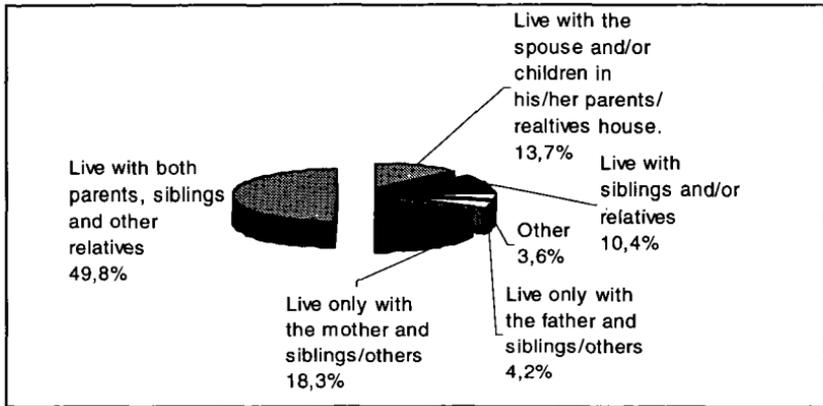
Source: UNESCO Survey on Gags and Crowds in the Federal District, 1999.

The nucleus family pattern – a married couple, living under the same ceiling, with a stable relationship – is still dominant, if not in practice, at least in their expectations and discourse. Nonetheless, the respondents signalize the presence of new family compositions.

According to Castells (1997), it does not mean the end of families, but the attempt to establish new family arrangements, which are being experienced in order live together and train children through new paths, better adjusted to a globalized society. These attempts themselves are a result of the changes in the global order, such as technological and economic revolutions and transformations in telecommunications, which allows network connections, in addition to other sharp modifications that affect both privacy and sociability, bringing about different movements. Among these, keeping the framework of this discussion, stand out the feminist movements that have been changing women's awareness and their role in society, building a new type of identity that no longer has the male figure as a referential.

However, in their speech, the youths seem to have difficulty in accepting these changes. This might happen because their position as excluded persons tends to incite fragmented perceptions of reality in them, which renders a broader understanding of the changing process itself rather difficult. They are left with a kind of dissatisfaction and perplexity in view of the verification that the traditional mechanisms of social aggregation were destroyed, and new alternatives have not yet clearly been defined.

In this sense, these new arrangements or new models are criticized by the youths, who treasure representations and expectations of the nucleus family traditional model. They consider the family the main institution responsible for the formation of values, for teaching the difference between right and wrong, and for imposing limits in a world where the established norms appear to grow more and more fragile and inoperative. Maybe that is why "broken families" appear as one of the causes of youth rebellion and of their search for the streets as an option: "he starts giving better grades to the street guys than to his parents." Numerous marriages, separations, and "bastard" children are a part of the elements that the youths refer to in order to qualify a "broken" family:

> *My family example is today's pattern: parents that marry, have children, separate, divide everything, do you understand? One goes one way, the other another way, dividing the children between them. Children are turned into a mess. I had four siblings with three bastards.*
> (Interview – Riacho Fundo, rappers, male, 19/20 years old)

Despite their criticism, for the respondents, the family is more important than any other institution and has more weight than any relation established outside the domestic context. They feel supported in difficult situations – like fights, a period at CAJE and persecutions – and they trust their families.

This data is corroborated by the answers obtained in the home sample about what would be more important in their lives, namely: family, education, work and their crew. For the great majority (87.9%), the first in the list – family – appears as the most relevant in their personal lives.

The reasons to justify this choice were several, but all related to affective aspects, the following standing out: affectivity, safety, and gratitude. Besides these, most of them (51.1%) also pointed out generic reasons that are expressed in phrases like: "unity," "basis of everything," "the only thing I have in life," "the most important thing" –once again mystifying the role of the family in their lives.

Graph 2.2 Reasons for the importance of the family
Federal District – 1999.
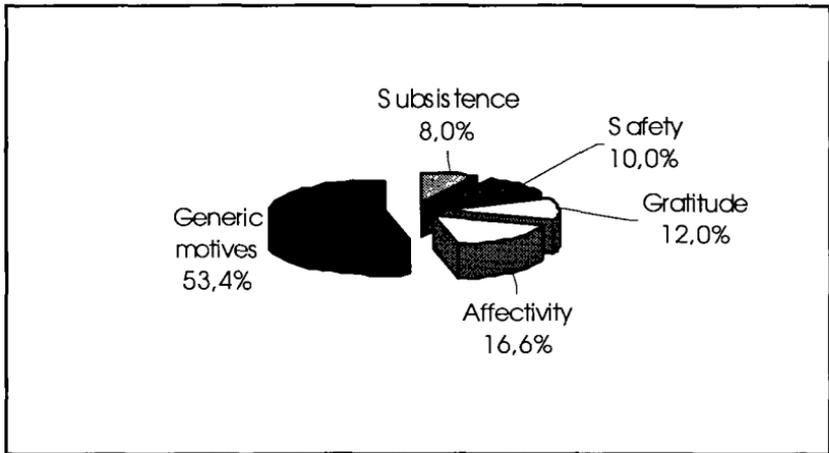
Source: UNESCO Survey on Gags and Crowds in the Federal District, 1999.

However, if on one hand, the family appears as a fundamental value, on the other, it is quite criticized and blamed: accusations against parents can be intense. It is evident that for the youths, the significance of the family goes through representations in which adjustment and harmony are the most relevant aspects.

According to the respondents, the family does not get enough involved in their children's lives, and children end up doing whatever they want about their destinies. Parents do not try to establish limits, leaving them free to be trained on the streets, which works as a learning place in every sense. It is on the streets that the youths start getting involved in criminal life, learning how to deal drugs, how to steal and how to rob. This happens because, according to the youths, today's parents do not know the "outside" world, and that is why they are not able to instruct and support their children.

> *If the parent has a view of the world outside here, out of this window, he'll try to warn his child (...) There are moments the parents just don't want to know anything (...) If you want, just go outside and you'll learn it on the streets there.* (Interview – Riacho Fundo, rappers, male, 19/20 years old)

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According to Zaluar (1997), the family starts losing its socializing role in a society in which "the globalization process is installed through the fast spread of new styles of youth culture in the cultural industry, partially transforming the youths into consumers of products made especially for them, be it clothing of several styles or illegal drugs. The family no longer goes to samba circles together, and funk music do not gather different generations in the same space (...) the family is torn apart..."

In view of these ruptures and omissions, the street starts to perform the role of educator and guide that should belong to the family. The youths are raised loose, without orientation, there is no dialog, nobody stops to talk, they go out looking for drugs and get involved in cases of robberies and deaths. In this view, the family would have influence over the probability of the youth entering or not the criminal universe:

> *The things I've learned, I learned them on the streets, and today, if I'm not worse, I thank myself for that. I've never had anybody to talk to, to tell about my problems, so I shut myself in, and started messing around on the streets.* (Individual interview with a crowd member - Ceilândia, school, female, 23)

The parents, according to the respondents, are afraid of reality. They should impose limits, give examples in order to demand the right attitudes from their children, should pay attention to reality, instead of denying it by pretending they are not aware of their children's involvement in illicit practices like selling and using drugs, stealing, robbing. "She doesn't ask very much, because she's afraid." But, if on one hand, parents are criticized because they turn a blind eye towards reality, on the other, their children have the capacity to fool and deceive them:

> *The parent that says he knows what his son is doing is totally mistaken. (...) You think your son is in a good place, but he's probably up to no good(...) Parents never know where their children are.* (Individual interview – Riacho Fundo, rapper, former member of a graffiti gang, male, 19)

On the other hand, the lack of safety that characterizes the urban space of the Federal District outskirts did also contribute to turn down the expectations around the family as a protected space, once the family itself is struck by it, its members find themselves enveloped by criminality and violence, being incapable to avoid them. Indeed, except for physical aggressions and fights because of woman/man, and even though there might be local varia-

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tions, in the sample as a whole, the older members of the families appear to be more frequently involved in cases of violence than the young people themselves. This data takes on great significance, since one of the family's functions is to provide integrity, physical safety, in short, the survival of its members. If the family is not able to do that, young people perceive it as being in a certain inoperative state, similarly to other institutions, which are equally responsible for sheltering them and securing their basic rights.

The family is the *locus* of the psychic organization of the individuals; it is a social space where generations face each other directly, with many problems and contradictions. Within this complex environment, it is not surprising that the youths criticize their own excessive liberty, lack of limits, the fact that they can always stay on the streets, the lack of demands on them, the denial of reality from the part of the parents, while values such as protection, domesticity, motherly and fatherly assistance, authority and emotional comfort appear as fundamental.

Again, it is worth emphasizing with Castells (1997), that there seems to be a new process of socialization in course, provoking changes in the existing contexts and, as a consequence, bringing about young people with more complex personalities and less confidence, yet more capable to adapt themselves to the changes. The youths interviewed would be beginning an adaptation process towards a new family model, with all the contradictions that it envelops.

If, on one hand, young people follow the prevailing thought about the so-called "maladjusted" or "broken" families, demanding typical and idealized behaviors and values, on the other, they seem to feel effectively abandoned and not prepared to face the concrete problems of a both changing and excluding society that does not offer them the chances of becoming protagonists.

Graph 2.3 Evaluation of the involvement of the youth and his family in situations of violence

Ceilândia

| physical aggression | sexual aggression | fights over drugs | muggings and robberies | murders | fights over men/woman | fights in the traffic | frisk/police review |

young   family

Planaltina

	physical aggression	sexual aggression	fights over drugs	muggings and robberies	murders	fights over men/woman	fights in the traffic	frisk/police review
young	18,5%	1,1%	1,1%	15,6%	0,4%	8,2%	2,6%	37,9%
family	13,4%	1,9%	6,7%	18,7%	1,5%	7,1%	5,3%	42,1%

young ■ family

Samambaia

	physical aggression	sexual aggression	fights over drugs	muggings and robberies	murders	fights over men/woman	fights in the traffic	frisk/police review
young	9,3%	0,7%	0,7%	11,1%		6,3%	3,0%	29,4%
family	7,8%	1,5%	1,5%	7,4%	2,2%	6,9%	7,0%	25,1%

young ■ family

Source: UNESCO, Research Gangs and Crews in the Federal District, 1999.

Work and Education

Despite the demographic transformations of the last decades, the Brazilian population is still very young. Since the youths have responsibilities today and constitute society's potential future, their situation of work and education shows itself as part of an increasingly relevant topic.

Many authors have been discussing the issue of labor and its social function (Castel, 1995. Gorz, 1988), stating that it is through work that the individuals begin to pertain to the public sphere and build their identity. Labor and education work as a kind of moral safe-conduct, a passport to society and citizenship (Arias, 1998).

Besides that, in modern societies, while education is increasingly a basic requirement to access job opportunities, the latter, no doubt, is the essential condition for human survival. That is why excluding societies adopt restrictive measures for access to education and labor against the excluded groups and those who are considered a threat: when denying access to education and work, they are indirectly putting into action a policy of extermina-

tion, proper of radical exclusion contexts. However, it is necessary to make it clear that though lack of job and education opportunities are manifestations of exclusion, they are not the sole ones, and not every case of job opportunity scantiness means there is a case of exclusion.

From the cities where the survey was made, it was verified that more than half (60.6%) of the young people that have composed the home sample informed us they were studying. This proportion is quite high when compared with the national average of the focalized age group. The data also indicates that Ceilândia City presents the highest proportion of young people studying (66.2%).

Nevertheless, insertion in the job market is quite reduced. Only 31.6% of the home sample respondents said they were working. In Ceilândia, the corresponding percentage is inferior to Planaltina and Samambaia, as can be noted in graph 2.4. Apparently, this low participation of Ceilândia's youth in the job market is compensated by a greater engagement in education.

The following graph informs us about the educational level of the surveyed population: only 0.3% of the youths were illiterate. The total amount of those who only finished grade four of Primary School corresponds to 7.5%. Those who informed they had reached grade eight (last year of Brazilian Elementary School system) were 14.1% and those who recorded their conclusion of Secondary School were 15.7%. This data indicates that, though there are many who went to school, their educational level is low.

Graph 2.4: School attendance and insertion in the job market by city Federal District – 1999
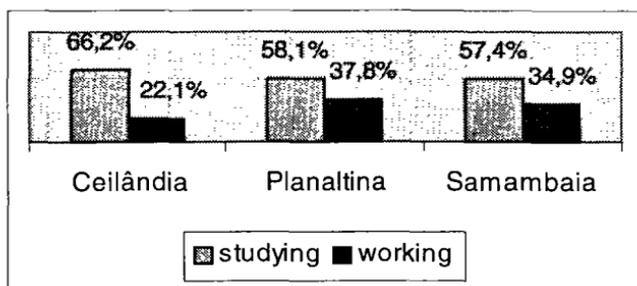
Source: UNESCO Survey on Gags and Crowds in the Federal District, 1999.

This undoubtedly indicates cases of repeaters, in such a rate that, though there is great percentage of school attendance, a significant number of these people do not pass to the following grade and, eventually, do not conclude the school level.

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Indeed, as graph 2.5 shows, about 2/3 of the 15-year-old youths have not yet finished the Fundamental School level (grades 1-8). The corresponding percentage of the 16-year-old's is of 50.1% and of the 17-year-old's, 42%. That is, about half of these youths do not reach grade eight before they are 17. The graph also shows that, at this age, the percentage of youths that reach grade eight increases, but the indexes go down again, from 19 on, reaching the top at age 24. In these cases, possibly what occurs is the ceasing of school life, the young remaining with an incomplete education.

Graph 2.5: 15 to 24 year-old people with incomplete* education – Elementary SchoolFederal District – 1999
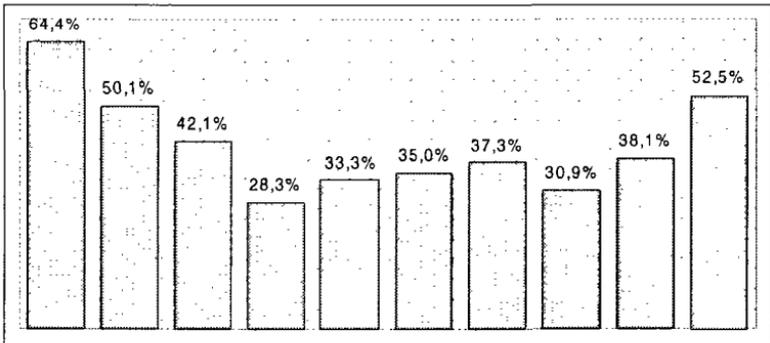
Source: UNESCO Survey on Gags and Crowds in the Federal District, 1999.

Graph 2.6: 18-24 year-old people with incomplete* education – Secondary School Federal District – 1999
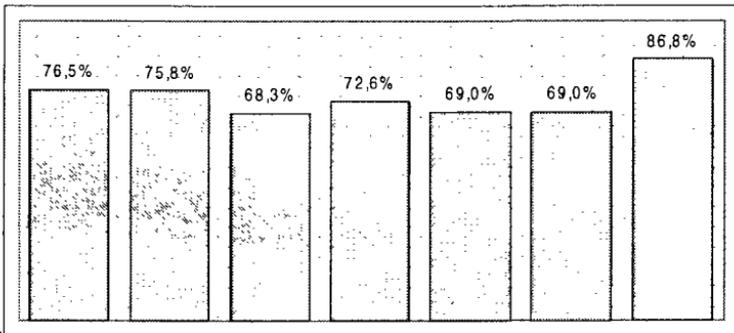
*All under the third year of the Secondary School.
Source: UNESCO Survey on Gags and Crowds in the Federal District, 1999.

Graph 2.6 shows the same tendency in the three-year Secondary School. More than ¾ of the 18-year-old's did not reach the third year. The percentages reduce with age, until they reach 68,3% among the 20-year-old's. Indeed, what seems to occur is a deficit of school level in relation to age, possibly due to repeating or occasional interruption of their schooling. The high percentage of 24-year-old people that did not reach the third and last year of the Secondary School, again stands out.

Analyzing their schooling by gender, we notice that the female respondents have greater insertion in school, with 57%, while male insertion is 43%. This data confirms surveys done by Rosemberg (1982; 1994) that conclude that there is no access difficulty caused by gender at any Brazilian school levels. There are more girls than boys in the first grades of Elementary School (1-8) and more frequently do they complete Secondary School.

However, though female educational level is higher than that of males, in the labor world the situation is inverted, that is, 57% of the working youths are male and 43% female.

The data below indicates that, contrarily to what could be expected, there is no direct relation between the young people's ages and their insertion in school or labor.

Table 2.1: Schooling, work and the percentage of inactivity of youths by age (in %)Federal District – 1999

Age	Studying (a)	Working (b)	Percentage of Inactivity 100 – (a+b)
15	90.6	8.5	+0.9
16	82.6	20.9	-3.5
17	76.9	24.1	-1.0
18	68.3	22.1	+9.6
19	47.9	38.0	+14.1
20	44.8	47.8	+7.4
21	32.1	47.2	+20.7
22	35.5	51.3	+13.2
23	24.5	49.2	+26.7
24	17.9	46.2	+35.9

Source: UNESCO Survey on Gags and Crowds in the Federal District, 1999.

Though the index of school attendance reduces with age, the index of their absorption in the job market does not present a proportionally inverted distribution, drawing a quite irregular curve. With this, what can be observed is that as age increases, a quite significant proportion of young people are inactive, once they are no longer connected to school and were not incorporated in the job world. This is possibly a result of their incomplete schooling, verified above, which enhances the narrowing of their job opportunities.

The study/work binomial is composed by the two fundamental activities of a youth's life: his preparation for maturity and his ingression in the productive world. We should stress that:

a) in extreme situations in which the youths do not study or work, or study and work at the same time, the distribution by gender is almost the same;

b) in the intermediate situations, in which only one of the activities is performed, there is a strong incidence of the *gender* variable.

Effectively, while 23.7% of the young men do work and do not study, the correspondent percentage of young women is of only 12.8%. In the inverse situation – those who do study but do not work – we find 41% of men, women representing 51.9%.

The proportion of registered young workers is of 30.6%, which represents a relatively high proportion, considering the age of the young people and the importance and extension of informal work in the Federal District.

The search for a job on the part of the youths that do not work or study is relatively low. From the 21.6% of those who find themselves in this situation, 20.8% did some kind of interview in search for a job in the month before the application of the questionnaire.

According to the qualitative data, the youths, mainly those who have reached adult age, affirm that they are looking for a job, but they say that "to find a job, to get a position, is very difficult stuff," for if they had an opportunity, they would be working. "The right decision is to work, but not always do people have the same choices." They insist on the lack of opportunities, specially because they are inexperienced and with low qualification: "Wherever you go, they ask for experience."

**Graph 2.7 School attendance and working state by gender (in %)
Federal District – 1999.**

Male

study, do not work
41,0%

study, work
14,6%

do not study, do not work
20,7%

do not study, work
23,7%

Female

study, work
13,0%

study, do not work
51,9%

do not study, do not work
22,3%

do not study, work
12,8%

Total

study, work
13,8%

study, do not work
46,8%

do not study, do not work
21,6%

do not study, work
17,9%
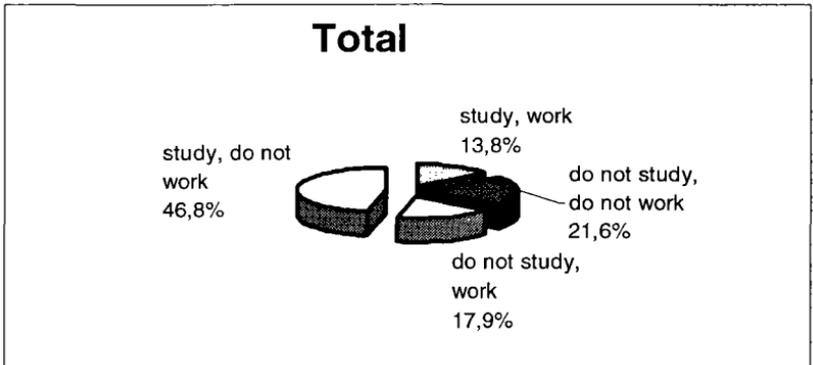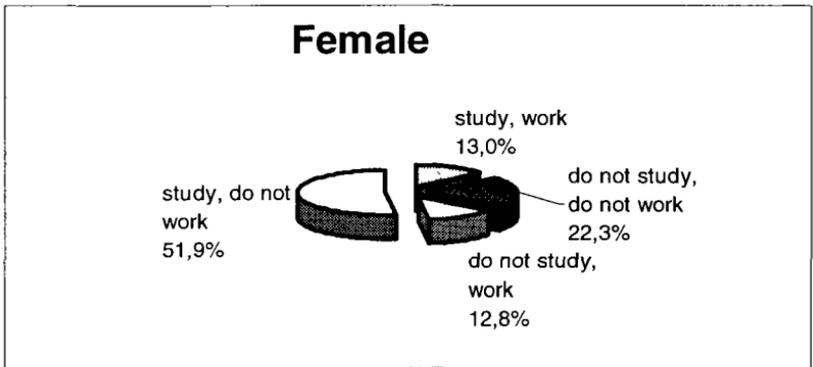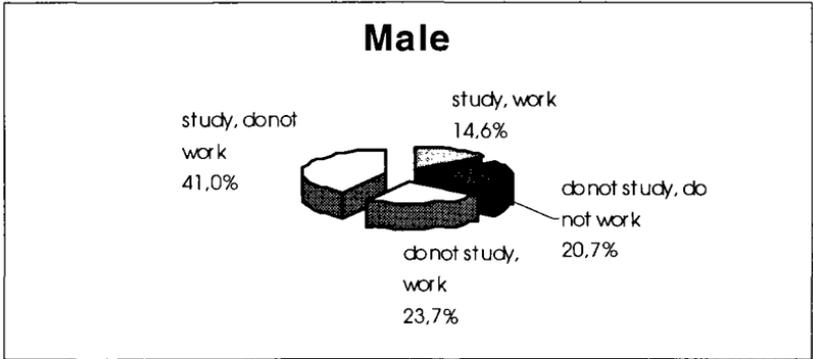
Source: UNESCO Survey on Gags and Crowds in the Federal District, 1999.

In a region such as the Federal District, where the market is narrower due to the scantiness of industrial activities, to the heavy weight of the public sector and to the requirements in professional qualification skills of the services sector, the available jobs are usually temporary and of very short periods. Besides, the youths feel deceived by their employers, who often hire under informal contracts, with no securities and no rights: "... they are very cunning."

During the interviews, the youths referred constantly to the low wages, saying that a delinquent life, despite its danger, is a concrete subsistence alternative for them.

In Samambaia, most of the respondents are minors and had never acquired work experience. Some had worked mainly in their family's little business as informal employees, in bars, buying and selling cars etc. Since the research was done in an election year, many of the adolescents had worked in the campaigns, distributing fliers and propaganda in general, gluing posters, and weaving candidate's flags.

In Ceilândia, the respondents were over 18, and informed us that they were looking for a job and that, if and whenever they get something, it was only temporary and without a work contract. They work in civil construction, as salesclerks, vendors, car washers, snack homemade food providers, and also in political campaigns. In the schools, students over 18 share their time between studies and "never registered jobs." They work as office-boys, motor-boys, vendors, waiters and, in the last election campaign, had also engaged in some free lance jobs. The younger ones do not work.

In Planaltina, although the younger ones have stated that they do not work "because we're still minors," they do small services like selling ice cream, hiring their cart, vending their products in the market. The older ones, when they work, do so as gardeners, mechanics, car washers, gas station attendants and vendors.

In general, the informants count on their family support to meet their basic needs – their food, lodging and some pocket money are provided by it. But what the family gives them is not always enough to cover their needs and purchase desires. Clothes, parties, shows, drugs are examples of desired goods that demand alternative ways to be obtained:

We feel uneasy to ask Mother for money. Then, if you ask, what she gives you is just good for nothing. She gives it and then an interrogatory follows... you're gonna date your girlfriend... you arrive there and are already worried. You're gonna ask for just one coke, 'cause it's gonna drain your allowance..." (Interview – Planaltina, school, gangs/crowds, male, 17/20)

To acquire such goods you need means; and the concern for money is an important factor in the young people's everyday lives. Money depends on luck and good professional education: "For us, money means a lot. Money is very important. Money is like blood: if you don't have it, you can't live."

Apparently, the meaning of work is summarized in granting survival means and means for satisfaction of needs and desires: it is not conceived as a source of satisfaction in itself, nor as a constructive activity or opportunity for personal fulfillment.

Moreover, for some respondents, work is never an alternative of support, because their own qualification is not sufficient to grant them a well paid job opportunity.

Besides not propitiating worthy salaries, work does not guarantee a comfortable and enjoyable old age, as it would be expected for people who have worked all their lives. There is also no way of saving money, thinking about the future: "there are people who work, work, and end up dying, they do not leave anything behind (...) they die working and owing."

For some of the youths, work is an alternative to the drugs and to a delinquent life style because whoever works does not have time for "bad thoughts:" "idle mind, devils' workshop. It's always good to do something; if you stay put at home, you already begin to think deadly foolish things." Many respondents that look for parallel forms of survival, even if considered unlawful, do not, however, adhere to this discourse. As an alternative, these youths get involved in drug dealing, taking the role of the "plane," also in muggings and thefts: "...so, he either works to get money, or he robs."

Chart 2.1 – Alternatives to work

Interview – school, street groups and rappers

Oh yes, you strive, strive, and never get anything. Know what, it's better to rob. Because, say, you work there. You work the whole month to make one hundred twenty. You cannot do anything with one hundred twenty. If you rob a bakery, you come back with five hundred – in one time only. Five minutes inside the bakery.
People get mad too because, see, there is a father, head of a family, a lot of kids to support. Then he gets one of these miserable jobs, earns one hundred twenty. Of course the guy gets mad. In such a situation people end thinking of robbing, anyway.
To see his child starve to death? The guy goes out robbing, of course.

According to Zaluar (1994a), work issue creates a field of ambiguities that is expressed in the speech of the youths, in the dilemma of becoming a worker or not. In one of the interviews, a young student presents himself as a bank robber and his project for the future is to become a graduated bank robber. "Bank robbers, today, are all the people who study. Graduated, wearing a tie and so forth." Among the youths, a negative view of the work is disseminated, differently from the view of work as a moral value.

Smartasses and Bandits

Along these same lines, we find a series of positive representations of smartness in the discourse of the youths, which comes up as a possible future alternative of a shorter life, yet easier, rewarding and less sacrificial than that of the workers.

To be a smartass, is to be smart and cunning; it is to be able to survive in a tough environment: "smartass is the one who lives longer." To be a smartass is to reach old age alive in an environment contaminated by drugs, violence, and crime. It is also to know how to run from the police, to never get arrested, to make money without working and without "dirtying" yourself, to be welcome everywhere, "to drive a good car, have a cell phone," "Uncle Escobar is a smartass (...)," "he's the guy with attitude." The smartass, according to the respondents, has a proper body language, a sway in his walk learnt over time, his hand in his pocket, and talks using slang.

To be a bandit, on the other hand, is to be involved in violent situations, to be involved with drug traffic, with crime; it is to always risk his life, "it is to be a fucker and a crook." It is a no-way-out road: once you enter banditry, there is no way back. The bandit blows all the limits; he does not fear jail or death.

The bandit is not always seen as a bad person, but as the one who defends and respects those living in his area. There is the "good bandit, the good assassin, the good drug dealer," who shelter their community by helping jobless people and families to buy food and by providing for the youth needs, be it buying clothes, tennis shoes, tickets for dancing-parties or drugs. The scheme in Brasilia's outskirts is seen as that of Rio's shanty hills: the drug dealers distribute medicine, gas tanks and when the police comes, everybody shuts up.

We can think that labor ethics are experiencing a crisis, and that the discourse of some of these young people that feel themselves marginalized and excluded is a search for a new collective identity that can be built by means of a certain resistance to the rules.

The Future

The future remits to the world of jobs, of work and of family, yet also to the world of trespassing. The youths are divided in their expectations about the future. Despite all the difficulties to enter the labor market, and the limitations of possible social ascension by means of education, the possibility of studying stimulates the desire to at least conclude secondary school and/or college in them. They feel stimulated to graduate and have a profession such as teacher, doctor, bank clerk, judge or a career in the Army.

The importance of the profession can be estimated by examining the aspects of life that they deem most important. Those of the home sample were asked to point out three of the most important aspects related to their personal lives, in order of priority. Health, happiness and profession were the most often mentioned. To be educated, have money, enjoy life and to have friends, though supposedly more related to the idea of youth, were the less mentioned.

Graph 2.8 Importance attributed by the youths to different aspects of life Scale of importance: 0 to 100 points/Federal District - 1999
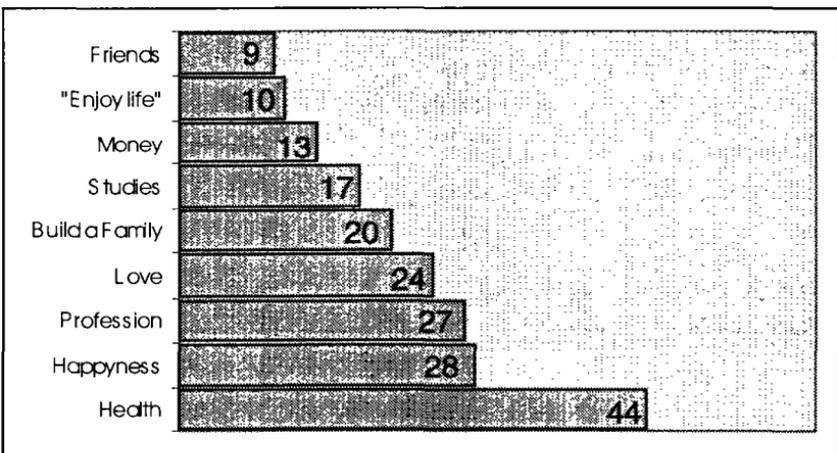
Source: UNESCO Survey on Gags and Crowds in the Federal District, 1999.

Indeed, to have a profession means to open the possibility of getting a job. Most of the respondents show their desire to be able to work some day and to have a job. Through that, they hope to have a better life, thus not needing to make use of the traffic: "If you have a profession, you have a job;" "You begin to work, that changes your whole life;" "to have a worthy work, not having to waste your night dealing drugs."

Others refer to some professions that do not necessarily demand many years in school, like soccer player, craft artist, DJ, music producer. Some respondents insist that all professions are acceptable and belong to the lexicon of possibilities they foresee, except a career in the Police: "the only thing I don't want to be is a cop," "I want to be something that will get rid of the police, of the lawyers."

Some dream of having an artistic career and to be able of supporting themselves with their music, despite their knowledge of the market difficulties:

> *To record a CD, live from rap, hold the first place at MTV, to have the best cover, the best producer, the best lyrics, the best vocalist, and to be known in the Hip Hop movement.* (Ineterview with rappers – Ceilândia, Riacho Fundo, Paranoá, Santa Maria)

To have money, to "be acknowledged by everybody" – appear as some of the generic aspirations of the young people of the outskirts:

> *I dream of what everybody in the outskirts dreams of: to be rich, to have money, to be respected. There's a thing you want, you can afford buying it, if you want trademark clothes, you've got the money to buy them.* (Interview – Smambaia, school, gangs/crews, male, 15/17)

To afford traveling, to have a better life than the present one, to have a car, to leave their parent's house, not depend on anybody, to be able to help their family and mainly their parents, are all desires that appear in the speech of the young. To live long, enjoy life, be happy, have a safer life, abandon drugs, make no use of violence and get out of delinquency are desires that appear in the perspective of a long term change.

Constituting a family is also one of the young people's expectations. To marry, have children and economic means to take care of his/her family appear as possibilities linked to a new phase in life, in which they would shift from teenagers to adults, have more responsibilities, and greater concern about money: "to have my dame, get a house for me to live in with my wife, have my son and go on living."

Some of the interviewed tell that men worry about their role as heads of family, about their responsibility to provide for their house, while the woman do not have such concerns: "Oh, I'm gonna marry, let him manage buying the furniture, the house..."; "we, the man, we get worried."

For some youths, the future is a mystery that they are prepared to face: "life is full of surprises;" "whatever comes around, here we are;" "it can even be a job as a garbage collector, I'll take it," "I just let it come, the future is a surprise." Others seem not to reflect deeply about the future, stating that what they want is to "lead an easy life," preferably "making little effort and earning a lot."

Chart 2.2 – Perspectives for the Future

Interview – school, street, rappers

To go on robbing, have fun; Go on dealing drugs, selling it; You really make money with that; To work, to have a beautiful wife, to work hard, to have lawfully acquired money – no way, dear – you have to trick. There's just no jobs around.
If they won't find a job, of course they say they won't leave that life they're living, won't leave those crews, let's say, that criminal life; Even us, that can tell we don't belong to the criminal life, we don't have a chance, imagine criminal life insiders.
What we have the chance to become - the farthest you can get - is to become a drug dealer. That's the highest we can dream of. Our future here, is to become a dealer. I think of having a house, a car, a family, but that's not possible. If we want to have a future, we're gonna be drug dealers.

Robbing and trafficking are the exact options that are going to be chosen by some youths who know their limitations to get any warranty in life. So, if a job is not managed, criminal life shows itself as the perfect way out, since they do not have any other options.

This alternative sphere, however, promises very little in terms of gains, and its only warranty is a precocious death.

The respondents that constantly make use of drugs also state they have little chance of reaching old age. They often die very young:

> *You don't get beyond 35. He's gonna kill you, or someone else will come and exterminate you (...) Most are like this. Most of us who get our head blown off, don't go much farther than that.* (Interview – Ceilândia, street, gangs/crews, male, 17/24 years old)

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Chart 2.3 – Future and Death

Interview, school, street, rappers

Future, if there is one – I'm not gonna have a future – is dark, illegal and close to death. It depends on you managing to come out of a 'war' alive and on managing to survive the next day.
Life is like a movie. Today you're alive, tomorrow, you just see a swarm of lost bullets, and you're done. (...) We get out this place here, and suddenly there's a war going on right there. It can happen a bullet hits me.

Pessimism, lack of hope, disbelief in society, the perception that the future does not exist, is all part of a typical picture of a context of exclusion. Given the condition they live in, the conventional sociability spheres do not offer enough answers to meet the expectations of these young people. In the blanks they leave open, another sphere or dimension is built. That of a sociability whose main mark is transgression.

Chapter III

Gangs, Crews and Rappers

...surviving in the underworld is unfortunately like this, hesitated, check, check,
died, bum, bum – this is the end...(Rap group)

The objective of this chapter is to examine the phenomenon of gangs/
crews in the outskirts of the Federal District. The central issue of this re-
search was to know what the youths think about the gangs, their experiences
and perceptions of them. Besides this, it was intended to identify the meaning
of the behavior of the youths affiliated to gangs and to characterize these
associations according to the concepts of gangs and crews, marking their
similarities and differences.

First, focus was given on the socioeconomic attributes and the at-
titude of the young people who are involved with gangs, or who had al-
ready been involved with them, so as to verify the existence, or not, of
distinctions between those youths and the ones who have never been in-
volved with gangs. Next, the kinds of existing gangs were investigated,
how they are formed, how the youths join them, stick with them and leave.
Then, the aspects related to appointment, substitution and attributions of
the gang leaders were explored. Finally, the activities of gangs, their ri-
valries, the guns, the drugs and the role assigned to the female youths
were examined.

In order to develop the intended analysis, many of the youths have
been interviewed, regardless of their involvement in gangs or crews in the
outskirts of the Federal District. Rap groups have also been interviewed, for
they appear as an opposition to the gangs, as they represent an identity con-
struction that synthesizes and translates the experience of being excluded
and it incorporates the violence which marks the daily life of the young. The
data which sustain the analysis have been collected both by means of the
interviews undertaken within the focused groups and by the home sample
research.

The Thematic of the Gangs in the United States

In the United States, gangs have decades of history and are very important in the organization of the collective life in the cities. They appear as a characteristic element of the urban space division, which has historically aroused violent conflicts of typically ethnic nature.

The American gangs are treated in a vast and varied literature, it being academic or originated from newspapers articles, governmental reports, practical manuals, educative guides and a set of autobiographic stories. The theme starts to gain more attention in the social sciences of the 20's, in the scope of the urban studies innovation undertaken by the School of Chicago.

The first School of Chicago consecrated to the gangs many of its classical studies. The reason was its uneasiness in relation to the "crisis" and the "social disorganization" produced by the accelerated urban growth and by the absence of integration in the social and cultural urban space by the migrants and immigrants who started to occupy the poor and decadent areas of that city. The spatial, social and cultural segregation, the crisis motivated by the weakening of the values, the moral and the traditional customs of the poor immigrating population, finally, the weakening of the traditional forms of regulating rules and behaviors would be responsible for the formation and multiplication of gangs. These would emerge as an answer of the youths coming from less privileged areas and from families having difficulty integrating socially to this disorganization of the environment. Besides this, the gangs would express the search for a social identity. Their way of functioning, of belonging, the position of the young, and the rivalry games would constitute vectors of an identity of substitution, the creative force of a culture which could favor delinquency.

The School of Chicago provides the first postulates of a "sociology of juvenile delinquency", referring to the problems of social integration in micro-communities, which are distant from the dominant norms in the society. After the 30's, and getting away from the model of "social disorganization", numerous papers approaching the theme continued to arise in all periods of the American sociology, giving space to counter-position of theoretical tendencies and perspectives. The privileged spot of the "gang" in the development of the "sociology of juvenile delinquency" clearly appears in the cultural, functional and interaction models.

Presently in the United States, the problematic of gangs congregates various lines of research, as well as opinion movements. To some research-

ers, gangs, seen as the fundamental gear of the immense drug traffic mechanism, deserve to be thought as "informal enterprises", characteristic of poor and segregated neighborhoods. To others, gangs constitute the "vanguard" of that population of excluded people, gathered together under the stigmatizing denomination of *underclass*. And there are those whose main focus is on the formation of an ethnic and/or dominant gender identity, strongly delineated by forces like segregation, immigration and exclusion of the school and of the job market. Gangs are also the object of primordial interest in the analysis of the new sub-proletarian criminality and of the street violence, responsible for the high mortality rates and for the increase of imprisonment of young Afro-American and Hispano-American people.

The Thematic of the Gangs in Brazil

There is a great hiatus in the problematic of the juvenile organizations in the United States and in Brazil, where the thematic of the young does not have much tradition. However, the emergence of crews and gangs in the national urban scenario, the break out of an unheard-of way for the youths to organize themselves and to be noticed in the social arena, has motivated the undertaking of different studies in various cities.[10]

Maybe this can be explained by the fact that, in Brazil, the socio-spatial organization of the cities and the conflict derived from it assume another historical configuration, expressing itself, for instance, by means of groups and associations. These, apart from the rivalry sometimes translated into violent clashes, produce models of sociability impregnated with "violence antidotes". [11]

In Brazil, when we refer to "gangs", we are not talking about "organizations", about "a business with enterprise characteristics", about an instrumental rationality which might make the social mobility of the young possible, as presented by Sanchéz Jankowski when he analyses the reality of the American gangs.[12]. Besides, the general criteria, which traditionally defines the gangs in the American researches – formal structure of organization, hierarchy, definite leadership, identification with a territory, recurring interaction, longevity and commitment with violent behavior [13] - are not necessarily transposable to our reality, for only some groups show specific characteristics related to the behavior previously described.

The use of the notion of "galère", introduced by Dubet in his studies on the French youth, may at first seem pertinent to the Brazilian universe in

order to understand the ways of interaction, practices and values of the youths from the outskirts, organized in groups and involved in situations of violence. "Galère" is, most of all, a way of letting the existence adrift, a way of loose sociability, full of nihilism, self-destruction and anger. This sociability may be marked by intermittent criminal activities or by a diffuse delinquency. However, one must not fall into the trap of applying mechanically the theoretical model developed by Dubet. In France, different from what happens in Brazil, the phenomenon of "galère" has as its background the conflicts and tensions caused by the immigration, the dismantling of the working class neighborhoods, the weakening of the working class movement and the deprivation of the conscience of class.

In Brazil, the word gang has been used generically to designate a group of young people, a group of companions and also a juvenile organization connected with delinquency. For this reason, it has been decided to use the term gangs/crews in this study in a generic way, referring either to the more structured groups, such as the graffiti gangs, or to the others.

It's important to observe that the media plays a fundamental role in the diffusion of the perceptions related to the gangs, often attributing to them certain crimes – mugging, robberies, fights and aggressions – regardless of the fact that they may have been done individually. A group of young people gathered is transformed into a gang; the young person in a cap and loose shorts becomes a member of a gang; the exchange of insults among adolescents at the entrance of the school turns into a battle between rival gangs.

In this study, the gangs/crews identified in the outskirts of the Federal District are more or less structured groups whose activities go from playful to criminal, whose members show solidarity based on a shared, though incipient, identity. Belonging to a gang/crew and playing its rivalry games are vectors of group identity which may lead both to new forms of creativity – the rappers, for example – and to delinquency.

The Gangs in the Federal District Plano Piloto

This is not the first time that gangs are object of study in the Federal District. Previous research on the youth of this region (Waiselfisz et alii, 1997) has focused on the gangs residing in the Plano Piloto, showing that they are well-known by the local youth and that they seem to represent a way of going against the emptiness of references which delineates the daily life in the city. They are informal organizations which identify themselves with a

leader and with a district, in which access is given to "enturmados" only. The research has shown that, in the Plano Piloto, this form of organization fills a certain existential emptiness, the lack of options and the disbelief in the authorities and in the law.

These groups of young people develop a complicity concerning illicit acts of the most varied kinds. They are feared and known in the neighborhood as disturbing, as a threat. The gangs get together to write on the walls of buildings, to steal, to fight, to wreck or simply to "create confusion". It calls attention the great number of young people who, in the mentioned research, stated that they were part of a gang (12.2%), as well as the ones who get together, according to their own perception, mainly to drink (86.0%), to fight (80.5%) and to smoke marijuana (77.1%).

Their action is centered in the Plano Piloto and appears in a circumstantial way following an act of vandalism or a scandal. The groups are formed in the "quadras", and their members are old friends and companions. They drink and do drugs, and have fun by fighting over territory, making use of the martial arts as instrument. There is a great competition among the gangs to see which is stronger and knows how to fight better. Their profile is essentially male, and the most remarkable members have good prestige among women.

The mentioned research shows that, in the Plano Piloto, the gangs are a means by which the young impose respect and cause fear, and also work as a shield against the threat of the other gangs, as a defensive strategy against violence, but applying the same violent methods. It is worth asking this: to what extent are the characteristics observed in the gangs of the Plano Piloto similar to those of the outskirts of the Federal District?

The Gangs in the Outskirts of the Federal District

The youths who were interviewed stated that there are various gangs in the cities studied. The most frequently identified ones are: graffiti gang members; delinquents – characterized for making use of drugs and mugging – criminals – typically consisted of drug dealers, robbers, thieves. However, the characteristics which delimit these gangs are very diffuse and mixed. Besides, there are groups commonly called, such as the rappers and the groups within the "quadras" or consisted of friends only.

The complexity of the dynamics and formation of these associations makes any kind of classification useless. In general, belonging to a gang of

rappers may imply in being involved with drug traffic tomorrow, and also becoming a rap singer, and then constituting a new identity. Moreover, there is a superposition of activities, which generates a multiplicity of roles and behaviors. That is to say, the member of a gang of rappers may be a drug addict, a student and a worker, simultaneously. Because of this, although there is an identification of the various kinds of gangs/crews understood by the young, the gangs' limits are always fluid and subtle.

The history of graffiti gangs in the Federal District is an example of what has just been stated. These gangs started to appear in the beginning of the 80's, when the first "hip hop movement " emerged in the city. At first, they were small groups who gathered together only in order to write on the walls of public buildings, which was considered fun. Gradually, these groups started to get bigger and their members started to quit graffiting and get involved with drugs, traffic and crime. The fun and the playful characteristics turned into delinquency:

> *It was a gang devoted to graffiti only, but, as time went by, it became a gang who robbed, who were armed. Then they started using drugs, things like that. It all started for fun, writing on the walls of buildings and everything. As time went by, it became a more dangerous group, stealing cars, having lots of guns. They started to be wanted by the police.* (Interview with rappers – Ceilândia, male, 18/21 years old)
> *The graffiti gang members there are all criminals. In the past, the thing was only graffiti, but then they started doing drugs. Usually they don't have money, so they start stealing, then they buy guns, next thing they do is armed robbery, it is like a snowball, it only gets bigger. Some die, others are imprisoned.* (Interview – Ceilândia, school, gangs/crews, male, 15/19 years old)

When they talk about the existence of gangs in their towns, the young refer not only to graffiti gangs, but also to gangs of car robbers, of bank robbers, of swindlers, of drug dealers: "There are all kinds of people". Besides being of varied kinds, the gangs are represented in different towns: "They spread everywhere. There is the ... from Ceilândia, Samambaia, Taguatinga."

These perceptions are shared by the youths who constituted the home sample (Chart 3.1), to whom there are various kinds of gangs in their town, stressing the ones of robbers (19.5%), of graffiti (16.2%), of drug dealers (8.8%) and the gangs known by acronyms (8.6%)[14] However, a significant

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percentage of the youths (21.4%) affirmed that they don't know the gangs from their towns.

These answers, however, express emphasis of perceptions and representations of the respondents, for the complexity of the phenomenon does not allow us to make strict characterizations.

In fact, in the statements of the focused groups, it becomes very clear that the gangs not always dedicate themselves exclusively to one activity, and that not all of their members share the same practices. For example, a member of a graffiti gang may also be a robber and thief at the same time, although not all members of his gang rob or steal.

There are groups who dedicate themselves to graffiti only. However, choosing to be a graffiter only may be seen as something to be discriminated for, because the person can be considered a coward, lacking cunning or "attitude". There are those who spread graffiti only for fun, "to fool around", and they buy the spray can with the money they get from their families. Given the playful and adventurous character of their activities, the graffiti gangs are not respected by the ones who trespass the limits of legality and assume criminal lifestyles. To the latter, the graffiti gangs are considered "comedy", people who are admired only by their companions: "The guys are famous among the gangs there. They are seen as vandals by the society and as criminals by the police."

Chart 3.1: kinds of existing gangs / Federal District – 1999

Kinds	Number	%
Gangs of Robbers	220	19.5
Graffiti Gangs	183	16.2
Gangs of Drugs	99	8.8
Gangs using acronyms	97	8.6
Gangs of "Quadras"	95	8.4
Gangs of Killers	51	4.5
Gangs of All Kinds	56	5.0
Crews	85	7.5
Does not know/Does not remember	241	21.4
Total	1127	100.0

Source: UNESCO, Research Gangs and crews in the Federal District, 1999.
Note: each respondent may check more than one kind of gang.

Perception and Self-Identification with Gangs and Crews

The groups mentioned by the respondents are, most of the times, called as gangs or crews, but they can be also sometimes identified by the name only – they are "named crews".[15] Usually, the names of these groups either have rebellious connotations or refer to the devil, to courage – "Destemidos Contra Atacam" [The Fearless Strike Back]; "Anjos Satânicos da Terra" [Satanic Angels of the Earth]; "Unidos do Inferno" [United from Hell]; "Grafiteiros Sem Lei" [Outlaw Graffiti] – or to the district they live in: "Vale do Amanhecer", "Pombal", "Caveiral".

Although the terms "gang" and "crew" are almost always used indistinctly, curiously the youths, in some groups of respondents,– even the ones who are open practitioners of transgressions and offenses – made a point in differentiating both terms, stating that they don't consider their group as a gang. According to them, making use of the term "gang" is a way of discriminating, labeling, and associating them to violence, to "bad thing".

In the youths's perception, "gang" is a strong term, "they are professional killers", "a mafia", and for this reason they prefer the term "crew", which is defined as a group of friends who get together to have fun, to "fool around", being always ready to protect and defend each other: "Whatever happens to one, happens to all."

Chart 3.1 – Who are they?

Interview – school, street gangs/crews, rappers

Gang is only talked about by the reporters, really, everything to them is gang. It is the crew, the "intimates". This gang thing doesn't exist for us, it is only crew and "intimate". Gang is television, newspapers. Gang is the "Comando Vermelho" [Red Command].

The police catches one or two armed people and they say it's a gang.

A group is gathered over there, and people think it's a gang. People who don't live with this think it's a gang. If you gather a bunch of friends, people look and see only shady characters, they think it's a gang. Maybe it's only pals, only friends.

However, there are those who, on one hand, criticize the use of the term "gang" for its derogative and stigmatizing aspect, but on the other hand, affirm it is even interesting that they are seen as gangs, because they gain the

respect of every one, and they are more feared. One aspect is clear and agreed on in the youth's view: to them, "gang" is a general term the media and the police use to refer to groups of young people as a whole.

Characterization of Gang Members

In the home sample, it has appeared a low percentage of young people who have assumed being a gang member at present (1.1%).[17] This number increases to 9.6% when it refers to those who had been part of a gang. Adding the ones who are presently involved with gangs and the ones who did that in the past, the proportion reaches 10.7% of the respondents.

It is important to call attention to some of the quantitative results of the research. The analysis of the data concerning death or violence operates, in general, with relatively low magnitudes, often calculated to groups of 100,000 inhabitants. According to the estimate of IBGE [Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics], in 1998, there were approximately 435 thousand young people, from ages 15 to 24, in the Federal District. This means, for example, that when it is registered that only 1.1% of the respondents affirmed they were part of gangs, this percentage corresponds to approximately 4,800 people involved with these juvenile associations at the present. When it is observed, based on the answers from the home sample, that 9.6% had already been part of gangs, this means that 42,000 young people share a process of socialization in which the culture of transgression and violence, and an alternative legitimacy, represent a relevant component.

It is in Ceilândia that a greater number of young people presently or previously involved with gangs appear (12.3%), comparing to Samambaia (8.9%) and to Planaltina (7.8%). [17]

How to characterize the young who have experienced or are presently experiencing the situation of being gang members?

The data examined in this section suggest relevant distinctions between those involved with gangs and the other ones, as it is observed below.

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[17] This inexpressive number obtained in the present study may have resulted from the way the question had been presented, which referred to the word "gang" in the questionnaire and which had been partially rejected by the focused groups, as it is seen above. It may also be due to the, let us say, informal aspect of the internal structure of many gangs, which leads their members to define themselves as crews.

Graph 3.1: Characterization of the young according to their involvement with gangs / Federal District – 1999.

	■ Involved with gangs	□ Not involved with gangs
Work		
Have work experience	16%	5%
Have formal work documentation	20.6%	30.6%
Are presently employed	34.5%	31.2%
Education		
Ist to 4th Grades	7.8%	7.6%
5th to 6th Grades	54.3%	47.2%
Secondary School	36.3%	43.3%
Are presently attending school	54.3%	61.6%
Family		
Live with both parents	38%	52%
Age		
From 15 to 17 years old	51%	41%
Sex		
Male	60.5%	45%
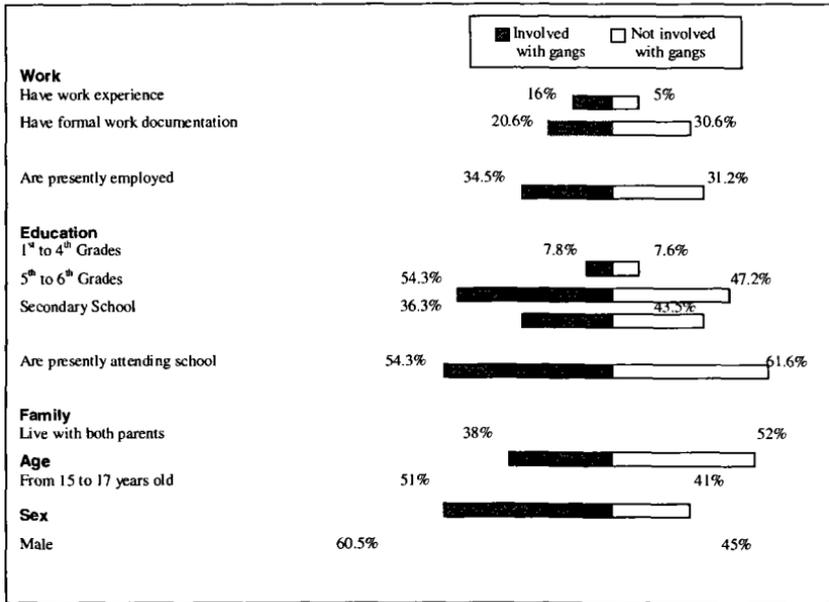
Source: UNESCO. Research Gangs and crews in the Federal District, 1999.

The majority is male, although it is surprising the great number of females (39,5%). Great part is between 15 and 17 years old and do not live with their parents. Although they are not the great majority, the ones who have already worked and those who are presently working, especially engaged in odd jobs, are numerous. The ones who were in school are less numerous, and their educational background is much lower in comparison to that of the other young people.

Thus, contrarily to what is thought, the biggest percentage of gang members – in the present or in the recent past – does not correspond to those people who are totally idle, who do not work or study. There are 27.2% of people in this situation. Even so, this percentage is superior to that registered among the youths who have never been part of gangs: 20,9%.

Despite the necessity of being careful when drawing conclusions, due to the small number of cases of gang members in the sample, these data allow the suggestion that keeping the young in school may represent a significant protective measure against the involvement with gangs, much more relevant

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than having a job, since the percentage of the youths who are involved with gangs and are presently employed is bigger.

Graph 3.2: Kind of Activity / Federal District – 1999.
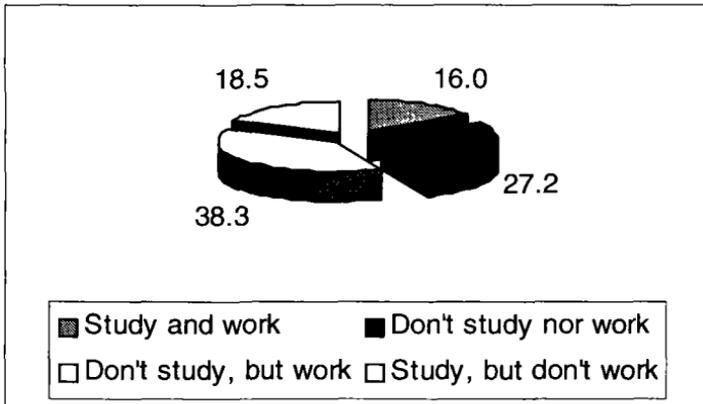
However, it is important to point out that numerous young people who are gang members are also regular students in the schools of the towns studied. This suggests that, although being in school may protect the young against the involvement with gangs, this fact alone is not strong enough to avoid them from being affiliated to gangs, even within the school walls.

On the other hand, the data on education and level of instruction, and the ones on kinds of activities and the professional status of the youths involved with gangs, suggest that there is a narrowing of rights and opportunities of this group, typical of environments and processes of exclusion, and this narrowing may be inducing the youths to join alternative associations, characterized by violence and transgression.

It is pertinent to ask how these young people elaborate their experiences in the different features of sociability. When asked to choose the most important of these features to their lives – family, friends, school/education or work – , the youths offered new and relevant hints to the characterization of gangs. As it can be observed in Graph 3.3, although family appears as the most important dimension to the majority, within the gang members, the percentage of the ones who have mentioned the family is smaller (75%) than that of the not involved with gangs (89%).

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Graph 3.3: Valorization of social features according to the involvement with gangs / Federal District – 1999.

☐ Involved with gangs   ☐ Not involved with gangs

Family   75%   89%

Friends   9%   2%

School   7%   5%

Work   9%   4%
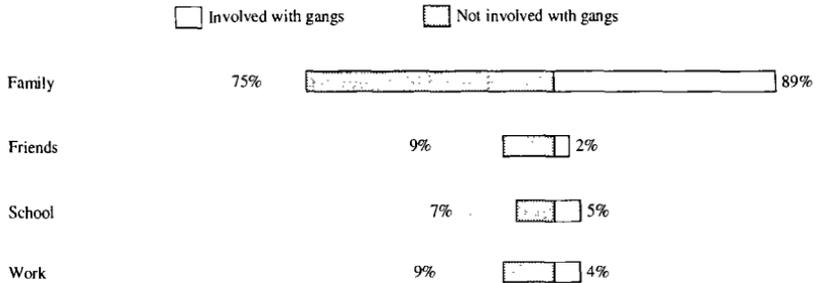
Source: UNESCO, Research Gangs and Crews in the Federal District – 1999.

Also significant are the differences between the two groups when the youths were asked about the most important things in life.

Compared to the others, the gang members are the ones who less frequently indicate as important: being healthy, enjoying life and being happy. Regarding the last item, it calls attention the great difference between the two groups, since the ones not involved with gangs, who mentioned "being happy", represent a percentage that is almost three times bigger than the first group's.

Another figure can facilitate the understanding of this graph. When asked about the presence of violence in their families, 37% of the gang members gave an affirmative answer, against the 22.6% of the non-members.

Graph 3.4: Valorization of the most important things in life, according to the involvement with gangs / Federal District – 1999.

▨ Involved with gangs   ☐ Not involved with gangs

Being healthy   51.9%   61%

Enjoying life   43.8%   50%

Having money   43.3%   24%

Being loved   45%   37.3%

Starting a family   34.6%%   26.2%

Having education   28.6%   29.9%

Having a profession   22.9%   25.7%

Having friends   16.7%   17.1%

Being happy   8.7%   24.1%

Source: UNESCO, Research Gangs and Crews in the Federal District, 1999.

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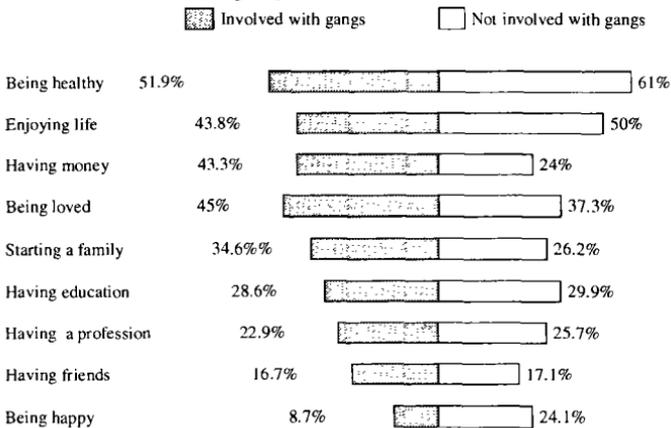
Graph 3.5: Presence of violence in the family according to the involvement with gangs / Federal District –1999.

| Involved with gangs | Not involved with gangs |
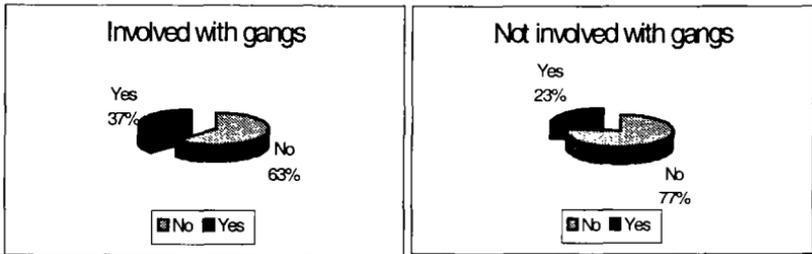
Source: UNESCO, Research Gangs and Crews in the Federal District, 1999.

Attitudes Towards and Involvement with Violence

Would there be any distinction of attitudes towards violence between this universe of young people and that from the home sample, who said they have never been involved with gangs? The data presented in Graph 3.6 illustrate that the differences exist and are relevant.

Graph 3.6: Perception of violence in the attitudes and situations according to the involvement with gangs / Federal District – 1999.

Involved with gangs   Not involved with gangs

Fighting 85.6%	90.8%
Being sexually abused 85.6%	87.5%%
Carrying guns 82.9%	87.5%
Being persecuted by the police 72,3%	78.6%
Quarreling 67.7%	76.8%
Graffiting 67.9 %	81%
Being stared at 57.8 %	74.2%
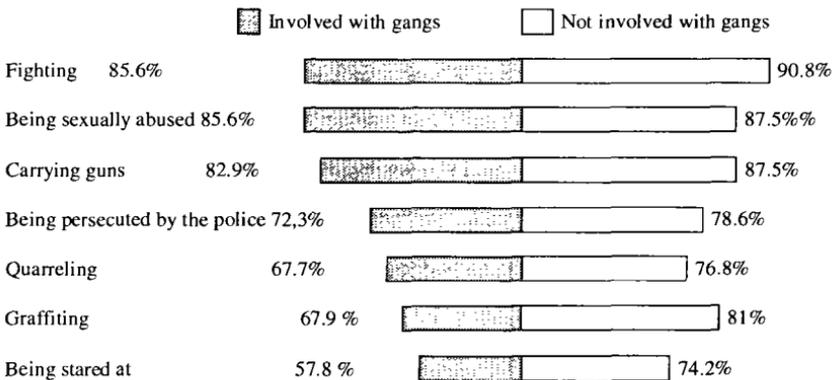
Source: UNESCO, Research Gangs and Crews in the Federal District, 1999.

The violent situations and attitudes which the youths were asked about – especially the carrying of guns, the graffiting, being stared at by a stranger, the fighting –, are usually perceived as having less violent potential for those who have already been gang members, or are gang members at the present.

The examining of the justifications for the violent acts also indicates that the gang members are more tolerant about violence. Graph 3.7 shows that, concerning the legitimating of violent acts, the gang members are persistently more likely to justify the violent acts than the other youths.

Three observations are pertinent. First, the two groups assume equivalent attitudes of disapproving of sexual abuse. Second, the big difference in percentage between the two groups refers to a symbolic attitude, that is to say, "to demand respect and admiration", in relation to which 48% of the gang members consider violence something justifiable, against 35% of the other youths. Third, although it had been noticed that "being stared at by a stranger" is less frequently indicated as a violent situation by the gang members than by the other young people, those who consider this a justified reason to commit violence are more numerous in the first group.

These results, however, should not obscure a very important fact: although gang members seem to be more insensitive to violence, and they justify the violent acts more easily than the other young people do, in both groups the percentage obtained is extremely high.

Maybe due to their more tolerant character in relation to violent acts, the gang members register a closer personal relationship with violent situations than the other young people.

As the data presented in Graph 3.7, except for what refers to sexual abuse, the percentage of involvement in violent situations is always higher among the gang members, when compared to the other people.

It is important to meditate on the meaning of these data on attitude. Why are gang members, or ex-gang members, less sensitive towards violence? Why do they justify so immediately the use of violence in situations apparently trivial, such as "being stared at" and "demanding respect and admiration"?

The answers to both questions may be in the phenomenon persistently indicated in this research. The social exclusion make individuals' self-esteem fragile, bringing tragic results especially to the young, since they are going through a period of personality formation. The lack of protection and public security in their neighborhood turns violence into something banal and make them especially vulnerable to threats and risks at the same time. The institutions responsible for their protection are inoperative and this causes the youths to feel they have to defend themselves, that they are left on their

own devices, which are scarce and precarious. The certification that they are not actual citizens, and that they do not have access to opportunities and to protection, ends up eroding all sense of social solidarity, in a way that almost everything justifies the violent response.

Graph 3.7: Personal engagement in violent situations according the involvement with gangs / Federal District – 1999.

Involved with gangs   Not involved with gangs

Frisk	65%		31%
Physical aggression	42%		11%
Robberies/mugging	26%		10%
Fights over lovers	23%		7%
Fights over drugs	11%		
Fights in traffic jams	7%		4%
Sexual aggression	1%		1%
Homicides	1%		
Other problems with the police	17%		2%
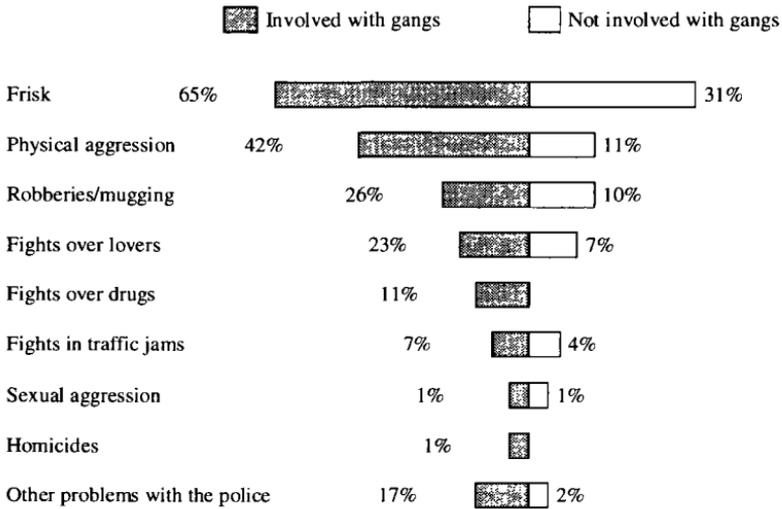
Source: UNESCO, Research Gangs and Crews in the Federal District, 1999.

The Formation and Organization of Gangs

Once identified the specific aspects of the gang members, it is important now to examine the characteristics of these associations. Usually, gangs/ crews appear in a non-deliberate way. They are formed by groups of friends within the blocks: "A group of people, like friends of the same neighborhood, of the same street. You say you're into forming a crew, make up a name for it, people already show interest." Also in the schools, the ones who consider themselves smarter, more street-wise, more "rats", get together. In fact, there is a certain random aspect regarding the formation of these groups. Some young people gather to defend a threatened or attacked friend. This person, in turn, gathers other friends seeking revenge, and for a moment, all of them share the same feeling and the same objective. However, in this game, complicity and friendship become more solid, originating a nearly fraternal rela-

tionship, and the group ends up consolidated, showing some aspects of organization.

In this aspect, it calls attention to the fact that one of the characteristics of graffiti gangs is having the names, nicknames, addresses and telephone numbers of all the members registered. In some cases, even the drawing style of each member is registered, and they dress all alike, choosing the same outfit style, the same color for caps and T-shirts. They create their own language, with differentiated slang and greeting words.

These groups may even have more than fifty members. A leader who has been interviewed stated that he has a list with more than three hundred people supposedly affiliated. The registration is made on the computer, and only the gang leaders have access to it, for fear of it ending up with the police.[18]

According to the literature, the reason why the youths – both men and women – join gangs is the search for answers to their basic human needs, such as the feeling of belonging, of identity, self-esteem and protection, and the gang seems to be the solution to their problems in the short term.

Indeed, some youths call attention to the fact that what mostly characterizes the gangs are the strong ties which bind their members together, protecting and helping each other, fighting against each other's enemies. "It's kind of a family". It is important to stress the meaning of their making use of a word which belongs to a typically private category – the family – for this would be the safe and reliable place in an unpredictable and hostile social environment, as it was mentioned before.

Being so, gangs attract affiliates for they constitute ties of solidarity and are characterized for shared value codes, from which the individuals build up collective identities which deny/reject the inequality of the broader social context which they are part of. Thus, it is possible to speculate that the Federal District offers a particularly favorable environment for this kind of association, both due to the lack of social root faced by its population, and to the isolating and asymmetrical aspect of the power relationships which characterizes its social environment.

The youths of the focused groups explain and justify their joining the gangs because they don't have anything else to do, because they feel excluded and don't have money. As a gang member, the youths imagine they will have the opportunity to get money easily, as well as the possibility of becoming popular and famous.

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[18] In some cities, the police has a list of gang members, obtained through their own investigations.

Also, there are those who join gangs to "boast about, humiliate the others" and to feel protected against the other gangs. "Many people join it because they don't feel safe. The guy is passing by, then a brat comes, 'cleans' him and grabs his stuff. Then he goes there, calls his crew and goes after the guy."

As it is shown in Graph 3.8, in the home sample the majority of people says there is no advantage of being part of a gang (55.1%), and 8.1% says they don't know what advantage there could be. Although not represented in the Graph, the data obtained indicate a slight difference of perceptions according to the sex, for the female group (58.7%) is superior to the male one (51%) in relation to the idea that there is no advantage of being a gang member. Despite this majority, the relevant information, in this case, is that more than one third of the respondents (36.8%) believes there must be some kind of advantage of being a gang member. Which advantages would these be?

Graph 3.8: Perception of the advantages of being a gang member. Federal District, 1999.
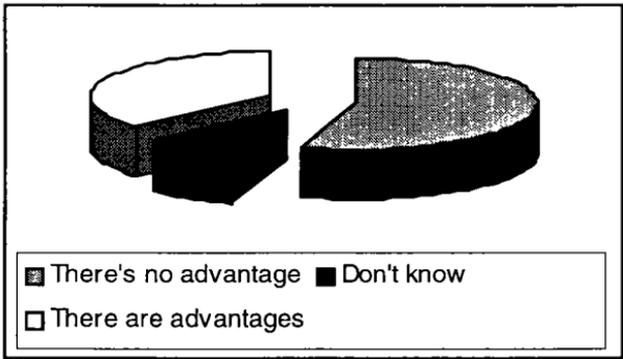
When examining the answers given by gang members to the same question, the percentage obtained constitutes a significant list of reasons. The indications that the advantage is "being respected" reach 22%. The second benefit indicated is "being protected" (16.2%). If "having a gun" – which can be used for protection – is added to the latter, then the percentage increases to 38.2%. Less than half of this percentage corresponds to the practice of violent or criminal activities: taking part in fights, having access to drugs, stealing and killing, represent 18.7%. If financial benefits are added to these, the percentage is still low: 24.6%. The social advantages (having friends, being

popular, being strong, and getting girls) correspond to 14.2%. The playful and freeing aspect of belonging to a gang – indicating that the advantage is being able to do what they want to, having fun – added to the answers that the most important advantage is graffiting, is equivalent to 11%. When combining the social advantages and the leisure ones, the result is 25%.

Hence, the qualitative and quantitative outputs show that the young people join gangs first to satisfy their human needs of being respected and safe, possibly due to the exclusion they are victims of and to their precarious living conditions. Besides this, they seek sociability and solidarity, as well as leisure opportunities. However, one cannot omit the fact that there are significant numbers of young people to whom the main benefit of being a gang member is the practice of illicit acts.

Joining, Staying in and Leaving Gangs

Joining and staying in gangs follow value codes, often associated with certain ritualistic activities: courage, strength, resistance, loyalty to the group and mercilessness to the outsiders and enemies, obedience to the leader and to the group's rules, such as the "silence code", being cunning, having a leadership ability. It is important to observe that these values are essential parts for the constitution of a certain kind of "order" designed to make the members' behavior predictable and reliable.

In fact, in order to become a gang member, a person may have to undertake certain obligations and be submitted to many tests, or "initiation rituals", so as to show his commitment to this values code. The young pay "tolls", that is, give the gang money, even if they have to steal it from the family. Or they have to give the gang drinks, spray cans, a bicycle, fashionable clothes: shorts by *Ciclone*, T-shirts by *Pier,* flip-flops by *Kenner.* Or they practice Russian roulette and are "baptized", being beaten and forced to pass through a "punishment row":

> *The baptism was the "punishment row", when the guy is beaten with a 38 gun, is punched in the face – if you give up, if you fall on the floor, the guys would kick you (...). There was another plan: the guys would say "ass in the edge", the guy would grab you by the arm, by the leg, find an edge and force you against it.* (Individual interview with a rapper, ex-member of a graffiti gang – Riacho Fundo, male, 19 years old)

One of the purposes of these physical tortures is to see if the youths will bear being beaten up without denouncing anyone to anybody, in case they are caught by the police. There are occasions when they go through the

so-called blood pacts, as a proof of loyalty to the group. The youths flagellate themselves, scratch their bodies, cut themselves and burn themselves with cigarettes. Killing, fighting, challenging and accepting challenges, shooting somebody, stealing and drinking without limit may also be part of the initiation rituals.

The so called "jerk, moron, sissy" don't even have the right to go through these tests – "We don't want Big Jerk in our group" – and the common opinion of the gang members is that the ones who don't join gangs are "jerks, morons, sissies". There are those not submitted to the rituals because they had already given proof of their courage, strength and bravery; or because they are famous or are "wild", "like a rock", or have "attitude".

In the home sample, the greatest part (30%) of the youths affirmed not knowing what is necessary to do to join a gang. However, 28.2% stated that it is necessary to prove their strength, and 13.7% indicated friendship relationships, leadership ability and obedience to the leader – giving support to what had been said by the focused groups.

As it happens when joining a gang, there are rules to be kept in one as well: not denouncing the fellows, observing the silence code – "Here the slum code rules" –, not creating too much confusion, not being afraid, "having attitude", not running away from difficult situations, "not making it easy on anyone".

According to these youths, in the outskirts, for anyone to prove he's a person "of attitude", to be respected and admired, it is necessary to accept challenges, to take revenge, not to be silly or too good – "the bro who makes it easy on people is an easy prey" –, be a smartass when dealing with conflicts:

> In the outskirts, to have some consideration you have to steal, kill, be rude, you have to get what the others pay for. You can't let anyone call you a joke, and can't let anyone take anything from you. (Interview – Samambaia, school, gangs/crews, male/female, 14/16 yeas old)

To carry a gun is a reason to be respected and "considered" by the buddies and by the girls, who feel protected by the youths and "like the guys who have guns". To be arrested may represent a way of getting respect, of showing status and bravery. Another way of causing people to fear and respect you is by means of the importance and the number of homicides committed: "To be respected you have to come like this, knock somebody down and kill them. Then nobody criticizes you." [19]

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[19] The notions of honor and respect found among the youths in the outskirts of Brasília coincide a great deal with those observed by Zaluar (1994a) among the youths from Cidade de Deus.

Usually, when a young person joins a gang, his leaving it is very difficult. The ones who want to leave are not respected. They may suffer physical punishment or may have to pay for his leaving to his fellows. In the interviews, it appeared cases in which the ex-members had to move to another house and to another town after having left their gangs:

> For the guy to leave like this, he has to spend more than ten years without showing up here. (Interview – Planaltina, school, gangs/crews, male, 17/20 years old)
> ... they are after me. I have to live always on the run. It is from Planaltina to Ceilândia, to Samambaia. Wherever I go, it seems I attract them. (Interview – Planaltina, school, gangs/crews, male/female, 14/16 years old)

However, the obstacles imposed on a member to leave a gang are not the same in all situations. They can vary due to the kind of gang or to the image of the individual. For example, it is easier to leave the graffiti gangs than other gangs: "... they're not going to beat you, to say you're dead. This doesn't exist in our gang." In cases when the person wanting to withdraw is very respected and "considered", it is only necessary to explain the reason for it and inform about his leaving. There are also cases of youths who, when arrested, immediately leave the gang to protect the group from the police, for the always-existing fear of having to reveal their friends' names.

According to the quantitative data, there is no significant variation, among the towns, in relation to the evaluation of the difficulty in leaving a gang. In general, the majority considers it being a question of will and strength. However, leaving a gang is considered more difficult for the girls than for the boys.

According to the youths of the home sample, leaving a gang is difficult when there is persecution (41.8%). But those also confirm the idea of gangs as an environment of protection and complicity, for 34% think that the obstacle lies on the difficulty in getting apart from the friends. It is worthy stating, however, that there are those (14.5%) who say that once in a gang, it is impossible to leave.

Table 3.2: Reasons for leaving a gang
Federal District – 1999.

Reasons	Number	%
Wishes a better life	362	44.7
Repentance and tiredness of violence	260	32.1
Feeling threatened	79	9.8
Pressure and advice from friends and family known by acronyms	29	3.4
Doesn't know	37	4.6
Other	33	4.1
Total	799	100.0

Source: UNESCO. Research Gangs and Crews in the Federal District, 1999.

The wish of a better life, according to the data from the home sample, is the main reason which leads the youths to abandon a gang (44.7%), followed by repentance, tiredness of violence (32.1%) and the feeling of being threatened (9.8%). Apparently, family and friends have little influence on these decisions (3.4%).

The motives shown above are consistent to those mentioned in the focused groups. However, in the latter, other reasons have appeared: being in the target of other gangs, being "threatened", being under death threat, reaching adult age, joining a religious group. Some people interviewed said they had left the group because they didn't see any future there, they had expenses buying drugs; others affirmed they didn't want to run the risk of being arrested, being shot, or feared becoming too greedy and real criminals:

> *You start stealing small things. Then you want something else. You see the profit becoming bigger but you are falling in a trap. You will have more money to buy a pair of shorts, a shirt, drugs and you are killing yourself. Soon you will be down and the cops will get closer to you.* (Interview – Samambaia, school, gangs/crews, male, 15/18 years old)

The Leadership Relations

Upon their formation, gangs express a leadership feature: they are based on a leader's ruling capacity. As it was mentioned by a significant percentage of youths in the home sample, one of the conditions to join a gang is being a leader or being able to obey one. To become a leader, it is necessary for the youth to have given the group proof of courage – "To have beaten or killed someone". A leader has to be a hardworking and sympathetic person as well.

The role of a leader is directing the group, "the buddies", and organizing the participation: arranging meetings, getting guns, and collecting funds for the members' necessities. He has to convene the group members to fight in situations of conflict with rival groups, be present in all fights, protect the group, and "cheer the crew up", "not to let them cool off". The leader is considered a "father" who doesn't let anything bad happen to the group, or anything go wrong with them. In the case of graffiti gangs, it is the leader who decides on which places to be graffited safely. The gang leader is always respected, admired and is often surrounded by "self-interested" people: "You go to one direction, they go after you"; "You get the hottest chicks".

There is another very important aspect concerning leadership: a leader, regardless of the kind of gang, is always under observation and, the more famous he gets, the more in danger he becomes, because he is "a marked man" to the other groups:

> *When the guy gets very famous, his death is close. That's why I didn't get to take the leadership of (...), the end of it is the Campo da Esperança, the wheelchair or the Papuda* [20] (Individual Interview with a rapper, ex-member of a graffiti gang – Riacho Fundo, male, 19 years old)
> *... any street that I pass by, everybody knows about it. If I come and scratch my head, everybody talks about it. I can't do anything, not a movement. It's all known in the whole town.* (Individual interview with a leader of a graffiti gang – Ceilândia, streets, male, 19 years old)

Usually, the group chooses a leader, but, when nominating a substitute, the present leader's word is very important. The new leader has to have a lot of "attitude and authority", courage, "he can't make it easy on anyone", he has to be smarter, take more risks, be totally reliable and has to guarantee the group's protection in any situation: "a bro told me to get out and I said: 'I'm not going, I have to stay here because I have to cover the other bros.'"

According to the leaders interviewed, the fact of completing 18 years old is crucial when deciding on quitting the leadership, mainly because the Children and Adolescents Statute will not protect them. After completing 18 years old, if the person is denounced and caught by the police, he runs the risk of being convicted for gang formation: "(...) then he completed 18 and didn't want it anymore, then it went on until I got to be leader"; "There comes a time when you can't be a leader anymore, it gotta be a minor."

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[20] Campo da Esperança is the cemetery in the Plano Piloto, Brasília, and Papuda is the prison of the Federal District.

When the person quits the leadership – due to age, to marriage or because he "quieted down" –, he is no longer member of the group, but is still friends with his old fellows. Even the older ones, married and with children, still visit their friends from the gang: "(the ex-leader) still hangs out with us"; "You'll be ruled by another leader and will not like it, you stick around with friends only, as if you were their colleagues".

The Activities of Gangs

The youths affirmed that gangs usually meet to discuss certain subjects, to buy spray cans, guns and other necessary things, to do some graffiting, to fight against the other gangs/crews. They also meet to steal cars, automobile parts and accessories, to rob gas stations, bakeries, buses, trucks loaded with drinks, lottery shops, drugstores, small markets, ice cream parlors, bars, snack bars, houses and schools.

Graffiting is seen as an option when there is nothing else to do, it is considered fun, an adventure full of emotions because it implies facing danger, escaping from the police. It is good to get the adrenaline going and it is addicting like a drug:

> *The thing is the danger. The thing is seeing only the car lights in a distance, throw away the spray can, like inside a house, and run away. Then you get far from the house, wait for the cops to go away, then you have to jump over the wall of the house to get the spray can back. Then when there's a dog inside, you have to run from the dog. Then it's even better to get the adrenaline going.* (Interview – Samambaia, school, gangs/crews, male, 14/16 years old)
> *It's like a drug: to try it and then quit is not fun. It's adrenaline going when you're graffiting, very crazy stuff. Because you choose the difficult place to do it. The most difficult places, the better the thrill, like graffiting the monuments. I'm gonna go graffiting that Cathedral...* (Interview – Ceilândia, streets, gangs/crews, male, 17/24 years old)

Being famous and renowned because of graffiting is something to be proud of and be respected for, and because of this, it is worthy running the risks. In some youths' opinion, the press stimulates the formation of graffiti gangs by giving importance to the subject. Having the name or the local of the graffiti published in the newspapers nourishes the pride and vainglory of the graffiti gangs even more.

Graffiting is seen as a great challenge, a dispute in which one has to be better than the other. The one who writes on the walls of difficult, high, never

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graffited places, "is like a model at a fashion show, everybody congratulates, shakes hands. It is a proof of attitude, of courage":

> *It is great, because you kinda go graffiting in Taguatinga, then a buddy passes by and gets to know that name there is yours and goes like: 'wow, that buddy is very crazy and stuff like that', you get famous. Then everybody knows me for that.* (Interview – Samambaia, school, gangs/crews, male, 14/16 years old)
>
> *You gotta go graffiting high places. It's like this: once, when I went graffiting the Riachuelo, in Taguatinga, next to the 2nd Police Station, I wrote: 'above X only God'. Then the guy went up there and put: 'I am God', signed: such and such. And in the little spot left, he even put: 'above me only God'. The guy was better than I was.* (Interview with rappers – Ceilândia, male, 18/21 years old)

As it has been said, the gangs do not meet only to go graffiting. The meetings have other purposes – to rob and steal is one of them. In general, small groups of 3 or 4 people, at the most, are responsible for the robbery, and it is usual to have a regular partnership. Especially with those robberies, which will not give them much money, they prefer to go in small groups: "Only three rob, or the money will not be enough. They steal, and it's thirty-five bucks, sharing it with five?" There are situations when the initiative is individual, for example, when the youths need to make ends meet or when they are "broke":

> *The shoes are old, then when they're worn out, we go there again. We go get it from who has it, from who can buy another one. We can't, so we gotta get it (...) we go there and ask, 'let me see your Kenner – brand of flip-flops by Redley Store.* (Interview – Samambaia, school, gangs/crews, male/female, 14/16 years old)

Besides this, the robberies may be ordered: "I say to the smartasses of the block: 'get something for me', if I ask them, they give me." Some youths say they only take small items, such as watches, caps, wallets, and bicycles. Big events like concerts and "Micarecandanga" [Carnival in August] are favorable to thefts, which normally do not have a determined place or time to happen:

> *The biggest fun is when there's Micarecandanga. To them it's a mall. They go, and when they come back, there are guys with eight watches, some guys go bare foot and come back with brand new sneakers, shorts, shirt, and money. They only go there to ' filch', really.* (Individual interview with a rapper, ex-member of a graffiti gang – Riacho Fundo, male, 19 years old)

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However, there are those who believe it is unworthy to run big risks to steal small items. They say it is preferable to go after "bigger things" because if they are caught, they will be punished the same way, and besides, the prisoners will despise them:

> It's not worthy making a fuss because of ten bucks. If I go out to steal something, I steal a car, if I don't get caught with the money from the car, I get an even better gun. Bicycle isn't a good thing, If I get caught, I don't wanna it to happen because of that. If you're inside a cell because of any theft, you get more beaten inside than by the cops. (Interview with leaders of a graffiti gang– Samambaia, school, male, 18 years old)

Inside the gangs, there is a specification concerning the robberies and thefts. Some steal cars and rob houses more often than others, who rob supermarkets, bakeries, trucks loaded with drinks, buses, banks, gas stations, and the like. The money from robberies and thefts is, in general, spent on clothes, tennis shoes, drinks, drugs, and guns, on going out to shows and to the movies. The money is always used by the individual or individuals that have undertaken the robberies, not being necessary to hand it to the gang. Sometimes, when the profit is high, the money is spent on a bigger purchase of drugs, which makes it possible for them to start a "drug den".

Violence may or may not be used against the victims of thefts and robberies. Some youths state they only rob in groups, because "... one holds the guy and the others beat him up. Really beat up, then if the guy is tough, doesn't want to give it up, we take it by force, beat him up, without mercy". Some say that, at first, when they go out to rob, there is no intention of making use of force or killing. A gun or a threat would be enough to immobilize the victim. When this victim reacts, however, the situation is inverted and some youths confess being "forced" to use violence:

> *'If you say something, start to complain, the first thing you're gonna have is a slap on your face to be quiet. If it doesn't help, we're gonna kick your ...' There are people who make a scene, can't control their feelings and end up being killed because of themselves.* (Individual Interview with a rapper, ex-member of a graffiti gang – Riacho Fundo, male, 19 years old)

Some youths interviewed affirmed that the robberies and thefts are regulated by a code, such as not raping, not stealing from the elderly, not stealing from a family man, from a worker, from close relatives:

> *What's the point of stealing from a family man, we think about the parents, too. How's it gonna be arriving at home and seeing that the*

father was mugged? That money my father gets isn't enough, we're gonna mug a father too? (Interview – Samambaia, school, gangs/crews, male/female, 14/16 years old)

Mainly among the younger ones, there is a "robinhoodian" ethics, stealing from the rich to give to the poor. However, it is preferable to mug "*bodinhos*" or people who have money:

'Bodinho' has money, gets allowance. We don't have any f* allowance. (Interview – Samambaia, school, gangs/crews, male/female, 14/16 years old)

Stealing from someone who has money. We gotta steal from the ones who have money, who have conditions to buy another thing, replace it. (Interview – Samambaia, school, gangs/crews, male, 14/16 years old)

Stealing and robbing within the own environment is considered, by some youths interviewed, a very serious mistake: "Stealing here in Samambaia, no, I'm gonna steal in Taguatinga, in these places there's only '*bodinhos*', I'm not gonna steal from people here."

Although there is a complete regulation, the rules are broken, occurring thefts of caps, shoes, bicycles and other small objects at the entrance of schools, where the youths study, and in their neighborhood. In order not to be recognized, "we cover our face with our caps". In one of the groups interviewed, the respondents declared that, besides being accustomed to robbing in their own neighborhood, their victims are usually workers, for they know the employees' pay day, and not even the ones who earn the "Bolsa Escola" [government financial aid for parents who keep their young children in school] are spared.

In the opinion of many people interviewed, the youths manipulate and take advantage of the minors in order to commit the crimes and offenses mentioned above. All of them have already heard about the law which protects minors and they know that, if arrested, underage people cannot be kept in jail for more than three years: "Oh, they think like this, 'If I do this, if I shoot somebody, I'm only forced to go to the Police Station, get imprisoned at the DCA [Children and Adolescents Police Station - CAPS] and then I leave'". For this reason, the age of 18 is a crucial one, it is a limit which marks out attitudes, viewpoints, differentiated behaviors. Even the ways of transgressing and committing crimes are reconsidered: "When you become 18, then you gotta be a real smarty, even smarter than the police."

Minors are manipulated by young adults, being used as shields in robberies and thefts. The younger ones take care of the guns and help the older

escape. They also assume responsibility for the crimes when taken to the police:

He is smart because he uses a minor, because the punishment for minors is shorter.

In the streets, the guys make 9-year-old boys to carry guns. Usually minors don't stay in prison. When the guy needs a child, he gives him guns, drugs, everything. They make the minor carry on with everything. (Interview – Ceilândia, school, gangs/crews, male, 15/19 years old)

Fear, Rivalries and Clashes Between Groups

Being or not part of gangs, some youths said they fear them and do their best to protect themselves: some stay home, others avoid gathering friends in a public place, and there are those who carry guns. The ones who do not give going out up prefer to do it always accompanied by their friends. The ideal number of people going out together is three or four. More than this can call the policemen's attention: "A crew is no good because of the police, because they see lots of you, you can be having fun, but they come to beat you." The danger of going out alone is being provoked and mugged, thus going out in groups is always safer:

You alone are more scared, you always take somebody with you, 'cos then you can defend yourself. (Interview – Samambaia, school, gangs/ crews, male, 15/18 years old)

Alone you don't have attitude, don't have courage of doing (...). When I'm alone it's like I'm only one. I don't mess with anybody. I don't look at anybody, don't do anything. (Interview – Planaltina, school, gangs/crews, male/female, 14/16 years old)

In the home sample, half of the youths said they are afraid of gangs. The other half stated they do not fear them when inside their neighborhood. The main reasons for some to fear gangs are the violence (49.9%), the fact that the members are unknown (9.6%) and the existing rivalry (7.4%).

Planaltina is the city where most youths fear the gangs in their own neighborhood (52.6%), followed closely by Ceilândia (51.1%). These percentages are much higher than those registered in Samambaia, where 40.4% said they are afraid. When the answers are focused according to sex, it is observed that the girls who are afraid of gangs (58.3%) are more numerous than the boys (36.2%).

The conflict between groups, as mentioned before, is one of the reasons why the members gather together. When the conflict happens, they raise

money to buy guns and they choose those who are going to fight. The armed confrontations usually take place on the streets, in the bars, at the entrance of schools. However, the physical aggressions take place inside nightclubs, shows, parties and malls.

These conflicts make most part of the youths in the home sample seek protection, avoiding the fights (43.9%), whereas a very high percentage of youths said they do not go out of their houses (35.1%). The girls are majority when they say they stay home for fear of being involved in conflicts between gangs. Only 3.3% of the youths interviewed said they try to be friends with the gangs.

However, there are two aspects to be observed in these data. Despite the importance the youths give to family as an institution, it is not mentioned as protection against gangs. Moreover, mentioning the police as a protective force is insignificant; it is closely followed by joining another gang.

The reasons for the clashes among gangs/crews, according to the respondents, are innumerable: it can be a "simple look that the other person doesn't like", a bump, a rivalry among the crews, old disagreements, a revenge, a challenge, a provocation, a jibe, a dislike towards the other crew, the "stoned", the graffiti guy, the smartass, the people who "show off", who want to "boast about", an invasion of territory and women. The fights also happen over a cap, flip-flops, guns, drugs and drug dens. To write on another graffiti and to defend its signature can cause extreme conflicts: "In their crew there was one with the same name, it can't be. Then both gotta do something, fight for the name. The hot shot gets the name."

Table 3.3: Attitudes adopted by the youths to protect themselves against gangs. Federal District – 1999.

Attitude	Total %	Male %	Female %
Not getting involved with gangs	43.9	45.3	42.6
Avoiding going out of the house	35.1	28.3	40.9
Avoiding fights	7.1	8.5	5.9
Talking; being friends with gangs	3.3	4.1	2.6
Facing it; imposing respect	2.7	4.7	0.9
Not reacting, not doing anything	2.0	3.0	1.2
Other	2.0	2.2	1.9
Joining a church	1.9	2.2	1.6
Hanging out accompanied by friends	1.5	1.1	1.9
Denouncing to the police	0.4	0.5	0.2
Joining another gang	0.1	-	0.2

Source: UNESCO, Research Gangs and Crews in the Federal District, 1999,

Other reasons for the never ending gang warfare are revolt, ill-treatment by the family, search for trouble, intention to be "tough guys", who shoot others and are brave:

> *The boys are on the corner of the street, then a guy passes by at full speed and starts to shoot, and then the guy from my street starts to shoot too. Then everybody is shooting everybody.* (Interview – Planaltina, school, gangs/crews, male, 16/23 years old)

The gangs have certain areas in which they work and they delimit their territory. Defending their territory, their block and their neighborhood is one of the main motives for conflicts among gangs: "It's a fight among blocks. They come over here and shoot us, we go over there and shoot them"; "Each gang wants to be the best, the strongest and the most popular in the area". Thus, there are clear rules, which limit the access of gang members to certain areas. The logic of the territorial division established is not always easy for those outside this environment to understand, but the youths know exactly where they can and where they cannot go:

> *You can say it's delimited. Let's say it's the Block 114 and the 314, let's suppose that the guys from the 114 aren't friends with the ones from the 314, and the 114 is across from the 314. So, they can't cross the street. Why? Because there'll be a fight.* (Individual interview with a gang member – Samambaia, school, female, 16 years old)

When territories are invaded, the invading group is consisted of five or six people at first. The rest of the gang gathers "when there's shooting". The tactics is to get the enemy by surprise and the leader, who is the first to shoot at the air, gives the order to fire. After this, everybody starts to shoot: "They're shot in the arm, the leg, the stomach." The invaded group, in turn, usually responds to the shooting by shooting back:

> *They come from another block just to fool around in ours and we're gonna let it lay? We're gonna let them rule our block? This is absurd! They don't even live here and wanna come here and rule, but they don't rule anything here.* (Interview – Samambaia, school, gangs/crews, male/female, 14/16 years old)

When crossing or passing by a "rival" block, it is important to know a fundamental living code which establishes a rule among the young, that is, they cannot look too much, or "stare" at the others: "To stare is to risk. A guy you don't even know..." A daring look demands defense, because for a person to be respected it is necessary to show courage, "attitude", and accept the challenge. Therefore, a single stare may end up in a "war", with "domino effect": "Everybody killing everybody."

Interview – school and rappers

You're walking on a street, head down, and there's somebody staring at you. You look and the person comes yelling at you. A friend of mine was going to school and he looked at another guy and the guy asked: 'what's the matter with you? '

If you have your head down, they'll think you're a joke. They stare until you avoid their eyes.

If you look, they provoke: 'do you know anybody familiar? Is there any funny thing here? What are you laughing at? Are you under laughing gas?' If I looked at you for more than ten seconds, man, you were already like if I had shot you: 'why are you staring? '

In situations of challenge and conflict, some respondents said that the difference among the cities in the outskirts and the Plano Piloto lies in the fact that, in the latter, the youths make use of physical strength, whereas the others use guns, they substitute the strength for the bullets:

> *Here you pull a bad face to a guy and he comes and shoots you, he doesn't care. In the Plano Piloto this doesn't exist, it's fighting. (Interview – Samambaia, school, gangs/crews, male, 14/18 years old)*
> *There's no one-to-one fighting. It's shooting, really. The guy doesn't waste time, isn't heavily built, because of the drugs too.* (Individual interview with a rapper, ex-member of a graffiti gang – Riacho Fundo, male, 19 years old)
> *Today the fighting is only bang, bang...The only muscle used is the finger.* (Interview – Ceilândia, street, gangs/crews, male, 17/24 years old)
> *Here in this place there's no fight, only shots. The guy can have the same body structure, the same height, it doesn't matter. If he's stared, he shoots. It's like a duel when they meet. It's a duel.* (Interview – Planaltina, school, gangs/crews, male, 17/20 years old)

The youths refer to the fights and conflicts between gangs as a vicious circle, a never ending "war", in which many "buddies" have already died and from which only the smarter ones escape:

> *They come over here and riddle us with bullet holes, and then we go there and do the same. It's all death, it's all we talk about; they come over to look for trouble. Then we go there and it's like this all the time.* (Interview – Planaltina, school, gangs/crews, male, 16/23 years old)

The clashes are not interrupted even when some gang members are arrested: "There's always a guy's brother or friend who stays". The "escapers" from CAJE very often constitute an opportunity to start the conflict again

and take revenge. In this war, families must be spared, although this does not always happen.

The shootings which happen "almost every time, the wars, the clashes, the fights" between the groups make it "easy to be killed like flies" and it calls attention the relationship the young have with death. The youths interviewed often said they do not fear death, that they face it as a fatality that can happen at any time, regardless of the age, a risk they cannot control: "I'll have to die some day, then this guy only came to make it sooner, so my death has come, he came representing it."

In a group of eight people interviewed, six of them, with ages ranging from 14 to 16 years old, said they are death threatened. They explain that death is something inevitable, with a certain time and place to happen. They say they have already lived a lot and intensely: "If it's for us to die, it's OK, many things have already happened." And they say they only fear dying a very painful death, for example, due to a stab.

To some youths, not only dying is something natural, but killing too, as a way to defend themselves, something related to surviving, and it is necessary to be brave to do it. Killing somebody is not *a priori* considered a crime, according to the universal conception of justice. [21] In certain occasions, it is necessary to kill in order not to die, and the killing may bring the youths fame and give them respect.

Chart 3.3 – The Killing Act

Interview – school, gangs/crews in the streets, rappers, leaders of gangs of graffiters.

There's no such a thing as shooting just to scare them. Because if you don't kill the guy, he gets you and that's the end for you. When you're alone, nobody will have pity on you.

The first killing is really bad, 'cos you don't know what to do. Then you're OK and kill everything.

It's very easy to die here. And to kill too. I think I haven't killed anyone, I don't know. Never saw it... I shot the guy but I don't know if he died. He didn't fall to the ground, I think you die when you fall to the ground.

It's killing or dying. We gotta do what's needed anyway. You're either the victim or the killer. There's nothing you can do about it. The strongest survives.

You're looking at the guy. He's looking at you, and you're so stoned you don't know what you're doing. You kill without knowing it. You just see him looking at you and swearing at you. What's the only thing to do? Shoot him! It's over.

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21 In this aspect, we recall Alba Zaluar's research in Cidade de Deus. The act of killing, to the youths of that city, is not *a priori* judged as a crime, and the moral evaluation of killing depends, as it happens in Brasília, on who has been killed and on the circumstances in which the crime happened (Zaluar, 1994a).

Guns and Drugs

The use of guns - "the iron" - , is common among the young. Guns are easily bought and they circulate in the houses, schools and on the streets in a natural way:

It's easier to get guns than jobs.
A gun is like a candy, you can buy it anywhere.
It's easier to buy a gun than to find medicine. With a gun you can find medicine, without it, no way.
Our protection is God, but in quotes, our gun is our single instrument. (Interview – Planaltina, school, gangs/crews, 13/16 years old)

The person who does not have one, or used to have it,[22] borrows it from a "buddy":

It's very easy to get a gun here. Your friend has a gun: 'lend me 'cos I want to kill a pig over there. He called me a joke'. The friend gets the gun and goes there. (Interview – Samambaia, school, gangs/crews, male 15/19 years old)

Guns are used in armed robberies and are considered a "livelihood" to some people interviewed. In addition, carrying guns is seen as the only way for the youths to protect themselves from the fights, mugging, violence and war that are part of their daily lives: "The way things are now, you can't live unarmed (...) suddenly there comes a jerk, trying to make us silent. He starts to shoot, out of nothing". It is a means of defense, of keeping the enemy away: "It's not necessary to hang around with a crew." Some youths go to school carrying guns – "When you have conflicts with anyone, they come after you even at school" – and they like to show their "toys" to their friends, "to show them you're something". The interviews make it very clear that guns are an extremely valued object to the youths, because they give them confidence, respect and are indisputable sources of power: [23]

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[22] When the research was done, a chief of police informed that some time earlier a campaign had been made in order to disarm people, and maybe for this reason many of them declared they used to have guns, but not anymore.
[23] It was not possible to verify if the open purchase of guns by the youths altered the relations of power in the populations of the cities where the research was done. Zaluar's study in Cidade de Deus shows that the youths' carrying of guns has threatened the relations of power in that community, previously controlled by a rigid hierarchy among generations. By means of the purchase of guns, the youths started to impose their will on the adults of the neighborhood, who therefore had their authority shaken (Zaluar, 1994a).

> *The cops go there to hunt you, they search your house. If they find the
> gun, you're in deep trouble. That's why anyone who's done something
> can't have a gun in the house. A flagrante delicto is serious thing.*
> (Interview – Samambaia, school, gangs/crews, male, 15/19 years old)

The most popular kind of gun is the "big eight", a gun whose caliber
is thirty-eight and whose average costs range from one and a half and two
minimum wages. However, the guns found with the youths are getting more
sophisticated, going from simple guns to weapons used by the Army. The
most powerful the gun, the most reliable it is: "In a war you can never have a
gun with six bullets. It's gotta be a pistol. The most bullets, the better."

Drugs, as well as guns, circulate freely in all the cities studied. Even if
they do not use them often, the majority has already tried some kind of drug
and many of the youths are addicts: "The easiest thing is to find a dealer";
"It's easier than buying candy". The most used drugs are marijuana and *merla*,
but cocaine, *glue* and *loló* [made with ether] are also used. The last two are
easily and cheaply bought:

The youths said they use drugs for fun, as a habit and because they
feel revolted at society. Drugs are seen as the only way of escaping from the
sadness and the reality:

> *It's to get away from the sadness and the cruel reality. From the hell
> that the world is. At that time you're happy. At that time you have
> friends. But when it's over, it's all sadness. Then you wanna feel that
> happiness again, you wanna dive in that. The stronger the better.
> Because of all that sadness that you've been through in life, and the
> things you go through in your home and outside, and you're a teen-
> ager and you know what you could be doing instead, and the way the
> world could be better, and the way it is now, and you wanna run
> away from all this. And the drug is the solution.* (Interview – Planaltina,
> school, gangs/crews, male/female, 14/16 years old)
> *I used to be with the group, everybody smoking, drinking. I used to
> smoke cigarettes only. Once somebody said: 'Go, you fool, it's just
> like cigarette'. And I did it, you know? I got to the station, didn't
> know anybody, you know? (...) A guy saw me smoking and said: 'It's
> not the same. One or tow of these and you'll be high, you'll talk to
> anyone, you don't know anyone yet'. Then I tried it, and it all started.*
> (Interview – Planaltina, school, gangs/crews, male, 13/16 years old)

Besides, using drugs often assumes an important aspect of sharing
and belonging: many youths do it because the others have offered them, be-
cause all of them were using drugs, because they live with people who do
drugs: "You're considered nothing if you don't smoke".

The study of the quantitative data shows that using drugs is consistently higher among gang members than among the other youths, being alcoholic drinks, marijuana and pills the most popular drugs. It is worthy pointing out the dissemination, in both groups, of the so-called "socially permitted" drugs, like alcoholic drinks.

Graph 3.9: Use of drugs according to involvement with gangs Federal District – 1999.

	Involved with gangs		Not involved with gangs
Alcohol	81.5%		55%
Pills	11%		3.5%
Marijuana	16%		2%
Cocaine	7.5 %		1.5%
Glue	7.5%		2%
Merla	7.5 %		1%
Crack	1%		0.5%
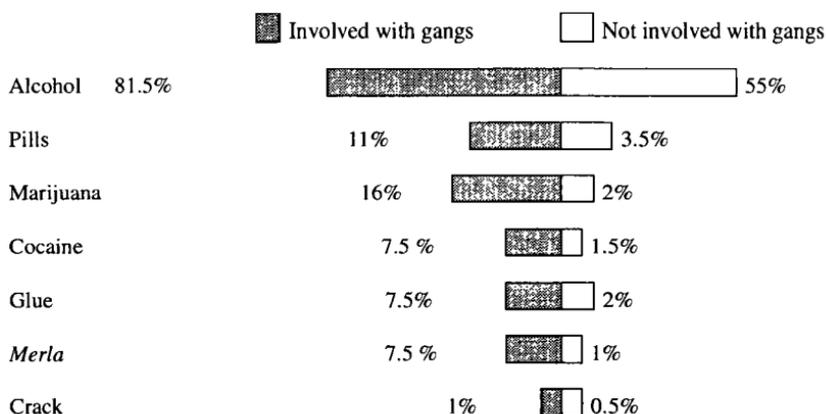
Source: UNESCO, Research Gangs and Crews in the Federal District, 1999.

In one of the cities where the focused groups live, it calls attention the great number of youths interviewed, of both sexes, who use drugs like marijuana and *merla*. There are numerous stories about how and when they started using them. Some youths said they had managed to quit and that their lives have changed a lot since then.

Among the youths who use drugs or not, marijuana is considered a light, inoffensive drug, "it comes from nature". They say it is harmless, soothing, social; it is not depressing and that it makes people's appetite stronger and turn them into happy and fun individuals: "The guy who smokes pot is the one who's cool." It is the most consumed drug among the people interviewed.

Merla is derived from cocaine. It is a paste made with the mixture of what is left over after refining cocaine and battery liquids. It is a very cheap drug and makes users "high". A can of *merla* costs from 45 to 60 reais, lasting, in average, a day and a half. It is a very discriminated drug among the youths, including the addict, who consider it the worst of all drugs. Possibly,

this opinion is not related to the destructive impact of the drug on the person, but also to the effects on the users' behavior, which cause them to be unpredictable, to adopt uncertain attitudes which can lead the youth to violate the codes of the group.

The ones addicted to *merla*, also called "noid", a word originated from paranoid, do not have limits. They steal from the family, neighbors and friends to buy the drug. They are aggressive and capable of extremely violent acts. *Merla* is a fast addicting drug. It makes the users' fingers become yellow and their teeth rotten. It also ruins the appetite and leads users to despair. To some, "*merla* is mean": [24]

> *"Noid" is tough, is a devil's son. It can be any time, early in the morning he is knocking at your door. When I'm 'noid' I get crazy, keep looking behind me.* (Interview – Samambaia, school, gangs/crews, male/female, 14/16 years old)
>
> *It gets to your nerves, this 'noid' thing. These guys ruin our reputation, they are beggars. They steal from their mother, they sell their clothes, everything in the house disappears (...) These guys aren't worthy anything, they even steal from family men.* (Interview – Samambaia, school, gangs/crews, male/female, 14/16 years old)

Few people interviewed said they are occasional cocaine addicts. They consider is an exciting drug which can make the person think he is always being followed, persecuted. However, the majority of the youths interviewed drink alcoholic beverages, even during the day, but they are not thought of as drugs.

Being a drug dealer is a means of guaranteeing drugs for their own use. The youths say they do not know the big dealers, they receive the drug through "messengers". Two youths interviewed were "messengers" of a big dealer, saying that this job is like any other and that selling drugs is easier than mugging. These youths are part of the organized drug market, they have a boss, obey a hierarchy, deal only with marijuana and are not allowed to use drugs.

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[24] The marijuana addict and the "noid" are considered different categories of people to the police officers as well. While the marijuana addict is able to work, socializes with other people, and smoke marijuana for fun, the "noid" is a sick person who steals from the family and other poor people, risks his job, sells his own body, spends a whole night hunting for the drug. The "noid" is much more dependent on the drug and *merla* is much more harmful. The purchasing power of those living in the outskirts is insufficient for them to buy cocaine. If they start to use it, they quickly replace it for *merla*, because it is a cheaper drug.

Dealing drugs also provides dealers with the opportunity of buying items that were inaccessible: "If I work two days, I can buy what I want." However, to some youths, drugs are the underworld, something that turns them into slaves, leading them to steal, to sell their own things – "The more you use drugs, the more you steal, you sell things like your bike"- and to be imprisoned or dead. One of the ways to escape from this underworld would be finding a job: "I'm sure that if she finds a job she'll get out of this, but she doesn't have an opportunity."

Youths and Gangs

When this research was being done, studies on female gangs/crews in Brazil did not exist and the role of women in this kind of juvenile organization had never been object of a systematic study. American researchers also call attention to the less relevant aspect given to this phenomenon in the USA, and they affirm that women had an active role in the male gangs, mainly acting as assistants, either engaged in "sexual favors", getting drugs or acting as contacts for the purchase of weapons (Connell, 1987; Miller, 1975; Campbell, 1993). [25]

One of the initial purposes of this research was to understand how the relationships between men and women were like inside the gangs/crews, how the male and female youths performed in gender [26], their role and how they represented it, how they perceived these relationships and acted due to them inside these groups. During the field study, it was not possible to follow the initial objective. Although mentioned by the respondents, all-female gangs were inaccessible to the research. It was clear that the majority of these organizations are essentially male, but this does not mean that women are left out. On the contrary, it was observed that women are present as gang members or simply as assistants.

In the home sample, 68.4% of the youths said that the girls are allowed in the gangs. Indeed, the number of female members is not small. As it

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[25] Anne Campbell is the pioneer in studies on female gangs in the USA. Campbell states that there are three ways for women to participate in gangs: (1) as members of a female gang; (2) as members of a male gang; (3) as assistants. The majority of the youths are involved in the latter.
[26] Gender is used to designate the relationships between the sexes, it is a way of referring to social constructions, to the social origin of male and female identities, that is, men and women have different abilities, attitudes and predisposition. The social ideas are converted into behavior, meaning that the biological differences between both sexes have been reinforced to create the differences between men and women. The gender refers to the structural and ideological domain which is present in the relationships between men and women (Castro & Abramovay, 1998).

was mentioned before, in 81 youths interviewed within the home sample who said they are involved in gangs or have already been involved in them, 40% is of the female sex.

It is verified, however, that the involvement of women in gangs do not have the same magnitude and intensity as men's: the girls are supporting people, as girlfriends, friends or neighbors of the gang members, and they are not forced to take part of the gang in a mandatory or coercive way. Some youths affirm that the girls' involvement in gangs is due to the influence of their criminal boyfriends, to the family abandonment and to the idleness.

In the interviews, it was made clear that the girls perform a very important functional role in the gangs. They hide the guns and the drugs when they go out with the group, taking advantage of being less searched by the police – "they hold the 'iron'", "hide the drug" and cover the drug dealing: "You see, I'm gonna get 50 bucks only to go to ..., fill three bags up with *merla* and take it." The girls, when necessary, also get money for the boys, making use of their "smartass" way, and they steal as much as any male gang member.

The data of the home sample contribute to this information regarding the differentiation of gender inside the gangs. The majority affirm that the women's role is mainly to have sex with the gang members (86.8%), cover them (85.2%), get guns (77.1%) and take care of the gang members (61.5%).

In the focused groups, various young people interviewed sustain that the girls are the cause of fights, quarrels and jealousy among the boys, and that they cause confusion: "There's always one that wants to be better than the other." When involved in gangs, they are considered as violent as the boys, they use guns, chains, pocket knives, they fight, go spread graffiti, do drugs and drink: "There are chicks who are made of rock and carry guns when hanging out with the guys. There are men who don't have the courage to do what the women do." Some youths interviewed consider such girls "almost men", they say they are fearless and when they decide to mug, they are worse than the boys: "The girls do crazy things. They go into a shop, change their clothes, steal cars." However, even if they are "like a rock", the boys do not dare attacking the girls physically.

Some girls interviewed affirm that, like the boys, they fight, they beat others and they are beaten on the streets, regardless of the fact of being women. The "staring" is also usual among the girls, who say that the secret is pay it back, respond in the same way and not feel intimidated: "If I don't stare, I am the one who's a looser. "

The youths' opinion about the social relationships between men and women express the usual concepts about them found in the society, showing

differences that are not natural, but socially produced (Lavinas, 1997). In general, women are seen by the young men as weaker, as less violent – "They don't have the muscles to go there and impose themselves" –, they have less experience in mugging and they can use their "smarty" ways to get what they want, including the proximity with gang members in order to become known. In one of the interviews, a girl affirmed that women are angrier and more compulsive than men, explaining these features in the light of "nature", of "females own chemistry". The girls also appear as powerful, capable of manipulating the personal relationships and, when they want to, of rescuing their boyfriends from the underworld. The boys believe that girls like "smartass guys", that they feel protected by them and that they don't like *"bodinhos"*.

The Rappers

When dealing with rappers, a distinction has to be made. Rappers are groups formed by the youths from the urban outskirts, some of them having already taken part in gangs, but do not have the same characteristics of gang members: they are not engaged in transgressions, do not adopt initiation or quitting rituals, do not have any hierarchy, or a boss, they do not have to face any trouble if they want to leave the group. Many times, groups of rappers affirm they are completely different from the other gangs and they see themselves as a "movement".

Unlike the gangs, the ties bending rappers together is their musical inclination: some of them sing, others write songs, the DJs are responsible for the "scratch"[27], and others dance. DJs are considered the most important member of the group and, in general, are very tall and strong young men: "The looks are all, it gives you power." The groups of rappers try to be professionals in the area of music, and the majority performs shows and some of them have already recorded their own CDs.

The rappers think about the future, not exactly as a project, but reminding the other youths of their important role and responsibilities in society. They talk on behalf of a powerless generation that lives in the outskirts and are stigmatized, describing their cruel reality, their local problems, and expressing their indignation to the established order and to a "destiny" of continuous exclusion, which seems predetermined.

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[27] *Scratch* is a word used by the rappers to refer to the collage of songs. It works as the electric guitar for the rock bands.

These groups, therefore, appear as an alternative against the gangs, a new way of protesting, and they are gathered as crews, but do not have the typical organization of the gangs. On the contrary, they can be an effective option for the youths to place themselves in the public space, in the debate about society, and they visualize the aspirations of the different groups formed within.

In the USA, rappers represented the revival of a new generation of African-Americans who was suppressed during the 70's, searching for answers to the living conditions of the minorities by means of a "black" movement, of a work that reconstructs the collective memory and looks for new ways of expressing themselves.

In Brazil, groups of rappers are organized according to the American model. Hip-hop includes the dance, which is the break, the rap and the graffiti. This is what they call *street art*. They are different forms of expression, which make sense within the community, denouncing the youths' indignation at the system, the living conditions, the family, the poverty and the neighborhood. Graffiti represents this indignation by means of drawings; it shows the discrimination and the lack of recognition. It is different from the ordinary spraying of walls, because the ones engaged in it just do it for fun, to become famous. And it is also different from the indignation of the criminal, the thief, who is "materialist, greedy", who steals because some people have a lot and other do not have anything, or because they "want to have fancy clothes."

The rappers' music, shown in very dynamic concerts, in which the dance is a vital part, has a strong vein of denunciation, focusing various dimensions of social exclusion: "We know the truth: the reality of the outskirts". Many times, the occurrence of violent episodes during the shows has served as arguments in favor of the prohibition of these performances. For this reason, the members of these groups feel persecuted, and they express their feeling of having been illegally silenced:

> *The police say that rap is synonym of violence. It's not like this; it is the minority who does this. The people who are in the power are against us...we say what they don't want to hear. They don't like it when you say that a boy is hungry, that the streets are full of trash, that the poor don't have anything to eat, while the rich squander money. A good example is the Micarecandanga, when people spend 55 reais buying the T-shirt to get in. Here in the outskirts, people barely have money to buy food; they get a minimum wage. (*Interview with rappers – Paranoá)
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> *The police arrived, beating a lot of people...the rap group got beaten, the dancer got beaten. Everybody was in uniform, but they thought we were a gang. It was the elite trying to put an end to the movement. (Interview with a rap group – Ceilândia)*

Besides being different from the gangs, the rappers are also different from the punks. According to Abramo, punks make part of a juvenile world which seeks the establishment of cultural references, adopting a style that goes against the system, and which shows their feelings in the field of leisure activities, consuming goods, media and cultural creativity. Punks place themselves alongside the existing institutions, adopting alternative ways of showing juvenile identity, expressing themselves in an aggressive way, evoking violence with their chains and sharp pinned bracelets. This was the way they found to show their dissatisfaction with the issues faced by the urban youths, adopting an angry attitude, always ready to fight. Their songs present a punk identity, forcing society to listen to and see them. However, although they denounce what they consider wrong, punks do not propose any solutions, since their themes focus exactly on the problem of juvenile existence in a society facing a crisis and without any future: "There is no projection of another state of things, different from the present one. What they emphasize is the impossibility of having a future, the disbelief in any proposal, including the suspicious attitude towards an illusory utopia" (Abramo, 1994).

Rappers also show a new language, an identity and a philosophy of life, a state of mind, a story, memories. However, unlike the punks, rappers present a more sophisticated and focused social criticism, and they express the feeling of belonging to society, of participating and of claiming for their rights. According to Bazin (1995), this movement is typically associated with the urban environment, as an answer to a hostile environment, reacting to the living conditions by proposing the modification of its sociocultural context.

This effort of building a collective identity through social criticism is also observed among the groups of Brazilian rappers. The youths' reaction, in general, seems to be compatible with this objective.

In the Federal District, for example, the feeling of exclusion previously expressed by the youths is shown through the rap, which, according to the people interviewed, is the only music that portraits the daily life of the ones living in the outskirts of the big cities; it a very strong means of expression, which talks about culture, politics, police, drugs, "tells the truth", "nothing is made up", and describes the problems of the youths from the outskirts in a precise way:

> *It seems they are watching everything and writing it down, retelling it in the exact way. The guy singing that song seems like he based his writing on us. He doesn't even know us, but it's the truth.* (Individual interview with a leader of a gang of sprayers – Ceilândia, streets, male, 19 years old)

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According to the youths interviewed, this happens because rap does not invent anything, it talks about poverty, makes observations about the rich, the powerful, and it criticizes the system:

> *It talks about the rich stealing from the poor, about what they do, they're not going to say they're good, because the rich aren't. It says those men are good for nothing, because they really are.* (Interview – Planaltina, school, gangs/crews, male/female, 16/18 years old)

Some songs are written based on the recording of sentences, for example, like the one a group extracted from a TV talk show, in which a woman said: "I don't like black people, I can't stand these people, they come and pollute the beach. To me, the poor are a sub-race". This recording was taken to a studio and the group wrote a song called "Sub-race", in which they said: "Sub-race is your f* mom!"

Rap accompanies all the situations of juvenile leisure activities, at home, on the streets and at parties. The youths really want to make it clear that it is a genuine musical style like any other and that the people who enjoy this kind of music are not vagabonds: they explain that, as some people like other kinds of music, they like rap.

One of the rap groups tells that they were formed because they wanted to find a living style other than that society was offering them, and said they had to work hard, for they did not have any sponsors or receive any help from anybody. The group points out that their lyrics are not commercially viable due to their theme, and they say that one of the objectives of the lyrics is to raise the awareness of the "self-interested", "jerks", racists, policemen and others. Their main theme is the outskirts and their problems – "there's a lot of dust'. Besides, they criticize the middle class, their values and the relationships between the rich and the poor:

> *The difference between them there and us here (...) there are people who, although having a good economic status, are aware. But there are many that don't even care; they're rich and the hell with the poor. You see? (Interview with a rap group – Riacho Fundo, male, 19/20 years old)*

Another aspect focused is the importance of keeping the youths busy, because otherwise they start getting involved with drugs and crime, and they become "police targets". Rap is considered a way of giving the youth direction: "It's like giving them ideas." One of the objectives of the group is to change the system "which originated 500 years ago, the people's minds."

Rappers are seen as radicals, because they insist on certain themes, they have a strong attitude, they swear a lot, say what they feel, what they suffer. The rappers interviewed said that society is hypocrite and that, during an interview, the TV crew has manipulated the message the rappers wanted to send, not allowing them to swear, which is their way of expressing their feelings. Television is also seen as sensationalist, broadcasting rappers only when somebody dies during a rap show.

In the shows, the interviewed said they claim for more control of the alcoholic drinks commerce and for police protection. They are critics of the police, and they ask for a police force that respects their rights of expression, their work and opinion:

> ... *We have the chance of being there on the stage, of talking bad things about them, and they have to accept it. They have to do their job. The rappers say the police is bad because it really is.* (Interview with a rap group – Riacho Fundo, male, 19/20 years old)

The rap singers said their claims are not taken seriously, and the way to make them reach the politicians is through their songs. However, it is noticed that the rappers world is not homogeneous. The groups are different and many times there are competition and conflicts among them, which are expressed in the songs. On the other hand, rap possesses a social representation related to criminality, which restrains its opportunities: "We sing rap and everybody thinks we are criminals"; "The police says that rap is synonym of violence."

The youths reject the prohibition of rap shows that has been established since the death of a person during a show. They compare their shows to the *Micarecandanga*[2][8] and say that this one is protected because important businessmen and powerful politicians control it, whereas rap "doesn't have any strong people to count on". They estimate that there are about 150 rap groups in Brasilia.

The Lyrics

Rap is a cultural movement that could be one of the elements working for a citizenship awareness, even by responding to the poverty and the various aspects of exclusion suffered by the population from the outskirts, like the ones who appear in this study.

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[28] Micarecandanga or Micarê is a Carnival party held in August, in the Plano Piloto, Federal District, and promoted by private entertainment agencies.

Often, the differences among the rap groups lie in their lyrics. There are groups whose lyrics incite the youths to buy guns, rob a bank, and never work anymore. One of the groups, during a show, has motivated the youths to throw stones at the policemen. According to the interviewed, they are groups who do not know how to explain the indignation they feel, and are criticized by the other groups: "They are not cultured, they don't know Luther King, Malcolm X, never read anything, don't know Zumbi (...)"

Some people interviewed stated that the most important rap groups influence the others, mainly the "Racionais" and the "Câmbio Negro", who have a "heavier" rap style and motivate the potential violence in the youths, and they sing what happens in their daily life: "Here it's like this, vagabonds really kill, swear at the police." Certain groups even motivate the formation of real gangsters, because their songs talk about stealing cars, and they encourage the youths to use drugs: "We have to talk about reality, but we're aware that the message can't be misunderstood."

Some groups interviewed write songs that do not instigate violence, fights, conflicts; they talk about peace, the search for a better life, trying to show that there are other paths. They say their lyrics are for the youths to think about their lives, in a way that they "are absorbed by the guys, that they listen to and meditate on that". Their themes also relate to poverty, social discrimination, violence, but many of their lyrics are also about positive aspects, sports like *capoeira* [Brazilian street fight], soccer championships, graffiti, "chats", things that constitute their identity.

Due to these differences, the people interviewed establish distinctions among the most "positive" and those whose lyrics encourage violence, the so-called "raw rap". The latter focuses on the exclusion, the few days of life that are left, the city, the necessity of carrying guns, defending themselves, shooting and killing not to be killed.

> *I have some time ahead (...) in the target of many guns, in the hands of criminals. Both sides are tough. Oh! I know I'm stoned. That's why, very often, carrying guns is the only guarantee here, to kill the jerk who's confronted you. Why do we have to live like this, in this damn side, killing not to be killed? I can hardly understand it, but it must be like this, so be it. Come shooting, said and done. He decided to do the deal, shoot a bro, but was caught by surprise, and killed by three or four good shots.* (Interview – rapper, Riacho Fundo)

The police are one of the elements the rappers most criticize. They are described as a corrupt institution that does not protect, but kills the innocent; that does not respect anyone, mainly in places where the law does not exist, and where the only recognized rule is having a gun, being violent and doing justice with their own hands:

... the police kills the innocent and guilty too. They say they're cleaning up, sons of a b *, killing the innocent and the guilty in prison. I want the corrupt to f* themselves – the law will be you and me now – I'll do justice with my own hands.

> *... they know who killed QLO, but they won't put him in prison, 'cos they paid for the cocaine – that they use in tons – then they'll get high and will go for writing their acronym, man, PM [Military Police] in the chest of a thief. Then what will your duty be? To kill, bro, to kill. Let's protect ourselves, then, when they're in uniform they abuse...what will your duty be? Can you say it? Oh, it's disrespect...* (Interview – rapper, Santa Maria)

In his study, Abramo (1994) shows how the lyrics have a distopian description – contrary to utopian – with apocalyptic images that are amplified to call attention to the negative traits of society. The suffering, the agony, the reality, the poverty, the family problems faced by the children and adolescents, the distrust, the distopia – about the possibility of existing a better world – are shown in the lyrics, suggesting there is no option or way out. The life in the outskirts, the indignation, the dangers and the dreams are described in a critic way, giving the impression that they live in hell, their future being either death or prison; a place where there is no happiness and where violence rules.

> *... I see that kid stealing food because the government doesn't feed him. Waiting for the government is dying of hunger. You don't eat unless you steal. Oh! It's tough. It was so cold that night...the kid didn't make it – he was dead by dawn: his blanket was cardboard paper. But the ones who didn't die are in the hospital where they spent Christmas; they're known as criminals, living on the streets and in ghettos... What's poverty? It's a person whose house is an old shanty. And they're glad to be there. Others don't even have a shanty...they live under the bridge, they freeze to death...Young kids run away from home not to be beaten up...*(Interview – rappers. Santa Maria)*
> ... I know that it's tough here, man. I've seen it all just under my nose. Deaths. Rebellious bros, blood, shots, drugged women, outskirts with no law. Bad blood in the night. Bang, bang... That one whose dead body they've*

dumped was just one more fellow who died holding a gun. We see poverty so close to us, indignation without any solution. Here the ghettos have no light, only despair, revolt, the end of the burden. (Interview – rappers, Riacho Fundo).

The so called "positive" rap is the one that criticizes drugs, describing how they destroy people's lives, making youths have a terrible future, fall to an abysm from which death is the only way out, "the graveyard". The encouragement to abandon violence and living dangerously is present in the lyrics as well:

> *...it's like there's no salvation – I trust in you, for you can't go wrong - the advice from a brother, for I'm talking with my heart – man, these words aren't in vain – trust me – trust me – these words aren't in vain – trust me, man, trust me, for I'm one of your brothers – much time has passed by – this damn drug you haven't quit – you're killing yourself with this damn cocaine and with this f* merla – look at yourself – for me to say this to you – you used to be a strong guy, now you're skinny – you used to be a smart guy – now you're f* and stinky – drugged, stoned and hurt – to tell you all this – it hurts deep inside, for you are a buddie of mine – you're a brother – but even your buddies' trust you've lost – by trying to be smartass on them – you're f* - you don't have to use drugs to be somebody – you're somebody – wanting to live is enough – don't forget your time is set to come – it won't take long – well, well...* (Rappers, Riacho Fundo)
> *Between the desire to live and the fear of dying, people are getting desperate – they don't want to suffer anymore – they're tired of war – they run away from the slums – their lives aren't the same there. Now say your prayers – light up a candle and ask your guiding angel to protect you and help you get out of this damn life – to help you not to feel pain anymore – being sure that for many it doesn't matter. The night is dark – horrifying spots – where they prepare themselves, and pull the trigger.* (Rappers – Ceilândia)

By examining the quantitative and qualitative data it is observed that, in a generally socially excluded environment which characterizes the outskirts of the Federal District, violence, transgression and criminality are the ordinary path followed by the youths. The ones who join gangs are minority and they present clear distinctions compared to the others, both in relation to the socioeconomic features and to their behavior. Apparently, these youths react to the exclusion by searching for choices of sociability, whose particular traits are the transformation of their own stigma into a tool for identity, and the open and violent use of this tool as a way of imposing respect. How-

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ever, by doing this, the limits which differentiate playful acts from offense, fun from transgression, are not observed, therefore, the youths lose control of their own acts. Thus, many of them engage in pervert mechanisms, such as drug dealing.

Nevertheless, it is noticeable the existence of innovative options – such as the rappers' – in which the denouncing of violence and of exclusion becomes part of the process of the social identity construction for the youths and become a relevant feature of this identity.

Chapter IV

Youth and Public Safety

This chapter explores the relationship between young adults and two of the institutions that are responsible for public safety in the Federal District: the Police Force and the CAJE - *Centro de Atendimento Juvenil Especializado* [Specialized Youth Supporting Center]. The subject mentioned here are connected to daily relationship between young adults, criminal or not, civil and military policemen, as well as the way they see each other, the Children and Adolescents Statute and the CAJE.

The qualitative data is based on scripts of interviews on focused groups, civil and military policemen and gang's/crews' young adults. The quantitative data is part of the home sample that took place in selected cities, and data about young provisional and convict delinquents from CAJE, gathered with the help of Social Service Foundation of the Federal District.

Public Safety

The ascending curves of violence and criminality are a serious problem in the world of the end of the twentieth century, it is even worse once we realize that, besides affecting physical, emotional and material integrity of an individual, it also questions the notion of citizenship, and the role of the State itself. One of the rare cases when everybody agrees with the same thing, in the political, judicial and intellectual environment, is about the important role of the State as the responsible for the safety of the citizens, once, the most basic right men have is their physical integrity.

By definition, these and other rights are assured, in the modern societies, by the public safety institutions. These institutions are responsible for a group of procedures of diverse nature, whose goal is to guarantee the citizens a safe and free existence, being their civil, political and social rights preserved.

In nowadays world, the concept of public safety has been increased to involve a group of global strategies, like environmental, sanitary, and food safety and the fight against drug dealing and organized crime in international basis. Although the most common strategy known by the citizens in their daily routine is the one related to internal safety, which means, the governments activities of prevention, repression and punishment of criminal and contravention acts of all kinds. (Rua, 1996)

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These activities involve a wide institutional web, that includes police, penitentiary, judicial material, also the judicial – legal orders, that establish the imperative in the formal intervene that rule the social coexistence and set limits, restrictions and obligations to the institutions themselves to promote the safety of citizens and the State itself. The subjects of such activities are the policemen and chiefs of police, penitentiary agents, judges and their courts, and many others. Their objects are, basically, the adult citizens, in general.

However, like it has been seen through academic and news data, in the official statistics and in the speech of institutions that take care of the young, not only in Brazil, but in all western world, the interaction in the public safety basis has been involving young adults, teenagers and children more and more. They have become the doers of the most outrageous actions.

Because of that, it needs to be asked: How do the young adults interact with the police? And with the system, which means, the penal rehabilitation? How well are they acquainted with the laws related to youth transgression? What is their perception of the law system? How do they see the legal disposition which involve them, being over or under age? What is their opinion about the police and the public safety system?

Naturally, the young adults' point of view is only one side of the matter. So, there is a need getting to know the perspective of the public safety agents, group in which the policemen are given a privileged role, they will have the chance not only to express their opinion towards the same topics mention before, but also to declare their opinion about their own role in their relationship with young adults.

The Young Adults and the Police

Next, the point of view of the young adult in relation to the police is going to be analyzed. It is possible to perceive that they are critical and incisive about police's work. Their talk is rude and heavy suggesting a latent conflict between young adults and policemen, such conflict can start at any time and it gets more serious when these young adults belong to gangs/crews. The reader should come up with his/her own conclusions.

In the interview with the young adults, the police is a common topic, it seems like it is part of their daily routine: "You can't even play hide and seek on the streets. Because if you do so, they come running after you".

According to the interviewed, the police's approach is very frequent, something common and banal. To be on the streets after ten o'clock, to walk in groups, to wear loosen bermudas, long jackets and caps – "the smart guy

kit", "the bandit pattern" – to walk in quick pace, to run, to play are acts considered suspicious, which can lead them to "frisk". "We were on the street playing, then the guys came and started kicking the guys who were older". Sometimes even the young adults who work are submitted to police inspection because they leave home very early, in the small hours of the morning . "We are working and they call us vagabonds, smart pants".

The young adults are sometimes searched at their own house door, in front of the neighbors, they say that they feel embarrassed, the people around them might think: "If the policemen is beating you, there's gotta be a reason." In one of the interviews a young adult said that the police started beating a guy in front of his house, he managed to escape and when the interviewed got out of his house the policeman said "You were lucky because you ran inside your house. The day I get you I will beat you up."

Most of the time, the police does not follow the individual's identification procedure and there is no discussion: the policeman approaches the young adults screaming, taking for granted that they are "bandits and smartasses" "They do not respect us at all." "They don't even know you and they say that you are a vagabond, and lots of other stuff." Generally, the young adults say that usually the police treats them as bandits and smartasses: "I think that for the police that work in the poor areas there are no young adults, the ones that exist are vagabonds. Every young adult is a smartass."

According to these young adults, being in a group is already a suspicious attitude in the police's point of view. "Nothing good is coming out of that". In these occasions they are stopped and told to separate. Many times, the police's order to go home is ignored by the young adults and they refuse to live the place in which they are, even under threat of being beaten, they challenge:

Most of the time they tell us to take a walk, 'go away', 'no, I'm going to stay right here', he says 'I'm going right there and when I come back you are still here, I'm going to beat you up'. I say 'whatever' (interview in Planaltina, in a school, gangs/crews, male/female, 16/ 18 years old)
... go ahead beat me up. I didn't shut my mouth, so you can beat me I'll pay you back later. (Interview, Planaltina, in a school, gangs/crews, male/female, 14/16 years old)

The girls are not as searched as guys are. That happens because there are few policewomen working together with policemen that by law, can not search women. In rare cases, the policemen use a gun detector on them. How-

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ever, after a certain time, the girls are threatened the same way the guys are. They are called names, searched, threatened and slapped: "Shut up your bitch, prostitute, vagabond, hooker. Then he grabbed my neck (...) they beat us, real bad, they have no mercy, they call us names when they are beating us".

Because of that, the relationship between these young adults and the police is described as tense and full of conflicts "awful", "they hate them" because they are violent and they threat us bad".

Some young adults said that there is a difference between the Civil Police Force and the Military Police Force. The Civil Police Force is more respectful, more polite and they only approach when they have very strong suspicious[29]. "The Civil only attacks when they are sure". However, other young adults describe disrespect and tortures they suffered in Civil Police Stations:

> *The Civil Police is nice only when they are approaching you on the streets or when talking to you in front of witnesses. When they take you to a small room they are hard on you. (Interview, Planaltina, school gangs/crews, male 17/20 years-old)*

On the other hand, the Military Police "does it its own way", without any concrete proof, "they don't fit at all the human rights rules", they start up with accusation, trying to find elements that incriminate and many times they simulate situations "They want us to hand over guns we don't have" "Say things that have nothing to do with us[30]" The TMP – Tactic Movable Patrol is the most feared one, for it is considered the most violent one.

The Police and the Young Adults

The same way it happens with the young adults it happens with the policemen, the policemen have also complaints about the young adults. The point of view they have in relation to the young adults is built up based on comparisons based on their own life experience, of their teenage years and of their daily relationships inside and outside police work.

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[29] Even though the young adults declare they are rarely approached by the Civil Police Force and that it respects them more than the Military Police, a Saturday in the afternoon, around 3:00 p.m., the interviewers were surprised in the middle of the interview, by the CPF. Three policemen got out of the car, with guns in hand, pointing them out to our informer that was searched.

[30] In another occasion, Saturday afternoon, while interviewing in a block, twelve armed policemen connected to the MP jumped out of a car shouting to search the young adults.

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Some policemen declare that nowadays youth "has lost their value, they live because they want to create disorder", "they only want to know about drugs", "They don't want to know about anything else", "they are greedy", "they only want easy money". Also, according to the interviewed, there are no limits for the young adults, no responsibility and notion of respecting their neighbors and no politeness.

The young adults from the poor part of the cities are seen as rebellious people. The policemen say that the environment in which they socialize causes such feeling, for these young adults are raised with violence surrounding them, not only witnessing it on the streets, but especially in their own homes. They are "traumatized" young adults, "raised without love", "without orientation", sons and daughters of absent parents, of "broken families"

At the same time, according to the interviewed, the young adults have a lot of energy and they don't know how to use it. Because of that, they get involved with crimes: "They have no assistance at home, no kind of orientation, they go to the streets and what is there on the streets? Robbery, drugs, a all sorts of worthless things".

It's important to point out that the police used the generic speech that blames the "broken families", the lack of care and attention, electing themselves as an alternative, as educators. The police would this way play the role, which initially, belongs to the family, which is, to teach young adults about limits, to teach what right and wrong are:

> *"Only two people can teach them about limits their parents and the police. Many parents don't do their job and then we have to set limits for them, of what is right and what is wrong (...) If the family taught them right from the beginning, the police would not have to nosy around. But when the parents aren't home, who is going to demand for limits on the streets? The police. It substitutes the family a bit. It teaches what they should and should not do.* (Interview with policemen from the School Patrol in Ceilândia City)

The "Frisk" According to the Young Adults

A central aspect of the young indignation and rebellion are the police approach, their search and when military policemen work in groups. These procedures according to the young adults, are normally followed by high levels of violence, it doesn't mean that there are not policemen that follow the rules: "Some of them act normally, other make use of violence because they see their uniform as something that makes them invincible".

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The young adults declared that being or not searched is a "matter of luck", it's a matter of bumping into a friendly policeman. However, most of the time they are called names, kicked, spitted on, slapped on the face, ears, mouth and head, beaten, hit by gun handle and boots.

The impunity and the abuse of power, according to these young adults, are always present.

Chart 4.1 - The search

Interview – school, gangs/crews, street,
group of rappers

This is how the MP search happens (...) they tell us to spread our legs to put our hand against the wall, we stay there and they open our legs wider (...) They keep asking 'What are you doing here? Where do you live? And then they hit you.
They don't come around to do a right search, they tell us to pass under the police car without touching our stomach on the floor, and if we don't do it they hit us. We were all wearing bermudas and no T-shirt, they just came around saying that we were selling drugs and started searching us, hitting and pushing, hands against the wall, hitting and threatening us with their guns, we said: 'we are no vagabonds'. 'I didn't ask you anything, shut up and put your hands against the wall (...) When they were done, they slapped us and went away laughing at us, as if they were all bandits.
If you complain they search you again (...). It has already happened that they got a friend of ours and disappeared with him. Until today he hasn't come back."

To express their anger and resentment for the humiliation and violence, the young adults make fun of the military policemen calling them "jerks" and "faggets". Such disqualification functions as a way of speaking out, releasing the frustrations for the situations they are forced to go through. It is worth mentioning that, while we were doing the fieldwork, some of our researchers witnessed a police search, and the young adults obeyed silently every order the policemen gave them. As soon as the policemen were gone the young adults started calling them names, laughing, being ironic, as if they could this way reestablish some of their lost dignity. If many young adults silence, other tend to fight back, not only with irony and challenges, but also searching for an opportunity of revenge.

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A flagrant of wall graffiting leads to immediate trip to a police station. However, according to the young adults interviewed, before they get there, they receive a serious punishment, like to clean the streets, they themselves are dyed with graffiti and are frequently beaten.

Also the lack of documents and the suspicious actions lead to the belief that they are dealing drugs, transform the young adults in suspects subjected to physical violence.

Chart. 4.2 -Beaten by the Police

Interview – school

Once I was beaten by the TMP, I was with two other friends, they asked for our documents, we didn't have any, and this is what they did. They got down their car and started beating us.

They approach us when we are on a corner and ask "What are you doing?' Then we say 'Nothing why?' 'Are you dealing drugs?' (...) That happens every day. They don't ask you anything. I think it would be better if they did. If you take too long to say your name they hit you, if you talk too much, they hit you even more. If you open your mouth they hit you, if you look at them they hit you, if you blink they throw you on the floor. Once I looked at one of them and he said 'What are you looking at?' I got myself in trouble. He forced me to stretch my legs open wide.

We were going down when the police on horse came. Our hand were all yellow because of work, my friend works with crafting and because of this a lot of stuff stick to his hands. They thought that he was smoking marijuana. And then he said: 'Do you smoke marihuana?' Then he said 'no'. 'Come on, you smoke it'. And then he slapped him. 'No man, I work from Monday to Friday'. Then just because he said that they started kicking him.

The young adults declare that they feel wounded, pushed, violated, but they have no chance to complain "If you complain, they beat you up". They say that it's their word against a stronger word, the policemen's, and they fear pay back. "If they get you here, they break you in pieces. If they get you in the police station, they break you in pieces: 'If you tell the judge, when you come back, they'll break you in pieces'."

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The Police and the Frisk

Contrasting with the young adult's idea, the search is seen as a technique, not as a source of violence. According to the policemen, it is supposed to be used when a person is suspicious and its function is to prevent problem, guaranteeing safety, especially in the areas considered critical. And not only the young adults are searched:

> *In a critical area everybody is a suspect unless they prove not so, student or not, worker, everybody is suspect.* (Interview with Military Policemen – Ceilândia)
> *We have to approach. It's no written on their fore head. 'I am honest, I come in peace. Nobody likes to be under surveillance, but if a policeman thinks somebody is suspicious, he has to do the search* (Interview with Military Policemen of the School Patrol – Ceilândia).

The prevalence characteristic of the police approach is emphasized by the interviewed. They say that, as a result of such work, they apprehend guns, drugs and, the most important, they prevent crimes from happening. The rounds and the approaches, that happen several times a day, in the same places, and aiming the same people, are important factors in crime prevention:

> *If you are always in a certain place, and a police car always comes around and approaches, you are going to avoid carrying guns and committing crimes in that place (...) It's the same as a soccer field, a team tries to attack the other, they are always trying, and at some time they score a goal. It's us getting closer, and closer, and sometimes we score a goal, then we frame the guy.* (Interview with Military policemen – Ceilândia)

This way the police approach is not considered, by the policemen themselves, neither an insult, nor as violent: it's part of the routine of defending the population against criminals.

It's not even intelligent for us to approach teenagers and act in a military way. We approach, as fast as we can, do you know why? Because this way the approach is sooner over, and there is no confusion to take the guy to the police station, for our objective is to arrest criminal, that is armed or with drugs and so forth. Because of that we approach in the most polite and quickest way possible.

The young adults confuse violence with energy. The police has to be forceful. For its own sake. You have to get closer: 'Hand on the head, spread your legs'. You have to put the guy in a position in which he can't react. Then, they confuse it with violence. The search is safety, which means, if we get there carelessly, we can even be shot, as it happened before.

Inside the schools or in the way out, the search is rare, but the check out is done. The identification of a suspect is based on the "kit", "those loosen pants, huge shirts and the kind of hat", and added to a way of acting, if they are polite or not. "The rebellious ones pass by and make fun of us, we just watch, maybe they have drugs with them or maybe a gun, we get suspicious because these kind of guys normally carry guns".

The School Patrol agents say that the way police acts in schools is very different from the way it acts on the streets. The search in school must be very discreet, avoiding this way any kind of embarrassment for the student. And, even when they are completely sure about a suspect, they have to ask for the school's principal's permission before doing anything, but that happens rarely:

We have to get the principal's authorization, and warn him when there is not a total certainty about something, in my case I never had to do that, when I'm sure go there and grab the guy[31] (Interview with Military Policemen from the School Patrol – Ceilândia)

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[31] The adopted procedure in cases of confirmed suspect of either carrying guns or drugs is to ask for police reinforcement and take the minor to the Children and Adolescents Police Station CAPS.

The interviewed also say that there are few schools in which the principals and teachers denounce students and call the police to intervene in conflicting situations. Educational professionals fear that such act can bring out retaliation such as: stoned cars, life threat, and physical aggression.

However, as it was said by the young adults, the policemen confirm that groups of young adults on the corners are immediately considered suspects and subjected to police search: "A little group on the corner, in a circle. We will always come close to find out what they are up to (...). Our duty is to approach before they do something wrong". The "vagabond kit"- bermudas, loose pants, untied hair, baseball hat, tennis shoes of famous brands, necklaces and rings – a bicycle[32], the way the young adults walk, talk and look at the policemen are associated to smartasses and bandits. For these reasons the police approaches young adults:

> *A long time ago we use to ask for a description of a criminal. Today we don't have to, we already know, it is baseball hat, colorful T-shirt, big bermudas. Whenever we see such clothing score.* (Interview with military policemen – Ceilândia)

The CAS

The Children and Adolescents Statute – CAS was important starting point for the child/teenager rights, as a citizen. Its approval resulted in intensive activity of civil society in favor of children and teenagers, involving groups and institutions, to the Children and Adolescent National Forum with the support of several important sector of the civil society. Since its creation until now many steps were taken.

For example, it was since the creation of the Children and Adolescent Statute – CAS – Law 8.069 of 1990 – that a significant change in the terminology used to characterize juvenile delinquents . The terms used before – minor, delinquent, criminal and lots of others – carried elevated dose of stigma that the new law, correctly, intends on changing.

The term infraction act started to be used to refer to crimes committed by the teenagers and the offender, to indicate his/her legal situation. In this field, the transgression is understood as a transitional situation in the life of a young adult, that is judged by the typical transgressions mention in the Penal

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[32] Young adults on bikes are considered suspects because, according to the police, they are the most common means of transportation among those that commit crimes. Bikes provide fast mobility, they get in and disappear in alleys, and it is almost impossible to catch them.

Code, receiving this way social educational measures according to the seriousness of the act and the conditions to accomplish it. With that, the new law agrees not only with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but also recognizes and consecrates the child and the adolescent as individuals who have rights, that means, they are citizens.

The Young Adults and CAS

In the interview with the young adults, it was surprising to realize that the young adults many times agree with the police about the CAS, according to what is shown next. Among the young adults members of gangs/crews, all of them know about the CAS and know the rights they have, as for instance, that the penalty received can not be longer than three years, it doesn't matter what kind of offense was committed.

However, in interviews with young adults many situations were mentioned that went against the ideal established in the CAS, especially when it is related to the apprehension of adolescents and the way they are led to the institutions. The young adults declare that they were mistreated and tortured:

> *They hit me a lot. We were all jammed in there, we slept on the floor, more than five hundred in a single cell* (Interview – Ceilândia, school, gangs/crews, male, 15/19 years old)
> *In the CAPS they leave you on your underwear, put you under a shower; take you to the bathroom and held you there, until you speak up, this is torture* (Interview – Planaltina – schools, gangs/crews, male, 16/23 years old)

Many of them, though, declare that spent a night in the CAPS, where they were filed, and were freed, as it is written in the CAS.

According to the interviewed, the minors know the law and make use of it to commit crimes: "They think this way, if I do it, if I shoot someone I only go to the police station, I stay there for two months and I get out". From that surged the importance of being eighteen, that ask for an enormous change in the attitudes and behavior: "When you turn eighteen, then you have to be a true tamp, and be smarter than the police".

Another aspect that will also appear in the policemen interview is the fact that minors are used as "shields" in criminal acts, keeping the guns and helping the older escape, receiving the blame:

> *They put minors in the group because they are smart, for the penalty is short. On the streets they give nine-year-older kids guns. Normally minors don't stay in prison. When they need, they give him guns, drugs, everything. They make the minor hold everything* (Interview – Ceilândia – schools, gangs/crews, male, 15/19 years old)

In case of crime for revenge the advantages in the CAS are also used, and the minors are used to kill in the name of the older, because they stay in jail for a short period of time. The young adults themselves criticize such right. They declare that if a minor is capable of committing a crime he should judge like an adult: "If they can kill, they should receive penalty the same as somebody older".

Apparently, the young adults share the same opinion, that hard state punishment would diminish, at least in part, the violence. This point of view is criticized by the ones that consider it improper, once young adults are submitted to a horrible prison system they will only worsen.

The Police and the CAS

In interviews with military police, the CAS is a polemic topic. According them, it gets in the way of police action, because it give rights in excess to the minors, without demanding duties, turning them into irresponsible people, it favor unpunishment and weakens, through its series of interventions, police actions that are considered important when fighting crime.

Besides that, the policemen say that many adolescents manipulate the Statute, making use of their minor condition to commit crimes that can not be correctly punished, protecting older bandits:

> *The older will always say that the drugs belong to the minor, that he owns the gun (...) The older is free, he is not even going to be charged for minor corruption because the minor says: 'I told him to come with me'* (Interview with the Military Policemen – Planaltina)
> *This Statute is full of flaws. There are needy children, and children who are exploited, this is true. But there are the children and adolescent that are making use of the Statute to commit crimes and adults that use these children and adolescents. Not all of them are like that, but there are children and adolescents that don't care. They don't worry, they steal, kill and they know that in maximum three years they are out* (Interview with Military Policemen – Ceilândia)

It was also noticed that the policemen unanimously complained that they are mocked, insulted and challenged by the young adults, because it is very common for the minor to be arrested and taken to the CAPS where they sometimes don't stay time enough, not to even fill out the documents necessary in case of arresting:

> *We pass by and they make fun of us: 'I'm a minor. If you touch me, I will tell the judge! Minor only at age, for many of them are taller than us (...) As long as this Statute exist they will continue to do whatever they want* (Interview with Military Policemen – Ceilândia)
> *Another day, I caught a minor stealing a car and he confessed himself that he had done just to drive around, go cruising. I took him to the CAPS. Soon after his parents signed some papers and took him home. The minor left the room making fun of me (...) It's frustrating to take them to the police station. We take them there, but we know that nothing is going to happen and that the minor knows that he is there, but he is not going to stay there long* (Interview with Military Policemen – Planaltina)

According to policemen declarations, their quick liberation incentives the minors delinquency. This is because the adolescents don't receive any kind of social and psychological help afterwards. The social educational measures are used only with that commit crimes again and with those who have "thick files", not to the first doers.

Chart 4.4 – The Police and the CAS

Interview – MP

... The Statute has given a lot of rights to the young adults, for nowadays, if we arrest a criminal, a child or adolescent, a minor infraction – we are no supposed to call them criminals, they are minor offenders –, they are citizens because they are 16 and they can vote. A citizen can not be punished; he can't be taken to courts.
This is what we don't understand; he gets out of there when he is 18 with clean file. If later on we arrest him based on article 12, that is drug dealing, if he doesn't mention that he has killed before, we don't know because his file is clean. He is a kid, but a dangerous kid.

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The CAS is also seen as instrument used by the Civil Police Force to get revenge over the Military Police Force that work on the streets[33]. The Military Policemen complain that they are despised and discriminated by the Civil Policemen because first they don't have specific time to arrive at work and second because they bring too many *flagrante delicto* to the police stations.

To the policemen another touchy spot is the human rights, that are severely criticized, that are treated not as a group of ideas, but in a personalized way, as if they were the persons who defend and represent them themselves – journalists, lawyer and BBO (Brazilian Bar Organization). The human rights, according to the interviewed, are always at the wring side, protecting bandits, drug dealers and criminals. Human right defenders and representatives are also accused of acting in excessively unfair way towards the police, instigating the society to feel riot and hate against them, and also of never take the police side:

> *They are never there when you really need them, they just show up to protect the bandits in general, minor or older, it doesn't matter. We and the common citizen generally has no human rights to defend them, to help them, they help only bandits. They never help us, never. They go to jails, police stations and hospitals. They are with the bandits* (Interview with Military Policemen – Ceilândia)

In the police opinion this unfair treatment, which they say they receive is frustrating and they consider it a kind of prejudice against the police force. They complain about having to do their duty in unfair environment, to deal with violence, to fight against criminality, things which expose them to a variety dangers, that the same time they have their level of freedom restricted by institutions and diplomas of the human rights.

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[33] A rivalry between the Military Police Force and the Civil Police Force in Brasilia a perceived in the interview made. There are a great number of mutual accusations that don't fit in this report because of the objectives proposed in this research. However, it's important to point out that such rivalry reflects on the problem of juvenile delinquency and on the attitudes taken in relation to it.

However, the policemen themselves recognize that, actually, they treat the poor young adults that live in the favelas, comparing to the middle and upper class of the city. They confessed that they are severe with the first ones, which have no powerful family to protect them. And they admit that are permissive with the last ones, because they feel threatened by them, since they have power to intimidate the policemen:

> *Yes, there is a different treatment. This difference is not created by us, the society does that. The first thing that the son of a rich man says: 'My father is...' Can I be tough on him? What if he really is son of ...? He will press charges against me. (...) With the middle and the high class we are afraid of going further. Even if we are right, we are afraid of going beyond the regular work, because later on they blame us.* (Interview with School Patrol Military Policemen – Ceilândia)

The Youth and the Police Corruption

A great complaint the young adults have, besides violence, is police corruption. They insist on saying that there are a lot of smartass, dishonest, corrupted, "vagabonds". They point out the corporation protects the policemen, they are not punished or judged and they were never arrested. "If a policemen kills somebody you can be sure there is always going to be someone to cover it up". They also accuse the policemen of involvement with drug dealing, to cover up for 'big' bandits and drug dealers, because they fear for their lives:

> *The bandits rule, the policemen obey; they fear them. They have a lot of guns; the ones who have only one are in trouble. The MP are also afraid of dying they are not stupid* (Interview – Planaltina – school – gangs/crews – male – 16/23 years old)

Among the complaints the policemen are accused of selling apprehended guns, exchanging them for immediate freedom of the young adults. The police is seen as a gang, paid by the State, with the taxes the population pay.

> *There isn't a worse gang than the police. It is paid with my mother's money, everybody's money. You are paying the guy, you put the MU in his hand, the machine gun, the twelve, so he can get to your son and hit or shot him with it. To put handcuffs on him* (Individual interview with a rapper – ex-member of a gang of graffiters – Riacho Fundo – male – 19 years old)

The policemen are accused of stealing objects and documents when they do searches. They are called thieves and junkies, because they take guns, drugs and money away. The policemen are considered a "bad example" and "impolite": "They are the worst bandits, not us".

Many young adults don't tell their parents about the way the police treat them. "If I tell them, they would say 'This is because you are a vagabond looking for trouble on the streets' ". Other are asked to memorize the name of the policeman. Still, in any of the individual cases the family brought charges against policemen.

> **Chart 4.6 Who is the bad guy?**
>
> Interview – school – gangs/crews – street
>
> *... They started slapping me, then they took me to a ware-house, and there they stole my bike and my documents...*
> *Some policemen apprehend drugs just to use them. I have a buddy from who they stole fifty grams; they only took the drug. Then they smoke it and when they come back to frisk other people they kill, hit. That is why these policemen hit us. And if you have some money in your pocket, they take it and say that you were selling drugs. They take your money but they don't take you. If there is a Sargent in the car, they say it is dirty money. You don't know whom to trust. They sell drugs; they get it from you. So they don't arrest you, you say: 'I'm gonna give you 50 bucks...' You don't know who you can trust the police or the bandits. I have seen policemen come here take the drugs, the money and tell the guys to go away. What are they gonna do to it? They are gonna sell it.*

If they get somebody with drugs, they keep the drugs. It has happened with a lot of people. Three day ago we were smoking right there, the police came and took it. Then there was a party going on, they drank beer with us but they were already tripping. If they get you with a can of merla, they don't even hit you. They say 'get going kid'. They get the can for them. Now if they get you with joint, they beat you up, because one isn't enough for the four of them.

The Police, the Criminality and the Drug Dealing

According to the policemen, the most serious problems that involve youngsters are gang fights and drug dealing. The majority of the murders committed in the researched areas and the high level of criminality in the poor areas of Brasilia are related to gang fights. Many of these conflicts have to do with drug dealing and fight over drug market spots:

> *One shoots here, another there, one dies here, another there, until one of them gives up and gets out of the area* (Interview with the Military Policemen – Ceilândia) *One is selling drugs in a place that doesn't belong to them; or one is picking up drugs in the wrong spot or vice-versa. Maybe one buys and does not pay. This is the way they pay* back. (Interview with the Military Policemen – Planaltina)

The policemen say that the drugs that are more often used by the young adults are merla and marijuana "It seems there is a fair going on at day time". They complain that they are very often fooled by the guys who sell drugs, for they use a code language to cover up each other, they declare that the drug dealers are protected by impunity:

> *We know about everything. We know where they live, where they sell*
> *drugs, but where is the power to invade their houses and drug selling*
> *places and end up with them? If a Military Policeman enters a home*
> *and does not find anything, the drug dealer presses charges on him*
> *(...). Nobody does anything, this is hypocrisy* (Interview with Military
> Policemen – Ceilândia)

They say that "the drug big bosses" make use of the minors to sell drugs, they pay them with drugs and protect them when they are arrested:

> *They normally send a car to the house of the kid and tell his parents*
> *'your son was arrested. I came here to take you to the police station.'*
> *He takes them and brings them home. Then the kid gets back to work.*
> *And the parents thank the drug dealer – 'Thank you, you are a won-*
> *derful person'- sometimes they have no idea who he is.* (Interview
> with the Military Policemen –Ceilândia)

They declare that there isn't an efficient system to fight against drug dealing and that the drug market spots are destroyed through stakeout, since the Federal District police has no police power[34]. Actually the police complaints only express their frustration because of fragile institutions, especially with those related to its roles and functions that get in the way of efficiency.

Police Contradiction

According to the gangs/crews and young adults' statements about the police, it's surprising that in the home samples of the three cities studied, only 4.1% of the young adults informed that they had problems with the

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[34] The "police power" means the capacity of fighting against drug dealing on a daily basis, as for example, to try to destroy a drug market spot, to do that in the legal way it is necessary to go through a long bureaucratic process with a search warranty signed by a judge. The stakeout system is the one in which the policemen watches the spot, see a criminal act going on and arrest people in the very act.

police in the last year[35]. This proportion is higher in the city of Planaltina (6.3%) and much lower in Samambaia (1.1%). From this group 70% were taken to the police station and only 30% that corresponds to eight young adults, received charges. Among the reasons that that originated such problems, according to the young adults themselves, were fights in general and muggings or robbery.

In the focused groups, the negative image the policemen have does not stop the young adults wish to have more security and a more efficient police force, with different values and attitudes.

According to the young adults, the police is never in the right place at the right time: "Instead of guaranteeing safety, they spank us", "We get mad, because they say that the police is supposed to defend us". Some believe that the police is doing what is right when they approach them, " They are just doing their job", but the way they come around and the disrespectful words they use are strongly criticized: "They humiliate us".

In spite of the fact that they have such terrible image among the young adults, it's important to perceive that there is a kind of complicity between the poor youth and the police. It is common that policemen live in the same city they live and know all the streets they work in." They know us, they even say that this is just routine", " There are a lot of cool policemen, the ones we know, that live close to us".

In one of the interviews, one of the young adults declared that such complicity vanishes in the small hours of the morning. Immediately though, a friend of his said that he was never searched by policemen he knew. He also said that sometimes they even warn him about major police searches: " Hey man, today we are gonna have some fun".

These contradictions are a consistent evidence of the hypothesis of institutional fragility in environments where there is social exclusion, mentioned in this research. Actually, policemen and young adults share the same social unfairness and exclusion even though they might experience it different ways.

The young adults, in all of the dimensions analyzed have no government support; life in an environment with no opportunity and no safety offers them only tragic choices[36] of being criminal or victims.

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[35] This data discrepancy is explained, first, by the specificity of the two bases of data, second, by a possible young adults reluctance, when question, they were not willing to mention such experience and third, by the limited number of people questioned that might have not given the right meaning for to have problem with the police".

[36] Tragic Choice is a concept used in literature related to the rational choice, it is a situation in which a person has only disastrous options from which to choose.

The policemen, certainly, because of the experience of living the so-cial and spatial segregation in the Federal District, and also because they have to deal with young adults without previous instruction how to do so. As a matter of fact, this is one of their complaints: The lack of specific formation to deal with youths, they are only trained to deal with the society as a whole[37]. Because of the urge of having to get rid of difficult privileging situations existent in this region, which main characteristic is as the central of the power. Finally by the stigma – deserved or not – that involve policemen in a general way, not only in the Federal District, but also all over Brazil.

The Young Criminals: the CAJE

The Specialized Youth Supporting Center – CAJE is an institution committed to the Public Safety Office of the Federal District. It is meant to make the Children and Adolescents Statute happen; in relation to the specific punishment minors who commit crime should receive. When this research was being done, the CAJE had 124 minors who were convict of crimes and 72 minors who were there provisionally, waiting for trial.

The data contained in their files shows that 96% of the population in the CAJE is male and that almost 80% of the convict are in the adolescence phase – between 16 and 18 years old.

They are young adults with low level of education: 8.1% of the con-victed are illiterate, almost 50% did not finish the fourth grade of Elementary School and almost 60% had already stopped going to classes by the time of their committal. This data reveals that the criminals come from the society, which has the lowest level of education.

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[37] In interviews with the School Patrol, one of the policeman mentioned that the policemen had participated in a group therapy in order to get more acquainted to the adolescents, making it easy to live in daily basis. Many of the other policemen didn't know about this group activity.

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Table 4.1: Age of interns in CAJE based on situation – Federal District – 1998

AGE	SITU ATION		TO TAL	
	SENTENCED %	PROVISIONAL %	NUMBER	%
13	0.8	2.8	3	1.5
14	3.2	8.3	10	5.1
15	8.1	25.0	28	14.3
16	16.9	29.2	42	21.4

Source: Social Service Foundation of the Federal District, 1998

The great majority of the intern (77.6%) was born in the Federal District, such fact goes against the idea that local criminality and violence were "imported", a result of the migration that has happened lately. Once data of the convicts and the provisional are analyzed, it was noticed that, in the first group, the percentage of young adults that were born in the Federal District (85.5%) is significantly higher than in the second group (63.4%) in which internees from other States are more than one third of the group.

According to the analyzed files, the most common reason for committal were: thefts (59.7%), homicide (29.8%), robbery (13.7%), drug dealing (3.2%) and rape (0.8%).

Table 4.2: Level of Education of the internees in CAJE based on situation – Federal District – 1998

LAST GRADE ATTENDED	SITU ATION		TO TAL	
	SENTENCED %	PROVISIONAL %	NUMBER	%
NONE	8.1	4.2	13	6.6
1ST GRADE	6.5	5.6	12	6.1
2ND GRADE	8.1	4.2	13	6.6
3RD GRADE	13.7	9.7	24	12.2
4TH GRADE	11.3	13.9	24	12.2
5TH GRADE	27.4	31.9	57	29.1
6TH GRADE	13.7	19.4	31	15.8
7TH GRADE	5.6	5.6	11	5.6
8TH GRADE	4.0	1.4	6	3.1
9TH GRADE	1.6	4.2	5	2.6
TOTAL	100	100	196	100.0

Source: Social Service Foundation of the Federal District, 1998

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Many of the young adults interviewed in the focused groups had already been to the Children and Adolescents Police Station – CAPS and to the CAJE. The reasons why they had been there were various: gun carrying, mugging, theft, driving without license, fights, homicide suspect, use of drugs, graffitting. Some were on trial and sentenced to volunteer and obeyed the rules or sentences established.

As it was seen in the last chapter, for the young adults that were or are members of gangs it is hard to get out of a gang and change the way of living: more than three fourths say that you just have to be willing to do so; although the analyzed data shows that it is not as simple as it looks. However, it is important to point out that, being in a gang might or might not be enough to mark a young adult's life the CAJE definitely does and leads them to a life of crimes.

The interviewed members of gangs/crews affirm that being to the CAJE only worsens the rage, the violence, and the "madness". They point out that being to the CAJE does not rehabilitate no one, on contrary. Living with young adults that killed, raped, decapitated makes them walk out worse than they "walked in", making rehabilitation impossible. The young adults declare that, besides being forced to maintain homosexual relationship while in there, after they walk out they can not get jobs: "When you go to jail, and you stay there for one or two years, you get out of there worse. You are another person. You either become gay or more violent". One of the interviewed said that a "buddy" sent a message:

> *'Tell the guys to get the guns, because when I'm outta here, we are gonna fight over our problems'. We think that the guy is going to change, but the guy gets worse.* (Interview with a rap group –Ceilândia – male – 18/21 years old)
> *There, depending on the size the guy have, he will be another doll. He will be a society abortion. After they are outta there, he is worth nothing. The society thinks that once they are there they will recover, but they ain't. The guy get outta there worse* (Interview with a rap group –Ceilândia – male – 18/21 years old)

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Graph 4.1: Frequency to school by the internees CAJE
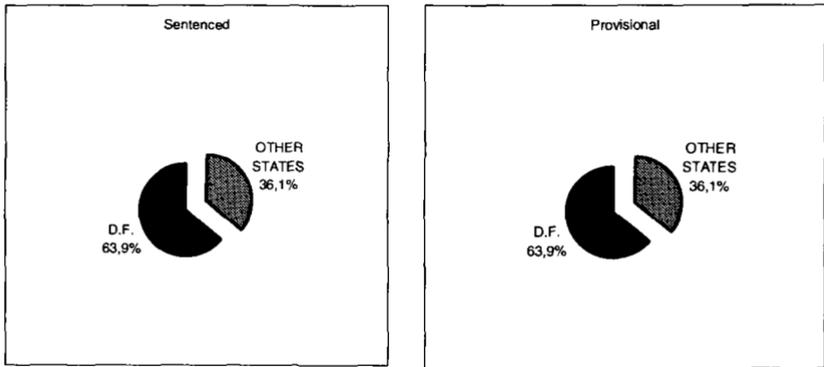
Source: Social Service Foundation of the Federal District, 1998

The policemen also see the CAJE as the "University of Crimes". They say that it doesn't help young adults at all, once they do nothing all day long, and there they have no use for the society "When he is arrested with a gun or with drugs he knows that he will rest, eat, drink, have fun and talk to psychologist for 45 days".

However, according to the policemen themselves, the life of a new interne is hard: they are often beaten by the other internees. For those who go to the CAJE there is no more chance and most of them are arrested because of stealing small objects. Instead of getting out of the institution with different ideas and values, the minor improves his criminal skills, when he is out he receive the admiration of his group. He become a "semi-god".

> *He gets there not knowing how to open a car; quickly he learns how to do it. There they learn how to kill and how to do a rebellion. And what can the police do? It has to stay there watching them use drugs* (Interview with Military Policemen –Ceilândia)

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Table 4.3 – Offenses of the CAJE internees based on situation – Federal District – 1998

INFRACTIONAL	SITUATION		TOTAL	
ACT	SENTENCED %	PROVISIONAL %	NUMBER	%
Homicide	29.8	9.7	44	22.4
Robbery	13.7	9.7	24	12.2
Theft	42.7	59.7	96	49.0
Rape	0.8	1.4	2	1.
Rape and theft	2.4	0.0	3	1.5
Rape and homicide	0.8	0.0	1	0.5
Illegal gun possession	1.6	5.6	6	3.1
Drug possession	2.4	0.0	3	1.5
Drug dealing	3.2	4.2	7	3.6
Physical harm	0.8	5.6	5	2.6
Other	1.6	4.2	5	2.6
Total	100.0	100.0	196	100.0

Source: Social Service Foundation of the Federal District, 1998

Graph 4.2 – Location of berth of the CAJE internees based on situation – Federal District
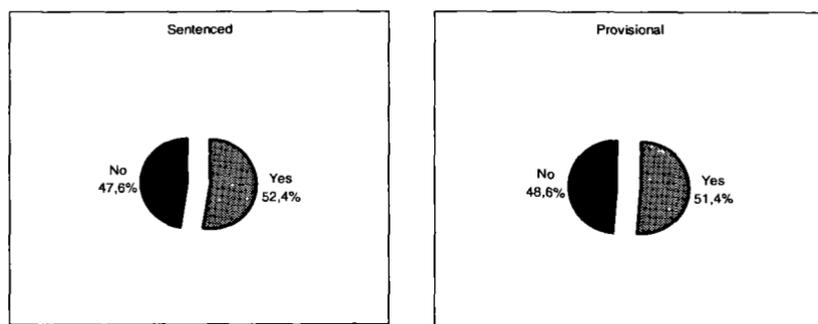

Source: Social Service Foundation of the Federal District, 1998

In prison they make a weapon, the "estoque" which is a piece of iron with a tip. According to the young adults, they are produced and sold by the prisoners themselves and used in self defense:

They sleep with two "estoques" under the pillow. If they have pil-
lows. This is their protection. It became commercial too; they make
weapons to defend themselves and also to make money to buy some
stuff like cigarettes (Interview with a rap group – Ceilândia – made –
18/21 years old)

The quantitative data reinforce the critics over CAJE rehabilitation
capacity: more than half of the internees had been there before, the convict
and the provisional. This is very serious data, which questions the effective-
ness of the system.

**Graph 4.3: Recidivism of the CAJE internees based on situation –
Federal District – 1998**
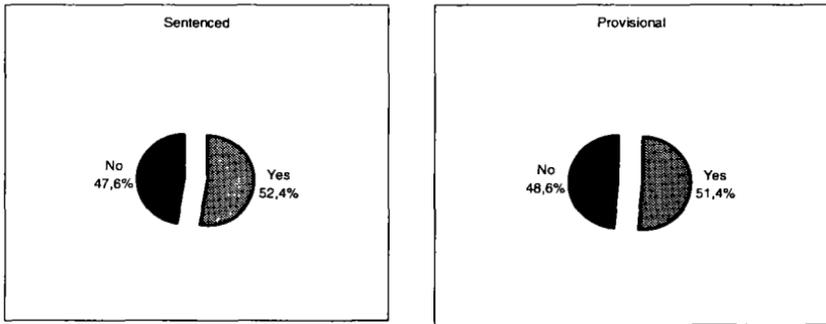
Source: Social Service Foundation of the Federal District, 1998

It is possible that part of the CAJE failure as a rehabilitation institu-
tion comes from the creation of a society that has its own rules, proceedings,
values and status. Actually, there is a hierarchy that depends on crimes, on a
known potential of violence. There are the "famous, superior" bandits. They
are dangerous and respected:

They can easily get home and kill their parents to get his heirloom.
This guy is a bandit. He will never loose his force. He wants to be at
the top of the world, only God is more than he is. The other people
say about him "Don't look at him. This guy can kill you. 'He is supe-
rior, the best. This one is a bandit, famous. (Interview with a rap
group – Ceilândia – male – 18/21 years old)

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There is also the drug dealer, he is respected, no one messes up with him – he was arrested with heavy munitions – and there is the "cacoete", it means a bandit that kill cops. There are those who rob bakeries, markets and gas stations, that have already killed someone. And last there are the "new-comers" the dorks, those who rob bikes, honest people, and rape. These are considered as nobodies, they have the respect of no one and when they arrive in the CAJE they are forced to give away everything they have – caps, tennis shoes, pants and even the food their relatives take:

Chart 4.7 – The CAJE rules

Interview – rap group – school

Rappers, "cacoetes" are definite killed once they are in there. The guys say: 'throw him in my cell. He will turn into a woman in there'.
When a guy who stole a bike gets in there, they say: 'You will hand in everything you have'. If you don't do so you can become their 'woman'.
Now a guy gets a head of a family, steals a watch, the man asks for help, the guy makes him kneel down and kills him. He is dead once he gets in there.

Only some of the interviewed in conditional are obliged to do community services. Some have to clean up graffiti; other have to help in institutions for mentally retarded people. These jobs are not well accepted by the young adults. They think that it's unfair to them.

> It was because of gun possession. They gave me a job for six months; just because I grafittied (...) They say that I'll have to pay 120 years *now* (Interview with a rap group – Ceilândia – male – 18/21 years old)

When both opinions are put together, the young adults' and the policemen's, two important ideas converge. The first one is about the CAPS, they both say that the law makes it easy for the young adult to start up a life of crimes and it is also a barrier in the way of crime fight. The other is about the CAJE, that is also considered "a university of crime", that has no capacity of rehabilitation at all.

However, these are the only two things in common. There are a lot of serious accusations between young adults and policemen. The first complain that they are treated unfairly, that they are not allowed to gather on the streets and have fun without being approached with extreme violence. The latter declare that the police approach exists to prevent crime and that it follows the rules and legal limits. They also declare that the young adults are violent, rebellious and twisted, although they recognize that they treat poor young adults differently that they treat the young adults from the Plano Piloto.

Final Considerations

The social space, in which these young adults live and grow up, clearly characterizes their daily routine, and their lives appear as a concrete example of the social relationships. As an urban space, the Federal District is seen as a clear social and spatial segmentation, in which the classes and social actors show extreme inequality, and do not get together in the same public and private spaces. Many of the differences are seen between the Plano Piloto and the outskirts cities.

This is why the poor young adults declare that they feel less valued and despised by those who live in the Plano Piloto. They also mention the lack of urban condition and of quality of life in their cities. They complain about the violence that surrounds them, about the lack of job opportunity and the low chance of social mobility, in relation to their poor condition.

They complain that there are not many options for leisure, which is something important in the lives of young adults: through leisure, they learn how to live and work in-group and the limits of social co-existence.

Social exclusion is clearly perceived by the young adults when they compare wealth with poverty, the social differences and the unfairness of the society in which they live. The poor youth is the one who is excluded, humiliated, hurt, the one who has no chance in life, has no value. The rich youth can do anything, is protected by the society and frequently passes the limit of impunity.

Actually, the conflicting experiences and feelings that the young adults go through are a result of the different ways they live their lives, compared with the young adults from Plano Piloto. The latter are not only seen as different, but also as unequal and in a situation of advantage. Because of that, they are seen as enemies, who deserve no solidarity or compassion whatsoever.

The "bodinhos" – the young adults from the middle and upper classes living in Plano Piloto – appear in this perspective. In the opinion of the youths who were interviewed, the *bodinhos* are the personification of life without limits, of those that do not face the lack of opportunities, the inferior life standards and the unfairness of the existing power, since they have more privileges. The *bodinhos* are the target for all their hate, which is a result of the social exclusion: they are their worst enemies. As if they were the incarnation of all the evil the youths from the outskirts go through, they are considered as the direct cause of all their humiliation. The *bodinhos* are not just seen as the reverse side of one same unfair structure.

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It apparently has to do with letting resentment go, with fulfilling the need to create a target for revenge against a society that has no criteria when it comes to punishing or rewarding. A twisted logic is adopted here, which personalizes the social dimension and blames a particular person at the same time.

On the other hand, this logic may express the stigma effect that exerts itself upon the youths from the outskirts, conditioning their perceptions and practices, in a world where exclusion and self-exclusion feed each other in a constant game. The only certainty in this world is that there are no universal norms.

The quantitative and qualitative data brings about important clues for comprehending how the young adults perceive and deal with the violence. We must begin by pointing out the fact that the notion of violence is not indicated as monolithic, but appears, rather as fragments of social life. For some, it is perceived in a twisted way: it seems common and naturalized, like a fatality that happens because it has to happen. Others describe the various forms of violence, which range from physical confrontation and family problems, to drugs, alcoholism, racial discrimination and social exclusion.

In second place, violence does not seem to have one single and absolute value connotation. On the contrary, it is seen as an instrument: it can be valid or not, depending on why, what for and against whom it is practiced. For example, it is valid as a way of defense, in case of aggression, humiliation, mugging and robbery. It is also valid as an answer to provocation, when someone stares at them, for example. And, in certain cases, it is comprehensible when employed in order to obtain satisfaction in relation to aspirations that, otherwise, would remain frustrated.

The representations of the phenomenon are the product of the mental construction connected to reality on the one hand, and of a real construction that is built from the situations lived by the youths and recorded in their memories and from the social relations established during their lives on the other. Thus, violence is a common and daily phenomenon in their everyday lives, and many of them have already witnessed situations connected to theft, homicide, mugging, rape, drug dealing and etc.

It is important to point out that this "anything goes" ideology has two faces. If, on one hand, it expresses the need for defense due to the loss of credibility of norms and a consequent uncertainty and unpredictability in social relations, on the other hand, it contributes to eroding the bonds of solidarity and to reinforcing mistrust and negative expectations. This generates further disbelief and uncertainty.

In relation to the family situation, according to data based on the home samples, in the great majority, the youths come from complete nucleus families. However, a great number of them live with only one parent. All of them

attribute great importance to family, and on a list of importance, this institution appears as the most relevant aspect in their lives. Nevertheless, the family itself is also severely criticized by the youths, who seem to be looking for more traditional models for it, since it has been losing its socializing function.

Apparently, here the relations are also ambiguous and complex. Undoubtedly, the family provides the young adults with affectionate and social bonds, and it definitely represents a space in which mistrust is minimized and solidarity is possible. However, on another hand, not always is the parents' authority based on practical reason, since most of the time, the norms of coexistence transmitted by them to their children are inefficient and inadequate when dealing with the outside world.

This generates a great gap between youth's expectations in relation to the family and in relation to what the family is actually capable of giving them. The parents are criticized for not establishing limits for their kids, for not being able to support them in their needs and for not knowing the reality in which they live. So, their education comes from the streets, where they are free and learn about life.

The data related to education and work indicate some surprises and contradictions, which are certainly present in the lives of the young adults. In the poor areas, the number of youths who are studying is high. However, although the number of studying students is high, their grades are low, exemplified by the large number of young adults who are over 14 and are still in Elementary School. Their participation in the job market is relatively low, but among those who work, the proportion of those with registered jobs is high. Finally, as they get older, one can notice an increase in the number of youths who neither work nor study.

It is in the focused groups that the youths manifest their anguish in relation to the job market, to education as the strategy to conquer a job, as well as to the lack of occupational opportunity. According to Madeira (1998), the difficulty in getting a job specially affects the group with low levels of schooling, bringing about unfortunate consequences in their way of living, and withdrawing from them the incentives to think on the long term and make plans for the future.

The interviewed youths generally looked for temporary jobs, as an obligatory answer to their survival needs and their consumer aspirations. The material compensation of such employment is clearly insufficient.

Their work is not a source of satisfaction, of pleasure, of personal growth, even of safety and social integration. It seems like the young adults are looking for new identities, denying themselves the opportunity of sharing a philosophy that connects social identity, moral duty, and pleasure in regular jobs. At the same time, though, many young adults believe in education,

and a great number of them show very realistic professional expectations. Such ambiguities express nothing less than the contradictions that structure the existence of the youths in the poor areas.

On the other hand, one of the effects of exclusion doubtlessly manifests itself when some young adults affirm that they don't want to be low-wage construction workers, and that the only alternative in order to have some comfort in life or to move up socially is to become robbers or associate with drug dealers.

However, expectations for the future are less clear when some youths refer to their limitations, pointing out a "life of crimes" as the only way out, in which their most desired dream is to become a drug dealer. In this sense, no future exists for them, since it it is directly connected to death and lack of hope. More than a far off idea, as would be expected from such young individuals, death becomes an immediate and concrete possibility.

The perceptions of youths in relation to the gangs and their direct and indirect experiences with them show that the gang/crew model found in Brazil does not specifically follow the one found in American society. The gangs analyzed in this research have characteristics that are more informal and a less rigid internal structure. However, three characteristic have to be pointed out: first, there are significant differences in attitude and social economy between the youths involved with gangs, in the past or present, and other youths. Second, to join and remain in a gang, it is necessary to go through rigid processes, oriented by a value code, many times associated to ritual activities. Third, the gangs are not disorganized groups, since they have leaders capable of applying their internal rules and organizing participation.

Perhaps precisely because of its relative informality and low organizational rigidity, any group that has more than two or three individuals can already be considered a gang, which is criticized by the interviewed. In the opinion of these youths, the gangs are identified and typified as groups of graffiti painters, thieves, robbers, drug dealers, etc. The fact that a youth is connected to a gang can lead him/her to graffiti, but also to get involved in a series ozf contravention and delinquency activities.

The daily lives of these young adults is ruled by certain codes, beliefs and values, some of which are shared by the youths of the outskirts, in general, and others which are very particular. The behavior found in the gangs/crews has a particular sense and a structure of meanings for those who live and deal with it.

Only by entering this world of representations was it was possible to comprehend the violence existing, its laws, principles and the importance of certain behaviors like "the look that kills". Their daily routine is shown as a reality interpreted by men, and that has a subjective result of a coherent world for them (Berger & Luckman, 1985)

Joining a gang works as an option for the youths that, as was mentioned previously, feel socially excluded. The gang is seen as an alternative space, a sphere of relations in which they are respected and protected. Moreover, through illicit activities, joining a gang can prove to be fun, on occasion, and might also provide certain opportunities to make easy money.

For almost all of those interviewed, the use of violence is perceived as something valid, observing some rules: not to steal from elderly people, not to steal in the areas in which they live, not to steal from the head of a family, steal from the rich and from the "bodinhos". These rules, though, are not strictly followed by all. One of the groups interviewed declared that they robbed even from the people who received money support from the government to keep their children in school. On the other hand – because of a high degree of uncertainty and disbelief, the imprecise meaning of future, the negative expectations that feed their opportunities for a better living – life is worth very little to these youths. The evaluation of a crime and its limits depends a lot on the circumstances. There is no *a priori* moral for them: the circumstances determine who, where and how a person can or cannot kill.

The gangs do graffiti, rob small and medium establishments and the money gained is used for self-pleasure, like buying objects, drugs and guns. Rarely does the result of the thefts and muggings go to the gang itself, and such activities are done by two or three of the members of the group. It is common for the youths to carry guns, for they consider the gun an object of personal defense that imposes respect. Physical fights rarely happen because they were substituted by the use of guns.

The reason why the gangs/crews enter in conflict calls attention. One of the main reasons is territorial power, i.e., the division of the areas in which each group has a specific space. To enter another gang's area is a provocation. "Staring" is also a form of lacking respect that might lead to a "war".

Drugs, specially alcohol, medicine, and marihuana are used constantly. However, merla is not appreciated, although it is used a lot, apparently because of the unpredictable behavior it originates.

Girls play an important role in the gangs, albeit different from the boys' role. They are responsible for covering up for their boyfriends and friends. They have sex with the members of the gang and get guns easier than the boys.

Compared to the American gangs and the French "galères", the Brazilian gangs/crews don't present the same model and organization. Actually, the empirical material collected indicates that it is possible to find many differences between the American gangs and the Brazilian ones.

Some groups of young adults from the outskirts of Brasilia incorporate rituals, denominations, structure and symbolic equipment, and many of them are similar to the North American gangs. However, once they are

analyzed by their cultural reference, one notices that this imitation involves local recreations and new interpretations of the original model.

Effectively, the majority of the gangs/crews analyzed present a more informal character with a more flexible internal structure, even if they have defined leaders, rules to become and to remain a member that follow rigid processes and are oriented by codes and values and often associated with ritualistic activities. So these are not American "gangs" or the French "galères", but the gangs and crews from Brasilia: closed groups that create private codes and languages that are part of the dynamic of the mass culture. Together with other actors, they characterize urban violence in the country in this end of century.

Groups that were close to this "mythic" model of gangs in the outskirts of Brasilia were the "graffiti gangs". They are a group of young adults that, in addition to painting graffiti, also steal, rob and mug. Violence can be used to support their criminal activities, and it also can show power, influence, "attitude", "respect" and "consideration" in their territories or when facing other rival "gangs". These "graffiti gangs" normally have defined leaders and identify themselves by distinctive signs.

On the other hand, there is an overlapping of activities in the gang's/crew's, and to belong to a graffiti gang may or may not mean involvement with drugs or drug dealing. There are also other kinds of groups, more organized or more informal, which are oriented to practice theft, robbery and drug dealing.

To belong to a gang or crew is not only a way to spend time: it is the search for a place with a position, it is insertion in a game of rivalries, it is the search for a social identity within the ambit of a culture, for ways that may or may not lead to delinquency. In this search, the value referential expressed by the gangs involve social injustice, rejection to segregation, consciousness of status difference, and criticism over the lack of respect and consideration.

Nevertheless, if on one hand, there is denial of an unjust and discriminative social order, on the other, clearly, there is a mirroring of the main values dominant in society. These values are struggle for power, need for social recognition, access to material goods, search for prestige etc, which orient diffuse demands when facing their problems.

Therefore, the gang presents itself as a way of socializing the youths looking for alternative forms of inclusion, with similar values, but different with norms and procedures. In this sense, to rob, mug, sell drugs, even though illicit, are actions considered as valid by gang members, because the product of such transactions allows them to come across easy money, to buy things they consider important. Besides that, robberies and muggings also provide a certain cohesion and a common goal for the whole group, since the risk is shared either due to direct involvement in the action, or because of the complicity of the action, even if it is an individual or small group action.

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All are interviewed, whether victims or criminals, "buddies" or bandits. Their speech and actions are ambiguous; work, not work, study, not study, future, present, death, faith in life, sociability, territorial stigma, identity, violence, peace, bandits, heroes, creativity, all appear as characteristics of these contradictory and rebellious youths.

The data obtained are constructions of the reality and of the actions of youths who are socially excluded. They have low insertion in the job market and a conflicting relationship with the principles and laws in force in society. They live on the edge of the drug and delinquency world and have experience in conflicts with social institutions. Thus, the gang/crew works as a way to establish a connection with their buddies, within the same territory and with shared feelings. Its around this space that gangs/crews will develop their daily routine, until society is capable of offering them other options.

The rappers are different from the gangs, for they have evaluated in terms of constructing a very definite social identity; they also offer a form and a channel of optional expression in regards to violence and criminality. Their music, rap, is the music of youths from the outskirts, a style with life of its own, sung with the use of words that become music. The rappers assume social denunciation as their main role, by using songs that portray the real world with an aggressive discourse. However, these youths do not consider their lyrics as an apology to violence, but rather the fruit of a reality described by those who are their eyewitnesses: the reality is violent. This is why the songs refer to the need to carry a gun, drugs, corruption, economic power and impunity, misery, suffering, life in the outskirts and death, thus reflecting the environment in which the youths live, with their stories and their social exclusion problematic.

Hence, rap assumes the dual function of a central component of leisure activities and of a channel of expression of the revolt felt by the youths, a protest against persecution and disrespect of their rights. In this sense, it seems to be an important element in the formation of a juvenile social identity in the outskirts of the Federal District, as well as a way to keep youths out of gangs and away from crime.

Finally, due to the entire process of social exclusion suffered by them and to the great frustration accumulated, the youths interviewed have few expectations as to their rights, but they denounce the mechanisms of coercion and violence suffered by them on a daily basis.

The police has the responsibility to fight crime and punish the criminals; however, when the youths describe the way they are treated by the police, one notices that there is a need for improvement on both sides.

According to the youths, the police approaches are constant and regular, but do not follow any legal procedures. Checks and frisks are part of the daily routine of a young adult from the outskirts; they are also beaten for no

concrete reason. The simple fact that they are young seems good enough a motive to make them suspects, and this is all the more so when they are in groups, specially in the eyes of the Military Police, which is considered more violent than the Civil Police.

The young adults believe that there is corruption in the police force, related to the denouncement that the police is directly involved with drug dealing and that there are people among the force connected to gun selling. Because of this, the youths do not feel protected, but attacked and black mailed.

Such denouncements disappeared in the home sample research, in which problems with the police are almost never mentioned. Such problems are not present in some of the youth's speeches either, which points out a certain pact between them and the policemen who live nearby and know them personally.

On the other hand, policemen also manifest their unease and dissatisfaction as to the contradictions that they also live with, seen within their own prism. They see the youths as rebellious people because of their family problems, and see themselves as law defenders, justifying their attitude - their approach – as necessary in order to protect the society. They recognize, though, that they mistreat the poor youths who live in the outskirts, in comparison with the way the treat youths from Plano Piloto, being permissive with the latter, by whom they feel threatened and intimidated due to the asymmetry in the power resources.

The CAS, according to the policemen, is an additional element in this conflicting relationship. This law seemingly takes away police authority and protects juvenile delinquents, without punishing them: the youths are accused of shielding themselves from the law, making fun of the police. The press and human rights institutions are also considered unfair in their perceptions of the police, protecting bandits by spreading friendly news about them.

However, there is one point on which both youths and policemen agree. The EYSC is an institution in which the result of judicial intervention is not only unavailing and inefficient, but also practically negative. This transforms the idea of reintegration of youths in society into myths. They both criticize the institution, and they believe that for it to work, it would have to be institutionally reorganized.

Finally, the opinions of the youths and the policemen in relation to public safety institutions can be analyzed through two different angles. On one side of the question, the perspective of absence – although not nonexistence – of a social contract that defines the universal principles and laws destined to rule collective coexistence at all levels, including daily routines, assuring effective exercise of citizenship and expression of society's legitimate

interests. In other words, although there is already a social contract, it does not fulfill its goals, and the social actors seek to defend themselves by behaving as if such contract did not exist. On the other side, through the optic of a crisis of the formal institutions of social control, that is characterized as a loss in terms of effectiveness and as the use of force and repression as a method. It is important to point out that this crisis of the formal institutions of social control, at same time that it is backed by the aforementioned absence of a social contract, is one of the elements that provoke that absence.

In relation to the first angle mentioned above, the importance of the universality of the laws and principles that constitute the social contract, and the obstacles it faces because of inequalities in societies in fast transformation, must be highlighted. The common norms and values are reached easier when individuals see each other as equals, when the other one is recognized as a moral being, protected by the same rights that each person recognizes as his or hers. In a hierarchic society, with great asymmetries between citizens, one hardly ever finds a level of reciprocity that can be used as an instrument of effective social organization.

On the other hand, as Huntington (1975) and Santos (1993) observed, societies can be based on a rigidly described status, and still possess norms, laws and principles that are universally recognized and obeyed, just as it happens with many traditional societies still existing today. Why do some societies still have social contracts that are not perceived in the social relations? According to the authors, the causes are the accelerated processes of social transformation, which substitute the stability of norms by the unpredictability of behavior, which only has loyalty, codes of value and private interests as values.

The youths interviewed represent the product of several Brazilian generations that have been facing profound and accelerated processes of change: economical, demographic, technological, social and political. And, as a result, these generations were not able to satisfy their aspirations. On contrary, the process of change experimented generated not only new forms of inequality and social exclusion, but also implied, as it happens with all social changes, a spiral of ascendant expectations that are difficult to satisfy.

Transformations over the last four decades happened in a grand way and were not followed by institutional changes of the same magnitude and depth. Because of this, an accentuated difference was generated between the spheres in which the changes actually happened and the other spheres. In the latter, the changes either did not happen, or did not happen with the necessary magnitude, or happened at a much slower pace. Consequently, gaps were established; spaces uncovered by the social contract. Great lacunae were

formed between the different spheres of life in society, with an impact on the functionality of the institutions.

Another component is situated in this point: the effectiveness of the institutional mechanisms to attend the citizens' expectations is increasingly smaller. As it was stated in the beginning of this research, the result is the weakening of institutions and social norms, the vulnerability of the concept of citizenship and the tendency on the part of the individual to isolate. This happens because collective coexistence is seen with alarm, mistrust and hostility.

The acts and consequences become unpredictable, the conducts become less rational, leading to a general disbelief in the norms themselves. This is the situation that is defined as absence of social contract, i.e., such a contract exists, but is not present in the daily routine of each individual. The individuals seek to protect themselves with the resources that they are capable of controlling. At the very limit, they count only upon their most restricted social circles or only upon themselves to solve their difficulties and to achieve their goals.

However, certain individual needs exist that can only be fulfilled by collective coexistence. And, in the absence, inadequacy or insufficiency of preexisting channels to attend this need, the individuals build new modalities of social coexistence, institute other codes of value and of behavior, establish new loyalties, and inaugurate alternative forms of sociability.

One may conclude that the lack of alternatives, the absence of instruments to deal with a globalized and fragmented context, in which changes are constant, lead young people to face situations in which there is no guiding referential, with repercussions in the processes of construction of identity. In an article on language, culture and change, Kramer (1998) refers to violence as a phenomenon that leads to total perplexity and shock when faced with discrimination, exclusion and elimination of the other. Roche (1998), in turn, affirms that in contemporary society the individual responsibility is altered into a profound indifference, in which individualism affirms itself and, in a game of "anything goes", the youths justify violence, which then becomes normal and acceptable.

SFor the researchers, the great challenge was to understand what the youths think, who they are, and their words, images and behavior, without prejudice or judgmental values. In fact, there are no sides to be taken: life and lack of life are described in the same way, and to survive or to die in this perspective is only a game against time. It is up to the readers to reflect on and evaluate what has been happening with a part of youth, the way they feel, the way they behave, the way they face reality and what kind of world they will be able to build in the future.

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