Slums of Asphodel

Urban Violence in Latin America: An Analysis of Responses and Indirect Costs

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the MA degree in Development and Emergency Practice, Oxford Brookes University

Gabriel Tobias
18 September 2012
Abstract

This thesis aims to better understand urban violence in Latin America through a multidisciplinary synthesis of existing research on the responses to urban violence, the indirect costs to urban slums and their residents, and the relationship between responses and indirect costs. This line of investigation builds upon previous literature, creating a typology of indirect costs and proposing the analysis of responses as an integral tool in the search for answers to this debilitating problem which has reinforced poverty and marginalization in the region. We find that: first, the indirect costs of violence have a severe and long-term impact on slums communities; second, there is an important multilevel relationship between the responses and the indirect costs; and third, supporting responses to urban violence has the potential to play a significant role in reducing the impact of violence on a community or city – and that this impact can be reduced. This type of analysis can help illustrate the contextualized relationships between responses and costs and propose adequate solutions for reducing indirect costs through better responses, and therefore deserves further investigation.
Statement of Originality

This thesis is the result of my own independent work/investigation, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged by explicit reference.

Signed ........................................................ Date ........................................

I hereby give consent for my thesis, if accepted, to be available for photo-copying and for inter-library loan, and for the title and summary to be made available to outside organizations.

Signed ........................................................ Date ........................................
Table of Contents

I. Setting the Scene
II. Research
III. A Theoretical Appetizer
IV. Violence: A Brief Introduction
V. Cities and Slums
VI. Main Course: Indirect Costs and Responses
   a. Fear, Trauma, and Stress
   b. Collective Efficacy
   c. Marginalization
   d. Democracy Undermined
   e. Cultural Reproduction of Violence
VII. Other Actors: Church and Mass Media
VIII. Recommendations
IX. Concluding Remarks

List of Tables and Figures

Figure 1: Map of regional homicide rates .......... Page 8
Figure 2: Theory Visualization............................. Page 9
Figure 3: Asset mapping..................................... Page 12
Figure 4: Ecological Framework............................ Page 12
Figure 5: Minor gun deaths................................. Page 18
Figure 6: Homicide rates, selected countries........ Page 19
Figure 7: Homicide rates, population density......... Page 22
Figure 8: IUDOP Survey..................................... Page 27
Figure 9: Rules of Law & Homicide rates............. Page 31
Figure 10: Vigilantism and “social cleansing”....... Page 32
Figure 11: Public vs. Private security.................. Page 32
Figure 12: Male victims and perpetrators............. Page 34
Terminology and Acronyms

Chronic violence: “...contexts in which violence is measured across three dimensions of intensity, space, and time. A working definition is where rates of violent death are at least twice the average for the country income category, and where these levels are sustained for five years or more and where acts of violence not necessarily resulting in death are recorded at high levels across several socialization spaces, such as the household, the neighborhood, and the school, contributing to the further reproduction of violence over time.” (Pearce, 2007)

Intervention: Intervention is understood here as an investment of outside resources which aims to support a community, city, or individuals residing within them.

Mano Dura: literally 'strong hand' in Spanish, this term refers to militarized security policies. The specific policies vary from country to country, but all involve increased incarceration and operations by state forces against criminal organizations.

Slum: “a heavily populated urban area characterized by substandard housing and squalor” (UN-HABITAT).

--

ECLAC: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

FMLN: Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front – left-wing former rebels, currently the ruling party in El Salvador

GINI: Measure of inequality among frequency distribution of incomes on a scale of 0.0 (most equal) to 1.0 (least equal)

GDP: Gross Domestic Product

IADB: Inter-American Development Bank

IUDOP: University Institute of Public Opinion (El Salvador)

LAPOP: Latin American Public Opinion Project

UNDP: United Nations Development Programme

UNODC: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
Acknowledgements

We often speak of 'debts' of gratitude, and if such a thing can be calculated I am surely deep in the hole. The thesis which you are, in theory, about to read, and indeed the entire Master's programme could not have been completed without the support of many. At Oxford Brookes, Prof. David Sanderson was a great discussion partner, always enthusiastic, and an excellent guide in professional pursuits. At Oxfam, Amonah Achi was a superb manager and a welcoming host in Mexico. I would be remiss to not thank her and her family, Thomas and Soyinka, for providing such a beautiful castle in which to write! Most of all, my deepest appreciation goes to my family and friends. Some slaved through early drafts and half-baked ideas, some shared in collective stresses and frustrations, and some provided a warm respite from the stew of mental agitation (and some did all!). I can only hope that I will be able to repay these debts someday. There is one thing I can say for certain: if the world had more of the love that I have been lucky enough to receive, there would be a great deal less violence to write about.
“For brave Macbeth – well he deserves that name –
Disdaining fortune, with his brandish’d steel,
Which smoked with bloody execution”

– Macbeth, Act 1, Scene 2

“We stopped at one corner to pick up the garbage, and we all got out of the truck. Then a car pulled up behind us and a man started shooting at us with an automatic rifle. I ran and hid behind a building, one guy got hit in the leg, he fell down. They shot us and they shot the truck and then drove away.”

“Why did they do that? They weren't trying to steal anything?”
“No, the thing is that the owner of truck owes somebody money. And I guess he didn't pay.”

“So now you have to find a new job?”
“No. I will go back tomorrow. There aren't any other jobs.”

– conversation with J, Guatemala City

“Violence is set in motion with physical carnage, but it doesn't stop there. Violence reconfigures its victims and the social milieu that hosts them. It isn't a passing phenomenon that momentarily challenges a stable system, leaving a scar but no lasting effects. Violence becomes a determining fact in shaping reality as people will know it, in the future.”

– Carolyn Nordstrom
I. Setting the Scene

The images of urban slums come easily. Rows upon rows of dilapidated shacks interlaced with waste-strewn alleyways, gleaming luxury towers in the background. Stick-figure children in misfitting clothes kicking a can down the street. A bleary-eyed man stumbling from the gutter back to the liquor store. An elderly indigenous woman straining under the weight of produce being brought to market. Pervasive fear is not so easily illustrated. There are the plaintive pleadings from mothers to their children to get home early, the occasional loud cracks that impose pauses on conversations, the blank stares as crowds gather around half-covered bloody corpses. Violence hides in the shadows, only revealing itself in brief moments of trauma. And yet for millions of slums dwellers around the world, especially in Latin America, fear and violence are ever-present, polluting community values, perverting social structures, and preventing residents from rising out of marginalization and poverty. It is these indirect costs – not the physical toll of violence, but its secondary effects on individuals, communities, and societies – which this dissertation seeks to understand in the context of the urban slums of Latin America. The working hypothesis is that responses to ongoing violence at different levels (individual, community, society, and structural) play a crucial role in determining the indirect costs – as opposed to the acts of violence themselves – and that an analysis of responses will lead to better understanding of those costs as well as potential methods for reducing them by working to improve responses in tandem with overall violence reduction strategies.

Urban violence has had a heavy toll in the cities of Latin America, felt most strongly in the poorer areas of town\textsuperscript{iii}. Every single one of the twenty cities worldwide with the highest homicides per 100,000 population (2011) is in the region, and forty-two of the top fifty\textsuperscript{iv}. The UNODC says the situation is “nearing a crisis point”\textsuperscript{v}, while others argue that there is already a need for intervention on humanitarian grounds\textsuperscript{vi} and propose that “genocide” is the only adequate way to describe what has happened to youth in Latin America\textsuperscript{vii}. The number of murders in the region's cities is truly shocking: tens of thousands, mostly young men, sent to early graves each year. In 2005 the direct costs of violence in Guatemala were $2.4 billion (7.3% of GDP): more than double the costs of that year's Hurricane Stan, and more than double the budget of the Ministries of Agriculture, Health, and Education combined\textsuperscript{viii}. In 2007 Mexico estimated a loss of $9.7 billion from urban crime and violence\textsuperscript{ix}. The direct costs of

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure1.png}
\caption{Figure 1}
\end{figure}
violence – loss of life and serious injuries – have been heavily studied across the region, and many have dug deep into structural and contingent factors searching for the causes of violence. This dissertation aims to follow a different path towards unraveling the fuller impact and potential solutions for urban violence in Latin America. Here the focus is not on tracing the relationship between the multifarious causes of violence and its direct costs, but instead on the relationship between the responses to violence and its indirect costs. The approach is multidisciplinary, combining psychology, anthropology, and criminology with more macro concepts of the processes of conflict, marginalization, and governance. This thesis builds upon the research of several scholars in recent years who began to understand two important things about urban violence: first, how sustained violence impacts on individual capacities and social structure, generating significant indirect costs far beyond physical injuries; and second, how particular responses to violence at different levels are instrumental – often in lasting and negative ways – in shaping future developments.

Figure 2
II. Research

“You plan a tower that will pierce the clouds? Lay first the foundation of humility.” – Saint Augustine

This thesis is based on a comprehensive, multidisciplinary literature review which proposes the analysis of responses to violence as a valuable tool in understanding the indirect costs of violence. The existing literature does not contain authoritative, final answers to research questions proposed here. This thesis binds together a variety of academic disciplines and approaches to establish a framework for understanding both responses and indirect costs, as well as open up new strategies for untangling the Gordian knot of urban violence. More in-depth and contextualized field research is needed to further this line of analysis, but the time and resources required for such an investigation are not within the scope or means of this thesis. A literature review helps to frame the key issues and highlight potential routes and important questions for further investigation.

This dissertation proposes the following research questions, context, and concepts.

Research Questions:

1. What are the indirect costs of chronic urban violence on slum communities and residents in Latin America?
2. What have been the responses to urban violence that slum communities and residents participate in or are affected by?
3. What is the relationship between the responses and the indirect costs?
4. Is the analysis of responses an effective tool for analyzing urban violence? What interventions might such an analysis propose?

Context

This work focuses on and draws lessons from several countries in Latin America from the 1980s, when violence began to rise significantly, until the present day. These countries are: Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Colombia, Venezuela, Brazil, and Haiti. These are not case studies per se, but instead taken as representative hosts of cities with urban slums and high violence in the region. In addition, the urban violence in these seven countries has received considerable and varied investigatory attention, allowing for a complete and broad-based literature review. The objective is not to be able to make definitive statements about those particular countries or cities, as all have
highly contextualized characteristics of violence. The goal of this analysis is to draw general lessons about responses and impacts across a wide variety of environments.

Concepts

Before moving on to further analysis, it is important to understand what is meant by 'indirect costs', and why these costs and the responses to violence are important. The indirect costs refer to 'assets' that will either be lost or not obtained due to violence or responses to violence – which is to say, assets that would have been retained or obtained without violence or, at least, with different responses. This definition is based on the ECLAC definition for indirect losses from natural disastersx. These more strictly financial calculations are adapted to the assets of slum residents through the “urbanized” versions of the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach crafted by Carole Rakodixi and Caroline Moserxii. Each of the five broad types of indirect costs described in this research impacts on one or more of the six asset types (political is included here – see Figure 3). Indirect costs of violence are identified by, among others, the Buvinic et al (1999) and Londoño and Guerrero (1999) studies for the Inter-American Development Bankxiii xiv, the Agostini et al study for the London School of Economics (2008)xv, and the Fuentes paper for UNDP (2005)xvi as an important area for further study. The importance of responses to violence – understood here as the actions taken by individuals, groups, or institutions which attempt to reduce the risk of victimization to themselves or others – is highlighted by many of the leading scholars of urban violence, especially Pearcexvii and Moserxviii, as well as an important World Bank report on community responses to violencexix. In this research both responses and indirect costs are conceptualized within the Ecological Framework for violence used by the World Health Organization, linking causes and effects between individual, community, society, and structural levelsxx (see Figure 4). This thesis synthesizes previous works to create a typology of five main indirect costs, and trace the role of responses within each of them.
III. A Theoretical Appetizer

Within the existing literature, five types of indirect costs of violence can be identified. These costs are interrelated in important ways. The different costs overlap and combine, and the responses play a fundamental intervening role between the acts of violence and the indirect impacts. These characteristics and relationships are discussed in brief here, and expanded upon in later sections.

The first indirect cost is concerned with the fear, trauma, and stress that are created by proximity to violence or by past victimization. Psychological studies have shown how severe this impact can be\(^{xxi}\). The stress of living with fear can cause serious mental and physical illnesses, and prevent people from reaching their full educational or professional potential. Trauma can have especially powerful effects on children and youth, reducing the quality of their lives over the long term. In addition, many studies have shown that a high percentage of violent offenders were victimized as children\(^{xxii}\) – one method by which violence can reproduce itself. Dependence on alcohol and drugs are often a consequence of trauma and stress, reducing quality of life and increasing the potential for future violence. The reduction in quality of life for people victimized or living in proximity to violence can come through several different channels. Anthropological studies of urban slums in situations of chronic violence confirm the predictions of the psychological studies\(^{xxiii}\). However, past is not always prologue; not everyone in this situation suffers these effects. The literature also identifies protective factors, the most important of which being a sense of social connection\(^{xxiv}\). The emotional and physiological responses to violence can have severe long term effects, but are not an automatic consequence of exposure to violence. There are interventions which can reduce those effects\(^{xxv}\). However, local protective factors are worn away by chronic violence, and the interventions which might support victims are often missing in these impoverished and marginalized communities.

The second indirect cost is concerned with the fear, trauma, and stress that are created by proximity to violence or by past victimization. Psychological studies have shown how severe this impact can be\(^{xxi}\). The stress of living with fear can cause serious mental and physical illnesses, and prevent people from reaching their full educational or professional potential. Trauma can have especially powerful effects on children and youth, reducing the quality of their lives over the long term. In addition, many studies have shown that a high percentage of violent offenders were victimized as children\(^{xxii}\) – one method by which violence can reproduce itself. Dependence on alcohol and drugs are often a consequence of trauma and stress, reducing quality of life and increasing the potential for future violence. The reduction in quality of life for people victimized or living in proximity to violence can come through several different channels. Anthropological studies of urban slums in situations of chronic violence confirm the predictions of the psychological studies\(^{xxiii}\). However, past is not always prologue; not everyone in this situation suffers these effects. The literature also identifies protective factors, the most important of which being a sense of social connection\(^{xxiv}\). The emotional and physiological responses to violence can have severe long term effects, but are not an automatic consequence of exposure to violence. There are interventions which can reduce those effects\(^{xxv}\). However, local protective factors are worn away by chronic violence, and the interventions which might support victims are often missing in these impoverished and marginalized communities.

The second indirect cost is concerned with the fear, trauma, and stress that are created by proximity to violence or by past victimization. Psychological studies have shown how severe this impact can be\(^{xxi}\). The stress of living with fear can cause serious mental and physical illnesses, and prevent people from reaching their full educational or professional potential. Trauma can have especially powerful effects on children and youth, reducing the quality of their lives over the long term. In addition, many studies have shown that a high percentage of violent offenders were victimized as children\(^{xxii}\) – one method by which violence can reproduce itself. Dependence on alcohol and drugs are often a consequence of trauma and stress, reducing quality of life and increasing the potential for future violence. The reduction in quality of life for people victimized or living in proximity to violence can come through several different channels. Anthropological studies of urban slums in situations of chronic violence confirm the predictions of the psychological studies\(^{xxiii}\). However, past is not always prologue; not everyone in this situation suffers these effects. The literature also identifies protective factors, the most important of which being a sense of social connection\(^{xxiv}\). The emotional and physiological responses to violence can have severe long term effects, but are not an automatic consequence of exposure to violence. There are interventions which can reduce those effects\(^{xxv}\). However, local protective factors are worn away by chronic violence, and the interventions which might support victims are often missing in these impoverished and marginalized communities.

The second indirect cost is the loss of collective efficacy amongst the community members living in a situation of chronic violence. Violence degrades their ability to build and effectively utilize social capital, weakening, destroying or perverting the traditional community responses to violence. This is brought about through two channels: the loss of shared public space which reduces the inherent opportunities for dialogue and participation, and the loss of social trust. The overwhelming response to chronic violence is to withdraw, to reduce risk by limiting exposure. Studies from violent urban areas around the world have shown how drastically people cut their time in public places and stop participating in community organizations\(^{xxvi}\). In many poorer areas with limited access to the formal justice system, community organizations play a key role in resolving conflicts. Women especially can play a significant role in these informal mechanisms, a role they are denied in other power structures. The withdrawal to private spaces which results from fear of violence undercuts the utility and role of community conflict resolution, meaning that even simple conflicts have a greater potential for exploding into
violence. The lack of opportunities for participation is only one side of the coin: the other result of the indirect impacts from fear and trauma is a dramatic loss of social trust. Community social structures lose their vitality, impacting beyond local conflict resolution to advocacy efforts with local government for a host of services and needs. These effects are, again, preventable to a great degree – but also tied deeply to existing social patterns of exclusion and marginalization.

The third indirect cost is that of social, political and economic marginalization. The loss of collective efficacy weakens the community's ability to act in a unified manner, but the responses to violence which predominate in Latin America marginalize people living in poor areas even further. People living in violent areas are heavily stigmatized by public policy responses and media-driven perceptions of residents of these areas. Violent slums are segregated from the rest of the population, physically, legally, and in the public conscience. Entire communities are dealt with as enemies in a war which supposedly only targets criminal enterprises. Young people are especially victimized by these factors, treated as criminals by police and denied job opportunities because of their addresses or appearances. Scapegoating becomes commonplace; with no solutions in sight, everyone tries to find someone to blame. Their blame usually falls on the young, the poor, migrants, or ethnic minorities: groups which are already extremely marginalized. Violent slums are often marked as “no-go” areas by the authorities, denying support to businesses, services to residents, and reinforcing the power of local violent organizations as “pseudo-states”. Residents are forced to depend on a combination of local gangs and patronage networks to meet their needs, unable to afford costs of living in less-violent areas and unable to utilize their resources effectively for economic stability or political power. The responses that drive this social, political, and economic marginalization are beyond the control of local residents. They are a result of misguided, militarized public security policies and officially-sanctioned fear-mongering.

The fourth indirect cost is the undermining of democracy. Living in situations of chronic violence has reduced people's faith in the potential for their governments to provide them with opportunities for a better future. Surveys across the region have shown how beliefs in democratic governance waver under daily violence; people seem to be ready to support authoritarian methods if it means an end to the killings. In their frustration they turn to militarized policing, wholesale incarcerations of “suspected” gang members, politically-linked death squads to eliminate “undesirables”, and restrictions on human rights by military governments responsible for massacres. Frustration with the lack of government action has led to marginalized communities seizing power through lynchings, an expression of “perverse” social capital. The ongoing failure to deal with violence has led to the dissolution of the “democratic promise”: inclusive decision making with respect for the rights and needs of all citizens, and opportunities for a better life through hard work. Some commentators have suggested that the power elite in some Latin American countries purposefully sustain violence and fear in order to justify continued authoritarianism; the overblown power of street gangs (often blamed for far more violence than that for which they are actually responsible) are paraded as boogie-men to scare the population. Regardless of the motivations behind the government's approach, chronic violence has seriously degraded democratic institutions at a local and
structural level. This cost is driven entirely by the response – both on the part of the citizens most affected by violence and from the power elite – that Latin American democracy is, at an essential level, incapable of tackling violence.

The fifth indirect cost is the cultural reproduction of violence. Violence and the failure to deal with it in the present creates a perversion of norms, values, and social relationships which tend to prolong chronic violence and make future reductions in violence even more costly and difficult. The normalization of violence has cultural implications, raising society's tolerance for violent behavior, allowing violent groups and individuals to gain prestige, and diminishing the importance of victims' suffering. The potential for the reproduction of violence underlies and magnifies the other four indirect costs, and taken on its own represents a cost to future generations. Violence redefines gender roles, pushing women's voices to the background and promoting a violent form of masculinity. Generations of children grow up idolizing gang members, copying styles from drug traffickers, playing with toy guns until they are old enough to get real ones. Violence becomes a legitimate means to express oneself and resolve minor disputes. These cultural adaptations become legitimized, and the more ingrained they become the harder it will be to get rid of them. They do not grow only out of responses intended to reduce risk or reduce violent groups; culture simply changes as people adjust to a new environment.

What is clear throughout the literature and commentary on these issues is that violence has complex multi-channel and multi-directional links with processes of marginalization in poor urban areas. Its impact has been profound in many cities of Latin America, not only in casualties but in deeper changes to structure and culture. However, violence is not an alien virus which landed by accident in the poorest parts of these cities. It is part of their history, their origins, their very foundations – and potentially their future as well. In order to understand the impact of violence and the responses to violence, it is necessary to first understand more about the nature of violence in the region and the particular context of urban slums in Latin America.
IV. Violence: A Brief Introduction

“We used to wonder where war lived, what it was that made it so vile. And now we realize that we know where it lives... inside ourselves.”

- Albert Camus

Violence has always existed in human relations. It is both a means of expression and a way to exercise power. Cave paintings and ancient myths speak of battles and warriors; human history has known few periods of extended peace. It should be no surprise that modern humans are violent, considering the advanced killing technology that has been developed and the potential for conflict over increasingly limited resources. For Thomas Hobbes, violence is a natural element of our species' existence; the capacity to do harm to our own brethren was ingrained deep in our souls and could only be contained by the imposition of a powerful 'social order'. Both Bates and Moser argue that violence is representative of the inability to manage conflict. Scholars like Stephen Pinker argue that violence has actually been reduced greatly from earlier human history. This, he claims, is not because humans have changed – social psychologists find that at least 80% of people fantasize about killing someone they don't like – but because the structure of our society increases the incentives for peaceful coexistence and decreases the incentives for violence. He presents a variety of theories for this shift in incentives, including Hobbesian state control, overall increase in quality of life, economic incentives for cooperation, and larger perceived social groups generating empathy towards more. His overall thesis and the relevance and accuracy of the data supporting it have been disputed by other scholars. Regardless of the direction of global trends and averages, violence is clearly not constant across all cultures, and its variations are social, not biological.

Before delving deeper into the nature of violence in Latin America, it is necessary to provide a working definition of violence. The Oxford English Dictionary defines it as:

“The exercise of physical force so as to inflict injury on, or cause damage to, persons or property; action or conduct characterized by this; treatment or usage tending to cause bodily injury or forcibly interfering with personal freedom.”

The two key points in this definition of violence, common to many others, are: the means used, and the intent. However not all violence is equal, regardless of the means and intent. There are two crucial elements missing from this definition which must be included in the working definition for this research. The result is also important – we are not so concerned here with judging the guilt of perpetrators in their intent, but instead understanding the impact of their actions. The impact of a rape is far different from the impact of a fistfight, even though both involve physical force intended to do damage to
persons. This example highlights the second missing element: cultural context. Some forms of violence are acceptable in every culture under certain conditions, and violence that has the greatest impact is usually violence which falls far outside of these acceptable norms. Punching a young man in a boxing ring elicits cheers, punching an old lady in a church tends to be frowned upon. These norms are crucial to understanding the nature of violence, the role of violent people or groups, and the impact of violence. Our understanding of violence cannot be determined through a narrow universal definition, as different cultures and different people within those cultures perceive it and feel its impact in different ways. Thus there are four main evaluative criteria for this research: means, intent, result, and context.

It is also necessary to define what we are not including in our understanding of violence. In this research we are concerned with interpersonal violence, not structural or symbolic violence. These are both extremely important and valid understandings of violence, and many scholars have proposed that these are the real underlying causes of interpersonal violence. Sanchez describes a “self-feeding cycle” where structural violence – neoliberal policies, inequality, exclusion, poverty, and alienation – generate both political and criminal violence against this oppression. Many feminist scholars have also tied the symbolic violence which relegates women to a secondary, servile role in society to the rising tide of femicides in Latin America. However we focus on interpersonal violence because we are interested in understanding the role of specific responses to violence at multiple levels in generating specific indirect costs. Responses to structural or symbolic violence are poorly studied – and their linkages with interpersonal violence also deserve much fuller attention -- but in the context of the research methods used here their inclusion is problematic. It is also difficult to isolate “responses” to structural or symbolic violence. Sending your children to school could potentially be categorized as a response to structural or symbolic violence – but is that really the motivation of the parent? Are they responding to the threat of potential harm to their children's future, following the cultural norms for education, or simply trying to get them out of the house for the day? Structural and symbolic violence merit much greater discussion, especially in Latin America, but for the above reasons are not included in our working definition of violence.

The means and the intents of violence vary greatly and often become confused in areas of high violence. Hannah Arendt spoke of the “all-pervading unpredictability, which we encounter the moment we approach the realm of violence.” As acceptable norms are breached, people begin to wonder: Who is doing this? Why are they doing this? According to Winton, as these lines become blurred, “cultures of violence” increase. There is a desire to either incorporate the violent acts as part of the existing society or ostracize the perpetrators – usually both desires exist simultaneously. Domestic violence against women, endemic in many parts of Latin America, is an example of perpetrators and violence existing within social norms. It is only in the past decade that several Central American countries made domestic violence a crime. Almost no murderers of women, most of whom are current or former partners of their victims, are ever brought to face justice. In 2010 a Guatemalan woman who had been severely abused by her husband was granted asylum in the United States because of the danger she would face if
returned – a new precedent. A violent, hegemonic masculinity that pervades much of Latin America allows violence against women to be given secondary status. A chorus of local and international NGOs is fighting to change this, to demand a public policy response to violence against women and other vulnerable groups like street children. Some advances have been made at the legislative level, but the priority for anti-violence efforts in the region is elsewhere.

In 2004 Honduran Security Minister Oscar Alvarez made a bold statement: according to him, the street gangs of Central America, most notably MS-13 (Mara Salvatrucha) and Calle 18 (18th Street Gang), were building ties to the international terrorist organization Al-Qaeda. This alliance was shocking to everyone, not least of all the three organizations mentioned. Although there was no truth to Alvarez’ statement, the underlying message was clear: be afraid of young men with tattoos. As with many other governments in Latin America, the Honduran government took it upon themselves to assign blame for the horrendous acts of violence that had begun to plague the region – acts of violence so heinous that they could not be incorporated in any way into social norms or processes. Heads of victims thrown in public places, grenade attacks on public transportation, bodies with messages carved in blood meant for other gangs found laying the street. As a man from Guatemala exclaimed in horror: “Who is teaching them these things!”

Street gangs sprouted in Latin America from a combination of unemployed young men and the absence of the state in the slums where they lived. From their informal origins as local clubs with rules of pride and honor, they evolved into criminal organizations willing to use violence to achieve their means. In Central America this was fed by the return of deportees from the United States who had been exposed to a virulent gang culture in cities like Los Angeles. Gangs became ambitious and competitive, engaging in small-scale but profitable activities like drug dealing, robbery, and extortion. Estimates are that up to 15% of local youth join gangs, although most studies have found

Figure 5

Deaths from gun violence among minors 1987-2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Deaths</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>3,937</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel/Palestine</td>
<td>467</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

rates around 3-5%. The average membership of a gang is 20-25%. An IUDOP study in El Salvador found that the vast majority of members joined to “hang out”, because their friends were in the gang, or to escape problems at home – or as one Salvadoran gang member put it: “for respect, to have friends, for unity, protection, and power.” Residents feared them, but in many cases also turned to them to provide what the government did not: security and basic services. The sprawling cities of Brazil are littered with private fiefdoms where gangs provide systems of justice and social support programs. However the reach of the gangs rarely extended beyond the slums, and most violence was between gang members. Yet as violence continued to increase, fed not by street gangs but by vicious and highly-armed conflicts in the drug trade between powerful cartels*, gang members were publicly assigned responsibility. Given the government's lack of substantive involvement with these slum communities and their predisposition towards active exercise of the 'monopoly of violence', it is hardly surprising that the public policy response to rising violence was nothing less than a counter-insurgency. There was little desire to understand the roots of violence or the needs of the hardest hit communities. Special forces stormed favelas in Rio, paramilitaries began eliminating “undesirables” in Colombia, and in Central America the police imprisoned anyone who even looked like a gang member. Even left-wing leaders like FMLN President Funes in El Salvador engaged in these tactics, despite his campaign pledges to take a more socially-focused approach to violence. These 'mano dura' strategies have had little impact on violence reduction over the long term, and most scholars agree that they have increased the potential for future violence and decreased the quality of life of slum residents.

Figure 6

Homicide Rates per 100,000 population in selected countries

- Mexico
- Guatemala
- El Salvador
- Honduras
- Colombia
- Venezuela
- Brazil
- Haiti
Chronic extra-normal violence presents a significant problem for society. Individual acts of violence can be punished, and that process of justice actually serves to reinforce cultural values and norms. But punishment itself is not a solution for chronic violence; if the problems are that severe, a slight change to the violence incentives will have little impact. Yet punishment's important tradition-affirming role, identified by Emile Durkheim, gives it great weight in public life. If cultural values and norms cannot be sustained against these transgressions by the imposition of justice, they begin to lose their power and are slowly replaced by values and norms that incorporate greater violent behavior. Victims begin to believe that their suffering is a natural part of life, and children grow up recognizing violence as a key element for success and pride.

In these processes we begin to see how important the role of responses to violence is in determining its full impact. At the individual, community, social, and structural levels these responses are based on a limited perception of resources and options and weighed down by histories of conflict and oppression. The history of these cities, and the formation of urban slums in particular, has great influence in the genesis of perceptions of the problem of violence and eventual responses.
V. Cities and Slums

“...personal disorganization, mental breakdown, suicide, delinquency, crime, corruption, and disorder.”

- Louis Wirth (1938) on the inevitable characteristics of cities

Cities capture universal attention, loved and reviled, sought and fled. Teeming masses, impersonal relationships, dark alleys; it takes little convincing to believe that violence is probable if not inevitable in such urban environments. Indeed this was the belief of the founders of urbanism, Louis Wirth among them. There was simply no way to throw so many different kinds of people, so many potential conflicts of interest, all into one pot and not expect sparks to fly. Yet cities are also the commanding heights of national and global power structures, lands of opportunity, each empty lot a potential skyscraper, today's street vendor tomorrow's wealthy capitalist. In the beginning, Fear lived side by side with Hope in the minds of the new urban migrants and in the policies of the power elite. For cities in Latin America, the confluence of the desires of these two groups was short-lived. Their perceptions and experiences of urban life, wrought in a half-century of civil conflicts, would fundamentally shape their responses to the urban violence that began to rise at the end of the twentieth century.

Migrants came to the blooming urban areas for a variety of economic and social reasons. The traditional, agricultural way of life became unviable for many rural families and communities. Jobs in the industrialized economy, and the education necessary to advance any type of career, were largely found only in the main cities. In addition, the flaring of rural insurgencies and heavy-handed military responses drove many to cities for safety. With the combination of these push and pull factors, many left the land their families and communities had lived on for centuries for a new life in the blooming capital cities.

The infrastructure of these cities was entirely unprepared for such a dramatic flow of new residents. Governments accustomed to ruling through a monopoly on violence had no intention of providing housing or basic services to the newcomers. They were happy to have them out of trouble-making rural areas and into the engorged urban labor force. By and large the official response to the construction of informal settlements and informal community structures was neglect; so long as the migrants kept working and didn't cause problems for the more established inhabitants, they were content to simply avert their eyes. Migrants went about building shacks in hazardous areas, forming politically powerless but self-led community organizations, and above all, working. Cities may not have been supportive environments for their culture, traditions, or social empowerment, but at least they could earn enough to get by and perhaps enough to send money to relatives struggling in rural areas. However their existence was never acknowledged as a legitimate part of the city. They were, in Thrasher's analogy, “interstitial areas in
the city” where “life, rough and untamed” arose, just “as in nature foreign matter tends to collect and cake in every crack, crevice, and cranny.”

Unfortunately the marginalization and vulnerability of these poor communities went further than benign neglect. Violence began to rise significantly in the 1980s, at the same time as economic problems worsened considerably in many countries throughout the region as structural readjustment policies forced heavy cuts to already bare-bones social programs. The shortage of income and lack of support put many families in desperate situations. This was not a recipe for collective action. Coping strategies were largely individual and almost entirely informal. The power elite was content to keep their heads turned, ignoring the rising violence in poor areas of the city as long as it did not spread beyond those cracks in the otherwise harmonious, foreign investment-friendly reflection of prosperity and modernity in urban Latin America. The public policy responses to the marked increase in violence which began in the 1980s, as Gomariz points out, came often ten years after these trends became clear.

Violent groups, fed by surplus weaponry from civil conflicts, surplus profits from criminal enterprises, gang mentalities exported by deportees from the United States, and empowered by private fiefdoms in the poor areas neglected by the government, were not content remaining in the cracks. Kidnappings, carjackings, robberies, extortions, and daylight assassinations became commonplace in major cities across the region. An IADB study estimated that those living in cities of at least 1 million were seventy percent more likely to experience violence than in cities between 50,000 and 100,000. The call for a public response came not just from the politically inaudible voices of slum dwellers, but “real” citizens as well.

Violence became a defining characteristic of these cities, especially in the slum areas. The death toll and economic costs rose swiftly. The impact was usually understood in those aggregated terms: how many homicides per 100,000 population and what the impact of violence was on the Gross Domestic Product. Simplified fatalistic excuses were offered to support ineffective responses and little attention was paid to the indirect costs of violence on individuals, communities, and the society as a whole. Many claimed that this violence was inevitable, a product of rapid urbanization, or income inequality, or a history of repressive political systems. While there was some truth to each of those explanations, none of them represent a necessary and sufficient condition for the increased level of violence. A global review of 67 major cities showed a clear absence of correlations between the size or growth of a city, and its level of violence. Venezuela has a significantly lower GINI coefficient than Panama, but yet double the annual

Figure 7

Homicide rates by population density of subnational regions, the Americas (2010 or latest available year)
homicide rate. Argentina and Chile were both ruled by savage military regimes in the second half of the twentieth century, but violence in those countries is far below the regional average. It can be taken for granted that some violence, especially in cities loaded with potential for conflict, is inevitable: an estimated 7.3% of any given population has what psychologists refer to as “intermittent explosive disorder.” And yet there seem to be very contingent explanations for why violence is so high and so destructive in certain areas. The next section will look at the role of responses to violence – individual, community, social, and structural – in determining its destructiveness.
VI. Main Course: Indirect Costs and Responses

The responses to urban violence in Latin America have their roots in complex, multilevel processes which reach deep into the social heritage of urbanization and state formation, as well as the human psyche itself. In many ways these responses, at the individual, community, social, and structural level are predictable. The weak social support, public and private, and the legitimized marginalization of slums communities and residents lend themselves to reactionary, individualistic instincts. There is little sense that there is something to be gained by bridging intra- and inter-community barriers, and as the extra-normal violence grows, so does the sense that new ideas are too risky, that the best that can be hoped for is that family and loved ones stay safe. Violence, and the fear of it, becomes “endemic”, in the language of Moser and McIlwaine. The next five sections will detail the public and private responses which arise from this situation and how they have increased the indirect costs of violence. This analysis is organized under the five identified types of indirect costs: fear, trauma, and stress; loss of collective efficacy; social, political, and economic marginalization; undermining of democracy; and, the cultural reproduction of violence.

A. Fear, Trauma, and Stress

“People experience real fear. The response depends on the individual; nonetheless, it is society that constructs the notions of risk, threat, and danger, and generates standardized modes of response, updating both – notions and modes of response – according to the historical period.”

– Reguillo (2001)

Fear, trauma, and stress are produced naturally by living under violence, but the individual and social responses to these situations make their effects far worse. At an individual level, fear, trauma, and stress produce serious problems, especially for those victimized at a young age. Educational and professional achievement can be reduced, physical and mental problems can result (especially drug and alcohol use), and the potential for violence reproduction is increased. The stress of living under violence can cause similar problems even for those who are not directly victimized. There are three main responses which contribute to the intensification of these problems: lack of support for victims, fear-mongering by government and media, and social withdrawal.

Fear is a powerful toxin. It provokes primordial, instinctual, and often irrational
responses in the human mind. Fear makes us forget values, norms, traditions; only one motivation remains – preservation. The stress of living under constant fear is debilitating, not only mentally but physically as well. Biologically, our bodies are meant to endure some stress. The brain chemicals released give us concentration and focus: a deadline at work, a train to catch, holding a piece of ancient pottery or a newborn baby in our hands. Over long periods of time the release of these chemicals no longer promotes concentration and focus, but instead overwhelms our emotional coping capacity. The effects on physical and psychological health can include chronic distress, psychosomatic symptoms, substance abuse, despondency and depression, hypertension, diabetes, coronary problems, and depressed immune systems. Yet these long-term conditions of extreme environmental stress are not an automatic result of living near violent acts, but are created largely by lingering traumas, perceptions of pervasive, existential threats, and the lack of local protective relationships.

The public policy response to urban violence has been overwhelmingly focused on punishing criminals and not on supporting victims. The victims of violence and witnesses of violence, largely concentrated in marginalized areas, are rarely if ever considered as needing support. The language is that of war; dealing with “collateral damage” is of secondary importance to victory over the enemy. Psychosocial support, just now gaining traction in areas of post-war recovery like the Balkans, is not generally seen in the slums of Latin America. The police, with historically poor or non-existent ties to these communities, are often a menace themselves. Without this kind of support for dealing with the trauma of being victimized or witnessing violence, the mental scars go unhealed. People living in these communities do not have access, financially or geographically, to individual or group therapy that might help them deal with these scars. The need is especially pressing for adolescents, whose untreated traumas can literally destroy their lives – and the lives of others. Victimization greatly increases the potential for the victim to become a perpetrator, or at least to have a greater tolerance for violence. Alcohol and drug use skyrocket among those traumatized by violence at an early age, both reducing their own quality of life and increasing the chances that they will be involved in violence (including self-harm) as a result of these addictions. Psychological studies have identified substance abuse as the most common co-morbidity with problems of aggression. More than half of abused women in one study in Nicaragua reported that their husbands were drunk during the abuse, and one-third said that alcoholism was a major cause of all types of violence. Although overall drug use is low in Latin America, some cities have extremely high rates: 40-60% of the population in certain Colombian cities. Lingering traumas are ignored by the social responses to violence, and the repressive, militaristic tactics adopted by state or paramilitary security forces often create more traumas in their own right.

Direct trauma is not necessary for the impact of violence to be felt. The majority of people living in cities with high urban violence feel fear disproportionate to the real risk of violence. This is encouraged by campaigns of fear-mongering and scapegoating conducted by the government and the media. Newspapers and TV reports are filled with bloody corpses and mug shots of suspected gang members every day. Government representatives make sensational statements about the danger posed by common
criminals. Even for those citizens who have never been affected personally by violence, it is easy to feel surrounded by threats. Reguillo calls this “social fear”, a “shared, socially constructed experience”\textsuperscript{lxvii}. Some claim that this is an intentional strategy on the part of the elite to instill the population with fear, thereby allowing authoritarian governments – who, by no coincidence, represent the interests of the elite – to continue ruling. This argument was put forward by Stuart Hall regarding the treatment of an upsurge in muggings in Britain in the late 1970s\textsuperscript{lxviii}. It is argued out that the upsurge in violence is more due to large-scale drug trafficking and the overall dearth of effective law and order mechanisms than small-scale street gangs, and yet street gangs receive disproportionate attention simply because they present easier targets with their tattoos and slum origins. Are the media complicit in this strategy? Or are they simply seeking to attract more customers with gory photos? Whatever the reasons behind the fear-mongering, the result is a population who feel as if they are living under a constant state of siege. A side effect of these public campaigns, the stigmatization of people who live in active gang areas, will be discussed further in the section on marginalization.

B. Collective Efficacy

“Learning how to live means only talking about good things, nothing dangerous. It is better not to talk about dangerous things because in the first instance you don’t know who you are talking to, and another thing is that you can’t do anything. If you just speak for the sake of it, when they look for revenge, how do you defend yourself?”

– Woman, San Salvador\textsuperscript{lxix}

Living under these conditions of constant fear and without support from the government also has a disintegrative effect on the social structure of slum communities, removing the protective factors embedded in social relationships. As discussed earlier, these communities already suffer from weak bonds due to residential instability and the loss of traditional mechanisms. They were not prepared to band together to deal with the increase in violence, and received minimal government support in attempts to control it at the local level. The response to this loss of control was largely one of social withdrawal. In order to protect themselves and their families, they limited their time in public places and limited their participation in public activities, including community organizations\textsuperscript{lxx}. They felt at risk simply being outside their homes, but also worried that their participation in any conflict resolution or community leadership organizations might draw unnecessary attention. This social withdrawal also removes support from the surrounding community for those directly impacted by violence. These relationships have been identified by various studies as crucial in reducing long-term stress and trauma, especially for youth\textsuperscript{lxxi}. Social isolation allowed these problems to fester.
Fear, trauma, and stress have serious effects on the health, well-being, and overall quality of life of people living under situations of urban violence. However these are not automatic consequences of such situations. The lack of support for victims, public fear-mongering, and social withdrawal are all contingent responses to violence that have made heavier the weight of fear, trauma, and stress, victimizing many more than have actually been directly impacted by violence. These impacts contribute directly to further marginalization of the most affected communities, and as we will see in the next section, a loss of local capacity for action.

Collective efficacy is the unified and effective usage of social capital towards group goals. Parents organizing a bake sale to raise money for their children's school supplies, a group of neighbors working together to determine property boundaries, the organization of a petition for a new police station to be presented to the mayor; these are examples of collective efficacy in action. Sampson defines collective efficacy as “social control enacted under conditions of social trust.” Poor communities plagued by violence quickly lose whatever small amount of collective efficacy they once had, leaving them incapable of dealing with even the simplest of issues or advocating for their collective needs with the government. Fear of violence reduces opportunities for collective efficacy as discussed in the previous section. There are two additional sources of damage wrought by responses to violence: loss of civic engagement and public activities, and loss of social trust.

The social withdrawal described in the section on fear, trauma, and stress has knock-on effects for engagement and activities in the community. People stop participating in community organizations, stop opening new businesses, stop attempting to advocate for their collective needs. This can actually be a very effective coping strategy, as was shown in Sao Paulo. But it is not always an intentional strategy, and can have serious negative consequences.

Living under these traumatic situations, many express a sense of being “lost”, disconnected from society. Levi refers to this as the “grey zone”, where people shrink away from social contact. This, he argues, is not a logical attempt to escape the risk of injury but instead an essential loss of the human desire for sociality.

Parallel to the reduction in participation and initiative is the loss of social trust.
People begin to lose faith in the essential capacity for collaboration and support among community members. “Trauma tends to first impact trust at the family and intimate levels, followed by the community level, then the broader social level”\textsuperscript{lxvi}. The increasing isolation can have long-term consequences, as Bar-On warns: “trust can be broken in an instant, but may take years to re-establish”\textsuperscript{lxvii}. Distrust can be pervasive. In Fortaleza, Brazil, 65\% of survey respondents in areas of chronic violence thought that their neighbors “only look out for themselves and cannot be trusted to help one another.”\textsuperscript{lxviii} Fuentes contends that chronic violence causes “processes that involve switching behavior based on expectations of honesty to behavior based on expectations of corruptions and violence.”\textsuperscript{lxix}

Without collective efficacy, slum communities lose the ability to work out local solutions to problems or even present those problems to the authorities in an effective manner. Growth and initiative are stifled, meaning not only that conflict cannot be resolved, but that opportunities for local improvements are left unsought. Both channels of responses link to the next two sections: loss of engagement leads to unchecked marginalization, and the loss of social trust is highly linked to the undermining of democracy.

C. Marginalization

“It is no longer a culture of poverty which prevails: it is the culture of violence, of hostility, of disintegration, of desolation, the life expectancy of being a second class citizen...”

- Koonings and Krujit, 1999\textsuperscript{lxx}

Slum communities are already socially, economically, and politically marginalized; the pattern of responses to violence intensifies and solidifies this process. In Latin America many are “relegated to long-term job informality and severely reduced social mobility in spite of historically high educational levels”; this is especially true for youth\textsuperscript{lxxi}. Residents are segregated, discriminated against, stripped of opportunities for advancement, and actively ignored (other than when they are being arrested). Responses to violence fuel all of this. There are four channels through which these responses intensify and solidify the processes of marginalization: physical and economic segregation, stigmatization and discrimination, unsought opportunities, and political conflict.

The general public policy response to urban violence has been to try and “contain” the problem. The “problem”, from an urban planning perspective, is the slums
themselves. They are cordoned off from the rest of the city in a variety of ways, and local investment is strongly discouraged. Sometimes the residents displace themselves under conditions of severe violence, severing ties and seeking shelter elsewhere. This was the case in Cite Soleil in Port-au-Prince during a particularly bad periodlxxxii. Overall, in Latin America victims of violent crime are 30% more likely to migrate to other countries. This separation is extremely traumatic for children who are left behindlxxxiii. Even when the state is successful in “clearing” an area of criminal organizations, resident may still be displaced by developers hungry for land close to city centers. This was the case in Rio de Janeiro, where both gangs and other slum residents were pushed to the outskirts of the citylxxxiv.

Slums residents, especially youth, are stigmatized and discriminated against. Some of this is official policy – police rounding up “trouble-making” youth, regardless of whether or not they committed a crime. Some is less visible but no less pernicious, like job discrimination or denial of services (such as phone, cable, and banking) based on a person's address. Slums residents are constructed as “the other”, a recipient for the channeling of “fear, blame, and insecurity”lxxxv. This over-exaggerated “fear of anything related to gangs, by appearance or address, is fed by the media who have “given the [gang] a huge symbolic power which opens the door to fear, but also heavy-handed responses by the government without actually looking at the socioeconomic and political model that cultivates these forms of extreme identity.”lxxxvi Some groups have it worse than others. Hume studied the connection between everyday discrimination faced by Haitian migrants in the Dominican Republic and official state violence direct against themlxxxvii. Youth, who are in reality 36.6% of the victims of homicides in Latin America (compared to just 16.2% in Africa and 1.2% in Europe)lxxxviii, are blamed for these problems, excluded from security discussions, and ignored in their particular needslxxxix. This stigmatization can have a cyclical effect: many youth in Port-au-Prince felt so frustrated with the lack of opportunities that using violence to “advance social or economic goals” was justifiablexc.

As discussed in previous sections, social withdrawal causes people to miss out on educational or professional opportunities. This is reflected in the economic impact that violence has on a community. A women's cooperative in Guatemala City where the author worked refused to open a street-front store, even when provided with a grant to cover initial expenses, because of the risk of extortion by local gangs.

Political conflict over slum areas, usually between government and local gangs or criminal organizations, can have severe effects on the residents. Sieder references an “illegal pluralism” in the fluid nature of these conflicts that can “open greater spaces for abuses by powerful actors and further marginalize the poor...”xc Instead of trying to fill the security and services gaps that were exploited by criminal organizations in order to take power, the government often concentrates on destroying the criminal organizationsxci. Winton sums up the situation: “These communities are subject to

* Studies by Dominguez (2010), Marroquín Parducci (2007), and Gayle et al (2007) have disproved the notion that gangs and deportees are the “major responsible parties for the upswing in violent crime”.

29
manipulation by the state, the drug groups, and the elite political sector, and are permanently caught between multiple power systems.”

In their enthusiasm for fighting crime and “containing” violence, public policy responses further marginalize communities which were already poor and excluded. The “progressive securitisation of social space” predicted by Agamben (2005) has ignored existing marginalization and any successes it has had in improved security in wealthier areas of the city has been at the expense of the “majority”\textsuperscript{xci}. Even residents who have no relationship to local violent groups are tarred with the same brush, and combined with the tendency to withdraw from public space in order to reduce risks; few opportunities for advancement or growth remain. An improved response from the government, a response which truly understood and met the needs of the most affected population, could make a difference. But as we shall see in the next section, democracy itself is weakened by responses to chronic violence.

D. Democracy Undermined

“If a delinquent forces someone to hand over car keys and gets behind the wheel of that car, he is already guilty of a crime. So there is no reason to take him to court.”

– President of Haiti (2001) on rationale for mob justice\textsuperscript{xcv}

The widespread emergence of democracy in Latin America in the 1980s was heralded as a new beginning for a region which had been under the yoke of a rainbow of dictators since Independence\textsuperscript{xcvii}. The government would now act as the protector of human rights and citizenship, everyone would have a voice in decision-making, and this stability would allow for Western-style prosperity. Unfortunately the responses in this period to rising violence belied the elite’s commitment to these principles, and this mass abandonment of hope was quickly joined by the general population\textsuperscript{xcvii}. For many scholars there is no bigger threat to democracy in the region than violence – not because violent actors could potentially overthrow the government, but because the changes in society in response to violence have made the environment inhospitable to democratic principles\textsuperscript{xcviii}. The undermining of democracy is brought on by three major responses to violence: repressive security tactics, general abandonment of democratic institutions and principles, and the acceptance and promotion of private security solutions.
When violence began to rise in Latin America, most governments were only recently emerging from full military rule, and the changes that accompanied free elections and multi-party competition did not extend to views on security. As security problems spread outwards from the slums, their perspective was straight-forward: find the enemy, eliminate the enemy. Koonings and Krujit trace these policies directly back to the legacy of state repression and sometimes it was worse than before. This linkage was made clear in their use of language. A regional summit for the Central American heads of state declared gangs “a destabilising menace, more immediate than any conventional war or guerilla.” This type of language was indicative of the brutality of the state response. In the early 1990s the Sao Paulo police were responsible for one in ten homicides, killing four times as many civilians in 1992 alone than during 15 years of the previous military dictatorship. This was little connection between these policies and the realities on the ground. These 'mano dura' policies, which Hume calls “the endurance of a hegemonic political project of exclusion and polarisation”, were implemented in El Salvador when homicide rates were actually at one of their lowest levels, having declined from around 140 to 50 (per 100,000 population) from 1995 until 2002 when the new policies were begun. Pearce and McGee argue that: “...state security-oriented responses to violence can undermine key democratic principles, vitiating political representation, and eroding the meaning and practices of democratic citizenship, so that classic understandings of state formation...fall apart.”

The abandonment of democratic principles began at the top with a disregard for human rights and citizenship among the poorest, but it quickly spread to the rest of the population. Across the region, faith in democracy is waning in the most violent areas. People have seen the response of “democratic” institutions, and they are unconvinced. In the author's experience in Guatemala, many spoke openly of a desire for the return of authoritarianism, if only to make the streets safe again. Gomariz identifies this as the problem of trying to create democracy “without a base of convinced democrats.” Cruz used mass survey from the LAPOP Americas Barometer to prove negative correlation between violence and social support for democracy. It is hard to believe in a democratic government when its own security instruments are so openly contemptuous of its supposed principles. A survey in Bogota in 1997, at the height of violence there, found that 70% of those who were shot at or raped never reported the
incident to police\textsuperscript{cvi}.

As people lose faith in the government, they look for replacement security solutions\textsuperscript{cvii}. These solutions both undermine democracy and lead directly to further violence. For the wealthier members of society and businesses, the solution is in private security. They hire people to carry big guns and defend their interests, and often those people are paramilitary or off-duty police officers. The police are, in an unsettling twist, benefiting from the lack of security\textsuperscript{cix}. Wealthy elites sponsor their own personal militias for “protection”\textsuperscript{cx}. Paramilitary death squads targeting youths, sometimes working together with states authorities, have been reported in Honduras and El Salvador\textsuperscript{cxi}. For the poor, the solution is in the local imposition of justice – most notably with lynchings. Rodgers refers to these processes as the “democratization of violence”\textsuperscript{cxii}. In one study, 37% of victims of violence in Port-au-Prince were targeted by mob justice or allegations of witchcraft\textsuperscript{cxiii}. With both private security and lynchings, the goal is to send a brutal and public message\textsuperscript{cxiv}. Snodgrass Godoy presents lynchings not as borne out of desperation, but instead an attempt to “reassert authority...as agents rather than victims” after decades of “repeated assault” by both criminals and the government, a Durkheimian
reparation of bonds among the community. She presents the example of the 2000 visit of the Guatemalan president to the small city of Chichicastenango where a mob of thousands informed him that he cannot do anything to stop continued lynchings and that any arrests of those responsible will be met with “open revolt”.cxv

Democracy is not a magic solution for the problems of Latin America. The roots of conflict, exclusion, and inequality lie deep below the surface. Yet if these issues are to be taken on, there is a need for the democratic principles of human rights, citizenship, and fairness. Without the belief that an inclusive system could actually make life better for everyone, the trend inevitably falls back towards the social Darwinism, every family or group for itself. The responses to violence have undermined this essential belief. Regardless of short term changes in the national homicide rates, this period of violence has wrought fundamental changes in the societies of Latin America.

E. Cultural Reproduction of Violence

“What the child cannot find at home, he goes to find it in the streets, and he finds good and bad things, and he does not have a role model who can mentor him, and then violence is the one who mentors him.”

– Resident of Fortaleza, Brazilcxvi

At the same time as people in slum communities are searching for local solutions for chronic violence, a very different process is occurring. Local norms and values are adapting to incorporate the once extra-normal violence and violent groups. This is expressed through a variety of cultural elements, and has the result of cementing the reproduction of violence over the long-term. Future reductions in violence to “acceptable” levels will not bring about the same reduction in costs of violence because the very definition of “acceptable” will have changed. Cruz states that these changes “require a system of norms, values or attitudes which allow, or even stimulate, the use of violence to resolve any conflict or relation with another person. This value system may pervade behavior in all spheres of life.”cxvii This has already been occurring in many parts of Latin America, and it will continue to get worse. The normalization of violence as a response to violence is expressed through three main channels: increased tolerance of violence, glorification of violent groups and perpetrators, and alterations in gender roles.

Violence, in one form or another, has become a fact of life for slum residents in Latin America. Little children draw gun battles and bloody corpses when asked to draw
their communities. As one man from Fortaleza put it: “We don’t run, we retreat. This is part of our lives. We don’t see anything, we don’t do anything regardless of whether we have seen it or not.” This loss of control leads to support for “social cleansing” activities by police or other violent groups directed against those perceived to be the “other”: youth gangs, street children, and homosexuals.

Violent criminals become heroes where they have power and money and their communities have neither. Teenagers see gang membership as a way out, a way to make money and gain respect. The clothing styles, music, and language of the most violent members of society are copied. In Colombia, Gaviria identified a shift in values brought about not only by the actual criminal activity, but by the emulation of the perpetrators. “In this way,” he says, “criminal violence becomes a source not only of income but also of pride and status.”

Caldeira (2001) also highlights the importance of the “talk” of crime, described as “contagious, fragmentary, and repetitive.”

However scary the image of little children with toy guns and “gangster” clothing is, the changes in gender roles brought on by chronic violence has a much more pervasive impact. Even gang members eventually grow up and “calm down”, but perceptions of men's and women's roles are easily transmitted from one generation to the next. Masculinity takes on characteristics of extreme violence: doing harm to others becomes a way of proving one's manhood. Men are already around 80% of both victims and perpetrators of violence worldwide. Bourgois describes how social marginalization in violent communities has transmuted masculinity to a construction around “interpersonal violence, economic parasitism, and sexual domination.” Femininity takes on a far more submissive role, with women often treated as objects of sexual utility by the “manliest” of men and expected to accept violence in their lives and their homes. Kishor and Johnson found in a cross-national study that women were twice as likely to report being victimized by domestic abuse if their mothers had been abused.

![Figure 12: Percentage of male victims and perpetrators by country (2000 or latest year available)](image)

Source: UNODC elaboration of UN-CTS. Bubble size is proportional to homicide rate by country.
The cultural reproduction of violence is essentially an indirect cost passed down to future generations. For them, a change in incentives for would-be perpetrators will not be sufficient to reduce violence. They will be traumatized children who grow up to be criminal-worshipping adolescents and adults who either enact or fear violence (or both) on a daily basis. The shifts in culture which bring about this reproduction of violence are not explicitly intentional; residents do not wake up one morning and decide that the way to combat violence is to start accepting more of it. These are changes of necessity, of believing that there really is no way to stop violent actors, especially when the authorities who are supposed to be preventing violence are often just as vicious. These are gradual, evolutionary changes, hard to notice and incredibly difficult to reverse. How can one convince a young man not to get involved with violent groups when the only other apparent option is a life of poverty and fear? How can one teach a young woman not to accept a violent husband or violent children when that is all she has seen since childhood?
VII. Other Actors: Church and Mass Media

One thing that becomes clear in looking at these responses and indirect costs is that the downward spiral of social control and protective relationships is not an automatic result of an increase in violence at any level. There are a number of factors and actors which play an active role in determining the future of communities in crisis. The main actors are the community residents themselves and the government. However these are not the only groups with a role to play. There are two other key actors whose responses to violence can have great influence over the aforementioned indirect costs: the church and the media. Their role has been mentioned in the analysis of the individual costs, but it bears greater discussion as their decision-making around security issues is rarely scrutinized.

Churches, both Catholic and Evangelical, hold great sway in many parts of Latin America. Their relationship to modern urban violence is complex and highly contextualized. Some churches intervene directly, attempting to negotiate truces between gangs or providing a path for gang members who wish to leave that life. Pentecostal churches especially provide members with the social support and protection that they lack in other spheres of life, and many have special “safe refuge” programs for youth trying to leave gangs. Studies in Nicaragua actually found that evangelical youth are less likely to join gangs. Others work along less direct lines, helping victims or providing support for youth. At the same time many violent groups integrate religion into their activities, taking patron saints and praying before battles. Many living in situations of chronic violence also show increased religious involvement.

In today’s modern society, the media has great influence on people’s perceptions of the world around them. In the countries of Latin America, they have often helped to exaggerate the threat posed by violence, adding additional layers to what Agbola calls the “architecture of fear” which surrounds residents of these cities. Such a climate of intense fear can “lead to a growing disposition to carry guns, to increased support for the death penalty, to illegal or violent police behavior and to support for the right to kill,” and thereby promote the reproduction of violence. In cities across the region there is often a significant lack of correlation between the percentage of the population who feel insecure and the actual level of violent crime. As Arrigiada and Godoy note that “sensationalist treatment of violent and delinquent events can generate a climate of fear and a strong feeling of vulnerability in the population, which is not always real, or corresponding to the observed level of violence.” An IUDOP survey in El Salvador in 2009 found that only 10% had been victimized by gang activity but 95% felt that gangs were a “national problem”. Not lacking in self-awareness, 47% said that the media “manipulates reality.”

Not all victims are treated equally. Violence in poor areas are often reported in the aggregate, de-personalizing violence where it is most often committed, while violence in wealthier areas are given greater detail, with “the media thus constructing some victims as more important than others.”
The media, as Adams identifies, is “narrating reality, reinforcing fears, deciding which crimes are most important, naturalizing or trivializing violence...” and yet is itself a specific target of violence\textsuperscript{cxxxv}. They have an important and often dangerous role to play in informing the public about violence and responses to violence, and can help bring needed transparency to government or private actions often shielded from view.

These two types of organizations can and do play a significant role in determining the indirect costs of violence. The church has played a largely positive role at an individual and community level, although there is still a lack of engagement at social and structural levels. The media has played a somewhat negative role in promoting fear-mongering, but some journalists have been extremely courageous in shining a light on the realities of urban violence and the cost of militarized government responses\textsuperscript{cxxxvi}. Given their great respective influences, their roles merit further study and attention. Their relative independence from the issues – at least relative to other actors like police and gangs – could open up potential for more coordinated and active involvement in improving responses to violence.
VIII. Recommendations

In looking at the impact of responses to violence on indirect costs, one can see the potential for interventions that improve those responses with the aim of reducing costs. These interventions also exist at all four levels of the ecological framework. These interventions would act in parallel with violence prevention efforts, not intending to directly reduce violence per se but instead attempting to support positive responses and marginalize negative responses in a way which allows for greater stability and the retention of local and individual capacities.

This response analysis approach requires much greater study in order to properly identify, design, and implement interventions. This is the most important recommendation of this thesis: that the analysis of responses deserves and requires a concerted research effort in order to draw out a more complete illustration of the multi-level social trends which accompany responses to violence and their relationship with indirect costs. Are indirect costs correlated with levels of violence, and if so, which ones? What drives particular responses at different levels? How do national or city-wide trends figure into the relationship between responses and indirect costs? These are among the many questions that beg for further study.

Nonetheless, the analysis in this thesis exposes several areas where an intervention of this type might be effective. The following is a partial but indicative list.

Support for community organizations

It is crucial that local organizations continue to function effectively despite high violence, and that people feel safe participating. This could mean creating physical safe spaces for meetings or activities, similar to the CPTED (Crime Prevention through Environmental Design) proposed by Caroline Moser\textsuperscript{cxxxvii}. The goal is retaining social trust and preventing social withdrawal; the organizations need not be aimed specifically at conflict resolution (e.g. a parents’ organization for schools). Psychosocial support for victims and witnesses of violence, especially youth, could also be very helpful. Community resources, as a World Bank report points out, can “mitigate early exposure to violence”\textsuperscript{cxxxviii}. Churches already play a significant role in many violent communities, and they are well-placed to increase that role with more resources and coordination.

Integration of Slum Communities

Instead of attempting to cordon off violent areas from the rest of the city, municipal authorities, the private sector, and international non-governmental organizations should work together to draw these communities closer. Violence should not be an excuse to further marginalize them, adding more fuel to slow-burning structural causes. It should be a wake-up call, an opportunity for the governing institutions to prove their strength and relevance. Residents of these communities should be offered more educational and financial paths to success, more opportunities for improved housing, and guaranteed basic services like water, electricity, and health care. Authorities should crack down on
discrimination against slum residents; this integration must be public and its support vociferous.

**Better Media Reporting**

Instead of sensationalizing murders, celebrating state and non-state violence, and painting stereotypes of the “bad guys” [read: poor, young, dark-skinned men], media reporting needs to show an honest picture of violence and violent groups. This requires at least three things: better media ethics, safety for journalists, and resources for smaller media organizations. An independent media which provides a full picture of violence and public policy might prevent many of the negative responses that are seen at the society and structural levels, as well as give a voice to those who suffer the most from violence. Safety is fundamental; the deaths of journalists in Honduras and Mexico lead most media outlets away from such effective coverage\textsuperscript{cxxxix}.

**Local conflict resolution**

The existence of legitimized local mechanisms for settling disputes allows for the operationalization and strengthening of community norms and values. This can come in various forms; community policing and mediation centers were implemented effectively in Diadema, Brazil\textsuperscript{cxl}. On the side of violence prevention, these interventions allow conflicts to be resolved without resorting to violence. They also serve the purpose of reestablishing some community control over violence, or at the least a perception of control which can generate trust in neighbors and trust in authorities. Local communities, despite histories of marginalization and repression, have a great deal of adaptive strength – the key is providing space for those adaptations to retain local capacities instead of devolving responsibility and withdrawing from social interaction.

Responses to violence can be supported through a variety of mechanisms. Reducing the indirect costs of violence should and can be a significant part of anti-violence interventions in Latin America and around the world. Dealing with the acts of violence themselves is clearly a priority, but those goals should not be at the expense of the costs analyzed in this thesis: violence, as we have seen, brings about a far deeper impact than just deaths and injuries. If responses to violence continue to result in increased indirect costs, individuals and communities will continue to suffer serious harm even if acts of violence are eventually reduced. In simpler terms, a falling homicide rate does not necessarily imply a better quality of life for affected communities, especially if the violence had become chronic. Urban violence becomes tangled in the roots of the city and its residents, and dealing with this entanglement requires both courage and innovation.
IX. Concluding Remarks

“...and the ghosts were gathered sitting and standing round him in the spacious house of Hades, to learn his sentences upon them.”

– description of the Asphodel Meadows in Homer's Odyssey

In the Greek afterlife, the souls who were neither good nor bad were sent to the Asphodel Meadows, so named for the flowers which grew on graves. The Asphodel Meadows, like the slums of Latin America, were not an Inferno; they were simply a place where souls continued to work without freedom or hope for a better future. And just as death ruled Asphodel in the form of Hades, death rules the slums. There is no aspect of life remaining untouched by its icy finger.

Despite their permanence in the world of the living, death has become a way of life for many people living in urban slums in Latin America. A new generation grows up in a world ruled by fear, wondering whether their family members and loved ones will make it home safe, knowing that staying silent and keeping their head down is the best way to avoid trouble, and realizing that when they do get into trouble, no one – especially not the authorities – can be counted on for help. It is a vicious, Hobbesian world which they have been raised in, and in which they in turn will raise their children. Fear, trauma, and stress cause a multitude of physical and mental illnesses, pushing people to their limits and weakening their social bonds. Communities splinter under the weight of “social fear”, undercutting any collective efficacy which may have existed previously in the slums. Residents, already at the bottom of the socio-economic heap, are condemned to social, political, and economic marginalization by security policies which ignore their needs and actively segregate them into physical and economic ghettos. Their hope for a new democratic beginning after years of dictatorship and civil war is dashed upon the rocks; governance is weaker than before, and just as content to limit its resources to the needs of the elite. And as this new generation grows up, devoid of hope for a better future other than migration to another country or the deadly brief life of a gangster, the culture of violence grows stronger.

However this chronic violence does not occur randomly, nor is it irreversible. There are specific processes which initiate and intensify urban violence, and just the same there are specific processes which are capable of reducing acts of violence and the impact of violence. This thesis has explored one particular segment of these processes: the responses to urban violence, the indirect costs brought on by this violence, and the relationships between the two. This analysis barely scratches the surface of urban violence in Latin America, but it does demonstrate three key points.
1. The indirect costs of violence have a severe and long-term impact on slum communities.

2. There is an important multi-level relationship between the responses and the indirect costs.

3. Supporting improved responses to urban violence has the potential to play a significant role in reducing the impact of violence on a community or city – and this impact can be reduced.

The analysis of responses sheds light on the day-to-day reality of people living in violent communities and the policy decisions that affect them. It is a needed corollary to the study of the causes of violence; this issue is nothing if not complex. Violence is one of the key issues of urban poverty today in Latin America and elsewhere. This is a development problem, requiring long-term solutions which remove the barriers which prevent them from rising out of poverty. This is a humanitarian problem, requiring intensive interventions to stem the loss of life in the region which can only be described as a 'human disaster'. This is a problem which requires a re-thinking of traditional ‘crime-fighting’ strategies, the inclusion of new stakeholders in the security debate, and a renewal of the democratic values which swept through Latin America over the past three decades but have yet to take root in many countries. Despite sustained economic growth over that same period, the benefits have yet to reach the poorest in many of the most violent countries and areas. The analysis of responses and indirect costs here demonstrates how urban violence can prevent the achievement of a fair and prosperous society for all. This could be the end: a gutter-stained drunk staggering home after a beating at the hands of a debt collector, wobbling menacingly towards his wife; a group of children bearing toy guns peeking out from the crowd at a half-covered corpse in the middle of the street; images of young men with tattooed faces and hard eyes who were never children, willing to play the role of evil incarnate because it's a step up from no role at all. Images of pessimism come easily.

Yet just as violence is written into human nature, so is imagination. Human beings can plan, can dream, can seek things which are not right in front of them. No matter how bad the situation gets in the slums of Ciudad Juarez or San Salvador or Medellin or any other city of Latin America, people will continue to persevere in their desire to make a better future for themselves and their children. The real, incredible story of urban violence is not the astronomical body count or the drug cartel wars or the legacies of government repression. It is the everyday resilience of young people who pass up easy criminal profits for hours of homework under flickering lights. It is the steadfast bravery of church leaders, community activists, and daring journalists who risk their lives for what they believe in. Their responses to the senselessness that surrounds them bring not costs but investments; these are the responses that need support, and with that support have a chance of re-binding the moral and social fibers of their communities.

*****

41
Footnotes

i Author's personal conversation, paraphrased


iv Ortega, José A., “San Pedro Sula (Honduras), la ciudad más violenta del mundo; Juárez, la segunda”, Consejo Ciudadano para la Seguridad Pública y Justicia Penal A.C., January 2012


x Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Handbook for estimating the Socio-Economic and Environmental effects of disasters, United Nations, ECLAC and the World Bank, 2003


xiii Buvinic, Mayra; Morrison, Andrew; and Shifter, Michael, “Violence in Latin America and the Caribbean: A Framework for Action”, Inter-American Development Bank (Technical Study for the Sustainable Development Department), March 1999

xiv Londoño, Juan Luis and Guerrero, Rodrigo, “Violencia en América Latina: Epidemiología y Costos”, Inter-American Development Bank, August 1999


xvii Pearce, Jenny, “Perverse state formation and securitized democracy in Latin America”, Democratization, Vol 17, No 2, April 2010, pp 286-306


xxiv World Bank (Social Development Department – Conflict, Crime, and Violence Team), “Violence in the City:


xxxi Muñoz Cabrera, Patricia with Macdonald, Mandy (ed.), “Intersecting Violences: A Review of Feminist Theories and Debates on Violence against Women and Poverty in Latin America”, Central America Women's Network (CAWN), October 2010


xxvi Muñoz Cabrera, Patricia with Macdonald, Mandy (ed.), “Intersecting Violences: A Review of Feminist Theories and Debates on Violence against Women and Poverty in Latin America”, Central America Women's Network (CAWN), October 2010


xliii Rodgers, Dennis; Muggah, Robert; and Stevenson, Chris, “Gangs of Central America: Causes, Costs, and Intervention”, Small Arms Survey, Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva, May 2009


xlvii Rodgers, Dennis, “Urban Violence is not (necessarily) a way of life: Towards a Political Economy of Conflict in


Reconciliación Social (Guatemala), March 2012

Center for Scholars’ Latin America Program (Washington DC) & Instituto Internacional de Aprendizaje para la Reconciliación Social (Guatemala), March 2012


Felbab-Brown, Vanda, “Law Enforcement actions in urban spaces governed by Violent Non-State Entities: Lessons from Latin America”, Western Hemispheric Security Analysis Center, September 2011


Figures

Title Page photo: http://jolanda70.blogspot.mx/, http://3.bp.blogspot.com/-ahrgJStCgY7T5qNiUuqEI/AAAAAAAAAT8/GeFrS_aDjbl/s1600/12.JPG, (accessed 15 September 2012)


Figure 1: Map of regional homicide rates (data and design: UNODC Global Report on Homicides 2011)
Figure 2: Theory Visualization (author design)
Figure 3: Asset mapping (author design)
Figure 4: Ecological Framework (author design)
Figure 5: Minor gun deaths (author design, data source stated within)
Figure 6: Homicide rates, selected countries (data from UNODC Global Report on Homicides 2011, author design)
Figure 7: Homicide rates, population density (data and design: UNODC Global Report on Homicides 2011)
Figure 8: IUDOP Survey (author design, data source stated within)
Figure 9: Rules of Law & Homicide rates (data and design: UNODC Global Report on Homicides 2011)
Figure 10: Vigilantism and “social cleansing” (author design, data source stated within)
Figure 11: Public vs. Private security (author design, data source stated within)
Figure 12: Male victims and perpetrators (data and design: UNODC Global Report on Homicides 2011)

*All author designs were made using www.easel.ly
Bibliography


Aguilar Villamariona, Jeannette, “Los efectos contraproducentes de los Planes Mano Dura”, *Ciudadania y Violencia Social*, Quorum 16, 2005


Buvinic, Mayra; Morrison, Andrew; and Shifter, Michael, “Violence in Latin America and the Caribbean: A Framework for Action”, Inter-American Development Bank (Technical Study for the Sustainable Development Department), March 1999


Davis, Mike, *Planet of Slums*, Verso, 2006


Felbab-Brown, Vanda, “Law Enforcement actions in urban spaces governed by Violent Non-State Entities: Lessons from Latin America”, Western Hemispheric Security Analysis Center, September 2011


Instituto Universitario de Opinión Pública (IUDOP), “Encuesta nacional de actitudes, normas, y valores en torno a la violencia y uso de armas de fuego: Consulta de Opinión de Septiembre 2001”, Universidad Centroamericana José Simeón Cañas, Informe 90


Londoño, Juan Luis and Guerrero, Rodrigo, “Violencia en América Latina: Epidemiología y Costos”, Inter-American Development Bank, August 1999


Moser, Caroline O N and Rodgers, Dennis, “Understanding the tipping point of urban conflict: global policy report”, Urban Tipping Point project, Working Paper #7 (DRAFT), June 2012


Muñoz Cabrera, Patricia with Macdonald, Mandy (ed.), “Intersecting Violences: A Review of Feminist Theories and Debates on Violence against Women and Poverty in Latin America”, *Central America Women’s Network (CAWN)*, October 2010


Ortega, José A., “San Pedro Sula (Honduras), la ciudad más violenta del mundo; Juárez, la segunda”, Consejo Ciudadano para la Seguridad Pública y Justicia Penal A.C., January 2012


Reece, Steve, “Homer’s Asphodel Meadow”, Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies, Vol. 47, 2007, pp. 389-400


Rodgers, Dennis; Muggah, Robert; and Stevenson, Chris, “Gangs of Central America: Causes, Costs, and Intervention”, Small Arms Survey, Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva, May 2009


Zúñiga Núñez, Mario, “Heridas en la memoria: la guerra civil salvadoreña en el recuerdo de niñez de un pandillero”, Historia Crítica, No 40, January-April 2010