

International Journal of Conflict and Violence

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Imprint

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Editorial

Letter from the Editors

Dear Reader,

This issue our guest editors are close to home. Wilhelm Heitmeyer and Steven F. Messner, both members of our own Board of Editors, have assembled a focus section examining the question of “Youth at Risk.” Their collection certainly lives up to our aspiration to be truly interdisciplinary and international. The methods applied in the reported research range from interview-based studies through empirical number-crunching to laboratory experiments (the latter a first for this journal); the geographical scope spans from Argentina through Central America and Europe to Africa. The youth at risk here are in conflict with the police, with each other, with societies that fear them, with societies that ignore their needs.

Our systematically eclectic approach continues outside the focus section too, with contributions on the theory of violence, female fighters in Africa, and spousal violence in Pakistan.

December 2011

Wilhelm Heitmeyer Douglas S. Massey Steven F. Messner James Sidanius Michel Wieviorka

Editorial Remarks: Youth at Risk

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Editorial Remarks: Youth at Risk

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Youth must always be analysed with respect to two aspects: Firstly, as a societally shaped phase of life that varies socially and culturally across countries and regions, characterized by different chances of social integration and dangers of disintegration. Secondly, as individual biographies playing out in a specific societal dynamic of integration/disintegration, where experiences with violence as perpetrators or victims play an important role.

Life in particular societal constellations presents risks for certain parts of the young generation, just as the behavior of youth may itself pose risks in some societal situations. The way the general relationship varies across different national and cultural contexts is the question we have chosen to home in on in this issue of the journal. Post-war, post-dictatorial, developing, transformative, and precarious societal contexts form consistent points of reference for the contributions, which include both country-specific case studies and comparative investigations.

In the Central and South American context, our frame is shaped by post-dictatorial and post-war factors:

Alejandro Isla and *Daniel Pedro Míguez* consider the origination of violence in post-dictatorial contexts, focusing on confrontational mechanisms between the police and the young urban poor in contemporary Argentina. Their research seeks to explain the underlying processes behind the growth in crime rates and increases in lethal police/civilian encounters during the 1990s. They call attention to

the important role of transformations of the social structure (such as growing unemployment and poverty) and repressive traditions that have been re-invigorated in recent years.

Anika Oettler focuses on the Central American fear of youth, especially in El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica, which is driven by the magnitude of the regional drug trade and the rates of murder attributed to youth gangs. Oettler explores national differences and variations in threat levels and patterns of attention, arguing fundamentally that current Central American debates on juvenile delinquency are closely intertwined with national and transnational myths that provide citizens with a significant frame of meaning.

In the African context it is development conditions, post-war constellations, and the role of the state that are of prime importance:

Josjah Kunkeler and *Krijn Peters* address the issue of youth, armed conflict, and urban violence in developing countries, starting from the observation that young people are major participants in contemporary intra-state armed conflicts. They argue that such involvement is often portrayed as criminal violence rather than as political or ideologically motivated struggles, demonstrating this in a study of the post-war reconstruction phase in Sierra Leone. Their thesis is that the urban youth violence in many developing countries should not be separated from its political roots.

Marc Sommers' issue is security, governance, and Africa's youth bulge. Examining the cases of Rwanda and Burundi, he argues that African governments and their international supporters are frequently underinformed about the priorities of most youth, resulting in distorted assessments of everyday realities. Sommers concludes that the relations between states and their massive populations of young, marginalized, and alienated citizens directly impacts the security and development prospects of African nations.

In the European context we are looking at adolescents and their attitude to violence in the context of rapid transformation processes and social instability:

Eva M. Groß and Berit Haußmann report comparative research in Eastern European transformation societies, investigating whether circumstances since the collapse of communism have affected the motives that underlie adolescents' approval of violence. Their questionnaire survey allows them to compare cities in Russia, Poland, Slovenia, and the Czech Republic with one another and with western and eastern Germany. They draw on Institutional Anomie Theory to interpret the findings, arguing that the results support the hypothesis that problematic institutional adap-

tation processes in situations of rapid transformation can foster instrumental motivations for youth violence.

David Hugh-Jones, Alexia Katsnidou, and Gerhard Riener report a laboratory experiment based on Greek students in the context of the December 2008 riots in Greece, after the killing of a fifteen-year-old student by a policeman. They test whether media reports can affect people's willingness to harm those in opposing political groups by examining students' allocations between themselves and others in modified dictator games. The results indicate that media reports can have appreciable effects, although the patterns are not entirely consistent with influential theories. The authors believe that experimental work will become increasingly important in studying the motivations behind political protest, contentious politics, and even civil conflict.

We are delighted that the contributions exhibit such a broad spectrum of methodology, ranging from constructivist discourse analysis to attitude surveys and experimental approaches. Taken together they supply ample justification for the framing of our focus section: Youth at Risk.

December 2011

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Formations of Violence in Post-Dictatorial Contexts: Logics of Confrontation between the Police and the Young Urban Poor in Contemporary Argentina

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Formations of Violence in Post-Dictatorial Contexts: Logics of Confrontation between the Police and the Young Urban Poor in Contemporary Argentina

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The increase in juvenile violence in Argentina since the 1990s results from a combination of economic and socio-structural change and the reinstatement of repressive traditions that became particularly engrained in the armed and security forces during the 1976–1983 dictatorship. Growing unemployment and poverty led to the emergence of loose webs of juvenile delinquency, while increasing public concern about violent crime led to a revival of harsh “iron fist” policing measures by security forces that are often themselves involved in crime in connivance with local politicians. Groups of young urban poor (calling themselves *Pibes Chorros* or Crooked Kids) and the security forces regard one another with mutual hostility, and police/civilian casualties increased over the period. The music of the Crooked Kids, Cumbia Villera, expresses their life experience. From a comparative perspective, the absence of institutionalized gangs sets Argentina apart from other countries in Latin and North America.

The growth of crime rates and the increase in lethal police/civilian encounters during the 1990s in Argentina cannot be understood without considering two specific underlying processes. On the one hand, the transformations of the social structure (growing unemployment and poverty) that started under the military dictatorship (1976–1983), but had its most profound effects in the 1990s. On the other hand, the repressive traditions that accrued throughout the institutional histories of the local security forces. Although these traditions had been part of the institutional culture of these organizations since their beginnings, they were consolidated during the 1976–1983 military dictatorship and re-invigorated in the 1990s because of the increasing corruption of the political system and the *mano dura* or “iron fist” security policies applied in that decade.

In line with this standpoint we propose, *firstly*, that the growth of delinquency rates was mainly associated with prolonged and very profound changes in the social struc-

ture. Growing unemployment and poverty during the 1980s and into the 1990s brought forth a growing mass of marginalized youth increasingly alienated from basic social institutions such as the labour market, stable nuclear families or the educational system. These adolescents, socialized mainly in peer groups, progressively developed a confrontational identity where breaking the law and challenging conventional social institutions became core elements of identification. However, in contrast with what happened in other parts of Latin America these groups did not develop into stable or institutionalized gangs, but remained as loose webs of juvenile delinquency with no stable or extended organizational structures. In this sense, Argentina shows important differences to other countries in the region. Even if, as we will show later on, it shares some of the characteristics of other Latin American countries, the presence and incidence of juvenile criminal gangs seem to be smaller than in other regions of the sub-continent such as Central America or Brazil.¹

¹ Even if crime rates for all types of crime grew significantly in Argentina through the 1980s and 1990s they did not reach the levels of the more violent countries in the region. According to the *World Bank Homicide Data Set 1980–2008*, while Argentina

showed rates between 6.74 and 9.39 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants per year during the 1990s, Brazil had rates between 25.30 and 29.25 and Mexico between 25.27 and 19.47 (Colombia 57.00–68.90; Ecuador 10.75–25.90; El Salvador 40.95–34.79; Gu-

atemala 35.00–25.20). Not all these homicides were committed by juveniles, but in the countries with higher murder rates there is a strong presence of “institutionalized juvenile gangs” (for a more precise definition see below).

Secondly, the growth in crime rates increasingly favoured a social atmosphere that permitted the reinstatement of traditions that had become ingrained in the repressive organs of the state, the military and the police, throughout their history, but especially during the 1976–1983 dictatorship. The appearance of groups of young urban poor calling themselves *Pibes Chorros* (Crooked Kids) and assuming the habitual practices of marginalized youth – addiction to drugs, disorganized but violent crime and a demeanour of confrontation with conventional society (a “style” that involved specific tattoos, clothes and gestures) – increased the demands for citizen security through repressive “iron fist” policies which favoured the use of force and tough measures to deter crime.

In this context the traditional discourse of the armed and security forces that divided the population into the morally upright defenders of the legal order and the “enemies of Argentine society” found new fertile soil. Where communists, left wing Peronists and union leaders had traditionally been defined as “public enemies” by the security and armed forces, during the 1990s the Crooked Kids took their place as a new social menace. Thus the demands for iron fist policies and the constitution of new forms of alterity, gave the security forces a context in which to re-deploy their repressive methods.

However, the ambivalent traditions of the Argentine armed and security forces involved not only a supposedly strict defence of the legal order but also the violation of civil rights and even of criminal law. Historically, the police in connivance with the political administrations had participated in the illegal regulation of crime. But although this “administration” of illegal activities such as prostitution, informal commerce or gambling had always been mechanisms through which the police and political administrators obtained extra funds to finance their organiz-

ations and increase their personal earnings, during the 1990s this type of “illegal business” was extended to other activities with a greater impact on society at large, like the illegal arms market, drug trade or “road pirates”.²

Therefore, the increase in crime rates and especially the proliferation of certain types of violent crime were not only due to the growing marginalization of deprived youth, but also to the increasing participation of members of the police forces and the political system in the organization of criminal activities.³ Often the collusion between the police and elements of the political system involved the exploitation of adolescents in conflict with the law who were used as cheap labour (for example as drug pushers or car thieves) for a small part of the benefits. Hence, the confrontation between the forces of order and these groups of adolescents did not only grow out of the defence of the law undertaken by legal institutions. Confrontations also arose because adolescents often resented and resisted being used by the police and politicians in their corrupt schemes. In our view both the perception of the police as a quintessential enemy (that the Crooked Kids express in their style and in their music) and the increase in police/civilian casualties that took place in the 1990s resulted largely from this state of affairs.

This process seems to have peaked during the 1990s. Prior to that decade crime rates, although slightly rising, had not been a major issue in Argentine society, while police/civilian casualties actually experienced a significant decrease during the second half of the 1980s. Similarly, after the initial years of the twenty-first century property crime rates and police/civilian casualties also experienced a substantial decrease. Hence, we may state that a particular “formation of violence” (Feldman 1991) emerged in Argentina during the 1990s, but waned progressively during the initial years of the twenty-first century as institutional and social conditions improved.

2 “Road pirates” is the informal name given to those who steal trucks with consumer durables to sell them on the black market.

3 Although there are many possible definitions of violence, in this text we use its narrower sense, as the “use of physical force” to eliminate, subdue or intimidate others (Riches 1986). In this case lethal

confrontations between the security forces and civilians (mainly poor adolescents from the city suburbs in conflict with the law) are the most prominent, although not the exclusive, manifestation of the growth of violence during the 1990s in Argentina. Additionally, although not all forms of crime involve the use of physical force, the type of crimes com-

mitted by marginalized youngsters frequently involves this type of violence. Hence, although delinquency is not always violent it does constitute a context where violence frequently emerges. Therefore the growth in crime rates may be considered a metonymic expression for the growth of violence.

According to Feldman, formations of violence develop between actors that represent the official social order and the law – the forces of order and the state– and other actors that explicitly or implicitly question that order. In these contexts actors reciprocally define each other as irreconcilable enemies. Not only does each perceive the other as an occasional menace to its own security; in this dynamic the “other” constitutes a threat to the complete moral order and lifestyle of its opponent and thus, in this logic, “deserves” to be violently eradicated. Since these reciprocal definitions between social actors mutate over time, *formations of violence represent “moments” in a historical process* where systems of social relationships and patterns of social interaction are defined and redefined. Hence formations of violence may appear and dissolve again in temporal patterns of confrontation, as seems to have happened in Argentina in the 1990s.

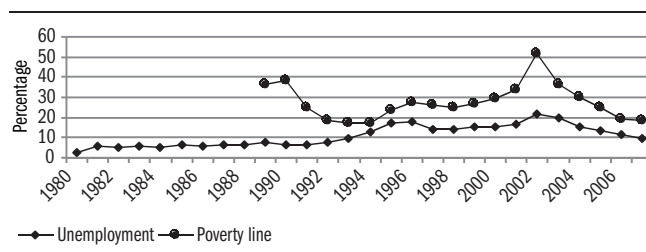
In order to expose the processes that underlie the formation of violence that arose during the 1990s in Argentina we will proceed, firstly, by examining the structural transformations that produced new forms of poverty and marginalization and created the conditions for the emergence of groups of young urban poor in conflict with the law. Secondly, we will show the processes that constituted the institutional traditions and cultures of repression in the local armed and security forces and the conditions of their re-emergence in the 1990s which led to a growing rate of police/civilian casualties. Thirdly, we will describe the identity that “defines” the Crooked Kids and show how it confronts the legal order, particularly as expressed by politicians and the police. Finally, we will show how these elements combined in a particular formation of violence and provide hypotheses to explain the differences between Argentina and other Latin American countries.

1. Central Aspects of the Structural Crisis

The structural transformations Argentina has experienced since the mid-1970s originated in an increase in unemployment and poverty. Since the mid-1970s a combination of low levels of productivity in the industrial sector and the economic “open market” policies applied by the 1976–1983

dictatorship and through the 1980s meant that Argentina was unable to generate sufficient jobs to include the new generations in the labour market. Unemployment consequently grew through the 1980s, especially among less qualified young people looking for their first jobs. These negative tendencies were aggravated under President Carlos Menem (1989–1995 and 1995–1999) when the open market policies were combined with the privatization of several public utilities (electricity, fuel, telephone services, etc.), which led to massive redundancies and increasing levels of unemployment. Labour rights were also reduced, making employment more unstable, with more members of the household (especially women and children) in the less well-off sectors searching for new jobs to guarantee a stable family income. This increased the pressure in the labour market that led to a growing unsatisfied demand for new jobs (Guadagni et al. 2002 and Becaria 2002 for a thorough account of the process).

Figure 1: Unemployment and Poverty in Argentina



Source: Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y Censos (INDEC), <http://www.indec.gov.ar/>.⁴

Figure 1 shows the persistent growth of unemployment through the 1980s and 1990s. Regrettably there are no official estimates of the poverty line index before 1988. Private estimates (Ferrerres 2005: 450–61) show that while salaries fell 25 percent in the decade between 1980 and 1990, average prices of consumer goods increased by 724 percent a year (the average rate falls to 285 percent a year if we exclude the hyperinflation years of 1989 and 1990). Given that prices rose while salaries fell during that decade, we can infer that poverty grew consistently through the 1980s as well. At the beginning of the 1990s poverty rates decreased for a short period of time due to a recovery of the value of incomes immediately after the 1989–1990 hyper-

4 The poverty line has only been measured since 1988. As of 2007 INDEC changed its measurement

methods, so the data is not comparable with previous years.

inflation.⁵ But this was followed by a persistent growth of poverty until the initial years of the twenty-first century. As of 2003 the negative economic tendencies reversed in a more favorable international context that resulted from higher prices for traditional Argentine exports (essentially agricultural commodities) and expanded social welfare policies of the Peronist governments, and the levels of poverty and unemployment fell drastically.

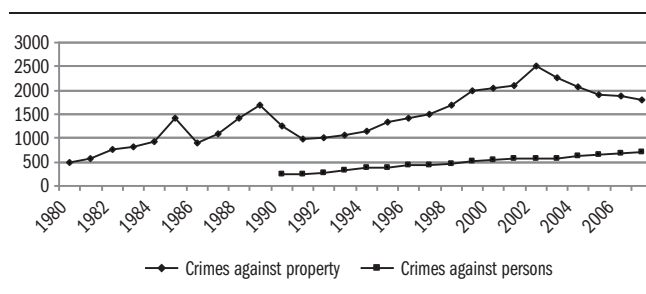
Although unemployment grew throughout the 1980s and 1990s its more notable impact occurred during the latter decade. Since initially unemployment rates were rather low, their impact among the population was not immediately felt. But during the 1990s the rate was consistently in two digits, and the level and persistence of unemployment during that decade turned it into one of the central worries of the population. From 1997 “insecurity” also rose from sixth to second place, to become one of the citizens’ principal preoccupations (Smulovitz 2003: 131).

The persistence of unemployment through the 1980s and 1990s not only implied an increase in poverty rates but also a change in the quality or type of poverty. Until the mid-1970s the predominant form of poverty in Argentina was of a “transitional” sort: poor people experienced upward social mobility, and were progressively overcoming material deprivation. Since the mid-1970s poverty has become mainly “structural” (poor people having no expectations of upward mobility) or resulted from pauperization (people from the middle classes falling into poverty). In this context material deprivation and social marginalization turned into permanent instead of transitional states, making them also an “inter-generational” phenomenon (Beccaria and Vinocour 1991).

Throughout this period crime rates grew steadily in line with poverty and unemployment. Between 1980 and 2002

there was a persistent increase in the rates of crime against property, which reversed thereafter following the unemployment curve. Although information for crimes against persons is only available after 1990, we find a growing tendency for the whole period, similar to crimes against property and the unemployment and poverty rates. However, in the case of crimes against persons the tendency does not reverse after 2003, showing a weaker association with the unemployment and poverty variables.

Figure 2: Evolution of Crime Rates



Source: Data from Sistema Nacional de Información Criminal (National Criminal Information Service), based on police reports.⁶

Another interesting element in Figure 2 is that the rate of crimes against property increased consistently, with two strong peaks during the fiscal and inflationary crises of 1989–1991 and 2000–2002. By contrast, the rate of crimes against persons seems less affected by the crises and shows sustained growth for the whole period. Correlation estimates reveal statistically significant levels of association between these social conditions and crime although, as expected, the correlation is somewhat weaker in the case of crimes against persons.⁷

5 Inflation decreased dramatically at the beginning of the 1990s: from 2314 percent in 1990 to 171 percent in 1991 and just 4.2 percent in 1994. This explains the relative recovery of real income and the transitory reduction of the poverty rate during those years.

6 Recording of rates of crime against persons began in 1990 when the Dirección Nacional de Política Criminal (national office of criminal policies) was created, but in 2007 the Ministry of Justice instructed it to stop making crime rates public.

7 There is already a vast literature showing that property crimes tend to be more associated with unemployment than crimes against persons, since in the latter case the motivations are more diverse than material deprivation and social marginalization (see Chiricos 1987 for a thorough analysis of the unemployment/crime association).

Table 1: Crime, unemployment and poverty correlates (1980-2007)

	Crimes against persons	Crimes against property
Unemployment	0.627(**)	0.782(**)
Poverty line	0.579(*)	0.747(**)

* p=0.01 / **p= 0.05 (two-tailed test)

Other, complementary studies show that the crimes registered in these statistical records involve mainly young males under 25 years of age from poor urban slums (Daroqui and Guemureman 2001; Guemureman 2002). Analyses of judicial sources also produce similar results. The correlation estimates for criminal counts of juveniles under 18 with the unemployment rate and the poverty line are 0.781 (p=0.05) and 0.626 (p= 0.05) respectively (Míguez 2008: 89). In addition, the social profile of the involved juveniles shows that they come mostly from poor urban enclaves of the major Argentine cities, in particular Buenos Aires. For example, Mariana Roigé (2010: 175) found that material deprivation (poverty) was a recurrent factor present in 90 percent of the households of juveniles with penal processes in the state of Buenos Aires.

The reviewed data shows that the structural transformations that Argentina underwent since the mid 1970s were associated with a persistent increase in crime rates. However, although this quantitative data shows clearly that there was an association between structural conditions and the evolution of crime rates, they do not show the particular nexus that underlies this association. More qualitative approaches reveal that besides the mere increase in the poverty and unemployment rates, the change in the type of poverty (from transitional to structural) had a significant impact in the expectations and forms of social organization of the less well off.

Family and ideals of social advancement and integration through work and education have always been central tenets of the lifestyles of the poor. As Kessler's investigation clearly shows (2000), the increase in structural poverty since the mid-1970s and its profound effects in the 1990s disarticulated this social complex by obstructing the traditional channels of social mobility. Structural poverty de-

based familial and local social ties and the foundations of personal life-projects. For example, the incidence of single parent (mainly female) households grew steadily from 9.4 to 16.1 percent through the 1980s and 1990s, with a greater incidence among the lower income sectors (Torrado 2003: 440-49). This led to a substantial crisis in traditional forms of social integration and a significant increase in the levels of social marginalization suffered by the young and poor from the urban peripheries (SIEMPRO 2000).

Successive qualitative investigations demonstrate how this debasement of the family-work complex constitutes a recurrent element in the trajectories of juvenile delinquents (Tonkonoff 2000; Duschatzky and Corea 2002; Kessler 2002; Míguez 2003). Traditionally family authority was conferred to the male head of the household who also acted as the main provider. As the experience of unemployment and structural poverty progressed this role suffered growing debasement as all family members began to act as providers. Sometimes adolescents even became the main providers of the household, thus challenging the patriarchal authority (Duschatzky and Corea 2002: 53). In this context, there was a substantial change in the moral criteria that separate legitimate from illegitimate sources of income. Whereas traditionally work was not only the legitimate source of the household income but also a dignifying experience for those at the bottom of the social ladder, in younger generations provision of sufficient income to meet the household's needs became the sole source of legitimacy, regardless whether the procured resources came from legal or illegal origins (Kessler 2004: 108).

In addition, erosion of familial authority and the de-structuring of traditional family ties introduced profound changes in the process of socialization of the younger generations. Although during adolescence peer groups are always a competing socializing force to the family, in these new contexts the "street corner society" (Whyte [1942] 1965) became the main socializing reference for some of the adolescents of the poor urban enclaves (Tonkonoff 1998). The bodily and subjective experience of adolescents from poor slums in these contexts is not congruent with what is expected from them in the educational system and work contexts (Míguez 2002). In many cases interviews

and ethnographic observation show that the aspiration to a stable nuclear family, a proper education and a job has not completely disappeared, even in the case of the more marginalized young urban poor (Kessler 2004: 143; Míguez 2008: 67). But research also demonstrates that their socializing experiences leave them ill prepared for successful performance in the educational and job markets; failure and frustration reinforce the tendency to become alienated from these (Duschaztky and Corea 2002: 194).

The qualitative research shows how in a context of growing material deprivation adolescents from the poor urban slums are socialized more frequently by the street corner group than in traditional nuclear families. This leaves them ill prepared to develop the habits required to build successful educational and working careers. This in turn is associated with alternative strategies to meet the household needs that blur the boundaries between legal and illegal activities. Hence the conditions found in qualitative research partly explain the processes that underlie the association between unemployment, poverty and crime. However, the material and familial conditions in which these adolescents grow up do not completely account for the particular forms of identification and idiosyncrasy that develop among them, nor totally explain the specific forms of action including delinquency and the use of physical force (violence) to confront legal powers such as the police. The way in which the security forces enact their repressive traditions to control these adolescents is crucial element to understanding their forms of perception and action, since these develop partly as an adaptive reaction to conditions set by the controlling public agents.

2. Repressive Institutional Traditions

As during other dictatorial periods in Argentine history, the 1976–1983 military dictatorship set out to “rebuild the Nation”, naming itself the “National Reorganization Process” (Proceso de Reorganización Nacional) and pursuing radically reactionary policies to eradicate what the armed forces and sectors of the ruling classes had traditionally per-

ceived as the root cause of Argentina’s problems: Peronism, its power in the unions, and the dissemination of left-wing ideologies. Accordingly, the political activity and rhetoric of the military deepened a confrontational logic that had progressively gained weight in Argentine society since the first two Peron presidencies (1946–1952 and 1952–1955). This confrontation became even stronger after the overthrow and proscription of Peron by the military in 1955.

The military dictatorship increased the social cleavages that traditionally divided Argentine society between Peronists and anti-Peronists by narrowing the margins of ideological acceptability to ever more idiosyncratic elements. They reduced the ideological scope to two basic stands: the defenders of a national ethos expressed in respect for private property, strong Christian – Catholic – morals and a patriotic spirit versus the immoral supporters of an anti-national ideology expressed essentially in communism and left-wing Peronism.

In order to impose its ideological standards on the whole population the military concentrated to an extreme extent all political power in their own hands and resorted to brutal repressive methods (prison camps, torture, mass murder and kidnappings – the infamous “disappearances”). In this process the narrowing of the limits of ideological dissent were taken to an extreme: all those who did not explicitly adhere to the ideological standards set by the military were considered at least accomplices of the morally dissolute “enemies of the Argentine nation” and thus could legitimately be subject to repression and extermination.

To an extent, the 1976–1983 military dictatorship represented just one more stage in the evolution of the political cleavages that had divided Argentine society since Peronism. But the dichotomization produced by the military’s redefinition of the ideological frontiers, the extraordinary use of force applied in brutal repressive methods and the concentration of power that characterized this last military dictatorship constituted a qualitative change that had profound consequences for Argentine society.⁸ In the issue

8 The effects of the dictatorship were vast and impossible to synthesize here, see Marcos Novaro and Vicente Palermo (2003) for a thorough account.

that concerns us here – the constitution of repressive traditions among the security forces – the conditions enforced by the military dictatorship boosted to an extraordinary extent the militarization and autonomy of the police. This consolidated an institutional culture that while certainly not new, gained strength and became so naturalized during the dictatorship that it was hard to neutralize after the restitution of democracy in 1983.

The history of the Argentine police, especially in the state of Buenos Aires, is permeated by a persistent tension. Initially created as a largely decentralized force answerable to the local authority, one of the central problems was its tendency to act in response to the interests of local political forces. This connivance often resulted in corrupt schemes where both parties (police and politicians) “administered” certain types of illegal activities for personal gain, namely gambling, illegal commerce and prostitution. These schemes often led to resources provided by the central state being diverted to personal accounts, disguised as maintenance costs of police equipment and infrastructure. In addition, the frequently close ties between local police chiefs and politicians resulted in the persecution of dissident political elements. Almost since the very beginning, the police force has had the “administration” of crime for personal benefit and the role of intimidating political dissidents as part of its constitutive traditions (Kalamanowiecki 2000).

In order to neutralize these tendencies there were efforts to extract the police from the local political sphere and create a more professional force under a more centralized administration. However, wherever these initiatives were successful a new problem would arise, since as the police force became increasingly autonomous of political power it developed its own corporate interests. Instead of complying with their role as servants of civil society the police officials stressed their function as a means of social control, acting essentially as a repressive force and according to their particular interests and political idiosyncrasy which they tried to impose on common citizens.

This tension was particularly clear in the 1930s when at the same time as an effort was made by the leading cadres of the ruling Conservative party to professionalize and bring the police force under the control of a central administration, local political leaders of the same party conspired with elements of the police force against these initiatives or simply disregarded them (Barreneche 2007a). Furthermore, at the same time as the policies of the Conservative Party aimed at more professional and centralized security forces, they explicitly attributed a political role to the police, persecuting members of the Communist Party and systematically deploying elements of the police force to produce the electoral frauds that kept them in power through the “infamous decade” (as the 1930s were named in allusion to the electoral corruption) (Béjar 2005). Hence, the efforts for centralization and professionalization were essentially fruitless in the face of strong contradictions in the (collective and individual) political agents that promoted them.

During the first two presidencies of Perón there were more successful initiatives to bring the police under a central administration. However this was done under a military scheme that transformed the police into an autonomous power with very little control by civilian authorities. Although there were efforts to assign the police a welfare role complementary to other social services (health, education, etc.), the military model reigned making “control” of the rival elements of civil society the prevalent component of the institutional culture (Barreneche 2007b). However, and in spite of a greater centralization and militarization, connivance between local politicians and police officials did not completely disappear. At the beginning of the Peron era, there were efforts to dismantle these types of police/political networks, but only because, initially, most communal political leaders belonged either to the Conservative Party or to the Partido Radical.⁹ As the Peronists themselves developed their territorial networks, the articulation between local political powers and the police regained some of its pre-eminence (Barreneche 2010: 49). Increasingly, it was the Peronists – or at least important factions of the Peronist Party – who established the more fluid rela-

9 The Partido Radical is a national political party founded at the beginning of the twentieth century

that basically represents the middle classes with a moderate social-democratic ideology.

tionships and systems of reciprocity and connivance with the police (Eaton 2008: 20). Moreover, as the Peronist Party lost part of its popularity towards the mid-1950s, the use of torture and political persecution became common practice among the security forces (Call 2002: 11).

After Peron's overthrow in 1955 successive civilian and military governments continued consolidating the authoritarian institutional traditions on which the 1976–1983 dictatorship was to base its even more repressive machinery (Pereira and Ungar 2004: 14). These were the (to an extent mutually conflictive) tendencies to administrate certain forms of crime for their own benefit, connivance with politicians in this type of manoeuvre, a propensity to become an autonomous force outside the influence of the civil powers and acting to control instead of serve civil society, and the frequent use of illegal procedures to combat crime, such as torture, murder and harassment of the civilian population.

During the 1976–1983 dictatorship military cadres were appointed as heads of the security forces. Particularly in the case of the province of Buenos Aires, the methods applied under the administration of General Ramón Camps and other top-ranking military cadres such as Miguel Etcheolatz and Carlos Suarez Mason represented a qualitative change in the levels of corruption, autonomy, confrontation with civil society and violence deployed by the security forces (Dutil and Raggendorfer 1997: 15).

These military commanders restructured the security forces of the state of Buenos Aires, merging them with military task groups and promoting the military “dirty war” tactics among the other security forces as well. The police thus became part of the repressive military apparatus, managing several detention camps where political prisoners were held for torture and future assassination. In most cases, these task groups would appropriate their victims' assets as “war bounty” to finance further repressive operations. But, progressively, the political purposes pursued by this repressive machinery were substituted by the personal economic interests of the top-ranked police and military officers. In this way, the repressive operations of the security forces progressively turned into economic op-

erations with the main purpose of enlarging the personal fortunes of the participating police and military officials (Dutil and Raggendorfer 1997: 16).

The repressive military tactics and the resulting institutional design and practices implemented during the dictatorship were not, fundamentally, new to the police. As shown, corruption, connivance with the political administration, confrontation with civil society and its resemblance to a military structure were all elements that had accrued as institutional traditions since its origins. However, during the dictatorship these traditions were taken to an extreme. The impunity given by the concentration of absolute discretionary power and the unprecedented levels of violence and flagrant participation in crime that this made possible took the tradition to a new level. While the administration of crime had always been part of the practice of the security forces, especially in “victimless crimes” such as gambling or illegal commerce, during the dictatorship the security forces became the perpetrators of all sorts of felony. They thus became an organizing and ruling force that could replace or subordinate common criminal gangs, not only administrating but also controlling and promoting most types of criminal activity (Isla 2007a).

After the democratic transition in 1983 several efforts were made to reform the police, to restrain corruption, moderate their procedures and limit their autonomy. The first elected president after the dictatorship, Raúl Alfonsín (1983–1989), sought to pass a law to bring the police under civilian control and restrict their discretionary capacity to arrest and detain citizens, but the initiative failed because it was opposed by the Peronist Party in Congress (Pereyra and Ungar 2004: 8). However, during those years citizen security was not perceived as a central problem and did not reign paramount in the political agenda. Hence, the issue went more or less unnoticed for much of the public. During the 1990s the situation changed significantly.

The rise in crime rates and the consequent pressure of civil society on the political powers to institute more efficient policing made citizen security one of the crucial elements of the political agenda (Smulovitz 2003: 132). There were several efforts during the 1990s to reform the police, both

at the federal level and specifically in the case of the state of Buenos Aires. Although there were certain timid attempts, specially in the state of Buenos Aires, to apply a “community policing” model, most security policies followed an “iron fist” (*mano dura*) approach (Pereira and Ungar 2004; Fuentes 2005).¹⁰ However, the policy failed even in these cases, since the strict and violent control of crime that is supposed by this approach clashed with the interests of the political and police officials who partake in crime. Hence, although the iron fist approach favoured the re-emergence of the use of force as a repressive tactic, connivance between the police and important elements of the political system made it an inefficient policy for combatting crime since “a good proportion of politics [was] financed through police corruption” (Ragendorfer 2002: 113; see also Klipphan 2004: 35; Saín 2004, 2008).¹¹

As we have established, there had always been connivance between the police and the political system in Argentina. But, during the 1990s the level of impunity granted by the political system to the police in its complicity with the criminal underworld introduced a qualitative change. Whereas, as reported by Sain (2002), after the return of democracy police officers shared monies extracted from small scale gambling operations and brothels with party leaders, “[t]he seriousness of crimes ... escalated through time, particularly the devastating crises of the late 1980s and the economic dislocations of the 1990s” (Eaton 2008: 19). As of the mid-1990s, the connivance between the police and the political system developed to a point where aside from profiting from prostitution and illegal gambling, “trafficking of stolen cars, kidnapping for ransom, trafficking of police reports and drug trafficking [composed a] ‘ladder of illegality’ that [went] from street-level police officers and districts’ political brokers to top rank officers, politicians and businessmen” (Fuentes 2004: 11).

Along with the impoverishment and marginalization that grew in the 1990s, this institutional context favoured the

proliferation of crimes with high impact on civil society that generated public demands for the iron fist. There was a massive increase in the consumption and circulation of drugs, leading, by the end of the 1990s, to a huge crack trade causing growing levels of interpersonal and delinquent violence (Epele 2010). Also, the illegal arms market grew considerably, with significant participation of members of the armed forces (police and military) acting as providers in the illegal weapons circuit. Additionally, other illegal activities such as auto theft and kidnappings for ransom also grew with the consistent participation of important sectors of the police forces as accomplices of these types of crime. Good examples of this were the *Banda de los Comisarios* (a gang composed of top police officers) who committed kidnappings for ransom, including the hijacking of the son of a well-known car industry boss (now mayor of Buenos Aires). Also, on several occasions the press discovered that in certain prisons guards were selling stolen car parts, releasing inmates for several hours to steal the cars that were then dismantled to sell the parts.

As part of the systems of reciprocity that were behind these crimes the police used poor adolescents from the urban outskirts who were in conflict with the law as a cheap workforce, sending the adolescents to commit the actual crimes (robberies, trafficking, etc.) but retaining the biggest share of the booty.

All in all, the current state of research suggests that after the dictatorship, at the beginning of the democratic period, the police basically returned to the practices of administering small-scale and essentially victimless forms of crime. Although there were violations of civil rights and even new cases of adolescents being ‘disappeared’ from rock festivals and political rallies (Tiscornia 2008; Pita 2010), a public opinion more sensible to the human rights cause, reduced levels of social marginalization and the relative low crime rates made the problem of citizen secur-

¹⁰ See Arzadún (2005) or Camou and Moreno (2005) for a detailed account of the police reforms in the state of Buenos Aires. Pereira and Ungar (2004) and Eaton (2008) provide a more global account of the processes.

¹¹ We are not implying that iron fist policies would necessarily be effective in the absence of corruption, but pointing out that in the Argentine case the connivance between political leaders and the police interfered to an extent even with this sort of policy.

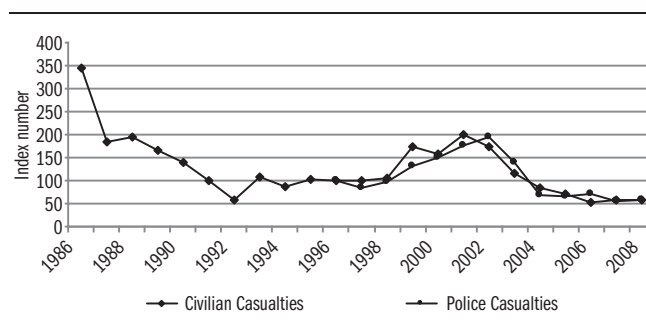
ity less pressing and the actions of the police more moderate. But as social marginalization, corruption and crime rates escalated during the 1990s there were increasing demands for citizen security policies.

Paradoxically, initiatives to reform the police, especially the iron fist policies applied in the 1990s that called for harsh repressive methodologies, facilitated the re-emergence of some of the worst traditions in the security forces. On the one hand, repressive iron fist methodologies revived the authoritarian predispositions that resulted from the militarized organization and culture that had long been part of the police traditions and that had deepened during the dictatorship. But concomitantly, it also strengthened the tendency to partake in crime, in connivance with elements of the political administration. In addition, the impunity given by collusion with the political system and the practices with which they had become familiar during the dictatorship favoured their participation in highly violent criminal organizations applying illegal force (harassment, torture, murder) to control and subdue elements of the criminal underworld. In sum, during the 1990s the traditions bolstered during the dictatorship were revived by the demands for iron fist policies and enabled by the levels of impunity provided by collusion with the political system.

This form of administrating crime by state officials resulted in very volatile systems of social relationships, where there were forms of reciprocity and even collaboration between the political administration, elements of the security forces and members of criminal networks, despite these last two sets of actors perceiving themselves as irreconcilable enemies. Hence, during the 1990s and at least until the change of economic trends and social policies at the beginning of the twenty-first century, a new formation of violence was constituted. It opposed the security forces and the young marginal poor as lethal enemies. The latter, often in conflict with the law, were known as (and called themselves) the *Pibes Chorros* or Crooked Kids.

As shown in Figure 3 the consequences of these ongoing conflicts became clearly expressed in growing numbers of casualties on both sides (police and civilians) between 1992 and 2002. But, as we will show in the next section, they were also expressed in the confrontational attitude and aesthetic style with which the adolescents from the poor urban suburbs constituted an identity that defined them in opposition to the institutional expressions of the legal order and sometimes even to society in general.

Figure 3: Police/civilian Casualties in Metropolitan Buenos Aires



Source: Fuentes (2004: 12); Bazano and Pol (2009: 35), based on data provided by CELS (Center for Legal and Social Studies) and Human Rights Watch.¹²

Figure 3 shows that during the second half of the 1980s there was a very significant decrease in civilian casualties resulting from confrontations with the police. The years that immediately followed the democratic transition of 1983, through until 1992, were characterized by increasing moderation in the levels of force used by the police, and also a period of relatively low levels of social conflict and crime rates (except for the mass looting during the 1989–2001 inflationary crises that seem not to have had an impact on the number of police/civilian casualties).

After six years of decreasing rates of police/civilian casualties (1986–1991) between 1992 and 2001 there is a clear change in the trend. The ten years after 1992 show a persistent increase in the number of police/civilian casualties, making the rate for 2001 341 percent higher than in 1992.

¹² Regrettably there is no data prior to 1986 or after 2009; also data for police casualties is only available as of 1996.

Although in the case of the police force there is no data available prior to 1996, we can observe a similar tendency: the rate of casualties in 2002 is 232 percent higher than in 1997. Exploratory studies suggest that most police/civilian casualties occurred in the metropolitan area of Buenos Aires, among males between 16 and 21 years of age from the less affluent sectors (López et al. 2005: 4). Hence, the 1990s was a decade where a new formation of violence emerged; one which confronted, mainly, the young and poor from the urban outskirts with members of the security forces, resulting in a growing number of casualties on both sides. After 2002 the change in economic trends, the decrease in crime rates and the changes in the welfare and security policies applied by the government seem to have reversed the tendency, and thus produced a decline in the levels of confrontation.

Regrettably, the sparse character of the available data (produced mostly by NGOs based on media reports and with a limited regional scope) does not allow us to know if what happened in Buenos Aires is similar to what went on in other Argentine cities. As mentioned, exploratory studies suggest that most violence occurred in the metropolitan area of Buenos Aires city, although it is probable that other big cities of the interior (like Rosario, Córdoba or Mendoza) underwent similar processes. Compared to other Latin American cities, during the 1990s Buenos Aires seems to have gradually reached or even surpassed the level of police/civilian casualties of some cities with higher general murder rates.¹³ For example, between 1990 and 1994 São Paulo had rates of police/civilian casualties double those of Buenos Aires, but between 1995 and 2000 the rates were similar: 1.61 annual deaths for every 100,000 inhabitants in the first case and 1.63 in the second. Both are far above the more violent North American cities, like Los Angeles with a police/civilian casualty rate of 0.5 and even Mexico City where the rate for that period was less than 1 per 100,000 inhabitants (Brinks 2003: 6–7).

¹³ According to a comparative study by the Dirección Nacional de Política Criminal (National Office for Criminal Policies) of the Argentine Ministry of Justice, during the 1990s homicides in Buenos Aires averaged 6.70 cases per 100,000 inhabitants per year, while the rate was 41.10 for Rio de Janeiro and 20.44

for Mexico City. Although Buenos Aires had homicide rates substantially lower than in those cities, its police/civilian casualties were similar or even higher.

Altogether, the evolution of the casualty rate suggests that during the 1990s the levels of confrontation between elements of civil society, especially young urban poor, and the security forces escalated significantly. As we have shown, this was partly due to a re-enactment of the repressive traditions that had accrued in the security forces since their constitution. These were bolstered during the dictatorship and reinvigorated in the 1990s by the relative impunity given by the connivance between political powers and the police. As a reaction to this situation, the young urban poor from the urban outskirts developed a confrontational attitude and aesthetic style that identified them as Crooked Kids. Paradoxically, this identity reinforced the perception of these adolescents as public enemies promoted by the supporters of the iron fist policies and the security forces, thus reproducing the cycles of violence.

3. Webs of Juvenile Delinquency

As has been shown in classical and recent research, conflicts between the institutional representatives of the social order and the young urban poor are usually mediated by collective systems of representation and practice, expressed in confrontational identities embodied in symbols, like gestures, tattoos, clothing, hair and music styles.

A comprehensive study by Hagedorn (2008a) shows that national or sub-national contexts may have a great say in the particular way in which these identities relate to specific organizational forms. That is, the social networks of marginalized youth involved in illegal activities may assume different morphological characteristics according to varying influencing factors. In general, Hagedorn relates the proliferation of gangs around the world to the growing levels of “polarization, social exclusion and the retreat of the state” (2008a: 6).¹⁴ The social networks of the young urban poor then develop as an answer to these relatively new forms of marginalization. Through them adolescents not only create a channel to illegally access the material resources that they

¹⁴ Hagedorn refers to the growing social differences and increasing levels of marginalization resulting from neoliberal policies applied on a global scale, which produced unemployment, poverty and a retreat of the welfare state that formerly guaranteed basic living conditions and forms of social inclusion.

cannot reach through legal means, but they also develop organizations that allow them to participate in territorial power relations and provide them with a meaningful identity when conventional forms of identification and participation are not available (2008a: xxvii).

However, although these forms of reaction to social marginalization are found across the globe they may assume different organizational forms. Hagedorn (2008a: 34) distinguishes essentially between institutionalized gangs and unsupervised peer groups. In the first case loose networks of juveniles involved in illegal activities acquire a more stable character expressed in an identity that may be passed down from generation to generation. Institutional gangs are not necessarily defined by very strict hierarchical structures with clearly identified roles. In general, they are composed of a loose network of juvenile groups that share an identity and participate in common activities, but do not necessarily have a centralized organization. Hence, instead of necessarily being rational criminal organizations, most gangs are “‘living organisms’ instilling in their members, as well as the[ir] communit[ies], a belief in the organization itself” (Hagedorn 2008a: 9). Although Hagedorn does not present a systematic definition of unsupervised peer groups, it may be inferred that these are rather small groups of marginalized youth who are involved in illegal activities but do not belong to any organizational network or express a collective identity in specific symbols and practices used beyond the immediate group of primary peer relations.

Several factors may contribute to turn unsupervised peer groups involved in illegal activities into institutionalized gangs. One influencing factor is the drug trade, which tends to structure youth in more stable organizations, especially when they are able to control specific territorial enclaves where the national state is weak or absent (Covey 2003; Briceño León and Zubillaga 2007; Zaluar, 2011). In these cases, gangs develop as territorialized power networks which are able to control urban enclaves, freeing those spaces from state control in order to develop their illegal

business. In exchange for neighbours’ acquiescence, gangs often provide the basic public services that the state does not deliver (welfare through informal reciprocity networks or protection from outside aggression) although this frequently comes at the price of a “reign of terror” that gangs impose on their turf and that strongly condition the life of its inhabitants (Souza da Silva 2006).

Another factor contributing to the institutionalisation of gangs, particularly in South America, has been civil war contexts. In many cases the organizational structures developed by juvenile institutionalized gangs comes either from imitation of the organizational structures of guerrilla movements, such as *Commando Vermelho* in Brazil (Riffiotis 2007), or by the transformation of former armed political organizations into common criminal gangs as in the case of the *Shining Path* (*Sendero Luminoso*) in Perú or *FARC* and *M19* in Colombia, or the evolution of guerrilla movements into territorial gangs, as it happened in Nicaragua (Zilberg 2004; Briggs 2007; Hume 2007; Rodgers, 2007).

Classical studies also show that immigration is a strong factor in explaining the particular constitution and morphology of gangs. The ethnic and cultural clash between groups of recently arrived migrants of different origins who coexist in proximate urban enclaves and the confrontations between them and the host culture and institutions have frequently given rise to adaptive organizations that often become involved in illegal activities (Cohen 1955; Cloward and Ohlin 1960; Suttles 1968). The constitution of institutionalized gangs in several Central American countries, namely in El Salvador, Guatemala and Ecuador, is a particular example of this, since it is partly related to a “reverse” process of immigration. The *maras* in Central America resulted from the massive deportation of former members of Los Angeles gangs like *MS 13* or *Calle 18* (Zilberg 2007; Wolf 2010).¹⁵ In general these were second generation immigrants who had no previous contacts with their original homeland, but brought their gang traditions with them. The powerful cultural symbols that were part of

15 *Maras* are a particular manifestation of Hagedorn’s “institutional gangs”, composed of youth involved in illegal activities who identify through bodily

marks and dress style. What distinguishes *maras* is their origin in this process of reverse migration and the resulting cultural synthesis between their origins

in the United States and their adaptation to the host national contexts which they were forced enter and accept after deportation (Hagedorn 2008b).

these traditions were highly appealing to local marginalized youth that had gone through brutal civil wars.

According to several scholars, the appealing character of the gang culture and symbols in Central America results from its similarities with the culture of violence that existed during the civil war years (Mosser and McIlwaine 2001; Cruz 2003; Rodgers 2003; Santamaría 2006; Kedron and Bensen, 2008). Hence, although gangs in Central America do not connect to the ideological tenets of former guerrilla organizations, they do at least aesthetically and in their opposition to the institutions that represent the legal order express rebellion through violent (forcible) behaviour. Savenije (2009: 214) and Kurtenbach (2008) question aspects of the “culture of violence” thesis as a central explanation of the proliferation of gangs in Central America. To them the fact that gangs provide a set of meaningful primary relationships and relevant identities for extremely deprived and marginalized youth has a far more important incidence on the process than the “violent” inheritance from previous civil war years.

It is interesting to note that despite Argentina being affected by many of the conditions that are associated with the institutionalization of gangs – such as political violence (especially in the 1970s), a very profound polarization of its social structure and a growing drug trade territorially based in slums and shanty towns – they have not “persisted for generations or reached the organizational level of their Rio counterparts, 1200 miles to the north” (Hagedorn 2008a: 14).

Instead of institutionalized gangs like Central American maras or Rio de Janeiro’s Comando Vermelho, what we mostly find in Argentina are what Hagedorn termed “unsupervised peer groups” and we prefer to redefine as webs of juvenile delinquency. Morphologically, these webs are composed of a loose set of interpersonal relations where mutual identification is based, essentially, on a particular use of slang, fashion, tattoos and hairstyle defined as the “Crooked Kids” style. These social ties and styles develop

in the free space provided by “un-ruled” and “un-patrolled” public spaces (street corners, bars or squares) where a confrontational spirit against conventional society, the law and its representative institutions is developed as a core element of identification. These webs become a channel for primary affective bonds and a system of social roles where those who have been marginalized by conventional society may find a space where they can be recognized and follow a “career”. In sum, the webs become a “social habitat” where poor and marginalized adolescents can find affection, an identity and socially valued “positions” (at least among the peer group) for which they find no homologues in the official social system.

It is hard to untangle the reasons why the same factors that caused unsupervised peer groups to turn into institutionalized gangs in other parts of the world did not have the same effects in Argentina. We will offer some hypotheses in the concluding section of this article. But what these webs of juvenile delinquency clearly share with institutionalized gangs is their capacity to produce an identity and a meaningful existence in the face of extreme marginalization and deprivation. As has been increasingly recognized since the pioneering studies of the School of Cultural Studies in Birmingham (Clarke et al. [1975] 2002; Hebdige [1979] 2002), aesthetic styles and music are central means not only of expressing but also of constituting these identities. The relevance of music and style in constituting these rebel identities has more recently been rediscovered by scholars such as Touraine (1995), Ferrel and Hamm (1998), Morales (2003) and Hagedorn (2008a: xvii).

Whereas hip hop seems to be the musical style adopted almost globally by institutionalized gangs as a means of expression and identification, in the case of Argentina a more local rhythm, *Cumbia Villera* (literally “Cumbia from the Slums”), condensed the identity that predominated during the 1990s among the webs of juvenile delinquency we describe.¹⁶ *Cumbia Villera* expressed a profound antagonism

16 We studied the different manifestations of the Crooked Kids’ style as part of a prolonged research programme on juvenile delinquency between 1998 and 2008. The research was based on intensive eth-

nographic fieldwork done in several contexts where we could observe the systems of social relationships that structure the webs of juvenile delinquency: prisons, rehab programmes, the juvenile penal sys-

tem, urban slums, street corners and squares. We also did participant observation in *bailantas*, the dance halls where young people go to listen and dance to *Cumbia Villera*.

towards the institutions that in the Crooked Kids' view quintessentially represent the social order: the police and the politicians that participate in corrupt networks and subject them to their power and interests. But the slang that composes the lyrics of this musical style also denotes social categories that constitute the role and status system that gives the Crooked Kids a meaningful identity and their particular form of (subordinate) social integration. For reasons of space we will not describe this specific system here (see Míguez 2006; Vila and Semán 2010 for a more detailed account). Instead we will concentrate on the basic symbols of identification and alterity that reveal the core of the Crooked Kids identity.

4. Cumbia Villera as Cultural Synthesis

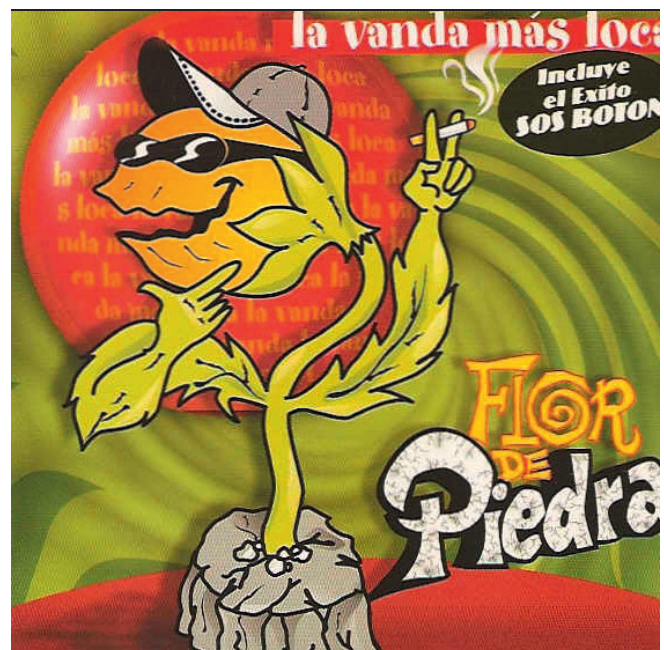
Cumbia Villera is a variant of the traditional Cumbia that was originally developed in Colombia and arrived in Argentina in the 1960s, where it became very popular among the working classes as a romantic and festive type of music. The more prominent Cumbia Villera bands emerged in the early 1990s and lasted through that decade, before either disappearing or introducing changes in their style to abandon some of what were initially the more disruptive elements in their aesthetic and lyrics: the celebration of drugs and crime. During the 1990s when the formation of violence was at its peak and police/ civilian casualties and crime rates climbed substantially, Cumbia Villera differentiated itself from traditional Cumbia by explicitly setting out to express the experience of young poor people who consumed illegal drugs, came into conflict with the law and had been through prison. The covers of Cumbia Villera records provide clear examples of this identification with the world of crime.

Cover 1



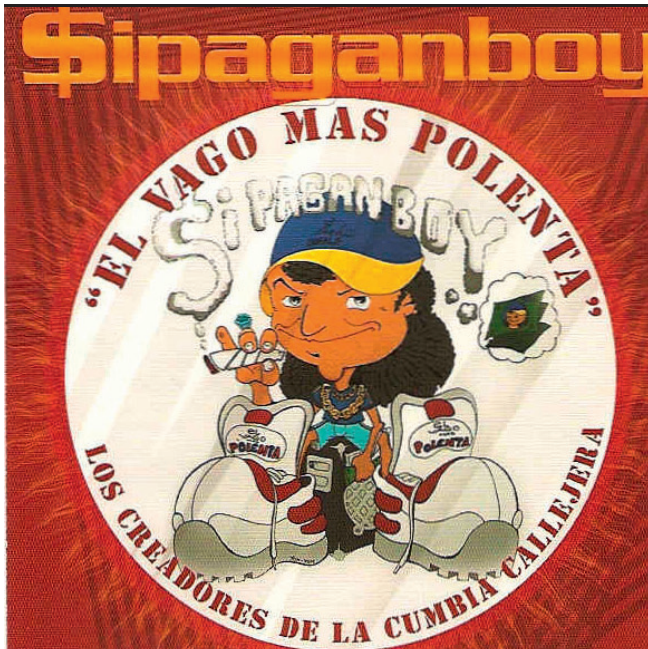
(by Andrea Cardinalli for Leader Music SACIM)

Cover 2



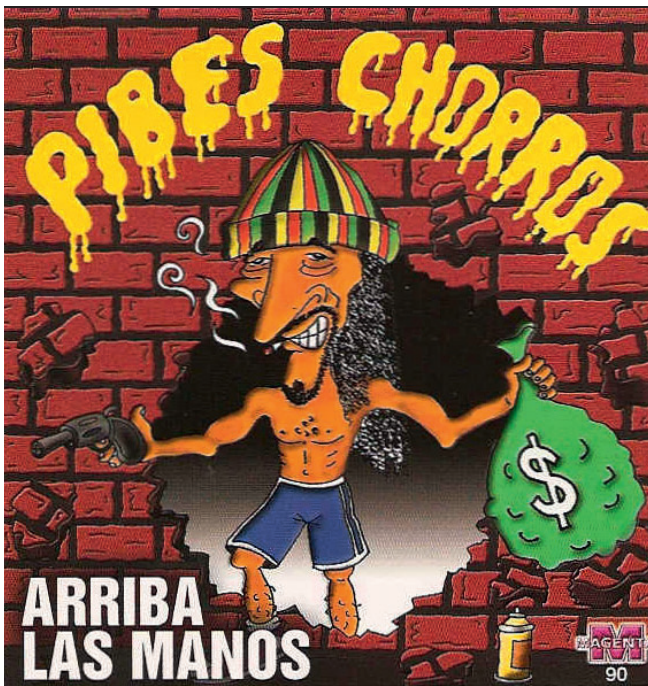
(by Moya Design and Andrea Cardinalli for Leader Music SACIM)

Cover 3



(by Martín Turalba for Leader Music SACIM)

Cover 4



(by Natalia Ruiz for Magenta)

While cover 1 shows a typical “street corner group” killing time on a slum street, the others clearly evidence identification with drugs (marihuana is alluded in the three covers) and crime. The lyrics also celebrate drugs and crime as in “I want vitamins”:

Quiero Vitaminas
I want vitamins [cocaine]
(by Pablo Lescano)

[...] I can't walk for sniffing so much.
I'm worn out, and I've got no vitamins.
I want to take [some more],
I buy a bag and I'm full of zip again.

In addition to its identification with drugs and crime, Cumbia Villera also evidences a confrontational attitude towards society. This can be seen, for example, in the song “Tumberos” (“Tomb-boys”: tomb means jail in the Crooked Kids’ slang), which contains a very explicit menace to those outside the world of crime (the song divides clearly between those who are outside the prison and “are going to die” from those who are inside and striving to get out to kill those outside).

Tumberos
Tomb-boys
(by Marcelo Moya and Edgar Navarra)

I'm from the tomb, I'm going to get out.
Tomb-boy I am, let's start the mutiny.
Tomb-boy I am, I'm going to get out.
And when I get out, you are going to die.

But even if it is possible to perceive a general confrontational attitude towards society in certain songs, most of them point to very specific types of alterity: essentially politicians and more specifically the police.

Ollas Vacías
Empty Pans
(by Omar Salto)

Empty bellies for our kids today
And in parliament only negotiations
We're going to burn them in the middle of the square.
You talk morality, and you're on T.V.
Politician sun of the beach, motherfucker ... People's Feelings!

Ladrón de lo Sacaste
Thief, where did you take it from?
(by Pablo Lescano)

I have to ask for my freedom
And they condemn me because I rob.
Why me?
When those who really steal are free.
That means most of the politicians and policemen.

These two songs show how politicians and policemen were perceived during the 1990s (and in fact still are) as those mainly responsible for the state of deprivation and marginalization that the Crooked Kids experienced in daily life. However, if the politicians were included as an “other”, it is the police that were perceived as the more extreme form of opposition.

Gatillo Fácil
[Happy Trigger]
(by Pablo Lescano)

They call him happy trigger,
He killed that kid in the street that came in his way.
He calls himself a macho,
with his police shield, heavy gun and the right to kill.
Don't forget Cabezas, Bulacio, Bru and Bordón.¹⁷
The list is so long I can't mention them all.
Hope God saves you from being the next in the queue.

This song, whose content is similar to fifteen or twenty other songs by other Cumbia Villera bands, shows that the police were perceived as a power that not only represented the law within the local space – the corner or the square – of the young urban poor. The police were also seen as a power that acts outside the law. At the same time as the police is seen as abusing power while persecuting those “outside the law”, they are also seen as in conflict with the legal order committing the same type of crimes that they supposedly persecute but with the protection and impunity that comes from being a state power. In this way the opposition to the police that partly defines the Crooked Kids identity was based on an image of this institution shared by most of the population: the police appeared as a corrupt and arbitrary force more interested in defending their own corporate interests than the legal order as such. This is an image that was particularly strong in the suburban slums (Puex 2003; Isla and Mancini 2008).

In sum, the confrontation between the police and the Crooked Kids was not only a conflict between the legal order and those who trespass against it. It was also a confrontation between two types of criminal groupings engaged in an unequal dispute over power and material resources. Hence, the logic of mutual confrontation expressed in the growth of lethal police/civilian encounters in the 1990s was partly based in an opposition between (legal and illegal) orders. But, in addition, it also resulted from a confrontation between a paradoxically illegal – and in that sense arbitrary – state authority and those who resisted the abuses of this capricious power.

Besides the songs, these confrontational logics were also expressed in the ways in which the Crooked Kids tattooed their bodies. Good examples of this are the “Crooked Kids' saint” (an image of a saint smoking marijuana that offers protection from the police to young criminals) or the “five dots” mark or the knife killing a snake (see images below) which manifest enmity against the police.

¹⁷ These are the names of some of the more renowned people kidnapped and killed by the police since the return of democracy.

Image 1



Crooked kids' saint painted in an institute's wall.

Image 2



Five dots mark and knife tattooed in an inmate's arm.

These images may be found in the street refuges where the Crooked Kids transit during the day or stay at night or painted on walls. But identity rites also require them to be tattooed publicly on different parts of the body. Initially, at the beginning of the 1990s, the tattoos were placed on visible parts of the body, like the forearm or chest. Since this made the Crooked Kids easily identifiable to the police, they began to put the tattoos on less visible parts of the body, but that could still be shown to fellow members of their groups. The fact that the tattoos had to be done in public, by a close companion, shows that it is part of a rite of passage in the strict sense of the term. The tattoos strongly mark membership and identity; they are a point of no return, since those who have the tattoos know that if they are detained by the police they face harsh reprisals, if not death. Thus, tattoos are not only an aesthetic mark of identification, they define a pattern of interaction and produce specific bodily experiences – to be tortured or killed – for those who bore the identification mark (Míguez 2002).

At this stage it is paramount to stress that this confrontational identity assumed by the Crooked Kids through these symbols and practices was a reaction or counterpart to the actions and rhetoric of the political and administrative leaders of the police forces who adopted iron fist policies. The heads of the police organizations often identified the young and poor from the urban outskirts as dangerous and a menace to the common citizen and the social order. In line with this rhetoric, the mere demeanour of a youngster could expose him to police reprisals, jail and torture only for loitering in the street or having an “attitude” towards authority, even if they might not have committed any crime.

5. Conclusions

The particular formation of violence that emerged in Argentina during the 1990s and lasted until the initial years of the twenty-first century resulted from the confluence of two main factors. One of these was growing levels of unemployment, marginalization and structural poverty that affected mainly the young urban poor. As in other cases in Latin and North America, this context favoured the emergence of juvenile oppositional identities where groups of “young and poor” could find alternative forms of social recognition and integration. Notably, delinquent identities in

Argentina did not turn into stable organizations akin to North American gangs or Central American maras. Instead, the forms of integration and recognition in Argentine delinquent identities took place in more loose social webs where individuals identified by sharing common moral and aesthetic codes.

The current state of comparative research makes the reasons behind this contrast hard to unveil. However, our research suggests a few *plausible hypotheses open for further exploration*. On the one hand, the Argentine oppositional identities did not have a strong ethnic component. According to classical and current research, racial contrasts and immigration are a significant force behind the emergence of institutionalized gangs. Although Argentina had strong waves of migration at the end of the nineteenth century and between the 1930s and 1960s, these did not rise to ethnically organized gangs with an intergenerational perdurance. Hence, in contrast with what happened, for example, in the United States, race is not an element of “distinction” and confrontation among members of different gangs.¹⁸

Another factor associated with institutionalized gangs is their predisposition to imitate former armed political organizations or for these organizations to abandon (at least to a great extent) their original political ends and turn into common criminal structures. The webs of juvenile delinquency in Argentina developed essentially in the 1990s, long after the armed political organizations had been eradicated by the brutal repressive methods of the dictatorship (1976–1983). Hence, in contrast with the Central American cases where gangs often developed in connection with armed groups or directly after civil wars, in Argentina the time lapse between the presence of armed political organizations in the 1970s and the Crooked Kids of the 1990s possibly precluded political organizations turning into criminal gangs or unsupervised peer groups inheriting the organizational strategies of the former.

Another factor that underlies the constitution of institutionalized gangs is the drug trade in “defensible”

urban enclaves that can be removed from state control. These conditions are clearly present in many Argentine cities. However, although one may find certain groups of young people involved in drug trafficking, who even may exert certain levels of control and power in a particular territory, they thus far have not evolved into stable organizations with specific symbols or a strong corporate spirit.

It is hard to fully explain this contrast with the Central American or Brazilian examples. One possible reason is that, in this respect, the conditions conducive to the growth of stable institutionalized gangs only lasted for a limited period in Argentina. As we saw in the data described above, criminal activity and violence resulting in police/civilian casualties reached its peak during the 1990s, but it was not as present during the 1980s and seems to be declining since 2002 or 2003. Hence, the limited duration of the process might be precluding the emergence of stable organizations and identities.

Another factor might be the power asymmetry between unsupervised peer groups and the coalitions generated by collusion between the police and elements of the political system that re-emerged in the 1990s. The traditions that originally accrued in the security forces favoured collusion between elements of the political system and the police to run illegal activities. During the 1976–1983 dictatorship the security forces became used not only to administering crimes, but to directly participating in the organization and command of criminal groups, displacing or eliminating common criminal gangs. Although in the 1980s these practices remained relatively dormant, they were revived in the 1990s. This suggests that the lack of stable institutionalized gangs may be due to the fact that the control of the types of illegal activity that are usually associated with institutionalized gangs were (and still are) to a great extent governed by official powers that obstruct the development of parallel competing organizations.

Now, if this ambivalent character of public organs vicariously and paradoxically hindered the development of in-

18 There are however certain embryonic organizations in some slums in Buenos Aires city, where the drug trade is being by groups of recent migrants.

However, this is not an extensive phenomenon and has not so far led to open confrontations between ethnically identified gangs.

stitutionalized gangs, it also enhanced the levels of resentment among adolescents and may also explain the growth of lethal police/civilian encounters that took place in the 1990s. The recurrent involvement in criminal activities of state agents that are supposed, at least symbolically, to embody a basic social consensus turns them into an arbitrary and, as such, at least partially illegitimate power. Hence, the Argentine formation of violence of the

1990s may be partly based on a configuration of irreconcilable enemies divided by the “rule” of law. But, since this “rule of law” was actually circumstantial to the actors involved and other random factors, the increase in lethal police/civilian encounters that is part of this formation of violence may have also resulted from the anomic social atmosphere that predominated in Argentina during those years.

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The Central American Fear of Youth

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It is often asserted that youth gangs and organized crime have seized Central America. For theories on contemporary Central American violence, Costa Rica, El Salvador and Nicaragua present important test cases, which demonstrate the need to differentiate the diagnosis. This paper is concerned with the social construction of violence-related national and transnational myths as a precondition for policy formulation. The notion of exploding youth violence is part of hegemonic discourses and not necessarily linked to lifeworld experiences. While discourses on youth violence differ from country to country, with varying threat levels, patterns of attention, and discursive leitmotifs, they share the monstrous image of brutal gangs (Mara Salvatrucha, Dieciocho) as the most vivid object of fear.

1. Introduction: An Explosion of Youth Violence in Central America?

In recent years, many scholars have examined violence and globalization, dealing with the “new paradigm of violence” (Wieviorka 2003) that has accompanied global social changes since the end of the Cold War. With regard to Latin America, there is a wealth of literature on the wave of criminal violence that has swept the continent.

Central America remains on the margins of international political life, but developments relating to crime, violence, and insecurity are attracting growing interest. It is often asserted that levels of violence in the region are as high as, or even higher than, during the state terror, insurgency, and war of the 1970s and 1980s. According to policy papers and academic studies, there are “two key areas of crime in which Central America is remarkable by global standards: the volumes of drugs trafficked through the region and the rate of murder” (UNODC 2007, 45). Even though there is scant evidence regarding “real” crime rates and perpetrators (Huhn, Oettler, and Peetz 2008), the majority of crimes tend to be attributed to youth gangs (*pandillas*, *maras*). In recent years, the question of “How the Street Gangs took Central America” (Arana 2005) has evolved to become the center of public debates, thereby clouding the

multifaceted character of violence. The most prominent phenomenon are the notorious street gangs Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) and Dieciocho (Calle 18/18th Street) that were formed in the Hispanic barrios of Los Angeles. When the U.S. government began deporting convicted criminals “home,” the gang phenomenon spread to the war-torn Central American societies, increasing massively from the mid-1990s onwards. Since then, media reports as well as policy papers have not ceased to perpetuate the dominant image of the anomic adolescent other. Central American youth gangs are said to have metamorphosed into a hierarchical transnational criminal network, which is generally tied to the narcotics trade (Bruneau 2005; Johnson and Muhlhausen 2005; Manwaring 2007). These concerns tend to be mobilized and translated into policy agendas at global and domestic levels. Central American gangs are often seen as major challenges to state sovereignty (Bruneau 2011; Manwaring 2007). In the latest World Development Report, they emerged as “major bugbears” (Jones and Rodgers 2011, 987) that represent the power of anomic social forces. It is crucial to note, however, that actual empirical evidence on the criminal behavior of youth gangs has been provided for the local level (Rodgers 2006; DIRINPRO 2006) rather than the national or transnational

levels. In general, there is little consensus on the causes, logics, and structures of gang proliferation (Jones and Rodgers 2009). Academic debate is divided as to whether Central American youth gangs should be viewed as locally rooted groups or whether migration has accelerated the proliferation of transnational adolescent organized crime (Cruz 2010). Some authors argue that Central American gangs tend to replace the state in “providing micro-regimes of order” (Rodgers 2009, 964) in slums and poor neighborhoods, attracting members with their cohesiveness, “gangsta” culture, and resistance identities (Hagedorn 2008; Reguillo 2005; Liebel 2004). There is a lively debate about the scope and extent of illegal and violent collective behavior, while others have dealt with root causes of gang proliferation such as unemployment, migration, and social disintegration. However, the sub-field of gang studies faces serious problems of methodology. As Wolf notes (2010), much literature on Central American street gangs relies on anonymous sources, self-proclaimed experts, and media and police reports, and thus lacks a critical foundation. Findings vary greatly, ranging from dramatizing policy papers to naïve interpretations of gang culture.

What does “mara” mean? It is important to note that “mara,” “pandilla,” and “youth gang” have evolved into confusing and sometimes euphemistic buzzwords. In general, “pandilla” and “mara” are interchangeable Spanish terms for “youth gang.” However, politicians and mass media have been at the forefront of creating and disseminating the meaning of “mara.” The term is strongly associated with the Mara Salvatrucha and Dieciocho gangs, which should be labeled (adult) “street gangs” rather than “youth gangs.” Nevertheless, they are often fearfully associated with deviant adolescents. It is important to note that the ascription by others is not necessarily shared by gang members, who often describe themselves as “pandilleros.” When referring to domestic youth gangs, people in Nicaragua and Costa Rica mainly use the term “pandilla.” Finally, it should be mentioned that there is a persistent etymological legend. While the term “mara” is often said to refer to “a

type of ant known for its ferocity” (Manwaring 2007, 13; Bruneau 2011), myrmecologists’ use of the term does not relate to army ant species but rather to horror movies such as *The Naked Jungle* and *Legion of Fire: Killer Ants*.¹

In all Central American societies, *maras* and *pandillas* are seen as a greater threat than ever before. However, we presume that this ever-present danger is, as in other cases, mainly a result of discursive practices. The high level of Central American criminal violence may be understood as a social fact, which is such, because it is commonly believed. Thus, the notion of exploding crime is part of a dominant ideological/discursive formation (Fairclough 1995) and not necessarily linked to “real” threat levels or lifeworld experience. The Central American talk of juvenile delinquency shows how public discourses produce and reproduce collective patterns of interpretation as well as systems of social rules. It is crucial to note that this seed of fear is nourished by a diverse pattern of discourse events that differs from country to country.

This paper reports some results of an exploratory research project on “Public Spaces and Violence in Central America,” carried out together with Peter Peetz and Sebastian Huhn between 2006 and 2009, with new observational data and supplemental material added. The research project deals with public discourses on violence and focuses on a wide range of hegemonic spheres and “subaltern counterpublics” (Fraser 1992) related to the media, politics, academic institutions, and the everyday social world (for more details on our approach, see Huhn, Oettler, and Peetz 2008). Our goal was to use multiple data sources to explore discursive fragments circulating within different public spheres (Oettler 2008), in particular in the media, the political arena, the academic and legal sphere, and daily life. The research data gathered included material from six Central American newspapers, speeches, publications of political parties and NGOs, ninety qualitative interviews, and 227 essays written by students from nine public, private, and rural schools and a theater project. These essays

¹ Thanks to Jan Oettler (University of Regensburg) and Chris R. Smith (Earlham College) for providing useful comments.

were published as an edition that can serve as a primary source for scholarly research (Huhn, Oettler, and Peetz 2007). In order to detect the macro-structure of the media discourse, we analyzed all issues of *Al Día* and *La Nación* (Costa Rica), *El Diario de Hoy* and *La Prensa Gráfica* (El Salvador), and *El Nuevo Diario* and *La Prensa* (Nicaragua) published in 2004, 2005, and 2006 (for an overview of the Central American print media and the marketing of crime, see Huhn, Oettler, and Peetz 2009).

This article is primarily concerned with the patterns of attention associated with contemporary youth violence in Costa Rica, El Salvador, and Nicaragua – three cases chosen for (1) a suspected similarity in the perception of insecurity and (2) a variety of forms and contexts.² In deconstructing the undifferentiated image of a vulnerable region that suffers from escalating violence and juvenile delinquency, my goal is to explore national differences as well as varying threat levels and patterns of attention paid to these issues. My argument is that current Central American debates on juvenile delinquency are closely intertwined with national myths, which provide citizens with a significant frame of meaning.

The paper is organized as follows: the next section briefly outlines the theoretical position and methodological approach of our research project. Rooted in the theoretical/methodological framework of Critical Discourse Analysis, the project explores the “social construction of [violent] reality” (Berger and Luckmann 1966) at the local, national, and transnational levels. Powerful and less powerful speakers in different discursive spaces tend to (re-)produce national myths. As “discourse is socially constitutive as well as socially shaped” (Fairclough and Wodack 1997, 258), the sections thereafter provide a brief historical overview of the evolution of political forces in Central America, revealing how national discourses on contemporary violence in Costa Rica, El Salvador, and Nicaragua, deal with the basic question: What factors underlie the understanding of

youth gangs as one of the greatest problems for public security, or even national security? (for the concept of *seguridad ciudadana*, see Peetz 2011). The last section explores the landscape of discursive and non-discursive arenas from a comparative perspective, trying to trace back the national and sub-national origins of this mobilizing myth.

2. Violence Discourse and Mystification

As mentioned above, the research project aims to uncover the origins, development, and institutionalization of Central American discourses on violence, rather than to identify the “real” magnitude of youth violence in Central America. When we began our exploration of the issue in 2005, we compared current academic debates with our own field experiences in Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, and Nicaragua. From our point of view, there were two basic presumptions to be made when addressing Central American crime. First, the waves of criminal violence that followed the state terror, insurgent action, and war of the 1970s and 1980s did not spread to all countries at the same speed. While public life in El Salvador has been shaped by fear and criminal violence for more than a decade (Cruz 1997, 2004), the level of attention to this issue in Costa Rica has only recently begun to rise (Huhn 2011).

Second, the “real” level of crime is mostly unknown. Throughout Central America, criminal statistics are incomplete, out of date, and, as a result, unreliable. As the state’s monopoly on the use of force is not fully functional in most Central American countries, the police and other state institutions are far from being omnipresent. According to Rodgers (2004, 117), many crimes are not registered in Nicaragua because the police are completely absent in over 20 percent of all municipalities.

With regard to the quantitative measurement of crime, Huhn (2011) recently summarized the pivotal points of criticism, ranging from the unreported crime figures to the institutional capacity for receiving complaints, and from

2 Central America encompasses a common history as well as a variety of national and local histories. Political turmoil and armed confrontation flourished in these countries throughout the second half

of the twentieth century, with Costa Rica being the sole exception. Democratization was achieved through civil war (Costa Rica, 1948), insurrection (Nicaragua I, 1979), election (Nicaragua II, 1990),

military directive (El Salvador I, 1982), and peace negotiations (El Salvador II, 1992).

crime investigations to translating these into accurate numbers. In general, criminal statistics reflect police activity more than levels of violent crime: due to under- and over-reporting they deliver disproportional pictures of crime. Moreover, the political-publicist circle of intensification (Scheerer 1978) “can be expanded by the crime rates themselves” (Huhn 2011, 137).

Young (2004) highlights the paradox that many researchers are aware of the thin ice of data, but still keep on skating. While this in itself is a fundamental reason to reject crime statistics, there are further epistemic arguments for abandoning a positivist attitude. From a social constructivist perspective, criminal statistics are a specific instrument people use to make sense of their world. They reflect and (re)construct patterns of violent action. “But if the information they give on crime is restricted, they may nevertheless reveal other facts about the society that produces them” (Caldeira 2000, 106). Thus, Central American criminal statistics relate to hegemonic discourses on violence, with the police being one of the most powerful speakers involved. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the homicide level in El Salvador is exceptionally high compared to Costa Rica and Nicaragua. Throughout Central America, reported homicides are increasing.³ Are these data reflections of the “real” degree of fatal violence, or do they reflect crimes reported to the police and other government agencies?

Although (organized) youth violence is unquestionably a significant pattern of violence in Central American societies, our findings suggest that the very perception of youth violence is tied to a multifaceted imagery. As an extension of the North American Crime Myth, the discourse on North American Transnational Youth Gangs (Johnson and Muhlhausen 2005) has swept through Central America, producing the vivid myth of Central American youth gangs as a transnationally organized crime structure. From national and sub-national perspectives, then, this myth becomes off-centered, shifting from its transnational mean-

ing to diverse fields of national and local significance. Through my reading of Central American discourses on youth violence, I seek to explain what underlies the common understanding of *pandillas* or *maras*. The myth of youth gangs becomes a mobilizing myth if and only if it is tied to vital national myths. The myth of Costa Rica being the non-violent Latin American exception and the myth of Nicaragua being a safe country are key features of contemporary national debates. In El Salvador, on the other hand, the myth of a war-torn society being invaded by criminal adolescents permeates daily life. Although they may be obvious, it is important to highlight two key aspects of this particular case: First, El Salvador is a country highly affected by both criminal activity and street gangs. Second, the phenomenon of *maras* has undergone significant changes in recent years, with youth gangs metamorphosing into organized criminal structures. At the same time, public politics changed from *mano dura* (iron fist) to efforts to combat organized crime, narcotics trade, and corruption. However, what does not fade is the initial perception of male, marginalized adolescents being “at risk.” In June 2011, President Funes presented his plan to introduce forced military service for “high-risk” teenagers (*Prensa Libre*, June 1, 2011).

What exactly does “myth” mean? A myth is a narrative synthesis of specific aspects of social life that is true for those who believe in it. The argument that crime myths create fear and justify repressive social control strategies is not new (Wright 1985; Ainsworth 2000; Garland 1996; Robinson 2000). Crime myths often evolve from certain crime stories and then become both exaggerated and over-generalized. In contrast to authors like Robinson (2000), who considers all crime myths to be untrue, I follow Katz’s argumentation (2003, 196):

Three features are salient in assessing whether a belief is a myth. First, myths are not necessarily false, they are ideas about matters that, under current states of evidence and by the use of the logic of empirical research, cannot be established as true or false. Second, myths are not just guesses about the unknown; they

3 Intentional homicides per 100,000 inhabitants: Costa Rica: 6.4 (2002), 6.6 (2004), 8.0 (2006), 11.3 (2010); El Salvador: 47.3 (2002), 64.6 (2004), 64.7

(2006), 66.0 (2010); Nicaragua: 10.6 (2002), 12.1 (2004), 13.1 (2006), 13.2 (2010); source: UNODC homicide data: [www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-](http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/homicide.html)

[analysis/homicide.html](http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/homicide.html).

are beliefs that resonate deeply because they address immediate existential concerns that they would resolve with presumptions. Third, myths are not simply emotionally evocative fantasies about central matters; they are profoundly consequential for the distribution of power in society.

In defining deviant social groups, crime myths produce and reproduce patterns of social exclusion. This is especially true for the vivid image of monstrous youth gangs, which tends to dramatize and overgeneralize the problem of youth violence. This image is profoundly consequential for the identification of both problems to be solved and social groups to be targeted. What if gang violence is not the key problem, but rather elitist attitudes, gender-based violence, and/or corruption on a grand scale? If the Central American crime myth has spread throughout the region, however, it is just as likely that a “real” problem of youth violence may exist at the local level. But if this is the case, the perception of insecurity tends to be shaped by a larger process of mystification. What is felt in Central American neighbourhoods, as we shall see in the following, is both a reflection and further complication of the vivid image of monstrous youth gangs.

3. El Salvador: The *Mara* Paradigm

Violence and repression shaped the history of twentieth-century El Salvador. Since 1931, there have been six successful military coups and numerous fraudulent elections, as well as short periods of democratic opening.⁴ From the late 1970s until January 1992, El Salvador experienced a guerrilla war between the Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN) and the state. After the peace accords were signed, the FMLN became a political party and experienced factional splits as well as programmatic agreements. The record on implementation of the peace accords is mixed (Studemeister 2001; Zinecker 2004). Although there have been positive achievements such as the demobilization of military and guerrilla forces, the subordination of the military to civilian authorities, and, most notably, the end of the war, the peace settlement has been “undermined by halfhearted compliance” (Karl 1995, 75)

and “there also have been notorious deficiencies” (Cañas and Dada 1999, 73). The restoration of democratic rule in the 1980s was an “elite settlement” (Higley and Gunther 1992), expressing the political project of “self-modernized” sectors of the Salvadorian oligarchy (Zinecker 2004, 25). The political system has been highly polarized for decades. “Ideology has been a major determinant of the vote in El Salvador ever since the first postconflict elections in 1994” (Azpuru 2010, 129).

After two decades of one-party rule by the Alianza Republicana Nacionalista (ARENA), the 2009 presidential elections produced a victory for the FMLN. Mauricio Funes, a well-known journalist, was the first FMLN presidential candidate not to be a former guerrilla commander. During his campaign, Mauricio Funes used the Obama-style slogan “Nace la Esperanza, viene el cambio” (Hope is born, change is coming) to indicate his moderate approach to national politics. Since taking office, President Funes has made broad-based economic growth, job creation, and fighting crime his top priorities.

At the time of our research, the debate on violence was inextricably linked to the issues of homicide and youth gangs and was severely limited by a national and international obsession with the latter. The question of “how the street gangs took Central America” (Arana 2005) had evolved to become the center of public debate, drawing attention and discussion away from the multifaceted character of violence (Huhn, Oettler, and Peetz 2008).

It is important to note that the current meaning of *maras* arose out of a complex and contradictory public process. Within a few years after the end of the war, public concern about delinquency and “low intensity peace” (Ribera 1997, 128) had risen. In the mid-1990s, right-wing politicians exploited the issue, calling for tougher law enforcement and, particularly, the death penalty (Vickers 1999, 400). While the academic debate focused on the role of the media and psychosocial explanations for exploding homicide rates

⁴ Mass violence dates back to 1932, when military and paramilitary forces killed an estimated thirty thousand people in the wake of a peasant

uprising, organized by local activists and members of the communist party (Dalton 1997, 163–220). The *matanza* is remembered as one of the main

turning points of Salvadorian history (Martí i Puig 2004, 54).

(Armando González 1997; Cruz 1997), the *maras* were treated as a juvenile phenomenon rather than a threat to national security (Smutt and Miranda 1998, Cruz and Portillo 1998). Within this particular context of political polarization, statements on violence became increasingly focused on juvenile delinquency.

In July 2003, President Flores announced his anti-gang campaign, Plan Mano Dura (the “iron-fist” plan), centered around raids and detentions (Peez 2011). One month later, according to *El Nuevo Diario* (August 23, 2003), the police had arrested 2,438 youths for having tattoos and for their style of dress, with 1,505 of them already having been released again. In October 2003, parliament passed the anti-gang law, which defined gang membership as a crime punishable by imprisonment. As the media began extensive coverage of the “total war” against youth gangs, repeatedly reporting on anti-gang efforts and crimes supposedly committed by gang members, the official electoral campaign started. During the first *foro presidencial*, a presidential campaign debate held in November 2003, Saca was asked: “Tony, why should the Salvadorans vote for Tony Saca?” Interestingly, while the ARENA candidate referred to honesty (“manos limpias”), freedoms (of expression, economic, religious), dialogue, and foreign investment, he did not mention public security or anti-gang policies. However, later on in the campaign, ARENA disseminated a manifesto entitled *País Seguro: Plan de Gobierno 2004–2009*, in which the “iron fist” against youth gangs is portrayed as the most important emergency measure to be taken.⁵ As discourses on violence are, in Foucault’s words, “interlocking, hierarchized, and all highly articulated around a cluster of power relations” (2006, 540), ARENA was able to restrict other representations of public insecurity. On the other hand, transnational networks of donor agencies and NGOs tend to play a critical role in defining political priorities and, thus, violent realities. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Society Without Violence

Program, established in 1998, provided an important public space in which the discourse on violence could flourish.⁶ A number of conferences were held to cover topics such as prevention strategies, media representations of violence, and gender-based violence (PNUD 2004, 2006). However, some of these issues were overlooked in subsequent debates. While they were not completely negated, they were relegated to discursive niches. One study, for instance, points out that Salvadorian newspapers “prioritize and accentuate violent acts committed by *maras* and marginalize information related to violence against women” (translated from *Las Dignas* 2006, 25).

As our qualitative data indicate, the awareness of daily insecurity tends to be multifaceted, with the hegemonic discourse on youth violence being questioned and other forms of violence being perceived as an imminent threat, albeit with varying degrees of sincerity. A paramedic told us:

And nowadays, well, in quotation marks, we live a peace process after an armed conflict, but with regard to violence, it has not been contained, and I’m not only talking about the situation of armed violence, in the typical case of, let’s call them, social groups, mistakenly called *maras* and all that, but rather there is domestic violence, there is violence in the streets, there is traffic violence, there is violence of all kinds, so we are not just transporting people assaulted by non-legal armed people [gente armada no legal] but we are bringing in children who have been mistreated by their parents, women who have been mistreated by their husbands, and we are even getting to a point where men are also mistreated by their wives [laughter]. (Interview, El Salvador, December 7, 2006)

As described above, the 2004 electoral campaign was the central point from which the discourse on organized and monstrous youth violence emanated. However, the *mano dura* policy was not the only feature of the electoral process. The media and ARENA also stoked fears of communism, trying to establish a relationship between the FMLN and international terrorism. Moreover, the media highlighted the US administration’s preoccupation with leftist

5 Only one type of perpetrator is specified in the text: “The minor law-breaker and young adult in conflict with the law,” “the youths” and “the *maras*.” When referring to delinquency and crime less concretely, perpetrators are not specifically mentioned.

6 In 2005 and 2006, the programme implemented an Arms-Free Municipalities Project in two pilot municipalities, San Martín and Ilopango.

governments, suggesting the possibility of deportations and the drying up of remittances, the financial lifeline that still keeps the Salvadorian economy running. The *mano dura* thus began to form an integral part of ARENA's rhetorical repertoire, but was not the only strategy used.⁷

In the Salvadorian case, the entrepreneurial sector is key for both political agenda setting and policy formulation. While the Asociación Nacional de la Empresa Privada (ANEP) was participating in bodies such as the National Commission on Citizen Security and Social Peace, the right-wing think tank FUSADES has propagated a specific understanding of what is threatening to investors. FUSADES, far from restricting its debate to “iron fist” policies, proposes a catalogue of measures that includes small arms control, law enforcement, prevention, rehabilitation, and institution building (Pleitez Chávez 2006). Thus, the more sophisticated concept of the enemy, as applied by Mauricio Funes, is also backed by the most powerful sector of Salvadorian society. In recent years, we have witnessed an elite discourse shifting from obsession with *maras* to a more multifaceted threat analysis. On a national level, the fear of marginalized youth has given way to the fear of organized crime. In his second anniversary address, Funes identified insecurity and low productivity as the main obstacles to development (*La Prensa Gráfica*, June 2, 2011). However, as many commentators noted, the president failed to touch on the social roots of insecurity: the neoliberal model.

Altogether, the image of monstrous youth gangs had a profound effect on the political trajectory in post-conflict El Salvador. In this process, policy makers did not simply react to a given problem. Instead, they proactively identified and prioritized the problem of juvenile delinquency. With the transformation of policy goals into repressive anti-gang policy, Salvadorian policy makers introduced a “punitive populism” (Wolf 2009, 88) that ultimately proved counterproductive. Although the change of government had a visible impact on agenda-setting, the overall fear of youth is unlikely to disappear.

4. Nicaragua: Contested Evidence on Insecurity

In contrast to El Salvador, popular uprising and guerrilla warfare were successful in Nicaragua. By the end of the nineteenth century, the idea of building a trans-isthmian canal had increased U.S. attention to the region. The following decades were marked by long periods of U.S. military occupation of Nicaragua (1909–1919, 1912–1925, 1926–1933) and a guerrilla uprising headed by Augusto César Sandino. In the early 1930s, U.S. troops withdrew and gave way to the Somoza dynasty that was to rule the country for almost fifty years.

As mentioned above, democracy came through insurrection. After their revolutionary triumph in July 1979, the Sandinistas encouraged a mixed economy and carried out national crusades against illiteracy and disease. It is important to recognize that the “first half decade of Sandinista rule ... featured experimentation, innovation, and some significant success in the area of politics” (Walker 2000, 74). Espousing an ideological *mélange* or “*sincretismo político*” (Cardenal 2004, 540), the Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (FSLN) fostered a system of mass organizations, with the Comités de Defensa Sandinista (CDR) being among the most grassroots organizations. They functioned both as local administrative units for food distribution and as neighborhood *vigilancias* (vigilance committees).

Although the second half of the Sandinistas' rule (1985–1990) saw important political achievements (constitutional process, elections), this period was shaped by the Contra War and the steady decline of both the economy and social programs, as well as a reversal of the gains in participatory democracy (Figueroa Ibarra 1993, 68–78, Walker 2000, 76–77, Prevost 1997, 154–55). Soon after its electoral defeat in 1990, the FSLN experienced internal struggles and organized Sandinista civil society imploded (Polakoff and La Ramée 1997).⁸ Since the late 1990s, Nicaraguan politics has been severely constricted by the *pacto*, a power-sharing pact between Daniel Ortega (FSLN) and

7 For more information about the 2006 electoral process, see Guzmán, Peraza, and Rivera (2006).

8 The Movimiento de Renovación Sandinista (MRS) broke away from the FSLN in 1995, on the grounds that the political stance of the post-insur-

rectionist FSLN was dominated by the authoritarian pragmatism of Daniel Ortega, oscillating between cooperation and confrontation (Close 2005, 123).

then head of state Arnoldo Alemán (Partido Liberal Constitucionalista, PLC). Even after Alemán was convicted of corruption in 2003, the *pacto* permitted president Bolaños little room for leadership. Together with Cardinal Obando y Bravo, head of the Nicaraguan Catholic Church, Ortega and Alemán formed a powerful triumvirate, corrupting democratic governance.

In the 2006 presidential elections, former president Daniel Ortega (1985–1990) was reelected with 37.99 percent of the vote. Since then, he has managed to bridge the gap between the Dominican Republic-Central America Free Trade Agreement (DR-CAFTA) and the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA), proposed by the Venezuelan government. Ortega introduced new anti-poverty programs and centralized power. His government's active efforts to "monarchize and privatize the state" (Rocha 2010) have caused severe friction within Nicaraguan society. At the time of writing, voters had just elected Ortega for a fourth term, ignoring the constitution's term limits.

In Nicaragua, the importance of insecurity in public discourse is much more difficult to ascertain. Until 2006, public life in Nicaragua was overshadowed by an elite discourse that described Nicaragua as a safe country (Rocha 2005). On the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the National Police, President Bolaños reported on the state of (in)security: "The citizen security we have achieved is enviable, it is beginning to constitute a legend in Latin America" (translated from *La Prensa*, August 6, 2004). On the same occasion, the head of the National Police, Edwin Cordero, referred to a decline in youth gangs (*pandillas*) and traffic accidents, saying that the police had achieved success both in combating the sale of illegal drugs and in establishing a network of women's police stations. A consultant working for a powerful semi-state consulting agency in Nicaragua told us:

Nicaragua is one of the most secure countries in Central America. ... yes, you notice security more in the urban part, in the rural part it is a bit more complicated, or in the poorest sectors of Nicaragua, or in the poor neighborhoods in Managua, you sense a bit more insecurity, because, OK, maybe it's a bit, well, maybe a bit strange, but, yes there are some hold-ups among the poorest people. (Interview, Nicaragua, December 14, 2006)

This image was reinforced by high-ranking police officials, who repeatedly claimed that "criminal violence is minimal" (Rocha 2005, 5). Given this image of Nicaragua as a safe country, most of the presidential candidates avoided the issue of violence during the 2006 electoral campaign. However, the FSLN presidential candidate Daniel Ortega, who refused to participate in pre-electoral "bourgeois" media events, addressed his electorate by touring the country and via party structures. His entourage touched upon the major preoccupations of poor people, including insecurity and the supply of electricity. Douglas Pérez, National Coordinator of the Communal Movement, stated:

Adolescents are generally criminalized, and the problem comes from the system ... we want a government that ... like we have been in the 1980s. (translated from FSLN 2006)

In general, our findings suggest that Nicaragua was a discursively divided country in 2006, with total insecurity and unrestricted freedom forming antithetical public perceptions. It is crucial to point out that the image of Nicaragua as a safe country was produced not only by members of the elite, but also by people belonging to the lower strata of society. A well-educated employee of the security company ULTRANIC stated that Nicaragua

is sane, relatively sane; of course, there are incidents ... Here it [the problem] is small, because it is a small country, everybody knows each other, the capital does not provide the conditions for gangs to organize. (Interview, Nicaragua, November 24, 2006)

Many Nicaraguans perceive crime as something imported or happening elsewhere. "Aquí es sano, pero ..." (here it is sane, but ...) is a phrase often heard in Nicaragua, and also in other Central American countries. On the other hand, large sectors of society perceive violent crime as an important problem affecting the country. The "talk of crime" often focuses on the poor, and some of our interviewees stated that criminal behavior is a rational choice made by people facing famine wages and "condiciones muy jodidas de trabajo" (very fucked up working conditions) (theater educator, Nicaragua, October 25, 2006). The latest IEEPP opinion poll (2010, 13–15) shows that 77.7 percent of respondents perceived ordinary crime as the main problem of insecurity. 38.4 percent referred to youth violence, and

31.1 percent to gender-based violence. Interestingly, 65.6 percent of the respondents identified insecurity as a consequence of unemployment. In general, the Nicaraguan public debate on insecurity tends to address socio-economic causes, with the lack of prospects at the center of many statements on the crime situation. However, there are conflicting views on the magnitude of youth violence.

First, the National Police celebrates a successful deactivation of *pandillas*. In a recent report, the police identify twenty youth gangs (*pandillas juveniles*) with 369 members and 163 at-risk juvenile peer-groups (*grupos juveniles en alto riesgo social*). Moreover, the police claim to have “re-integrated” 3,979 adolescents between 2002 and 2007 (see also *La Prensa*, February 26, 2010, and October 23, 2010).

Second, some analysts state that Nicaraguan *pandillas* were “metamorphosing into a drug institution” (Rodgers 2008, 84). According to Oscar Bonilla, director of the Salvadorian National Council for Public Security, Nicaragua has already imported the brutal Mara Dieciocho and Salvatrucha from Central America’s northern triangle – El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras (CENIDH 2010, 71, see also *La Prensa*, April 21, 2010).

Third, there is a growing concern about the manipulation of *pandillas* for political purposes. As mentioned above, Ortega’s return to power has been accompanied by growing repression, including police raids, criminal charges, and harassment of prominent opposition figures and Sandinista dissidents like Ernesto Cardenal, Mónica Baltodrano, Carlos Fernando Chamorro, and Dora Maria Tellez. After the 2008 municipal elections, political demonstrations were met with violence. “Meanwhile, bands of young Sandinista-linked thugs, claiming to be the ‘owners of the streets,’ attacked demonstrators while the police stood idly by” (Burbach 2009, 37; see also CENIDH 2010, 65–66). Vilma Núñez, director of the Nicaraguan Center for Human Rights (CENIDH), declared that the adolescents

were manipulated by the government (*La Prensa*, November 9, 2009). The adolescents were supplied with weapons, food, and bus fares. As Rocha notes, “the aggression was produced by and in the context of an absence of political and social morality” (2008). Most strikingly, it remains unclear whether these adolescents were actually gang members or not.

5. Costa Rica: Crime and Moral Decline

Following the annulment of presidential election results in March 1948, Costa Rica experienced a short civil war, which brought José Figueres into power. Since then, the political system has displayed great stability, based on a party system effectively dominated by two parties, the Partido Liberación Nacional (PLN) and the Partido Unidad Social Cristiana (PUSC). A commitment to democracy, the abolition of the army, and the “Bismarckian character of the Costa Rican state” (Davis, Aguilar, and Speer 1999, 43) have become core features of national identity. In contrast to other Central American countries, non-communist political society has been embedded into an institutional setting characterized by a high level of political freedom. If the second half of the twentieth century was characterized by the consolidation of democracy and organized civil society (Davis, Aguilar, and Speer 1999, 44), the turn of the millennium witnessed a significant change. The “transition to neoliberalism” (Booth 2000, 101) of the late 1980s implied the replacement of the social democratic model with structural adjustment and cutbacks in social security, education, and health. While political decision-making was dominated by decrees, voters were faced with the increasing “sameness of the PLN and PUSC” (Booth 2000, 96). The 2006 election returned Óscar Arias (PLN), the president and famous Nobel Laureate, to office but brought the bipartisan model to an end.⁹ In 2010, Minister of Justice Laura Chinchilla (PLN) won the presidential elections.

In contrast to El Salvador and Nicaragua, political parties and decision-making bodies in Costa Rica tend to highlight

⁹ Surprisingly, the Partido Acción Ciudadana (PAC), founded in 2000 by Ottón Solís, received 38.9 percent of the vote, and the PUSC suffered a devastating defeat, winning only 3.5 percent. The “new-

comerís” appeal to the electorate was successful because he presented the PAC as a force opposing free trade and corruption.

the very perception of insecurity as a major problem. The “real” level of crime and the perception of insecurity are often discussed as two sides of the same coin. For instance, the final document of the PLN party congress in May 2005 and the forty-nine-page PLN *Programa de Gobierno 2006–2010* both refer to a dramatic increase in violence and insecurity, linked to a persistent fear of crime. The PLN proposed to “stop the increase in delinquency and reduce the acute perception of insecurity that is currently a burden on the Costa Rican population” (translated from PLN 2006, 24). In recent years, the twofold problem of increasing crime and increasing fear has been perceived as one of the main obstacles to human development in Costa Rica. Notably, awareness of rising insecurity has circulated within the realm of academic debates linked to international organizations (Proyecto Estado de La Nación 2000, PNUD 2005, Rico 2006).

However, it appears that the twofold problem of increasing crime and fear was not at the center of the electoral process in 2006. While the electoral platforms of both the PAC and the PLN included the issue of insecurity, promising an “integral-preventive vision” (PAC 2006), the strengthening of the police, and the recovery of values and norms, media debates focused on free trade, privatization, the social system, and, most notably, the personalities of the presidential candidates. The issue of violent crime entered the stage in 2010. During the presidential campaign, Minister of Justice Laura Chinchilla emphasized conservative sexual policies as well as the promotion of free trade and foreign investment. However, her top priority was the improvement of public security and, especially, the introduction of new anti-crime policies.

In Costa Rica, the increase in crime is not perceived as being explosive in nature, but rather as being linked to a steady socio-economic decline since the mid-1980s. It is important to note that a perceived or real dramatic increase in robberies has emerged as a thematic node associated with other leitmotifs such as drug consumption and moral decline (Rico 2006, 17, 25–26). The issue of “ordinary violence” is not treated prominently in *La Nación*, but where it is addressed, it is treated intensively (Huhn, Oettler, and Peetz 2009). Media reports reflect an ongoing concern that

the country is facing a permanent decline linked to a deterioration of the foundations of the social security system and the social fabric of society. By attributing crime to moral decline, *La Nación*, as well as other important voices, establishes an argument that leads to the stigmatization of youth. Consider, for example, Ottón Solís’s *Convocatoria a la Ciudadanía*. In this document, the PAC associates crime and insecurity with social exclusion, loss of solidarity, impunity and corruption, the transnationalization of organized crime, and “domestic violence, especially violence against women” (PAC 2006, 43–44). The chapter on insecurity culminates in a statement on rehabilitation measures with *infractores* (lawbreakers), “children and adolescents with criminal behavior,” “youth gangs” (*pandillas juveniles*), and “marginalized youth from rural and urban areas” as the focus groups. How does the diagnosis of crime symptoms translate into the definition of perpetrators to be reintegrated into society? It is crucial to note that the Costa Rican “talk of crime” is not a discussion about youth gangs, but rather a conversation about moral decline, with the (imagined) criminal behavior of adolescents serving as a vivid leitmotif.

6. Organized Youth Violence as a Discursive Node

Members of the political establishment and international think tank researchers play a key role in the process through which the meaning of youth gangs (*pandillas, maras*) is progressively created. The life-threatening scenario of brutal and hierarchical gang culture, however, evolves into something more fluid as we take other public realms into account.

In general, “fear of youth” is not necessarily linked to lifeworld experiences. This is best explained with an example. Our data set, gathered in 2006, includes 226 essays written by students from rural and urban, marginal and upper middle-class schools (Huhn, Oettler, and Peetz 2007). The survey was carried out in two steps. The first question was not directly linked to problems of crime, violence, and insecurity but allowed for a variety of answers: “Imagine you were the president of the country. What are the country’s most important problems and how would you solve them?” The second question referred directly to lifeworld experience: “Do you feel secure in your family/neighborhood/vil-

lage/town/country? Why? Why not?” The students’ essays show that there are national differences in the perception of threats (Petz 2011). 80 percent of the Salvadorian students identified problems related to violence, crime, and (physical) insecurity as major problems of their country, compared to 67 percent of the Costa Rican students and 25.6 percent of the Nicaraguan students. There is a correlation between print media discourses and students’ perception, with the latter differing from “real” crime rates. Furthermore, our data indicate that the image of youth gangs is connected to class and patterns of social exclusion. In their answers to the open question that was not directly related to violence, sixteen (out of nineteen) Salvadorian upper-middle-class students mentioned youth violence as a major problem of the country, while only thirty-four (out of fifty-two) students from Salvadorian urban public schools identified issues related to crime and violence as important problems. Are students from an upper middle-class social background – which, in San Salvador includes certain standards of private security – more sensitive to crime problems than their marginalized peers? Our data indicate that the latter tend to stress other issues such as poverty, inequality, and joblessness. Most interestingly, however, only four (out of nineteen) Salvadorian students from private schools mentioned youth violence as a problem related to their own personal security. In contrast, thirty-four (out of fifty-two) students from marginalized urban schools considered youth violence to have an effect on their own lives. This indicates that even in marginalized neighborhoods, fear of youth gangs seems not to be omnipresent.

The image of *maras*, however, evokes feelings of fear that have gradually become internalized. This image of organized youth violence has emerged as a symbol for social deterioration and exploding crime rates. Our interviewees often drew on this symbol of the *mara* when they were asked to compare the current situation with the past or to comment on the statement that Central America is one of the most violent regions of the world. A Costa Rican priest stated:

Yes, I think so [that Central America is one of the most violent regions of the world], yes I think so. In other Central American countries, it is worse and, for example, in El Salvador the *maras*, it’s terrible, it’s terrible. (Interview, Costa Rica, November 4, 2006)

A taxi driver from El Salvador said:

And what we have here is violence, nothing but violence, and I think that you will eliminate this violence only if you eliminate these *maras*. (Interview, El Salvador, November 28, 2006)

A female cook:

Yes, I think so, El Salvador is the country that has more violence, more assassinations, rapes for nothing, they kill people without any reason, they assault people without any reason because there are many *mareros* and many delinquents. I think, yes, El Salvador has more delinquency. (Interview, El Salvador, 9 December 2006)

It is important to note that the cook identifies two groups of perpetrators, *mareros* and delinquents, and presumes them to be guilty of a variety of crimes. Although most interviewees also refer to other groups of perpetrators and other violent settings including, for instance, school massacres in the United States, the war in Iraq, suicide bombers, Colombian mass violence, and insecurity in Somalia, it appears that the very notion of *maras* provides a strong argument.

In recent years, the concept of *pandillas/maras* has entered the political vocabulary. As political decision-makers, among them presidents, members of parliament, and international consultants, have begun to turn their attention towards public security, youth gangs have increasingly been labeled as the perpetrator par excellence. It is crucial to underline, however, that the political intentions and socio-economic settings have differed from country to country.

According to Rocha, various factors have contributed to the identification of Nicaraguan youth gangs as a major target group to be reached by policy interventions. What has mattered most is the transformation of the Sandinista police into the National Police. The existence of parallel Sandinista and traditional elite networks within the National Police “has generated different discourses and actions towards youth violence” (Rocha 2005, 12), with powerful international donor agencies such as the Inter-American Development Bank contributing to making the rehabilitation/prevention of youth violence a major prior-

ity.¹⁰ In general, it appears that Nicaraguan decision-makers use efforts to reintegrate so-called “young people at risk” as a marker of difference, and something that indicates the democratic nature of Nicaraguan politics. They also take up arguments that are circulating in other spheres of public life in Nicaragua. After the Sandinistas’ electoral defeat in 1990, NGOs dealing with child protection appeared throughout the country. The Instituto de Promoción Humana-Estelí (INPRHU-Estelí), the Centro de Prevención de la Violencia (CEPREV), and the Fundación de Protección de los Derechos de Niños, Niñas y Adolescentes Infractores de la Ley (FUNPRODE) are some of the most important Nicaraguan NGOs working with “adolescents at risk.” All share the characteristic of being dependent on foreign financial resources. A second, and more important, shared feature is participation in transnational advocacy networks. Since the ideas of international consultants, Nicaraguan decision-makers, and NGO activists complement one another, the notion of youth violence has emerged as a substantial issue in public spheres.

In contrast to Nicaragua, the networked, organized civil society in El Salvador has been an ineffective counterweight to official agenda-setting and thus not a policy multiplier. While ARENA has used the *maras* label as a meta-symbol for evil, trying to establish the idea of close ties between *maras*, Jihadist terrorism, and the FMLN, the latter has circumnavigated the issue of youth violence, focusing instead on power relations and the socio-economic dimensions of development. Given the high degree of political polarization, the discursive power of organized civil society has been severely limited for a long time. Since anti-gang policies have been adopted, human rights organizations, churches, universities, and non-organized professionals have criticized the state for violating human rights and exaggerating the problem of youth violence. Backed by international NGOs and intergovernmental organizations, organized civil society has sought to establish a counter-

weight to official statements. In general, critical views on repressive anti-gang rhetoric can be articulated, but they tend to be ignored by the mass media. Recently, however, U.S. and Colombian “success” stories appear to have created renewed interest in the promotion of alternative anti-crime strategies by the business sector, regardless of whether or not these strategies are repressive. Certain interventions by FUSADES (see above) signaled a strategic shift from “iron fist” policies to more comprehensive anti-crime policies.

In Costa Rica, the stigmatization of youth has not yet been translated into policy. Rather, the classification of youth as the social group most susceptible to crime and anti-social behavior corresponds to the widespread perception that Costa Rica is facing a moral decline. The 2005 PLN electoral platform includes a similar argument, stating that Costa Rica is suffering from a norms and identity crisis. Therefore, state policies should “promote generation rescue, inspired by new principles and norms, creating the conditions for a renewed culture of social cohabitation that allows for the reversal of the observed tendencies” (translated from PLN 2005, item 151). Why is a generation to be rescued? Or, in other words, why do strategies designed to prevent crime overlook adult criminals and violators and refer solely to the imagined perpetrators of tomorrow? As described above, adolescents at risk tend to be the only group of perpetrators that is *named*.

In conclusion, as explained above, public discourses on youth violence differ from country to country, with important thematic nodes linked to their respective political history. The seed of fear is not automatically nourished by “real” violent incidents but rather by discursive events. Moreover, we have shown that the public discourse on violence is not a monolithic phenomenon, but rather a series of overlapping or contradictory discourses emanating from a variety of hegemonic publics and “counter-publics” (Fraser 1992).

¹⁰ A variety of institutions dealing with youth violence and/or “young people at risk” have been established since the late 1990s, with the National Secretary of Youth Affairs (Secretaría de la Juventud) and

the Special Ombudsman’s Office for Children and Adolescents (Procuraduría Especial de la Niñez y la Adolescencia) being the most important.

7. Conclusion

The argument that there are discrepancies between the portrayal of monstrous Central American youth gangs and social reality is not new. Previous writings have highlighted the complex and often dispersed nature of the Central American gang phenomenon:

While there is no doubt that a significant proportion of regional violence is attributable to the phenomenon, gangs are relatively local-level security issues rather than the transnational threat that the media and some policy outlets make them out to be. (Rodgers, Muggah, and Stevenson 2009, 23).

The combination of scant empirical evidence and dramatizing reports has fostered the spread of myths about organized youth violence: (1) youth violence is exploding; (2) North American transnational youth gangs have “growing tentacles” (Muhlhausen 2005); and (3) Central American neighborhoods are struck with fear.

There are, however, significant discrepancies here. Our qualitative data indicate that national discourses on violence are intrinsically tied to national myths. The myth of Costa Rica being a “peace-loving nation” (Huhn 2009), the myth of pre-Ortega Nicaragua being a secure country (Oettler 2009), and the myth of El Salvador being invaded by criminal adolescents (and, more recently, by mafia organizations) are key features of contemporary national debates. In Central America the diverging paths of development seem to converge in terms of crime policy. The three cases discussed in this paper encompass countries with high and medium human development (Costa Rica vs. El Salvador and Nicaragua), countries with and without a recent history of internal war (El Salvador and Nicaragua vs. Costa Rica) and countries with crime rates usually perceived as exploding (El Salvador), increasing (Costa Rica) or low (Nicaragua). These contextual features may best be understood as a complex matrix that affects discourse content indirectly, allowing for overlapping or even contradictory messages. Irrespective of national differences, however, Central American crime myths are created and perpetuated mainly by mass media, politicians, and social scientists and serve to justify elitist status quo politics.

On the other hand, it is crucial to note that Central America is a “bounded system” (Stake 2000), an interdependent con-

figuration of societies characterized by porous borders. There is a cross-national discursive leitmotif focusing on the ever-present danger of youth violence, moral decline, and social disintegration. The notion of organized youth violence has become a central feature of both national and international debates on violent Central American “realities.”

The vivid image of monstrous youth gangs is widespread but by no means automatically associated with lifeworld experience or sufficient empirical evidence. The talk of intentional crime, whether regarding homicide or organized youth violence, is by no means the only talk of violence found in public spheres in Central America (Moodie 2010; Hume 2008). What matters to many of our interviewees are issues related to large-scale corruption, structural violence, and/or gender-based violence (Huhn 2009; Peetz 2011; Huhn, Oettler, and Peetz 2007). The talk of crime is performed within ever-shifting intersections of ethnicity, class, and gender (see Anderson, Hill, and Collins 2001; Johnson 2001). Moreover, public spheres are often divided along residential lines. Various domains of oppression and privilege come together in the rhetoric of (in)security. As our data indicate, the “talk of crime” (Caldeira 2000) serves to create and perpetuate a patchwork of inequalities. There are, for instance, white female NGO activists who reproduce prejudices against the poor. There are people from poor neighborhoods who identify other poor neighborhoods as the danger spots, and there are machos from all strata of society laden with prejudices against women. On the other hand, there are men who communicate feminist messages and people from poor neighborhoods who demystify the image of the dangerous poor. And, of course, there are white feminists engaged in the struggle against prejudice. Thus, it is crucial to recognize that discourses on violence are plurivocal and often ambiguous, with a wide range of speakers bound to different public realms. Perceptions of insecurity are closely tied to a matrix of privilege and discrimination, with income, gender, sexual orientation, and residential background being important, albeit not determinative, factors affecting fear.

The perception of youth violence is multifaceted, with cross-sectoral and cross-border discursive strings as well as national and subnational peculiarities. As Downs pointed

out thirty years ago, every problem of crucial importance to society “leaps into prominence, remains there for a short time, and then – though still largely unresolved – gradually fades from the center of public attention” (1998, 100). In public discourse, though, issues come and go in public attention. According to Downs, the “issue attention cycle” usually begins with a series of dramatic events resulting in “alarmed discovery” and “euphoric enthusiasm” that the problem can be quickly solved (*ibid.*). Applying this concept to the intertwined Central American cases, we can identify different stages of national agenda-setting and po-

licy formulation. While the problem of youth violence is still leaping into prominence in Costa Rica and Nicaragua, it is already fading from the center of public attention in El Salvador. Nevertheless, the iconographic image of monstrous youth gangs that originate in marginalized neighborhoods will have an enduring effect on collective memory. In Enteman’s words: “even a million words may not be able to undo the negative impacts of a single bad picture” (2003, 27). The picture of gang members with their tattooed faces and torsos will endure as long as “adolescents at risk” are seen as a menace to the social order.

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“The Boys Are Coming to Town”: Youth, Armed Conflict and Urban Violence in Developing Countries

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“The Boys Are Coming to Town”: Youth, Armed Conflict and Urban Violence in Developing Countries

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Young people are major participants in contemporary intra-state armed conflicts. Since the end of the Cold War there has been a trend to portray these as criminal violence for private (economic) ends, rather than politically or ideologically motivated. Hence, the perception of young people's role has moved from “freedom fighters” to “violent criminals.” Our discursive and conceptual reconsideration based on a case study of Sierra Leone finds that the associated dichotomies (“new war/old war,” “greed/grievance,” “criminal/political violence”) are grounded in traditional modernization assumptions and/or constructed for policy purposes, rather than reflecting reality on the ground. Urban and rural youth violence in developing countries cannot be separated from its political roots. Moreover, the violent dynamics in which urban youth violence is embedded challenge our conceptions of what an armed conflict is. Including this form of violence in mainstream conflict theory would open the way for a new interpretation and more effective policy interventions. Extrapolating the experience of Latin American cities plagued by drug violence, the recent and significant increase in drug trafficking on the West African seaboard could mark the beginning of another armed conflict with high youth involvement, this time playing out in urban settings.

Demographically speaking, developing countries are young countries. Where most developed countries are confronted with an ageing population – and must find solutions to overcome increasing demands on elderly care and/or the affordability of pension schemes – developing countries are confronted with an opposite demographic layout and with a rather different set of problems and challenges. Nowhere is this more apparent than in Sub-Saharan Africa where the majority of the population is below 25 years of age, with the youth category (15–25 years) making up at least 20 percent.¹ This poses significant challenges to a region already characterized by limited development and weak states. A youth bulge – as it manifests itself in Sub-Saharan Africa – requires considerable efforts by states to create education (secondary and tertiary) and employment opportunities for its current and next generation of young people. It can

also contribute to urbanization, as young people are more mobile and may more easily leave their village to look for work or education in one of the bigger towns or cities, with the unlucky ones ending up living from hand to mouth in ever expanding slum areas. The magnitude and the rapidity of this phenomenon is clearly illustrated by the following figures: from an urbanization level of just 11.1 percent in 1950, current (2010) urbanization in Sub-Saharan Africa stands at 37.3 percent and is expected to reach 60.5 percent by 2050.²

Political instability has further added to population movements and urbanization. Civil conflict – now the most common type of armed conflict in the world – often results in large groups of refugees and internally displaced persons. As of 2008 the total number of refugees was esti-

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1 See <http://www.un.org/esa/population/>.

2 See <http://www.un.org/esa/population/>.

mated at 10 million, with the number of internally displaced persons 26 million – many of them children and young people (Dupuy and Peters 2010, 25). Moreover, young people are also major participants in armed conflicts, with ultra-young combatants – that is child soldiers – especially active in African conflicts (Dupuy and Peters 2010). The Sub-Saharan Africa region has been particularly affected by political instability over the past twenty years: while the number of armed conflict and wars globally has been gradually declining since 1992, Sub-Saharan Africa continued to experience high numbers of armed conflicts throughout the 1990s (Human Security Report Project 2008). Given the nature of many of these intra-state conflicts – with fighting going on in rural or mining areas – capital cities often provide a safe haven with at least some degree of order and stability, increasing the level of urbanization even further. Moreover, humanitarian aid – if it is delivered in the first place – is most readily available in or near urban centres for logistical reasons, adding another incentive to move to these places. Once peace is achieved, not all refugees and internally displaced persons are willing or able to return. Many of the cities and capitals in Sub-Saharan Africa countries which have experienced (or are still experiencing) armed conflict have doubled, tripled, or even quadrupled in population, presenting a particular set of challenges to development and security.

Being a subnational site, violence within cities will generally be interpreted as criminal in nature, and thus excluded from mainstream (social) conflict analyses and tools. However, especially since 9/11, the city has acquired a more prominent role on the security agenda and has been included as a site of violence in relation to the so-called “new wars.” Within these analyses, cities are seen as the key sites in the “non-traditional,” “asymmetric,” “informal,” or “new” wars (Kaldor 1999 in Graham 2004, 3). Warfare, in other words, “is being urbanized [and] urban areas are now the ‘lightning conductors’ for the world’s political violence” (Graham 2004, 4). Indeed, if anything, 9/11 has proven that cities are vulnerable sites for outside threats.

Violence within cities is nothing new, as cities are traditionally imagined as a site of crime. However in the context of mass migration, failing states, post-conflict societies, and long term issues around exclusion, poverty and inequality, urban violence is taking on excessive forms (Moser 2004). Added to this, the international commodity markets and “shadow economies” have created a new problem for many West African cities: drug trafficking and its accompanying violent social structures. In general, violence has reached unprecedented levels in many cities of the South, and is increasingly seen as one of the most portentous threats to development on a local, national, and international scale (Winton 2004).

It is against this general background and in relation to experiences in other major cities dealing with excessive violence that we explore the case study of Sierra Leone and pose the question: is Freetown – or for that matter, any other capital city in war-affected West Africa now used for drug trafficking – on the verge of becoming another Rio de Janeiro or Johannesburg? All of the points raised above can be found in this particular case: a youth bulge; limited educational and employment opportunities for young people; high incidence of child and youth combatants; a decade-long civil conflict mainly playing out in rural areas; large internally displaced person and refugee populations³; a quadrupling of the capital’s population within a ten-year period; and finally a new security threat due to the emergence of drug trafficking combined with high youth unemployment rates. We will argue that the conflict in Sierra Leone and its particular post-war challenges can only be understood by acknowledging that there is a crisis of youth – in fact, we argue that young people in Sierra Leone experience a double crisis. We then make a case for the need to critically scrutinize the so-called “new war” concept (Kaldor 1999) and its apparent dichotomy of “criminal versus political violence” (with the new wars characterized by criminal violence and the so-called old wars – or pre-1990 conflicts – characterized by political violence). Instead, we argue that “new war” violence can be as politi-

3 During the course of the conflict more than half of the population was displaced (internally or externally) at one point or other.

cally motivated as “old war” violence, making these dichotomies of limited value for the analysis of contemporary armed violence. It appears that both greed and grievance are part of armed conflicts, in old as well as new wars, and in urban violence.

Through quantitative analysis, scholars conclude that there has been a “dramatic global decline in political violence since the end of the Cold War” (Mack 2005 in Newman 2009, 255). Current conceptualizations, however, are in need of more refinement, as Newman states that “there is less room for optimism about other forms of low-intensity conflict and serious violence which falls outside conventional definitions of civil war” (2009, 256). This article homes in on these observations through examples of violence in (West) African and Latin American cities, extrapolating findings to the case of Freetown, Sierra Leone. Drawing on ethnographic research concerning cities in the South that reveals the realities of urban violence – as opposed to general interpretations thereof – we suggest that much of today’s urban youth violence, particularly in third world cities, should be interpreted (conceptually) as armed conflict, since it is characterized by high levels of organization, produces well over one thousand deaths per year (per city) and is the product of socio-economic marginalization of young people and its associated grievances, but also at times of “greed” or criminal agendas.

1. Conflict in Sierra Leone

In March 1991 the rebel Revolutionary United Front (RUF) entered Sierra Leone from neighbouring war-affected Liberia, and plunged the country into a horrendous armed conflict. Over the following eleven years it fought successfully against an authoritarian regime, a military regime, and a democratic regime, and collaborated with another military regime after finally signing a peace accord with the reinstated democratic government. The conflict is generally perceived as one of the first so-called “New Wars” (Kaldor 1999). Starting just after the end of the Cold War, the conflict in this small West African country satisfied all five “New Violence” characteristics identified by Chris Allen (1999, 9–11): the various armed groups *targeted predominantly civilians* rather than rival armed groups; the violence and atrocities committed by all factions – and in

particular the RUF which quickly made the amputation of the limbs of their victims by machete their trade-mark atrocity – showed *extreme brutality*; the emergence and rapid growth of the traditional hunter-based civil defense forces (the “Kamajors”) clearly indicated the *state initiation and sponsorship of violence*; the role of the so-called “blood diamonds” which fuelled and according to some observers actually caused the war (Smillie et al 2000) underscored the motive of *war as business* rather than a matter of political or social grievances; and finally, the particular way in which the factions operated (including the government army) – with commanders leading through personal authority rather than military hierarchy – could be interpreted as typical of *warlordism* as first described in studies of warfare in ancient China.

The “war as business” explanation in particular found considerable support among national elites and international observers. David Keen (1998, 2001) was among the first scholars to point out the role of local, national, and international economic interests in these “new wars” and show that the fighting in Sierra Leone was prolonged because certain categories of people (military and rebel commanders, businessmen and arms dealers, politicians) were benefiting financially from the insecurity and chaos in the country. Paul Collier – a professor at Oxford but at the time temporarily heading the World Bank’s Development Research Group – however, “dismissed” political motivations or causes for many conflicts, arguing that it was “greed, not grievance” which characterized the conflicts emerging in the post-Cold War era. Collier shows – using statistical analysis of conflict countries in the 1965–99 period – that those countries that depended on primary commodity exports and had a low national income were particularly vulnerable to civil war. For Sierra Leone Collier found further evidence in the fact that during the 1999 peace negotiations, the rebel leader demanded to become the Minister of Mining (2001, 146). In line with Collier, Smillie et al. (2000) argue that the war in Sierra Leone was the result of a criminal conspiracy seeking to control the lucrative diamond fields, rather than the result of an insurgency by a rebel movement motivated by political grievances. The argument that the rebel insurgency was a “criminal conspiracy after the country’s diamond wealth” was also taken

up by the prosecution at the Special Court for Sierra Leone, created after the war to bring to justice those who were deemed to bear the greatest responsibility for the war.⁴

While it is likely that diamond revenue fuelled the conflict, given that all armed factions need some source of income to wage their wars, there is less evidence that the diamonds actually caused the war. For instance, a report by the Sierra Leonean organization No Peace Without Justice, presenting findings based on statements from more than four hundred witnesses who lived in war-affected districts, found very few instances of diamond mining by military or rebel personnel during the first years of the war (Smith et al. 2004). This increased significantly during the later stages, suggesting indeed that the opportunity for diamond mining fuelled the conflict once it was under way rather than acting as a cause and motivation from the outset (Peters and Richards 2011). The Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission concluded that “it was years of bad governance, endemic corruption and the denial of basic human rights that created the deplorable conditions that made conflict inevitable,” (TRC 2004, 10) and that “the exploitation of diamonds was not the cause of the conflict in Sierra Leone; rather it was an element that fuelled the conflict” (TRC 2004, 12).

Among the proxies used by Collier as an indicator of greed are low levels of secondary education and high levels of (male) youth unemployment: poorly educated youths without jobs, it is suggested, would be particularly interested in accumulating resources through warfare, since there are few if any other avenues open to them and their opportunity costs are thus low. While these two proxies can and have been contested as indicators of greed agendas (Arnson and Zartmann 2005) – that is, they could equally indicate grievances – they do nevertheless point to an important characteristic of the conflict in Sierra Leone: the majority of the combatants involved in the conflict were young (including significant numbers of under-age combatants). Humphreys and Weinstein (2004) find that the

majority of the combatants fall into the youth category and have a rural background. The crucial role (rural) youth played in the conflict, and understanding their motivations as one of the root causes of the conflict were first flagged by Paul Richards in 1996. Richards shows that following the collapse of the neo-patrimonial state in Sierra Leone before the war, many young people lost the opportunity to benefit from education or to secure employment. This resulted in grievances, which in turn made them more vulnerable to militia conscription and the insurgents’ rather simplistic ideology of “free education, free medical care” and “jobs for all” (RUF/SL 1989, 1995). Peters (2006, 2011) later identifies a double crisis faced by youth in Sierra Leone: not only were their educational and employment hopes crushed by a contracting national state but they also found themselves marginalized through (labour) exploitation at a local level by landholding elites (mis)using customary law. Obviously the use and abuse of customary law was most pertinent in rural areas.

Whether because of the state’s inability or because of its lack of commitment, young people all over the developing world are experiencing massive challenges. The 2007 World Development Report, *Development and the Next Generation* (World Bank 2007), states that there are 1.3 billion young people now living in the developing world – an unprecedented - number – and that about half of the young people globally (which includes developed countries) are unemployed,⁵ with at least 10 percent of them not even able to read or write (meaning that they did not have access to primary let alone secondary education). While youth unemployment in itself does not lead to armed conflict – although research has shown an increased risk of armed conflict in countries experiencing a high youth bulge combined with a high young male unemployment rate, and a higher risk of riots if this coincides with great urban inequalities (McLean-Hilker and Fraser 2009) – it could be argued that in the case of Sierra Leone, where youth experienced an additional crisis, it became a particular pernicious situation with a rebellion of an extremely des-

4 <http://www.sc-sl.org/> (accessed December 2011).

5 For instance, North Africa and the Middle East alone must create 100 million jobs by 2020 to cater for their youth. (World Bank 2007).

tructive nature as the outcome. This second crisis experienced by youth – whether specifically through the exploitation of youth via customary law or more generally through gerontocratic control over the means of production (and reproduction, that is marriageable partners) – is particularly visible in Sub-Saharan Africa. Indeed, Henrik Vigh (with reference to Guinea-Bissau) calls the inability of young people to gain a reliable income, marry, and have children, and thus become an adult, a “social moratorium” caused by “generationally asymmetric control over access to resources” (2006, 96).

The 1999 Lomé peace accord, the 2000 Abuja ceasefire and the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration program for combatants hardly recognized this double crisis experienced by most of the youthful fighters in Sierra Leone.⁶ Both the peace accords and the DDR program were formulated at a time when the “greed, not grievance” explanation was particularly dominant. As a result, any genuine grievances of youthful combatants and war-affected youth were easily dismissed as a fabricated explanation to justify their participation in an atrocious war (Mkandawire 2002). Rather ironically, the Government of Sierra Leone – with the support of the UK’s Department for International Development (DfID) – embarked on a “chieftaincy restoration programme” to rehabilitate and reinstall the power of the paramount chiefs and customary law more generally (Jackson 2007), and by so doing reinstated the very causes of the war, according to its youthful protagonists (Richards 2005). About half of the ex-combatants who registered for DDR opted for the skills training reintegration package, which included training in trades such as carpentry, tailoring, or car mechanics (NCDDR 2004). But six to nine months of training proved insufficient to compete in a post-war economy that was already at a low ebb. As a result, most of the ex-combatants were unable to acquire a livelihood through their newly acquired skills, and, after selling their DDR toolkit, drifted to the mining areas – where they at least could sell their labour – or the urban centres (Peters

2007). From a pre-war population of around half a million, the country’s capital Freetown increased to about two million inhabitants during and after the war (Shepler 2010). In the city the youthful ex-combatants have even fewer opportunities to secure a livelihood than in the mining areas and often have to survive through informal networks and contacts, frequently dating back to the time when they were still under arms. From a remarkable low level straight after the war, crime rates have increased annually, with armed crime causing particular concern. More recently, Sierra Leone – like other coastal West African states – has been facing an additional security threat through drug trafficking. With smuggling routes via the Caribbean more closely monitored by national police forces, often in collaboration with European and North American police forces (and/or Interpol), South American drug lords have diverted cocaine destined for the European and American markets to West Africa. From here it is trafficked on, perhaps teaming up with human trafficking networks (Aning 2007). Guinea-Bissau is already labeled a “narco-state.” In 2007 President Koroma of Sierra Leone declared that the three biggest single threats to the security of his country were youth unemployment, drug trafficking, and corruption (Peters 2008). It is not hard to see that there is a connection between these and the real potential of drug money to undermine the difficult process of rebuilding a “failed state.” While domestic use of drugs is still limited (UNODC 2007, 23; Bøås and Hatløy 2005), it is clear that there is a real possibility of Freetown turning into another Sao Paulo or Bogota, with youth-cum-drug gangs becoming part of the urban landscape. If so, young people will again be victims as well as perpetrators, just as they were during the civil war a decade ago. But while there was some recognition of their grievances after the war – following sensitization campaigns by civil society organizations and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to challenge the narrow interpretation of a war motivated by greed – there is little chance that young people’s predicaments and the grievances that lead to involvement in crime and drug-trafficking will be recognized.

⁶ For details of the Lomé Peace Accord, see: <http://www.sierra-leone.org/lomeaccord.html> (accessed December 2011). For the Abuja Ceasefire Agreement, see: <http://www.sierra-leone.org/ceasefire1100.html> (accessed December 2011)

With the above in mind, we make two arguments: Firstly, the so-called new wars are not necessarily bereft of any political agenda, although it may not necessarily take the shape of an easily recognizable ideology. In the case of Sierra Leone it was the grievances of young people without prospects for proper education or employment who experienced socio-economic marginalization and exploitation by a gerontocratic rural elite abusing customary law and tradition. Secondly, we propose that the high levels of violence experienced in many urban centres also reflect economic and social grievances, rather than merely a greed agenda or a criminal and/or psychopathic propensity for violence. In the case of Sierra Leone, lack of institutional reform in rural areas continues to produce migration of young people to the cities, where – if left without any support – they become particularly vulnerable to groups involved in illicit activities or criminal networks. In other countries that experienced increasing urbanization further in the past, the relationship between urban violence and a rural crisis might no longer be clearly identifiable, although this does not mean that it was not there in the first place.

2. Youth Gangs and Urban Violence

Urban youth violence and armed conflict are clearly separated – conceptually – in conflict literature through a “political versus criminal violence” dichotomy. However, following the case set out above we would argue that youth violence in many urban post-war settings – the extremely high levels of (youth) violence in South Africa or Brazil would be other good examples – is embedded within a conflict dynamic that demonstrates more similarities than differences with what is subsumed under the banner of “armed conflict.” Indeed, drawing on insights gained through the “new war” debate, we find a number of similarities that link urban violence to contemporary armed conflicts. A number of common factors and characteristics can be distinguished in many cities throughout the world, as well as within contemporary armed conflicts or new wars: the presence of non-state armed actors; the linkage of

violence to the international commodity markets (both legal and illicit); conflict motivations that are not necessarily state-related; local forms of sovereignty and collective life; high levels of casualties; and finally, the crucial role of youth as armed actors. But why then are these still two separate categories? In other words: what impedes the inclusion of urban (youth) violence in mainstream conflict analyses and transformative methods? The literature on armed conflict prevention, analysis, and reconstruction is well developed it might prove of some use for understanding and addressing urban youth violence.

Clearly, urban youth violence – and urban violent dynamics in general – lack the traditional “conflict umbrella,” as these violent episodes find themselves detached from the nation-state in which they occur in terms of ideology, actors, and bounded territory; the city is a subnational site. Therefore, urban violence is generally framed and interpreted as criminal violence. Within a context of “state failure” or the inability of state representatives to provide security, the lives of inhabitants of cities such as Rio de Janeiro and Johannesburg are constituted by a “culture of fear” (Koonings and Kruijt 2007) that is attached to issues of crime. Indeed, the “fear-of-crime rhetoric” (Lemanski 2004, 103) stands at the heart of the dynamics which catalyze urban violence. Through this interpretative frame – which is present at local, urban, and national level – repressive, violent policing, vigilantism, and urban spatial and social segregation in the form of gated communities – which in turn spatially manifest and deepen social boundaries – are legitimized (Caldeira 2000). The crime frame and inability of the state to protect its citizens from this form of violence opens a market for the privatization of violence and frames slums and their inhabitants as violent enemies of the city, or “Others” (Lemanski 2004; Rodgers 2006).⁷ One particular group in these slums is considered an enemy of the state: the youth gang (and the associated drug trade). Indeed, young people in these slums are often – due to lacking or unstable family structures, a lack of

7 A shift from framing violence as “political” to simply “criminal” has opened the way for a number of violent actors that legitimize their actions through this crime frame. In Latin America for example, where there is a legacy of a culture of viol-

ence, the “discourses about corruption” (Penglasé 2007, 319) justify a number of non-state armed groups and informal mechanisms of revenge violence and vigilante crime (Moser 2004, 12). Different actors and mechanisms constitute this culture of vi-

olence, such as “[s]lumlords [who] organize squads of armed mercenaries to exterminate crime on their premises” (Balán 2002, 1).

education and opportunities, and race- and class-based discrimination – members of gangs, which have become increasingly linked to the international drug trade and with it have become increasingly militarized (Caldeira 2000; Jütterssonke et al. 2009; Lemanski 2004).

Gangs composed of mainly young males aged 15–25 are a typical characteristic of contemporary cities of the South. These gangs provide young people with a sense of belonging and social identity, and as they operate in shadow economies, make up for the lack of educational and job opportunities. Within gangs, young men find a way to make a living (see for example Jütterssonke et al. 2009). Mainstream research on gangs has focused on youth gangs as dominantly a Latin American phenomenon, yet many other cities in the South – characterized by an environment of exclusion, post-conflict reconstruction, and rapid urbanization – exhibit similar groups of (semi-)organized youth. In Kabul and Karachi, bands of (armed) youngsters – at times involved in international drug trafficking – have become a characteristic of the urban landscape (Esser 2004). In Lagos, so-called “area boys” act as violent brokers in parallel structures, having created an income for themselves by guarding individual property or public space in a situation of lacking state security, and with it have become an accepted part of the urban landscape (Ismail 2009). Smith (2004, 128), discussing the case of the Bakassi Boys in southeastern Nigeria, clearly shows the socio-economic and political dimensions that gave rise to this phenomenon:

Vigilantism and the widespread popular support for it can be read as a response to the practices of the Nigerian state and the failures of democracy to deliver expected political and economic dividends. ... On the other hand, vigilantism must also be read as an expression of discontent with regard to more traditional structures of patron–clientism as they play out in an era of centralized state power and heightened inequality in a population that is younger, more educated and urbanized, and full of frustrated ambitions.

In many cities of the South, gangs initially filled up the gap left by state absence and acted as community builders with clear ideologies focusing on countering the negative effects of social and economic exclusion (Arias 2006). Gangs functioned as state entities; they act as constructors of social cohesion and a sense of community, as police, judge, and

executioner (Arias 2006; Dowdney 2003; Rodgers 2006; Salo 2006). Pinnock (1984) considers the gang subculture as an expression of and resistance to the 1980s African political economy. For South Africa this was the Apartheid regime and for many other Sub-Saharan Africa nations, (authoritarian) regimes implementing World Bank structural adjustment and austerity measures. Salo also points out how gangs act as community builders in South African townships, as they shape closed social, moral, and territorial boundaries (2006). Gangs thus function as parallel regimes and provide a sense of belonging and community for the slums in which they operate, for those excluded from state-citizenship and state-based social structures through discrimination, often based on the intersections of economic, geographical, and racial criteria. In popular perceptions, slum inhabitants, as well as their unorganized, poor lifestyle and illegal settlements, are often seen as “inhuman” inhabitants of the city (see for example Davis 2006). These geographical spaces are often closed communities, functioning as archipelagos within wider state structures. Generally, slum inhabitants are accorded no rights to the city nor state services for their illegal settlements, often excluding them from water or electricity networks, public transport, and wider social networks, making them a sort of “second rate citizens” (see for example Koonings and Kruijt 2007). Within this environment, “gangs are also an expression of social cohesion in peripheral communities” (Salo 2006, 148). Indeed, according to Lund, what is specific to African societies in which state formation is a challenging process is the difficulty in “specifying what is ‘state’ and what is not . . . many institutions have a twilight character; they are not the state but they exercise public authority” (2006, 673).

Initially, gang violence was limited to occasional turf conflicts over territories. However, with the introduction of the drug trade to Latin America in the 1980s and 1990s, and more recently to African states, the character and image of gangs is changing rapidly. In Brazil, children as young as ten years old are incorporated in these factions as lookouts, messengers, and little drug carriers. Gradually, children and adolescents began to fill positions previously only held by adult traffickers. Many adult traffickers were imprisoned or killed, paving the way for more children to enter the drug trade as a full time occupation (Dowdney 2003). Likewise

in South Africa, Salo's ethnographic research demonstrates that in the past gangs performed a policing function and provided youngsters with a form of social, gang, and community-based identities linked to the neighbourhood (2006). Nowadays however, "the gangs are being redefined primarily as economic units whose core business is illegal drug trafficking" (Salo 2006, 170). As with new wars, we can see here that non-state armed actors and non-state forms of sovereignty deriving initially out of grievances over social and economic exclusion have become increasingly violent and catalyzed through economic motivations. Both greed and grievance have thus come to form a part of the conflict dynamics. We will return to this issue later.

Building on existing insecurities in an age of rapid neoliberal change and the introduction of organized crime in the slums, gangs are easily framed as criminal groups disrupting state security and thus become the scapegoats for a wide range of crises – social, political, economic – way beyond their scope and impact (Jüttersonke et al. 2009; Koonings and Kruijt 2007). These frames form the basis on which a vicious circle of violence and counter-violence has come to preoccupy the residents of cities of the South. Violence associated with slums increasingly reaches the wealthier parts of the cities, as the popular phrase *la bala perdida* – the stray bullet – in Brazil demonstrates. In many urban societies of the South the violence of "backward" people in the slums is now felt to be "spreading its tentacles" throughout the entire city (Penglase 2007). Responding to these insecurities, the public demands more repressive action. Violent raids in slums – carried out by on- as well as off-duty police officers organized in militias –

often kill more innocent bystanders than they actually arrest drug lords. Police officers in Latin American cities are known for their extra-judicial killings, which they are rarely punished for (Alston 2009, 2010; Human Rights Watch 2009).⁸ This phenomenon is not confined to Latin America, but is increasingly a characteristic of African cities and evolving into a global phenomenon (Alston 2010).

Youths, in cities North and South, are especially vulnerable to the administration of arbitrary and selective social order at the hands of the police, "due to the widespread perception of "youth" as criminal" (Winton 2004, 173). The complexity of the situation is further deepened by the way many police officers are themselves organized in armed bands that either collaborate or compete with gangs over the drug trade.⁹ Police officers in other words, often maintain the very structures which they are meant to fight. Moreover, repressive methods appear to have had the opposite effect as they forced gangs to become better organized and armed. Rio de Janeiro's violence is characterized by:

paramilitary organisation at the local level, territorial and political domination of geographical areas, high numbers of armed combatants (including ex-military men), a constantly armed presence in the communities they [drug factions] dominate, military grade weapons and levels of armed violence that kill well over 1000 civilians and combatants during a one year period. (Dowdney 2003: 192)

What might have started as groups of youngsters hanging out on the street is now, with the introduction of the drug trade and repressive and violent policing, evolving into well functioning armed bands fighting for and over their neighbourhoods, the profits of the drug trade and over the

8 The state mechanism assigned with the protection and provision of security, the police, appears to have become an important factor of high crime rates. According to Winton: "in attempts to regain social order and power, the police may be involved in a form of vigilantism which extends to social cleansing, targeting groups of "undesirables" such as suspected criminals, youth gang members, street children and homosexuals [and] agents on the whole act with remarkable impunity" (2004, 173). In Brazil for example, the Rio and São Paulo police together have killed more than 11,000 people since 2003 (Human Rights Watch 2009). In nearly all cases in which police have killed people while on duty, the officers involved report the shootings as "resistance

killings" – legitimate acts of self-defense. The legitimacy of these "resistance killings" is however questionable, as research done by the Special Rapporteur (Alston 2009) and Human Rights Watch (2009) demonstrates, and a substantial portion of these shootings are in fact extrajudicial executions whose victims are foremost "young, male, black and poor" (Alston 2009, 7). Off-duty police officers pose the most severe threat to public security. Organized in militias or criminal organizations these *grupos de extermínio* routinely commit extra-judicial executions. Furthermore, like the drug gangs, these militias effectively control entire neighborhoods, extort residents through security taxes, and are a major source of homicides and other crimes in Rio, including tor-

ture, corruption, and – in some cases – drug trafficking (Human Rights Watch 2009). These acts of social cleansing are, however, difficult to prove. In Brazil, police impunity is rather the norm than the exception; of more than 7,800 complaints recorded by the Rio Police Ombudsman's Office, only 42 led to criminal charges and only four to convictions (Human Rights Watch 2009).

9 In the case of Mexico, for example, there is evidence of the involvement of the police forces and other security agencies in a range of illegal activities such as "graft, gambling, prostitution, smuggling and drug trafficking" (Pansters and Castillo Berthier 2007, 40–41).

grievances that united them in the first place. Grievances over discriminating and repressive raids in slums drove their inhabitants into the arms of the gangs, which themselves engage in retributive violence to protect their neighbourhoods and avenge their losses, consequently provoking more repressive tactics and endorsing their dangerous image, culminating in a downward spiral of violence (Arias 2006; Rodgers 2006).

This spiral has culminated in what could be termed an *undeclared war* in cities between non-state organized armed actors among themselves, as well as a wide range of state administered forms of violence. Under a so-called “state of exception” (Agamben 1998) – in which the law is (temporarily) infringed due to imminent emergency threats – violence is deployed against slums and their inhabitants which is as easily as destructive and lethal as war-related violence. Within urban social dynamics, slums are discursively dehumanized and popularly considered as “barbaric” undeveloped spaces that contain “invalid” dangerous populations, which threaten the development and security of the valid spaces and populations of the city (Agamben 1998; Foucault 2003; Samara 2010). Violence enacted towards these geographic spaces and populations is legitimated through their supposedly inhuman character, leading to a number of development projects, such as the construction of highways, that bulldoze entire communities in a process starkly resembling *urbicide* (see for example Davis 2006; Graham 2004; Shaw 2004). Furthermore, crimes considered “war crimes” under international humanitarian law and listed in the Rome Statute, such as social cleansing, torture, extrajudicial killings, are well known strategies used by those concerned to “fight crime.”¹⁰ These “war crimes” take place, however, without the official conflict umbrella, thus eliminating them from the mainstream conflict analytical map. Moreover, like new wars, these violent social structures contest our notion of what a war is. Qualitative research (see for example Alston 2009, 2010; Human Rights

Watch 2009; Koonings and Kruijt 2007; Leeds 2007; Rodgers 2006) demonstrates that urban violence could – and should – be labeled as *social* conflict instead of criminal violence defined by individual pathologies. Placing local gang violence and state-administered violence within their wider social structures and linking their local discourses and frames to wider global ones demonstrates their similarities to the social structures that are typical for armed conflict. This indeed raises the question, when is a war actually a war?¹¹

3. When Is a War a War?

Considering that homicides in cities around the globe exceed the number of battle deaths in the average civil war (Cramer 2006), we should be wary to uncritically accept definitions as an accurate description of reality. Definitional frames are often not purely descriptive, as they “may shape what is viewed and how it is interpreted” (Cramer 2006, 51). This is especially important as categories frequently reflect – or feed into – specific policy choices and demands (Kalyvas 2001). For instance, children involved in the drug trade suffer from higher mortality rates than their counterparts involved in armed conflict, but only child soldiers are recognized as a special group – for example under the 2000 Optional Protocol to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child – making them more visible and thus facilitating NGO or government interventions (Dowdney 2003). Contemporary definitions, categories, and the assumptions on which these are based appear essentially state-centric and therefore often exclude sub-national locations as sites of war, of which the city is a prime example. What we are seeing here is a global tendency in which not only the state’s monopoly on violence is challenged, but the state itself is challenged in its role as provider of security. Within contemporary armed violence, non-state armed actors and non-state forms of sovereignty, non-state forms of identities to wage war for, and non-state forms of security all challenge our notions of the

¹⁰ In Brazil for example, the police are known for their dehumanizing and violent behaviour towards slum inhabitants. According to Amar “police in training still too often roll their eyes when human rights are mentioned, grumbling that human rights organizations are made up of the ‘usual suspects’ –

homosexuals, feminists, and blacks sympathetic with narcotraffickers” (2009, 522). Within this environment “rights such as freedom from torture, summary execution or arbitrary arrest are routinely violated” by state officials (Penglase 2007, 306).

¹¹ This question is borrowed from Cramer (2006), who asks himself in *Civil War is Not a Stupid Thing* when a war is *not* a war.

state as the only representative of collective life and consequently represent assumptions that define what a war is. Mainstream analysis and notions of state authority in African societies often miss out on these phenomena; as Lund points out: “[o]rganizations and institutions that exercise legitimate public authority, but do not enjoy legal recognition as part of the state, are out of focus” (2006, 675). Gangs in slums are the prime example of alternative forms of governance that are often hived off as criminal or illegitimate.

Not just urban violence, but contemporary conflicts in general demonstrate a discrepancy between assumptions and definitions concerning war and the realities of war. Whereas war was traditionally seen as a matter for states, national boundaries are increasingly transgressed and non-state armed actors have become prominent players on the battleground. This makes contemporary conflicts and urban violence awkward objects of analysis, as they transgress a number of constructed boundaries associated with war, spanning “legal vs. illegal, private vs. public, civilian vs. military, internal vs. external, and local vs. global” (Malešević 2008, 98). Contemporary conflicts or new wars and urban violence therefore question the assumptions on which definitions are based.

When we examine the mainstream definition of armed conflict, we find that political violence is defined as violence associated with the nation-state, and violence performed by or against a nation-state is considered political and for a public cause (Jabri 1996). Indeed, deconstructing the contemporary mainstream definition of armed conflict into its constituent parts reveals its state-centric foundations. Armed violence is included within the category of armed conflict when it meets the following criteria:¹²

12 The literature on what exactly constitutes a “war” in mainstream conflict analysis is diverse and it appears there is no single agreed definition (Cramer 2006). Definitions of armed conflict vary on numbers of casualties and definitions of battle deaths. The definition provided by the Peace Research Institute (PRIO) in Oslo is taken here as exemplary of a mainstream understanding of “war.”
13 According to this definition, a conflict has to be politically oriented, and to be so, association or in-

[a]n *armed conflict* is a contested incompatibility that concerns government and/or territory where the use of armed forces between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state, results in at least 25 battle-deaths. (UCDP/PRIO 2009, 1)

In other words, without state involvement or state contestation, a conflict cannot be considered an armed conflict and is consequently not political violence.¹³ These constructed boundaries culminate in three interrelated dichotomies: war vs. crime, political vs. criminal violence, and public vs. private association or motivations for violence that are essentially the basis of the new war paradigm. Within these dichotomies, a differentiation is made between killing for private gain and killing on the *battlefield*, of which the latter derives its legitimacy out of the perception of being “undertaken in the name of an assumed collective just cause” (Jabri 1996, 105). This collective is defined by its national identity, hence the state-centric character of mainstream conceptions. However, in the case of African societies, “[w]hether labeled state or not, it seems that a wide variety of institutions constitute themselves as *de facto* public authorities” (Lund 2006, 676), thus questioning the definition of what can be considered public.

Contemporary interpretations of armed violence are embedded in a general discursive shift that is constituted by a crime frame, and it is here that global and local discourses of violence interpretations are linked. Post-Cold War conflicts are seen as a departure from earlier forms of conflict (Kalyvas 2001) and violence previously framed as “political” – through its perceived allegiance to Cold War ideologies – is now simply framed as “criminal” (Harris 2003), as these conflicts appear to lack overt state involvement, state contestation, or a clear ideology. The new war paradigm frames these conflicts as “highly decentralized”

volvement with or of the state is necessary. *Party* for example in the above definition is operationalized as “a government of a state or any *opposition* organization or alliance of opposition organizations” (Lacina and Gleditsch 2005, 162, italics ours). Opposition implies a relation to the government, as the party to be opposed to must be the state or a government of a state. Another example is the content of the incompatibility between these parties, which must “concern government and/or territory” (Lacina and

Gleditsch 2005, 162). An *incompatibility concerning government* is operationalized as “concerning the type of political system, the replacement of the central government, or the change of its composition” (ibid.). An *incompatibility concerning territory* concerns “the status of a territory, e.g. the change of the state in control of a certain territory (interstate conflict), secession, or autonomy (internal conflict)” (ibid.).

(Maleševi 2008, 98) as they are detached from the nation-state in which they occur and their very existence is often linked to state failure and a lack of a state monopoly on violence (Jabri 1996; Maleševi 2008; Newman 2004). As we have seen that contemporary classifications of “armed conflict” define the nation-state as the centre of public life and the only legitimate public just cause to wage war for, new wars – often decentralized or local in nature – risk being classified as falling in the private realm, thus waged for private causes, and thus criminal in nature.

However, the meaning of what is public and what is private – the general boundary that separates political from criminal violence and old from new wars – appears to be dependent on the context in which conflicts are embedded, and need not be defined by a national element. Traditionally, the society of classical social theory – the self-contained nation-state – is the primary criterion for governance (Giddens 1987). Traditional modernization theory is embedded within the belief that the nation-state is the “centre in society capable of shaping the entirety of social relations” (Kaya 2004, 47). Collective social life, in other words, is constructed and naturalized around a national element which leads to a “state-administered ‘universal’ identity” (Baumann in Best 1998: 312). Being the sole representative of collective life, the state is defined as the only legitimate violent actor. Contesting a state-centric approach, Bakonyi and Bliesemann de Guevara argue that contemporary conflicts find themselves on the margins of and beyond the state and for these actors “reference to the state is only one aspect” (2009, 398). According to Rodgers, multiple forms of sovereignty can coexist and non-state collectivities can form “micro-regimes of order as well as communal forms of belonging to definite albeit bounded, collective entities” (2006, 321). As such, Lund argues that in the case of African societies, it is useful to approach the phenomenon of public authority and governance not “as stemming from one single source, but rather to focus on how particular issues (security, justice, development, taxation and others) are governed and which actors are engaged in them” (2006, 682).

This allows us to think about the relationship between violence, order, and the state in a “less epistemologically

constrained manner, along a continuum where the boundaries between the state and non-state forms of authority can become blurred” (Rodgers 2006, 317–18). Furthermore, it allows us to define what is considered “public” in a more context-sensitive manner, consequently approaching new wars, as well as urban violence, as social conflict instead of mere private criminality. In the case of urban violence, collectivities are not necessarily national, as slums are characterized by state absence and parallel regimes.

When “political” violence is understood in broader terms – for example when one includes interethnic violence and the violent policing of marginalized impoverished and/or ethnic enclaves – cities are major, and indeed increasingly primary, venues for official policies of surveillance, coercion, and security, as well as being sites of resistant tactics by those seeking to survive such policies (Amar 2009). The frame of criminality ascribed to new wars and urban violence is not random, but embedded within wider assumptions and discourses that construct the category “armed conflict” and link it to the nation-state.

Furthermore, the boundary between war and crime appears normative rather than analytical, as warlike levels of violence do not apparently necessitate an official state of war. We should be wary of separating normative and political definitions from analytical ones, as in many cities of the South, under a “state of exception,” war crimes and crimes against humanity are the reality of many. Especially in the case of young people this becomes a stressing issue as they have come to be seen as the main perpetrators of violence in cities and have become the main victims as well. How can these youngsters, and slum inhabitants in general, hope to see their human rights protected and crimes committed against them punished when those who are supposed to protect them are in fact the ones who attack them? These dynamics have confronted international law practitioners and as such in international customary law the meaning of “armed conflict” includes non-state armed violence. According to this definition, an armed conflict is found to exist “whenever there is a resort to armed force between States or protracted armed violence between governmental authorities and organized armed groups or *between such*

groups within a State” (O’Connell 2008, 12, italics ours). Such a definition can inspire conflict resolution practitioners and creates a space to link international conflict analytical, transformative, and legal tools to urban violent dynamics. Especially urban youngsters could benefit from such a shift, as their situation starkly resembles those of child soldiers in “official” conflict, but due to the lack of understanding of urban violence as social conflict these youngsters remain invisible on the mainstream conflict analytical map. Which tools, insights, and mechanisms – such as those already designed for child soldiers – do we as conflict resolution practitioners have that can be applied to urban youth?

4. Conclusion

Unfortunately, the number of young people who find themselves in extremely challenging circumstances in weak or post-conflict third world states where state support and provision are already limited is only likely to increase in the future. Responses vary, but can include active participation in armed violence (including urban violence). We have shown that the dichotomy between youth as “perpetrators” or “victims” is not very useful here (often they are both, or become perpetrators only after their human rights have been violated in the first place) and that other dichotomies – such as “political versus criminal violence” or “new war versus old war” are equally problematic and unhelpful. Rather, we suggest looking beyond these conceptual and constructed categories. This would allow us to better comprehend urban youth violence and to see the socio-economic and political grievances that feed into it. This is necessary because, as we argue, policy-making and interventions are based (of course) on the understanding and conceptualization of what the problems and challenges are. We have used the case of Sierra Leone to illustrate the “crisis of youth.” While Sierra Leone is a rather small country, it represents an interesting case for academics and policy makers. In 1994, the journalist Robert Kaplan wrote an influential piece that was published in the *Atlantic Monthly* (and forwarded to every American embassy in the world by order of the Clinton administration) warning against the world’s “coming anarchy” caused by environmental degradation, unrestricted population growth, and resurfacing primitivism (1994). Kaplan took Sierra Leone as the prime

example to illustrate his points (1996). While his “new Barbarism” thesis has been sufficiently refuted for Sierra Leone (see for instance Richards 1996), we should not “throw the baby out with the bath water.” A youthful population can be a significant and positive asset to a country and its development, but if left to its own devices (or marginalized and exploited) can also turn against its country and become a force of destruction, as the above examples have demonstrated.

Indeed, rapid urbanization, slums, youth gangs, and the negative effects of drug trafficking and use are characteristic of cities throughout the world. In response, cities have become dominated by a fear-of-crime rhetoric that enables and demands repressive policing strategies. Combined with the impact of the opportunities created by the shadow economy, urban violence in many cities of the South generates well over one thousand deaths per year per city, and draws in organized violent and armed actors ranging from youth gangs, police officers, militia groups composed of former military men, vigilantes, violence brokers, up to the level of politicians. Cities are becoming increasingly segregated into social and spatial archipelagos as fear of the “other” informs mutually interpretative frames of their inhabitants. Within these settings, it appears that urban youth is both the main perpetrator and victim of these violent dynamics, and questions arise about how to address and alleviate their vulnerable and dangerous position.

We have taken examples of other cities around the globe to open up analyses for Sierra Leone (or for that matter, any sub-Saharan city) and pose the questions: Is Sierra Leone, and specifically Freetown, transforming from a safe haven into a site of violence? Could a city like Rio de Janeiro show what Freetown could look like in a few years? Clearly the introduction of drug trafficking in West Africa will have an impact on these young people and their lives. We can learn from examples like Rio de Janeiro or Johannesburg. Exploring the benefits of non-state-centric analyses may be helpful in increasing our arsenal of preventive measures and policy interventions. There is a desperate need for more refined and inclusive definitions and categories to accurately address the contemporary armed conflicts.

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Governance, Security and Culture: Assessing Africa's Youth Bulge

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Governance, Security and Culture: Assessing Africa's Youth Bulge

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Although Africa has a youth-dominated population, African government policies are often not youth-centered and African governments and their international supporters are frequently under-informed about the priorities of most youth. Reliance on the “youth bulge and instability thesis” leads to distorted assessments of everyday realities. Examination of the lives, priorities, and cultural contexts of African youth, and the cases of youth in Rwanda and Burundi in particular, shows that the nature of relations between the state and massive populations of young, marginalized, and alienated citizens directly impacts the governance, security, and development prospects of African nations.

1. Learning from Liberia

If ever there was a youth-dominated conflict in modern times, it was Liberia's long and grueling civil war (1989–1996, and again in 2000–2003). Ignited by Charles Taylor's Christmas Eve incursion from neighboring Côte d'Ivoire late in 1989, together with perhaps one hundred other men, the conflict soon took the form of youth-led chaos. “What initially was seen as a revolution ... fought with sticks and cutlasses,” Utas writes, “was eventually transformed into a war of terror where young people started fighting each other” (2005: 55). In fact, some youth continued to view the war as their revolution, for as long as they were able to take advantage of the opportunity that armed conflict afforded. The civil war provided them with “a chance to become someone in a national system that had marginalized them, but also a chance to get rid of the load of work and expectations that the parental generation had laid on them” (65). Some of the more successful young soldiers, sometimes goaded by their girlfriends, “felt so affluent that they could wash their cars in beer – a beverage most could not even afford to drink prior to the war – and that they could drive a car until it ran out of gasoline and then just dump it for another one” (66). The result was a war that wreaked colossal destruction. By 1997, civil war had already left a nation of perhaps two and a half million

with up to 200,000 dead, 700,000 refugees, and much of the remaining population internally displaced (Utas 2008: 113).

The region of Sub-Saharan Africa has the most youthful population in the world. Of the forty-six countries and territories where at least seventy percent of the population is under the age of 30, only seven are not in Sub-Saharan Africa (Leahy et al. 2007: 87–91). With this in mind, one of the most striking aspects of contemporary Africa is how male African youth have so frequently been viewed as threats to their own societies. However, the view from below differs dramatically from the largely quantitative analyses from above and from outside the continent. Again, the Liberian example is illuminating. A nation long renowned for grasping leaders and withered government institutions has more recently provided truly upbeat signs of forward movement. That said, most youth continue to be left far, far behind. Fieldwork in rural Liberia uncovered a widespread fear of “rebel behavior youth” – youth who had assumed the attitudes of wartime combatants and became socially sidelined (Sommers 2007b: 1). Liberia's post-war youth unemployment has been estimated at the astonishing rate of 88 percent (Government of Liberia 2004: 7). Taking all of this into account – a widespread sense of estrangement and social distance felt by many youth and an

economic recovery that is passing most of them by – one could certainly argue that Liberian youth are among the world's most peaceful populations.

Just why most Liberian youth, and a great many other African youth, are not viewed as mostly peaceful underscores the central argument of this paper: that African governments, and the international donor agencies that support them, are generally under-informed about the priorities of marginalized youth majorities. While Africa may have an exceptionally youth-dominated population, African government policies are often not youth-centered. As a result, and quite unintentionally, this collective stance runs the risk of making Africa less, not more, secure. I begin by examining the implications of today's exceptionally youthful population demographics, paying particular attention to arguments and oversights concerning connections between today's youth bulge and instability. Next, I examine a crucial literature that is often overlooked: that which illuminates vital issues that inform youth lives in war-affected Africa. I further probe these issues by comparing youth realities and priorities in the neighboring Central African countries of Rwanda and Burundi. The conclusion returns to a central concern of proponents of the youth bulge and instability thesis: whether such "bulges" threaten internal security.

2. Assessing the Youth Bulge and Instability Thesis

"The current cohort of young people in developing countries," the World Bank forthrightly states, "is the largest the world has ever seen." About half the world's people are under age twenty-five, 1.5 billion of them are youth, and 86 percent of them live in the developing world (World Bank 2006: 33, 4). The situation is even more pressing in war-torn nations, where youth cohorts challenge efforts to rebuild governments, societies, and peace. Virtually all wars in the world today take place in demographically "young" nations (Leahy et al. 2007: 24). Sub-Saharan Africa stands at the intersection of these and related trends: its youth population growth rate is the highest of any region (World Bank 2006: 33), some of its nations are currently impacted by conflict or have been recently, and the expansion of its urban areas "has no precedent in human history" (Caraël and Glynn 2008: 124).

"In many sub-Saharan African countries," Eguavoen notes, "young people already represent the majority share of the population pyramid, which is referred to as the 'youth bulge'" (2010: 268). However, the paucity of first-hand information about African youth in general, and the majority of youth who are poor and marginal in particular, has opened the door for policy development to be informed by narrowly conceived data and misguided assumptions about youth. Many of these assumptions have been powerfully influenced by the above-mentioned youth bulge discussion. While this demographic phenomenon is currently present in a great many developing nations, most scholarly and policy references to the youth bulge highlight the "extremely robust" correlation between countries with youth bulges and the incidence of political instability (Urdal 2004: 16). Cincotta, for example, confidently states: "As one might expect, and as numerous studies have shown, populations with excessive numbers of young people invite a higher risk of political violence and civil strife than others" (2008: 80–81).

The idea of youth or young people as, essentially, looming terrors, regularly invites exceptionally bleak and frightening imagery. In an article with the unnerving title, "The New Population Bomb," Goldstone cites "Cincotta and other political demographers" who assert that "countries with younger populations are especially prone to civil unrest and are less able to create or sustain democratic institutions. And the more heavily urbanized, the more such countries are likely to experience Dickensian poverty and anarchic violence" (2010). On the other hand, Cincotta also predicted the rise of democratic movements in North Africa. "The first (and perhaps most surprising) region that promises a shift to liberal democracy," he announces with, it turns out, remarkable prescience, "is a cluster along Africa's Mediterranean coast: Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt, none of which has experienced democracy in the recent past" (2008: 82).

In addition to security concerns that are attached to youth in war and post-war Africa, there are additional apprehensions about Africa's urban youth. An Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation (USAID) publication states this frankly: "Urbanization concentrates precisely that de-

mographic group most inclined to violence: unattached young males who have left their families behind and have come to the city seeking economic opportunities” (2005: 7).

African cities have also seemed to have ignited a series of positively doom-laden responses from Western observers. From Alex Shoumatoff, for example, we receive speculation about a dangerous irrationality spreading through male urban youth minds in Africa (1988: xiv):

It is only when large cities begin to appear in the [African] landscape ... that a societal madness begins to occur; that detribalized young men, lost souls wandering in the vast space between the traditional and modern worlds, can be heard howling in the streets of downtown Nairobi in the middle of the night.

Much more famously, Robert D. Kaplan spoke of male youth in urban West Africa as “loose molecules in an unstable social fluid that threatened to ignite” (1996: 16). Echoing Shoumatoff, that “social fluid” is of a menacing, urban kind, divested of “certain stabilizing cultural models” that are anchored in rural areas. Relying on the sort of purple prose that can make one’s stomach churn, Kaplan also extemporizes on the muck of West African city life. Forced by a flat tire to take in his surroundings, Kaplan highlights (62):

the piles of garbage, the empty shelves in the single store, the buzzing flies, the vacant and surly stares of the numerous young men hanging out until our flat tire gave them something useful to do, the sheer nothingness of it all. Life went on, babies were being conceived and born, and yet little was created, or even repaired, beyond the bare necessities. This was a timeworn life based on high infant mortality and low life expectancy.

The – for Kaplan – unnerving presence of many young men in African cities seems to have inspired him to make the following influential prediction: that “the perpetrators of future violence will likely be urban born, with no rural experience from which to draw” (12).

Kaplan’s take on Africa and Africans has proven influential indeed. Not only has his use of West Africa as a lens for predicting a frightening future sustained a cottage industry of commentators over the years, it has also, reportedly, proven remarkably influential with policymakers. As Dunn, one of a plethora of Kaplan critics, notes: “The fact

that Kaplan’s article has become part of the USA’s foreign policy vision of the world makes it highly alarming” (2004: 497). In dramatic, compelling prose, Kaplan evidently voiced widely felt, but privately held, revulsions and terrors – and made them stick.

Significantly, such theorizing is taking place without interviews with the African male youth about which the theorists are so concerned. What is their take on urban life, or life anywhere, for that matter? The sense that observers may be jumping to conclusions is reinforced by Kaplan’s tendency to observe male youth instead of talk to them. Viewing from afar, for example, Kaplan claims that “the robust health and good looks” of youth in urban West Africa (and it is clearly male youth he is talking about) “made their predicament sadder” (1996: 16). Kaplan bases his assessment on the opposite of what he observes. It is far more likely that something is amiss in such analyses, that the actual reality male youth inhabit diverges from such speculative assertions. In this case, it appears that the dread of African male youth in cities substitutes for evidence-based analysis.

What might be called the “youth bulge and instability thesis” is typically used to illuminate what its proponents consider the central threat to political stability in post-war countries: male youth (shortly we will also examine what might be called the “urban threat thesis,” which views urban youth as the principal potential youth menace). At the same time, it is indeed difficult not to sense strongly that something is seriously amiss with these arguments. For one thing, a correlation linking disproportionately high numbers of youth to political instability does not demonstrate a causal relationship. This is not to say that this renders the tenets of the youth bulge and instability thesis irrelevant. On the contrary, Urdal, Cincotta, Goldstone, and others have established that the correlation between the two has validity. We should indeed be concerned about nations with weak governments and economies that have exceptionally youthful populations. However, a correlation alone has limited explanatory power and provides an incomplete and fairly distorted picture of broader realities.

Contextual evidence invites added challenges to the descriptive power of the youth and instability thesis and the

urban threat thesis. Some of the assertions that proponents have brought forth are weakly supported. For example, the relationship between “too many youth” and violent instability has been buttressed, in part, by the assertion that young men are “inherently violent” (Cincotta et al. 2003: 44). However, biological research challenges this claim (Rowe et al. 2004). Additionally, a great majority of African nations with youth bulge populations have not experienced recent civil conflicts. Furthermore, when civil conflicts do, in fact, arise in African countries with youth bulges, “the vast majority of young men never get involved in violence” (Barker and Ricardo 2006: 181). Moreover, most of the recent African wars are now over – Angola, Burundi, Liberia, Mozambique, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, and so on – despite all of them taking place in countries that still have youth bulge demographics. Finally, a commonly cited predictor of instability and war that lies at the core of the urban threat thesis – the concentration of large numbers of unemployed male youth in cities – is confronted by the fact that most recent armed conflicts in Africa began and were largely fought in rural areas of the countries involved (such as Angola, Burundi, Liberia, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Sudan, and Uganda).

Given that the predictors of unrest and instability are in evidence in country after country across Sub-Saharan Africa – such as populations infused with youth bulge demographics and high rates of urbanization – the fact that so many wars have ended, and that things are not far, far more unstable across the region, directly challenges both the youth bulge and instability and the urban threat arguments. The absence of the voices of ordinary male and female youth themselves in the debates helps explain just why these two statistical, correlation-based arguments have so many weaknesses. What accounts for the fact that the overwhelming majority of youth do not engage in wartime violence? If African cities are magnets for unemployed male youth, then why are the cities they inhabit not far more unstable? Since the predictive power of the youth bulge and instability thesis, in particular, is so inexact and, apparently, weak, then to what extent should we rely on it?

Exactly what, in short, are we supposed to be so concerned about? One senses that a fear of male youth, however sub-

conscious, may inform at least some of the damning predictions and unnerving descriptions. As Gavin notes: “Any discussion of the youth bulge in Africa risks veering into the land of breathless alarmism – *young men and street gangs and guns, oh my!*” (2007: 70). Developing policies that build on the youth bulge and instability thesis and/or the urban threat thesis will probably prove counterproductive if they incorrectly color most male youth as menacing and encourage unproven assertions about how male and female youth think and act. They may also support “dangerous discourses of ‘savage,’ ‘barbaric,’ and (above all) ‘dangerous’” male youth in unstable and conflict-affected countries (Scheper-Hughes 2006: 315). After all, the orizers tend to focus on certain kinds of male youth, especially those who are unemployed and live in cities in Africa and the Middle East.

3. Literature on African Youth Realities

It is well worth considering that a fundamental shortcoming appears to exist in the youth bulge and instability literature – the limited nature (or complete absence) of information about how youth view their own situation and what motivates them to make life-altering choices. Profound marginalization and the social construction of masculinity can figure prominently in such decisions. The social exclusion of youth is a recurring structural feature of many societies and communities (as in Rwanda: Uvin 1998; Sierra Leone: Richards 1996; and Liberia: Utas 2005 and 2008). While mention of the social, political, and economic marginalization of most young people in war and post-war societies is now commonplace (Ebata et al. 2005), the threats facing many youth in unstable and war-affected contexts – “the near-invisibility of female youth and the emasculation of male youth” (Sommers 2007a: 113) – remain under-examined.

Adulthood and masculinity expectations and pressures can also profoundly influence youth decisions and their outlook on the future. Utas describes a “crisis” facing many young men in Liberia who are unable to become socially accepted as men because they have been unable to achieve the cultural mandates of building their own house and then getting married. The males who had chronologically outgrown youth were thus becoming not men but

“youthmen” (Utas 2005: 150). Governments can exacerbate the promotion of male youth frustration in a number of ways, including making access to land and non-farm employment difficult. This can severely reduce the ability of male youth to marry and become men (Uvin 1998).

While much research has noted that male youth who are caught in inescapable positions of social failure may turn to desperate, even violent, action (Correia and Bannon 2006), the “the indigenous sources of strength” (individual, familial, and community) that “allow or keep young men out of conflict” are “nearly absent” from discussion and research (Barker and Ricardo 2006: 175). Speaking of Burundi, Uvin argues that (2008: 178):

when young men face great difficulty in achieving normative manhood, they do what most of us do when confronted with major challenges in our lives – they try harder than ever, they seek to innovate, they try to move and find opportunities elsewhere, they turn to God for strength, they hang out with friends and complain – but they do not necessarily become murderers.

Many if not most African male youth, in short, resist engagement in violence and demonstrate remarkable resilience in the face of dire circumstances (Boyden and de Berry 2004; Annan et al. 2008).

The situation facing female youth is similarly serious, since attaining a respectable and hence more protected form of womanhood is typically attainable only if there are men available to marry (Coulter 2009; Stites, Akabwai, and Mazurana 2007). The phase of prolonged delay before male and female youth can marry and become seen as adults has been called “waithood,” during which youth find themselves confined in “an adolescent, liminal world where they are neither children nor adults” (Singerman 2007: 6). In the absence of marriage, and since female youth tend to have significantly fewer economic options than their male youth counterparts, involvement in irregular or risky income-generation, including prostitution, is

often their only means of survival (Angola: de Barros 2005; Rwanda: Sommers 2012). An additional threat is what Nordstrom has termed the “invisibility” of girls and young women in war-affected contexts, in which a “veil of silence” descends and makes it difficult to access the trials and alarming vulnerabilities that girls and female youth endure (1999: 75).

Sadly, fear and presumption appear often to make poor female youth virtually imperceptible and transform young men, particularly those in African cities, into an undifferentiated mass of security threats.¹ Speaking to members of the marginalized youth majorities in urban or rural Africa invokes an entirely different view of contemporary Africa: one where innovation and resourcefulness characterize the increasingly separate social worlds of African youth; where humiliation hounds many male youth who are simply unable to become men; where far too many female youth endure desperate and strikingly overlooked lives; where governments are seen as predatory and riddled with corruption and nepotism; and where older generations grow more and more detached from the younger generation. After examining how agencies and – much more crucially – societies define what it means to be a youth, we will turn to cases that illuminate some of these tendencies. For the fortunes of youth in two Sub-Saharan African countries – Rwanda and Burundi – are strongly influenced by the combined impact of two critical factors: the nature of governance and culture.

4. Between Ages and Cultures: The Challenge of Defining Youth

Before we embark on examinations of ordinary youth in two Sub-Saharan African nations, we must clarify what is it that we mean by “youth.” While it is hardly a pedestrian concern, the definition is also, unquestionably, a moving target. The United Nations, for example, defines youth as “persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years.” At the same time, the UN also states that its definition is “for statistical purposes” and “without prejudice to other definitions by Member States.” In other words, while it was necessary to

¹ Extended discussions of Africa's youth bulge and security concerns can be found in Sommers 2006 and Sommers 2007a.

arrive at an age range so that statistics could be gathered, it is accepted that individual states may have their own definitions (ECOSOC n.d.). And so they have: the African Union, to name just one example, defines youth as persons aged 15 to 34 years (Eguavoen 2010: 268). At the same time, USAID observes that “The UN system defines young people [as distinct from “youth”] as persons in the 10–24-year age group.” Young people, USAID explains, “includes both adolescents, ages 10–19, and youth, ages 15–24” (USAID n.d.).

Beyond the welter of age-based definitions of youth, there are cultural classifications for youth and adult. Instead of an age range, the challenge of passing into adulthood stands out. It is not easy to achieve. Eguavoen summarizes substantial academic literature on African youth definitions and finds that they are exacting (2010: 268):

In academic debates, youth is understood as a social category that assembles individuals in the social transition stage between childhood and adulthood . . . as well as ‘adults without adult status’, meaning individuals who have not succeeded in establishing themselves socially as adults by getting married, finding their own household and/or being able to take economic care of themselves and dependants.

In addition, exiting the culturally defined category of “youth” may not be permanent. One must return to “youthhood” if one fails to maintain one’s status of “adult.” As Eguavoen explains (*ibid.*):

There is growing empirical evidence that the social status of adulthood may be reversed if the individual falls back into poverty, which means that young adults are socially delegated back to youth status and, as a direct consequence, denied full adult rights, again resulting in low social status and limited access to resources and political decision making.

Gender dimensions are also crucial in movements between being a youth and an adult, since “African women usually have a shorter time within the period identified as youth (from puberty to 18 or 19 years old), because they tend to marry at a younger age than men and thus receive the social status of adulthood earlier than their male counterparts” (Eguavoen 2010.: 268–69). To be sure, there are cases in Africa where adulthood can be achieved in other ways. But as we will see, much depends on whether cultural

mandates and expectations are rigid (as in Rwanda) or more flexible (as in Burundi).

5. Views from Below: The Cases of Rwanda and Burundi

African cultural definitions of what it means to be a youth and how a youth might enter adulthood differ by gender and create the risk of engendering public disapproval for youth who fail to achieve and maintain the cultural prerequisites of adulthood. What the cases of Rwanda and Burundi reveal is how dominant the threat of failed adulthood can be for youth, and how governments can play a decisive role in determining whether youth fail or succeed in this seminal quest.

Just as it was before the devastating genocide of 1994, Rwanda is again widely seen as a model of development (Sebarenzi 2009; Uvin 1998: 1–2; International Development Association 2009: 1). Laudatory prose is routinely reserved for Rwanda and its current government. In Kinzer’s words (2008: 2), Rwanda has

recovered from civil war and genocide more fully than anyone imagined possible and is united, stable, and at peace. Its leaders are boundlessly ambitious. Rwandans are bubbling over with a sense of unlimited possibility. Outsiders, drawn by the chance to help transform a resurgent nation, are streaming in.

Cooke sums up Rwanda’s internationally-inspired glow, noting that the Rwandan government’s “expressed vision of national reconciliation through development and service delivery has won accolades from the international community” (2011: 1). While warnings about and condemnation of extensive government repression and human rights violations have also come to the fore (for example, Reyntjens 2004 and 2011), it is the image of Rwanda rising from the ashes of genocide that has captured the imagination of most.

The same cannot be said for its neighbor to the south, Burundi. There, in the aftermath of an extremely violent, destructive, and generally overlooked civil war, Burundi, despite its movement into post-war democracy, remains plagued by the poor reputation of its government. Kron contrasts conditions in these two countries, which have similar languages, colonial histories, cultures, and sets of ethnic groups, commenting that, “in contrast to orderly

Rwanda, the darling of the international aid community, Burundi is violent, dysfunctional, and chaotic.” Significantly, Kron adds: “On the plus side, civil society in Burundi is indigenous and true, and unlike in Rwanda, ethnicity is not being ignored. Politics can breathe” (2010: 2).

The striking contrasts between Rwanda and Burundi are revealed in research conducted by myself and a colleague, Peter Uvin (Sommers and Uvin 2011; Sommers 2012; and Uvin 2009), based on nearly identical sets of qualitative questions, as well as very similar samples of rural and urban, and male and female youth, the procedures for which we devised together. What our research collectively uncovered largely contradicts the reputed realities in the two countries: the general situation and outlook of Rwandan youth was bleak, while their Burundian counterparts, while materially just as poor, had outlooks that were vastly more upbeat and optimistic. In Burundi, “generally weak governance and social tolerance toward manhood mandates provides space for many youth to generate trajectories of their own.” Meanwhile, in Rwanda, many youth are “risk averse and tied to a future where public failure appears likely” (Sommers and Uvin 2011: 2).

In both Rwanda and Burundi, the culturally mandated norms for adulthood were similar: to become socially accepted and recognized as a man, a male youth must build his own house before marrying and starting a family. For female youth, being an adult is culturally defined by marriage and then having children. But in Rwanda, most youth are failing to make significant progress towards adulthood. Field research there found that there is a severe housing crisis in the country and government regulations contribute significantly to making it unusually difficult for most male youth to complete a house. As a result, most male youth are failing to achieve the first step towards socially recognized manhood. Meanwhile, a female cannot become a woman until she has someone to marry. For most, they are forced to wait for male youth to finish building a house – which many are unlikely to achieve. The pressure on female youth is acute, since it is illegal to marry before age 21. But by their mid-twenties, male youth may view them as too old to marry. When this occurs, a female youth faces a future as a spinster and social outlier (Sommers and Uvin 2011: 3).

Although the ideals of normative manhood (and, for that matter, womanhood) were similar in Burundi, it was not the central focus of male youth lives there. Unlike Rwanda, where strict government housing regulations contributed significantly to failed manhood, and where cultural mandates were unyielding, the prospect of social failure and public humiliation as failed adults did not threaten male and female youth in Burundi. Burundians “widely accepted that [adulthood] could not be perfectly achieved, and were willing to accommodate alternatives” (Sommers and Uvin 2011: 4). Ultimately, our comparative analysis revealed that “most Burundian youth believe that they have options and possibilities while most Rwandan youth do not.” While the Rwandan government is lauded for being “simultaneously progressive and prodevelopment,” research with Rwandan youth found that it is also “interventionist and controlling” (9). Together with rigid cultural requirements and real threats of public humiliation, most of Rwanda’s youth are stuck in a situation where failure is likely – and difficult to avoid. One way to sidestep it is for rural youth to migrate to the capital, Kigali. Yet in Rwanda, shifting to the city was “mainly a destination for the desperate, not the inquisitive or the dynamic” as was essentially the situation for their counterparts in Burundi (7). Not surprisingly, while Burundian youth “held out the hope of improving their lot and perhaps even ascending socially,” most Rwandan youth aimed “to minimize their chances of collapse” (8).

Rwanda’s combination of a strict, strong, and controlling government, and a society that adheres to rigid cultural expectations, leaves most of its youth risk averse and facing the prospect of failing to gain social acceptance as adults. In contrast, Burundi’s comparatively weak government does not appear to play much of a role in Burundian youth lives. At the same time, the government’s minimal presence, together with the fact that society views adulthood norms as flexible and adaptable, rather than rigid and unyielding, gave Burundian youth room to move. The punishing set of circumstances that surrounded Rwandan youth simply does not exist for Burundian youth. Taken together, there appear to be some benefits to having a weak government – provided a youth is ambitious and enterprising, and as long as society supports rather than condemns

youth who struggle and perhaps even fail to meet culturally-defined adulthood requirements.

6. Conclusion

Is the youth bulge a threat to state internal security? Perhaps. Urdal argues that the determining factor is not youth but economic opportunity: "If young people are left with no alternative but unemployment and poverty, they are increasingly likely to join a rebellion as an alternative way of generating an income" (2007: 92). Urdal's argument, however, requires context, since most unemployed and impoverished young Africans do not become security threats even when opportunities for enrichment arise. There is, in addition, scant information on how and why most marginalized African youth resist engagement in violence even when it would seem to provide immediate benefits. Focusing on youth demographics, moreover, runs the risk of overlooking other crucial security concerns, such as illicit drugs and small arms. The easy availability of drugs and arms can fuel conflicts and influence youth behavior. Both can aid youth recruitment into gangs and militias.

A starting point for donor nations is not to make unstable governance unintentionally worse. While such a result is not intentional, supporting government policies and programs that make the lives of profoundly marginalized youth majorities even more marginal creates the risk of undermining government institutions and increasing frustration and despair within youthful populations. Such situations can threaten the credibility of states and foment instability. They are also environments in which gangs and militias can be found, although not necessarily: recent research in urban Rwanda, which has one of the youngest populations in the world and significant governance issues, did not uncover any evidence of gang activity (Sommers 2012). However, even when opportunities for joining gangs and militias are present, such as in South Sudan, where they seem to be enlarging (Martin and Mosel 2011, Sommers and Schwartz 2011), few African youth are likely to do so.

That said, once a war starts, the availability of so many youth means that young fighters are easily replaceable. This appears to allow military outfits to send child and youth soldiers into high-risk situations and accept unusually high casualties. This is vividly illustrated by accounts from child soldier outfits, which may endure exceptionally high casualties in battle before withdrawing. A former Liberian child commander explained how he had always obeyed his commander's order to continue advancing his contingent of 250 child soldiers in battle until fifty had not been killed or wounded (field interview in Liberia, 2005). A Sierra Leonean youth explained that he had been one of twenty children whom the Revolutionary United Front had abducted from his village. Weeks later, his commander informed him that he would receive a military promotion. The reason was simple: he was the only one of the original twenty who was still alive (field interview in Sierra Leone, 2010).²

The cases of Rwanda and Burundi clearly demonstrate what can occur when outsiders presume the situations of youth rather than investigate them. Rwanda's mostly bubbly international reputation is not reflected in the everyday lives of its nonelite youth majority. In fact, their reality is virtually the reverse: dreadfully constricted and conspicuously overlooked. Indeed, it is necessary to consider the possibility that a country containing so many young people with limited options and facing the prospect of public failure just might turn violent. To be sure, Burundi has its own share of troubles. But a constricted and controlled youth cohort is not one of them.

What we are left with is the towering significance of governance and culture – and the unavoidable necessity to find out, from ordinary, non-elite youth themselves, what their priorities are. An over-reliance on quantitative correlations and journalistic observations runs the risk of missing basic forces that youth face. High quality, field-based, qualitative research with members of non-elite,

2 The exceptionally brutal tactics of child soldier commanders are detailed in excellent books on child soldiering, such as Honwana 2006, Rosen 2005, Singer 2005 and Wessells 2006.

marginalized youth majorities in African countries must be conducted and then used to inform government and non-government policy and practice. This approach effectively calls for ordinary youth priorities to inform government and donor priorities explicitly and directly; a truly mighty task. But as qualitative research with Rwandan and Burundian youth reveals, what such research uncovers about the gap between institutional and youth priorities can be truly surprising.

One of the issues that solid qualitative research with ordinary youth can shed light on is whether youth are able to achieve adulthood in their societies, and what happens to them if they fail. In worlds where youth strain to gain recognition as adult contributors to society, the power of cultural judgment to impact young lives must not be overlooked. Nor can a second option available to youth: shunning traditional adulthood expectations altogether, and living, as a consequence, in social outlier societies, such as Liberia's so-called "rebel behavior youth," whom I mentioned earlier (Sommers 2007b). Heavy reliance on elite youth leaders in civil society as "youth voices," in addition, is almost always a mistake if tensions and suspicions divide elite youth minorities from vast nonelite youth majorities (such scenarios are common). Similarly, if youth programs unintentionally demonstrate exclusion by providing programs to the fortunate few in areas where most youth are desperate for any support, they may inadvertently make difficult situations even worse, most particularly for youth who are not program participants.

In addition, international actors may develop youth programs with a limited awareness of others in their midst. It has been my experience that Christian and Muslim religious organizations are quite often the main institutions that target poor urban youth for outreach and support. In rural areas, there may be other organizations reaching out to poor youth, but even there, religious organizations are often highly effective. An additional result can be a divide between poor youth who are members of a particular church or mosque and those who are not. Religious leaders can, of course, also rally youth for or against their government.

Which returns us to the governance issue. The Rwandan government's strong accent on social control carries with it a significant downside. The lives of ordinary Rwandans are constricted. And although Burundi's governmental weaknesses are not to be sought or aimed for – not in the slightest – the Rwandan government's knack for squelching dissent and profoundly constraining individual life options cannot be overlooked. Indeed, a crucial challenge for democratizing African states lies in questions about their credibility before their own youthful and mostly marginalized populations. African youth cannot, by themselves, threaten the prospects for democratization within their countries. Presuming an inherent male youth threat is suspect and should never be allowed to overshadow other important security-related factors, such as the health of the nation's economy, the degree to which young people are frustrated and endure social humiliation, and, finally, the nature of the state's relations with massive populations of youthful citizens.

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Eastern European Transformation and Youth Attitudes toward Violence

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Eastern European Transformation and Youth Attitudes toward Violence

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This cross-national examination of the motives behind adolescent approval of violence in major cities in Germany and four Eastern European transformation societies (Czech Republic, Poland, Russia, Slovenia) draws on Institutional Anomie Theory (IAT), which leads us to expect higher instrumental motivation for violence among adolescents in the transforming societies. Differences in institutional structure and cultural orientations between Germany and the Eastern European societies are assessed using data from ILO and ESS. Analysis of the different motives for violence is based on data collected by the Criminological Research Institute of Lower Saxony (KFN) in Kraków, Volgograd, Ljubljana, Plzen, and Hamburg. Comparability and cross-cultural interpretability of the violence attitude measure is assessed by applying confirmatory factor analyses in multi-group comparisons. A lack of sufficient data meant that specific assumed linkages as implied by IAT could not be established, but the results for a specific instrumental/utilitarian motive for violence and for institutional structure and cultural orientations point to the utility of applying insights from IAT to understanding the dynamics of violence within the Eastern European context of transformation. We find empirical indications that specific features of the family mediate the “Eastern effect” on the instrumental/utilitarian motive. Further research is needed to discover whether economic dominance affects motives for youth violence indirectly via the socialization provided by non-economic institutions rather than directly via cultural orientations.

1. Introduction: Objectives and Theoretical Frame

The recurring theme of youth and violence concerns the social sciences in all societies, whatever their social and political history and situation. The societies of Eastern Europe have experienced strong processes of social transformation since the collapse of communism, as the rapid implementation of the free-market economy and the concomitant capitalist ideology have wrought changes in value orientations in these societies (Thome 2003, Kim and Pridemore 2005). Our central question is whether these circumstances also have an effect on adolescents’ attitudes to violence.

This contribution is a comparative investigation of the extent of the motives that lie behind *adolescent* approval of violence in major cities in Germany and in four Eastern European transformation societies.

If we are to draw conclusions about the phenomenon of violence as a whole it makes sense to start with approval of

violence. We assume that there are *different motives* for approval of violence, for example economic/instrumental or expressive/hedonistic motives, whereby purposes may range from self-defense over revenge or achieving recognition to simply having fun.

As well as Germany (east and west), our comparative analysis of motives for violence encompasses Russia, Poland, Slovenia, and the Czech Republic. Despite the many historical, linguistic, political, and social differences between them, we agree with Zhao and Cao (2010) these Eastern European countries represent a geographical group whose rapid social transformation represents a different context from Germany. The transformative process set in motion in these countries by the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe was framed by neoliberal global developments and had massive repercussions on their political institutions. While East Germany imported its institutional framework from West Germany, which was already a free-market economy, capitalism

as the new form of order was implemented very suddenly and with full force in the other Eastern European countries.

To interpret our findings we draw on the Institutional Anomie Theory (IAT) of Messner and Rosenfeld (1994, 1997a), which focuses explicitly on the violence-promoting role of *the economy* in situations where it acquires institutional dominance, and is therefore, in our opinion, highly relevant to the Eastern European countries in the period *after* the fall of the Iron Curtain. The limited scope of our study precludes a direct test of the IAT, which is not what we set out to accomplish, but we do seek to assess the applicability of central tenets of IAT for an understanding of adolescents' attitudes toward violence in the investigated countries.

We propose that the dominance of *economic institutions* in Eastern European societies encouraged by the *shift to capitalism* and the corresponding value orientations arising in the population create a social climate that especially encourages *instrumentally* motivated violence. This should be reflected in higher approval of *instrumental* violence by adolescents in Eastern European cities compared to those in the German city of Hamburg.

We begin by describing the IAT in general (section 2), before applying it specifically to the context of social change in Eastern Europe (section 3). A comparative investigation of selected indicators for institutional structure and cultural orientations in Eastern Europe and Germany follows in section 4, before finally we examine the motives for adolescent violence in a theory-led comparative investigation covering five countries (section 5). The question of cross-cultural comparability and interpretability of the measured latent approval of violence scale will be a central concern in this section, and will be investigated by conducting confirmatory factor analyses in a multi-group setting.

2. An Outline of Institutional Anomie Theory

Messner and Rosenfeld's Institutional Anomie Theory (IAT) (1994, 1997a) builds on and expands Merton's

anomie theory (1938, 1968). Both approaches see the unfettered striving for success in capitalist society as the main component of an anomic culture that can lead to deviant behavior (Bernburg 2002). While Merton deals with features of the stratification system (social structure in the form of unequal distribution of the legal means to achieve the culturally prescribed goal of success) that translate anomic culture into deviant behavior, IAT specifies the institutional configuration that encourages the *emergence* of an anomic culture (Bernburg 2002, 738). This, according to Bernburg, brings IAT close to Durkheim's European anomie concept (1893 [1992]), and lends it relevance in connection with social change.

The essence of IAT is that high rates of violent crime arise especially in capitalist market economies where the economy comes to dominate those institutions that are not by nature orientated to economic criteria (Messner and Rosenfeld 1994, 1997a). The focus here is mainly on the explanation of *instrumental* (Messner and Rosenfeld 1994, 84), or *utilitarian* (Bjerregaard and Cochran 2008, 32) violent crime. This may involve not just profit in the narrow sense, but also prestige tied to monetary success.

The predominance of the economy and the relative powerlessness of essentially non-economic institutions such as the institution of education or the political system are expressed in the devaluation of non-economic functions and roles, the accommodation of non-economic institutions to economic requirements, and the penetration of economic standards into many non-economic institutions. The consequence of this is anomie in the sense of a largely unrestrained striving for economic success that at least situatively relaxes moral constraints. After the weakening of social control by non-economic institutions, the surviving action-defining criteria are primarily economic values such as success orientation (great pressure on the individual to achieve goals by any means necessary), excessive or egotistical individualism (as opposed to Durkheim's moral individualism [1991]),¹ universalism (where success standards apply equally to all

¹ Moral individualism, which it is argued develops in the course of the modernisation process, regulates social relations more strongly through mu-

tual recognition and empathy, which leads overall to less violence (Karstedt 2001).

members of society), and money fetishism (money becomes the absolute measure of success) (Messner 2003). Egotistical and *disintegrative* individualism is thus the most fundamental aspect of the cultural base of anomie in modern societies (Messner, Thome, and Rosenfeld 2008, 172).

According to IAT, economic dominance with the corresponding cultural ancillaries creates a lifeworld that fosters criminal and violent behavior. We focus here on the assumed connection between economic dominance and adolescent approval of violence, surmising that in Eastern European societies there will be greater approval of violence, especially for instrumental motives, than in Germany, because we assume that in the transformation societies the cultural influence of the economy is less limited by extra-economic institutions. We next consider whether there is evidence for such a manifestation of institutional anomie in the transformation societies, first theoretically (section 3) and then empirically (section 4).

3. IAT and Societal Transformation

Although IAT was not originally conceived for the analysis of social transformation, it can also be applied fruitfully to the explanation of deviance and violence in that connection. Thome (2003) sees the transformation societies of Eastern Europe, with their still underconsolidated democratic institutions and cultural traditions exposed to the forces of a globally unfettered economy, at heightened risk of social anomie as described by Durkheim (1893 [1992]). Zhao and Cao (2010) are able to confirm this empirically for the Eastern European societies with respect to anomie at the individual level, measured as the “individual’s acceptance of legitimacy of five instrumental crime-related scenarios” (1217). One consequence of this, they write, is the cultural encouragement of *excessive individualism*. The closeness of Messner and Rosenfeld’s anomie concept to the social anomie of Durkheim (Bernburg 2002) and the way economic institutions primarily direct this specific transformation process suggest that IAT will be highly relevant in this context.

The connection between rapid social transformation and deviance can be explained very well, as also noted by Bernburg (2002), by building on the governing IAT concept of

institutional imbalance and applying it to the transformation from communist to capitalist societies. Altogether this accords with Polanyi (describing transformation occurring during an earlier historical period) and with Messner and Rosenfeld, who concur that radical socioeconomic transformation can bring forth massive social problems through a “disembedded” (Polanyi 1957), and thus dominant economy (Messner and Rosenfeld 1994). In the process that transformed the Eastern European communist societies into structurally capitalist societies, their citizens largely adopted the capitalist ideology with its dominant values such as striving for success, money fetish, etc. (Kim and Pridemore 2005). At the same time, for example in Russia through widespread poverty and unemployment (World Bank 2000), they have less legal opportunity to realize material wishes. Economic deprivation and pronounced social inequality can, where other (extra-economic) value orientations lose their balancing influence, lead to increasing deviance, especially in conjunction with anomie as described by Messner and Rosenfeld (Savolainen 2000, Piquero and Piquero 1998). Because economic institutions play a central role in the transformation from communist to capitalist societies, Stamatel (2009, 1427) agrees with Kim and Pridemore (2005) that the practical relevance of other social institutions, especially the political system, will decline. This reduces their social control function. IAT suggests that dominance of the economy in the transformation societies may erode other institutions (already weakened by the rapid speed of change) even more strongly than in the established capitalist societies. In line with this assumption, Kim and Pridemore (2005) find in Russia no moderating effect of extra-economic social institutions in the relationship between *negative socio-economic transformation* and property crime. In relation to the United States, by contrast, Chamlin and Cochran (1995), and later Piquero and Piquero (1998), are able to show that extra-economic institutions mitigate the effects of economic deprivation on property crime. Thus in Russia at least, the social control function of extra-economic institutions appears to be weakened.

In the following we investigate data from the ESS (European Social Survey) and the ILO (International Labor Organization) to see if there is any evidence to back up these

suppositions. Is the weakening of extra-economic institutions and dominance of the economy more prominent in the investigated transitional societies than in Germany?

4. Economy, Political System, and Cultural Orientations in Germany and Eastern Europe

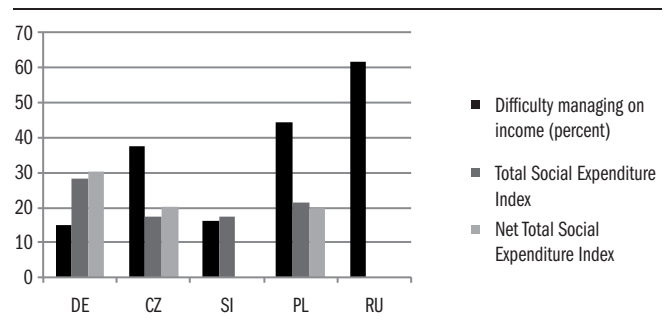
We wish to compare three central areas with reference to IAT: the economy, the political system, and cultural orientations.² Following our description above, IAT, applied to the Eastern European context, clearly implies differences between Germany and the transformation societies for the selected indicators of institutional structure (political system and economy) and cultural orientations, which will be empirically assessed below. While this certainly does not mean that we can prove institutional anomie to exist in Eastern Europe, the investigation might give us an indication as to the validity of central tenets of IAT with reference to the transforming societies.

After a brief description of the available indicators for economy and the political system, we will devote our main attention to the country-specific cultural orientations. Theoretically, these represent the main point of connection to the adolescent attitudes and motivations on which our empirical analysis focus.

In countries where the economy *dominates* other institutions, according to Bjerregaard and Cochran (2008), well-being is extremely dependent on the forces of the market. Low rates of welfare spending can be interpreted as an indicator of pronounced *commodification* (commercialization of all areas of society, see Polanyi 1957; Esping-Anderson 1990) and thus economic dominance (Bjerregaard and Cochran 2008, 37; Messner and Rosenfeld 1997b, 1396 ff.; for a critical take on this see Hirtenlehner et al. 2010). Two useful measures of a country's level of social spending relative to GDP are the ILO's Total Social Expenditure Index (TSEI) and the *Net*

Total Social Expenditure Index, which is based on the Social Expenditure Database (SOCX, see Adema and Ladaique 2009) and takes into account the country-specific taxation systems and private welfare spending (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Commodification/decommodification



Sources: Data from ILO and ESS.

In line with the expectations derived from IAT, both measures clearly indicate the highest social spending in Germany.

Another indicator of the balance between economic institutions and the political system in the various countries is the percentage of respondents in the ESS who report difficulty making ends meet *in relation* to TSEI.³ Altogether, Figure 1 plainly shows that social policy in the transformation countries is *less* orientated on much *greater* existing needs than in Germany. This is, we believe, associated with elevated commodification of labor (increased market dependency, see Messner and Rosenfeld 1997b). In line with IAT, we interpret this as a pointer to an institutional imbalance between the economy and the political system in the transitional societies.

According to Messner and Rosenfeld, one of the central tasks of the political system is to guarantee public safety. The judiciary and police as components within the set of political in-

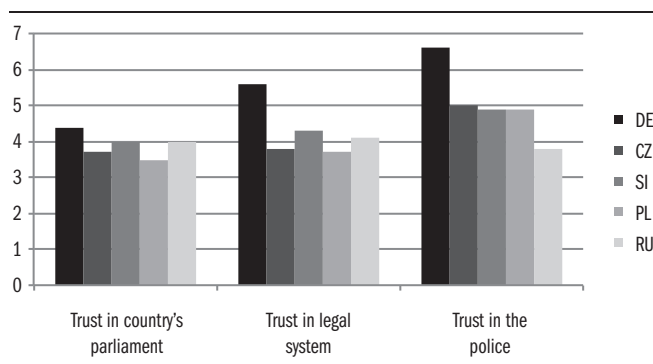
2 The indicators were also compared between the former East and West Germany. With the exception of the indicators for the strength of the political institutions ("trust in country's parliament," "trust in the legal system," "trust in politicians," "trust in political parties," and "satisfaction with democracy"), no differences were found between former East and West

Germany. This could be due to the fact that East Germany imported its institutional framework from West Germany after the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe. For more detailed results please contact the authors.

3 Respondents were asked about their feeling about the household's income, answering 1 "living comfortably on present income," 2 "coping on present income," 3 "difficult on present income," or 4 "very difficult on present income." The variable was dichotomized, and Figure 1 shows the percentage of respondents answering with 3 or 4.

stitutions bear the main responsibility for crime control and peaceful conflict resolution (Messner and Rosenfeld 1994, 72 ff.). IAT, applied to the transitional societies, implies greater trust in the political institutions in Germany in comparison to the transformation societies. The results of our country comparison of trust in parliament, the legal system, and the police are consistent with these expectations (see Figure 2).⁴

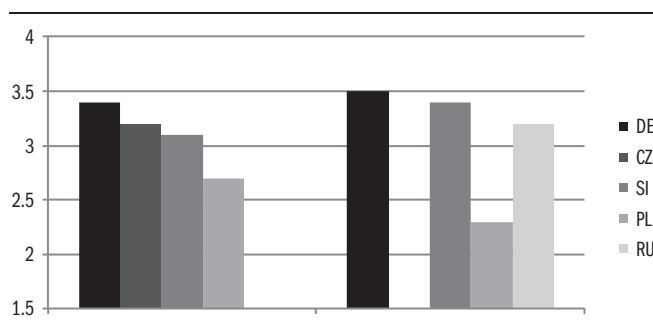
Figure 2: Trust in institutions



Trust in parliament ($F=65.5, p<0.001$), the legal system ($F=313.5, p<0.001$), and the police ($F=292.6, p<0.001$).

A similar if less drastic pattern is found for trust in politicians and political parties (Figure 3).⁵

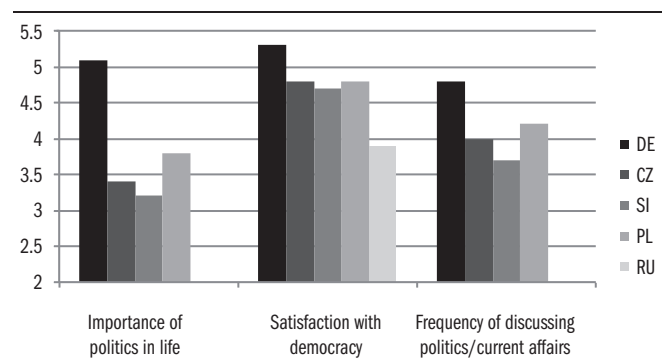
Figure 3: Trust in politics



Trust in politicians ($F=48.0, p<0.001$) and political parties ($F=100.9, p<0.001$).

The lower overall levels of trust in the political systems in the transitional societies points to their weakened social control in relation to people's activities, in comparison to Germany, as implied by IAT. The country-specific figures for satisfaction with democracy, the importance of politics, and how often people discuss politics (Figure 4), underline our supposition.⁶

Figure 4: Personal relationship to politics



Importance ($F=254.5, p<0.001$) and frequency of discussion ($F=130.7, p<0.001$) of politics, satisfaction with democracy ($F=141.1, p<0.001$).

Altogether this strengthens Thome's thesis (2003) that democratic institutions in transformation societies suffer major difficulties adapting to the speed of change of the economic system. The political system, or *polity* (Messner and Rosenfeld 1994, 73), appears to play a more important role in everyday life in Germany than in the transformation societies. We interpret this as an indication that polity exerts greater social control in Germany than in the transition societies (as this would be expected to protect from institutional anomie as described by IAT).

The indicators described above give pointers to country-specific imbalances between the economy and the political system. We assume, on the basis of IAT, that the *cultural*

⁴ Respondents were asked how much trust they have in the country's parliament, in the legal system and in the police (0 "no trust at all" to 10 "complete trust"). The exceptionally large differences in trust in the police and the legal system between Germany and Eastern Europe might play a major role for the differ-

ent levels of approval of violence among adolescents
⁵ Respondents were asked how much trust they have in the country's politicians and political parties (0 "no trust at all" to 10 "complete trust").

⁶ Respondents were asked how satisfied they were with the way democracy works in their country (0 "ex-

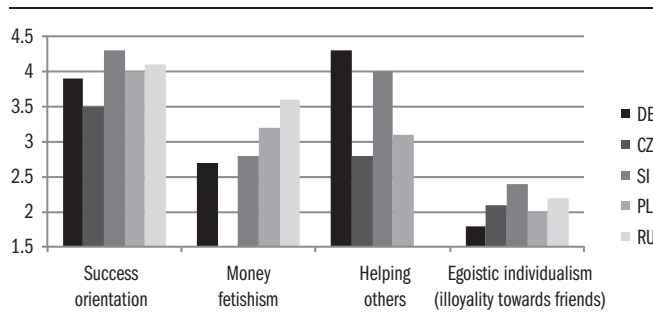
tremely dissatisfied" to 10 "extremely satisfied"), how important politics is in their life (0 "extremely unimportant" to 10 "extremely important") and how often they discuss politics/current affairs (recoded for Figure 3: 1 "every day," 2 "several times a week," 3 "once a week," 4 "once a month," 5 "less often," 6 "never").

transformations,⁷ which are theoretically particularly relevant in relation to our target group and its attitudes since they possibly create a social climate that especially encourages *instrumentally* motivated violence, are closely related to *economic* and *political* transformations.⁸

As already mentioned, according to Messner and Rosenfeld (1994) the weakened cultural system of an anomic society is recognized above all in value orientations, which become increasingly orientated on economic principles: success, egotistical individualism, and money fetishism (see above).

The ESS country comparison of internationally comparable measured value orientations after Schwartz (2006) (ESS round 1 [2002] and 4 [2008] with Russia) supplies indications that economically shaped value orientations are *more likely* to be found in the transitional societies (Figure 5).⁹

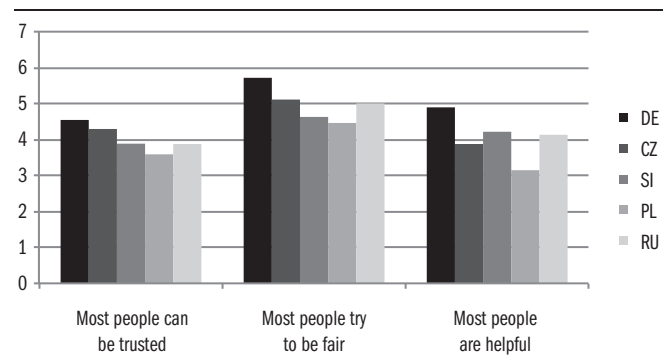
Figure 5: Value orientations



Success orientation ($F=82.2, p<0.001$), money fetishism ($F=103.3, p<0.001$), helpfulness ($F=327.6, p<0.001$), and individualism ($F=117.9, p<0.001$).

In line with IAT, with the exception of success orientation, where Germany has only the second-lowest value, all the other indicators point to a more strongly anomic culture in the transitional societies. Thus in 2008 Germans placed significantly less importance than Poles or Russians on being rich and owning wealth.¹⁰ At the same time, Germans see themselves most strongly as people for whom it is important to be loyal and open to friends (shown in Figure 5 as individualism, where high values indicate weak loyalty and lack of openness). Germans also significantly most frequently report helping other people outside their work. We interpret this as an indication of a more strongly *dis-integrative* individualism (Messner, Thome, and Rosenfeld 2008) in the transformation societies. This impression is reinforced by the country comparison of trust, fairness, and helpfulness (Figure 6).¹¹

Figure 6: Trust, fairness, and helpfulness



Perception of trust ($F=58.4, p<0.001$), fairness ($F=135.9, p<0.001$) and helpfulness ($F=219.1, p<0.001$)
 Note: Pairwise effect sizes indicate significant differences (see footnote 12).

7 Here we can admittedly represent “transformation” empirically only as *momentary snapshots of a process*.

8 But this does not represent the empirical core, especially as it also touches on micro/macro issues that are not the subject of the empirical analysis.

9 Schwartz’s value measurement: Respondents were asked: “Now I will briefly describe some people. Please listen to each description and tell me how much each person is or is not like you” (recoded in Figure 5: 1 “Very much like me” to 6 “not like me at all”); Money fetishism: “It is important to him/her to be rich. He/she wants to have a lot of money and expensive things”; success orientation: “being very successful is important to her/him. She/he hopes that people will recognise her/his achiev-

ements”; egotistic individualism (not recoded in Figure 5): “It is important to her/him to be loyal to her/his friends. She/he wants to devote herself/himself to people close to her/him”; Help others (not in the Schwartz format): “How often do you help others, not counting work/voluntary organisations?” (recoded in Figure 5: 1 “every day,” 2 “several times a week,” 3 “once a week,” 4 “several times a month,” 5 “once a month,” 6 “less often,” 7 “never”).

10 Effect sizes are calculated as quotient of mean difference and total standard deviation. Effect sizes greater than 0.2 are significant (0.2 is small, 0.5 moderate, 0.8 large) (Nachtigall and Wirtz 1998); effect sizes of money fetish in pairwise country comparisons: DE/PL: $d=0.34$; DE/RU: $d=0.67$; in com-

parison with Slovenia we find a similar trend, but the effect strength is smaller: DE/SI: $d=0.1$

11 Respondents were asked whether most people in their country can be trusted, or you can’t be too careful (0 “you can’t be too careful” to 10 “most people can be trusted”), whether most people try to take advantage of you, or try to be fair (0 “most people try to take advantage of me” to 10 “most people try to be fair”), and whether most of the time people are helpful or mostly looking out for themselves (0 “people mostly look out for themselves” to 10 “people mostly try to be helpful”).

People in Germany plainly perceive considerably *stronger* reciprocal trust, solidarity, and helpfulness in their surroundings than people in Eastern European countries.¹²

The figures can be interpreted as an indication of the cultural consequences of economic institutional dominance as described by Messner and Rosenfeld. Specifically, we mean a strengthened “by any means necessary” mentality in the transition societies (Messner and Rosenfeld 1994, 17).

It is noteworthy that Slovenia appears to represent an exception among the countries that have undergone system change. In many of the aforementioned indices Slovenia is more similar to Germany than to the other countries. This might reflect the conspicuously successful democratic transformation and the relatively stable consolidation of democracy after secession from Yugoslavia (Tos and Miheljak 2002).

Altogether, however, the described data tend to strengthen our theoretical expectations in relation to institutional anomie and its cultural repercussions in the transitional societies, since the results of the country comparisons of the selected indicators are largely consistent with the respective expectations as implied by IAT.

The analyses that follow below serve to investigate our IAT-led assumption that this overall social climate has an influence on adolescent approval of violence in major cities in these countries. The economic dominance fostered by the *shift to capitalism* (section 3) and the corresponding value orientations produce, we propose, a social climate that fosters *instrumentally* motivated violence in particular. This, following the arguments implicit to IAT, should be reflected in stronger approval of *instrumental* violence among adolescents in Eastern European cities than in Germany. In a nutshell, IAT, applied to the Eastern European context, suggests there should be a distinct instrumental/utilitarian dimension underlying the motives for violence among youths, whereby this motive should be more prevalent in transitional societies than in Germany. Nonetheless it must

be acknowledged that on the basis of the available data we are unable to directly establish the assumed linkages in terms of assessing the direct correlation between economic value orientations such as disintegrative individualism and approval of violence in the specific countries. Based on our data, we can only assess indications that point to the validity of the arguments implied by IAT. To do so, we concentrate, as already mentioned, on a cross-national comparison of the motivations behind the approval of violence.

5. City Comparison of Adolescent Approval of Violence

A critical appraisal of the official data reveals the relevance of measuring *attitudes* to violence in addition to using *official data* on violent crime for international comparative studies. The suitability of official crime statistics for comparing violent crime internationally is very limited, as they include only offenses that are reported and recorded. So they are strongly dependent on victims’ willingness to report and on police recording methods (Enzmann and Siegmunt 2005). In Eastern Europe the validity of official crime statistics is especially uncertain. In times of political, institutional, and economic upheaval there can be little confidence in the reliability and continuity of police and court recording systems (Sack 1997). *Attitudes* that precede actual acts of violence (and especially their official registration) become highly relevant in this context if one wishes to conduct international comparisons of the phenomenon.

But the question of international comparability is also a central methodological problem of attitude surveys. Studies centring around attitude measures across different cultural contexts often ignore this issue of comparability of the measured dependent latent construct (e.g. Zhao and Cao 2010). This can turn out to be an essential problem, for example when the dimensionality and factor loadings of the measurement instrument are not equal across the different cultural contexts. In that case, interpretations of different levels of the latent construct or of relevant covariates across nations are at risk of being invalid, since apples and oranges cannot be compared (non-comparative meanings of the

12 Pairwise calculations of effect sizes for the overall index (factor analysis yielded a one-factor solution, Cronbach’s alpha = 0.77 in 2002/0.78 in

2008) suggest major differences between Germany and the transition countries (DE/CZ: $d=0.34$; DE/SI: $d=0.39$; DE/PL: $d=0.64$; DE/RU: $d=0.51$); data from

2008 used to measure effect size for Russia because comparable data were not available for 2002.

dependent latent constructs). When working with latent constructs in a cross-cultural setting, the comparability of the measured latent construct needs to be assessed by testing for cross-cultural invariance of dimensionality, factor loadings (measurement invariance), and intercepts (scalar invariance) of the measurement. This can be achieved by conducting confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), based on exploratory factor analysis (EFA) in a multi-group setting (see Reinecke 2005; Brown 2006). For our cross-cultural analysis of youth attitudes toward violence, especially with respect to our in-depth interest in different comparable motives (dimensions) behind the measured items, the aforementioned problem applies acutely.

We therefore begin with an examination of the applied approval of violence scale, to investigate the dimensionality of the measurement in the different countries exploratively using principal component analysis (section 5.1.1.). We then extract a reduced measuring instrument for approval of violence through CFA following the criterion of partial measurement invariance (Steenkamp and Baumgartner 1998) (section 5.1.2.). Only under this precondition of comparability and cross-cultural interpretability can we in the last step (section 5.2.) investigate the approval of violence across the different countries with a view to assessing the validity of our IAT-led hypotheses that there is a distinct instrumental/utilitarian dimension underlying the motives for violence among youths, and that this motive should be more prevalent in transitional societies than in Germany.

5.1. The City-specific Dimensionality of the Violence Attitude Scale – Assessing Comparability and Cross-Cultural Interpretability of the Latent Dependent Variable

5.1.1 Sample and Explorative Analysis

Our analysis is based on a data set from the Criminological Research Institute of Lower Saxony (KFN), produced by comparable school student surveys in five major cities (Table 1). The central components of the questionnaire developed by KFN were the same in all the cities (first wave 1998: Wetzels et al. 2001). It contains items on attitudes to and experience of violence from the perpetrator and victim perspectives as well as indicators on social status, primary socialization (such as childhood experi-

ence of violence or positive parental attention), norm orientations of adults and peers, attitude to violence-legitimizing masculinity norms, and personality characteristics such as self-control.

Random samples of ninth-grade school classes stratified by school type were surveyed in 1998, 1999, and 2000 in Kraków, Volgograd, Ljubljana, and Hamburg. In Plzen a total survey of all school students in ninth grade was conducted. The sample sizes in the individual cities are shown in Table 1. Overall response rates ranged between 80 and 90 percent.

Table 1: The sample

Sample	Ljubljana	Hamburg	Volgograd	Plzen	Kraków
(total: N=9905)	19.5% N=1934	34.7% N=3435	17.6% N=1747	12.8% N=1270	15.3% N=1519
Gender	Male: 46.5% (N=899) Female: 53.5% (N=1035)	Male: 48.7% (N=1672) Female: 51.2% (N=1758)	Male: 45.3% (N=791) Female: 54.7% (N=955)	Male: 45.4% (N=573) Female: 54.6% (N=690)	Male: 51.9% (N=784) Female: 48.1% (N=726)
Age (Average)	15.03 (S.D.=.80)	15.11 (S.D.=.72)	14.56 (S.D.=.53)	15.03 (S.D.=.47)	15.5 (S.D.=.9)
Education	high: 17.4% middle: 40.2% low: 42.4%	high: 38.4% middle: 51.6% low: 10%	high: 20.9% middle: 12.3% low: 66.8%	high: 5.5% middle: 12.3% low: 82.2%	high: 33.7% middle: 16.3% low: 50%

When we refer in the following to German, Russian, Slovenian, Polish, or Czech adolescents we are referring not to nationally representative samples but to representative samples of adolescents from the respective cities.

The original scale for measuring approval of violence comprises fifteen statements to which respondents were asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement on a four-point scale (1 for “completely disagree” to 4 for “fully agree”). Because certain items were omitted from the survey in particular countries, we concentrated only on the ten items that were included in the questionnaires in all the countries (for items see Appendix 1). As Table 2 shows, the data from the individual samples produce very different factor solutions.

Table 2: Sample-specific factorial structure

	Factorial structure	Cronbach's α	Explained variance	Factor correlation
Ljubljana	2 (Item 5 excluded)	Subscale 1: .80 Subscale 2: .64 Overall: .81	53.6% [Factor 1: 41.6%]	.467
Hamburg	1	.88	51.4%	-
Volgograd	2 (Item 10 excluded)	Subscale 1: .72 Subscale 2: .68 Overall: .76	48.7% [Factor 1: 35.4%]	.333
Plzen	1	.89	48.9%	-
Kraków	1 (Item 5 excluded)	.89	53.8%	-

Ljubljana and Volgograd each exhibit a different two-factor structure, while our explorative factor analysis with Kaiser criterion (eigenvalue > 1 for a separate factor) found a single-factor structure in Hamburg, Kraków, and Plzen (for detailed descriptions of the two-factor solutions see Appendix 2). The factor loading for Item 5 (“If somebody attacks me then I hit back,” defensive motive) in Ljubljana and Kraków was too low, so it had to be excluded from the final factor solution. The same problem arose in Volgograd for Item 10 (“If someone provokes me I quickly turn to violence”).

In her analysis of the very same instrument in Russia, Siegmunt (2005) found exactly the same factor structure as we found in Volgograd. She designated the two factors “willingness to commit *instrumental* violence” and “willingness to commit violence for *fun*.” However, because explorative analyses suggest that the measurements are not comparable across our five samples we must for the moment desist from naming and interpreting the dimensions, which we refer to as *motives* in the following. Because comparability of the dependent variables is essential for our investigation and for valid interpretations of the dimensions, confirmatory analyses follow. The objective is to extract a comparable measuring instrument.

5.1.2 Confirmatory Factor Analysis of the Dependent Variables in Multi-group Comparison

The following analyses set out to identify a reduced model measuring comparable latent constructs (attitudes toward violence) across all the countries despite the different

country-specific structures of approval of violence found among the adolescents using EFA. Only under this precondition can possible comparable dimensions (motives) be validly interpreted across cultural contexts and subsequently cross-country comparative investigations of the extent of approval of violence be conducted.

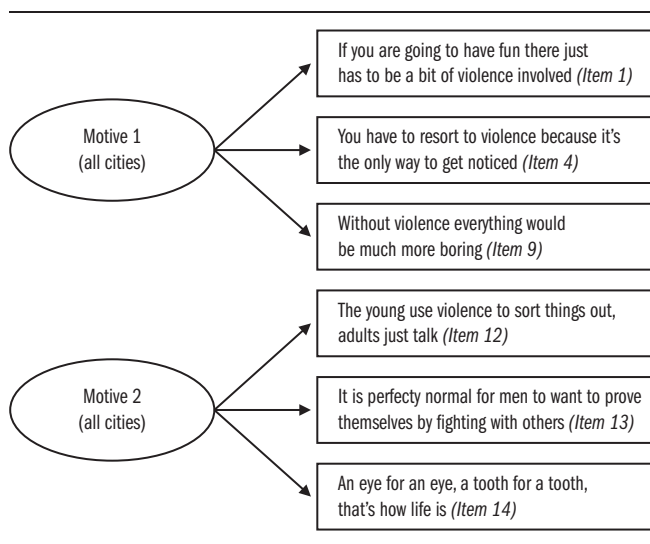
First, on the basis of the EFA, we conducted separate CFAs for the three different models identified in each of the countries (for country-specific models see Appendix 3). We then identified a two-factor structure which fits the data best in all cities. Despite it being partly identified in the *explorative* context, the single-factor structure turned out to be the worst in all the countries in the *confirmatory* context (see Appendix 3). Based on the two-factor structure with the best model fits, we conducted a multi-group comparison to test for measurement and scalar invariance (equal factor loadings and intercepts of the indicator variables) across the cities, which is a precondition for cross-national mean comparisons.

Altogether across the countries the overall scale exhibits neither scale nor measurement invariance. The criterion of partial measurement invariance (Steenkamp and Baumgartner 1998), under which there must be at least two invariant factor loadings and intercepts across the groups in order to be able to conduct mean comparisons, is *not* fulfilled by the scale across the five countries either. The same is confirmed by pairwise country comparison of the instrument. Taken together, these findings mean that although the surveyed items adequately map *two* latent dimensions of violence motivation (in the CFA we could identify one two-factor structure with good fit indices in all five cities), the *meanings* of these items for these dimensions are not comparable.

Because this lack of comparability precludes conducting cross-national analyses of violence motivation using the overall scale analysed here, we proceeded to extract a *reduced* measuring model with invariant factor loadings that is generalizable across the countries (Figure 7). Because items 1, 4, and 9 have strong shared influencing factors in all the countries (error correlations), we tested these as the reduced factor of the first motive of approval

of violence. The second motive is formed from items 12, 13, and 14, following the structure in Ljubljana that fits the data best in all cities apart from Volgograd (see Appendix 3). These three items are also contained in the *instrumental* motive in Volgograd (Siegmunt 2005) and exhibit good loadings.

Figure 7: Reduced model of approval of violence (simplified depiction)



For the reduced measuring model of approval of violence we can assume partial measurement invariance across all countries if only two factor loadings per factor are fixed across the groups (Table 3, Model 2).¹³ This model does not fit the data significantly worse than the baseline model (Model 1) in which all factor loadings can be freely estimated in the countries (apart from the marker). There are no longer any relevant error correlations between the items. The scale can thus be regarded as measuring comparables in all the investigated countries. Across the countries the items have a *comparable meaning* for the latent dimensions (motives).

Table 3: Reduced model of approval of violence, multi-group comparison

	χ^2 (df)	$\Delta \chi^2$	p	RMSEA/SRMR	CFI
Model 1	269.496 (40)			0.055/0.025	0.986
Model 2	295.500 (48)	compared to model 1: 26.0 (8)	n.s.	0.052/0.029	0.984
Model 3	1520.015 (64)	compared to model 2: 1224.52 (16)	<0.001	0.110/0.065	0.909
Model 4	500.402 (53)	compared to model 2: 204.902 (5)	<0.001	0.067/0.034	0.972

Model 1: Baseline

Model 2: Partial measurement invariance (dimension 1: factor loading 1, 4 invariant; dimension 2: factor loading 12, 14 invariant), no mean structure.

Model 3: Partial measurement invariance (dimension 1: factor loading 1, 4 invariant; dimension 2: factor loading 12, 14 invariant) + all intercepts invariant (mean structure).

Model 4: Partial measurement invariance (dimension 1: factor loading 1, 4 invariant; dimension 2: factor loading 12, 14 invariant) + intercepts 1, 4 and 12, 14 invariant + additional release of intercept restriction for Hamburg, Plzen Item 12, Kraków Item 01.

On the other hand, scale invariance (mean comparisons permitted) cannot be assumed, because the model (Model 3) clearly and significantly worsens when the intercepts of the items are fixed across the countries. The comparative fit index (CFI) of 0.909 is no longer acceptable (for a good model fit values should be higher than .93). According to Steenkamp and Baumgartner (1998), however, a comparison of means is also permissible when only the intercepts of the two invariant factor loadings are additionally invariant. Despite minimal releases of these restrictions, Model 4 fulfils this condition adequately given the many groups. Although it remains worse than the case without invariance of intercepts after the χ^2 difference test, it has in itself a very good CFI (0.972); RMSEA (0.067 [0.062; 0.072]) and SRMR (0.034) are also acceptable. Thus this model is used in the following analyses as the cross-country measurement of approval of violence.

We believe that the cross-city *comparable two-factor* solution provides two dimensions that can be meaningfully

¹³ In order to account for possible distortions in the results through deviations from normal distribution, we also calculated the model with the MLR estimation with robust standard errors (an estimation

method based on maximum likelihood that is more robust against deviations from normal-distribution of the variables). The Scaling Correction Factor was 1.25 and there were no noteworthy deviations of the

coefficients from the ML estimators (estimated by maximum likelihood estimation). We therefore chose the ML estimation in order to be able to conduct and interpret Chi-square difference tests.

interpreted in the scope of IAT. With regard to the respective *motives* for violence, it would appear to make sense to distinguish the factors into approval of violence for *instrumental/utilitarian* reasons (motive 2), and *hedonistic* approval of violence (motive 1).

We believe motive 2 to contain clearly purpose-driven ideas about when the use of violence is necessary or permitted, thus making it an *instrumental/utilitarian* motive in a broader sense. At the same time, it is not a “pure” instrumental motive aiming at monetary success, as would be most clearly defined in the scope of IAT. It is rather “mixed” in the sense of containing aspects of the former collectivist culture, for example in terms of values of honor. Honor in turn may be a compensatory substitution for monetary success offered by collectivistic elements of cultural tradition. Overall, motive 2 clearly contains a stronger *instrumental/utilitarian* element than motive 1, which has a more pronounced *hedonistic* element. Motive 1 relates more to *individual* and *personal* gratification, recreation/entertainment, and fun in connection with violence, in contrast to the rather collectively pronounced motive 2, as clearly reflected in the three items of motive 1. Alongside Items 1 and 9, which intelligibly elucidate a fun dimension, the purpose of getting noticed (Item 4) is in our view for adolescents, possibly unlike adults, another facet of individual-centered fun and recreation. Since IAT is suggestive of a distinct *instrumental/utilitarian* dimension implicit in the motivations for violence which does not need to be exclusively aimed at profit in the narrow sense, but can also aim at prestige (see section 2), our findings are so far generally consistent with the expected dimensionality.

From there, we go on to analyze whether there is any variation in the levels of the different motives for violence between the transitional societies and Germany. IAT, applied to the Eastern European context (see section 3), suggests that especially the *instrumental/utilitarian* motive should be more prevalent in the transitional societies, since the *instrumental/utilitarian* motive more clearly represents a facet in which violence is approved as a means to achieve a *useful* objective (e.g., honor as a compensatory substitute for monetary success). The question of more or less morally controlled means to achieve a culturally prescribed and *useful* goal is, following

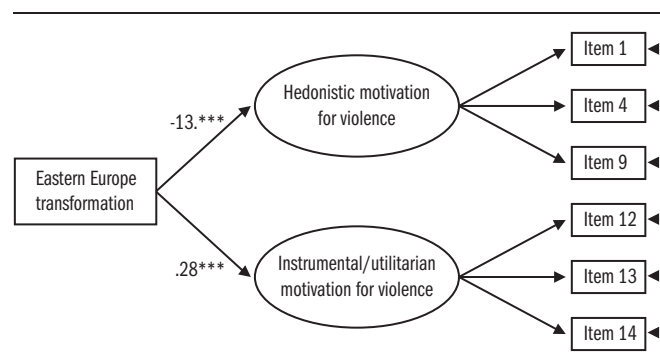
Merton (1938), also a central point in IAT (Messner and Rosenfeld 1994, 84; Bjerregaard and Cochran 2008, 32).

5.2. Description and Discussion of Findings

First we tested whether the cultural institutional context in the Eastern European transformation societies had any influence at all on the extent of approval of violence and whether this influence differed in relation to the two different motive structures (Figure 8).

Building on Zhao and Cao, whose analysis operationalizes “rapid sociopolitical change” (2010, 1215) in the form of a dummy variable named “nations of Eastern Europe under democratic transition,” we also grouped the investigated Eastern European countries (value 1) as a dummy variable with reference category Germany (value 0). Following Zhao and Cao (2010) we assume that the nations of Eastern Europe have experienced a unique, extremely rapid, shared development trajectory. This makes them of interest for studies of cultural contexts as a *group* contrasted against other nations, especially long-established *capitalist* democracies (such as Germany). The contrast is especially relevant in the context of IAT (see section 3). As already mentioned, our method merely captures a *snapshot* of the transformation process.

Figure 8: Motives for violence regressed on Eastern European transformation; CFI=0.955/RMSEA=0.079/SRMR=0.035



Note: y-standardized regression coefficients because the independent variable is a dummy variable. MLR estimation tested (robust standard errors), scaling correction factor = 1.1.

The results shown in Figure 8 affirm the inferences drawn from the factor analysis, support a key hypothesis and open up an unexpected line of inquiry. First, the opposite effects on the two motive structures mean that the measuring in-

strument may *on no account* be treated and interpreted as a one-dimensional construct across the contexts. Second, in line with our specific assumption on the differing extent of approval of violence in Germany and in the transition societies, the context of Eastern Europe fosters the formation of an *instrumental/utilitarian* violence motivation among adolescents ($\beta=.28^{***}$). This result is consistent with the expectedly higher prevalence of that motive in the Eastern European context as implied by IAT. But we also found an unexpected *negative* effect of the transformation on the *hedonistic* motive structure ($\beta= -.13^{**}$), telling us that the hedonistic motive is on a lower level in the transitional societies, which requires further explanation.

IAT offers *no clear* explanation for this. From this perspective it would be just as conceivable that an egotistical and hedonistic variant of approval of violence would actually, alongside the key dimension of the instrumental/utilitarian motive, also be more prevalent in the transitional societies because the moral influence of extra-economic institutions loses its practical relevance for individuals.

To validate our findings, we further tested the “Eastern effect” (Figure 11) with the regional dummies (see Appendix 4). First, all city dummies have a significant positive effect on the instrumental/utilitarian motive, bolstering our IAT-led hypothesis. Second, the negative Eastern effect on the hedonistic motive is mainly driven by Ljubljana and Volgograd. In Krakow, both, the instrumental motive *and* the hedonistic motive are more prevalent than in Hamburg. This, alongside the fact that Slovenia, which, following our indicators for institutional anomie, was half-way between Germany and the other Eastern countries, makes the second strongest contribution to the Eastern effect, indicates that there is no single explanation for the variance of violence motivation between the countries, but that the mechanisms involved are more complex.

In the next step, to further explain this “Eastern effect,” we must leave the narrow path of IAT with respect to the avail-

able data. Based on our data, we cannot go down the line of establishing the assumed linkage between the two motives and economic dominance or disintegrative individualism, as indicated by IAT. Doing so would empirically shed light upon the question whether the instrumental/utilitarian motive is a more prominent consequence of economically informed value orientations among adolescents than the hedonistic motive, and whether this could explain away the greater levels of the instrumental/utilitarian motive in the transitional societies.

Based on the available data, we alternatively analyzed the possibility that the “Eastern effect” could be explained with reference to different levels of deprivation in Eastern Europe and Germany,¹⁴ with deprivation being another prominent explanans for deviance and violence (Bernburg 2002; Savolainen 2000; Chamblin and Cochran 1995; Merton 1938). The analysis indicates that this is not the case (Appendix 5: Models 1 and 2).

In the next step we tried to get closer to the mechanisms that lead to the “Eastern effect” by additionally taking into account effects of socialization such as child-rearing practices in the family, current parental norm orientations, current family climate, and exposure to delinquent peer groups (see Appendix 5: Models 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7).

Close consideration of the respective effects of the different covariates on the two motives, *net* the “Eastern effect” (Appendix 5), hints at an interesting pattern. First, similar to the “Eastern effect,” deprivation *tends* to have a *negative* effect on the *hedonistic* motive, while it tends to have a *slightly* positive or *no* effect on the *instrumental/utilitarian* motive. Second, *early* child-rearing practices in the family (experience of parental violence during childhood before the age of twelve, positive parental attention in childhood) tend to have *stronger* explanatory power for the *hedonistic* motive for violence than for the *instrumental/utilitarian* motive (see Appendix 5: Model 7). Third, the *current* family climate (within the last twelve months) and parental

14 The coefficient of deprivation regressed on transformation is highly significant (0.72^{***}), indicating that in our data, deprivation is more preva-

lent among the adolescent respondents from Eastern Europe than among those from Germany.

norm orientations seem to have a *stronger* influence on the emergence of the *instrumental/utilitarian* violence motivation of adolescents than on their *hedonistic* motivation (see Appendix 5: Model 7). Fourth, exposure to delinquent peer groups yields similarly strong effects on both motives for violence, though a little stronger on the hedonistic motive (see Appendix 5: Model 7).

The “Eastern effect” on the two motives keeps changing slightly when taking into account the above mentioned covariates step by step and thereby bolsters the possibility of a more complex mechanism that fosters youth motivations for violence. Overall, the “Eastern effect” on the *hedonistic* motive tends to get *stronger*, whereas the effect on the *instrumental/utilitarian* motive tends to get *weaker*, especially after taking into account the current norm orientations against violence of the parents and the current family climate in terms of inconsistent prohibitions (see Appendix 5: Models 4 to 6). This means that the present traits of the parental home seem to play a role with regard to the “Eastern effect” on the *instrumental/utilitarian* motive. The results hint at the possibility of a mediating function of the family in the relationship between Eastern European transformation and instrumental/utilitarian motivation for violence, since the direct effect of transformation on the instrumental/utilitarian motive clearly shrinks after taking into account the above mentioned current aspects of the family. At the same time, current parental normative rejection of violence and inconsistent family climate are significantly related to transformation ($\beta = -0.27^{***}$ and $\beta = 0.29^{***}$ respectively). A city-specific validation of this effect confirms our assumptions without exception. After taking into account the current aspects of the family, the Eastern *city* effects on the instrumental/utilitarian motive shrink in all city-specific analyses. At the same time, the possible mediators for this Eastern effect on the instrumental/utilitarian motive are significantly correlated with the respective city dummies as expected, with one single non-significant exception in Krakow (see Appendix 6). The strong Eastern effect in Ljubljana, which, following

our IAT-led rationale in combination with the results regarding the indicators for institutional anomie, should be the weakest, might be explained by the mediating function of the current family. One of the possible mediators in the Eastern effect on the instrumental/utilitarian motive, inconsistent prohibitions, is significantly more prevalent in Ljubljana than in Hamburg or any of the other cities. This could be one explanation for the strong Eastern effect in Ljubljana.

Our results suggest that further research taking into account indirect effects via socialization provided by non-economic institutions (e.g., child-rearing practices in the family) is likely to be worthwhile.

It remains the case that the overall “Eastern effect” on the two motives for violence of the adolescent respondents turns out to be considerably stable, independent from deprivation, early child rearing practices in the family, current norm orientations against violence of the parents, the current family climate, exposure to delinquent peer groups, age, and education.¹⁵ The *instrumental/utilitarian* motive for violence among the adolescent respondents is more prevalent in the transition societies, whereas the *hedonistic* motive is more prevalent among the German respondents.

Using our data we were only able to scrape the surface of the background reasons behind differences in motives for violence. Alongside a detailed exploration of the mechanisms, as mentioned above, we think that further empirical assessments with regard to a validation of the opposite effects of the Eastern European context on the two different motives for violence in an adult sample could be worthwhile. This would shed light on the question, whether the “Eastern effect” in our data is due to the specific lifeworlds of adolescents (e.g. hallmarked by specific youth cultures or influences of socialization), or whether it is indeed a more general societal phenomenon in the transitional nations.

15 The Eastern effect was additionally controlled for age and education, but these are not shown in the table.

6. Summary and Outlook

Using micro- and macro-level data we were able to bolster our assumption that the economy would be more dominant and omnipresent in the transitional societies than in Germany. In line with IAT, we found indications of an imbalance between the political system and the economy in the transformation societies. This was corroborated by a country comparison of subjective assessment of personal financial situation and of the relationship between social spending and GDP. Taken together these elements suggest greater *commodification* of labor in the transformation countries. At the same time we found evidence that the relevance and credibility of the political system and democratic institutions were reduced for the populations in the transitional societies. The cultural base of institutional anomie was also more widely visible there: the indicators implied stronger money fetish, disintegrative individualism, and erosion of solidarity in the transitional nations.

Overall, the results of the cross-national comparisons of selected indicators for institutional structure and cultural orientations are consistent with expected differences as implied by IAT, applied to the Eastern European context of transformation.

From there, we followed an IAT-led argumentation expecting a distinct *instrumental/utilitarian* dimension underlying the motives for violence among youths, as well as a greater prominence of this motive among the adolescents in the transitional nations.

On the one hand, the findings are consistent with the expected dimensionality and variation across nations. Even though, due to a lack of sufficient data, specific assumed linkages as implied by IAT (e.g. between economic dominance or disintegrative individualism and violence motivation) could not be established, the results with regard to a specific instrumental/utilitarian motive for violence being more prevalent in the transitional societies, alongside the results about institutional structure and cultural orientations as described above, point to the utility of applying insights from IAT to understanding the dynamics of violence within the Eastern European context of trans-

formation. In order to discover more about the validity of the underlying theoretical mechanisms we believe deeper studies into the country-specific connections between micro-level indicators of economic dominance and adolescent approval of violence to be necessary. The limited nature of our data precluded expanding our investigation in such a way.

On the other hand, the results suggest that alongside the instrumental/utilitarian motive there is a specific hedonistic motivation for violence underlying the measurement in a cross-nationally comparable manner, which in turn is more prevalent among the German youths. The reasoning of IAT seems to be coherent with respect to the instrumental/utilitarian motive in our data, but the hedonistic facet of the discovered “Eastern effect” cannot be clearly interpreted in the scope of IAT. Due to the aforementioned lack of sufficient data to establish linkages between disintegrative individualism and the two distinct motives for violence, we established alternative approaches to the mechanisms that might explain the “Eastern effect,” based on the available data. Findings show that the “Eastern effect” cannot be explained away by any of the considered covariates: deprivation, early child rearing practices in the family, current norm orientations of the parents, the current family climate, exposure to delinquent peer groups, age, and education.

Overall, the results of those additional analyses suggest that the mechanisms that lead to this stable “Eastern effect” are rather complex. Our additional findings hint at the possibility that the family might play a mediating role with regard to the “Eastern effect” on the *instrumental/utilitarian* motive for violence. The results suggest that, alongside more detailed empirical assessments, further theorizing along these lines is likely to be worthwhile. Even within the scope of IAT, the precise mechanisms could be more fully theorized. For example, to what extent does economic dominance affect motives for youth violence indirectly via the socialization provided by non-economic institutions (e.g., child-rearing practices in the family, current educational practices and norm-orientation of the parents) rather than directly via cultural orientations (e.g., values of disintegrative

individualism)? For adults this specific indirect mechanism might be less relevant in terms of a conceivably stronger direct influence of general cultural orientations on their motives for violence, since they are usually by then rather independent from their parental home. Further theoretical and empirical assessments along these lines seem worthwhile to us.

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As a last point we need to acknowledge the already mentioned limitation of our samples to major cities in the respective countries, thus lacking nationally representative data. This means that we have only urban populations in our samples, and lack rural populations, which might bias the results with regard to entire nations. This is a potential limitation that needs to be addressed in future research.

Appendix

1. Items

- Item 1: If you are going to have fun there just has to be a bit of violence involved.*
- Item 4: You have to resort to violence because it's the only way to get noticed.*
- Item 5: If somebody attacks me then I hit back.*
- Item 7: The strongest must win, otherwise there is no progress.*
- Item 8: If I have to show what I'm capable of then I use violence.*
- Item 9: Without violence everything would be much more boring.*
- Item 10: If someone provokes me I quickly turn to violence.*
- Item 12: The young use violence to sort things out, adults just talk.*
- Item 13: It is perfectly normal for men to want to prove themselves by fighting with others.*
- Item 14: An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, that's how life is.*

2. Explorative Factor Solutions

Table A2-1: Item and scale values for the approval of violence scale for Ljubljana

Items	M	SD	FL	r_{it}	NL
If you are going to have fun there just has to be a bit of violence involved (item 1)	15.6	25.42	.81	0.58	-.13
You have to resort to violence because it's the only way to get noticed (Item 4)	9.5	20.69	.74	0.54	.01
The strongest must win, otherwise there is no progress (Item 7)	26.5	29.35	.60	0.47	-.06
If I have to show what I'm capable of then I use violence (Item 8)	13.7	23.70	.79	0.67	.12
Without violence everything would be much more boring (Item 9)	15.7	26.16	.68	0.61	.05
If someone provokes me I quickly turn to violence (Item 10)	30.5	29.79	.55	0.50	.18
<i>Motive/Factor 1</i>	18.5	18.39		$\alpha = .80$	
The young use violence to sort things out, adults just talk (Item 12)	36.7	32.21	.74	0.45	-.09
It is perfectly normal for men to want to prove themselves by fighting with others (Item 13)	46.0	32.69	.86	0.48	.05
An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, that's how life is (Item 14)	40.7	33.91	.63	0.42	.14
<i>Motive/Factor 2</i>	41.1	25.19		$\alpha = .64$	
Overall scale (without Item 5)	26.1	18.06		$\alpha = .81$	

Abbreviations: FL = factor loading; r_{it} = selectivity coefficient of items; α = reliability of sub scale/overall scale; AL = ancillary loading.

Table A2-2: Item and scale values for the approval of violence scale for Volgograd

Items	M	SD	FL	r_{it}	NL
If somebody attacks me then I hit back (Item 5)	75.7	25.27	.65	0.30	-0.05
The strongest must win, otherwise there is no progress (Item 7)	36.6	33.12	.55	0.46	-0.05
If I have to show what I'm capable of then I use violence (Item 8)	38.2	32.29	.65	0.48	0.25
The young use violence to sort things out, adults just talk (Item 12)	31.0	33.27	.46	0.44	-0.08
It is perfectly normal for men to want to prove themselves by fighting with others (Item 13)	46.6	32.57	.68	0.52	-0.21
An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, that's how life is (Item 14)	50.2	33.17	.66	0.48	-0.31
<i>Motive/Factor 1</i>	46.4	20.40		$\alpha = .72$	
If you are going to have fun there just has to be a bit of violence involved (item 1)	12.5	23.97	.78	0.53	-0.05
You have to resort to violence because it's the only way to get noticed (Item 4)	10.5	21.77	.80	0.48	0.01
Without violence everything would be much more boring (Item 9)	13.0	23.70	.68	0.47	0.14
<i>Motive/Factor 2</i>	12.0	18.06		$\alpha = .68$	
Overall scale (without Item 10)	34.9	17.15		$\alpha = .76$	

Abbreviations: FL = factor loading; r_{it} = selectivity coefficient of items; α = reliability of subscale/overall scale; AL = ancillary loading.

3. Confirmatory City-specific Structural Comparison of Measuring Instrument

Figure A3-1: Model 1, one-factor solution (Hamburg, Plzen, Kraków)

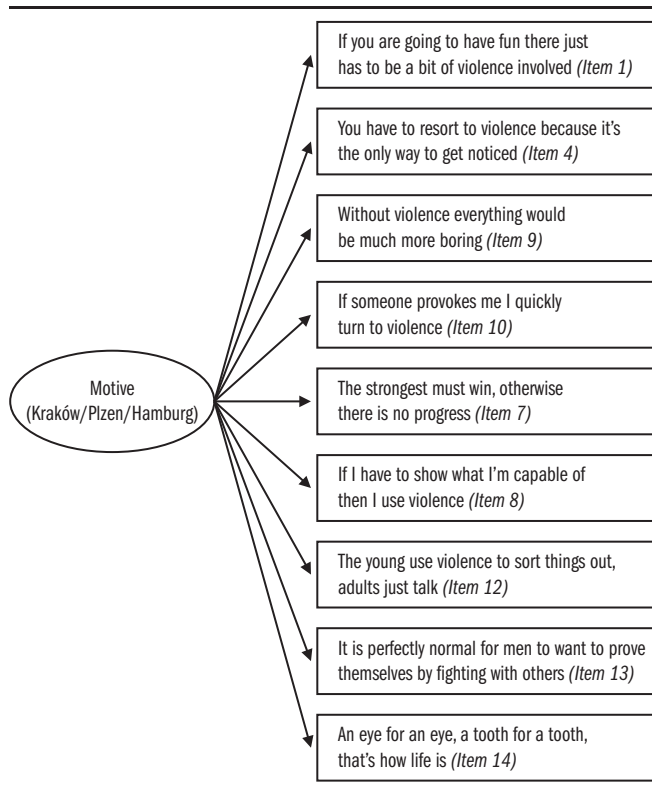


Figure A3-2: Model 2, two-factor solution in Volgograd

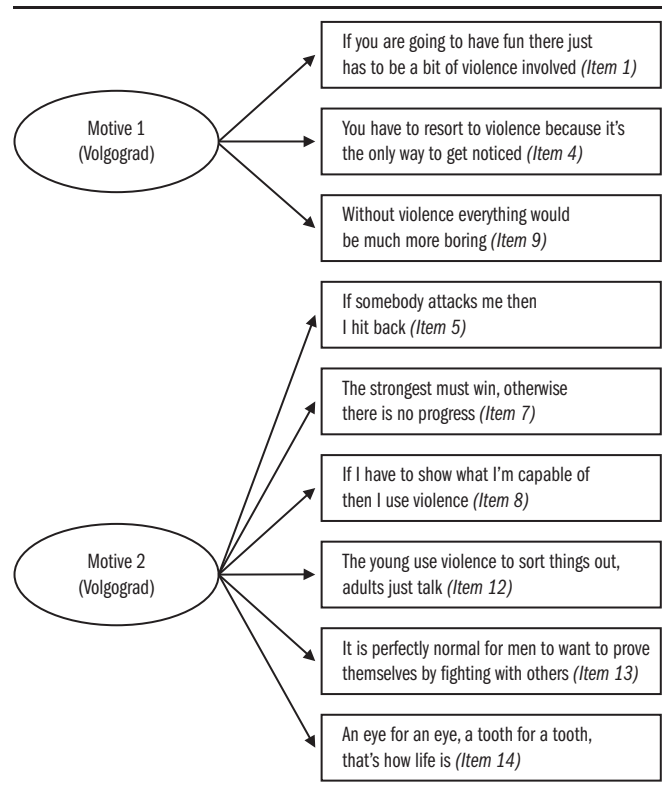


Figure A3-3: Model 3, two- factor solution in Ljubljana

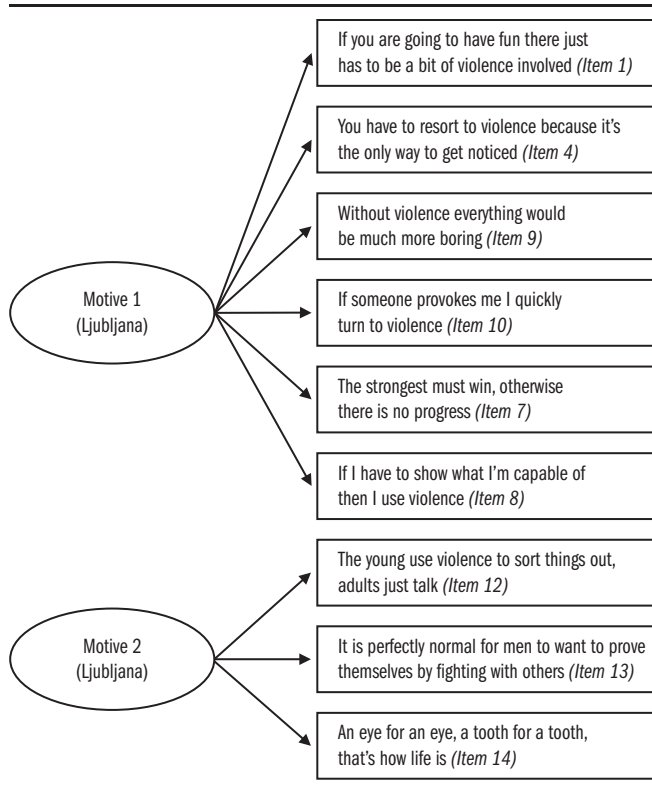


Table A3-1:

	Model1 (CFI/BIC/RMSEA/ SRMR)	Model 2 (CFI/BIC/RMSEA/ SRMR)	Model 3 (CFI/BIC/RMSEA/ SRMR)
Ljubljana	0.922/148557.623 /0.081/0.045	0.917/150362.216 /0.082/0.044	0.972/148355.172 /0.050/0.027
Hamburg	0.961/268568.942 /0.074/0.029	0.969/269904.571 /0.064/0.026	0.979/268354.011 /0.055/0.021
Volgograd	0.877/142770.904 /0.093/0.051	0.943/142683.467 /0.061/0.035	0.911/142664.131 /0.080/0.045
Kraków	0.973/110625.281 /0.062/0.024	0.972/112033.240 /0.060/0.028	0.982/110585.667 /0.052/0.021
Plzen	0.970/100398.485 /0.063/0.029	0.974/102049.988 /0.057/0.028	0.975/100380.746 /0.058/0.026

Model 1: one-factor model without Item 5 (9 Items); Model 2: two-factor-model as found in Volgograd (without Item 10); Model 3: two-factor-model as found in Ljubljana (without Item 5). No error correlations permitted between indicator variables; BIC (Bayesian Information Criterion, lower values indicate a better fit) comparisons permitted between Model 1 and Model 3 (same covariance matrix).

4. Validation of the Eastern Effect with Regional Dummies

Table A4-1: Motivation for violence regressed on the specific city dummies, reference category Hamburg

	Instrumental/utilitarian motivation for violence	Hedonistic motivation for violence
Ljubljana	0.317***	-0.323***
Volgograd	0.406***	-0.423***
Plzen	0.264***	n.s.
Kraków	0.106**	0.226***

5. Further Analyses Concerning Mechanisms that Could Explain the “Eastern Effect”

Table A5-1: Multivariate linear regressions to approach the mechanisms that lead to the Eastern effect

Covariat	Model 1 (I/H)	Model 2 (I/H)	Model 3 (I/H)	Model 4 (I/H)	Model 5 (I/H)	Model 6 (I/H)	Model 7 (I/H)	
transformation	0.278***/ -0.132***	0.266***/ -0.136***	0.273***/ -0.127***	0.266***/ -0.134***	0.208***/ -0.191**	0.152***/ -0.213***	0.227***/ -0.200***	transform
deprivation		0.12**/ 0.038(n.s.)	0.06*/ -0.03(n.s.)	0.039(n.s.)/ -0.056*	0.012(n.s.)/ -0.086*	0.013(n.s.)/ -0.086*	0.009(n.s.)/ -0.082*	deprivation
eltpos			-0.194***/ -0.251***	-0.158***/ -0.198***	-0.120***/ -0.162***	-0.065***/ -0.143***	-0.067***/ -0.147***	childhood
eltgew				0.116***/ 0.182***	0.096***/ 0.168***	0.039*/ 0.142***	-0.031(n.s.)/ 0.052**	childhood
normelt					-0.248***/ -0.231***	-0.251***/ -0.234***	-0.121***/ -0.087***	current parenting
inkons						0.201***/ 0.075***	0.100***/ -0.036(n.s.)	current parenting
delisubk							0.530***/ 0.596***	peer group
R ² (I/H)	0.018/ 0.004	0.019/ 0.004	0.059/ 0.065	0.070/ 0.096	0.128/ 0.147	0.161/ 0.152	0.404/ 0.454	
CFI	0.955	0.954	0.958	0.955	0.958	0.955	0.952	
χ ² (df)	721.123 (12)	749.283 (16)	2002.991 (82)	2863.162 (139)	2854.425 (170)	3130.279 (204)	2789.964 (265)	
RMSEA (pclose)	0.079 (0.000)	0.070 (0.000)	0.051 (0.135)	0.047 (0.999)	0.043 (1.000)	0.042 (1.000)	0.040 (1.000)	
SRMR	0.035	0.032	0.026	0.027	0.026	0.026	0.027	

I=instrumental/utilitarian motive for violence

H = hedonistic motive for violence

eltpos=positive parental attention (childhood)

eltgew=experience of parental violence (childhood)

normelt=current parental normative rejection of violence

inkons=current family climate: inconsistent prohibitions

delisubk=delinquent, violent peer group.

Operationalization:

eltpos: Respondents were asked: “Please think of the time when you were a kid. We mean the time before you turned 12. How often did your parents behave toward you in the way it is described below?” Respondents could answer from 1 “never” to 4 “often.” The eltpos index was calculated by the mean of the following Items (if latent, modelled accordingly): 1. “they praised me when I did something especially well”; 2. “They put their arms around me and cuddled me”; 3. “They calmed me down when I was afraid”; 4. “They explained things in a calm way to me when I did something wrong”; 5. “They really cared for me”; 6. “They protected me”; and 7. “They comforted me when I was sad.”

eltgew: Respondents were asked: “Please think of the time when you were a kid. We mean the time before you turned 12. How often did your parents behave toward you in the way it is described below?” Respondents could answer from 1 “never” to 4 “often.” The eltgew index was calculated by the mean of the following Items (if latent, modelled accordingly): 1. “They threw with things at me”; 2. “They gripped me hard or pushed me”; 3. “They hit me”; 4. “They hit me with an object.”

normelt: Respondents were asked: “Imagine, during school break, you got into a fight with someone from your class. You get very angry and hit him in the face with your fist. He falls to the ground, his pants get ripped and his nose starts bleeding. You did not get hurt. If you did something like that: How bad would the following persons think that is? Respondents could answer

from 1 “not bad at all” to 5 “very bad.” The normelt index takes into account the answers for father and mother (mean of the two Items; if latent, modelled accordingly).

inkons: Respondents were asked: “Please tick off, how often the following occurred at home in your family during the last twelve months”: Respondents could answer from 1 “never” to 5 “very often.” The inkons index was calculated by the mean of the following Items (if latent, modelled accordingly): 1. “No matter how I behaved, my parents always found it wrong”; 2. “Concerning prohibitions, my parents said one thing and then the other, I never really knew how to behave right.”

delisubk: The respondents were asked to evaluate the following statements about their group of friends using a four-point scale (1 for “completely untrue” to 4 for “completely true”). The delisubk index was calculated by the mean of the following Items (if latent, modelled accordingly): 1. “We fight with other groups”; 2. “When we get together many people are scared of us”; 3. “To have fun we sometimes do things that are forbidden.”

deprivation: We constructed deprivation as a dummy variable where value 1 comprises adolescents whose parents are affected by unemployment and/or receive welfare benefits.

6. Effects of the Regional Dummies on the Possibly Mediating Variables

Table A6-1:

	Current parental normative rejection of violence	Current family climate: inconsistent prohibitions
Ljubljana	-0.106**	0.538***
Volgograd	-0.444***	0.380***
Plzen	-0.703***	0.222***
Kraków	-0.102**	n.s.

Possible mediators in the relationship between transformation and instrumental/utilitarian motivation for violence regressed on the specific city dummies, reference category Hamburg

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Intergroup Conflict and the Media: An Experimental Study of Greek Students after the 2008 Riots

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Intergroup Conflict and the Media: An Experimental Study of Greek Students after the 2008 Riots

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We report a laboratory experiment in the context of the December 2008 riots in Greece, after the killing of a 15-year-old student by a policeman. Our sample comprised 266 students from the University of Thessaloniki. We tested whether media reports can affect people's willingness to harm those in opposing groups by examining the way students allocated money between themselves and others of various professions, including police, in modified dictator games. Exposure to media reports decreased giving to police, but only when choices were private. Laboratory behaviour was correlated with self-reported participation in demonstrations, supporting the external validity of our measure. Media exposure appears to have affected behaviour by different pathways than those proposed in the existing literature, including "spiral of silence" and "frame alignment" theories.

In December 2008, after the killing of fifteen-year-old schoolboy Alexandros Grigoropoulos by a member of the police force, Greece was shaken by a series of demonstrations, which swiftly turned violent. Participants fought the police and destroyed property. Although mass violence has subsided at the time of writing, there have been subsequent terrorist attacks targeting individual on-duty police officers and mob attacks against police stations.¹ The December events continue to resonate in current Greek politics and society.

We use Greece as an example to examine the behavioural roots of conflict between opposing groups in a democratic system. This paper reports an experiment to test the specific hypothesis that intergroup discrimination and potentially conflict may be fostered by messages from the media. Our participants were Greek students, who were asked to allocate real money between themselves and others, including members of the Greek police force. This complements

existing research by demonstrating that exposure to media may affect behaviour as well as, or instead of, changing opinions. To increase confidence in external validity, we correlated behaviour in our experiment with self-reported participation in demonstrations against the police.

Commentators and academics have blamed the media for fomenting civil and political conflict in cases such as the civil war in the former Yugoslavia (Oberschall 2001, 2000; Kaufman 2001; Ignatieff 1998); twentieth-century race riots in the United States (Bauerlein 2001); and the Rwandan genocide (Gourevitch 1999).² A key observation from these case studies is that not all participants in conflict are necessarily willing. As one Rwandan eyewitness stated: "ten percent helped; 30 percent were forced to kill; 20 percent killed reluctantly; 40 percent killed enthusiastically" (Mamdani 2001). Indeed, psychologists have hypothesized that intergroup violence is aided by the creation of within-group norms supporting it (Bar-Tal 1990). Similarly, some

¹ See e.g. "Policeman Shot Dead in Greece," BBC News, June 17, 2009, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/8104799.stm>, "Greek unrest takes worrying turn," BBC News, January 5, 2009,

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/7811914.stm>.

² By contrast, the literature on social movements has not tended to give the media a leading causal role in mobilizing protest (although see Gamson 1992; Walgrave and Manssens 2000; Cooper 2002).

observers argue that the media was crucial to the escalation, outcome, and public perception of the December 2008 events in Greece. Some media outlets presented a very emotional account of the boy's death and its consequences for democracy (on the Greek media's emotional presentation of events in general, see Patrona 2006, 24); others tried to downplay the social importance of the riots, presenting and condemning them as outbreaks of random violence (Michael-Matsas 2010). For this reason, Greece offers an interesting context to examine media effects on behaviour towards a specific group in a democratic regime.

Public opinion research offers theories that could explain the role of the media in this process. *Framing theory* suggests that media can affect the cognitive schema individuals select to understand a situation. *Agenda setting theory* proposes that some issues can be made more salient in audiences' minds simply by covering them more often. *Priming* extends this, arguing that media coverage makes audiences more likely to consider particular issues in evaluating actors or issues (Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007). *Frame alignment theory*, an extension of framing within the social movement literature, holds that messages from social movements have a greater impact if they fit with a person's existing beliefs (Snow et al. 1986; Snow and Benford 1988). Lastly, and of particular relevance for understanding how the media can influence the formation of social norms, Neumann (1974, 44) argues that a *spiral of silence* could lead people who thought they were in a minority to conceal their true beliefs. If individuals depended heavily on mass media to learn what others think, this would give media power to determine the opinions people were willing to express, and hence public opinion; importantly, it could also affect the actions people were willing to take. Applied to the Rwandan case, the argument would be that the media created a climate in which attacks on Tutsis were publicly believed to be acceptable, or even required, behaviour.³

Our research does not aim to identify the psychological mechanisms behind media effects. Instead we examine a new and interesting dependent variable – that of behaviour with monetary consequences. Research on these topics has typically focused on measurement of opinions, or in the case of the spiral of silence, on measuring willingness to speak out, often via hypothetical questions.⁴ This is a limitation if we are interested in behaviour such as conflict participation, because behaviour and expressed opinions may vary independently of one another. On the other hand, case studies of civil conflict (and other forms of research such as survey analysis and media content analysis) can focus on behavioural dependent variables, but it is intrinsically hard for them to demonstrate causality. We therefore chose a middle way: a laboratory experiment in which the dependent variable is behavioural. We cannot directly study participation in violent conflict in the laboratory, but we can explore behaviour that has real monetary consequences, both for the participants and for others. While such behaviour certainly offers no guarantee of external validity,⁵ it does provide evidence that goes beyond the informational content of opinion questions and hypothetical questions about behaviour. Specifically, we examine (1) the effect of media on behaviour and (2) the interaction between media exposure and the publicity of subjects' decisions. This allows us to examine the “spiral of silence” effect, which predicts that individuals will be more affected by media when they know their actions will be visible to others who have been exposed to the same media.

In our experiment, participants first read a newspaper article: a treatment group read an inflammatory article dealing with the shooting of Alexandros Grigoropoulos, while a control group read a neutral article. They then allocated real money between (1) themselves, and (2) anonymous recipients identified only by profession, including members of the Thessaloniki police force. Our dependent variable is “giving discrimination”: the difference between amounts given to members of the police force and amounts given to

3 Fuller literature reviews on priming, framing, and agenda-setting can be found in Weaver (2007), Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007), and Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur (1976).

4 For a review, see Scheufele and Moy (2000). Glynn et al. (1997) provide a meta-analysis of these studies and find limited effects.

5 Similar external validity issues are faced by studies on the effects of violent media that use lab measures of violent behaviour as a dependent variable. See Geen and Thomas (1986) for a review and discussion.

other groups. We can thus measure whether exposure to media affects giving discrimination. A cross-cutting treatment manipulates the publicity of allocation decisions: some subjects' decisions were fully private, while others were revealed to a neighbouring participant. This allows us to examine how the effect of the media article is moderated when subjects' decisions are made public to others. Thus, we can examine the effect of the spiral of silence on behaviour. Spiral of silence theory predicts that exposure to mass media will change individuals' views of what the majority thinks, and this will change their willingness to express their own opinion, or to take actions that reveal their opinion in public. This effect will be absent when the same actions are private.

Our participants were students at the University of Thessaloniki. Since Thessaloniki was a centre of anti-police activity, and since students were centrally involved, our sample comes from an interesting population of potential conflict participants.⁶ Indeed, many subjects reported taking part in demonstrations against the police. Before making their allocations, half our students were exposed to a (real) newspaper article discussing the killing of Alexandros Grigoriopoulos. The other half were exposed to a neutral article. This allows us to measure the effects of media exposure on the allocations made. Clearly, donating or withholding money in a laboratory is not the same as taking part in a potentially violent protest. However, it is an action with real consequences for both oneself and others, and this may be linked to willingness to take similar action in other contexts. In fact, we find a significant correlation between behaviour in the laboratory with self-reported protest participation during December 2008, detailed in subsection 4.3 below.

We find that media reports did indeed affect students' willingness to give to police, but only when decisions were private. When decisions were going to be made visible to another person, the media report had no effect. Thus, our hypothesis that public actions would be more influenced by the media was not supported. Also, while media reports de-

creased giving to police when giving was costly, they did not decrease giving when not giving was costly – that is, when participants had to pay to reduce the recipient's payoff. Thus, although exposure to media can change people's behaviour, we did not find evidence that the media can cause people to take action with material costs to themselves. Lastly, media exposure did not significantly affect people's expressed opinions. In other words, our subjects behaved differently even though their publicly expressed opinions did not change. Our results thus suggest that the link between opinion and action is complex. Media narratives may change what people do in private, for instance by legitimating selfish behaviour, without affecting the opinions they express in public. And making decisions public can (sometimes) dampen the effect of media narratives.

In the next section, we describe the background of our experiment: the Greek riots of 2008, and the role of police, students and media in them and in Greek society more generally. Section 2 sets out our design and Section 3 gives our results.

1. Background: The 2008 Riots

The December 2008 riots in Greece were the public response to the killing of a fifteen-year-old Athenian schoolboy by a policeman (USA Today 2008). The event catalysed an explosion of public discontent which was not directly connected to the boy's death but was indicative of the general mood of the society (Christofer 2008). The outrage of a traditionally highly politicised society (Alivizatos 1990) escalated into a month-long conflict between police and demonstrators, including both peaceful demonstrations and violent riots. Aggression against the police and other symbols of state and media power, such as university teachers and journalists, continued in subsequent months, along with repeated strikes against government economic policies (Smith 2008).

The violence demonstrates the anger of Greeks, particularly young people, towards government and state institutions

⁶ However, as is common in experimental work, our recruitment methods do not allow us to claim that our sample is representative.

(Karamichas 2009, 291). General dissatisfaction with public administration, political corruption, and unsuccessful governance has for many years lacked an effective means of expression, due to Greece's weak civil society (Mouzelis 1978, 19). The major political parties dominate social relations and expression of opinion in the Greek political sphere (Pridham 1990, 116) and have long used corruption and clientelism to secure their rule (Pappas 1999, 169–220). The on-going economic crisis added to public dissatisfaction with the dysfunctionalities and corruption of the Greek political system. The riots have been described as the first political explosion of the current world economic crisis, combining features from May 1968, and from the French *banlieu* rebellion in 2005 (Michael-Matsas 2010).

During the events of December 2008, the police were the main target of protesters' anger, not only because of their function as a law and order mechanism. Historically the Greek police have been seen as an organ of state repression. Before 1974, the police were used by both the dictatorship and elected right-wing governments to keep the masses out of politics (Veremis 1997; Demertzis and Kafetzis 1996). Support for democracy was suppressed and private life was infiltrated by a vast network of police informers (Samatas 1986, 35). The democratization of the state apparatus by the Karamanlis administration shied away from introducing major reforms out of fear of a backlash (Clogg 2002, 173). This led to the disillusionment of ordinary Greek citizens with the police (Kassimeris 2001, 262), which continued during the Third Greek Republic. In modern Greek politics the police are framed as both symptom and cause of political failure (Featherstone 2009, 2). The population's deep lack of trust in the police force (Mouzelis 1978, 133), is reinforced by the police's inability to provide good services, and the fact that the force is seen as protecting the political establishment, the two major parties. The death of Alexandros Grigoriopoulos thus added to a disillusionment not only with the police, but with the entire state apparatus, including the political, economic, and social elite of the country. An opinion poll reporting trust in institutions showed that

more Greeks distrust the police (46 percent) than trust them (43 percent). But the police are not the least trusted institution. Political parties come bottom, trusted by only 8 percent, while newspapers are trusted by just 33 percent.⁷

The role of the media in the December events was crucial. Greek media have a special position in the country's political life, participating as an independent political actor, more so than in other European democracies. As in other young southern European and Latin American democracies, the media in Greece are highly party-politicized (Hallin and Papathanassopoulos 2002). Media companies have invested little in developing quality journalism, which is hardly considered an autonomous profession. Compensating for their lack of professionalism, the media chose sensationalism over objective presentation of news. Outlets with different political alliances spin the news from different political perspectives. As a result, one could read wildly different interpretations of the December riots depending on the source.

The media's emotional presentation of the boy's killing and their analysis of its impact on democracy (or, on the other side, one-sided condemnation of the rioters' violence without comparable condemnations of police actions) may have affected opinions – whether privately held or openly expressed – about the actors and events of December 2008. Equally importantly, it may have affected the behaviour of those involved. For that reason we focus our analysis on the impact of the media coverage of the events.

Students are traditionally seen as a force of political change by both the students themselves and by Greek society in general. The strained relations between students and police and the students' role as the major protest group in the December riots give us a valuable opportunity to examine a strong form of outgroup discrimination – something that is extremely hard to create with minimal groups in the lab (Mummendey et al. 1992; Brewer 1999).⁸ Finally, the political situation allows us to examine media effects in a naturalistic way using a real media report drawn from the December 2008 period.

7 Opinion poll conducted by Public Issue on December 17–19, 2008. Results can be found at <http://www.publicissue.gr/1028/institutions-2/>.

2. Experimental Design and Questionnaire

Experiments were conducted in nine sessions from April 8 to April 11, 2009, at the University of Macedonia, Thessaloniki, Greece. The sessions were held in the computer laboratory of the Economics Faculty, with adaptations for running computerized experiments.⁹ Subjects were recruited via two methods: a) voluntary registration during lectures at the European and International Studies department and b) posters and leaflets distributed in and around the university and in the city centre.¹⁰ The subjects were aware that they would be paid €2.50 for participating, and would have the potential to earn more depending on their answers. Volunteers contacted us by phone, e-mail, or in person to subscribe to the session of their choice and were informed that the sessions would run for an hour.

We employed a 2×2 factorial design, where we varied the publicity of the decisions and subjects' exposure to media. We applied these four treatments between subjects, so that any subject was exposed to only one of the four treatments. The experiment had two stages. In the first stage subjects read one of two newspaper articles: one dealing with the riots, and a control article about the activities of a Greek internet telephony company. In the second stage, subjects played a series of dictator games in which their decisions were either public or private. (Whether the subjects were in the *private* or the *public* treatment was determined beforehand and did not change during the experiment. This was communicated to the subjects before they made any decisions.) In each dictator game subjects could give money to people outside the lab, identified by their profession and gender. In these games we varied the recipient (the *other*) and the relative price of giving to the other. After all allocation decisions had been taken, subjects were asked to fill out an electronic questionnaire. Table 1 gives an overview of the experimental design.¹¹ All sessions were conducted by the same experimenters, taking the same roles in each session.

Table 1: Structure of the experiment

	Neutral media/ private (N=68)	Riot media/ private (N=72)	Neutral media/ public (N=72)	Riot media/ public (N=54)
I	Introduction and explanation of experiment			
II	Neutral media	Riot media	Neutral media	Riot media
III	Example for choice on the budget sets			
IV	Profession chosen at random without replacement out of six professions (<i>stratified within subject</i>)			
V	Choice on linear budget set chosen randomly without replacement out of nine different possibilities <i>Stratified within subject and profession</i>			
	Price of giving (in €)		Budget (in €)	
	0.50		7.50	
	1.00		7.50	
	2.00		7.50	
	0.00		7.50	
	2.00		15.00	
	-0.50		5.00	
	-1.00		7.50	
	-2.00		10.00	
VI	Choice on step-shaped budget set			
VII	Discuss decisions with neighbour			
VIII	Post-experimental questionnaire			

The columns represent between subject treatments and the rows within subject decisions. Number of observations reported for between-subjects treatments.

8 Other researchers have used ethnic groups to examine intergroup behaviour. Here is the problem that norms of inter-ethnic fairness, which are common in societies where ethnic groups must live together, may interfere with research. Indeed, experimental work with "home-grown" groups often finds weaker results than that with minimal groups (Habyarimana et al. 2007; Whitt and Wilson 2007; Goerg et al. 2008; Bernhard et al. 2006).

9 Photographs available on request.

10 As with most laboratory experiments, our recruitment methods are unlikely to give a truly random sample of the population of interest. However, there are no obvious reasons for our results to be biased in any specific direction. Since April 11 was a Saturday, the students on campus that day might be a strongly selected

subset. We have too few observations on the Saturday (38 in total in four treatments) to explicitly test for selection effects, but our results are robust to the exclusion of the Saturday session (analyses available upon request).

11 The protocol and written instructions are available on request.

2.1. Media Articles

We asked subjects to read an article from a Greek newspaper and find spelling mistakes.¹² Subjects were given five minutes to complete the task. Half of the subjects read a neutral article about business activities of a large internet telephony company. The other half were presented with a news article containing a detailed description of the shooting of the fifteen-year old boy, broadly sympathetic to demonstrators and critical of the police. This article functions as a riot media treatment presenting the subjects with a subtle negative stimulus towards the police triggering a more emotional reaction. Subjects were asked to count the spelling mistakes and rewarded with 1€ for getting the correct number (which was 10). This task resembles a priming task, frequently used in psychological research to make a certain concept more salient (Bargh and Chartrand 2000; see Tajfel 1981 or Benjamin et al. forthcoming for applications to economics). We do not attempt to distinguish between the different causal mechanisms which may have been operating, including “priming,” “framing,” and “agenda-setting” effects. The relationship between these concepts is complex and controversial (Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007) and its discussion is not the focus of this research.

Subjects were aware that both articles came from *Kathimerini*, a widely read Greek newspaper.¹³ We chose articles from *Kathimerini* because it has the reputation of being a serious, mainstream paper. Its moderately right-wing position is well known to the Greek public. More left-wing subjects might if anything be sceptical of *Kathimerini*'s position, which would bias our results towards finding no effect of the media on behaviour. Another factor that might bias our results downward is the “hostile media phenomenon”: subjects tend to perceive media as biased against their own views, whatever those views are (Vallone et al. 1985).

2.2. Recipients

Recipients were either police or members of one of five other professions: firefighter, private-sector employee, civil servant, housewife, or entrepreneur. We used multiple

groups so as to avoid inducing experimenter demand effects by making the police/other distinction obvious. Firefighters in particular provide a close comparison group with police, since both are uniformed state employees with a strong group identity. This allowed us to check whether our results come from general intergroup hostility, rather than specifically from discrimination against members of the police group. Recipients were identified on the computer screen by true profession, along with fictitious names that preserved gender, and subjects were informed of this. Recipients were not present in the laboratory. Instead, money donated was sent to them by post, directly after the experiment (see section 3.3. below).

2.3. Dictator Game

In a dictator game subjects are asked to split money between themselves and a recipient. Dictator games are widely used in experimental economics to measure other-regarding preferences (e.g. Forsythe et al. 1994); behaviour in dictator games may also be affected by norms (Dana et al. 2006). Each subject played six turns of a modified dictator game – one for each profession. In each turn a profession was chosen randomly without replacement, a recipient was chosen randomly from a pool of potential recipients of the chosen profession, and the subject then made nine decisions allocating money between him- or herself and the recipient. So every subject was presented with all of the six professions in random order.

Motivated by analogous situations in civil conflict, we wished to learn how subjects behaved when discrimination carried a cost to the discriminator, and more generally how discrimination was affected by changes in its cost. Therefore, we varied the price of giving to the other person across the nine decisions.¹⁴ Subjects were shown a series of different budget sets, with payoff to oneself on the y-axis and payoff to the recipient on the x-axis, and were asked to pick a point on the boundary of the budget set, as shown in Figure 1. Before the actual task, subjects made a non-paid trial choice to ensure that the setup was well understood.

12 A translation of the articles (without spelling mistakes) can be found in the Appendix.

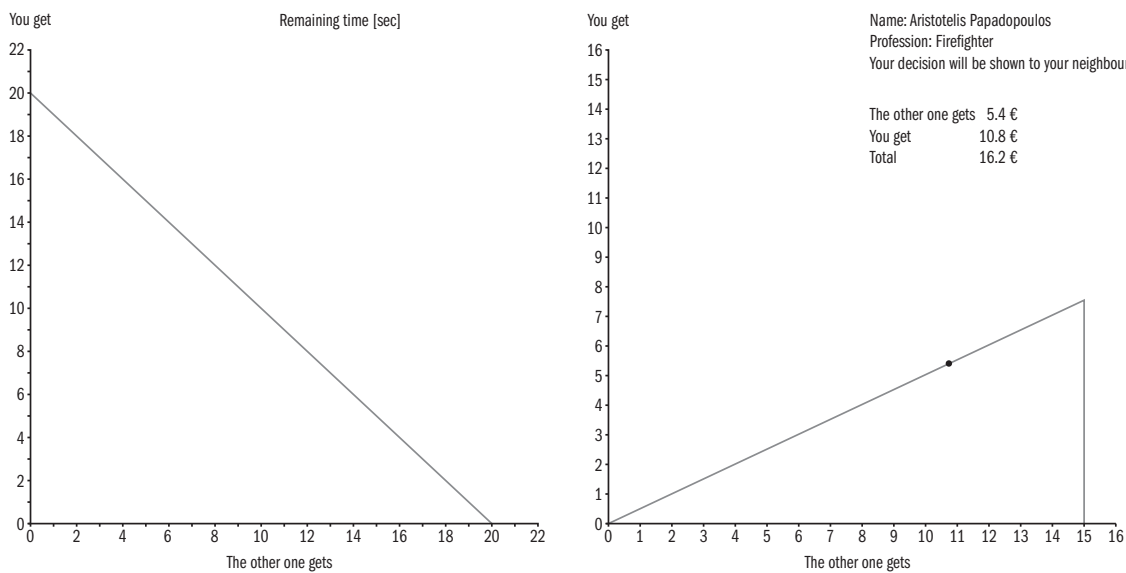
13 According to the newspaper *To Vima*, November 25, 2008, <http://www.tovima.gr/default.asp?pid=2&artid=243941&ct=85&dt=12/10/2008>.

14 For a similar approach see Andreoni and Miller (2002) or Fisman et al. (2007).

When a point was chosen, the resulting allocation was shown in figures in the top right corner of the screen. If the subject was satisfied with the decision, they confirmed the choice. There were three different kinds of budgets. Four were standard budget sets crossing the x-axis at 7.5€ or

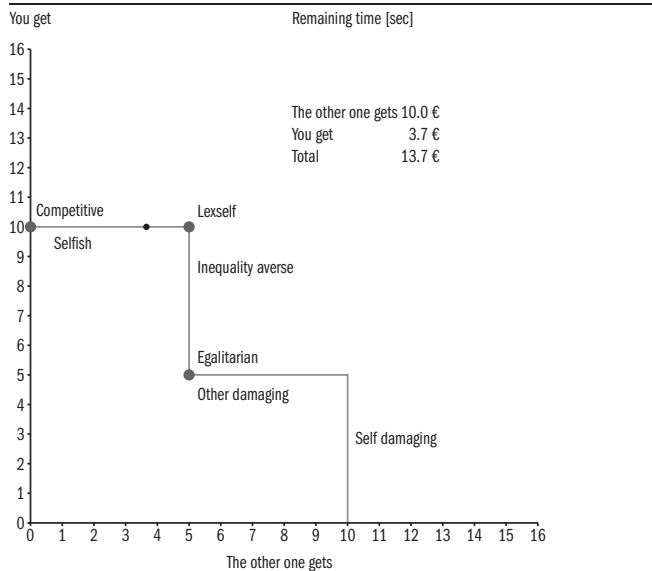
15€, and the y-axis at 7.5€ or 15€. Thus, the price to give to the other person was either 0.5€, 1€, or 2€ and the own endowment was either 7.5€ or 15€. One budget set had a zero price of giving: the set crossed the y-axis at 7.5€, continued to (7.5€,7.5€) and then dropped to cross the x-axis at 7.5€.

Figure 1: Examples of budget sets



Note: Amount given to self is on the Y axis and amount given to the other is on the X axis. Subjects clicked on the budget line to determine the allocation. After each click they were shown the allocation, which they could then confirm.

Figure 2: Step-shaped budget set



Note: Diagram labels and emphasized points were not shown on the screen.

We call these five budgets, including the zero price budget, the “costly giving” budgets. Three budget sets had a negative price of giving, i.e. it was actually costly not to give to the other – we describe these as “costly withholding” budgets. These started at the origin, and went to either (5,10), (7.5,7.5) or 10,5), so that the price of not giving was 0.5€, 1€, or 2€. This is the closest laboratory analogue to behaviour that has costs to the actor as well as to the potential victims, such as participation in riots.

The final budget set in each profession was step-shaped (see Figure 2). The step-shaped budget set is suitable for detecting certain prototypical forms of other-regarding preferences in a non-parametric way, as choices within certain subsets on the budget line have a direct interpretation in terms of social preferences.

Competitive subjects want to maximize the difference between their income and the income of the recipient. *Selfish* subjects choose the highest possible outcome for themselves but, given this choice, do not maximize the payoff of the other. *Lexself* subjects maximize their payoff and then the payoff of the other. *Inequality averse* subjects will forego their own profit in order to reduce inequality. The *egalitarian* point indicates strong preferences for fairness. Points to the right of this point indicate other-damaging behaviour on the horizontal line, and self-damaging behaviour on the vertical line.

2.4. Private and Public Treatments

In the public treatment, after the dictator games, one set of each subject’s decisions was chosen at random and displayed to a single other subject, who was seated at a neighbouring workstation in the lab; pairs of neighbours were then asked to chat (using the zTree interface) about their decisions for three minutes. In the private treatment, decisions were not displayed and there was no chat.

In neither case could we, the experimenters, connect subjects’ decisions to their real identities. In both cases, subjects were informed of this in advance. Half the subjects were in the public treatment, half in the private.

2.5. Questionnaire and Payment

Immediately after the experiment, but before the payment procedure, subjects were asked to fill out a questionnaire on-

screen. They were assured that their answers were anonymous, and that they were not obliged to answer any questions. The questionnaire included the following sections.

1. Open-ended questions on the purpose of the experiment, so as to check for experimenter demand effects (see below).
2. Trust in institutions, including the media and the police.
3. Questions about the riots, including multiple choice questions on who was to blame for the riots, the causes of the riots, whether violence by the police and/or students was justified, and whether policing had been effective.
4. Questions on the subject’s own participation in and experience of demonstrations, including participation in violence.
5. Questions measuring the subject’s level of identification with the student group.
6. Demographics.

After all subjects had completed the questionnaire, they were called up individually and paid privately before leaving the laboratory. Subjects were shown the money they had allocated to dictator game recipients being placed in envelopes for posting (but not shown the recipients’ names or addresses), and one volunteer subject came with us to observe the envelopes being posted.

2.6. Credibility and Debriefing

Greece is a low-trust society, so we were concerned to establish the credibility of our experiment. Initial instructions for participants, which were read out in public, stressed that economic experiments do not use deception. In the post-experimental questionnaire, we asked subjects whether they trusted the experimenters to send the money on a scale from 1 (“not at all”) to 7 (“very much”). The mean responses by treatment were: riot/private 6.02; riot/public 6.06; neutral/private 5.70; and neutral/public 5.60. The responses are quite high, and are not significantly different at a 10 percent level using rank-sum tests. Thus, even if credibility was not achieved for all participants, this will not have affected the treatments differently.

Another concern in psychological experiments is “experimenter demand” effects, which cause participants to behave in ways they think the experimenters want. This

makes it important that participants do not guess the purpose of the experiment.¹⁵ Priming tasks can be a particular area of concern (Bargh and Chartrand 2000). By including multiple social groups as recipients, using a non-standard dictator game, and by framing the media article as a spelling task, we aimed to avoid this. As a check, our questionnaire included open questions on the experiment topic. No participant mentioned the police or the December 2008 disturbances.

2.7. Hypotheses

We use a simple measure for our dependent variable: the difference between amount given to members of the police force and amount given to other groups. We call this “giving discrimination”.¹⁶ To examine whether media can affect behaviour towards the police group, we formulate the following key hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1 *Giving discrimination will be greater in the riot media treatment.*

We split this into two sub-hypotheses, based on the different costs of giving.

Hypothesis 1.1 *Giving discrimination will be greater in the riot media treatment, in the costly giving budgets.*

Hypothesis 1.2 *Giving discrimination will be greater in the riot media treatment, in the costly withholding budgets.*

To examine the spiral of silence hypothesis, we test for an interaction effect between the publicity and media treatments. If exposure to media affects how our subjects perceive others' opinion, and they care about others' opinion when their actions can be observed in public, then:

Hypothesis 2 *The increase in giving discrimination from neutral to riot media treatment will be greater in the public treatment.*

We also wish to examine whether exposure to media affects people's expressed opinions. Our questionnaire included multiple choice questions asking which groups the subject blamed for the December disturbances.

Hypothesis 3 *Blame for the police will be greater in the riot media treatment.*

Lastly, we use the same measure to test whether behaviour is correlated with expressed political beliefs, and to test the prediction of frame alignment theory that messages are more effective if they fit with a person's existing beliefs. Thus we expect an interaction between the media treatment and our measure of beliefs.

Hypothesis 4 *Giving discrimination will be greater among subjects who blame the police for the shooting.*

Hypothesis 5 *The increase in giving discrimination from neutral to riot media treatment will be greater among subjects who blame the police for the shooting.*

3. Results

In total 184 subjects participated; the number of subjects per session varied between 12 and 28. 58.6 percent of the subjects were female. 20.2 percent of the women and 30.9 percent of the men stated that they participated in demonstrations connected to the events in December, but nobody admitted taking violent action. The experiment lasted around one hour. The average payment (including show-up fee and rewards for correct counts in the initial task) was about 10 euros.

Table 2 gives a detailed overview of the allocations to the different professions by treatment over all budget sets. The first – and not necessarily surprising – observation is that average giving over all treatments when the decision is observed increases giving to the other by around 0.50 (t-test, p-value < 0.001). This fits with research on observability in experimental games, which is known to in-

¹⁵ Participants were invited to email the researchers if they wished to learn more about the experiment after taking part.

¹⁶ This term is purely for convenience, and is not meant to imply any particular theory for the reasons behind the difference between amounts given.

crease the pressure to conform with norms such as fairness and generosity (e.g. Andreoni and Petrie 2004, Dana et al. 2006). In contrast, there is no significant difference between the riot and the neutral prime over all profession types.

Table 2: Average giving over all budget sets (pooled) by treatment (euros)

	Treatment				Total
	Private		Public		
Profession	Neutral	Riot	Neutral	Riot	
- Police	4.16 (0.17)	4.01 (0.16)	5.08 (0.15)	4.92 (0.17)	4.53
[All non-police]	4.41 (0.07)	4.66 (0.07)	5.00 (0.07)	4.90 (0.08)	4.74
- Civil servant	4.27 (0.16)	4.26 (0.15)	4.63 (0.15)	4.87 (0.17)	4.49
- Private-sector employee	4.41 (0.16)	4.62 (0.15)	5.06 (0.15)	4.81 (0.17)	4.73
- Housewife	4.86 (0.16)	5.07 (0.15)	5.48 (0.15)	5.34 (0.16)	5.18
- Entrepreneur	3.90 (0.17)	4.25 (0.15)	4.47 (0.16)	4.24 (0.17)	4.22
- Firefighter	4.62 (0.16)	5.12 (0.15)	5.37 (0.15)	5.24 (0.16)	5.09
Total	4.37	4.56	5.01	4.90	

Standard error of means in parentheses

In the private treatment, when subjects received the neutral prime, police and entrepreneurs received the lowest average contributions. In the riot prime, the donation to policemen was lower, at 4.01, while the contributions to the other professions were greater (or nearly the same in the case of civil servant). This is in accordance with our expectations that giving discrimination will be greater in the riot media treatment. A particularly striking observation is the rise in payments to police from the private treatment to the public treatment under the neutral media condition. They received over 0.90 more and their average payment actually exceeded the average of the other groups. This shows that subjects were functioning according to the norm of giving and non-discrimination in public, but showed their true feelings in private. This corresponds to the spiral of silence theory. In the public treatment, the riot prime decreased contributions for all profession types. The difference between police and fire service personnel we do not investigate further. We furthermore find significant differences for decisions made in the private, riot

prime treatment, which we examine more closely when testing our hypothesis in the next section.

4.1. Non-parametric Tests

We measure an individual's "giving discrimination" as average giving to non-police, minus average giving to police. (Results do not change if more complex measures are used, such as the t-statistic of a police dummy in a regression of an individual's giving.) Table 3 shows average giving discrimination by treatment.

Table 3: Discrimination by media and publicity treatments

All budget sets						
	Private		Public		Total	
	N		N		N	
Neutral	45	0.258	48	-0.079	93	0.086
Riot	48	0.658***	38	-0.021	86	0.358***
Total	93	0.466***	86	-0.053	179	0.217***
Positive Prices						
	Private		Public		Total	
	N		N		N	
Neutral	45	0.146	48	-0.28	93	-0.073
Riot	48	0.692***	38	-0.092	86	0.427**
Total	93	0.431**	86	-0.115	179	0.169
Negative Prices						
	Private		Public		Total	
	N		N		N	
Neutral	45	0.166	48	0.237	93	0.126
Riot	48	0.327	38	-0.369	86	0.019
Total	93	0.247	86	-0.116	179	0.073

Note: Significance levels of Mann-Whitney test whether discrimination is present: * p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01.

We then ran Mann-Whitney tests on discrimination in the different treatments.¹⁷ There was a slight, but not significant, increase in discrimination in the riot treatment over the neutral treatment ($p=0.127$, one-tailed). Thus, Hypothesis 1 (giving discrimination will be greater in the riot media treatment) receives weak support in the data. Next, we differentiate between costly giving and costly withholding budgets.

Table 4: Preference types elicited from choices on the step-shaped set

Preference type	Private				Public			
	Neutral		Riot		Neutral		Riot	
	Police	Not police	Police	Not police	Police	Not police	Police	Not police
	% of subjects in category							
Competitive	13.33	10.67	25.00	8.57	4.17	3.72	13.16	11.40
Egoistic	26.67	18.22	18.75	12.24	14.58	13.22	13.16	11.92
Lexicographic self	35.56	47.56	29.17	41.22	45.83	58.26	34.21	33.16
Egalitarian	4.44	9.33	2.08	6.12	10.42	5.37	10.53	8.29
Equity	11.11	5.78	20.83	17.55	18.75	11.57	15.79	21.24
Other-damaging	6.67	6.22	4.17	12.65	6.25	10.42	13.16	11.92
Self-damaging	2.22	2.22	0	1.63	0	0	0	2.07
Pearson's test	5.45 (0.49)		17.17** (0.01)		4.57 (0.47)		1.61 (0.95)	

Note: Significance levels of Pearson's chi-squared test of equality of distributions between choices for the police and non-police groups on the step-shaped budget set by treatment (p-value in parentheses): * $p<0.10$, ** $p<0.05$, *** $p<0.01$.

Discrimination did not vary significantly between media treatments when withholding was costly ($p=0.846$, one-tailed). Cheap discrimination, however, is significantly stronger in the riot media treatment ($p=0.009$, one-tailed). Thus, Hypothesis 1.1 about the costly giving budgets is supported, but Hypothesis 1.2 about the costly withholding budgets is not: the riot cue increased the difference between giving to police and others, but only when giving was costly

to the subject. Table 4 gives further support for this result for the step-shaped budget set. We categorized subjects' choices on the step-shaped set by their corresponding prototypical social preferences, as described above. The distributions of social preference types for police and non-police recipients are significantly different in the private, riot media treatment (χ^2 -test, p-value: 0.01). In particular, subjects are much more likely to show competitive preferences towards police than to non-police. In the other three treatment combinations we do not observe this difference.

To examine Hypothesis 3 that blame for the police will be greater in the riot media treatment, we examined a question from the questionnaire: "Who was to blame for the December 2008 riots?" Subjects were presented with different alternatives, of which more than one could be chosen. We count those subjects who chose either "the police" or "the police leadership" as blaming the police. In a Wilcoxon rank-sum test, blaming the police was not significantly different between riot media and neutral media treatments (p-value: 0.23, one-tailed). Thus, Hypothesis 3 is rejected. By surveying opinions alone, we would conclude that the media have little short-run effect.

Turning to Hypothesis 4 (giving discrimination will be greater among subjects who blame the police for the shooting), we compare subjects who blamed the police or police leadership for the riots with those who did not. Giving discrimination is not greater among those who blamed the police – in fact it is less, but insignificantly so (0.153 vs. 0.260, $p=0.921$, one-tailed). The same holds for cheap discrimination. However, this pattern is reversed in the private treatment: discrimination is higher among those who blame the police, and for cheap discrimination this is significant at the 10 percent level ($p=0.0576$, one-tailed).

To examine Hypothesis 5 (the increase in giving discrimination from neutral to riot media treatment will be greater among subjects who blame the police for the shooting), we look whether there is a significant trend towards

17 The use of non-parametric tests is robust to non-normality of the data. However, they might have less statistical power than parametric tests like

the t-test, when the normality assumption is not violated.

discrimination when changing from the neutral to the riot treatment. We find that cheap discrimination is significantly stronger (difference: 0.59, Kruskal-Wallis test, p-value: 0.06) when subjects blame the police and their decision is private. We also find an increase in discrimination in the public treatment, but this is not significant at conventional levels (difference: 0.33, Kruskal-Wallis test, p-value: 0.15). We do not find significant differences in discrimination between the riot and the neutral treatments behaviour with subjects who – according to the questionnaire – did not blame the police.

4.2. Regression Tests

The overall pattern revealed so far is that subjects only give less to police when it is not costly, and only in private. To investigate this further, we ran OLS regressions on giving to others, using clustered robust standard errors for inference, where the cluster is the individual. Table 5 reports the results. Riot and Public are dummies for the riot media and public treatments respectively.¹⁸

The regression analysis shows the effect of prices and endowments. While for positive prices (these are the costly giving treatments) these effects go in expected directions,

i.e. higher prices reduce giving to the other and higher endowment increases it, the effect of endowment on giving goes in an unexpected direction: the higher the endowment (measured in terms of the maximum that a subject could give to him- or herself), the lower the willingness to contribute, even controlling for the price. This also drives the aggregate results in column (1) of Table 5.

The effects of both media (identified in Table 5 as Riot, indicating that the subjects read the article on the riots) and publicity (identified as Public) treatments on giving to non-police do not reach significance, except for the public treatment effect when prices are zero. For the publicity treatment this is surprising, as these findings are not in line with previous research on social distance and other-regarding behaviour (for early evidence in simple dictator games see Hoffman et al. 1996). The fact that recipients are not present in the laboratory may have dampened the effect of publicity.¹⁹

¹⁸ We conducted robustness checks adding the gender of the recipient into the regression. The main effect of the gender coefficient is insignificant and the coefficients of interest did not change in size and significance. Results are available upon request.

¹⁹ Findings that donations to a third party outside the lab are higher when identity is reported to a subject the lab have been found – to the best of our knowledge – only in research on charitable giving. See for example Reinstein and Riener (forthcoming) in the context of charities.

Table 5: Regressions of amount given

	(1) Non-zero prices	(2) Positive prices	(3) Negative prices	(4) Zero price
Price	0.802*** (0.0781)	-2.333*** (0.155)	2.181*** (0.069)	
Endowment	-0.0755*** (0.0138)	0.270*** (0.0156)	-0.080*** (0.028)	
Riot	0.201 (0.254)	0.502 (0.460)	-0.199 (0.309)	0.471 (0.428)
Public	0.517 (0.275)	0.640 (0.448)	0.350 (0.288)	1.158** (0.404)
Police	-0.154 (0.199)	-0.146 (0.242)	-0.166 (0.202)	-0.711 (0.393)
Riot × public	-0.188 (0.362)	-0.159 (0.633)	-0.225 (0.436)	-1.159* (0.583)
Police × public	0.278 (0.235)	0.427 (0.314)	0.0818 (0.257)	0.668 (0.512)
Police × riot	-0.381 (0.297)	-0.547 (0.340)	-0.161 (0.326)	-0.220 (0.575)
Police × riot × public	0.363 (0.355)	0.173 (0.449)	0.614 (0.409)	-0.206 (0.769)
Downward	-4.627*** (0.336)			
Constant	7.527*** (0.319)	2.339*** (0.376)	9.511*** (0.394)	5.353*** (0.348)
Combined coefficients				
Police + police × riot	-0.536** (0.221)	-0.692*** (0.241)	-0.327 (0.256)	-0.931 ** (0.420)
Police + police × public	0.124 (0.125)	0.281 (0.200)	-0.083 (0.158)	-0.042 (0.328)
Police + police × public + police × riot + police × public × riot	0.105 (0.149)	-0.092 (0.214)	0.369 (0.190)	-0.468 (0.391)
Observations	7607	4348	3259	1087
R ²	0.2278	0.0989	0.3178	0.0365

Dependent variable is amount in euros. Coefficients are unstandardized. Cluster robust standard errors in parentheses, clustered by individual.

Column (1) pools costly withholding (negative prices) and costly giving (positive prices) treatments, but excludes zero-cost giving. The step-shaped budget sets are not part of this data.

Baseline: decision private, neutral cue, non-police recipient, positive prices include zero price giving

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Examining the *Police* dummies – and their interaction with the treatments – confirms the results of the non-parametric tests. We see no evidence that subjects gave less to police in the public treatment: the combined coefficient of police plus police × public is not significantly different from zero. On the other hand, the combined coefficient of police plus police × riot is significantly different from zero and negative. Thus, Hypothesis 1 cannot be rejected for private decisions. However, publicity appears to eliminate the effect of the riot media, since the combined coefficient police + riot × police + police × public + riot × police × public is not significantly different from 0.

group, then the difference between “riot blame” and “neutral blame” will be greater than between “riot no-blame” and “neutral no-blame,” in either the private or the public treatment. Although the direction of the effect is right (0.89–0.30 > 0.33–0.14 in the private treatment; –0.17–(-0.51) > 0.25–0.13 in the public treatment), it is not significant. Similar results (not shown) were obtained for regressions on individual giving decisions. Thus, the weak non-parametric results are not supported in a regression framework: we cannot reject the null hypothesis that the riot media treatment had no extra impact on individuals who blamed the police.

We now turn to Hypothesis 4. Table 6 shows a simple regression of giving discrimination on treatment dummies, crossed with a dummy for those who blamed police or police leadership. If the riot cue had more effect on this

Table 6: Linear regression of cheap discrimination and blame attributions

Base: Private neutral no-blame	0.14	(0.29)
Private neutral blame	0.30	(0.46)
Private riot no-blame	0.33	(0.49)
Private riot blame	0.89*	(0.40)
Public neutral no-blame	0.13	(0.36)
Public neutral blame	-0.51	(0.39)
Public riot no-blame	0.25	(0.45)
Public riot blame	-0.17	(0.36)

Robust standard errors in parentheses. Results for downward sloping budget sets. A two-sided t-test rejects the hypothesis that in the private treatment the riot media has a different effect on subjects who blame the police and subjects who do not (p-value: 0.24).

* p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01

4.3. Participation in Demonstrations

Laboratory behaviour can be accurately measured, but does it correlate with behaviour in the real world? To address these concerns, our questionnaire included measures of participation in the December 2008 demonstrations. We examine how our “giving discrimination” measure correlates with these self-reports.

Around 23 percent of our subjects participated in the demonstrations. Table 7 shows average donations by treatments and groups. We see very clear and significant discrimination against police among subjects who participated in the demonstrations, but only in the private treatment. The discrimination is stronger in the riot media treatment. In the public treatment, we do not see discrimination. In contrast, the group of subjects who did not take part in the demonstrations do not appear to discriminate against the police, except in the private, riot media treatment.

Table 7: Average giving over budget sets with positive prices by treatment

Participated in demonstrations				
	Neutral/Private	Neutral/Public	Riot/Private	Riot/Public
Non-police	2.98	3.34	4.15	2.12
Police	1.98	3.85	2.46	1.69
Δ	1.00* (0.053)	-0.51 (0.240)	1.69*** (0.007)	0.434 (0.32)
Did not participate in demonstrations				
	Neutral/Private	Neutral/Public	Riot/Private	Riot/Public
Non-police	2.67	3.43	3.02	4.22
Police	2.80	3.52	2.58	4.30
Δ	-0.13 (0.660)	-0.08 (0.780)	0.44* (0.100)	-0.08 (0.830)

t-test for differences of giving between police and non-police groups. p-value in parentheses.

* p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01

Using the step-shaped budget set, we also examined whether subjects who chose the competitive point when the recipient was a police member were more likely to have been involved in the demonstrations. Estimating a linear probability model with participation in demonstrations on the left hand and the preference type on the right hand side of the equation, we find that those with competitive preferences were significantly more likely to have participated in the demonstrations (results available on request).

It could be that subjects misreported their participation in demonstrations so as to justify their behaviour in the experiment. We cannot rule this out completely. However, as a robustness check we examined whether the answers on participation were different between the treatments. If self-justification explained the answers, we would expect that the effect of the treatment on giving would be reflected in the answers. Fortunately, we cannot reject the null hypothesis that the distribution of answers is equal (publicity treatments: χ^2 -test, p-value: 0.141, cueing treatments: χ^2 -test, p-value: 0.797). Therefore, although we cannot rule out some misreporting, we believe it is unlikely that the level of misreporting is correlated with in-lab behaviour.

We expected to find that subjects who participated in the demonstrations gave less to the police in the upward sloping budget sets, but this was not the case. So, although self-reported participation in the riots was linked to laboratory behaviour, we could not replicate the kind of behaviour that has material costs and risks, such as participation in political protest. Further work with a more selected group of subjects – for example violent protesters – might address this issue. Also, we cannot say whether causality runs from protest involvement to less giving, or vice versa, only that the two behaviours were correlated.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

Many case studies of conflict propose that outgroup hatred can be whipped up by media and elite rhetoric. In our experiment, subjects exposed to an “inflammatory” newspaper article gave significantly less to police than to others in a dictator game, but only when decisions were private. Hypothesis 1, that exposure to the media would increase discrimination, therefore received qualified support. One

explanation for the effect of media on people’s opinions and actions is the “spiral of silence” hypothesis: subjects care about other people’s opinions in forming their own, and they will infer these opinions from the media. However, in this case, the hypothesis that this will be strongly visible in the public treatment was not supported (Hypothesis 2). In fact, exposure to the media had less effect when decisions were made public. There was also no evidence that the media treatment increased subjects’ expressed blame for the police (Hypothesis 3). Why did the spiral of silence not arise here? In this case, subjects may have already known that the December 2008 events were a widely discussed and contentious topic. If so, media exposure would have had little effect on their expectations of what others thought, and thus little effect on their public behaviour.

Similarly, according to frame alignment theory, messages which are aligned with subjects’ existing beliefs should have more effect on their behaviour. However, when we examined the behaviour of subjects who blamed the police, we found no evidence that they gave less to the police (Hypothesis 4), and only weak evidence that their giving was more affected by the riot media in the private treatment (Hypothesis 5). Frame alignment seems not to have operated here.

This leaves open the question of exactly why media exposure did affect our subjects’ private behaviour towards others, even without affecting their expressed opinions or public behaviour. While we cannot answer this question for certain, one possible hypothesis is that in our experiment the riot article’s frame provided subjects with an internal justification for selfish behaviour towards the police, without changing their expressed attitudes. An analogy can be drawn with research on self-serving choice of norms (Loewenstein et al. 1993, Konow 2000): when multiple norms seem to be applicable to a situation, subjects may choose the norm which benefits them most. Here, the riot article may have allowed subjects to apply a “Lockean claim” or “punishment” norm, justifying lower generosity to police. If this were so, it would be a previously unstudied pathway by which media reports might affect behaviour in conflict situations. For this reason, we believe that existing work examining media effects on opinions ought to be com-

plemented by further experimental research into media effects on political and social behaviour. Future work could test our hypothesis on self-serving norms; experiments could also examine the effects of exposure to media over a longer period than the relatively short timeframe used here.

Laboratory experiments will always face questions of external validity. While we have no panacea for these concerns, we were able to link behaviour in the experiment to self-reported participation in demonstrations. It is possible that subjects lied or misremembered their own actions, but we prefer the simple explanation that there was a genuine correlation with real-world behaviour, especially as reported participation levels did not vary between treatments.

Clearly, our laboratory results cannot explain the causes of the December 2008 riots in Greece. However, we can make inferences about discrimination and its triggers among Greek students. When given an appropriately chosen frame to understand recent events, many students gave less to the police. Students were reluctant to discriminate in the public treatment, perhaps because they feared the disapproval of fellow participants whose political views were unknown. But in the private treatments, anti-police behaviour was

elicited. These findings are still relevant two years later, as the events of December 2008 triggered general social unrest and further violence in the form of new terrorist organizations. In fact, the media themselves have become targets, with the murder of a journalist in July 2010; extremist groups see the media as part of the establishment that causes the general misery of the country (see discussions in Karakousis 2010 and Strittmatter 2010).

Based on our results we can also draw some general conclusions on conflicts between opposing groups in democratic settings. Our results show the power of the media to shape behaviour. In particular, they suggest that, surprisingly, media may affect behaviour more in private than in public. This is interesting, since many important political actions, such as democratic voting, occur in private.

More generally, we believe that experimental methods will become increasingly important in studying the motivations behind political protest, contentious politics, and civil conflict. Both field and laboratory experiments have a role. A key issue will be defining and finding the population of interest. We also hope that our work will generate interest in linking experimental and case-study approaches to these issues. As our experiment shows, the insightful hypotheses provided by qualitative work can be tested experimentally.

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Appendix: The Newspaper Articles

1. Neutral

Skype Comes to Your iPhone

Internet telephony provider “Skype” has announced plans to expand its services to mobile phones such as iPhone and Blackberry, scheduled for May.

Skype has been working for some time to make its services compatible with the most advanced mobile phones in the market. In an attempt to expand its current user base of 400 million people, the company has been offering cheap and occasionally free calls.

Skype manager, Scott Darslang, made no secret of his great expectations for the success of adaptation on the iPhone, which he said was a great piece of technology and very compatible with Skype services. “The most important request from our users is the transfer of our service on the iPhone, and this demand is constantly rising”, commented Darslang in a recent interview.

Even though Skype is best known for its videocall service, the company yet to announce whether this function will be available on the iPhone. “We are very careful when it comes to quality,” explained Darslang, pointing out that they must first make sure that it works perfectly, before incorporating it in the iPhone package.

From *Kathimerini*, March 30, 2009 (http://portal.kathimerini.gr/4dcgi/_w_articles_kath-world_1_30/03/2009_273107)

2. Riot

The Constitution and the Blood

December 2008. Exarchia. A special police agent, called “Rambo” by his colleagues, kills the high school student Alexandros Grigoropoulos; the bullet hits the fifteen-year-old in the chest. The numerous protest voices on television, the internet gave the police to get away with the line of “police self-defence” and “emotional turbulence.” Eyewitnesses confirm that the policeman shot the boy in cold blood following a trivial verbal exchange, and departed immediately with his colleague leaving the boy to die.

Shocked by their brother’s murder, students across the country protested in anger. Fully aware and bitter that their voice will not be heard they left books (Ancient Greek, novels, maths, everything a child reads) and flowers on the “unknown soldier” monument in front of the Greek parliament. Among the books we might find a copy of our constitution with two points underlined: Article 2.1: “Respect and protection of the value of the human being constitute the primary obligations of the State” and Article 5.2 “All persons living within the Greek territory shall enjoy full protection of their life, honour and liberty.” The students have underlined “all persons.” With their blood.

Extract from an article by Pantelis Boukalas in *Kathimerini*, December 9, 2008 (http://news.kathimerini.gr/4dcgi/_w_articles_columns_2_09/12/2008_295314)

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The Eye of the Beholder: Violence as a Social Process

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The Eye of the Beholder: Violence as a Social Process

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A triangular reconstruction of the social dynamics of violence offers a means to bridge the gap between research on the micro- and meso-level dynamics of violent interaction on the one hand, and theories of power and domination on the other. The origins of this approach are found in the phenomenological programme of social science violence research formulated by German sociologists in the 1990s (Sofsky, von Trotha, Nedelmann, and others). Reconsidering their arguments in the framework of social constructivism, this article reconstructs violence as a triangular process evolving between “performer”, “target” and “observer”. Disentangling the dimensions of the somatic and the social shows, however, that these are not the fixed roles of agents, but changeable modes of experiencing violence. Violent interaction uses the suffering body to stage a positional asymmetry, i.e. a distinction between strength and weakness, between above and below, which can be exploited for the production and reproduction of social order.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, violence research in Germany experienced a renewal, against the background of a rising number of violent conflicts in the post-Cold War world and an ongoing debate about organised violence in Nazi Germany. Two approaches became particularly significant in the social sciences.¹ One was the so-called “Berlin School”, which formed around the works of the Berlin-based anthropologist Georg Elwert and his concept of *markets of violence* (Elwert 1997, 1999).² The second approach came to be known as phenomenological violence research and was inspired by the (highly controversial) studies of the sociologist Wolfgang Sofsky (1993, 1996, 1997, 2003).³ At a time when dominant discourses emphasised the barbaric and irrational character of con-

temporary violence,⁴ the Berlin School and phenomenological violence research set out to systematically analyse its functions in processes of social structure formation. They took different approaches: In the framework of the anthropologically inspired Berlin School, violence was conceived as one possible form of human action; starting from this assumption, research investigated the interrelations between violence and other forms of action, as well as between violence and the formation of social structures.⁵ The phenomenological approach, by contrast, started from the observation that social science violence research so far had neglected the phenomenology of violent interaction; therefore, little is yet known about the social dynamics of the violent moment itself.⁶ Against the back-

1 This article and the discussed approaches focus on the social dynamics of violence and the gaps in social science research on the issue.

2 For a broader discussion of the approach including case studies that employ it see Eckert (2004). Elwert's concept of violence was an integral part of his understanding of anthropology as a discipline, coined “Sceptical Social Anthropology” by Thomas Hüskén (2004).

3 The linguistic style of Sofsky's work is particularly striking. In an almost literary approach, Sofsky

composes “thick descriptions” of idealtypical psychological and social dynamics of different forms of violence. Von Trotha later coined the approach “theoretical ethnography” (1997, 24). For a broader discussion of the approach see Trotha (1997).

4 The leading paradigm at the time was the “new wars” theory (Kaldor 1999; Münkler 2002, 2005).

5 In this logic, Elwert's thinking, for example, focussed on the interrelations between violent action and exchange and reconstructed the emergence of a

particular type of social structure, which he called “markets of violence” (Elwert 1997, 1999).

6 It was only towards the end of the 1960s, against the background of a statistical increase in acts of violence in many industrialised countries, that violence entered research agendas (Imbusch 2002, 26). In a recent seminal work the German social scientist Jan Philipp Reemtsma explores the link between violence and the project of modernity, as well as the role of the social scientist within it (2008). See also Trotha (1997, 10–16).

ground of a phenomenologically influenced sociological thinking, scholars argued for a social theory of violence which starts from a reconstruction of the dynamics of violent interaction (Trotha 1997, 9–20).

While the Berlin School became influential for empirical research on organised violence, the debate about a phenomenological renewal of violence research remained limited to German sociology and hardly outlasted the academic careers of its founding figures. The key postulate, to combine the phenomenological analysis of violent confrontations with social theory, was never fulfilled.⁷

This article addresses that gap, seeking to outline a social theory of violence by reconceptualising central arguments of phenomenological violence research in the framework of a particular school of social thought: constructivism. The central question is: *how can social constructivist thinking contribute to bridging the conceptual gap between the dynamics of violence on a micro-level and processes of social structure formation?*

The first section reviews the demands of the phenomenological school of violence research and introduces the etymological distinction between the transitive and intransitive meanings of “violence”. Sections two and three go on to present a theoretical framework for violence research derived from a combination of the phenomenological approach on the one hand and social-constructivist thinking on the other, in which the “observer” plays a key role. I deliberately avoid arguing in the language of any one particular socialconstructivist theory, so as to maintain the general potential of such an approach. Section four outlines some implications of this approach for empirical violence research.

The basic argument is that in a social-constructivist framework violence has to be conceived not as a dyadic, but as a triangular dynamic. The social dynamics of violence do not

evolve simply as a physical confrontation between a “perpetrator” and a “victim”, but constitutively include a third position, namely the “observer”. I distinguish between “performer”, “target” and “observer” as three modes of experiencing violence. In this perspective, violence is defined as a correlation between inflicting and suffering as observed by a third party. This approach analytically disentangles the dimensions of the somatic and the social, and thus permits a differentiated analysis of the interrelation between the two. It will be argued that violent interaction uses the suffering body to stage a positional asymmetry, i.e. a distinction between strength and weakness, above and below, which might be socially exploited for the production or reproduction of social order. According to this triangular concept of violence the social impact of the somatic processes in violent interaction cannot be ascribed to the intensity of the latter; instead, the social consequences of violent interaction depend on the incident being observed and judged by a public. It will be shown that this perspective on violence permits us to bridge the gap between research on the micro- and meso-level dynamics of violent interaction on one hand, and theories of power, domination and the formation of social order on the other.

1. *Violentia* and *Potestas*: Violence in Interaction and Society

In an article published in 1997, the sociologist Birgitta Nedelmann discusses the state of the art of violence research and summarises the challenges for consolidating a phenomenologically inspired research agenda. According to her, “new violence research” should develop a conceptual framework which allows the integration of classical sociological theories of social order and domination; it sociologically conceptualises the injuring of bodies and the experience of pain; and, finally, it analyses the subjectively intended meaning (in the Weberian sense) of violent action (Nedelmann 1997, 72–80).

The ambition of the phenomenological research programme was hence not simply to reconstruct violent inter-

7 A major argument against such an approach was recently formulated by Slavoj Žižek, who argues that the “overpowering horror” of violent acts and the resulting empathy with the victim prevent us

from thinking and from developing “dispassionate” scientific concepts (Žižek 2009, 3). A counter-argument can be formulated in terms of hermeneutic thinking, which emphasises that the researcher and

his or her emotions are always involved in social science research; in this regard, violence might be different in degree, but not in kind.

actions on a micro-level (as a reading of Sofsky's works especially might suggest), but to bridge the gap between such micro-level analyses and processes of social structure formation at large. In a broader sense, the phenomenological research programme demanded an exploration of the interrelations between (a particular form of) interaction on the one hand, and the (re-)production of broader social structures on the other. Rephrasing the problem this way draws attention to the correspondence between the phenomenological agenda of violence research and schools of social thought which consider interactions as being decisive for the formation and reproduction of social structures.

The constitutive interdependency between interactions and social structures is present in all socialconstructivist theories. It echoes in post-structuralist approaches such as Pierre Bourdieu's theory of *habitus* and field (Bourdieu 1989) and Michel Foucault's discourse theory (Foucault 1977), but also in Niklas Luhmann's social systems theory (Luhmann 1984, 1995) or Anthony Giddens's theory of structuration (Giddens 1984); it is particularly pronounced in Symbolic Interactionism (Blumer 1977). So far, however, the possible insights to be drawn from a combination of social constructivist theory on the one hand, and a phenomenological approach to violence research on the other have not been systematically explored.

In the case of violence, this interdependency between interaction and broader social structures seems to be reflected in the very etymology of the notion, as over the course of linguistic history the meaning oscillates between a transitive and an intransitive pole (Bowman 2001). While in its transitive sense "violence" denotes a relationship between a subject and an object in interaction, it indicates a property or potential of a subject in its intransitive meaning and thus refers to structural aspects. In both the Latin and the Anglo-Saxon languages, the transitive meaning prevailed: "[t]he exercise of physical force so as to inflict injury on, or cause damage to, persons or property; action or conduct

characterised by this; treatment or usage tending to cause bodily injury or forcibly interfering with personal freedom" (OED, "violence"). This understanding of violence evokes an image of transgression, of an integral space that is broken in a situation of interaction.⁸

Historically this transitive meaning was preceded by an intransitive one. The Latin *violentia* from which "violence" is derived initially signified "vehemence", "force" or "impetuosity".⁹ Instead of referring to a relationship between a subject and an object, the notion of violence originally indicated a property or an enduring potential of a subject only (Bowman 2001, 25–26). Eventually this ambiguity was solved by bifurcation: *violentia* was reduced to the transitive meaning with which it is associated today, while the intransitive aspects were referred to the notion of *potestas*. Latin and Anglo-Saxon languages reflect this linguistic distinction between "power"/*pouvoir/poder* and "violence"/*violence/violencia*. The German expression *Gewalt*, by contrast, still echoes the ambiguity of the Latin root (Imbusch 2002, 28–29).¹⁰

Efforts to conceive a social theory of "violence" can benefit from this linguistic distinction between transitive and intransitive meaning. From the transitive usage of the word we can infer, firstly, that violence is a social process; the notion refers to a relationship involving a subject and an object. Secondly, the transitive usage suggests that the processes in question typically unfold in interactions and are thus related to the realm of the somatic, to the bodily aspects of human existence. The originally intransitive meaning of the word, however, reminds us, thirdly, that focussing on the violent act alone reduces our understanding of the phenomenon. Like a stone falling into water to create spreading ripples that may change the lines in the sand on a distant shore, violence transcends the moment of inflicted harm and comes to be inscribed into the structure of society itself. In section two I move on to investigate the transitive dimension of violence, reconstructing the social dynamics of violent interaction. Section three then ex-

8 The obvious exception is auto-aggressive behaviour, such as suicide or self-mutilation, in which the subject and object of action coincide.

9 The Latin root of *violentia* is *vis*, which means force or bodily strength.

10 The intransitive dimension of the notion is still present in expressions such as *Staatsgewalt* ("state power").

plores the intransitive dimension, examining how the somatic processes which evolve in violent interaction are related to processes of social structure formation and dynamics of power and domination.

2. The Violent Moment: Three Modes of Experiencing Violent Interaction

More than other forms of human action, violence has the potential to produce transformations of the social, because violence is characterised by a juxtaposition of social processes and the somatic aspects of human existence. Violence is a technique of making the body a site of social bargaining processes.

Violent action targets the body upon which injuries are inflicted with pain being the result. Pain is always an existential human experience that fundamentally shakes self-awareness. It deprives the individual of the familiar instrumentality of the body and confronts him or her with their bodily existence.¹¹ Moreover, it creates isolation since the experience of pain cannot be shared and can hardly be communicated. Prolonged states of pain therefore erode the sense of time and open up the gates to despair (Trotha 1997, 28–29).

Experiencing pain inflicted by violent action is, however, particular. The target shares the loneliness, isolation and despair of all other pain sufferers. But one who suffers in violent interaction does so conscious that the pain is not the result of fate or hazard (as in the case of accidents or illnesses), but has been brought about intentionally by someone else. It is injury and pain inflicted deliberately to enforce the will of one against the resistance of the other (Trotha 1997, 31).

Violence can be described as a social process whose function is to negotiate and reconfigure a relationship. Yet this process does not follow a random path; instead it is shaped

by the structural principle of *asymmetry*, by the attempt to create a positional difference between the actors involved (Baecker 1996, 99–100; Simon 2000, 109). Violence can therefore be described as a social technique that uses the body to mark and/or (re-)produce an asymmetric constellation in which the inferior position is associated with the experience of suffering, while the superior position is associated with the experience of inflicting suffering. Initially this difference is but situational; the positions of the one who suffers and the one who inflicts suffering can – in principle – be reversed. Yet, depending on the context and dynamics of the situation, the asymmetry might be perpetuated. In this case, violence produces subjects with complementary identities, which are commonly denoted as “perpetrator” and “victim”.¹²

These two notions are, however, linked to strong value judgments and emotions. Moreover, they evoke the idea of “perpetrator” and “victim” being definite roles of agents. As we will see in the following, contradicting a widespread assumption, the contingency or reversibility of positions is crucial for understanding the social dynamics of violence. Instead of speaking about “victims” and “perpetrators”, the notions of “target” and “performer” will be used here to refer to the two different positions. Rather than roles of agents, “target” and “performer” should be understood as different modes of experiencing violence.¹³ The “target” is associated with the damage to the body, with states of suffering or passivity, with feelings of fear and pain, with inferiority; it is where the existential character of violence derives from. The position of the “performer”, by contrast, is associated with intentional action aiming at damaging another body, with superiority and the exercise of power. Although these modes might, as mentioned above, lead to the formation of a particular subjectivity (as “victim” or a “perpetrator”, for example) and although the formation of such subjectivities might frequently be a principle moti-

11 As Trutz von Trotha remarks in this regard, intense pain can change the experience of positionality in the sense described by Helmuth Plessner. The latter argues that the particularity of being human – in contrast to animals or plants – consists in being able to extend existence beyond the borders of the body, establishing artificial borders and embodying

them (Plessner 1928). According to this argument, in experiencing pain man (temporarily) drops out of the species, approaching states of animal or even plant existence (Trotha 1997, 29).

12 In the following, quotation marks are used to indicate the non-ontological character of these expressions.

13 A similar idea can be found in Ivana Maček’s anthropological work on the war in Sarajevo (2001). She distinguishes between three “modes” of experiencing war, the “civilian-”, the “soldier-” and the “deserter mode”, understood as three ethically different ways of perceiving the war which introduce different choices of action and different legitimising narratives (Maček, 2001, 218–219).

vation for initiating violent interaction, such a development is far from preordained: not every brawl or battle produces the dyad of victimisation and empowerment.

At first glance, the complementary modes of experience, “performer” and “target”, seem to comprise what is essential for analysing violence. They permit us to reconstruct the relational dynamics of the situation as well as its somatic aspects. Yet, considering violence as a social process, we have to move beyond the confrontation of “performer” and “target” in the violent act to include a third mode of experience: that of the “observer”. It is only by bringing in this last perspective that the social dynamics of violence can be truly understood. Violence is not simply physical harm intentionally inflicted by one person on another. It is not limited to the asymmetrical dyad of “performer” and a “target”. As a social process it evolves in a triangle where it is not only exercised and suffered, but also observed and judged.

The idea of violence evolving in a triangular constellation appears in various approaches. Communicative aspects of violence, with an emphasis on the role of the public, are most prominently treated in the research on terrorism (Schmid and Graaf 1982; Waldmann 2005). With regard to armed group behaviour in civil wars Stathis Kalyvas argues in the same direction, pointing out that the main function of selective violence is to enforce “compliance” to armed rule among the (observing) population (Kalyvas 2006). Under the expression “bystander”, the role of the “observer” has been intensively discussed in genocide research (Vetlesen 2000; Barnett 1999; Grünfeld and Huijboom 2007; Hilberg 1995).¹⁴

The major difference between these works and the proposition advanced in this article can be best understood by examining the function of the “observer” in the respective concepts. The above-mentioned approaches conceive the

“observer” as being crucial for the emergence and dynamics of particular forms of violence (such as terrorism, civil war or genocide); in stark contrast, the triangular concept proposed here introduces the observer as a *constitutive* third element in the social dynamics of violence.¹⁵

Another important difference is that, as pointed out above, “performer”, “target” and “observer” are not conceived as definite roles of particular agents; instead they are modes of experiencing violence, which, in a given violent interaction, might oscillate between different agents.

Introducing the “observer” as a third constitutive element in a social theory of violence has a major implication: it permits us to analytically disentangle the dimensions of the somatic and the social. While experiencing violence as a “performer” or as a “target” means to be caught in the physical and emotional dynamics of a violent confrontation, the “observer” mode is in no sense predetermined. The “observer” breaks the hermetic circle of injuring and suffering, and is associated instead with consideration and decision. In this mode violence transcends the immediate confrontation and enters the realms of judgement, debate and memory. It is here that the shift from the transitive meaning of the notion as *violentia* to its intransitive meaning as *potestas* takes place.

The most important consequence of this approach for empirical research is that “violence” is no longer conceived as an *empirically evident* phenomenon. At first glance, of course, the commonly assumed obviousness of violence stands to reason because of the somatic character of the processes in question: as violence deals with physical bodies, it is apparent to the senses and should easily be perceived. Taking a closer look, however, this commonsensical understanding is all but unambiguous: everyday experience is full of controversies about whether a certain

14 With regard to the individual, the “bystander effect” has been intensely researched in social psychology. Also known as the Genovese syndrome, the notion refers to the individual’s failure to help in an emergency situation. The latter, however, include accidents and similar situations as well as violent interactions (Latane and Darley 1970).

15 In his study on trust and violence in modernity, the literary scholar and social scientist Jan Philipp Reemtsma also argues for integrating the third party as a constitutive element in concepts of violence (Reemtsma 2008, 467–82). As a general idea, this thought can already be found in Riches’s *Anthropology of Violence* (1986).

interaction, for example spanking a child, barging into a crowded train, or forcing a kiss on a woman just met in a bar should or should not be considered violence. In spite of the obviousness of the somatic processes is question, the use of the notion of “violence” to describe them is all but undisputed.

The theoretical reconstruction of violence as a triangular rather than dyadic dynamic systematises this contingency, emphasising that the concept of “violence” refers to a particular mode of observation more than to a certain type of interaction. It can be defined as a correlation between inflicting and suffering as observed by a third. Although this attribution might be more compelling in some instances than in others, it is contingent. What is considered violence depends on social norms and individual values, on criteria, thus, which lie in the eye of the beholder.

Among the three modes of experiencing violence, the “observer” is the most inclusive. The reason for this is that *post factum* all agents involved (as far as they are still alive) become “observers” of the violent interaction as they remember, reflect, judge, decide. Violent action tends to generate its own public; even if not witnessed in the moment of its occurrence, the spoiled body itself comes to testify to violent action until long after the fact. The “observer” mode is, hence, not limited to witnesses of violence *in actu*. Instead, it relates to a variety of publics created – intentionally or not – by the violent act: the paralysed and frightened eyewitness, the “performer’s” cheering, goading peer group, global media stridently condemning the deeds, the researcher analysing the situation are all possible manifestations of the “observer” mode of experiencing violence.

Considering the social dynamics of violence, the “observer” mode is, finally, the most striking indicator of the relational fragility of violent situations. The commonsensical understanding of violence, which mistakes “performer”, “target” and “observer” for definite roles of particular agents neglects that violent interaction frequently takes place in unsettled situations, in which positions can be reversed quickly: one moment’s “observer” might be next moment’s “performer”; today’s “performer” might be to-

morrow’s “target”, and so forth. Usually, the agents’ knowledge about this interchangeability of positions is an important factor in the dynamics of violent interactions: where the fear of victimisation is driving the actions of “performers” and “observers”, violent situations quickly gain momentum.

In this sense the “observer” might become decisive for the evolution of a violent interaction. Her or his relative position to the “performer” and the “target” is crucial in defining the potential and limitations of a violent situation: an “observer” sympathising with the “target” potentially limits the options of the “performer”, whereas a timid or even applauding “observer” affirms and encourages the violent assault.

The “observer” is hence crucial when it comes to the *social* effects of the somatic processes evolving in violent interaction; or, to use the distinction introduced above, he or she is pivotal for understanding how the transitive and the intransitive dynamics of “violence” are intertwined. Having explored the former in this section, we will now turn to the latter and discuss the role of violence in the formation of social structures.

3. Beyond the Violent Moment: Violence and the (Re-)Production of Social Order

According to the research agenda proposed by Nedelmann (see section one), so-called new violence research should not be limited to the theoretical reconstruction of violent interactions. Instead it should attempt to combine these considerations with theories of power, domination and the formation of social structures at large (Nedelmann 1997, 72–80). This demand was motivated by the prominent role of the notion of violence in classical theories of domination: in Max Weber’s thinking, violence, or rather the credibly institutionalised threat thereof, is conceived as the basis of domination. This very idea is already to be found in the political philosophy of state formation of Jean Bodin (1606) and Thomas Hobbes (1992 [1651]). In this perspective, social order is dependent upon the successful monopolisation of the potential for violent action (Weber 1978, 54). These works thus focus on what had once been the intransitive dimension of the notion of violence.

The triangular reconstruction of violence proposed in the preceding section permits us to reframe the propositions of a classical Weberian sociology of domination, linking the intransitive meaning of violence as *potestas* to the interaction processes associated with the transitive meaning as *violentia*. A first step in this direction was undertaken by the German sociologist Heinrich Popitz who was a major inspiration to the violence research renewal movement in the 1990s. In *Phänomene der Macht* (Phenomena of Power) (1986) Popitz sets out to refine the role of violence in a Weberian sociology.¹⁶ Introducing the concept of action into Weber's theoretical framework he proposes conceiving violence as the most direct form of power, as power in action, or, as he put it, "pure action power" (*schiere Aktionsmacht*) (Popitz 1986, 68, my translation), which is rooted in the general vulnerability (*Verletzungsoffenheit*) of man (69). On the basis of this discussion of phenomenological aspects of violent interaction, Popitz insists on the systematic role of violence in the formation of broader social structures: "Violence in general and the violence of killing in particular is not just an accident of social relations, not a side issue of social order and not just an extreme case or *ultima ratio* (about which not much fuss can be made). Violence is actually ... an ever-present option of human action. No comprehensive social order is based on the assumption of non-violence. The power to kill and the powerlessness of the victim are latent or manifest determinants of the structure of social coexistence" (translated from Popitz 1986, 83).

Unlike Weber, whose writings discuss the monopolisation of violence in terms of a technical problem arising out of the process of state formation, Popitz's phenomenological work traces how the natural presence of the potential of violence, combined with universal knowledge about the consequences of violence acted out, has an ordering effect on society. He links the structures of society to the dynamics of violent interaction and, in doing so, calls attention to the fact that violence, in the guise of contingency, is also inscribed into social structures characterised by the *absence* of violent interaction. The German sociologist Dirk Baecker went on to demonstrate that the latter holds true not only for processes

of socialisation at large in the sense proposed by Bodin, Hobbes or Weber, but also on the meso- and micro-level (Baecker 1996, 94–95). The triangular concept of violence permits us to theoretically refine this relationship between violent interaction and the formation of social structures.

As elaborated above, violent interaction follows the structural principle of asymmetry, attempting to stage a positional difference by means of the suffering body, a contrast between strength and weakness, above and below, superiority and inferiority. If the perception of this positional difference can be perpetuated, the latter might be used for the establishment or reproduction of a social order based on domination and subordination. In this case, violent interaction produces particular asymmetric and complementary subjectivities on the side of the "performer" as well as the "target".

In this regard, violence is functionally equivalent to other social techniques of asymmetrisation, such as defamation or derision. The latter, too, stage and/or (re-)produce an asymmetry that is exploitable in a relationship of power. The particularity of violence, however, stems from the fact that the asymmetry is produced by threatening not only the social or mental integrity of the agent, but also the physical conditions of her or his existence. Given the general vulnerability of the human body, the performance of violence needs neither sophisticated equipment nor specialised knowledge to be effective. Violence is, in the words of von Trotha, an "everybody's resource" (translated from 1997, 25).

Moreover, the somatic character of violence reduces the ambiguity inherent in any communication. Violence is apparent to the senses; and as the memory of violent acts is embodied in wounds or scars, the sensuousness of violence transcends the moment of violent action itself. Violence is easily accessible, easily perceivable and easily understood (Riches 1986, 11) and therefore reduces the contingencies inherent in any communication. Baecker speaks of violence as "deoptionalised communication", which forces particular attributions and dramatically narrows the range of possible ensuing communications (1996, 101).

16 Unfortunately, the book has not been translated into English.

More than other social techniques of asymmetrisation, violence therefore bears the potential to perpetuate the perception of a positional difference produced in a confrontation and turn it into the social basis of domination building on asymmetric and complementary subjectivities. As any social order is based on the production and reproduction of differences, violence is, hence, a potent instrument for establishing social order and transforming the social environment.

The same argument could, of course, be conceived in the framework of a dyadic theory of violence. Yet, the triangular reconstruction of violence proposed here implies one major dissimilarity. Introducing the “observer” as a third constitutive element draws attention to the contingency of the processes in question: in a dyadic concept the social dynamics of violence are conceived as unfolding only in the confrontation between a “target” and a “performer”. The problem of such a representation is that it risks confusing the social and somatic dimensions of the processes in question. The dyadic reconstruction of violence suggests a correspondence between the somatic and the social in the sense that the social impact of “violence” is assumed to be a function of the intensity of the somatic occurrences. Yet the everyday debates mentioned above, which question the adequacy of the notion of “violence” for spanking a child or forcing a kiss, already illustrate the shakiness of this assumption.

The triangular reconstruction, by contrast, implies that the social effects of the dyadic, somatic events do depend not on the severity of the latter, but on the perception of the processes in question by a third party. It suggests that, socially, the question of whether or not certain occurrences are “violence” can never be decided by any objective criteria, but depend on the perspective, i.e. the norms, values and objectives, of an “observer”.

One major implication of this approach is that it permits us to conceive not only the presence of violence as observed by a third party, but also the absence of this observation. Rigorously conceiving violence as socially constructed implies that different “observers” might judge the same proceedings differently. And it suggests that the formation of such an observation is open to manipulation. The ap-

proach therefore draws attention to processes and techniques which either deliberately stage “violence” or attempt to invisibilise it.

Contradicting the commonsensical assumption that violence is a process that is by definition initiated by a “performer” causing injury, the triangular reconstruction implies that “violence” might also be enacted on the side of the “target” by *staging suffering* – independently of the actual intensity of the somatic events in question and even independently of the actual intention of the perceived “performer”. As long as the somatic intensity is low, the social dynamics of “violence” depend chiefly on the victims propensity to display suffering – or not to. In this sense, even a kiss might come to be observed as violence.

As pointed out above, the triangular reconstruction draws attention not only to processes of staging violence, but also those of invisibilising it. What might appear as violence to a critical observer can be discursively reframed so as to conceal the coercive character of the measures in question: “torture” or “enhanced interrogation methods”, “forced sterilisation” or “prevention of hereditary disease in offspring”, “massacre” or “mass execution”, “genital mutilation” or “ritual circumcision” – the list of such alternative descriptions of identical occurrences could be extended *ad lib*. In each of the conceptual pairs, the first description spotlights the coercive character of the action of the performer and the suffering of the target intentionally provoked by it; the second variant, by contrast, clouds these aspects by emphasising the legitimacy of the action deriving from its role in the production or reproduction of social order.

Techniques and processes of socially staging and invisibilising “violence” ultimately point to the problem of legitimacy that violence can never escape. Many scholars have pointed out that violent interaction is always a contestable social act, which has to be justified (Riches 1986, 5–8; Schlichte 2009, 85–115). Not by chance, Weber defines the state as the possessor of the *monopoly of legitimate violence* on a given territory (1978, 54).

In a triangular reconstruction of violence, the interrelation between violence and legitimacy can be further refined:

rigorously conceiving violence as socially constructed implies that different “observers” might judge the same proceedings differently, which ultimately draws attention to the manipulability of the observation. With regard to the problem of legitimacy, this manipulability can be exploited by the “performer” as well as by the “target”: to prevent delegitimation “performers” can not only adjust violent action according to the norms and values of relevant “observers”, but also attempt to discursively reframe actions which risk being observed as “violence”. Conversely, delegitimation can be introduced on the side of the “target” by performing suffering and thus staging violence.

These dynamics of legitimisation and delegitimation through violence are particularly important when it comes to the establishment and reproduction of a monopoly of power. As pointed out by theories of state-building from Hobbes to Tilly, violence plays a central role in the establishment of social order on the large scale (Hobbes 1992; Tilly 1975; 1985). In the medium and long term this central role of violence in the emergence and reproduction of social order risks jeopardising the legitimacy of the latter. Therefore, the monopolisation of the potential for violence is systematically combined with a reinterpretation of the coercive actions of the monopolising power. Yet, as the coercive action persists, the discursive manipulation remains open to contestation: delegitimising the powerful by drawing attention to the suffering caused by coercive actions, by speaking of “torture” and “massacres” instead of “enhanced interrogation methods” and “mass executions” is therefore one of the most threatening instruments in the hands of the less powerful, especially in contexts that cultivate the ideal of non-violence.

4. Implications for Empirical Research

The key implication of the triangular concept of violence for empirical research is the shift from conceiving “violence” as being *empirically evident* to conceiving it as being *socially constructed*. Accordingly, empirical research has to investigate how this construction takes place. In the triangular framework proposed here, the interdependencies between the somatic dynamics on the one hand, and their social effects on the other, will be crucial. Attention, hence, turns not only to processes in which

asymmetries are staged on a somatic level, but simultaneously to the question of how these processes are observed, described and judged by an idealtypical third party. Accordingly, phenomena of violence can be differentiated in terms of two characteristics: (a) the somatic intensity of the processes in question, i.e. the intensity of the bodily transgression, which might be high or low; and (b) the social observability thereof, which, again, might be high or low. The somatic intensity of the events is crucial in determining the scope of possible attributions and interpretations; while in cases of low somatic intensity it might be possible to deny (or stage) the intention to inflict suffering, cases of high somatic intensity narrow the range of possible interpretations. The somatic intensity also affects the agents’ capacity to choose action. The social observability of the same events, by contrast, is critical in determining in how far a particular occurrence can become a subject of debate at all; therefore, the social impact of any struggle over interpretation will be particularly pronounced in cases where the events in question can be widely observed. Table 1 summarises the possible combined expressions of the two characteristics.

Table 1: Social observability and somatic intensity

	Low social observability	High social observability
Low somatic intensity	1	3
High somatic intensity	2	4

In each of the four idealtypical cases the social production (or obscuration) of violence takes place under different conditions and the options of the “performer”, the “target” and the “observer” vary accordingly. In empirical research, the distinction between the somatic and the social dimension might, hence, serve to differentiate dynamics of violence as well as to analyse processes of transition from one form to another.

To further develop this approach, research in two directions is needed. First, the figure of the “observer” has to be conceptually refined, in particular in view of its possible empirical manifestations and the related social functions. Empirical and theoretical work is necessary to fulfil this goal. Empirical research can draw on insights from those

areas of violence research where the “observer” or the “public” already plays a central role, such as genocide or terrorism research (cf. section two). Starting from there, the social “production” of “targets” and “perpetrators”, of “victims” and “performers” should be explored in a general perspective, investigating diverse settings of organised and unorganised violence. Theoretically, the differentiated elaboration of the “observer” can benefit from a number of recent pieces of research on the conceptual figure of the “third party”.¹⁷

Based on this refinement of the third party, a second challenge for further developing this approach can be met: to explore and to conceptualise the interplay between the *social* and the *somatic* in the social production of violence. A central question in this regard is in how far particular somatic dynamics limit the possible range of communicative responses and interpretations and how these limitations are dealt with socially.

5. Conclusion

Drawing on the phenomenological critique of violence research, to develop a theoretical concept of violence in the framework of social-constructivism, violence can be conceived as a triangular dynamic evolving between a “performer”, a “target” and an “observer”. The latter is pivotal in establishing meaning and judgement, in introducing the political dimension of violent interaction. This analytical perspective permits us to integrate the instrumental and the expressive dimension of violent interactions; it allows us to conceive violence as an act as well as an image, or, to put it differently, as an instrument efficiently serving practical as well as symbolic needs (Riches 1986, 11, 13). Violent action is thus not simply a means to pursue particular ends, but first and foremost a way to create, stage or change asymmetric relationships (cf. Simon 2000, 108–109).

Including the “observer” as a third constitutive element in a social theory of violence permits us to conceptually bridge the gap between analyses of violent interaction on the one hand, and discussions of violence in the sense of *potestas* on the other. This theoretical framework allows to systematically link research on the empirical dynamics of violent interaction with theories of social order, power and domination.

¹⁷ See for example Boltanski (1999), Fischer (2006), Werron (2010). The sociologist Gesa Lindemann even argues for a triangular conception of “sociality” in general (2006).

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Women Without Arms: Gendered Fighter Constructions in Eritrea and Southern Sudan

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Women Without Arms: Gendered Fighter Constructions in Eritrea and Southern Sudan

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An analysis of gendered fighter constructions in the liberation movements in Eritrea and southern Sudan (EPLF and SPLA/M), examining the question of female access to the sphere of masculine fighter constructs and the relevance of this for influence in peacetime affairs. Empirical research in both countries, in particular interviews with participants, reveals that what keeps women out of the sphere of legitimized violence is not some “inherent peacefulness,” but the exclusivist construct of the masculine fighter, which is supported by society. This makes it hard for women to participate in war, and especially to gain full fighter status. An intrinsic link is found between fighter status and access to power in post-conflict state-building from which women, being unable to gain full fighter status, are largely excluded.

“There are no men or women in the field, they are all comrades. And I tell you this, we never allowed them to put us down as women.” (Rozina, former EPLF fighter, Asmara, Eritrea, March 1997)¹

The conflicts in Sudan and Eritrea share two distinctive features: they were the two longest conflicts on the African continent and both resulted in the transformation of a guerilla army into the government of a new state. The Eritrean People’s Liberation Movement (EPLF) started in the late 1960s and won independence by a shared military victory over the regime of Mengistu Haile Mariam in Ethiopia in 1991;² the Sudan People’s Liberation Army/Movement (SPLA/M) signed a comprehensive peace agreement with Khartoum in 2005 and South Sudan gained independence through a referendum in 2011.³ Although operating in close geographical proximity, in the same era, and with a similar Marxist liberation rhetoric, their political understanding and social objectives were quite distinct. While the EPLF pursued an openly revolutionary strategy of political and social transformation, the SPLA was principally a

fighting body whose political change agenda was restricted to overcoming the repression of the central regime in Khartoum (Akol 2009, 268). This decisive difference makes a comparative analysis of the nexus between fighter and citizen constructs particularly interesting. Other factors, such as style of leadership, international connections, and donor dependency, also influence the development of citizenship in post-conflict situations.

Whilst the majority of media and human rights reports on women in conflict depict women as victims of violence by armed groups (Human Rights Watch 2009; APPG and SFHR 2008) and policy papers count on women as actors for peace (Interpeace 2008), the focus of this paper is the construction of fighter images, in particular of women protagonists. My assumption is that armed group and society alike construct gendered fighter images.

1. Review of Literature and Central Positions

There is a distinct desideratum of academic research in the field of female fighters and gendered fighter images in the

¹ Interviewees are anonymized for their protection.

² Mengistu, whose regime (1974–1991) originated in and followed the Derg (Red Terror) (1974–1987),

was ousted by an alliance of guerilla movements, including the EPLF, the TPLF, and other groups that constitute the EPRDF government in Ethiopia.

³ Southern Sudan designates the southern territory of Sudan before the referendum while South Sudan refers to the new state.

Horn of Africa. The history of the EPLF is documented by the movement itself,⁴ and has been studied academically by often partisan researchers (Cliffe 1988; Connell 1993; Pate-man 1998; Wilson, 1991). The history of the war in south-ern Sudan is still understudied (Garang and Khalid 1992; Johnson 2003) despite a growing body of literature about the SPLM/A (Young 2005; Metelits 2004, 2010; Mompilly 2011; Rands 2010; Rolandsen 2005, 2007). Since the sig-ning of the CPA, various SPLA/M members and fighters have published autobiographies and talked in detail about military operations (Akol 2009; Arop 2006; Igga 2008), but there has been limited reflection on the political objectives and strategies of the movement (Nyaba 1997).⁵ Hardly any study reflects beyond the bounds of the movement or takes the gender and social aspects of the war into consideration (Allan and Schomerus 2010; James 2010).

1.1. Women as Victims – Men as Perpetrators

While there is a vast body of literature on women in war (Bennett, Bexel, and Warnack 1995; Cooke and Woollacott 1993; Lorentzen and Turpin 1998; Turshen and Twagira-mariya 1998; Matthews 2003) the feminist discourse on gendered fighter images is often restricted to Western ar-mies and the hyper-masculinity of the male soldier (D’Amico 1996; Enloe 1983; Goldstein 2001; Stiehm 1996).⁶ There is a focus on gender in international relations (Enloe 1990; Sylvester 2010; Tickner 1992) and in violence against women in conflict (Alison 2007; Moser and Clark 2001; Nordstrom 1997; Nordstrom and Robben 1995; Ni-coli’c-Ristanovi’c 1996; Turshen 1998). The supposed di-chotomy of violent masculinity and peaceful femininity is prominently highlighted (Elshtain and Tobias 1990). Where women are described as violent warriors the refer-ence is mainly historical (Alpern 1998; Ehrenreich 1997; Hacker 1997) or the existence of violent women is dis-cussed as rule-bending, a case study of an extreme ex-

ception (Mackenzie 2011; Sjoberg and Gentry 2007).

Women who reject the feminine stereotype of life-giving and caring to encroach into the male sphere of life-taking are considered wrong, unnatural, or deviant (Coulter, Pers-son, and Utas 2008, 10).

1.2. Citizenship and Gendered States

The warrior-citizen nexus is a foundational theorem in ancient Greek citizenship ideals (Plato’s Republic). It was taken up again in feminist international relations studies, with a focus on hegemonic masculinity as the marker for power in international relations (Sylvester 2010; Tickner 1992). Post colonial studies and “third world feminists” (Gilroy 1993; Hall 1995; Mohanty, Russo, and Torres 1991; Okpewho, Boyce, and Mazrui 1999) have established a foundation of literature on the exclusiveness of identity constructs in societies with a hegemonic dominant subject that is relevant to understanding mechanisms of exclusion and relevant to the present study. Although the main aspect of these discourses is citizenship built on exclusion as an essential moment creating dichotomized “us/them” groups in nation-building processes, there is a growing body of academic literature on the masculinity of the state and the exclusion of women (Hooper 2001; Joseph, 2000). Yet the trope of the fighter as highly gendered construction of per-formative images of masculinity, accessible to men but with restrictions for women and the idealized fighter as the imagined core identity blueprint for post-conflict citizen-ship are still lacking in academic and policy discourse.

There is also an increasing body of literature on the role of women in state-building, intervention, and DDR (demo-bilization, demilitarization, and reintegration) (Brethfeld 2010). Yet again the lack of correspondence to feminist studies and research on gender in International Relations and state-building is quite apparent.

4 EPLF publications such as the EPLF journal *The Eritrean Struggle* and grey material collected in As-mara 1997 and archived by the author.

5 Two SPLM publications discuss aspects of the movement’s political agenda of the SPLM: *A major Watershed: SPLM/A First National Convention Resol-utions, Appointments and Protocol* (12 April 1994) and John Garang de Mabior, *This Convention is Sov-ereign: Opening and closing speeches by Dr. John Gar-*

ang de Mabior to the First National Covention, 2 April 1994 (SPLM secretariat of Information and Culture).

6 This constitutes the dilemma of “western theories on African realities.” Using a broad range of liter-ature, from local fighters’ autobiographies to West-ern and non-Western feminist theory, post-colonial theory, and a substantial body of work on women in war, I therefore approach the question from various

angles and multiple disciplines. The intention is not to write an authentic analysis of women in liber-ation movements from an insider perspective. Posi-tioning myself as an author influenced by “Western theory” and deconstructing grand narratives by questioning them through analysis and empirical findings thereby creates a non-linear interpretation of the issue.

2. Background and Methodology

The construction of fighters, warriors, and comrades plays an important role in every aspect of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration efforts, security sector reform, and, beyond that, state-building and nation-founding myths (Coulter, Persson, and Utas 2008, 7). Yet the construct of a strong and heroic persona bound by a code of honor and possessing virtues of protection relies on an invisible and silent other: the civilian. Without civilian acceptance and resonance a fighter construct cannot prevail. In order to understand how fighter constructs work – for fighters and for civilians – we need to examine the legitimizing forces: the civilians, and society and culture at large, that applaud and encourage the heroic fighter image. On the basis of my own empirical research in southern Sudan and Eritrea I would argue that there is an intrinsic link between the fighter image and access to power in post-conflict state-building.

In the transformative phase from conflict to post-conflict the status of fighters is a telling indicator of post-conflict social development and of acceptance of or resistance to the use of violence as an ordering factor, instrument of power, or general disciplinary mechanism. The absence of women in decision-making positions in South Sudan and the backlash against female fighters in Eritrea both reflect gender fighter images with consequence for post-conflict power.

In southern Sudan women were largely excluded from fighter status in the SPLA, which denied them access to negotiation and decision-making processes. Specifically, their exclusion from the negotiations for the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) prevented them from shaping the future of South Sudan. While women in Eritrea were formally acknowledged as active fighters and had access to political positions, the increasingly autocratic leadership of President Issayas Aferwerki restricted political decision-making to his inner circle.

One crucial factor for understanding militarized politics in post-conflict states is the link between access to violence and access to power. In the case of southern Sudan and Eritrea the acknowledged experience is that “entrepreneurs of

violence” gain access to power and decision-making, leaving out a vast body of knowledge of civilian decision-making and conflict transformation.

In terms of methodology, I chose to compare two armed groups operating in the Horn of Africa: the Sudan People’s Liberation Army/Movement (SPLM/A 1984–2005) (Arop 2006; Johnson 2003; Nyaba 1997) and the Eritrean People’s Liberation Front (EPLF 1978–1991) (Cliffe 1988; Cliffe and Davidson 1999; Lyons 2006). The regional and temporal proximity of these two case studies allows direct comparison of the political and social agendas of the insurgents and their respective construction of fighter images. Distinct ideological differences regarding gender ideals, political objectives, and social transformation make the comparison even more fruitful. Both insurgencies have ended and are now established and establishing governments in their new countries, allowing us to analyse the consequences of gendered fighter images in post-conflict state-building efforts. While both movements shared similar gendered fighter constructs based on a masculinist ideal of warrior and liberation fighter, they had different policies regarding the acceptance of women as fighters. Women in southern Sudan could join the SPLM and support its armed wing, the SPLA, but were largely denied active combat positions, whereas the EPLF numbered about 40 per cent women across its ranks.

Alongside academic literature, the paper is based on my own empirical research in southern Sudan and Eritrea, which focused on the work women do during war, gendered images of fighters, and the role of female fighters in those two regions (Weber 2007).

The data was collected through semi-structured interviews: in Eritrea with active and retired female fighters; in southern Sudan, the Nuba Mountains, and the Sudanese diaspora with female activists, women in the SPLM/A, commanders, Commander-in-Chief John Garang de Mabior (now deceased), traditional leaders, local communities, and civil society representatives in the diaspora. The main body of empirical data was collected during an extended research trip to southern Sudan and Eritrea between November 1996 and May 1997. Although in the

conflict was still ongoing in southern Sudan, I was able to cover various regions controlled by the SPLA (Bahr el Ghazal, the Nuba Mountains, Upper Nile and Lakes states, Eastern and Western Equatoria). In Eritrea during the period between independence in 1993 and the re-eruption of war with Ethiopia in 1998 I was able to interview recently demobilized female fighters who were not yet reintegrated into society nor re-mobilized for the new conflict. Follow up research was conducted during various human rights assignments undertaken for Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and others.⁷

3. Empirical Results

Image constructions, such as fighters, warriors, or citizens, might be conceptualized as part of a transformative ideal of a guerilla movement.⁸ However, without relational praxis – the day-to-day activity of gender/fighter/citizen – the construct cannot hold.

I subscribe to a constructivist concept assuming that there is no pre-discursive truth. Social roles, such as gender, age, or class, are developed by a dominant discourse of attribution, relational praxis, and performance that maintains and reinforces the role and image. Who dominates the discourse, what performance is encouraged, and what role is positively sanctioned is mainly a question of power in the given society. Roles are not predetermined or unchangeable, but nor are they completely fluid and constantly interchangeable, since hegemonic subjects have an interest in guaranteeing their power. One example for this is the high rate of divorce between male and female fighters in post-war Eritrea, with the men marrying non-fighter women instead.

3.1. Access to Power through Violence

Women were allowed to join both liberation movements, but there were distinct differences in numbers and tasks. Ideologically, both movements had similar influences, yet their political infrastructures were distinctively different.

Eritrea is small in comparison with southern Sudan, and the SPLA lived, trained, and organized attacks from safe refuges in Ethiopia. Direct encounters with villagers and urban infiltration of enemy forces, so successful in the EPLF struggle, were simply impossible for the SPLA. The SPLA was determined to win territory rather than hearts and minds. While women made up approximately 40 percent of the EPLF ranks, the figure for the SPLA was roughly 7 percent. In Eritrea women were allowed into all positions, including combat roles, whereas in Sudan they were mainly restricted to nursing, feeding, sheltering, emotional and social reproduction and caretaking, and communication functions. As a member of the National Executive Committee of the SPLM/A explained, no formal reason was given for the demobilization of active fighters:

I do not know the real percentage of female fighters in the SPLA, but maybe you can say 7 percent. There are not too many women freedom fighters. But there were before. In 1984 there was one women's battalion. But after that they never organized as female fighters. But they are still there in the army. These women got training – not as officers, only a few of them. So we have a number of officers, more than thirty, but they are not active in their role. I don't know why. In this workshop on officer training, they said maybe they forgot to enrol them in the movement. I don't know, the blame comes from different areas. Now there are more women joining the training. In Equatoria, for example, they get military training in the movement. Although they are not really active. I mean they are not passive but not as active as the men. They do not go to the frontline and fight. But also we have some women who have been trained as nurses. Sometimes they go but not many of them. If you compare it to the Eritrean movement, it is nothing, what the women do by way of fighting itself it is nothing. (Sittouna Ahmed, member of SPLM/A NEC, Nairobi, December 6, 1996)

Another woman who identified herself as a fighter in the SPLA made it quite clear: “The rumors that women had been demobilized because they would run away when people were wounded are wrong. It was because the men did not want us to see them when they cry” (Bangwat Amum, civil administrator with the Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission, the humanitarian wing of SPLM,

7 See reports by Amnesty International on Sudan (*The Human Price of Oil*, 2000, and *Darfur: Rape as a Weapon of War*, 2004) and by Human Rights Watch (*Uganda: Abducted and Abused: Renewed*

Conflict in Northern Uganda, 2003) researched and co-written by the author. Since 1999 I have undertaken annual research visits to north and southern Sudan but no further visits to Eritrea.

8 See EPLF propaganda brochures.

and former SPLA fighter, New Kush, southern Sudan, December 1996).

In the cases of both southern Sudan and Eritrea power – during and after the struggle – is based on (potential) access to violence. Only with the gun (or the status) can a person make demands, either for food, cattle, and shelter, or for political positions. Case studies from both places show that women had an interest in fighting. In many interviews they said explicitly that they wanted to have a gun and fight. “And we really went to places and saw things that even men have not seen before. Even when going to military training. That was in Ethiopia. This was the Koryiom [Locust] Brigade. And all of us trained with rifles, just like the men.” (Adau Deng Dual, SPLA member, Nairobi, 1998). Similarly, an EPLF fighter recalled her initial encounter with the movement:

I was burning with national feelings. I was young and I wanted to do something. I was a member of the youngsters of the EPLF, of the Red Roses, before I was a member of the ELF. That was from '76 to '78 and what we did back then was mainly singing and dancing. Then I was still too young to join the armed forces, they sent me to Zero School for two years and finally in 1984 I joined. I was not happy about going to the school, I cried when they told me to go to school, I wanted a uniform and a gun. (Rozina, EPLF fighter, Asmara, March 19, 1997)

The aspect of violence in the construction of fighter images refers not only to the “situational action” (Wilström and Treiber 2009) of the doing but also to the violence inscribed in the image itself: the inscription of violence into the fighter image and the praxis of violence enacted by the fighter and legitimized by society. It is not only the gun that makes the power imbalance between fighter and citizen: potentially violent, but the construction of the fighter as disconnected from society, the gulf between masculinity and denial of femininity in fighter images, the rites of passage, and the preparation for and praxis of killing, maiming, and destruction. These all involve violence as an inherent factor of “doing fighter.” Beyond this, the system-

atic lack or denial of care for the traumatized fighter body and mind carries another aspect of violence with it. The diverse parameters of violence are extensively discussed in feminist theories and include direct, social, and cultural violence. The human body stands at the centre of war and violence studies, as it does in feminist theory. In this paper I am concerned with physical violence in the construct of the gendered fighter body and the legitimacy given to the gendered fighter body to use violence against all the “others,” the outsiders, those who are not fighter comrades (Weber 2007, 315ff.).

The discrepancy between the women’s self-perceptions as active members of the SPLA and their exclusion from active positions by the movement itself is well illustrated by a speech made by Commander Salva Kiir at the SPLA women’s convention in southern Sudan in 1998:⁹

The women in the New Sudan have played and are playing a great role in the military struggle. Since the start of the Movement, women were recruited into the army but were few in numbers and they mainly participated in taking care of the wounded. In 1986 the first five officers were graduated in shield three and from that time up to now there are more than 20 female officers and their role has been as effective as men in the field. However, our women have had minimal representation in the decision making of the SPLA as compared to man. (Salva Kiir, New Kush)

Although the current president of southern Sudan, Salva Kiir, gave this speech at a SPLA women’s convention in 1998, the movement itself barely recognizes women as active members of the armed forces. Hardly any women are listed on the SPLA payroll and therefore eligible for a proper DDR package, a pension, or continued employment in the armed forces (Small Arms Survey 1998). Furthermore, women are not recognized as fighters in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) nor were they able to gain access to the CPA and post-referendum negotiations.

This exclusion of women from fighter status is not only a gendered dichotomy, an “us against them” enforcement of

⁹ Copy of the speech in the author’s archive. The speech was given on the occasion of the first women’s convention of the SPLM/A in 1998. The first convention of the SPLM/A took place in 1994,

ten years after the movement started. This was the first meeting where political objectives were formulated, and a change in political positions was discussed following the fall of Mengistu’s regime in

Ethiopia. The SPLM’s agenda changed from socialist/Marxist to capitalist/Christian, but none of these political labels were ever translated into a political program.

the unity of men in arms, but also a disempowerment of women (regardless of their war reality), because their experience is almost invisible and inaudible in the public discourse. This exclusion from active recognition in the armed movement denied women in southern Sudan the right to participate and have a voice in ceasefire and peace negotiations, in the architecture of state-building, and in vital decisions concerning the political, economic, legal, and military future of the country. However, as the example of Eritrea shows, even where women were part of the armed struggle, their actions are acknowledged, and they are portrayed as heroic fighter personae, their gain in decision-making power during the struggle will not necessarily prevail after victory has been won and the country is navigated back to “normality.” We see how dramatic a change this can be if we compare the EPLF’s revolutionary propaganda with the post-conflict reality:

The old belief that women are too soft to stand the trials of the battlefield has finally been put to rest. Over the past fifteen years Eritrean women fighters have seen action ranging from minor skirmishes to bitter full-scale battles. They have inspired their comrades and proven themselves effective and efficient. All this without losing their capacity for love and care. It is an achievement with few parallels in the history of modern warfare.¹⁰

And this is what one demobilized EPLF fighter had to say after the war of independence:

Those days of war were the best time in my life. I cried when I learned about our victory. Now we have to face this reality. Everybody is alone, on her own. This individualism, all these problems of everyday life. You have to start thinking about really unimportant things, like how to dress your daughter and yourself, since the neighbors are watching and we are not allowed to walk in combat uniform any more, we are not allowed to parade in our uniforms during the victory parade. We have wear traditional dress and behave like traditional women. Do you know that more than 80 percent of marriages between fighters are now divorced. The men are all looking for traditional wives in the village, they don’t want their female comrades any more. (Negeste, female former EPLF fighter, Asmara, Eritrea, April 1997)

The admiration, support, and legitimization of female fighters, of women in arms was quickly devalued after demobilization. The emergency phase of war was over, now

the reconstruction of state and society needed women to become normal, feminine, obedient members of society again, so that the society would not feel alienated and would continue to support the struggle despite hardships (Hirt 2010, 13).

3.2. “Doing Fighter”

Gender roles in society play a decisive role, as does the congruence between the image and the reality of the fighter. Construction of gendered fighter images entails attribution and is bound to historical roots such as age-group initiation, warrior tradition, guerilla ethos, and in some cases a just warrior narrative (Igga 2008; Pateman 1998). This section also reflects on society’s legitimization of the use of violence by fighters. I will show that in the context under discussion, men are not born, but made fighters, and women can perform, but not own the fighter status.

The construction will also relate to the political agenda, the programmatic scope, and the ideological embeddedness of the armed movement (Garang and Khalid 1992). Depending on the movement’s transformative objectives, its interest in social change, its promotion of equality, or conversely, interest in retraditionalization, the fighter image is closely linked to and constructed upon the movement’s rhetoric. Both movements recruited women, and in the beginning women were also recruited to SPLA combat units but were demobilized after the first battle. Formally they stayed in the movement, but had to shift to other tasks. In Eritrea after the conflict ended, female fighters were increasingly discouraged from wearing their uniforms and forced instead to blend into “society.” In southern Sudan their role as mothers and helpers is applauded while their active involvement in the struggle goes unrecognized. As Bangwat Amun explains in New Kush, southern Sudan:

We stay calm in this struggle. We have to win this struggle for ourselves, our children, our country. First, to liberate our land and start living in peace with each other. Then comes the second struggle we have to start and this might take much longer. This will be the war against men. Men who do or do not want to understand that women are not lesser than they, that whatever men

¹⁰ Eritrean Liberation Front, *Eritrean Women* (Port Sudan, 1980); the author collected and archived grey

literature by the EPLF during field work in Eritrea in 1997.

can do, women can do, and that women have been taking care of the survival of our people. There is the war to come to fight men about the status of women, our tasks and the respect these men lack. The next war is for us. For the involvement of women in decision-making processes, for visibility, respect. It was the women that were left behind in this war and we managed to fulfil every task, and after the war, this has to be recognized.

Further, the fighter construct – and exclusion from it – must be endorsed and developed by the civilian population if it is to prevail. In many interviews women in southern Sudan stated that the main obstacle to their interest in joining the struggle was society's response. As Victoria Akur Deng, another SPLA member from southern Sudan, explains: "This was not something that they [her parents] could understand, that I, their girl who they even sent to school, that I wanted to join the movement. Maybe my father understood, but he thought this is overdoing it, there are men in our country that can do the fighting. Why do they need you, women with guns?"

Military training, mobilization, songs, and bonding practices are relevant to understanding gendered fighter images and their reflection in society. Gendered fighter bodies and minds are sculptured: while the virile, strong, hard body of the masculine warrior is shaped in training, the ideal of masculinity goes beyond the perfect fighting physique. The masculine ideal is based on an epistemology of victorious men in battle, fearless warriors in a golden past, men taking the pain and hardship of initiation without whining.¹¹ Male initiation into adulthood in peacetime southern Sudan places a premium on "courage, aggressiveness and violence" (Deng 1972 68). In wartime, songs are used to boost aggression and detach the fighter from the domestic sphere. "Even your mother, give her a bullet! Even your father, give him a bullet! Your gun is your food; your gun is your wife" (Hutchinson 1996, 55).

The sexualized female body exemplifies the "other," both the enemy and the desired aspect of home. The female body represents the honor of family/community/ethnic group and nation. The female body turns easily into muti-

lated territory, an enemy, a "non-we" to be ostracized. The female body is, it does not actively produce or create. Its creational power happens to the body (Cohen 1987).¹² "These things" – sexual intercourse, childbearing, menstruation – happen to the female body, with or without consent. The warrior body signifies the opposite. The warrior body actively transforms itself into a fighting machine. In order to become a warrior (body) the male body also has to be molded, since real men's bodies rarely constitute masculinity as idealized in the fighter. The transgression in the passage to become a real fighter body is therefore equally necessary for male and female fighter aspirants. Nobody is born a fighter. (Evans-Pritchard 1940; Hutchinson 1997; Perner 2001).

Hard bodies, steeled bodies, scarred bodies, bodies trained to endure pain and duress, bodies that are virile, bodies that keep a secret, bodies that are part of a larger body: the armed group creates and maintains a masculine image by overcoming the female body and the female sphere. Whether in Western regular armies, violent gangs, or armed insurgent groups, an important aspect in the construction of fighter bodies is the disconnection of the fighter body from the feminized sphere of the mother, the wife, the lover, the family, and the civilian community at large (Jok Madut Jok 2007, 232ff.). This may involve bonding through an act of collective violence which cannot be shared with or violates civilians, and thus bonds the new fighter body together. This of course profoundly contradicts the ideal of fighters as protectors of women and civilians. Various techniques of violence are at play in constructing the new fighter body (individual and group), including pain inflicted by his own group to mark the fighter's body. Forcing the initiated fighter body to inflict pain on others by raping, brutalizing, or even killing members of his or her family or community (Weber et al. 2003) is a rare yet increasing method of ensuring the loyalty of the newly constructed fighter body to the newly constructed we-group and guaranteeing that the new member feels fear and shame towards his group or community of origin.

¹¹ For initiation rites in southern Sudan see Perner 1994 and 2001 (pp. 82 ff.).

¹² Klaus Theweleit argues that on the contrary, the creational powers of women's bodies, lead men to develop womb envy and compensate by becoming

creators of death in wars (Cooke and Woollacott 1993, 283–316).

As two child soldiers, who were just captured by the SPLA in Northern Bahr al Ghazal explained “Kerubino’s men caught us, they told us to go back to our villages and take the food. We were given guns to make sure that our people would not resist us” (Duar Apuk and Mayen Atem, both 13 years old, interviewed in Ameth, Northern Bahr al Ghazal, following capture by the SPLA)

Although the protocol of dehumanization ensuring obedience is highly gendered, it makes little difference if the recruit is male or female. The step of humiliation is often based on an effeminizing concept (you are a girl, a pussy, you will be fucked) which apparently works for men and women alike. (Weber 2007, 307). Yet the long term consequence is highly gendered: women as fighters with female bodies find it hard to become acknowledged as active fighters, and women who cross into the sphere of masculine fighter images will find it hard to stay there and keep their status when the conflict, the “emergency” is over – when peace comes.

The use of violence as part of being a fighter (“doing fighter”) is not treated as a gendered trait. It is even understood that women in combat will act as violently as men – as this comment by one Eritrean EPLF fighter shows:

The Ethiopian prisoners of war were afraid to be guarded by women. They preferred men to guard them, since we women would be cruel. I would say to my comrades, why feed them and keep them, since they killed our people. Why not shoot them right away? (Lemlem, demobilized EPLF female fighter, Asmara, March 1997)

3.3. Fighter, Civilians, and Citizenship

The fighter-civilian sphere is constitutive to the legitimization of the use of violence against civilians, despite the protection of civilians being the original rationale of fighting, despite any code of honor, affiliation, or support by the civilian community (Kalyvas 2006; Schlichte 2009). This is a quite complex matter, since the distinction between protection of civilians from the enemy as the legitimization for using force in a just cause and attacks and abuse against civilians is quite narrow. Here the division between private and public, the exclusion of women from the public sphere, the exclusion of civilians from the front, is based on a gen-

dered concept. In any just war discourse it is the beautiful soul (Elshtain 1995, 140) that needs protection by the just warrior. The home front, women and children, the innocent need protection from the warrior/fighter, so the fighter is required to leave the protected sphere in order to protect it.

Yet precisely because of the loyalty to the new family, the armed group, the responsibility to protect is quite often turned around with astonishing ease, with the weak, female, and innocent – certainly on the enemy side – are used as targets and human shields. Because the feminine sphere of the civilian is not only in need of protection but has less value attached to it because of its members perceived weakness, unpredictability, and unsoldierliness (Ericsson-Baaz and Stern 2008, 62), the weak becomes the ugly, subhuman, the one violence can be used against indiscriminately. (Springmann 2011, p.388)

One constitutive factor of the legitimization and praxis of violence is the normative concept of obedience. “Mothering the frontline” becomes a prerequisite for the image of the peaceful woman/mother who cares for her own, but at the same time legitimizes the killing of the children of the other mother (Kaplan 1994). Here the caring role of women is understood as a substantive part of the war effort. By silently accepting violations carried out by its own fighters against other civilians, society legitimizes violence.

What Christina Thürmer-Rohr labeled complicity with the perpetrator (“Mittäterschaft”) (1989), unquestioning emotional and material support for fighters regardless of their activities, could be described as the grand narrative of obedience inscribed in most societies. It is based on a rather interconnected understanding of power, encompassing not only vertical power from above but reassurance and acceptance from below as a form of legitimization for violent structures (Foucault 2004; Rommelspacher 1995).

In order to gain full recognition, acceptance, admiration, and – even more importantly – support from civilians, an everyday practice of fighter-citizen relations is necessary. This can be accomplished through friendly interaction, following Mao’s dictum that “the people are like water and

the army is like fish”. Interestingly, in many armed movements, acceptance of the fighter image is maintained even where fighters enforce obedience, eliciting the support of civilians in the form of food, shelter, information, carriers, and manpower through the power of the gun.

3.4. Warrior-citizens

For an understanding of the status of fighters, the founding myth of the new nation-state is central: newly built in the case of Eritrea; just beginning construction in the case of South Sudan. In both countries the role of civilians during the struggle plays but a minor role in the national founding myth. Equally, recognition and reconciliation of violence and war traumas are sidelined in the effort to build the national identity. In both cases the identity of the vanguard, the elite, is based on the shared experience of the fighters during the struggle. The two states share a militarized interest, where “security first” is the dominant rule (with legislation and distribution of public goods secondary) (Woldegiorgis, FES 2010). They differ, however, in the strictness of the securitization of the state effort. In South Sudan there has so far been no need for forced conscription, nor does the leadership seek total control over the state territory or its citizens (nor would it be in a position to achieve that). Whereas Eritrean fighter images dominate the founding myth from heroic narratives (Connell 1997) to the ideal of honor, perseverance, and strength, in South Sudan the army has less of a heroic touch. While the rhetoric of war is omnipresent in South Sudan today and SPLA fighters are hailed for their endurance in the war against the North, peace and independence came through negotiations – unlike in Eritrea, where the EPLF’s military victory over the Derg regime marked the path to independence.

At the level of public pronouncements both states hail their women for their support of the struggle, but only Eritrea had the experience of the relational praxis of demobilizing female fighters from active military service to civilian life. The rewriting of history in both countries includes a devaluation of the active role of women inside and outside the armed group. Their supporting roles for the struggle are acknowledged, but not the transformation of individuals, of role models, the reality of active decision-making by women in the absence of men, and the strength, endur-

ance, and perseverance of civilians in the decades of struggle.

Grace Odong captures with great clarity the failure to acknowledge women’s decision-making power in southern Sudan during the struggle:

War takes away men from homes to the battlegrounds. In these situations women are in most cases separated from their husbands for very long periods. In the periods of absence women take the role of mothers, fathers, healers, educators, social worker, etc. In a way it forced lone parents to take control of meager resources. However, even though women gained greater control of resources than previously when their husbands were around, they have fallen back again over time. The gap between women and men grows and women are relatively less well off vis-à-vis men than they were in the past. In armed struggle like the current one facing us in Sudan, women are the ones sacrificed on the altar of the struggle. (Grace Odong, southern Sudanese women’s activist, Equatoria, 1998)

4. Conclusions

The results reached through my field research in southern Sudan and Eritrea can be summarized as follows:

1. Women have restricted access to power positions during conflict because they are not fully acknowledged as active fighters.
2. Women are able to perform but not transform gendered fighter images. They can act as fighters but not become “real fighters.” As a result they fail to benefit from the fighter-citizen connection created by the masculine fighter image. Even if they turned into fighters during the war, they are forced to turn back into women afterwards and thereby leave the masculine sphere of power.
3. Masculine fighter images are idealized by men and women alike. But for women to become fighters means crossing established gender lines. Fighter ideals are grounded in gendered body images and narratives and practiced through gendered social roles.
4. Women actively participate in the construction of the masculine fighter idea(1) and legitimize the fighters’ use of force and violence.
5. There seems to be no apparent difference between men and women in the use of violence; it is merely the opportunity factor that leads more men to legitimized uses of violence.

6. The armed movement and civilians create a sub-status of supporters of the struggle, which is hardly contested. Thereby the high status of the fighter is manifested whereas the supporters are not fully acknowledged as active participants in the struggle.

While feminist theorists and peace scholars (Alison 2007; Ruddick 1990, 1994; Reardon 1985, Gilligan 1992; Chodorow 1989), masculinity scholars (Theweleit 1993, 284), and war theorists (van Creveld 2001) discuss both inherent and socialized peacefulness of women and war-proneness of men, my research clearly demonstrates that despite socialized gender norms women can play violent roles during conflicts, both in active fighting and in legitimizing violence. The case studies from Eritrea and southern Sudan clearly show that women possess an interest in the use of violence and in becoming active fighters. Yet one of the manifestations of structural violence in gendered fighter images is exclusion (Weber 2007). In many insurgent groups, armed forces, rebel groups, and militias, women are simply not allowed to operate as fighters. And if they do, they are not formally recognized as active combatants and fail to gain high positions in the military hierarchy. This enforced absence from the armed forces themselves by no means excludes women from war and conflict; on the contrary, the home front, support, and supply are continuously tended by women. And civilian casualties are much higher than casualties amongst fighters.

It is also apparent that civilians, despite the hardship they suffer through war – from the enemy but also from the armed groups of their own side – support masculine fighter ideas and ideals and legitimize privileged access to power through fighting positions. This has already been reflected in studies of men and women in Western armies and conflicts (Boulding 1988, 2000; Cooke 1993; D’Amico 1996; Enloe 1983, 2000; Isaksson 1988; Kaplan 1994; Stiehm 1996, Tobias 1990) and is part of the ongoing debate in feminist theory and masculinity studies (Connell 2005; Goldstein 2001; Hooper 2001). The crystallization of gender dichotomies during war and the privilege of hyper-masculinity (hegemonic masculinity) is discussed, yet the debate lacks analysis of the knock-on effect of this militarized masculine mindset on post-conflict society.

The significance of this evidence for post-conflict societies, demobilization, state-building, peace negotiations, and conflict management is widely neglected. Analysis of war and political violence (Kalyvas 2006; Schlichte 2009; Tilly 2003) addresses “exceptional” politics (Agamben 1998, p.145), but forgets that exceptional politics and the use of violence are normal everyday praxis in gender relations.

The discussion generally focuses on the aspect of peaceful women as carers and mothers, rather than reflecting their function in mothering the frontline, legitimizing violence by “their” sons, and keeping quiet about atrocities. Active female fighters are hardly considered at all, and where they are, are mainly depicted as the exception, the travesty (Sjoberg 2007; Sylvester 2011). While there is a growing literature on the role of men as warriors and fighters in southern Sudan (Burton 2007; Deng 1972; Madut Jok 2007;) and autobiographies of military men turned politicians (Akol 2009; Arop 2006; Igga 2008; Nyaba 1997), there are very few reflections on the experience of women during the war (Hutchinson 1996; Turshen 1989) or autobiographical writings by influential female figures in southern Sudan. The experience of women in the war in Eritrea is more visible (Wilson 1991), but rarely reaches beyond biographical anecdotes (Schamaneck 1989) and is rather unreflective of the political exclusion of former female fighters and the potential consequences for post-conflict state-building. It is important to acknowledge the reality of these women in demobilization and reintegration schemes, and their experience and expertise need to be reflected in conflict management and peace negotiations, precisely because it differs from that of mainstream male fighters.

Understanding the relational praxis of fighter-civilian interaction, the attribution of meaning and status to fighters and civilians before, during, and after conflict, is relevant for the success of post-conflict demobilization as well as for the shaping of societies and citizenship. Longstanding and protracted conflicts create social practices that carry on as habitual references after the conflict.

The United Nations acknowledges this connection and the necessity for women to become active participants at all le-

vels of conflict resolution and peace negotiations.¹³ However, analysis of the basis of the fighter construct and the fighter-citizen nexus is lacking, especially in the efforts to implement UN Security Council Resolution 1325.

There is also a growing body of literature on African rebel or liberation movements that have become governments (Boas, Dunn 2007; Mampilly 2011; Rolandsen 2007), but a total absence of critical debate about either the broad exclusion of women from fighter status or the existence of female fighters and its repercussion for post-conflict governments.

5. Outlook

Whether gendered fighter images will become an important building block for the grand narrative of the “imagined community” or a mere ridiculized travesty will depend on the political and social transformation from conflict to post-conflict. Especially in cases where the new leadership is unwilling or unable to downsize the armed forces, successfully demobilize and reintegrate former combatants, and subsequently form a national army with a meaningful role, the image of the soldier is degraded. Masses of men with arms but no pay roam the streets – often far away from their families – and become a threat to civilians rather than a force for protection. This scenario is currently quite realistic in the case of South Sudan. The opposite case, mystified over-admiration for everything connected with the fighter, from the assumed spirit of honor and discipline to moderation and endurance, a hierarchical style of leadership, and the foundation of the national identity on an exclusivist fighter experience, is strongly visible in the Eritrean case. Neither the SPLA’s propaganda apparatus, nor its political agenda, nor its community outreach ever reached the level of organization of the EPLF. The SPLA never formulated the need for social transformation in southern Sudan – only a transformation of the political elite in Khartoum. There-

fore they did not think it necessary to educate or mobilize the rural and urban population for their struggle. Unlike the EPLF, the SPLA did not engage in literacy programs for the rural population, nor did they mobilize communities to educate girls and boys alike. The sectors of distribution of public goods, education and health was outsourced to international humanitarian agencies.

The fighter image is not constructed in isolation, but is closely linked to the efforts, discourse, and realities surrounding it.

Do women gain anything by actively joining armed struggles? This question has at least two answers. The skills, status, and acknowledgement acquired through active participation in the struggle empower women to perceive themselves as active members of society. The decisive question however remains whether their active involvement, their new skills, their transformed social gender role and praxis are acknowledged by the armed movement and the society at large. If female fighters remain a mere travesty of the construct of a “real” woman and the image of the “real” fighter remains a masculine image of a male person transcending beyond the sphere of femininity, the gains for active female fighters in political power, participation, and social transformation are limited. Whereas women in southern Sudan were kept in a subordinated feminine image of support and supply, in Eritrea the fighter image underwent a gender transformation during the struggle, including equal distribution of formerly gendered tasks such as fighting and bringing up children (Pateman 1990; 220).¹⁴ The reason why this deep transformatory aspect could not prevail has largely to do with the militarization of society after independence. The retraditionalization of gender roles had a broader support base (the patriarchal non-fighting society as well as many male fighters) that obviously benefitted from the traditional role of women.

¹³ United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, “Women, Peace and Security” (S/RES/1325 (2000)).

¹⁴ The Zero School of the EPLF was a collective effort to bring up and educate the children of the revolution collectively by all fighters, not necessarily their biological parents.

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Spousal Violence against Women in the Context of Marital Inequality: Perspectives of Pakistani Religious Leaders

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Spousal Violence against Women in the Context of Marital Inequality: Perspectives of Pakistani Religious Leaders

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Spousal violence against women is a controversial issue in Pakistan. Some religious leaders argue that “mild wife-beating” is permissible in exceptional circumstances to discipline the wife and protect the institution of the family. Some conservative religious leaders also argue that the husband has a superior and authoritative position in marital relations. This highly contested and sensitive issue acquires religious overtones and the scientific community seems reluctant to investigate it. Based on fourteen in-depth interviews, this article documents the views and opinions of religious leaders in Lahore, Pakistan, concerning spousal violence within the context of marital inequality. Rather than debating the position of Islam on spousal violence, the paper explores the minds of religious leaders who greatly influence the views of the general public.

1. Theoretical Background

Spousal violence against women has become a widely recognized international public health and human rights issue (Heise 1996; Rosenberg and Fenley 1991; WHO 1996). Spousal violence is a universal phenomenon, affecting millions of women every year (World Bank 1993). Around the world, at least one woman in every five has been physically or sexually abused at some point in time (Heise et al. 1999). Women living in developing countries, especially in high-violence societies, are even more vulnerable to spousal violence (UNICEF 2000). Like other developing countries, Pakistani society has a patriarchal structure and most of the socioeconomic space is owned and controlled by men (Jafar 2005). Because of the large gender disparities in the areas of health, education, and economic and political participation (Raza and Murad 2010), women are usually subordinated to men (Mumtaz and Mitha 1996) and are frequent victims of violence (Nasrullah, Haqqi, and Cummings 2009). Archer reports that women’s victimization rates are generally higher than

men’s in societies where women have less power and low social status (2006).

Spousal violence refers to intentional use of physical force with the potential for causing injury, harm, or death, as well as any act of psychological violence such as humiliation, forced isolation, repeated yelling, degradation, or intimidation (Garcia-Moreno et al. 2005). A study found that 50 percent of married women in Pakistan are physically battered and 90 percent are emotionally and verbally abused by their husbands (Tinker 1998). Spousal violence is not only prevalent in rural areas of Pakistan but also widespread in cities such as Karachi (population 13 million) and Rawalpindi (3 million) (Human Rights Commission of Pakistan 2004; Fikree and Bhatti 1999; Fikree et al. 2006; Nasrullah, Haqqi, and Cummings 2009; Shaikh 2000).

By its constitution, Pakistan is an Islamic state, with a population that is 97 percent Muslim (80 percent Sunni, 17 percent Shia). Article 2 of the Constitution of the Islamic

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Republic of Pakistan states that “Islam shall be the State religion of Pakistan” no law can be enacted that contradicts the basic teachings of Quran and Sunnah (Constitution of Pakistan 1973). People usually have great trust in religious institutions like the mosque and the madrassa (religious school). Religion is not just a set of spiritual beliefs, but overwhelmingly dominates in the social, political, and personal lives of individuals (Ayyub 2000; Farmer 2007). Historically, the mosque has been a hub of social and educational activities (Haddad 1986). Almost every village and locality has a mosque headed by an imam, who is always a man. Women are not eligible to hold this position. The imam is employed and paid by the local community, and while there is no specific educational qualification he should possess the religious knowledge necessary to lead the five daily prayers and other religious rituals. An Imam usually follows a particular school of thought, such as Barlvi, Deobandi, Wahabi, Shia, etc., interpreting, practicing, and preaching religion in line with his own sectarian tradition. Although there are slight variations, all Islamic schools of thought in Pakistan uphold a conservative and patriarchal interpretations of the role and status of women.

Family counseling services by professionals like psychologists or family social workers are rare in Pakistan, and a large proportion of the population has absolutely no access to such services. Even where they do exist, many victims of spousal violence are unlikely to contact them because the problem is considered a private issue; women do not want to tell “outsiders” about the problem (Ayyub 2000). People seek guidance from the imams or religious leaders who are in close contact with the community and provide counseling services on domains of life including marriage, divorce, inheritance disputes, etc. (Ali, Milstein, and Marzuk 2005; International Crisis Group 2002).

The role of religious leaders in Pakistan is diffuse and complex. They not only lead prayers and deliver Friday sermons, but also provide a range of social and religious services (Ali, Milstein, and Marzuk 2005). For example, a local religious leader interprets and applies religious principles to day-to-day problems (e.g. how to slaughter a chicken or how to reform a deviant adolescent). Their role

varies depending upon the socio-economic status, level of education and exposure to modernity of the particular community. In modern and wealthy urban localities, the role of religious leaders is fairly limited and is restricted to leading prayers. In rural areas and in poor urban localities, the religious leader is more influential and enjoys respect and religious authority. Given the socially important role of religious leaders in Pakistani society, it was assumed that they would be the first instance victims of spousal violence would consult for help or counseling. Even in the United States, religious leaders (of all faiths) are found to be among the first to whom marital abuse is reported (Levitt and Ware 2006b; Ware, Levitt, and Bayer 2004).

The type and quality of counseling services religious leaders provide to victims has not yet been fully researched, especially in developing countries. Studies from developed countries report that religious leaders are often inadequately trained to address or intervene in cases of spousal violence (Alsdurf 1985; Bruns et al. 2005; Dixon 1995; Knickmeyer, Levitt, and Horne 2010). In developing countries religious leaders are usually taught to evaluate and analyze the problem from within their traditional patriarchal perspective and propose solutions or interventions accordingly.

Patriarchal values are historically dominant in Pakistan, and almost all the social institutions reinforce and support them (Mumtaz and Mitha 1996). Generally, conservative religious leaders espouse a male-oriented religious spirituality and reinforce male dominance in marital relations (Davidson 1978; Pagelow and Johnson 1988). That said, certain religious leaders do help the victim to resist violence by mobilizing community support and isolating the perpetrator. For example, the internationally reported gang-rape victim, Mukhtar Mai, kept silent until the local imam persuaded her and her family to file charges against the influential perpetrators (Ali 2005). Studies conducted in the United States and other Western countries also report a similar role played by religious leaders in supporting and assisting the victims of spousal violence (Alsdurf and Alsdurf 1988; Bowker 1988; Martin 1989; Popescu and Drumm 2009). Other studies also indicate that religious services can provide helpful support to battered women in

distress (Humphreys 2000) and women who suffer from mental illness (Ali, Milstein, and Marzuk 2005).

Overall, males are encouraged to control and subordinate their women (Dobash and Dobash 1979) and these beliefs are usually communicated in the religious idiom (Zakar 2004). The control and concealment of women's bodies is the most contested and controversial issue in Muslim cultures (Ali 1986; Agarwal 1994; Ayyub 2000). A majority of Muslim scholars considers that the husband should have a leadership position in marital relations, while the wife should play a subservient role (Frazier 2000). However, there is no consensus among religious leaders regarding the husband's authority to physically beat his wife. As with many other religious issues, there are many conflicting interpretations and opinions (Ammar 2007). So the emphasis placed by religious leaders on traditional gender roles and persuading victims to adhere to them is expected. This perspective is not specific to Pakistan or to Muslims; Jewish and Christian religious leaders also often provide religiously motivated counseling services to victims (Adelman 2000; Giesbrecht and Sevcik 2000; Hassouneh-Phillips 2001).

Research shows that religious authorities usually accord unequal relations to husband and wife (Daly 1973; Dobash and Dobash 1988; Wood and McHugh 1994). For example, the traditional Christian Church has always promoted male domination and accepted the rightness of the patriarchal order (Pagelow 1981). Many Muslim scholars also argue that the husband has a leading and commanding role in marital relations (Al-Qaradhawi 1997; Ayyub 2000). Across the social science disciplines, spousal violence is understood primarily as a matter of power, control, and dominance (Cooper-White 1996; Martin 1976; Dobash and Dobash 1979; Walker 1979).

As in many other Asian countries, spousal violence is not yet considered to be a serious social issue in Pakistan, despite its great prevalence and negative health consequences (Ali and Khan 2007). Despite opposition from conservative legislators, the Parliament of Pakistan enacted the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act in 2009, criminalizing spousal violence and making it punishable by

fine or imprisonment (Government of Pakistan 2009). However, the impact of the law has been limited because culturally spousal violence is still considered to be a private family matter and is rarely reported to the police.

Research on spousal violence in Pakistan is still in a nascent phase. The matter is widely considered to be culturally sensitive and is therefore rarely and only reluctantly investigated. Reflecting its sensitivity, the *Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey 2006–07* (National Institute of Population Studies and Macro International 2008) did not contain a single question on violence against women. No nationally representative study is available and only a very few small-sample clinical surveys have been conducted by individual scientists (Fikree and Bahtti 1999; Fikree et al. 2006; Shaikh 2000). To the best of our knowledge, no study has yet been conducted in Pakistan to investigate the influence and opinion of religious leaders on the issue of spousal violence. The present study intends to fill this research gap by documenting the perspective of religious leaders on spousal violence in Pakistan. Note that we do not set out to debate Islam's position on spousal violence, concentrating instead on exploring the minds of the religious leaders who greatly influence the views of the general public.

2. Methodology

This study was a part of the dissertation project on “intimate partner violence against women and its implication on women's health in Pakistan” (Zakar 2011) The study was approved by the dissertation committee of the Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Bielefeld, Germany. In Pakistan, the study objectives and methodology were also reviewed and approved by a group of professors from the University of the Punjab, Lahore.

The study is based on in-depth interviews with fourteen religious leaders in Lahore selected using purposive sampling. Lahore is divided into nine administrative towns, and an effort was made to select at least one religious leader from each town, with success. To include the views of progressive and educated religious leaders, we also interviewed two university professors of Islamic studies and three college lecturers in Islamic studies.

In this study, “religious leader” means the imam of a mosque or a person with religious education who teaches Islam in a religious institutions such as a madrassa, in a college, or in a university. Religious leaders were contacted personally at their workplace, informed about the study and its objectives, and asked to participate. Of the thirty-four religious leaders who were contacted only sixteen (47 percent) showed an interest in participating; ten (29 percent) said they were too busy and eight (24 percent) were reluctant to talk about the issue in general. Of the 16 who originally agreed to participate, two withdrew at the time of interview. In the end, fourteen interviews were completed during an eight-week period in December 2008 and January 2009. Before the beginning of each interview, written informed consent was obtained and a written background survey was administered to gather demographic and professional information.

The study used a semi-structured interview framework to help the interviewer to follow certain topics and to explore the views of the religious leaders. Open-ended questions were formulated on the basis of previous qualitative work done as a part of the dissertation project and the review of literature on the topic. Because of cultural sensitivities, questions related only to physical and psychological violence and avoided the issue of sexual violence within marriage. Various questions were asked to elicit participants’ opinions about spousal violence. They were also asked about their experiences of dealing with cases of spousal violence and their knowledge and awareness of the health consequences of violence. All questions were worded open-ended. Questions used included: “What is your opinion about the role and status of women vis-à-vis men?”; “Do you think that men and women are equal in marital relations?”; “Do you think that a man has a right to beat his wife?”; “Do you think that spousal violence is a problem for Pakistani society?”; “How do you deal with cases of spousal violence, when women victims come to you?” The term “spousal violence” was explained as “any act of physical violence i.e., beating, kicking, slapping etc., psychological and coercive behavior perpetrated by the husband against his wife” (Garcia-Moreno et al. 2005).

Cultural sensitivities precluded the female primary researcher conducting the interviews, which were instead

conducted by a male interviewer with considerable experience in qualitative interviews (the second author), in the presence of the first author. The interviews were conducted in the respondents’ first language, Urdu, and lasted one-and-a-half hour to two hours. With the permission of the participants, the interviews were audio-recorded and written notes were taken.

2.1. Participants’ Characteristics

The fourteen interviewed religious leaders were all males. Nine were working as full-time imams at mosques, three were high school teachers of Islamic studies and two were university professors of Islamic studies. The age range was from 26 to 58 years. Almost all were married with children. The time they had been teaching religion for ranged from four to twenty-nine years. Respondents represented diverse educational backgrounds: eight had informal madrassa education, of whom three had special religious training (alim fazil); six had a university degree, of whom two had doctorates. Not a single participant reported having specialized training in wife abuse or violence-related issues.

2.2. Data Analysis

All audio-recorded in-depth interviews were transcribed verbatim by the first author. The transcribed materials were translated into English by the first and second authors, who both have good command of Urdu and English. Analytic induction and constant comparison methods of qualitative data analysis were carried out by systematic examination of similarities between the religious leaders’ views in order to identify emergent themes (Auerbach and Silverstein 2003). After multiple readings of the transcripts, the first author first identified common themes such as male superiority in marital relations, women’s obedience, etc.; second, the themes were coded to discover the patterns; third, data were searched for similar occurrences or recurring phenomena; and fourth, findings were translated into theoretical constructs that were refined continuously until all the instances of contradictions and similarities were explained (Auerbach and Silverstein 2003). In order to preserve the validity of the responses, the first author shared the initial write-up with the male interviewer, with whom she co-led all the interviews. The male interviewer provided his comments and improvements were made ac-

cording to his suggestions. Finally, the results were discussed with all the interviewees. A few of them provided clarifications of certain comments, which were incorporated into the final text.

3. Findings

The areas where we sought the opinion of religious leaders included their views on marital equality, status of husband vis-à-vis wife, and their perspective on the phenomenon of spousal violence. During the course of interviews, we tried to understand how they responded when victims of spousal violence came to them for help and advice; whether they tried to reform the perpetrator or blamed the victim. We also sought information about their perceptions of the severity and gravity of the problem of spousal violence in Pakistan and the possible impact of violence on women's health. At the end, we tried to elicit their perspective on the notions of "women's rights," "female empowerment" and "gender equality." In the following, we document their views in detail.

3.1. Marital Inequality

In response to our question regarding gender equality in marital relations, almost all the religious leaders sought to articulate a difference between the Western and Islamic concepts of "gender equality." Some (5 of 14) said that, "in general, men and women are equal." But in marital relations they considered that there was some sort of division of labor based on "natural and God-given differences," and hence equality was not possible. Most (9 of 14) argued that in an Islamic family context the husband plays a superior and authoritative role. For them, the husband acts as the guardian of his wife.

Some of the religious leaders (5 of 14) said that in order to achieve harmonious conjugal relations and a smooth functioning of family affairs the wife needs to accept her husband's superiority. Most (8 of 14) cited the example of Western industrialized countries, where, they said, the institution of the family had been destroyed as a result of women refused to accept a subordinate role. Explaining the logic of superior-subordinate relations between husband and wife, one religious leader in his mid forties, with ten years of schooling and two years' training in a madrasa, said:

After marriage, husband and wife constitute a functional unit. For the smooth functioning of the family, the wife must accept the leadership role of her husband. If both claim equality, they cannot run the family. You cannot drive a car with two drivers or with two steering wheels.

Unequal relations between husband and wife were also glorified. It was argued that subordination suits wives best. The whole discourse revolved around the popular cultural notion that "women are weak, emotional, tender, and therefore need protection." One middle-aged religious leader, with eight years of religious education but no formal schooling, argued: "Women's nature could not bear the burden of the outside world; they cannot travel in congested buses; they cannot perform manual and tough jobs." For some (4 of 14), it was an insult for a woman to go to male-dominated offices and face the harsh and harassing culture of work places.

One interviewee asked the researcher what the solution to this problem could be, and offered his own solution. He reasoned that the most natural and respectable place for a woman was within the "four walls of the house," where she can live like a queen. The responsibility of providing all the household needs rests with the husband. He continued:

Western women have rejected this household heaven, now they are in the bazaars [streets], pubs, and show-biz. They sell their services and bodies. They are being ruthlessly exploited by men. Since they are free from their guardians [fathers, brothers, and husbands] nobody helps them and nobody comes to their rescue.

While discussing the issue of marital equality, many religious leaders argued that women are equal in the eyes of Allah but lose their equality in marital relations. Almost all (12 of 14) thought that the husband should have a commanding position in the governance of the household. One religious leader in his early forties with a university degree in Islamic Studies stated:

The reason for this authority is that the husband as a male is more rational in resolving issues of family life. The wife, as a woman, is emotional in general. The wife is required to obey the commands and instructions of her husband so long as these do not involve any acts of disobedience to Allah's commands.

The two religious leaders who had doctoral degrees in Islamic studies contested that interpretation and said that Islam did not give superiority to one gender over the other. They also argued that men and women are equally wise and rational. However, most of the religious leaders (11 of 14) considered marital inequality to be natural and normal and were not willing to review their position.

It seems that most of the religious leaders inadvertently mixed religion with their local cultural beliefs and a patriarchal ideology that historically reinforces the dominance of men and subordination of women (Dobash and Dobash 1979). The sociologist Finkelhor (1983) found that the abuse of power occurs in the context of power inequalities (a more powerful person takes advantage of the less powerful). Since traditional roles imply an inequality between the sexes, the conditions are ripe for abuse (Finkelhor 1983). In many conservative religious traditions, especially in Christianity, the church unwittingly set the stage for abuse by assigning women an inferior position (Brown and Parker 1989; Dobash and Dobash 1979; Katschke-Jennings 1989; Walker 1988). The situation is similar in India, where patriarchal ideology is imposed in the name of the Hindu religion (Dhruvarajan 1990).

3.2. Religious Leaders' Opinions about Spousal Violence

Almost all the religious leaders (13 of 14) avoided the question of the permissibility of spousal violence or wife-abuse in categorical terms. Some (5 of 14) even disagreed with the very concept of “wife-beating.” They argued that the husband and the wife have a relationship with a very special structure and nature where “beating” or “not beating” is not the issue. One religious leader in his late sixties, who remarried after the death of his first wife, argued:

Husband and wife have a diffuse relationship of love and intimacy. People should not unnecessarily search for “violence” in such relations. Sometimes anger and coercion could be an expression of love. It is not a master-donkey relationship, where one can count how many times a donkey was beaten by the master.

Some religious leaders (6 of 14) thought that the wife should be cooperative and must understand her husband's

problems and limitations. One religious leader in his mid twenties who had six years of madrassa education said that: “the wife must not impose things on her husband that he cannot afford, or ask for things he is not capable of buying. And if she unwisely insists to her husband and offends him by repeated demands, the husband has the right to ‘admonish’ her.” When the researcher asked the religious leaders to define “admonish,” one said: “the husband may not necessarily use violence or coercion, but he just tries to make her realize that she may get punishment because of her unwise behavior.”

The religious leaders argued that, before imposing any physical punishment, a “wise husband” should contact the “deviant” wife's parents, local religious leaders, and other respectable family members to exert social pressure on her. One religious leader opined:

All should politely remind her about the role of an “ideal wife.” If it does not work and she clearly defies the religiously defined role, then she deserves some symbolic physical punishment.

Another religious leader with a similar point of view reasoned:

Yes, the husband has a right to show anger or to give symbolic or very mild physical punishment, but he still has no right to break her bones or inflict injuries that could render her permanently disabled.

Alluding to circumstances that could create tension between husband and wife, some religious leaders (5 of 14) thought that the wife should avoid certain social activities or otherwise face justifiable anger from her husband (and possible punishment). All agreed that “the wife should not offend her husband as offending a husband is a great sin and will not be tolerated on the Day of Judgment.” and quoted various religious authorities to support their opinion.

While explaining the social position of a wife, some religious leaders believed that an ideal wife should be discouraged from developing an independent social network and interacting with “strangers,” especially men from outside the family or men who are not known to her husband. “Unnecessary mingling with unrelated men is a sin, and

the husband has a right to forbid his wife from such activities even if he has to use some coercive methods,” one said. Three said that a husband has the right to physically beat his wife if she develops relations with *non-mehram* (males outside of the immediate family). The wife should not let down her husband by being “too independent” and “too empowered.”

University-educated religious leaders held that Islam has given women many rights which they never had before: for example, the right to inheritance, the right to divorce, the right to own and control wealth, and the right to marry a person of their own choosing. They said that the feudal economy and the influence of Hindu culture denied these rights to women in South Asia. One religious leader, with a master’s degree in Islamic Studies who also occasionally participated in TV talk shows, stated:

Islam gives many rights to women. Even in the Quran many verses talk about the treatment of women with benevolence and fairness. We should not unnecessarily highlight the issue of violence against women. It is important that we should see what rights Islam has given to wives, which no other religion or culture has given.

Two madrassa-educated religious leaders considered strict control useful for familial stability if the wife showed disregard for religious and cultural norms. They considered the issue of violence against women to be a symptom of ideological disharmony and normative chaos. One religious leader in his late fifties who taught in a local madrassa said:

I think one reason for the increasing disobedience of wives is the secularization of society. The women’s desire to attain professional status, wealth, and glamour is the gift of the Western life-style. This desire has threatened religious values as more and more women are assuming non-traditional roles. It is a dangerous tendency. She can earn money, but then she ignores her children’s upbringing. If children are deviant, what is the use of that wealth then?

3.3. Religious Leaders’ Responses to Victims of Spousal Violence

In many Muslim countries, especially in Pakistan, religious leaders are also considered “elders of the community” and people seek their advice on many religious and mundane issues (Ali, Milstein, and Marzuk 2005). The religious leaders were asked whether battered women came to them for

counseling. Half of them said that “problematic women” do come to them for a variety of reasons. Most of these (5 of 7) provide spiritual prescriptions to cope with the problem. One reported: “I provide many spiritual coping methods for the victims,” but clarified that he did not exploit or magnify the issue unnecessarily. Explaining his method of handling the victims, he said: “First I give some spiritual treatment and then remind women of their (wifely) religious obligations.” “We give advice according to sharia and we don’t care if they get angry or consider us an ally of the perpetrators,” said another. Most (10 of 14) thought that no professional or formal services were needed for victims, believing that such services made things even more complicated. For them, the best solution was that both (husband and wife) should stick to their religiously obligated roles. One religious leader in his late forties, who reported having worked as a *Haj* worker in Saudi Arabia, said:

Some NGOs are unnecessarily flashing the issue of violence for their nefarious objectives. They are not doing any service for battered women. Rather they are encouraging women to revolt from the family and the result of their unwise intervention is the disintegration of the family.

One university-educated interviewee said that religious leaders should respond positively to the victims of violence. Though women rarely came to him (he was a high school teacher of Islamic studies, not a full-time imam), he believed that religious leaders should help the women instead of giving them sermons or blaming them for their sins. Not a single religious leader reported referring a victim to a care-giving institution. Generally, they had limited knowledge of local intervention programs for battered women and lacked information about legal options and remedies.

In response to questions about wife battering cases, most religious leaders (10 of 14) suggested that women should discuss the problem with family, parents, and in-laws and seek their help. The main reason for their inability to provide intervention was lack of counseling training and mistrust of state institutions. Since they usually discussed such issues in ideological terms, they never considered treatment options, legal remedies, or counseling programs for the abusers.

The religious leaders usually gave women advice based on “doctrinal prescriptions” instead of addressing the women’s needs. Sometimes religious leaders were skeptical and critical and quick to blame the women for their difficult situation. The usual advice was to pray to Allah for a change in their husband’s behavior. While explaining the coping strategies against a husband’s violence, one madrassa-educated religious leader said: “The first line of defense is patience; patience has a huge power to conquer. With patience, the wife can win the heart of her husband.”

A majority of the religious leaders (11 of 14) laid great stress on preserving the marriage and avoiding divorce, in the process implicitly or explicitly trying to persuade the victim to tolerate the abuse. By doing so, they reinforced the myth of a “happy family” and created an imaginary cloak around the violence and terror that existed in spousal relations (Cooper-White 1996). Such reasoning is not specific to Pakistan. Muslim communities in other countries, even in the industrialized developed countries, lay great stress on keeping the family together and advise women to sacrifice their personal desires and independence in order to keep the family intact (Ayyub 2000). “Marriage for Muslim women is integral to religious and social life, many of the women ... tolerate significant abuse for many years, hoping that through faith, things would improve over time” (Hassouneh-Phillips 2001, 933).

However, two interviewees argued that women should not compromise their human dignity and security as granted by Allah and written in the Quran. One said: “If a husband is violent and abuses his wife without any reason, then she has the right to go for *khula* [divorce] and get rid of this relationship.” Another religious leader said: “If a husband abuses his wife repeatedly, she is entitled to leave the relationship.”

3.4. Denying the Problem and Blaming the Victim

Almost all the religious leaders (12 of 14) denied the significance and prevalence of the problem of spousal violence in Pakistan and refused to accept the statistics given by local research institutions and international agencies. They usually considered it to be part of a wider Western

conspiracy to malign Muslims in general and Pakistan in particular, arguing that the real violence was committed in Western cultures where men live with women without marrying and, when the women become less attractive, abandon them. For them, this was the real violence and exploitation.

Most of the religious leaders (9 of 14) place some blame on the women who were beaten by their husbands. “Yes, some men are very cruel, like wild animals; but wives too have many ‘bad habits,’” said one. Although the religious leaders talked about the equality of men and women in the eyes of Allah, they believed that men have a better understanding of things than women. Overall, most of the religious leaders had a tendency to “smell something wrong” in the women’s behavior. Although many (8 of 14) condemned the husband’s violence, at the same time they tried to place some responsibility on the victim.

3.5. Impact of Violence on Women’s Health

Almost all the religious leaders (13 of 14) knew that serious acts of violence such as “breaking bones” or scarring a body, especially the face, renders serious damage to the health of women. All were unanimous that such violence is un-Islamic and illegal. They categorically stated that the perpetrator of such violence (whomsoever it may be, including the husband) deserved no concession and must be punished by law.

Nonetheless, opinions on “mild violence” were diverse (and the religious leaders never exactly defined what “mild violence” meant). Some (6 of 14) considered that mild and “justified” violence would not have a lasting negative impact on the woman’s health, provided that the intentions of the perpetrator were not wrong. Some (5 of 14) believed that the husband should clearly tell his wife of her fault before committing even a symbolic act of violence. One religious leader stated:

She should be properly informed that she must not do a particular act. Then, despite knowing all this, if she insists on doing the “wrong things,” the husband may punish her. In such cases there would be no psychological damage to her health; it is a normal process of learning.

3.6. Freedom of Women: Fears of Conspiracies

Almost all the religious leaders considered that wives' freedom must remain within the context of religion and culture and tried to make a distinction between freedom and stubbornness. Almost all (13 of 14) believed that within the four walls of a house, the woman is free to do what she likes after performing her compulsory household duties. One religious leader who had specialized religious education (an alim fazil course) said:

The Western concept of freedom is absolutely prohibited in our religion. If freedom means sexual promiscuity, abortion, or open display of the body we reject this. These are sins clearly defined by the Holy Quran and are punishable by Islamic law. A Muslim society cannot negotiate on such things in the name of freedom.

Almost all the religious leaders began with the assumption that Islam gave many rights to women. Many argued that women had a very poor status before the advent of Islam. But Islam gave women equal rights, and in some situations women even have more rights than men. They are entitled to special status and greatly respected as mothers: "heaven lies under their feet". One religious leader said:

The Western concept of freedom is strange for us. When you talk about freedom, the question is freedom from whom? If you mean freedom from men – who are her father, brothers, husband, or sons – it is not understandable. Within the Islamic framework, men are her guardians and protectors. Freedom from them is not freedom.

Usually the religious leaders avoided answering these questions and instead began criticizing the "modernization" introduced by Western civilization. They considered that Western constructs, concepts, and mind-sets were creating "women problems" in Pakistan. For instance, they disagreed with the concept of "women's empowerment." Most considered such concepts to be "tools and techniques to humiliate Muslim cultures," and argued that efforts to empower women were a carefully designed conspiracy of Western civilization, and believed that the Western concept of empowerment will upset the entire gender balance envisioned by Islamic society. Such empowerment, they feared, will ultimately destroy the family institution.

Some religious leaders also blamed the researcher (though indirectly and politely) for working to promote the agenda of the West. One religious leader, who graduated from a famous Sunni madrassa in Punjab, said: "The Western agenda is to destroy Pakistan, not by bombs, but by using foreign-funded NGOs to destroy Pakistan's Muslim identity and convert Pakistan into a secular state." Another questioned why the Western donor agencies were funding "gender-equality projects," and questioned the hidden agenda of NGOs working on "violence against women." He advised that an educated Muslim should not fall into the trap of the Western and Jewish conspiracies. In essence, the issues related to violence against women are understood in a highly parochial and patriarchal fashion. It is important to remember that the opinions expressed within the interviews belonged to the individual religious leader and may not necessarily coincide with other leaders' views in that particular religious school of thought.

4. Discussion and Conclusions

The data show considerable diversity in religious leaders' perspectives on spousal violence in Pakistan. Although the some considered mild or symbolic violence by a husband to be justified in exceptional circumstances, none of them believed that serious acts of violence such as "honor killing" or bodily mutilation (nose-cutting, limb amputation, acid throwing, etc.) were permissible. Such brutal violence is frequently reported in the media in Pakistan. So, one needs to be careful about the common stereotype that projects violence against women in Muslim societies as religiously motivated. It seems that these acts of violence are rather linked with the patriarchal structure and women's socio-economic status in society. The prevalence of violence against women also depends on the nature of gender relations, which rest on two basic perceptions: 1) women are subordinated to men, and 2) men's honor resides in the actions and behaviors of the women of his family (Lewis 1994).

In Pakistan, religious leaders do not follow a monolithic intellectual tradition. Religious leaders from different schools have different perspectives regarding the status of women, and sometimes take contradictory positions. They may exonerate the perpetrators by justifying violence and thereby hinder efforts to establish non-violent relation-

ships between husband and wife. Nonetheless, religious leaders in close contact with the community can play a positive role in providing effective counseling services to the victims of spousal violence (Bruns et al. 2005). Studies conducted in other countries on religious leaders from different faiths also report that compassionate clergy counseling can have a positive influence on psychosocial outcomes for women in abusive relationships (Ali, Milstein, and Marzuk 2005; Pagelow 1981).

Some religious leaders said that “wife-beating” meant just a symbolic threat and not real physical assault. A majority agreed in principle that a husband had the right to admonish his wife if she refused to obey him in “rightful matters.” Some religious leaders thought that beating was allowed but made the conditions so stringent that, in practice, violence could never be carried out. Nonetheless, in patriarchal societies religious precepts are misinterpreted to enhance male dominance and ensure women’s subordination. Hence, the perspective of religious leaders could be used as a justification for violence by some patriarchal men. Rotunda, Williamson, and Penfold (2004) also found that patriarchal views combined with the opinions of religious leaders could increase the use of controlling tactics by abusive men in some American communities.

Most of the religious leaders relied on their traditional worldview and local gender relations when evaluating and counseling a victim of spousal violence. It seems that most persuade the victims to “perform their religious duties” and adopt a “forgive and forget approach” instead of giving them useful advice. This approach is not limited to Muslim religious leaders; leaders from other faiths also adopt a similar attitude when it comes to spousal violence (Rotunda, Williamson, and Penfold 2004). When victims came to them for support, the clergy gave them advice based more on theological doctrine than the women’s needs (Pagelow 1981).

Under the influence of prevailing patriarchal ideas, some religious leaders tended to blame the victims, seeking fault in the women’s behavior of and blaming them for their miseries. This is consistent with the study by Levitt and Ware (2006a), who found that religious leaders from Jew-

ish, Christian, and Islamic faiths in Memphis (United States) had similar views, which resulted in them attributing responsibility for abuse to the victims instead of the perpetrators (Levitt and Ware 2006a).

Some of the religious leaders also advised women to mend or change their behavior to avoid the anger of their husbands. This advice persuades women to stay in abusive relationships and may expose the victims to repeated violence (Levitt and Ware 2006a). Similar findings are reported by Knickmeyer et al. (2003), who found that spousal violence victims reported that religious leaders had influenced them to stay in their marriages and bear the future abuse.

The qualitative data show that almost all the religious leaders considered some sort of marital inequality to be religiously permissible. However, the nature of the inequality varied and opinions diverged sharply. A majority assumed that women need the protection and guidance of men and seem to be influenced by the prevailing patriarchal culture of their society (Levitt and Ware 2006b). Attributing negative stereotypes to women, such as that women are “short tempered,” “tender,” and “emotional,” led some religious leaders to believe that women need a “specially protected place” in society and male guardians to look after them. Glick and Fiske coined the term “benevolent sexism” to explain such a situation (2001). “This set of paternalistic stereotypes about women is experienced as positive by its adherents as it places women in a revered, albeit restricted, status” (Levitt and Ware 2006a, 1188). This concept may undermine women’s self-confidence and make them permanently dependent on men (Carrillo 1993).

Like all qualitative studies, this research had some limitations. Firstly, the sample was not representative; it was based on fourteen in-depth interviews with religious leaders from urban Lahore. So the findings cannot be generalized to other religious leaders’ perspectives (especially those from rural areas). Secondly, in the context of ideological polarization of Pakistani society, the religious leaders were more interested in “defending” than “explaining” their ideas. Thirdly, it was sometimes difficult to ask probing questions because of the religious sensitivity of

the issues. Nonetheless, this study is the first of its kind and addresses very important and sensitive women's rights and human rights issue in Pakistan, and lays a good foundation for future research in this particular area.

There is ample evidence that violence, no matter how subtle or mild it may be, causes a great deal of distress and psychological damage to the victims (Stets and Straus 1990; Walker 2006). Any act of violence, be it within marital bonds or beyond, is a severe violation of human rights (Carrillo 1993; Nussbaum 2005). There are strong voices of unequivocal rejection of violence against women in Pakistan (Ministry of Women's Development 2008).

A growing body of research reports the negative implications of violence on women's physical, psychological, and reproductive health (Campbell 2002). Under pressure from international institutions and global civil society, as well as local social dynamics, the role and status of women in Pakistan is a contested issue. Pakistan has signed various international conventions prohibiting violence against women. Additionally, vocal independent print and electronic media are highlighting the problem of spousal violence and increasing public awareness of the issue.

Against this backdrop, the role and position of religious leaders is a very important influence on spousal violence in

Pakistani society. Given their control, community contacts, and social clout, religious leaders can play a positive role in reducing spousal violence by highlighting its negative human rights and health consequences. Instead of making spousal violence into an ideological or controversial issue, it is high time for moderate and conservative forces in Pakistan to find common ground on this women's rights issue (Ali 2005).

Further research with a larger sample is needed to investigate the potential role of religious leaders in helping the victims of spousal violence by providing culturally and religiously appropriate counselling services. Research should also focus on how religious leaders could effectively work together with formal care providers such as health professionals, social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists, and lawyers. The most important thing is that religious leaders should not be neglected or ignored in violence prevention programs; their social capital and community influence should be harnessed to help the victims and reform the perpetrators. The religious leaders should be kept on board through research and training, and should be made aware that the issue of spousal violence is relevant to their role as religious leaders. The formal care-providing institutions should also be encouraged to acknowledge and recognize the importance of religious leaders and proactively collaborate with them in the battle against spousal violence in Pakistan.

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