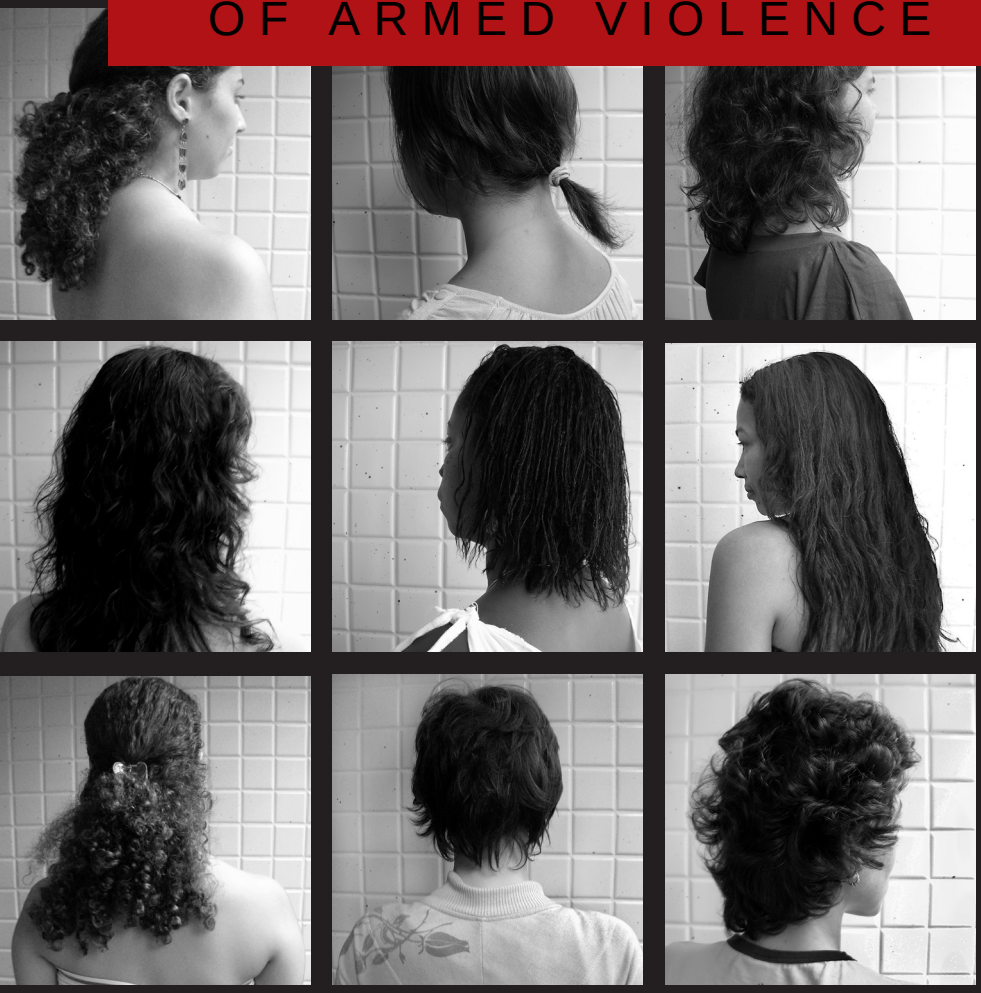
INVISIBLE FACES OF ARMED VIOLENCE



A CASE STUDY ON RIO DE JANEIRO

TATIANA MOURA

7 LETRAS

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A case study on Rio de Janeiro

Edited English version

7 LETRAS

General Research Coordination
Tatiana Moura
Jessica Galeria

Research Team
Carla Afonso
José Manuel Pureza
Marco Aurélio Martins

Cover
Cláudia Duarte

Photographs
Raquel Dias

Editorial Production
Debora Fleck
Isadora Travassos
Jorge Viveiros de Castro
Marília Garcia
Valeska de Aguirre

Graphic design and layout
Victoria Rabello

Proofreading
Sandra Pássaro

Translation
Ana de Andrada

English version proofreading
Chloé Cina
Mónica Rafael
Victor Ferreira

Institutions
Peace Studies Group/Centre for Social Studies (University of Coimbra)
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editora@7letras.com.br
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C O N T E N T S

A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T S

A friend of ours used to say that most people can take a photograph. But for the specific event which he was organising, he wanted to invite a professional photographer. He argued that, although we can all take photographs, the looking was different. That it was important to him to register the images through the eyes of someone who could see what was beyond these images.

To look, to see and *to perceive* have different meanings. This research results from the intersection of these three verbs: to look, with critical eyes, trying to perceive what is beyond the obvious, the visible, using other lenses and other filters. And it results from a sharing of visions, of ways of seeing and perceiving reality.

Many people and institutions influenced this journey decisively, accompanying us from the beginning or joining us along the way. We thank them for their support and their trust, certain that we are just taking the first steps of a long walk.

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P R E F A C E

Bárbara Musumeci Soares*

Invisible Faces of Armed Violence is an unusual book that deals with a harsh and painful subject with great tenderness and sensitivity, adding new dimensions to the accumulated knowledge on armed violence while, at the same time, introducing a dimension of optimism to a devastating setting.

The text and the research process that created it make up an indivisible whole: researching, hearing, allowing to speak, registering, documenting, analysing, writing and intervening interacted in this work in such a way as to finally jeopardise the traditional barriers and frontiers between subject and object. Thus, the study of female roles in the settings of violence developed, almost naturally, into emotional ties between researchers and interviewees and into the commitment to put the gathered information to good use.

Apart from this type of procedure being in accordance with ethical norms for research with human beings, the emotional ties that flourished during the research gave rise to a new work agenda, focused on the indirect impacts of violence and their expression in the family sphere. It can be said that the way of working that resulted in this book is almost a metaphor for one of its theoretical foundations, which consists, as it will be seen, in the emphasis given to the dimension of continuity. Continuity between war situations and peace contexts, between the various types of violence in which men and women get involved and between violent practices and their impacts.

Certainly, the vision that was able to grasp the complexity of the relationships between the many phenomena observed also allowed barriers to be dissolved and dualist visions, so frequent when violence is being analysed, to be escaped from. Whether dealing with the relationship between theory and practice, or between observation and the facts observed, or the image of the groups studied and their violent experiences. In this sense, it became almost a necessity to intervene in the very setting of the phenomena, as a result of a certain quality of relationship established with the people researched. It was not by accident that, as a result of this research on women and girls in armed contexts, a new project was formulated, focused on the family members of victims of massacres, giving its target public the primordial role of protagonist and deconstructing victimised identities.

Readers will therefore find, in the text that follows, an opportunity to rethink a few notions about violence and security that have been repeated uncritically, thus adding new elements to reflection. One of these notions is the idea that violent criminality only concerns the male universe and that the homicide rates express, by themselves, that men – predominantly young and non-white, according to statistics – have a central participation in urban violence settings.

By relativising these notions, based on the combination of rich field material and secondary sources, the research brings to light some crucial aspects for a more sensitive and wider understanding of the violence phenomenon.

Firstly, it reveals gaps and creates a bridge between areas of research on violence and public security that, inexplicably, are still divided and do not communicate: to this day, there are feminist-inspired works about violence affecting women in the private sphere, on one side, and studies on violent criminality, focused on the public world and on male activity, on the other. Everything happens as if there were no significant connection between these phenomena and as if it was natural, therefore, to dismiss *a priori* the possibilities that escape this dualist scheme.

Thus, and while the limited research that exists does not allow its premises to be tested, there is a tendency for certain notions to be reproduced indefinitely: surveys that contemplate interpersonal violence cover only the feminine universe and certain forms of victimisation, such as domestic violence and sexual crimes. In this way, they reinforce the idea that only women are victimised in the private sphere and that street violence does not relate to them in any way. For their part, victimisation research minimises interpersonal aggressions by dealing with them indistinctly and without the appropriate techniques, looking at robberies, thefts and extortions as if they were phenomena of the same nature. In doing so, they prevent their expression and dismiss all nuances of interpersonal aggression, as if they did not represent essential elements for the understanding of violent contexts.

* Anthropologist, researcher from the Centre for Security and Citizenship Studies (CESeC) of Cândido Mendes University, Rio de Janeiro.

It is not surprising, therefore, that these approaches yield incongruous results, reinforcing the impression that violence – or types of violence – can be understood as being separable into two distinct and isolated poles: feminine and masculine.

The bridge that this work proposes to build, in a pioneering way, allows us to glimpse a new horizon of knowledge about violence, the richness of which will depend, as the author suggests, on the intersection of visions that rarely converge. The following text leaves its mark and its contribution in this direction, by challenging schemes and redistributing the pieces on the board, analysing the direct and indirect impacts of armed violence on the lives of women, focusing on the various types of female contributions in the shaping of violent behaviour and valuing the potential of women as formulators in the peace processes.

“ *W O M E N* A N D A R M E D V I O L E N C E I N R I O D E J A N E I R O ? ! ? ”

Introduction or why we did this study

Initially, when we presented and discussed the project “Women and girls in contexts of armed violence: a case study on Rio de Janeiro”, the reactions were varied. Some people expressed surprise, others smirked, while others were perplexed. Less often than we would have liked, some were curious and genuinely interested. Armed violence in Rio de Janeiro, yes, but *women* and armed violence in Rio de Janeiro? Women do not have much to do with armed violence. Why do you want to do this?

In short, it is because we care about security matters and the reduction of violence. We also believe that knowledge and understanding of the roles of girls and women in contexts of armed violence, that the different effects that this violence or types of violence can have on their lives and the ways in which they organise themselves to prevent it, constitute a relevant, if not crucial, aspect of the efforts to promote more inclusive and efficient models and practices for security and prevention of violence.

Also, because we care about Rio de Janeiro, a city divided by its socioeconomic inequalities, but with violent practices which transcend society and that involve and affect the various strata of its population in a specific and complex way. In addition, because we got involved and became involved with its stories, silences, lives and experiences.

The following pages constitute a long answer to these questions. But first, we think it is pertinent to briefly explore some of the questions that (still) persist and provoke reactions such as the ones we referred to earlier.

Women and girls. The probability that men, especially young men, will kill with and die from firearms in Rio de Janeiro, as elsewhere in the world, is much higher than for women. This argument has been used, nationally and internationally, to explain (to legitimise, justify and perpetuate) the absence of women and girls in both research and interventions that are developed in order to respond to armed violence. In general, references to girls or women are made based on their condition of victims or as a vulnerable group. They are usually grouped alongside children and the elderly. This is the case of the United Nations Action Programme on Small Arms of 2001.

This formatted and stereotyped vision with which we often see and interpret reality has both negative and material consequences. We have a tendency to see only what is already visible and, moreover, we tend to define, at times arrogantly, what deserves to be visible and made visible. That which is less visible or does not correspond or legitimise (our) preconceived constructions about reality tends to be excluded, marginalised and condemned to remain invisible. In the opinion of Barbara DuBois (1983), women have been defined not in terms of what they are, but rather of what they are not. That is particularly true, in our opinion, in contexts affected by armed violence. Women and girls are not the majority of those who kill with firearms. Correct. Women and girls are not the ones who die the most from firearms. Correct. So, women and girls have nothing to do with this matter. Wrong. Women, men, young girls and boys participate in this type of violence. They suffer specific consequences and respond to this (or these) type(s) of violence(s). But female (women and girls) participation, the consequences they endure and the responses to violence(s) set up by them often escape what is a traditionally well-established image. For this reason, they remain out of reach of less attentive or less interested visions.

Recognising that women and girls have something to do with armed violence presupposes the need to look beyond established formulas (created precisely to categorise or name that which is most visible and nothing beyond it), as well as trying to understand the dynamics and characteristics of these “other” forms of participation, victimisation and responses. For this, it is necessary to ask other questions, which lead to certain answers. If we do not ask them, we will never know the answers. This was the (theoretical and practical) principle that guided our study and it is explained in more detail in the chapter about the *sex of violences.*

International examples show that the inclusion of women’s issues, needs, vulnerabilities, experiences and forms of resistance has been crucial for the success of policies, projects and programmes which prevent deaths and injuries from firearms. It is essential to understand why this is the case.

This is precisely what we tried to do in the course of this project: to ask other questions and contribute to filling the gaps; gaps that exist in the research and, as a result, in the security policies and programmes in Rio de Janeiro,

Brazil and internationally. We did it by trying to make visible (and audible) the voices and perspectives of girls and women who, in different ways, become involved and/or suffer the effects of armed violence in Rio.

Armed violence. To cause death or injury of others on a large scale (with extremely efficient instruments that are widely accepted and even admired or glamorised, easy to use, transported and hidden) is not a theoretical problem. The problem of armed violence has real implications for hundreds of millions of people, in various contexts: in both war scenarios and peace contexts and in all the other undefined settings that exist between these two poles. This complex problem, which has now reached tragic proportions – annually, in the world, firearms provoke about half a million casualties (Small Arms Survey Yearbook, 2001) – cannot be dealt with through analyses or abstract initiatives centred on firearms that ignore and silence the human side: men, women, girls and boys who see their lives affected by armed violence.

It was this concern with the human aspects of armed violence, and, therefore, of security, which made the use of the expression "armed violence", in the singular, problematic. The variety of ways in which the population becomes involved and relates to firearms, as well as the range of consequences that result from this involvement, do not fit easily into one category, or even into several, as we will demonstrate later. And because the use of firearms, their victims and the scales on which they manifest themselves are varied, we have chosen to talk about "contexts of armed violence" or "types of armed violence", highlighting the relationships or continuums between these types of violence, the multidimensionality of this phenomenon and the specific characteristics of the contexts and the people involved.

THE PROJECT AND THE CHALLENGES

In 2003, when we decided to work together to write the proposal for the study that we are now presenting, we knew that the task would not be an easy one. First, we decided to focus our analysis on women and girls. It was a conscious decision. It is necessary to produce knowledge so that analyses, proposals and gender policies can subsequently be developed.

Secondly, we were conscious of the difficult task of completing a participatory study, committed to change and to the participants of the research; creating and maintaining relationships, acting for change, and trying to contribute to the creation of responses to the needs that were identified.

With all this in mind, the idea started to take shape and, above all, attracted the attention of the people and institutions that would make its execution possible. Thus, in February 2005, we began the project "Women and girls in contexts of armed violence: a case study on Rio de Janeiro", a research-action partnership between the Brazilian NGO Viva Rio and the Peace Studies Group at the Centre for Social Studies of the University of Coimbra (Portugal), funded by the Ford Foundation.

The results presented in this book are the outcome of the involvement and work of a team that on both sides of the Atlantic came together to make this research possible: José Manuel Pureza, Carla Afonso, Tatiana Moura (Peace Studies Group/CES, University of Coimbra), Marco Aurélio Martins and Jessica Galeria (Viva Rio, Rio de Janeiro).

This project had two general objectives. The first was to contribute to the *production of knowledge about the specific and complex roles* played by women and girls in contexts of armed violence in Rio de Janeiro: about their involvement in armed violence, about the diversity and specific characteristics of the effects of these type(s) of violence(s) in their lives, and about their formal and informal responses to this problem. The second was to contribute to the creation and implementation of *more efficient and inclusive strategies to reduce certain types of armed violence*.

In particular, we intended to:

- Identify and analyse the *typologies and motivations for the involvement of women and girls in armed violence* (as direct agents, with active participation, or indirect agents, in supporting roles such as the transportation of firearms, drugs or information), and identify the *symbolism* that they attribute to *firearms*;
- Identify and analyse the *direct consequences* (death and injuries) and some of the *indirect effects of armed violence on the lives of women* (using a weapon to threaten them, as a factor of insecurity in situations of domestic violence and as a determining instrument for the condition of survivors or relatives of a fatal victim of armed violence);
- Identify and uncover interventions or *formal and informal responses* led by women in this context (through civil society groups, victims' associations, demonstrations against armed violence and efforts geared towards change in public policy);
- Stimulate reflection and promote *debate on gender based approaches* to the problem of armed violence within low income communities, civil society groups (particularly groups active in women's rights and violence against women) and at governmental level.

This report represents an initial effort to identify and characterise *some* of the ways in which women and girls become involved and/or may suffer from the effects of armed violence in Rio de Janeiro. We hope that it is just a beginning and that by exposing the diverse practices and insecurities it can contribute to the creation of new responses that are also diverse and inclusive.

Methodology

In terms of methodology, our central concern was to challenge existing preconceived categories and ask the questions that are not normally asked. In this way, and by adopting a feminist approach, the question of the method to be used became, for us, a question about how this method could contribute to change.

Feminist theories challenged traditional disciplinary boundaries and revealed cultural practices, structures and aspects that are articulated (and manifested) in *continuum* and thus help to legitimise and perpetuate the marginalisation and silencing of experiences of various sectors of society, particularly women. Bringing these continuums to light requires, however, the combination of various methodologies.

We began by gathering and analysing the literature on: a) feminist approaches to International Relations, especially with respect to women and security; b) experiences of women and girls in contexts of armed conflicts and responses carried out in these contexts; c) typologies of violent conflicts and particularly urban violence; d) processes of disarmament; e) methodological approaches to the collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data.

We then moved on to collect and analyse statistics and research on the case of Brazil, and in particular on Rio de Janeiro – on violence against women, women's roles in the police as well as women's life experiences as prisoners, on the situation of youngsters and adolescents, on firearms in Brazil – and we collected data from the Ministry of Health on the impacts of armed violence, and crime statistics from the Police.

Based on this theoretical and empirical material, we defined three broad categories or themes to be analysed: 1) the involvement or participation of girls and women in armed violences; 2) the impacts of these types of violences on the lives of women; and 3) the formal and informal strategies employed in these contexts, to confront these violences.

It was stated earlier that the task of categorising or conceptualising invisible experiences was not easy. Essentially, it was because of the continuums of types of armed violence, which manifest themselves in spirals, which are endured (and sometimes carried out) by women and girls that the task of categorising and defining the research groups and themes ("micro-experiences", "micro-contexts") was made difficult. However, this task was necessary in order to systematise and analyse all the data (quantitative and qualitative) collected during the project.

It was also due to the fact that, in order to understand *where* the girls and women actually are, in complex armed violence settings, we had to broaden our vision and look further. To do this, we refer to *involvements in armed violence* and not of involvement, in the singular, in order to include in this category forms of participation (subcategories) that go beyond those normally carried out by men and boys (considered more direct, active and, therefore, more visible); we refer to the *differentiated effects* of armed violence that apart from the deaths and injuries from firearms include other negative consequences resulting from the presence and use of firearms (in particular, in this category, we include the role of the firearm as an instrument to threaten and intimidate girls and women in "micro-contexts" of violence. We also include the experiences of survivors of armed violence; namely, relatives of the dead). Finally, we speak about the *answers*, both formal and informal, that have emerged through the context of armed violence.

The available statistical data, in particular the data managed by the DATASUS/Ministry of Health, is distinguished by gender. It has a national scope and the information is also kept at the state and municipal level. This data is currently widely used in research to measure the impact of armed urban violence in Brazil. The data on crime that is available is less transparent, difficult to access and not always separated by sex. However, these two types of data have been used to show that women and girls are not very affected by armed violence in Brazil: men represent 91% of the deaths from firearms and 90% of hospital admissions which result from injuries also caused by firearms. By measuring the direct and visible aspects of armed violence, the data hides the other consequences that affect women and girls in particular ways, as we shall see in this book. In order to identify some of them we developed other ways to obtain information, especially qualitative information, which allowed us to discover much of what is missing and/or has been excluded from the official sources.

Above all, we tried to listen to and get to know the stories about violence and the responses to this violence from, in particular, girls and women. Scripts for semi-structured interviews were developed and applied to individual and group interviews during the course of the eight months of field research. The following groups were interviewed:[1]

- Prisoners and employees of Talavera Bruce Prison;
- Young women following a socio-educational measure of internment and of semi-liberty, at Santos Dumont School and the Ricardo de Albuquerque Centre for Integrated Resources for Care of Minors (CRIAM), respectively, and employees from both institutions;
- Community leaders of Cantagalo and Jardim Batan (Realengo);

[1] The choice of groups and individuals interviewed resulted from previous contacts and the creation of networks and suggestions given by the research participants themselves.

- Participants and representatives of civil society groups (NGOs): Advocaci, Cemina, Cepia, Centre for Security and Citizenship Studies (CESeC), Single Base for the Favelas (CUFA), Nós do Cinema School for Audiovisual Education, Promundo Institute, Crescer e Viver Social Programme and Viva Rio (team from Public Security Actions Programme – PROASP – and Luta pela Paz Project);
- Women from the *hip hop* movement of Rio de Janeiro;
- Specialists from the public security sector: judges, civil police officers (chiefs of police), military police officers, researchers;
- Relatives of the victims of armed violence (mostly mothers of victims).

Together with the interviews, focus groups were set up with prisoners in Talavera Bruce and mixed groups of young members of low-income communities. With this, we aimed to obtain information to complement the individual interviews, through collective interaction and the natural debate that was generated between the participants.

On the whole, 149 people were interviewed. After the interviews had been transcribed and read, we manually organised the information; identifying patterns in the answers and thereby creating subcategories for each of the overall themes.

Questionnaires were developed and distributed/applied to the following groups:

- Women who went to the service desk at eight out of the nine Women's Police Stations in the City of Rio de Janeiro to inform the authorities about incidents of domestic violence that they had suffered, between September and October of 2005 (questionnaire developed together with CESeC, to be filled in anonymously and voluntarily);
- Prisoners at Talavera Bruce Prison.

In November 2005, in Coimbra, an international experts' meeting on the research theme was held to debate the objectives and methodologies to be used. In June 2006, we presented the main results of the research at a seminar organised in Rio de Janeiro. At this seminar, with representatives from various sectors, the recommendations that we present in this study were elaborated.

An analysis of the representations and language in the press was carried out, centring on the theme tackled by the research.[2] The interest in developing this analysis around the research project's theme is justified by the decisive role that the media now play in identifying, approaching, interpreting and debating the central themes of our societies and inserting these into the public agenda. Indeed, the media often have the power to decide what the current main themes are and to influence public opinion, as well as to mobilise and determine new points on political agendas.[3]

In selecting the news to be analysed, we did not opt for scientific sampling techniques. Instead, we tried to access the greatest possible number of articles, basing the selection on the themes dealt with in the news. In this case, all news articles are related to two themes: women and violence. For the qualitative analysis, we selected news articles from these themes in which one of the following perspectives is presented: women who are victims of violence and women who are aggressors or are involved in criminal practices that do not always include direct aggression. The first group includes women directly involved in violent acts (robbery, homicide or injury) or in acts related to drug trafficking, which lead them to be characterised as "criminals". The second group includes women who are direct victims of violent acts (homicide, robbery, injury, and threat) or relatives of victims.

On the whole, 75 journalistic texts published by the newspapers *O Globo*, *Jornal do Brasil* and *O Dia*[4] over the months of May 2004,[5] January 2006 and February 2006[6] were analysed. Out of the 75 selected articles, 52 are news reports (including notes), 19 are news articles from a special section on women involved in crime and four are opinion pieces.

[2] The selection, collection and analysis of the press articles centred on the project's theme were carried out by Mónica Rafael, Sílvia Roque and Carla Afonso (Peace Studies Group/CES, University of Coimbra), who had the unsurpassable support of the team from the Centre for Security and Citizenship Studies (CESeC), especially Bárbara Soares, Sílvia Ramos, Angélica Silva, Greice Conceição and Gabriel Fonseca da Silva, and with the collaboration of Susana Baptista and Pedro Abreu, from the Centre for Social Studies of the University of Coimbra.

[3] More information on media representations of violence in Ramos and Paiva (orgs.) (2005).

[4] The newspaper *O Globo* is one of the main opinion-making vehicles on a national level and the newspaper *O Dia* is known for its markedly popular character. Both have national circulation, but operate specifically in Rio de Janeiro with a broad local section. Besides, they are considered the newspapers which publish the most news about Rio de Janeiro, particularly with respect to the coverage of violence, crime and security.

[5] The month of May 2004 was chosen due to the existence of a special section on women criminals with a wealth of material for analysis.

[6] The months of January and February 2006 were chosen because the research project was taking place then, in Rio de Janeiro.

The analyses of the press are found in the chapters on the other faces of armed violence and on the different effects of firearms on women and girls, respectively.

Parallel to the research, we became involved in processes for the reduction of armed violence in Rio de Janeiro. In Brazil, this included the National Referendum on the prohibition of the sale of firearms and ammunition and in movements and meetings related to the new Brazilian Domestic Violence Law (current Maria da Penha Law, August 2006)[7] and in meetings with healthcare professionals aimed at promoting a useful body of information on domestic violence. Internationally, we participated in the UN process on small arms and work carried out by the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA)[8] and in sessions of the Public Hearing promoted by the National Justice and Peace Commission, entitled "For a society that is safe and free of arms" in Portugal.[9]

For Maria Mies (1983), the validity of a theory or research does not depend on the application of certain methodologies or rules, but rather on its potential to create and/or guide practices that lead to a greater critical consciousness. If this is the case, then the validity of our methodological options will only be confirmed in the future.

[7] Law 11,340, approved on August 7, 2006, was named Maria da Penha Maia, in honour of the biopharmacist who fought 20 years to see her aggressor husband sentenced and became a symbol against domestic violence. In 1983, she was shot in the back by her husband, Marco Antonio Herredia, and became paraplegic. In 2001, after 18 years, the Interamerican Human Rights Commission accused Brazil of negligence and omission in relation to domestic violence. Only in 2003 was Penha's ex-husband arrested.

[8] In June 2005 and June 2006, in the Biennial Conference of States and in the UN Revision Conference on Small Arms, we presented, in New York, the preliminary and final results for the project "Women and Girls in contexts of armed violence: a case study on Rio de Janeiro", in meetings of the IANSA Women's Network.

[9] This Public Hearing occurred between November 2005 and May 2006.

THE SEX OF VIOLENCE: FROM THE HOME TO THE OUTSIDE WORLD

The concepts and practices of war (and peace) can adapt and change to new realities. The settings of war change; its players change, and the means used to reach its objectives change. In the 1990s, authors from a broad group of backgrounds analysed the so-called *new wars* (Kaldor, 1999), which were distinguished from traditional wars by their players, objectives and strategies.

Concepts and practices change, but the *sexual* character of wars seems to be permanent: all wars or armed conflicts rest on the construction of identities and on structures and mechanisms of power and domination that are at the heart of a patriarchal system, which some feminists refer to as *war system*. In order to perpetuate itself, this system requires the construction of a certain type of masculinity (hegemonic, dominant, and violent). In its turn, this masculinity always requires masculinity(ies) and femininity(ies) that are silenced, invisible and, therefore, marginalised, to serve as its antithesis, denial and counterpoint. From this, we can see that the manifestations of this system are not exclusive to contexts that experience a declared or recognised armed conflict, and can be found in undefined contexts, undergoing an apparent situation of formal peace.

This approach highlights the need to perceive and analyse the existence of *continuums* of types of violence (armed, domestic, sexual, social, economic...) as an expression of a reality in which war is not an isolated social fact, but rather something that invades everyday life; a cultural reality that causes many to confuse war with peace.

By recognising the existence of these contexts and by analysing them, we aim to reveal how restrictive and exclusive the current (and closed) classifications or definitions of *war* and *peace* are. We analyse transversal existence, dissemination and use of firearms in several contexts (particularly in a specific context of formal peace) and the construction of a *war system* that perpetuates the exclusion and marginalisation of women (and other marginalised groups).

We further aim to challenge thought and to find new mechanisms to respond to the insecurities created by these newest wars, analysing alternative and non-violent forms of prevention and transformation of these conflicts – *newest peaces.*

The new geography of war(s)

We know that not all types of violence are synonymous to war. We know, however, that both violence and war are social constructions and not biological determinisms. Namely, war and any form of organised violence is a cultural phenomenon that can be learnt and unlearnt. As Jan Jindy Pettman (1996: 88) states,

> War corresponds to a set of social practices; it is a form of politics that presupposes the organised capacity to use violence on a wide scale and the predisposition to resort to violence to resolve conflicts.

War is, therefore, a dynamic concept that is complex and can be interpreted in several ways. An analysis of the evolution and conceptualisation of international conflicts allows us, on the one hand, to observe the tendency for approximation between so-called war zones and so-called peace zones, the generation of undefined spaces; and, on the other hand, to identify *continuums* of violence (or types of violence), from the global to the local scale.

Contrary to the view of the "old wars" (international), in the new wars (intranational or civil) that surfaced at the end of the Cold War, violence was no longer seen as an exception – a moment of intense irrationality, with a clear beginning and end – and became an "installed" expression of a culture of violence, with varying intensity and extremeness. This persistence became, however, a crucial element of political and economic survival in many regions of the world, satisfying the new political war economies, which depend on this violence *continuum*.

Many wars of the 1990s arose from an amplification of the contradictions and internal relations that had shaped preceding formal peace negotiations – which ultimately corresponded to a violent peace or an undefined zone (Duffield, 2001: 188–189). Alternatively, these new wars are inscribed in a *continuum* of violence that crosses borders, in which the emergence of agglomerates of war economies and the interdependence between war zones

and peace zones are essential defining traits. The same author, Mark Duffield, argues that the fundamental difference between the "old" and the "new" wars lies not in the matter of the great number of civilian deaths (since mass death mechanisms have existed since at least World War II) or in the fact that they are revealed internally to the states (since internal wars already existed, albeit camouflaged), but rather in the (il)legitimacy attributed to the leaders and motivations of these "new" wars. When the legitimacy given to the confrontation between blocks and to nationalist ideologies disappeared, leaders and their motivations emerged, with the end of the Cold War, as illegitimate, savage and incomprehensible in the new order of international relations, which is marked by a growing importance and visibility of humanitarian and human security matters.

At present, we are facing the dissemination, on a global level, of another type of violent conflict that has been emerging between the lines of other types of war and that we daringly refer to as micro or *newest wars*. With the increased visibility and impact of these "newest" wars, the way to look at war and the armed violence phenomena within International Relations also changes profoundly. The focus becomes the links found between mechanisms and expressions that are simultaneously localised and globalised. It is the dissemination of armed violence at an increasingly micro-scale, with its preferred settings positioned on the peripheries of large urban centres situated in countries where there is formal peace, and with young men as its players (whether direct victims or agents of violence), most of whom belong to marginalised social classes. In spite of the fact that they manifest themselves at a micro or local scale, these *wars* are a world phenomenon, both by their global dissemination and by their dependence on and connection with contexts that are considered to be war and post-war contexts.

The newest wars differ from simple large-scale internal criminal activity. The increasingly blurred line between the internal and international sphere in these settings means that the definition or characterisation of these new conflicts depend on the "lenses" or the filters with which we analyse these contexts. If we focus solely and exclusively on the internal dimension it is not possible to see much more than a situation of highly concentrated criminality, which lacks any political objectives. But if we understand the connections between these local phenomena and the international context, we shall see that we are facing the emergence of a new kind of conflict, disseminated on a global scale. When we refer to this type of violent conflict as "newest wars", we aim to highlight this important difference.

Latin America constitutes one of the most expressive examples of this phenomenon, where formal and institutional peace did not represent a decrease in violence, but rather a "democratisation of violence" (Rodgers: 2003). This type of violence, which emerged in the 1980s and 1990s, resulted from the combination of several factors[10] and has paradoxical faces. The case of El Salvador is a good example of this: between 1990 and 1995, after the signing of the peace accords, the homicide rate increased from 79 to 139 homicides per 100 thousand inhabitants (Briceño-León, 2002: 13). This author formed the view that more deaths began to be registered in the calm of peace than during the torments of war.

The scale of these manifestations of violence is different from the other wars. It is a concentration of great violence in very limited territories, or "micro-territories" (neighbourhoods, urban communities, suburban areas), within a national context of apparent, institutionalised and formal peace.

Indeed, in this reconfiguration of the manifestations and types of violence, *urban spaces and their peripheries* are the elected territories of the newest wars. As Eduardo Galeano says, with respect to Nicaragua, the most astounding thing is the comparison between past and present. If peace reigned in the streets of the country's cities during the war years, since peace was declared the streets became war settings, battlefields (Galeano, 1998: 314–316). However, this democratisation and urbanisation of violence is imperfect, and some sectors and areas of society and the city are more susceptible to violence than others.

The youngest of the young are those who often run the most risks, as shown by Luke Dowdney's two studies about children in the drug trade (Dowdney, 2003 and 2005), which establish a parallel between young men involved in drug trafficking (in Rio de Janeiro and in nine other urban centres across the world) and child soldiers. But due to the alleged depoliticising of these newest wars, the former are less visible and more difficult to categorise. They do however face mortality rates that are far greater than those in situations of declared armed conflict.

[10] Some authors point out, among others, the persistence of high levels of social inequality, low or negative rates of social growth, the high rate of unemployment and informal work, the rapid growth of big cities and metropolitan areas, the homogenisation and inflation of expectations of young people born in poorer communities, the absence or fragility of basic urban infrastructures, basic social services and civil society organisations in poorer communities, the growing availability of small arms and drugs, the growing and ever-strengthening presence of organised crime, the culture of violence maintained and perpetuated by organised crime and the media and, finally, the low efficiency level of the police and other institutions of the criminal justice system.

The main challenge with analysing the evolution and (re)conceptualisation of wars is how to question with precision the separation between wars and "lesser forms" of violence that show, in particular, the importance of the notion of *continuums* of violence as an expression of a reality in which war is not an isolated social fact, but rather something that attacks our everyday life as a cultural system.

(In)visible faces

Stereotyped visions of reality always produce perverse results. The fact that it is men – and in the case of urban armed violence, young men – who kill and die the most has led to the oversight and neglect of other actors involved in this violence.

Alternatively, attempts to understand and create an immediate response to the number of dead and wounded in this context of newest wars has led to less attention being given to other forms (no less important) of armed violence and its effects on the lives of various sectors of society, namely women and girls. These effects, which are often silenced, are shared by various local contexts, thus becoming global (or: thus assuming a global dimension).

Expressions of the various types of violence that constitute sources of insecurity present themselves on many scales, from the interpersonal to the international. Accordingly, we must question *who* or *what* has been considered the object/subject of security, what levels of analysis are favoured and *who* or *what* constitutes a *threat* to security in security theories and public policies. For this reason, it is precisely one of the main objectives of this study: to make these "new" risks and their different scales visible.

Finally, we believe that, although it is important, the attention given to the most visible practices and players (and victims) of violence has contributed to the invisibility of the answers and reactions to this violence or the many success stories in this field. While we maintain that the newest wars are local phenomena disseminated on a global scale, presenting specific settings for both war and peace, we also maintain that proposals for violence prevention, reduction and transformation, practiced on a micro-scale can represent proposals for a macro or global peace. These are examples of *newest peace*. After all, as Italo Calvino (1999) reminds us, there are two ways to not suffer in the hell that we live in each day. The first is to accept this hell and to be part of it to the extent that we no longer see it. We have chosen the second: *to try to find those things around us that are not hell, and give them a form that will allow them to endure*.

Continuums, spirals and identities

Feminist analyses of international relations have denounced the central place occupied by the social construction of a *war system* (Reardon, 1985) based on concepts and practices that exclude. This war system is present in each layer of society. It is not limited to situations of armed conflict or wars recognised as such. Violence within the family and sexual violence, which use firearms as an instrument with which to threaten, and which occur in the so-called private sphere, during times of war and "peace", are part of a culture that normalises, naturalises and privatises violence against women. They correspond to sexualised violence that, despite being expressed on a micro-scale, is global. That is, they also reflect attempts to construct a certain type of dominant masculinity, the same one that underlies the war system, the same one that has shaped and resulted from the reconfiguration of local-international conflicts.

This analysis supports the *continuums* of types of violence beyond what is officially considered war. With this, we aim to demonstrate the proximity between war zones and peace zones, particularly through the analysis of the exclusion and subjugation of women; a phenomenon that we consider to cross various contexts.

We believe that the emergence of new and newest types of war is possible because the underlying system (and the version of masculinity associated with it) has an enormous capacity to transform and adapt to the emerging trends on the international arena. Through the eyes of some people, the new and newest wars are low-intensity conflicts, with no political objectives, *demasculinised* (Van Creveld, 2000) and, therefore, depoliticised. Indeed, only the dominant groups have the power to describe a certain type of conflict as a war. However, we have been watching the transformation of wars for more than a decade. And along with this transformation, we have watched the (re)construction of identities that legitimise and perpetuate them.

At its core, the underlying axis common to the various wars is attached to the construction and promotion of a type of masculinity that is considered to be dominant. It is heterosexual, homophobic and misogynistic, considering professional performance (the resulting gains from the profession) and the capacity to acquire material goods as the base for respect and social status. In order to be dominant, this type of masculinity aims to maintain a hierarchical power structure, subjugating women (femininity) and some men.

However, and in the words of Michael Kimmel,[11] violence perpetrated in the name of this masculinity is not so much the result of an identity, but rather an attempt to re-establish power and, therefore, to belong to a "group" (that is valued, respected and holds onto power).

Armed violence often becomes an alternative means of affirmation. The growing social fragmentation and polarisation is compensated, in some cases, by the development of alternative forms of social identity and the search for economic and symbolic power (Winton, 2004).

Gary Barker's (2005) analysis of the motives that lead young people, in several urban centres across the world, to join gangs or armed groups, to "kill or die to attain a socially-legitimate version of masculinity" reveal precisely this. Barker maintains that the demands of the dominant version of masculinity in contexts of poverty (or inequality) all over the world are related to obtaining goods, money, respect and women. However, the means that its main players are prepared to use (and that are available to them) mark the frontier between the adoption of a violent masculinity and other types of masculinity. By associating dominant masculinity with the possession and use of firearms, some young men, trying to occupy a place in highly hierarchical societies, resort to armed violence as a way to obtain an enhanced social status and power, and to demonstrate their hegemony.

That is, the democratisation and inflation of young people's expectations in large urban centres corresponds precisely to the attempt to construct and promote a model of dominant masculinity. In the context of newest wars, in which multiple situations of social and economic exclusion are exacerbated, the choices available to young people in urban areas are limited. Thus, the failures of traditional social institutions on all levels greatly contribute to the choices that some young people make to join gangs. On a macro level, the state fails to give meaning to citizenship, especially for the most marginalised (Winton, 2004). The resulting growing social fragmentation and polarisation is sometimes compensated by the development of alternative forms of social identity, and violence can become a resource through which a recognised identity is obtained (Briceño-León and Zubillaga, 2002). In summary, although they do not make up the majority, many young men "kill and die to attain a socially-legitimate version of masculinity" (Barker, 2005: 83).

However, there has not been much debate on the construction of femininity(ies) in contexts of armed violence. On the one hand, we know that certain versions of dominant masculinity depend on the construction of their negation or opposition – vulnerable and passive femininities. But on the other hand, we have also observed an inflation or standardisation of the expectations of girls and women, as well as their frustrations, in these contexts. Thus, it is imperative to consider and analyse the emergence of very new identities or femininities and understand in what way and through what practices they are constructed. That is, to make the simplistic analysis that a dominant masculinity opposes a vulnerable femininity more sophisticated and subtle, and to understand what type of relations cause these constructions of identity: whether it is opposition, imitation, rejection, admiration, dependency, autonomy or subservience... It is precisely these relations and the connections between them that will form the basis of this book.

[11] Communication made at the experts' meeting of the project "Women and Girls in Contexts of Armed Violence: a case study on Rio de Janeiro", held at the School of Economics of the University of Coimbra, on the 4th and 5th of November 2005.

L o o k i n g a t t h e s i l e n c e s

A R M E D V I O L E N C E : T H E *O T H E R F A C E S*

> *I am tired of being the blood, the earth and the scream. I address the storyteller and those who have passed the tale down, written it down, recited and believed it. Is that all? I ask the storyteller. Where am I then? Do I have to be Abel if I don't want to be Cain? Is there no other way?*
>
> DOROTHEE SÖLLE, 1982

Some authors (Nash and Tavera, 2003) maintain that the proposals for analysing women's participation in wars throughout the centuries, and the impact of these wars on their lives are *spaces without history*; characterised by the absence of (some) experiences of silenced authors. This history becomes, therefore, an incomplete and partial history.

The exposure brought by the denunciation of war strategies and practices that use girls' and women's bodies as battlegrounds – as was the case with the large-scale sexual violence and homicide of Tutsi girls and women in Rwanda, in 1994, or the mass rapes perpetrated against girls and women in Bosnia, in the conflict of 1992 – made it impossible to consider wars as an exclusively masculine terrain. Women had come to be part of this history, the history of these conflicts. However, once again, many histories were shown to the world in a partial and incomplete way. The reasons for this violence were not explored; their medium and long-term impacts became much less visible and marginalised other experiences.

Many of the ready-made ways of seeing these and other conflicts have tended, precisely, to fit into a mould and to reproduce stereotypes, presenting and considering women and girls merely as victims and, beyond that, as passive victims, with no capacity for reaction or response. And this type of construction underlies and legitimises another stereotype, no less entrenched, of the innate association between masculinity and violence. The stereotypes or myths essential for maintaining a war system – that permits, normalises and even trivialises violence (in times of war or in times of peace) – subtly impregnate our society, our lives and our homes. In this way, to question that which has been constructed so as to remain unquestioned, or to denounce inconsistencies and expose other faces of this system, becomes a difficult task.

In contexts where the practice of violence or types of violence, particularly armed violence, has become daily, the hows and whys of these types of violence manifesting themselves from the most private, micro-sphere, to the most visible, macro-sphere, must be questioned. The myths or preconceptions on which they rest, and which make them (almost) legitimate and socially acceptable, must be denounced.

The construction of femininity as inherently peaceful (and passive) has served as a counterpoint and legitimisation for the construction of a violent masculinity, which resorts to (fire)arms as a way to attain and/or maintain its power. All those who contradict this association, by now a natural one, generate suspicion, discomfort and repudiation. They are the targets of media-based, momentary and fleeting looks and attention, which spend little time trying to understand what underlies this suspicion, or what characteristics and standards apply to these *exceptions to the rule*.

Some of these characteristics and standards are precisely what we have tried to identify in the course of this research. We have tried to see, behind the hypervisibility of the agents of armed violence in Rio de Janeiro – young, poor, marginalised men, living in low-income communities, who do the most killing and dying –, which stories are being silenced or looked at with suspicion.

We discuss girls and women[12] who participate in violence, especially in armed violence, the specificities of their participation and the underlying motives for their actions. We know that armed violence has many faces, manifests itself in different ways (some more visible than others) and has multiple agents and players. The fact that in Rio de Janeiro (and across the world) the percentage of male transgressors is much higher than that of women transgressors must not be used as an argument for closing our eyes and marginalising other specificities of violent

[12] Under article 2 of the Statute for Children and Adolescents (ECA), for the purposes of this law, a child is any person less than 12 years of age and an adolescent is between 12 and 18 years of age. Thus, when we mention girls and young women in this study, we are adopting the formal ECA distinction, that is, of ages between 12 and 18.

(and armed) crime. To look at the involvement of girls and women in violent practices contributes decisively to a better and more complex understanding of reality and to the creation of efficient policies and programmes for prevention of and response to armed violence.

In order to do this, we used the survey and analysis of studies on the theme (especially the study carried out by Soares and Ilgenfritz (2002) on women prisoners) and existing statistical data on female criminality in the city of Rio de Janeiro (Childhood and Youth Court of the City of Rio de Janeiro[13] – VIJ, of the Socio-Educational Actions Department[14] – DEGASE – and data from the Talavera Bruce Prison). However, these data, which are extremely sparse, only give us a partial view of reality and do not come close to revealing the complexity of the involvement of girls and women in armed violence.

In this context, we tried to understand and listen to the subjective aspects and singularities of this involvement, through semi-structured interviews, carried out individually and collectively, focus groups and, above all, participating observation carried out over the eight months of research field work. The qualitative analysis results that we present in this chapter reveal life experiences, opinions and ways of seeing of the following groups of participants:[15] thirty two prisoners at the Talavera Bruce prison; ten female adolescents, who were serving a socio-educational sentence of internment or semi-liberty; ten young people (female and male), who were participating in social projects; professionals, who work with transgressing adolescents; and experts in the area of public security.

Through this analysis we aim to understand the specificities of girls' and women's participation or involvement in armed violence, offering clues to deepen the understanding of this social phenomenon. It is only with this knowledge and recognition that preventative and responsive measures adequate to women's reality(ies) can be created.

Looking closely...

A vision moulded and accustomed to male practices and faces was precisely what caused people to regard us with suspicion when we first began to talk about our research. These people would state that women and girls had nothing to do with armed violence. It is true that, if we compare the number of young men/men arrested or imprisoned for involvement with criminality to the number of young women/women involved, we will see that in absolute terms the numbers for female participation are far lower than the former:

- In December 2005, the male prison population in the State of Rio de Janeiro (in semi-open and closed regimes) was 15,063 and the female population was 787 (DEPEN);[16] of these, 12,536 men and 779 women were in a closed regime.
- The number of male adolescents in conflict with the law who went through the Childhood and Youth Court of Rio de Janeiro (VIJ) was 4,661 in 2001; 6,232 in 2002; 4,700 in 2003; and 5,214 in 2004. For women: 691 in 2001; 770 in 2002; 692 in 2003; and 889 in 2004. According to these data, the number of female adolescents going through the VIJ increased by 28% between 2001 and 2004, whereas the number of male adolescents increased by 11% (tables 1 and 2).
- In 2005, the annual average for adolescents (male and female) in conflict with the law, dealt with by the DEGASE in Rio de Janeiro, was 2,300. Out of this total, 600 were serving a socio-educational internment sentence and 339 were in semi-liberty. In the case of young women, we see that, from this total, 47 adolescents were serving a socio-educational internment sentence (Santos Dumont School) and 20 were serving a socio-educational semi-liberty sentence (Ricardo de Albuquerque CRIAM).

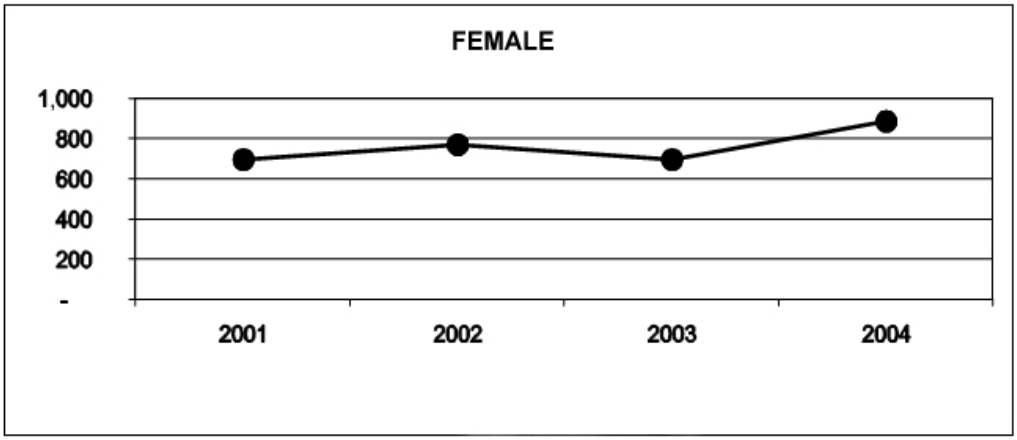
[13] The Childhood and Youth Court is the competent body for the territory of the district of Rio de Janeiro for judging adolescents who commit felonies.

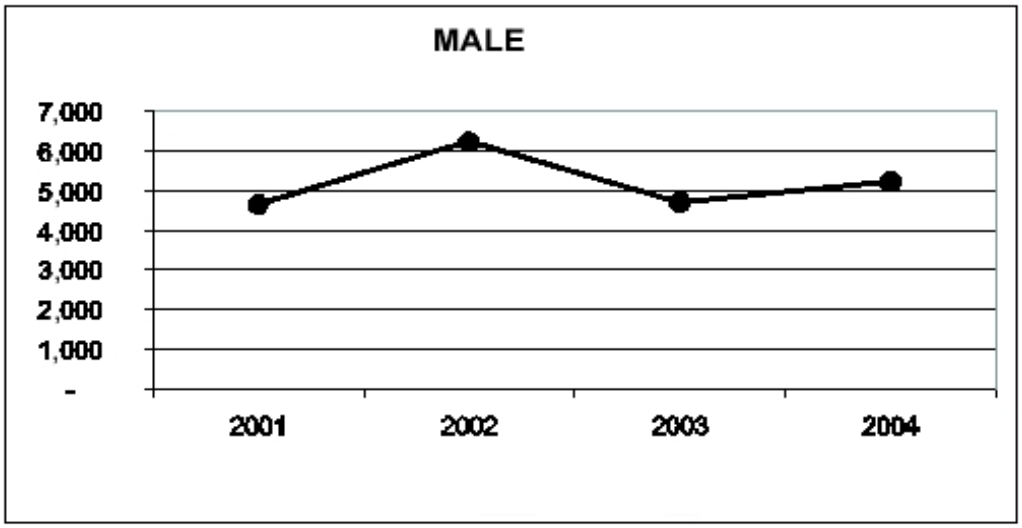
[14] In the State of Rio de Janeiro, the performance of the socio-educational measures of restricted liberty, semi-liberty and internment, is the domain of the General Department of Socio-Educational Actions – DEGASE –, connected to the Human Rights Office. This department was created by Decree no. 1843 of 26/1/1993, with the power to provide, control and coordinate actions associated to the performance of Socio-Educational Measures relative to the total universe of the State of Rio de Janeiro.

[15] These are the directly identifiable groups. Apart from these, we must consider the innumerable individual contributions made by people directly or indirectly involved with violence.

[16] National Penitentiary Department (DEPEN), Brazilian Penitentiary System, Ministry of Justice, 2006.

Tables 1 and 2
Number of Adolescents going through VIJ[17]





Source: Statistics Report of the Childhood and Youth Court
Period of 1/1/2001 to 31/12/2004.

A pioneering study carried out by Barbara Soares and Iara Ilgenfritz (2002) on the situation of women incarcerated in the State of Rio de Janeiro – their characterisation and the history of violence experienced in their lifetimes – reveals that, between 1988 and 1999/2000, the female prison population in the State of Rio grew 132% in absolute terms, 36% more than the male population. This increase was due, largely, to the number of women sentenced for possession, use and trafficking of drugs (that went from 36% in 1988 to 56% in 2000). Out of the 524 women interviewed for this research, 294 of them had been arrested for drug-related felonies (use, trafficking, gang formation) and 163 (31%) had been sentenced for violent crimes (homicide, infanticide, bodily harm, theft, robbery, kidnapping, extortion, sexual assault). Nevertheless, the total female prison population (633 women) corresponded, in 2000, to only 3.7% of the total prison population of the State of Rio de Janeiro.

In 2004, according to data from DEPEN, this percentage rose to 5.8% (corresponding to 1,102 women in Rio de Janeiro's prison system, in closed, semi-open and provisional regimes). In 2005, for women serving prison sentences in closed regimes, we found that the number rose from 678 (in 2004) to 779 (in 2005).

[17] Although the Childhood and Youth Court has statistical data relative to the offenders, the offences committed and the decisions made, not much of the data is separated by sex. Tables 1 and 2 constitute the only available data in which it is possible to know the sex of the adolescents.

Due to the shortage of data on the typology of crime committed by the female prison population of Rio de Janeiro, we focused on a more reduced universe, which part of our research was devoted to. Thus, we found that in 2005, according to data provided by the Talavera Bruce prison,[18] out of the 310 women[19] serving sentences at this unit, 55% had been sentenced for drug-related felonies, 15% for theft and larceny, 11% for homicide, 8% for kidnapping and 11% for other crimes. Data for 2006 from the same prison show us that the number of incarcerated women went from 310 to 340, although this increase was largely due to the closing and resulting transfer of inmates from another unit to Talavera Bruce. Out of the 340 women[20] serving sentences at Talavera Bruce,[21] 56% have been sentenced for crimes associated to drug trafficking (articles 12, 14 and 16 of Law no.6, 368, of October 21st, 1976), 25.6% for theft, 6.9% for kidnapping, 4.4% for homicide, 3.5% for larceny and the same percentage for other crimes.

For the purposes of our study, we requested data on the carrying of and/or contact with firearms by the women incarcerated in Talavera Bruce prison: out of the 340 inmates in this prison, 55% had never had any contact with firearms, 17% had carried a weapon and 28% had had some type of contact (as aggressor and/or victim) with a weapon. That is, 45% of the women incarcerated in Talavera Bruce had had some type of contact with a weapon during their life.

As to the involvement of female adolescents in crime in Rio de Janeiro, we found that the existing quantitative data did little to help us understand the typology of crimes committed by young women, since both the VIJ and the DEGASE data are not separated by sex. We know that in 2005 drug trafficking was responsible for the passage of 35% of adolescents (male and female sex) through DEGASE, followed by crimes against property – theft and larceny, 29% and 17%, respectively – and 2% for carrying a firearm and homicide.[22]

The interviews carried out during this study show that, although the statistics have rendered them invisible, women and girls also become involved with armed criminality. The words of several interviewees reveal that they become increasingly involved and that this involvement is happening at younger and younger ages (12 or 13 years old). However, their forms of involvement (since they do not fit into the categories invented and established for the male sex) are minimised or go unnoticed by inattentive eyes that only see the visible side of this scenario. Indeed, and in the words of Soares and Ilgenfritz (2002: 127), considering this neglect of the gender question,

> (...) it is not surprising that women are only remembered when they participate in a crime that has great repercussions, which makes newspaper headlines. At these times, a sensationalist atmosphere is produced in relation to a supposed escalation of women's participation in crime, until the violence committed by men comes back into play and they are forgotten once more.

From the analysis of representations and language in the written press, we can conclude that great emphasis is given to women aggressors (out of 75 news items about women and violence analysed, women are identified as aggressors in 76.6% of the cases) and this is particularly noticeable in those news items in which, there being multiple aggressors, including a woman, the emphasis is placed on her. There are titles such as *Woman with rifle kills two*[23] or *A maid in service of crime*.[24] Likewise, there is the place that such treatment of women (namely, singling them out as the authors of violence) occupies in the central body of the news item, as in the case of *In the unrest of the home*,[25] in which, out of ten aggressors, only one is a woman. In this item, there are three references to the woman, including a detailed physical description. In all of these news items, references to the male elements are minimal.

The type of language used for women aggressors varies according to the type of news item and the type of newspapers, whether more or less sensationalist. However, although a significant part of this analysis refers to several news items in a Special Section[26] on women criminals, we think it is important to look at the way in which women who escape the feminine stereotype are represented, at least in some respects. They are often characterised, from a psychological point of view, as "cold", "daring", "vain", "clever" or, from a physical point of view, in detail,

[18] Data on the prison population of Talavera Bruce Penitentiary on September 2nd, 2005.
[19] As to the profile of the women prisoners, we were able to verify that 75% of the inmates were non-white, 70% were aged between 18 and 39 years of age, and 67% were educated to primary school level.
[20] The majority (66%) are aged between 18 and 35, 67% were educated to primary school level and 75% are non-white.
[21] Data on the prison population of Talavera Bruce Prison on November 8th, 2006.
[22] DEGASE, Technical Assistance/Statistics Department.
[23] *O Dia*, February 3rd, 2006.
[24] *O Dia*, February 1st, 2006.
[25] *O Dia*, February 8th, 2006.
[26] *O Dia*, issues from 23rd to 26th May, 2004.

regarding their height, hair colour and build ("young", "white", "thin", "curly hair"). A reference to the fact that they are "pretty" is also common. There are at least two "types" of hypersexualised women aggressors who make the news: one has a seemingly very feminine physical appearance and manner, including the "criminal's girlfriend", the other is the masculinised aggressor. In addition, their preferences and lifestyles also appear to be newsworthy, as shown by the references to a liking for nightlife and for luxury goods.

Sometimes there is a comparison between the acts practiced by women and those that are normally characterised as masculine: "They are like men: they carry rifles, wear hoods and even kill".[27] The expression "even kill" reveals a mixture of suspicion and admiration for the women who deviate from the peaceful stereotype. The use of weapons and the capacity to take lives are elements that deconstruct the traditional images for women and are often compensated by affirming, nonetheless, characteristics that are considered specific to women. That is, there is a desire to show that her role comes exactly from the fact of being a woman, with the most cited functions being those of "tricking", "distracting" and "seducing" the victims, also linking feminine participation to an increase in danger, since the social construction of the "criminal" identity has been confused and an element of illusion, of falsehood, associated to the feminine, has been introduced.

Other images, apart from photographs, are sometimes used. That is the case with the Special Section on women criminals,[28] where an image of Lara Croft, the adventurer from games and films, occupies the whole left side of the page, implicitly transmitting the message that women in crime are "beautiful, dangerous and armed", valuing the image and devaluing the crime.

When the approach, depending on the newspaper and the type of article, leans towards sensationalism, we believe that the result is the creation of figures, representations and types that can be loved or hated, with a discourse that turns the motivations of women in crime into something "more superficial" than those of men. For example, the quest for an easy life, for luxury goods: "She never experienced financial difficulties, but she entered the world of crime because she is obsessed with designer clothes and shoes",[29] or "many women are seduced by the good life offered by the criminals".[30] And, therefore, they are also more given to remorse and sentimental reactions, such as tears when they are captured: "The blonde cried, begging not to go to jail."[31] Sometimes there is a tendency to devalue their participation in the crime, attributing it to moments of impulse and irrationality when women allow themselves to be lured: "This serves as an example for girls who want to do anything to get ahead in life and don't watch who they go around with"[32] – lawyer to a woman arrested in connection with drug trafficking, used as an argument for her defence.

However, the practices of (armed) violence with a feminine face are varied and are an integral part of the setting of urban armed violence experienced in Rio de Janeiro. To recognise these particularities and to include the needs of girls and women in the policies for prevention and response to armed violence constitute crucial steps for the efficiency of these measures.

…the other roles

Some analyses of the construction of identities in times of armed conflict[33] alert us to the fact that, in these contexts, the differences between men (masculinity) and women (femininity) are reinforced erroneously, simplifying identities: an active role is attributed to men and women assume more invisible, "mere" support roles, mostly in the private sphere.

In the contexts of armed violence, and in the case of Rio de Janeiro, this tendency seems to repeat itself. The representations and analyses of the involvement of both young and adult women in this type of violence seem to be reduced to one of two hypersexualised options that are often presented on extreme poles: one results from some kind of relationship with male agents of armed violence (girlfriend, wife or companion); the other comes from some kind of "deviance" in behaviour, which makes comparison with behaviours perceived as masculine "inevitable".

[27] *O Dia*, May 25th, 2004.
[28] *O Dia*, May 25th, 2004.
[29] *O Dia*, May 19th, 2004.
[30] *O Dia*, May 26th, 2004.
[31] *O Dia*, May 23rd, 2004.
[32] *O Dia*, May 26th, 2004.
[33] For example, Enloe (1993); Pettman (1996); and Tickner (1992).

"Maria Fuzil (Mary Rifle)" *versus* "Lili Carabina (Lili Carabine)".[34] Sometimes attributes are mixed together: beautiful, armed and dangerous. The two poles oscillate between, on the one hand, the role of trophy or trophy-like incentive and, on the other, the suspicion provoked by an aggressive and violent femininity, immediately categorised as and associated with masculinity.

These are, however, simplistic and reductive representations of the possible participation of girls and women in armed violence in Rio de Janeiro. Stereotyping these two extremes has perverse effects. On the one hand, it leads to the invisibility of various types of participation located between these images. On the other hand, it obscures and simplifies the characteristics of various types of involvement, especially the existence of connections, accumulations and *continuums* between these forms of involvement.

In order to understand these forms and characteristics of the involvement or participation of girls and women in armed violence, specifically armed violence associated to drug trafficking and theft crimes (which constitute the highest percentage of felonies committed by women and young women), it is necessary to broaden categories and go beyond the standards that have been created for (and in relation to) the male sex. In the course of the interviews carried out during this research it became clear that the participation of women and girls in armed violence in Rio de Janeiro is heterogeneous and conditioned by various factors.

For methodological reasons and to facilitate understanding, we have chosen to divide the types of feminine involvement into three categories: *1) as an incentive for men to commit armed violence; 2) base and/or secondary roles* in this violence; and *3) direct/active/visible involvement* in armed violence. Each of these categories or forms of participation of girls and women has their own expressions and results from specific factors. However, these specificities and the motivations that lead to this participation are not hermetic or isolated; they form combinations, accumulate, and result in plural and complex forms of involvement.

It is important to mention that none of the participants in this research has been named, when the interviews are quoted, in the course of this chapter. The names of the young women who were serving socio-educational sentences of internment and semi-liberty are fictitious, and were chosen by the women themselves.

The *glamour* of armed violence

Some studies on the involvement of young men in armed violence in Rio de Janeiro[35] have revealed that the possession and/or use of firearms is often associated with ways of attaining prestige and social status, power, money and women. That is, it corresponds to a mechanism for attaining social recognition in which the female sex is an essential indicator and barometer. In the course of our research, we have tried to understand these forms of incentive and legitimisation of armed violence and, particularly, what they signify. That is, we have tried to know what concrete practices, in the specific case of girls and women, this *glamorisation* or incentive to armed violence translates into, and what underlies this practice.

We found that, similarly to what happens with the male sex, and in a setting characterised by the invisibility of young people from marginalised social classes and extreme inequality, the glamorisation and incentive to armed violence underlies the search for a certain kind of social recognition, in which consumer goods and the respect felt by others are central elements.

> *Women love criminals! Our Lady, it even makes him better-looking!!! He gets handsome, he gets more powerful... (...) He has a position. Girls are very devalued... Slum girls can't buy at Gang, PXC... and criminals can!*
>
> (*Renata*, 17 years old, drug trafficking)

> *"I want that, I want this". They can't buy it; because they don't work, they go and steal, the girls don't care... they just want to have designer clothes...*
>
> (Inhabitant of Complexo da Maré, 17 years old)

[34] *Maria Fuzil* (*Mary Rifle*): slang for young women who have relationships with or go out with armed young men; *Lili Carabina* (*Lili Carabine*): nickname of Djanira Ramos Suzano, sentenced to more than 100 years of prison due to her crimes in the 1970s. Her criminal record includes six escapes from jail and sentences for homicides, assaults, robbery, drug trafficking, reckless driving, illegal weapon possession and fraud. In the 1970s, Djanira became Lili Carabina and began to wear tight clothing and a blond wig to seduce the bank guards while her gang acted.

[35] For example, Barker (2005); Dowdney (2003); and Rivero (2005).

Here a guy has no education, he's going to be a thief, or a drug dealer, or what else is he going to do? Work on a building site; carry crates... then what happens? The example that he sees is someone who earns 300/400 reais, and it's a consumer culture. It demands other values. And only the drug trade can give it, right? There are kids here who can't write their name but they steal a mobile phone every day and sell it for 200/300 reais. How much is that at the end of the month? A lot of money! Money that I've no hope of getting with a secondary school education. So it's much easier for a girl to fancy a guy like that.

(Inhabitant of Praça XI, 33 years old)

They... like, you go by, they make jokes, swear, and you can't answer back, because, if you answer, then they go, they talk to their husband and they make things up, then they beat up the women, you know, sometimes do things to the family… So, I think, like, it's a sort of power that they think they have over other people's lives, I think that's what it is… Also, for the money, there's a lot of money in all this. Many of them say it's because of the money, that every weekend they go shopping, that they have good clothes, and so on, that they don't work, that they depend on that man, I think that's what it's about.

(Inhabitant of Rocinha, 27 years old)

This type of incentive, resulting from the construction of a valued femininity/identity, is not, however, exclusive to any sector of society.

I think that's what it is, you know, it's all... it's being drunk on power, on success... girls think that a guy who carries a gun he can give them... a good position in society... so that's what they want... they go after them in the slums... even rich girls, middle class, upper middle class, they go after that in the slums, that position with the guy, who carries a gun, that power he's going to give her.

(Prisoner, Talavera Bruce Prison,
31 years old, sentenced for drug trafficking)

It's fashion, see? Every now and then everyone starts wearing pink, everyone wants to wear pink... most women nowadays like guys with guns, it's an addiction, see?

(Prisoner, Talavera Bruce Prison,
28 years old, sentenced for homicide)

The incentive to armed violence, therefore, is related to a construction of a type of femininity that is valued, recognised and visible, and largely dependent on the existence and promotion of a violent and armed masculinity (and vice-versa). That is, this social recognition and the sensation of a certain idea of power are, for the female sex, determined by the existence of a masculine counterpart (that provides this power), and is as lasting as the presence of the men in their lives.

The attempt to maintain this social *status* or visibility develops, therefore, into specific forms of involvement in the spiral of armed violence. The interviewees mentioned several times that the participation of adolescents and women involves *hiding drugs and weapons*,

(they often think this way): "I have to keep my husband's gun here in my house or he will keep his gun at the other woman's house". And he will, and there's no way around it...

(Inhabitant of Cidade de Deus, 28 years old)

Or even *bringing and taking information*, as a symbolic way of proving faithfulness and loyalty, when the masculine element involved in armed violence has to hide or is arrested.

To sum up, the participation or involvement of girls and women in armed violence, through the incentive to this violence, can take the form of specific practices, which start to become natural in subtle ways.

These practices are best represented by the lyrics of a song by one of the young women interviewed during the research,

Gangster girl
Gangster girl you know how it is
You're only on top when the guy is standing
But if he goes down so do you
Gangster girl keep your eyes open

Stupid and oppressed that's what you are
Don't get on your high horse, don't act like a woman
You're not a fighter either like many single mothers
You're just easy, you're just easy, you're a fool

I think you like being knocked around
In the middle of the street many slaps on the face
The guy just puts you down, that is so low
You've got to be really stupid to put up with cowardice
She ran away from home so her dad wouldn't beat her
Got a little gangster who hits you even more
You tell your friends he eats out of your hand
Gives you money too, what a fine pimp
Shootout in the slum he's always the target
Even makes you a hostage to save himself
If you get shot he won't care a bit
You're the object he wants to use

With drugs he turns you on with a tracer he turns you off
On the mobile, call girl
Express delivery you take your time
All day on top of the slum
Shut out by your neighbours
You think it's cool to be envied by the girls
Loved, desired, hated on corners
He makes you famous and he does it without a condom
Every mouth chews your name
Cocaine woman the plotters have your number
They've bought your outfit, dug your grave
When you're past your sell-by date your time will come

Going to bed with him is not a choice, it's a necessity
The only way he'll give you money and give you what you want
If you see your friends you've got to keep it quiet
If he finds out he'll give you a good thrashing
You don't have a life, you just do what he wants
If you say no you'll get hurt you're gonna get it
You have no exclusivity in this relationship
If you try to get out of this life you're going in the dump
If he can't have you nobody else will
This guy doesn't love you, doesn't wish you well
Love is blind and this one will destroy you
Hear what I'm saying don't be fooled
Gangster girl, he orders she obeys
Sure she's good for all the wrong stuff
She goes into this life like a robot
Guns, drugs, sad suicidal life
Always naive you wait for him
But when the going gets tough he's out and she's screwed
Stupid girl now you're paying for what you didn't do
And your darling he's with another girl this minute, girl
You're inside abandoned and forgotten
The one who said he loved you hasn't been to visit you
Now is time to learn the best choice is the rational one
Think with your head and not with your heart

(Jamille NegAAtiva, 23 years old)

However, not all forms of female participation in armed violence are the result or expressions of the *glamorisation* of firearms or incentives to armed violence. And it is precisely these (other) forms of participation (and their underlying motivations), which do not completely fit in with pre-established categories, which run the risk of remaining more invisible and marginalised. We are talking about *support, base or secondary roles*, or roles that are "hierarchically inferior" in armed violence.

"Women are used as carriers..."

It is precisely in armed violence support roles (whether in trafficking, kidnappings or robberies), considered marginal and secondary, that feminine faces are concentrated. This tendency is not, however, exclusive to Rio de Janeiro; it is an ancient tendency, on a global scale, in contexts of armed violence.

The distinction made here between *roles of incentive* to armed violence (and the practices that, in the course of the research, appear to be associated to them) and *secondary* or *base roles* in this violence does not mean to imply an obvious separation between them. Before we list and analyse some of the practices that make up these secondary roles, we would like to highlight two aspects. Firstly, to say that many girls and women who legitimise armed violence (and, occasionally, bring it about by being the incentive for it) as an indirect strategy for obtaining recognition generally see themselves involved in a cycle of trivialisation of firearms and slide into playing some of the roles that we are about to analyse (secondary or peripheral roles). Secondly, to stress that the motivations identified by young women for their involvement and participation in these peripheral roles reside in the same line of factors as those that underlie the *glamorisation* of armed violence: low expectations, social exclusion and the prospect of armed violence as a mechanism for obtaining consumer goods.

In the interviews carried out, the *transportation of firearms and/or drugs* was revealed as a practice often performed or attributed to girls and women. Indeed, female participation in the structure of the drug trafficking in Rio de Janeiro is largely associated, according to the interviewees, with transportation functions – the so-called *mules* or *carriers* – and sale and preparation of individual drug packets.

> *Women are used as carriers. They take business to another slum. Guns, drugs, everything! It's mostly women who take stuff to the slums. But to stay in the slums selling drugs, that's unlikely.*
>
> (*Miriam*, 16 years old, armed robbery)

> *I've never used a gun. Women don't... it's more men. Oh... but I've seen many girls take a gun to a boy, so he can steal. She takes it to him, then he does the robbery and then gives it to her for her to take back to the slum.*
>
> (*Beatriz*, 17 years old, carrying a weapon and armed robbery)

> *The "certainty" that a woman can only be searched by a woman police officer means that girls and women are often preferred and chosen to transport drugs and firearms from one place to another, and that they do it somewhat "calmly". There are some cases; it's, like, cases of two men with a girl to carry. Because the girl, they can't search her. They get scared and take the girl.*
>
> (*Gabriela*, 14 years old, drug trafficking, carrying an illegal weapon and gang formation)

> *Because you have to be a woman to get through the BOPE raids. It was a moment of weakness. I was just going to give the gun and go. And I was going to the slum to share the money. It's half and half... Every convoy has to have a woman to carry a gun. If she can get out, she will... There has to be a woman, because she gets through more easily. When we go past the police, he can't touch my body... As it was in my handbag, he could search my handbag*.
>
> (*Miriam*, 16 years old, armed robbery)

We can therefore see that armed violence, as a system, benefits from invisibilities and stereotypes. Like any system that uses violence and, therefore, tries to maintain or substitute power, it requires discreet and silent practices that do not raise suspicion or denounce myths. In order for principal roles, which detain power, to exist, there must always be supporting, secondary roles that ensure their sustainability. Whether in drug trafficking, in thefts and robberies, kidnappings or even in violence that is micro or private (in the next chapter we will analyse the impacts of the presence and/or use of firearms on the life of women).

Maybe that is why the involvement and direct participation of girls and women in armed violence, or the fact that elements of the female sex resort personally to firearms as a means of reaching a goal or escaping invisibility, cause such discomfort and suspicion. And once again, as will be seen further on, we call attention to the fact that this passage – from acting in peripheral roles to direct and principal roles – corresponds, in many cases, to a transition. In the absence of a response to the needs and motives that drive girls and women to enter into armed violence in the form of incentive, and/or in secondary roles, acting in a direct and armed way, in some cases, is an attempt to intensify silent screams. That is, assuming (and sometimes inheriting) roles that are traditionally performed by the male sex, which give them visibility and power.

Direct involvement

Almost inevitably, when the face of violence is female, it is the target of attention, indignation and (momentary) media visibility. We need only remember Lyndie England (the American soldier accused of torturing Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib prison) or the Chechen women suicide bombers (black widows) involved in the attacks on the Moscow Theatre in October 2002. This female face of violence is considered much more frightening and shocking, as it does not correspond to traditional, established representations of masculinity and femininity. These women take on a destructive role, instead of the usual reproductive role.

Immediately, causes for these "insane" acts are sought for: the behaviour is interpreted as pathology, considered a synonym of despair, and arguments that help to explain and minimise our discomfort and "excuse" their actions are sought for.

Rarely do the debates analyse the spirals or the *continuums* of types of violence that many girls or women are subjected to, and the event is treated as an isolated case, as an exception, something sporadic. This type of analysis and interpretation is very apparent in the representations of the participation and involvement of girls and women in armed violence in Rio de Janeiro. The (usually sporadic) alarmist and often sensationalist expressions about the supposed escalation of feminine criminality, especially resulting from direct and more visible feminine participation in armed violence, do not seem to be accompanied by deeper debates about the reasons for these practices. Consequently, prevention and reduction responses for this type of activity adequate to the needs of girls and women are not considered.

The interviews reveal that, although they make up a minority, girls and women also participate more directly in armed violence.

> *I was a containment soldier. I learnt to handle guns. And is that rare? It's very unusual. But it was really just me who used a piece. Just men. The girls were sellers. I got into gunfights with policemen several times. I always worked at night as a soldier. Then, I earned trust and became a seller. Then, my day was Sunday. My weapon was the base one, my case was different. Then they gave me several rifles, Hugo, pistol, H8...*
>
> (*Monique*, 18 years old, homicide)

This type of involvement includes girls and women who occupy positions considered more central in the drug trade hierarchy (who carry and/or use firearms in their functions), in robberies, or who play a main part in homicide cases. However, it became clear that, in most cases, direct involvement corresponded to a more visible expression, or a more accentuated practice, of other types of involvement (incentive, secondary roles) that began to accumulate, in *continuum* and as a chain. The following quote, from an inmate of Talavera Bruce prison, constitutes a clear example of this:

> *So I was eighteen years old (and I started to date a drug dealer)... then I liked the success that drugs gave me... I used to go to the parties... the parties only started when I arrived, right... Life was good... Oh, power, power... drugs gave me a lot of power. I manipulated people's minds, see... everybody did what I wanted, because I had what they wanted... so I manipulated... I was number one... everyone had to do what I wanted. (...) he only took me to beautiful places... he just dealt for actors... I would go to the dressing-rooms and I started getting excited, getting excited... then he went to live in Bahia, he left me in his place here to supply, right...*
> *...Nowadays think about it too, they want to be number one too...*
>
> (Prisoner, Talavera Bruce Prison, 48 years old,
> ex-drug dealer, sentenced for homicide)

Finally, we would like to stress that, in some interviews, armed violence constituted a way of reacting to other types of accumulated violence. We refer specifically to homicide – the most visible expression of violence – motivated by the accumulation of physical and psychological abuse, structural and cultural violence, perpetrated over the course of years, particularly by people with whom these women maintained a close relationship (husband, companion, ex-companion, boyfriend...). That is what happened with the interviewee quoted above, one of the interviewees who had been sentenced for homicide.

Final Considerations

The justifications or motivations presented for involvement (of distinct types) in armed violence differed for girls and women. For the former, it was mainly about the search for social recognition (mirrored in the possibility of obtaining respect and having access to certain consumer goods and/or drugs), the feeling of belonging (due to exclusion and unstructured families and bad treatment) and the sensation of adrenaline. For women, on the other hand, it came from a need to satisfy basic needs and support their families, especially when they were unemployed. With this classification we do not wish to establish a hierarchy of motivations between girls and women (considering the former more *superficial* and the latter more *legitimate*). It is worth highlighting that, although different, these motivations result from power relations to which girls and women are exposed, and from social expectations that are often imposed, both on the male and the female sex, as conditions for being valued within a certain social group.

> *They're getting more involved. It's also because most men, they always go to jail and end up dying. Then, there's the woman, sometimes she has two or three children. Then the husband is gone and she has to take care of the family business.*
>
> (Male inhabitant of Praça XI, 33 years old)

> *So, what drove me to it was that I wanted to give my grandchildren everything I could... I wanted the best for my grandchildren... so... (silence). It was a big illusion... what drove me to enter it was illusion.*
>
> (Prisoner, 53 years old, Talavera Bruce Prison, sentenced for drug trafficking)

Motherhood came up in many interviews as a factor for not only causing and continuing girls' and women's involvement in armed violence but also for changing their behaviour. On the one hand, involvement in criminality and armed violence came up as a way of "giving what they never had",

> *(she said) "I don't want my son to have the life I had, so I'm going to stay in the drug trade because this way I can raise him in the manner I wish I had been raised". You know? She said: "If I stay here, my son will have good schools, will have a good education..." In her eyes, right? "He'll have the education I never had and the life I never had." So, a lot of them continue to think that way too.*
>
> (Rapper, 24 years old)

On the other hand, motherhood came up as a factor that influenced a change in values and behaviour. Girls and women may have been a trophy-like incentive for the use of weapons, they may have taken on peripheral roles in armed criminality; they may even have performed more direct roles. But being aware of the risks and insecurities, they wanted a different and "longer-lasting" life for their sons and daughters.

The answers showed a pattern with respect to the increase in the involvement of girls and women "in crime" (drug trafficking and robberies). Opinions unanimously stated that there are more and more girls and women involved (in various ways); that this involvement is starting at a younger and younger age; and that "things used to be different": there weren't as many firearms (and they weren't seen), it was more difficult to obtain a gun, they were much less technologically advanced, and there weren't as many children/adolescents in drug trafficking/crime.

To sum up, we would like to leave some final considerations, with the words of our interviewees, and specific recommendations on the lack of knowledge and possible answers to the question of feminine involvement in violence, which resulted from the project's final meeting:[36]

> *The money is not well distributed, so what happens... while these politicians don't see that poor people have just as much of a right to a good life, to have coffee and milk in the morning, a roll of bread, some jam, a biscuit or... whatever it may be... decently... for a human being to eat, as long as people aren't aware of that... dammit, loads of people are going to come to jail... because nobody can stand it... what sane person is going to better themselves, knowing that shameless guy is waking up in the morning, to a well-laden table, with fruit, nothing but the best... while you wake up in the morning, take your change to the bakery, try to buy bread to give to ten children, or eight children or five children... then... you end up... getting involved in what, in crime.*
>
> (Prisoner, 34 years old, Talavera Bruce Prison, sentenced for theft and drug trafficking)

[36] "Women and girls in contexts of armed violence: a case study on Rio de Janeiro", held in Rio de Janeiro, 8th and 9th June, 2006.

You've got to understand the justification of "easy money" in a wider context of inequality and social exclusion, which affects young people (of both sexes) in Brazil and poor young people in Rio de Janeiro in a clear manner. The first factor for delinquency is the terrible income distribution that Brazil has... this blatant geography such as the one in Rio de Janeiro, with the richest neighbourhoods right next to the poorest, as with Rocinha and S. Conrado, Santa Marta, Pavão-Pavãozinho. And this blatant social difference is already a stimulus for people to try to attain the same standard of living as their economically powerful brothers. If a boy sees a pair of trainers on the feet of a boy just like him, or a designer shirt, a fashionable bag, it's very natural for them to want to have it. On the other hand, we have the media, which encourages consumption, and everyone, from the poorest to the richest, has access to radio, to television.

(Former-honorary judge at First Court for Childhood and Youth of Rio de Janeiro)

I think things should change, there should be more jobs for young people, a good school, I think it will go down, the violence will go down a bit, as long as there are good opportunities for work, for a school, for a good degree, you know? Because if a boy from a poor community had the same chances as a boy out there do you think he would go into crime? He won't, why is he mixed up in crime? Because he gets easy money, he'll get clothes easily, he'll get women easily. He knows that if he goes outside they're going to discriminate against him because he's from the slum, he's poor, he's black, you know? So I think there's got to be more opportunities.

(Adolescent, Complexo da Maré)

I think every human being, right, has this... ideal... of wanting power... everybody wants to be powerful... everybody... nowadays, if you can't get it one way you'll get it another way... if crime gives you this power, a person's going to get this power in crime, if it's by studying, if it's a president... wherever life takes you, right... a person sees... that place is going to give me power, so I'm going to that place, because that place is going to give me power.

(Prisoner, 47 years old, Talavera Bruce prison, arrested for drug trafficking)

Recommendations

Problems identified

1. Lack of knowledge (consequently, data) on the typology of the involvement of girls and women in armed and violent criminality.
2. Scarcity of knowledge and analysis of the motivations of girls and women in armed violence in Rio de Janeiro.
3. Absence of policies and programmes for preventing and/or reducing armed violence specific to girls and women, as well as reintegration measures for after involvement.

Proposals

1. To recognise that the roles assumed by girls and women in their involvement in armed violence in Rio de Janeiro go beyond those that have been established and standardised for boys and men (i.e. they should be seen as roles of support and incentive to armed violence).
2. To invest in the ***production of data on the involvement*** of girls and women in armed violence. In the case of Rio de Janeiro, *for women*:

- Cooperation between the Special Office for Human Rights (SEDH), National Office for Public Safety (SENASP) and Special Office for Policies for Women to include gender and armed violence variables in the regulation that obliges states to publish data on criminality.
- For the Civil Police, complete filling-in of occurrence register (RO), specifically the instrument used in the crime.
- Production of a new prison census (DEPEN) dividing sex by penal type.
- Inclusion of data on women in the national weapons system (SINARM).

For girls

- Modernisation and unification of the information system for childhood and adolescence (SIPIA),[37] separating sex and the use (or not) of a weapon.

[37] SIPIA is a national system for registering and processing information created to assist governmental decisions on policies for children and adolescents, guaranteeing them access to citizenship. SIPIA I – promotion and defence of the fundamental rights proclaimed in the Statute for Children and Adolescents. SIPIA II Plus – establishments in which adolescents comply with the socio-educational measures. SIPIA III – family situation, in the form of adoption, whether by a national or foreign applicant. More information at http://www.mj.gov.br/sipia.

- Adherence to and implementation of this system at a state and municipal level.
- For human rights tribunals and NGOs at a state level, create awareness of the need to adhere to the information system in order to systematise and publish data.
- For NGOs, inclusion of the theme in the agendas of human rights organisations.

Recommendations/Responses for the ***motives for involvement*** of girls and women:

- For NGOs dedicated to violence prevention and social insertion, inclusion of girls and women in the organisation's programmes, creating a specific programmatic approach.
- For funders, to demand the inclusion of girls and women in the funded programmes, guiding this inclusion.
- To include the question of the involvement of girls and women in armed violence in the National Plan for Policies for Women.
- For the State Office for Childhood and Youth, Special Office for Policies for Women, SEDH/SPDCA, to put support for research projects and programmes dedicated to the theme on their agenda.
- For SENASP, to include, in the support of violence prevention at a municipal level, programmes for girls and women who are involved/related to armed violence.
- Strengthening of the protection measures contained in the Statute for Children and Adolescents (ECA) with a gender emphasis.
- Discussion, elaboration and presentation of a PL, instituting the PPCAM at a state level.
- To make organisations that work with violence prevention aware of the need to include a gender perspective in their approaches and programmes.

3. On an international level, seeing as armed violence often has greater humanitarian impacts than armed conflicts, include the possibility of applying responses contained in Resolution 1325/2000 of the UN Security Council[38] to non-war contexts.

[38] UN Security Council Resolution 1325 was approved on October 31st, 2000. It was the first SC resolution on the impact of war on the lives of women and the contributions of women to conflict resolution and peace.

A look at the numbers

BEYOND THE BULLET: THE DIFFERENT IMPACTS OF FIREARMS ON WOMEN AND GIRLS [39]

The "women-victim" paradox

This chapter is marked by a paradox. Women carry the historic weight of a stereotype that represents them as helpless creatures that need protection. Well, this vision, which crystallizes the image of the woman-victim, forgets all the other roles that women perform in contexts of armed violence. But on the other hand, this protection myth is in itself responsible for the subjection of women to (the threat of) violence by those who would supposedly protect them. It is, therefore, a treacherous way of thinking.

Feminist analysis of violent or war systems denounces the ideological elements that underlie them, revealing their dependence on a sexual hierarchy of values. That is, hegemony or domination presupposes the maintenance of power, which in its turn presupposes the normalisation of power relations (Pettman, 1996). At the same time, the construction of stereotypes that legitimise this system of war or violence rests on dichotomies or dualities that are constructed as negation or opposition: peace and violence, femininity and masculinity, private sphere and public sphere, etc. The association between masculinity and violence depends on and has as counterpoint a devalued, passive femininity, in need of protection. The social construction of the *protector/unprotected* and of a vulnerable femininity that needs protection contributes to legitimise the war system. *Women and children* are the symbols, the victims and the motives for violence, as Enloe (1993, cited in Pettman, 1996: 99) maintains, and for this reason anything that contradicts or undermines the legitimacy of this dichotomy tends to be silenced and hidden.

This type of approach normalises socially-constructed forms of behaviour and reproduces dichotomies that reinforce the subordination of women. The division between protectors and unprotected contributes to a dependency relationship on a collective and individual plane (Martínez López, 2000) and renders invisible the experiences of women and men who, not conforming to the roles attributed according to sex, are ignored. Furthermore, by fictionalising a kind of "natural" social function of protection performed by men, this division leaves aside a fundamental reality: that it is precisely these "protectors" who constitute the main source of threat to the "protected". The data analysed in this chapter demonstrates this well.

This simplistic and stereotyped division of roles has practical consequences. Although men constitute the majority of fatal victims of armed violence all over the world, they are rarely called "victims" or labelled a helpless "vulnerable group". On the contrary, they are frequently categorised as "perpetrators" or, when the specificities of male victimisation are considered, they are labelled as a "risk group". And this risk group needs "specific programmes and policies" and not "special protections", a term that is generally reserved for the female sex.

The analysis of the impacts of armed violence on the lives of men and women in Rio de Janeiro reveals the contradictions and incoherencies of dichotomised and stereotyped constructions about vulnerable victims versus aggressors. Men are labelled as the main perpetrators of this type of violence, and so eyes are shut to the various forms of involvement of the female sex in armed violence. At the same time, it is also men, especially young men, who die as a result of the use of firearms. On the other hand, in Rio de Janeiro, in Brazil and in the whole world, women are the most affected by violence within the family. However, as these violent practices occur in the private sphere, they are left out of macro analyses of armed violence. Even though it is in this sphere exactly that the greatest number of aggressions, threats and deaths of women by firearms take place.

In this chapter we aim to analyse the various impacts that armed violence can have on the lives of women and girls – who do not constitute the majority of the agents of violence or of its direct victims. Beyond the visible and direct impacts – such as deaths and injuries by firearms – we include in this analysis other impacts resulting from the proliferation and use of firearms, such as a gun being a source and instrument of threat in situations of violence within the family. For this purpose, we based ourselves on existing studies, statistical data and on the analysis of statements gathered during the research and we developed and applied a questionnaire in eight of the nine Special Police Stations for Women (DEAM) in the Metropolitan Region of the State of Rio de Janeiro.

[39] Jessica Galeria contributed to this chapter, especially in the systematisation and reading of the statistical data presented.

Direct impacts: the destruction of bodies

The existing statistical data (Ministry of Health[40] and criminal) allow us to analyse the direct and visible impacts of armed violence in Rio de Janeiro, that is, the deaths and injuries by firearms. However, and as we already mentioned, the presentation of these data, which is often made in comparative terms, has been used to show that women and girls are not very affected by armed violence in Brazil: men constitute the majority of deaths by firearms (91%) and hospitalisations resulting from injuries caused by these firearms (90%), according to Ministry of Health data from 2004.

This comparison has a double consequence: on the one hand, it marginalises the specificities of the direct impacts of firearms on the lives of women and girls; on the other hand, it gives us only a partial view of the real impacts of armed violence on the lives of this group, which can go far beyond deaths and injuries. We are talking about the use of firearms as an instrument of threat, in unequal power relations, and particularly in situations of violence within the family.

Brazil has one of the highest rates of mortality from firearms in the world: in 2002, this rate was of about 22 per 100,000 residents.[41] In the same year, 90% of the deaths from firearms were homicides. The overwhelming majority of these deaths occur among young men, as shown in figure 1, on the profile of fatal victims of armed violence, by sex and age, in 2002.

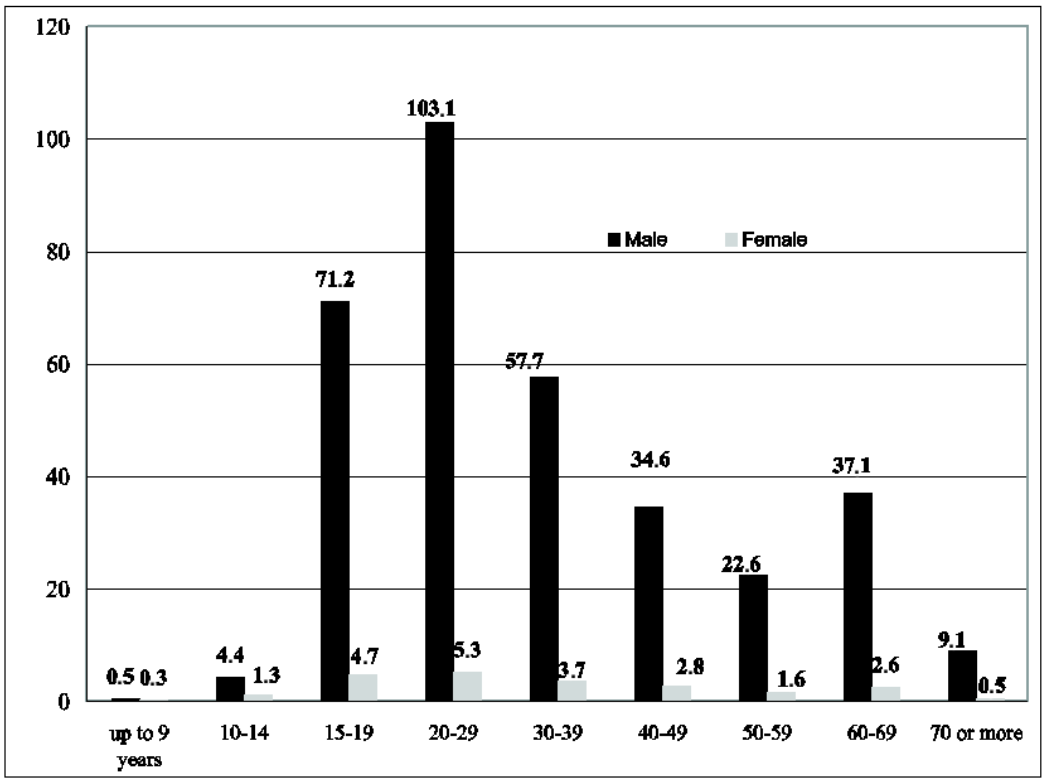
The mortality rate among the male population in Brazil is almost 17 times higher than the registered rate for women. Once again, and similarly to what happens with the data and analyses on the authors of armed violence, this enormous disproportion and hypervisibility, which has been shown and used with similar graphs,[42] has influenced and directed research and policy agendas all over the world.

[40] The data is separated by sex and gives information on death and hospitalisation rates by age, place, cause of death or injury, instrument used, and other variables. The data is collected by the Ministry of Health in two systems, the System of Information on Mortality (SIM) and the System of Information on Hospitalisations (SIH).

[41] Data collected by the Ministry of Health in the System of Information on Mortality is the most reliable and accessible data on deaths by firearms. In this chapter, unless otherwise stated, all the data quoted is from this source. The references to data and graphs from 2002 are from the report *Brasil: as armas e as vítimas* (2005). Available at www.vivario.org.br and www.comunidadesegura.org/pt-br/node/30291.

[42] The proportion of deaths according to sex follows the same pattern in other contexts: according to the World Report on Violence from the World Health Organisation, 90% of world homicides committed with firearms occur among men. Available at www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/world_report/en.

Figure 1
Death by firearms rate, by sex and age, Brazil 2002
(per 100,000 inhabitants)



Source: ISER, 2005

It is necessary, therefore, to concentrate on the analysis of data on deaths and injuries by firearms *within* the female sex, instead of focusing on the *comparison between women and men.* Understanding the various ways in which armed violence manifests itself, in Rio de Janeiro, in Brazil or in the world, is an essential element for responding to the problems resulting from the proliferation and (bad) use of firearms.

One of the few existing studies that focus specifically on *female mortality* shows that, in Brazil, the mortality rates from external causes grew in the period between 1979 and 1999 (Reis at al., 2001). The increase is particularly due to the rise in the number of homicides, since other types of violent deaths (traffic accidents, falls, drowning, suicides and unknown injuries) did not increase or decrease significantly in this period.

Table 3
Female mortality from external causes
Brazil 1979/81 and 1997/99

	1979/81	**1997/99**
	N = 14,059	**N = 20,694**
Traffic accidents	32.7%	32.5%
Unknown injuries	19.0%	9.4%
Other causes	17.2%	19.2%
Homicides	9.6%	17.7%
Suicides	8.2%	6.8%
Drowning	7.6%	8.2%
Falls	5.8%	6.2%
	100.1%	100.0%

Source: Reis, A. C. *et al*. (2001)

However, it is important to highlight that, during the 1980s, several homicides were classified as "unknown injuries" because it had not been registered that the injuries had been intentional. The improvement in data collection during the 1990s may have contributed to uncover homicides that had previously been classified as unknown injuries (meaning that, consequently, the percentage of unknown injuries fell), revealing a panorama that was closer to reality. This example illustrates how data collection can be contaminated and influenced by a gender bias: assuming that a woman's death caused by her partner may be unintentional, or revealing a lack of interest in correctly categorising women's deaths, considering them to be less important or relevant data.

In 1999, and according to the same research, firearms were the instrument used in the majority (50.1%) of women's homicides. That is, *more women were killed by firearms than by all other methods of homicide put together* (strangling, sharp object, physical aggression, etc.). The age range most affected by deaths by firearms was 10–19 years old, followed by 20–29 years old.

Table 4
Female homicide by type of weapon used
Brazil, 1999

Age	0–9	10–19	20–29	30–39	40–49	50–59	60+	Total
Type	N = 120	N = 678	N = 1009	N = 833	N = 449	N = 159	N = 185	N = 3433
Firearms	27.5	57.7	54	48.6	49.9	44.7	27.6	50.1
Sharp object	20.8	18.4	24.4	30	29.2	30.2	36.8	26
Strangling	14.2	4.1	3.4	4.2	2.4	6.9	5.9	4.3
Physical aggression	5	1.2	0.9	0.5	0.9	1.9	1.1	1
Not specified	18.3	16.7	16.1	14.4	15.8	15.7	22.7	16.2
Other types	14.2	1.9	1.3	2.3	1.8	0.6	5.9	2.4
	100.0	100.0	100.1	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Reis, A. C. *et al*. (2001)

In 2002, in Brazil, 42% of women homicide victims were killed with firearms. If we focus only on the Brazilian state capitals, this percentage rises to 44.4% (ISER, 2005).

In 2004, the most recent year for which we have data, the female mortality by firearms rate in the city of Rio de Janeiro was 4.8 per 100,000 inhabitants – almost twice the national female rate (2.5 per 100,000 inhabitants). This proportion is close to the rates for the total population, which is slightly more than double – 2.2 times higher – in Rio de Janeiro (45.2 per 100,000 inhabitants) than nationally (20.3 per 100,000 inhabitants). Rio has the sixth highest female mortality rate, close behind Recife, Vitória, Belo Horizonte, Cuiabá and Florianópolis.

Table 5 shows the ten Brazilian state capitals that have the highest female mortality by firearms rate and table 6 the ten Brazilian cities with the highest male mortality by firearms rate.

Table 5
Female mortality rate by Firearm Projectile (FP)
in Brazilian state capitals, 2004
(per 100,000 inhabitants)

1.	Recife	8.9
2.	Vitória	7.0
3.	Belo Horizonte	6.2
4.	Cuiabá	5.7
5.	Florianópolis	5.1
6.	Rio de Janeiro	4.8
7.	Porto Velho	3.8
8.	Porto Alegre	3.6
9.	Maceió	3.3
10.	São Paulo	3.0

Table 6
Male mortality rate by Firearm Projectile (FP)
In Brazilian state capitals, 2004
(per 100,000 inhabitants)

1.	Recife	113.6
2.	Vitória	97.2
3.	Maceió	92.5
4.	Belo Horizonte	91.7
5.	Rio de Janeiro	90.6
6.	Porto Velho	67.3
7.	Salvador	64.1
8.	Cuiabá	57.9
9.	Porto Alegre	54.2
10.	Curitiba	52.4

Source: ISER, with data from the System of Information on Mortality (SIM) from Datasus/Ministry of Health, 2004

Reading these tables it can be seen that, in relative terms, some cities are more violent for women than for men – Belo Horizonte (ranking 3rd for women and 4th for men), Porto Alegre (ranking 8th for women and 9th for men) and Cuiabá (ranking 4th for women and 8th for men). It is important to note that these cities are situated in states with the highest concentrations of firearms (between 40 and 93.3 per 100 households) in the hands of private citizens in the country (ISER, 2005: 166). Florianópolis, the city that most stands out for the significant difference between the ranking of the sexes – the fifth highest rate for death by firearms for women and the 16th for men is in a state that has an extremely high number of firearms in the hands of private citizens, including legal and illegal weapons.

Sleeping with the enemy

For many women, the aggressor is someone they know. Worldwide, 40% to 70% of homicides of women are committed by their intimate partner. Rio de Janeiro is no exception. In homicides and attempted homicides with firearms, more than half of the women victims (53%) knew their aggressor. And more than a third (37%) of these women had a romantic relationship with their aggressor.[43]

[43] ISER (2005), with data from Legal Police Stations of Rio de Janeiro, between 2001 and 2005.

However, the flaws in the collection of data prevent us from knowing where most homicides of women occur. The existing data for 2002 (ibid) show the following:

Table 7
Place of death by Firearm Projectile (FP)

	Hospital	Streets	Home	Other	Unknown	**Total**
Rio de Janeiro	96	0	62	207	36	**401**

The high number of deaths for which the place of occurrence is unknown or classified as "other" (60% of the total) frustrates the efforts to analyse the data. Furthermore, when the death occurs in hospital, we are equally unaware of where the violence took place.

According to the data presented we can, however, affirm that although *carrying* a gun has been prohibited for most Brazilian citizens by the Disarmament Statute, the presence of a gun at home – whether legal or illegal – continues to represent a real source of threat and insecurity to women.

In this context, we must challenge the myth that only illegal markets need to be controlled, since legal weapons belong to those considered "law-abiding citizens". It is forgotten, or concealed, that a "law-abiding citizen" can easily become a law-breaker if he has a gun in his hand. At the same time, it must be remembered that legal weapons can easily be stolen, lost, or resold to others who can use them to commit violent crimes. A study by the Public Security Office revealed that legally-obtained weapons[44] had been used in the majority of crimes in Rio de Janeiro. But this research revealed particularly that most of the crimes committed with once-legal weapons had women as their victims: 67% of rapes aided by firearms had been perpetrated with guns that had been legally bought and registered, compared with 58% of the cases of homicides with firearms or 32% of armed kidnappings. It is important to remember that, as Rangel Bandeira and Bourgois (2005) maintain, danger or the enemy often sleep next door, and the majority of intentional injuries and/or homicides of women are committed by people these women know.

The power of the law: the case of the Disarmament Statute

In December 2003, the Disarmament Statute, new gun-control legislation, was approved in Brazil, severely restricting access to firearms. The data for 2004 show the first signs of the efficiency of this measure: the rate of deaths by firearms decreased by 8%, the first drop in thirteen years, representing 3,234 fewer deaths in the total Brazilian population in relation to the previous year.

The female mortality by firearms rate, however, decreased from 2.7 per 100,000 inhabitants, in 2002, to 2.5 per 100,000 inhabitants in 2004. There was, therefore, a slightly smaller reduction in relation to the general decrease among the Brazilian population. In other countries, the introduction of stricter gun control laws had significant impacts on the reduction of female mortality. We believe that this discrepancy results from the fact that the Statute has a more immediate impact on the proliferation and use of firearms in public spaces (the street), significantly reducing the risks and mortality rates resulting from brawls in bars, arguments in traffic, etc. – situations that present a greater risk for the male sex. We can suppose, however, that the Statute measures which make the acquisition of new firearms more difficult will, in the mid- to long-term, reduce the mortality rates, especially for women, which occur mainly in the private sphere.

Firearm injuries in the female population in Brazil and in Rio de Janeiro

Table 8 shows the number of female hospitalisations caused by firearm-related injuries in all Brazilian states, and the percentage of the total, in 2004.

[44] "Fontes de Abastecimento de Armas de Fogo do Mercado Criminal no Estado do Rio de Janeiro", ISER and Government of the State of Rio de Janeiro, Public Security Office, State of Rio de Janeiro Civil Police, Legal Police Station programme, September 2005.

Table 8
Hospitalisations by Firearm Projectile (FP), Brazil – 2004

Hospitalisation frequency per state, according to sex

State of hospitalisation	Injuries from FP		female % total
	Female	Total	
Rondônia	16	172	**9.3%**
Acre	8	58	**13.8%**
Amazonas	17	67	**25.4%**
Roraima	5	54	**9.3%**
Pará	47	487	**9.7%**
Amapá	4	60	**6.7%**
Tocantins	4	16	**25.0%**
Maranhão	1	14	**7.1%**
Piauí	29	283	**10.2%**
Ceará	102	1186	**8.6%**
Rio Grande do Norte	19	285	**6.7%**
Paraíba	27	324	**8.3%**
Pernambuco	1	8	**12.5%**
Alagoas	37	378	**9.8%**
Sergipe	9	115	**7.8%**
Bahia	462	2547	**18.1%**
Minas Gerais	179	2363	**7.6%**
Espírito Santo	84	631	**13.3%**
Rio de Janeiro	198	2084	**9.5%**
São Paulo	573	5565	**10.3%**
Paraná	50	519	**9.6%**
Santa Catarina	29	246	**11.8%**
Rio Grande do Sul	97	1405	**6.9%**
Mato Grosso do Sul	11	106	**10.4%**
Mato Grosso	13	156	**8.3%**
Goiás	48	432	**11.1%**
Distrito Federal	60	744	**8.1%**
Total	2130	20305	**10.5%**

Source: ISER, with data from the Hospitalisation System (SIH) from Datasus/Health Ministry (2002)

In 2004, in the State of Rio de Janeiro, 327 women and girls were killed by firearms, and another 198 were hospitalised due to firearm-related injuries. In Table 9 we can see that in Rio, as in Brazil, there are many more deaths by firearms than injuries, revealing the lethality of armed violence. However, it is interesting to note that the proportion of women injured by firearms (9.5%) is higher than the proportion of women who die as a result of the same weapons (5.4%).

Table 9

Rio de Janeiro State	Male	Female	Total	Female % total
Injuries FP	1886	198	2084	9.5%
Deaths FP	5743	327	6070	5.4%

Our first interpretative hypothesis is that the *intention* of killing is seen more within the male population. The second hypothesis is that men, and especially young men, seek medical assistance less often than women (Barker, 2005) when they suffer injuries. This is particularly relevant in the case of firearm-related injuries, which may be explained by the fact that they do not want to be stigmatised or seen as criminals.

A recent study (ISER, 2005) shows that firearm injuries require a longer period of hospitalisation and bring more costs to the public health system than other types of injuries, such as those resulting from car accidents: the average cost of care by the Unified Health System (SUS) is R$ 380, while injuries caused by firearms require an average hospitalisation of seven days and cost on average R$ 5,564 per patient. Thus, as well as being the most lethal instruments, firearms are also those that create the most problems for the national health system.

On the other hand, the rates of mortality caused by firearms increase the disparity between the number of men and women in Brazil, especially in the states with the highest rates of violence. According to data from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE),[45] in the State of Rio de Janeiro, the average life expectancy for men is 62 years, and for women, 74 years. That is, for each 100 women, there are 87 men.

Beyond the bodies, the destruction of lives

As we have already mentioned, violent practices are present in all spheres of society, on various scales, and do not only manifest themselves in the public sphere. Violence within the family, which disproportionately affects the female sex, and happens in the private sphere, during wartime and peacetime, is part of a culture that normalises, privatises and renders these practices invisible. And this type of violence often finds in the firearm an instrument of coercion, intimidation and threat, which may come to be lethal.

It is worth insisting that, in spite of the innumerable studies and of some existing mechanisms and organisations to deal with the problem of violence, especially domestic violence, against women in Rio de Janeiro and Brazil, we have found, in the course of our research, that the question of armed violence and of the role of firearms as a factor of risk and threat to women has not been a central concern in approaches to the theme.

Indeed, when looking at the content of press articles analysed, women appear as victims in 23.4% of the cases (including women who are direct victims of violent acts, such as homicide, robbery, injury, threat and family members of victims). The news articles in which women appear as victims refer mostly to acts of direct physical violence using firearms, with an unknown aggressor (a relationship between the victim and the aggressor can be identified in about 30%). From this brief analysis we can see some trends in the way questions of violence are treated when women are involved. Firstly, we find a clear absence of news articles in which violence is directed to the woman because she is a woman (domestic violence, sexual violence, etc.). This absence can be explained by the fact that this type of violence derives, supposedly, from the private forum and it is a reality that women themselves try to hide, out of fear and shame. Only in extreme cases (homicide) do they earn a newsworthy place.

Therefore, we dedicate the following pages to the analysis of silences and absences, that is, that which the data (and the news articles) has not been showing us.

The numbers of violence

The centrality given to deaths and injuries by firearms in Brazil, and specifically in Rio de Janeiro, has guided the analyses and responses to the problem of urban violence in the country and in the city.

However, these more visible manifestations of the violence perpetrated with firearms – the deaths and injuries, or the so-called direct impacts – constitute extreme expressions of a *continuum* of other forms of violence, which have been put in second place in the analyses of armed violence (its forms, its victims and its performers) in Rio de Janeiro, and which specifically affect girls and women.

It is already common sense to remember that all over the world girls and women are the main victims of sexual violence and violence within the family. Brazil is no exception. Research conducted by the Perseu Abramo Foundation in 2001[46] shows the numbers and the types of violence committed against women in Brazil: 20% of Brazilian women have been the victims of lighter physical aggressions; 18% have suffered psychological violence;

[45] IBGE, Synthesis of Social Indicators, 2003.

[46] National research on women, performed in 2001 by the Public Opinion Nucleus of the Perseu Abramo Foundation, "The Brazilian woman in the public and private spheres". Available at www2.fpa.org.br/portal/modules/news/index.php?storytopic=730.

15% have been threatened; 11% have suffered beatings resulting in cuts, bruises or fractures (the same percentage for women victims of forced sexual relations or sexual harassment); 9% have been locked in the house, prevented from going out or working; and 8% have been threatened with firearms.

In Rio de Janeiro, with respect to intentional bodily harm, the percentage for women was almost twice that for men victims of this crime in the years 2003 and 2004 and in the period from January to October 2005.[47] According to the Women's Dossier from the Institute of Public Security, analysing the cases in which intentional bodily harm occurred as a result of *domestic violence*, 90% of the victims were of the female sex.[48]

Also according to data from the Institute of Public Security, between January and October 2005, in 99% of the cases of bodily injury resulting from domestic violence there was no information about the *type of instrument* used in the aggression, with this absence being a characteristic of domestic aggression cases. We must question the reason for this omission: on the one hand, it can mean exactly what it says, in other words, in an unequal power relationship between the aggressor and the victim, physical force was the means of subjugating the woman; on the other hand, it can signify that several instruments were used in the aggression, which also proved to be a characteristic of these situations. However, it can also mean that, although no instrument was used in the aggression, it was, nevertheless, present and also constituted a *form of threat.*

The firearm as threat

When we centre our analysis on the (different) impacts of firearms on the lives of women we quickly perceive *continuums* and connections within armed violence. We easily understand that violent behaviours which are made (hyper)visible in the public sphere, and which attract a large part of the attention and effort of policy-makers and public security policies, move across scales and also manifest themselves, violently, on a micro-scale.

The private sphere, which is considered private and therefore "forgotten" in the debates on public (in)security, is frequently the stage of "wars" and terror for a large part of the population and especially for women. And we do not refer only to deaths and injuries of girls and women caused by firearms, but also the role of the gun as a source of threat and as an instrument for reinforcing the inequalities of power. In the opinion of Ana Liési Thurler,[49]

> Violence is progressive, it moves from threat to beating, sometimes going as far as murder. Thus, domestic and family violence corresponds to a perverse cycle and tends to repeat itself with more intensity and in a smaller time interval each time. In this way, the high incidence of threats indicates a great number of women living under risks to their physical and psychic health and to their lives.

That is, understanding that armed violence has other faces and victims and also manifests itself on a micro-scale may contribute to reducing the number of dead and injured in the context of Rio de Janeiro, in Brazil and in the world.

According to the research mentioned above, carried out by the Perseu Abramo Foundation, every 20 seconds a woman has her physical integrity threatened with a firearm in Brazil. Between September and October 2005 we carried out research[50] in eight of the nine Special Police Stations for Women, where 615 questionnaires were spontaneously filled in by women who were reporting violence. Although it was a pilot study, which can in no way be generalised, we believe that it reveals important specificities of the violence that manifests itself on a micro-scale against women. Firstly, it denounces the permeability of frontiers, showing that firearms constitute a source of threat and fear not just in the public and visible sphere, but also in spaces considered safe, such as the private sphere. Secondly, it reveals connections between two forms of violence that are usually debated and considered independently; domestic violence and armed violence.

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[47] According to the Women's Dossier, from the Institute of Public Security (2006), for the crime of intentional bodily harm, the percentage of male victims was 38.1% in 2003, 36.7% in 2004 and 33.1% in 2005; for the female sex, the number was 61.5% in 2003, 61.5% in 2004 and 63.4% in 2005.

[48] In 2004, the majority of women victims of intentional bodily harm were single (57%), aged between 18 and 34 (56.2%) and white (49.6%). In 85.5% of cases, the victims knew the perpetrators and more than half (53.8%) of the accused were married to or held another kind of romantic relationship with the victims. And for cases of domestic violence, in 87.3% of the cases, the aggressor was a companion or ex-companion of the victim. Data provided by Miranda; Pinto and Lage (2006) (Orgs.).

[49] *Pelo fim da violência contra as mulheres*, Correio Braziliense, 6/3/2006.

[50] Research performed by the Centre for Security and Citizenship Studies of Cândido Mendes University, Viva Rio and Peace Studies Group/CES (University of Coimbra), in the Metropolitan Region of the State of Rio de Janeiro, with 615 questionnaires spontaneously filled in. Questionnaire attached.

Out of all the women who filled in the questionnaire, 60.3% had been attacked by their intimate partners or ex-partners (husbands, boyfriends, companions) and 70.2% stated that they were in favour of the prohibition of gun sales in Brazil. When the accused person was the intimate partner (or ex) the support for prohibition rose to 74.4% and to 76.1% if the reported aggression had occurred within the home. Among those who knew that the aggressor had a firearm and those who said they did not know, 68.5% answered that they had already been threatened with a gun in some way. Seventy-three percent also mentioned that the presence of the gun prevented them from reacting physically or verbally to the violence, with 68% stating that they would like to end the relationship with the aggressor, but didn't do it because they were afraid of being attacked with the gun. Especially important is the percentage of respondents who said they *did not know* if their intimate partner had a gun at home (24.6% of all the cases). Not knowing means having to deal with this doubt and, therefore, with the imminent discovery of its existence. And it means, above all, that in order to maintain and perpetuate a relationship of domination and power, the gun does not necessarily have to be used, or even seen.

The statements collected during the research also contributed to deconstruct the association between firearms and security. The gun was repeatedly associated to fear or considered a threat factor. Several women revealed that they were threatened with firearms during their lives, usually by intimate partners or ex-partners. Sometimes, the stories were not told in the first person, and referred to other women, acquaintances, friends or family members. But they all referred to "private", silenced fears, and to cycles of violence which it was difficult to escape from.

> *Because the guy keeps putting a gun to the woman's head, oppressing her so she won't report him, right... the women who are stabbed and have to go back home, because suddenly they think that they can't support themselves... "I have my son, he's going to be a person with psychological problems because he was brought up by divorced parents..." ... Anyway, they have a series of arguments to say why they stay in that. And we also see those stories of husbands who lock their wives at home, husbands who lock their wives at home because after a certain number of days it can't be reported anymore, right, the crime becomes barred by law, the reporting is barred by law, so it has no effect. So, this way, private prisons, there are many things. Armed violence is so infinite that as time goes by we're going to discover different ones.*
>
> (*Rapper*, 24 years old)

Recognising this problem and placing it at the centre of priorities and of the public agenda means taking into account real insecurities that, although less visible, due to its scale and its players, are felt by a high percentage of the society of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil and the world.

Final considerations

Deaths by firearms have been rising, over time, in Brazil and in Rio de Janeiro, disproportionately affecting women and men. In spite of this disproportion, firearms are the most used instrument for killing women in Brazil and in Rio. In Rio de Janeiro, a woman is twice as likely to be killed by a firearm as the national average for Brazilian women (the homicide by firearms rate is twice the national average). When analysing the data on injuries from firearms, we find that they also represent a significant risk for women.

However, the direct impacts of firearms – the deaths and injuries – are only the tip of the iceberg of the problem of armed violence in Brazil and in Rio de Janeiro. We must not remain tied to this data and go beyond, analysing other forms of impacts.

As we saw before, the impacts of firearms in cases of violence against women are not always visible: even when it is not directly fired, the gun contributes to an even greater imbalance in power relationships that are already unequal, as it can be used by the aggressor to impose his will through threats and intimidations. Besides, the presence of a firearm in violent situations limits the possibilities of reaction and reduces the chances for a victim to escape and for someone from outside to intervene and help.

In spite of the existence of policies and programmes that aim to reduce violence, in practice, there is very little dialogue between the governmental sectors responsible for gun control and those that deal with violence against women. In the analyses, legislation and implementation of policies aimed at preventing and reducing domestic violence rarely are references, connections or attempts to intersect with existing national firearm control legislation. In the same way, the analyses, programmes and laws for prevention and reduction of armed violence do not include concerns with the tremendous scourge of domestic violence and of violence against women in general.

In the final seminar of this project we identified, together with all the participants, problems and some recommendations on this theme, which we now present.

Recommendations

Problems identified

1. Insufficient recognition of the firearm as a threat in private life.
2. Absence of public awareness about the relationship between violence against women and armed violence.
3. Lack of intersection of these two variables at public policy level (national and international).
4. Absence of data and knowledge on the role of firearms in violence against women.

Proposals

1. Not to neglect the application of the *preventative urgency measure* contained in the Maria da Penha Law, with respect to firearms.

2. To improve the psychosocial evaluation of police officers (of all, not just those in DEAM); promote their capability and the valuing of their role (in the case of special agents).

3. To create DEAM offices in all states, as in Rio de Janeiro, and also standardise its operations.

4. To ensure that risk analysis is used in all centres for victim care, including the presence of a weapon at home.

5. For the social movements (feminist, disarmament, human rights, etc.) to unite for exchange of data and promotion of joint campaigns.

6. For UN member states in formal peace to draw inspiration from the process of Security Council Resolution 1325/2000 in order to create more efficient protection and public security policies, broadening the scope of the policies.

S t r a i g h t i n t h e E y e s

SURVIVORS OF ARMED VIOLENCE [51]

Armed violence marks the life of the population in different ways, and goes far beyond the official statistics on deaths and injuries with firearms, which reveal the more direct impacts of this violence. In the spirals and *continuums* of armed violence that manifest themselves internationally and that express themselves locally in Rio de Janeiro, the one who dies is not the only victim.

In the last twenty years there have been, on average, 6.5 deaths a day from firearms in Rio de Janeiro.[52] Each death drags in its wake the pain of those who remain, affecting an entire social circle, especially the family and friends.

A recent study revealed important data on the so-called secondary, indirect or hidden victims of urban violence. It is estimated (Soares *et al*, 2006) that, in the period from 1979 to 2001, between 300,000 and 600,000 people survived[53] violent deaths in Rio de Janeiro. These people, the ones who remain, are the ones who continue to have to deal with the cycles of violence, usually without the support needed to be able to return to a healthy and productive life.[54]

The massacres and summary executions, with roots in the military dictatorship,[55] constitute to this day extreme, visible and frequent expressions of armed violence in Rio de Janeiro. And if in the past, in the words of José Cláudio Souza Alves, they marked the frontier between the civilised world and barbarianism, currently they are spread out, escaping their geographical limits and becoming part of the city's reality (2006:16). And this geographical dissemination is matched by the dissemination of destruction and rupture of ties and other lives.

Although men, women and young people of both sexes make up the tragic numbers of the massacres in Rio, it is young, black men, the vast majority from poor communities, who are the main targets of these practices. The bodies lined up in Vigário Geral, the massacre at Candelária church, the 29 victims of Nova Iguaçu and Queimados, the murders in the Borel slum or the beating of the four young people of "Via Show" in São João de Meriti, just to mention a few examples, are irreparably written into the history of Rio de Janeiro. They are the bodies of sons and daughters, husbands, wives, parents and/or friends of someone. However, for people who live this drama closely, these facts do not end and are not confined to the tragedy of collective or individual deaths. Their effects are perpetuated and unfold in other *continuums* of violence, in the daily lives of those who remain, whether through pain, fear, humiliation, impotence, disorientation or the countless difficulties experienced on the paths that are only just beginning when the facts start disappearing from the news programmes.

The visibility of these deaths and their trail of pain are temporary. Indeed, after the dramatic events, the survivors return to the condition of invisibility. As a rule it is mothers, sometimes sisters and wives, but rarely fathers and brothers, who start the journey through the paths of justice, in the hope of redeeming some meaning of what is left to them and in the effort, not always rewarded, of fighting against impunity.

On this journey, new effects of violence emerge dramatically in the shadow of the law's neglect, and in the absence of the most elementary institutions and social resources. To travel this path after a violent incident, when death is not assimilated as a fatality or the natural succession of life, is a process that leaves scars, imposes limitations and modifies existence. Overcoming loss, confronting its developments and transforming pain and grief with courage and perseverance turn out in practice to be an individual and solitary effort. Many of these people, especially when it comes to mothers and wives, experience the same adversities: loss of economic structure, shattered family equilibrium, undergoing long legal proceedings in unfavourable conditions, having to deal with the murderers or threats of retaliation. In some cases, they have the added burden of proving that their sons or partners

[51] The writing of this chapter was assisted by Carla Afonso and Marco Aurélio Martins.
[52] Calculations based on official data from the Ministry of Health (Datasus): 47,171 deaths by firearm in the city of Rio, between 1982 and 2002.
[53] "Survivors", in this chapter, refers to whoever survived the death(s) of another (family member), and not to people who survived an injury caused by a firearm.
[54] *Psychological consequences of violent experiences through firearms*, paper for the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, January 2006, Vivo International.
[55] When the extermination groups were formed in Baixada Fluminense with the direct and indirect participation of police officers and the approval of shopkeepers, businessmen and local political groups (Alves, 2006).

were not criminals and were not involved in the drug trade. In others, when there was involvement, they have to defend, posthumously, the constitutional right to a fair trial and sentencing in the terms of Brazilian law.

The hidden, invisible victims, the survivors of armed violence who are not part of the statistics of violent crime in Rio de Janeiro, are the protagonists of this chapter. We spent a large part of the months of research with them, we were received in their homes, their communities, neighbourhoods, and we entered their lives. And their lives entered ours, initiating a path of give and take. The initial contacts, arranged under the pretext of doing interviews, turned into long, continuous conversations, lasting hours, days, or months. The individual interviews turned into collective meetings for sharing and learning.[56] The first ten participants were joined by another five, then three, then another six... And we, who were three, became four, five, six, eight...

It is not easy to transfer the stories, experiences, sorrows and struggles of these women onto paper. And considering them examples of *indirect impacts* of armed violence has contributed to legitimising their invisibility. These impacts, which result from the death and loss of loved ones, and which are often lived in silence and are difficult to name, affect very directly the lives of those who are left behind and try to deal with the loss. To ignore them and subjugate them means to perpetuate cycles of violence, in the absence of answers.

This chapter is divided into three parts. The first part is dedicated to the stories and the words of the survivors. In the second part, we present a systematisation of the impacts expressed by them and the obstacles they have faced since the loss of their loved ones.[57] In the third part, written by Carlos Martín Beristain, we weave together some thoughts on the global reach of these phenomena and on the specificities of the work with this group, in Rio de Janeiro.

[56] We carried out individual interviews and organised group meetings, for experience sharing and learning. These groups and the psychosocial support work were aided by Carlos Martín Beristain, doctor, specialist in mental health, and Marco Aurélio Martins, member of the research team and psychologist.

[57] Carla Afonso and Marco Aurélio Martins contributed to the analysis of qualitative material and writing of this chapter.

Photographs: Raquel Dias

Elisabete Medina Paulino

Mother of Renan Medina Paulino and Rafael Medina Paulino

I never hit my children. The first time they were beaten was by those police officers.

My name is Elisabete Medina Paulino, I am 42 years old and I am the mother of Rafael and Renan Medina Paulino. They were murdered in the parking lot of the concert venue Via Show.

I got married when I was very young. I wanted to be a mother and a housewife. I stopped studying to look after my first child, Dani. I never wanted to have a nanny to look after my children. I thought that nobody could have taken better care of them than me. I only managed to finish secondary school after I had had my daughter. After the birth of my first grandchild, I stopped again. I looked after the baby so that my daughter could work. Once again, I gave up a career, a profession so that I could be a grandmother. I was a grandmother when my sons died.

Rafael was the eldest. He was eighteen, Renan was thirteen and was very big. He seemed older than Rafael. He was 1m76 tall and he weighed 95kg. Yet he was a big child; my baby, that's what I called him... They were very lively boys who had great plans and were full of potential. Rafael wanted to be a physiotherapist because his grandmother (my mother) was being treated by a physiotherapist and he felt sorry for her. He would say: "No, Grandma, I'm going to do physiotherapy, I'm the one who's going to look after you." Renan wanted to be a judge. He wanted to fight impunity and corruption. My sons had dreams. They wanted to change something.

On 6th December 2003, everything changed. The boys were at the concert venue Via Show, on Dutra Avenue. They were murdered by police officers; the bouncers for the event.

My youngest son was the first to go to the concert venue. He didn't even know that his brother and cousin, Bruno, were also going. It was the first time that he had gone out in the evening. I paid for a van to take him and bring him back. Later on, his cousin and brother decided to go. They had planned to go in the cousin's car but they met another friend who was going to Via Show and they decided to go in their friend's car. At the venue, they met my other son, Renan, who decided to come back with them.

On the way out there was some trouble with this friend in the parking lot. The bouncers went up to him, took him aside and started to beat him hard. When my sons and Bruno went to see what was happening to their friend, the bouncers didn't care, they just beat up everybody.

Then they saw that it wasn't going to work out. They took the boys to Caxias, to an abandoned farm where they killed them and threw them into a pit.

At four in the morning, when the van was supposed to bring my son home, I was downstairs waiting. I didn't sleep, waiting for him to turn up. Then, everybody arrived and they said that Renan was coming with his brother and cousin. I waited. Five o'clock came, then six, and they still didn't arrive. At seven in the morning, we went to Via Show, to trace their steps. We tried to find out what was going on. The police, who have a police booth at the front said there had been no fights that night and that it had been quiet. They even argued with us, saying: "No, your sons must have gone to the beach, after the show, they'll be home soon...". My son was very responsible; he would never have done that. Never. Especially if he was with his younger brother. That's why I became desperate. Then his friends started to search all the beaches in Rio, but we knew they hadn't gone to the beach. I waited with my sister-in-law. We searched and we reported it to the police.

Our friends, the neighbours, the whole neighbourhood closed Brasil Avenue on Sunday and then the Security Office sent the police to find out what was happening. The press started to report that the boys had not been found; we were on television all the time and it was even shown abroad. People who live in Europe, our friends, saw it, even a friend of my sons who lives in Switzerland...

We were desperate for days. We didn't know anything. We didn't know whether they were dead or alive, who had killed them, or why they had been killed. We didn't know if they had got mixed up in something. My sons were not bad boys, no! I never hit my children. I never gave them a single spank. The first time they were beaten it was by these police officers. Between Tuesday and Wednesday, the Office received an anonymous report and then they found the bodies.

Driven by our suffering and fighting spirit we jumped into action. The first person we contacted was the Secretary of Security. To our surprise, when we arrived at his office, they already knew that we were the mothers of the boys that the Caxias police officers had killed. One of them told us: "It was a cover-up. They saw something they weren't supposed to have seen".

We're fighting so that this won't happen anymore and for it to have an end. If we don't say anything, nothing will be done, and they will keep on killing. Lots of boys have disappeared at this concert venue. We were the first mothers who spoke out, who cried out. People are afraid. I don't know what of, maybe of dying. But I'm not afraid of dying. What's the only thing they can do to us? Kill us? They already have. A child is a mother's life. I know what it's like to lose my children and I don't want anybody else to suffer such pain. Our peace, our family, is over.

I'm no longer afraid, now I fight.

On 22nd June 2006, Military Police soldier Henrique Vítor de Oliveira Vieira, one of the nine police officers accused of kidnapping, beating and executing Renan Muniz Paulino and Rafael Medina, Bruno Muniz Paulino and Geraldo Santana Júnior, was given 25 years and 7 months in prison by the Jury Court of Duque de Caxias. Out of the eight people accused of the crime, one died, another has mental problems and six await trial, also by Jury Court.

Siley Muniz Paulino

Mother of Bruno Paulino

They kill us, kill our families, kill our friends

My name is Siley Muniz Paulino. I am 48 years old and I am the mother of Bruno Muniz Paulino. He was twenty and my only son. He was murdered by nine police officers at the concert venue Via Show.

I never saw my son cry. He was pure joy, always playful. If we chided him for any reason, he would say: "Hey shorty, calm down, you're no match for me".

Bruno was raised in a neighbourhood where everyone is friends and very concerned about their children. So much so that I always made a point of opening the terrace to my house so that he could be with his friends while I watched him. My son studied Mathematics at university and worked with his father. Both were mugged four times. One day he came home saying: "Mum, I'm going to try to enter the civil police force, we've got to do something. They won't let us work". He started the course and had spent only 15 days on it.

One Friday night, Bruno, his cousins and a friend went to Via Show (concert venue) and never came back. We looked everywhere: hospitals, morgues, and found nothing. So we went home and started to cry. We didn't know anything, not even whether our sons had died, we just knew that they didn't go around with bad company. They weren't addicts or criminals.

On Sunday there was an anonymous tip-off saying that uniformed police officers in a convoy of cars had gone by in the direction of a far-off place. Only the police officers knew the place where the crime was committed, it was difficult to reach. The vegetation was thick. They went by with our sons, to execute them, afraid of nothing! They were sure they wouldn't be caught. And there, in the middle of the forest, they executed our sons and threw their bodies into a pit.

We were desperate. Saturday went by, then Sunday, Monday, and they only turned up at dawn on Tuesday. On the day of the funeral, the entire neighbourhood closed its doors for the last goodbye. There were more than a thousand people.

We asked Justiça Global for help. They helped us by producing a report for the UN, our case was in the news and a book was even released in the United States, with the distinguished cases of impunity. So we started to belong to Mães do Rio; mothers who suffer the same pain and are always together. We then went to Brasília where we met the Minister of Justice (Márcio Thomaz Bastos). We handed him the letter that set out our case. After all, it is pressure that counts! Nine police officers killed my son and I am crying out for justice. The justice I ask for is for the police officers who killed our sons to be sentenced. If every woman who had lost her child cried out with us, if they all did their part, maybe we could get there. What you can't do is stay out of it. If the nine police officers were sentenced, that's nine police officers down. If the ones from Queimados were sentenced, that's 21 police officers down. That way, we'll remove from society those who don't deserve or are fit to be there. If everybody cries out, if everybody fights for justice, who knows whether we may be able to improve this impunity a bit?

It's for our children that we fight. For my son, the son I had and for my nephews. You raise your child the best way that you can You give him the best education, shelter him from bad things, show him the way and then these police officers, who are supposed to protect us, come along and ruin everything. This is to show other mothers that they can cry out, they shouldn't be afraid. We were timid, we didn't know how to speak, and we learnt to face everything: to learn how to speak and how to resolve things. They kill us, they kill our families, they kill our friends... Nowadays, I'm not afraid of anything.

Do you know what I do to survive this pain? I talk all the time. I always remember what a reporter once said: we turned our mourning into fighting.

Dalva da Costa

Mother of Thiago Silva

It's difficult enough to lose a son. Imagine having to prove that your son was innocent, that he wasn't a criminal.

I am Maria Dalva da Costa Correia da Silva. I am 52 years old. I live in Borel and am the mother of Thiago who was 19 years old when he was murdered on 16th April 2003.

I am currently unemployed. I used to work with tobacco importation and exportation but after I lost my son, I was never able to work again.

My son was very mature for his age. He had a daughter. He did several courses and had chosen to be a mechanic. He even had an official contract already. He was executed, over at Borel, on 16th April 2003, with three other people. There were four victims and two survivors.

My son worked all day that day. He didn't go to school because there were no classes. He got home about 6 o'clock. He played videogames with his brother and he said "ah, football, nobody beats me, you'll never beat me..." and he left saying he was going to cut his hair. When he got to the barber's, there was someone ahead of him, and then he stopped in the street to chat. While he was chatting, chatting, he heard a shot and ran towards the alley. On that day there was a police team on duty and 16 police officers on a clandestine operation. They arrived around three o'clock, trying to find out where the drug outlet was. They went into a house and hid. But after a while, they didn't hold back any longer and started to shoot. The police officers were on the roof and they shot my son.

Thiago pleaded for 20 minutes, saying he didn't want to die, telling them that he had a daughter... At the time I heard the shots and I knew he was on the street. I just prayed and asked God to protect my son, but my son was gone... He was shot five times and had two bullets in him.

When my husband went out of the door and into the street he saw them throwing my son into the car. He recognised him because he was wearing a shirt from his 19th birthday. Nobody could get close because they put their rifles up, shot into the air, and pushed... Then they took the bodies, they claimed that they had helped and the next day, the paper said four criminals had been executed in Borel in an intense shootout. And what do we do? It's difficult enough to lose a son. Imagine having to prove that your son was innocent, that he wasn't a criminal. That's even more difficult.

The whole community revolted and that's when we went on a march of silence. We only protested with signs and banners. Everyone in white, with his picture saying "I can identify myself". Because they couldn't identify themselves and had another name. That's why we played this game: "I can identify myself." We also made a dossier for each of them and sent it to Lula. When Lula received the dossier, he asked the Federal Police to carry out the investigation and inquiry.

We did the "I can identify myself" to avoid these massacres... but impunity is the mother of violence. They know they won't be punished and they continue to kill.

Out of the five police officers accused, only two have been tried. They were found not guilty by the Rio de Janeiro Jury Court. The remaining police officers are in prison awaiting trial.

Dulcinéia Sipriano

Mother of Marcos Vinicius

What I feared was to lose a child, and I did. Now what do I have to fear?

My name is Dulcinéia Maria Sipriano, I'm 52 years old, I live in Queimados and I'm the mother of Marcos Vinicius. Everyone around here called him Pitão, that was his nickname. All my children have a nickname. He had had his 15th birthday in January, and he was the son every mother wants to have. A good son, he never gave me trouble at school. Intelligent, studious boy, with a great future ahead of him.

I have another seven children and they all live with me, except for Simone.

Marcos Vinicius would always get up at 6 in the morning, get dressed, I would get up too, to make breakfast for him. At 6.20am he would leave for school, because his school was far away. When he was out in the street he'd shout "I love you, Old Lady!" and I'd say "I love you too!" On the way back, at the gate, he'd shout "Mum, I'm home" and then "Mum, I'm hungry". He was punctual with his mealtimes, he had to have breakfast, lunch, a snack, and his dinner was at 8.30pm.

On March 31st, 2005, Thursday, the day he was killed, he got home and said "Mum, I have an assignment on stem-cells to do, to hand in on Tuesday. It's a big assignment". I quickly offered to help with the assignment. We spent a long time researching the books we had at home, but we also had to look on the *Internet*. So we arranged to go to *LAN House* on Monday and look for information. We stopped for dinner; Marcos Vinicius wanted scrambled eggs to go with the rice and beans. When he was going to bed, after having slept a little in his father's lap, he remembered we had to go to visit his sister, Simone, to fetch something I didn't quite catch to hand in the next day at the school office. He put on his cap, his flip-flops and left, saying "I'm not even going to wear a shirt". My daughter, meanwhile, had come to my house. She lives nearby. Then she left to meet Pitão, but I asked her to stay. She didn't want to, because she had left her children alone at home. She left but came back shortly afterwards, feeling very scared, saying: "Mum, they're shooting up there, you can see the fire from here". She started crying, thinking about her children. To calm her down, I said: "Don't worry; it's OK, because Pitão is there with them." When the shooting had stopped, we went out to find out what had happened and we didn't even notice when one of my grandchildren, Igor, ran past us. When we arrived at the place it had happened, we saw my nephew lying on the floor. At the time I thought it was my son, Toco. Another nephew of mine said it was Chicão, not Toco. Then, I heard Igor shout: "Grandma, Pitão is lying here, come here Grandma, let's take him. He's breathing". Because my son was still alive when we arrived. He tried to say something. He still tried to say something. I got desperate. I couldn't see anything anymore. I had lost one of my sons and a nephew, who was 34, who couldn't even celebrate the first birthday of the son he had wanted so much.

Nobody understood why that massacre had happened. Out of the five people who were killed (my son, Marcos Vinicius, my nephew, Chicão, Juninho, who was a student and delivered gas, Marco Aurélio, who was a teacher, and João Bolinho, who was the eldest); nobody had had problems with the police. None of them were addicts, none of them. Everybody liked them.

It's all very recent, still. I'll never forget that day. It won't get out of my head. A lot has changed in my life since that day. My health has worsened. I now have hypertension, insomnia, constant tiredness. Life at home isn't the same anymore. The structure of the whole family was shaken. We all miss Pitão a lot.

They killed 29 people altogether. It was repugnant. If it was a drug dealer who had shot my son in the head, I wouldn't be as angry as I am with the police; because the police have a duty to protect, not to kill. They are paid to protect and not to take the lives of our loved ones.

After the event, we decided – my family and the other family members of the shooting victims – to get organised and form a movement. We had the precious help of Ismael Lopes, president of *SOS Queimados* at the time. We had no other support apart from Ismael Lopes. The mayor, for example, gave us no help. Shortly after the event we were kind of lost. But Ismael helped us from the first moment. The next day he, my daughter Patricia and my son Dudu organised a march in Queimados, asking for justice, and we also started to hold meetings. We made banners, the children made signs... It was all very fast. Ismael helped my children to present our "fight" at Viva Rio, in Brasília, and encouraged us to create an NGO. They also contacted other groups of family members of victims, such as "Via Show Mothers". And that's how the AFAVIV – Association of Family Members of Victims of Violence in Baixada – was born, although it isn't registered yet.

At first people were afraid to get involved, because the relatives of the police officers started to pressure them. I told my daughter: “I am not afraid”. What I feared was to lose a child, and I did. Now what do I have to fear? I have other children, it’s true. I fear for my children. But if I don’t cry out, one day it will happen to another and then to another. Soon I will have no children. Someone has to say enough! Stop!

The NGO aims to provide psychologists to help the families of victims, organise activities to keep children busy, get a base. When we have a base, we want to create a library. That was my son Marcos Vinicius’s dream. He always used to say: “Mum, I’m going to build a library”.

The Military Police soldier Carlos Jorge Carvalho, one of five police officers accused of participating in the massacre in Baixada that killed 29 people in the towns of Nova Iguaçu and Queimados, was sentenced by the Jury Court of Nova Iguaçu, on August 23rd, 2006, to 543 years of prison for the crimes of murder, attempted murder and gang formation. The other four are awaiting trial by Jury Court.

Marilene Lima de Souza

Mother of Rosana Santos

To this moment, I have nothing but her absence. We have the right to bury our children with the same dignity that we brought them into the world with.

My name is Marilene Lima de Souza, I am 54 years old, and I am the mother of Rosana da Silva Santos, murdered in 1990, at the age of 18.

Rosana left home on July 21st, Saturday afternoon. She said she was going to Saquarema, on a trip with her boyfriend. They were going to spend a week and come back on Sunday.

A few days earlier several young people who lived in the Acari slum had suffered extortion in the house of a woman who lived there. They took a lot of things. And they were going to get the rest later. Hoping the police would forget, they spent the weekend on a farm, in Magé. My daughter was the girlfriend of one of the boys, and they went in a big group, and they spent about five days there.

On the sixth day six plainclothes people and a hooded person turned up. They entered the house and said they were police officers and they wanted money. They told the owner of the house to leave and they were there for more than an hour, and told them to get out. They put the girls in my daughter's boyfriend's Fiat and the boys in an old van, which this lady used to sell vegetables at the market.

On the night of the 31st the van was found, a bit burnt, on a vacant lot near Bongado. They had tried to set fire to it but the neighbours had come and put the fire out. You could see the blood clearly. There was a lot of blood. It looks like they transported the people there or killed the people inside the van. But the bodies never turned up. We received lots of reports: that they are buried on the farm that they were fed to a pair of lions that are on the farm...

When the Acari case happened I was working, I worked at a shop. I asked to leave so that I could accompany the police officers on the case. I wanted to see, I wanted to be there when they found the bodies so I could find them at the same time. I wanted to find the bodies at the farm... But there's this thing, you have to get there, you have to go in with a warrant. How do you go into someone else's home? If it was in the street I would just get a shovel, I would go, dig and get the bones.

You have to live in suspense. I can't stand it! I take controlled medication so I can bear it, otherwise I can't stand it. I've always avoided taking medication, you know, to remain lucid, in spite of everything. But know I said "No, now I need to ask for help". I panic whenever I have to go out. I feel scared. One feels impotent.

To this moment, I have nothing but her absence. I have nothing to prove that she's been missing for 15 years. We are poor people who deserve respect, who deserve to bury our children with the same dignity with which we brought them into the world. It's a huge violation of my right as a mother to bury my child and a huge violation of her right to life.

I've been in this fight for 15 years. We don't solve it, but at least we bother people. If you're silent, you are playing your oppressor's game. And I believe things are growing inside us. It's not a question of wanting; it's a question of necessity, really. First there is the moment of indignation, of wanting to know what happened to our children. Then there is the fight. Then there's no turning back. I can't go back to being Marilene, mother of my children, grandmother of my grandchildren. My children were little; they said "Mum, it's happened, there's nothing you can do. You just have to carry on. Think about us. You're putting us at risk". And I thought "no!" it's the opposite. I had to be there, to bother them, to say it wasn't an animal that had been put to death, it was a human being, and just as it happened to her it could have happened to them.

The main objective is to find the bodies of our children. But my daughter is not anonymous; she's not just one more person in anonymity, like the others, because there's this huge family that is being created inside the country, the huge family that suffers violence. Because then you see that this pain is not just yours. The desperation is huge. Because we, the mothers, women, we get pregnant, we struggle to raise our children, but we always expect to die before our children. And children are dying in front of their mothers. I wanted my daughter and then, at the age of 18, someone comes and aborts her.

My fight, it will only be over when I die. Even if I have this right to know, before I die, that she really was murdered and she really is there.

The crime, attributed to police officers, is yet unsolved. The bodies of the young people and adults still haven't been found, and the families are still searching.

Patrícia Oliveira

Sister of Wagner Santos

If you're going to fight you have to be prepared to be attacked.

My name is Patrícia Oliveira, I'm the sister of Wagner dos Santos and I am a militant for the defence of Human Rights. I work at the Human Rights Commission, in Rio de Janeiro. But I only became a militant when I met Wagner again.

My parents suffered from alcoholism. My real mother, who died run over by a car and who I never met, she gave me away, with another sister, and she kept Wagner and my younger sister, who died with her. Wagner stayed with a neighbour; he changed hands many times, until they called FUNABEM. He only left there when he was 21. He lived in several places, in Vila do Pinheiro, Avenida Brasil, but we hadn't been reunited yet.

In 1993 Wagner was 21. He wasn't working at the time, but when he didn't have enough money to sleep in a hotel he slept at Candelária church. But he wasn't there all the time. He wasn't very well-known at the time. That group there, he had met three days earlier, at the birthday of one of the girls, who was a psychologist. He arrived at the party and played the guitar, in a capoeira ring.

Eight boys were killed in the massacre at Candelária church. Wagner was wounded, with the other boys, who were murdered one by one. He survived because he's stubborn. He suffers from several after-effects and he's got saturnism, which is lead poisoning. And he still has a bullet lodged in his fifth vertebra. He was shot eight times in total: four in 1993 and four in 1994. In 1994 he went to work in Bahia, under protection, because he couldn't stay in Rio. He worked at a hotel and then he came back to Rio. He was at Central Station, with no protection at that moment, and a police officer came – probably a police officer, because he was in plainclothes – with a picture of him and asked if he was Wagner dos Santos. Then he said he was a police officer and threatened him. He ran, but a lot of busses, a lot of cars were going by and he couldn't cross. Then a lady came and said "Why are you hitting him?" "Oh, because he stole over there", said the police officer. Then the lady said "If he stole, take him to the police station" and the police officer replied "Sure, I'll take him to the police station". But they took him near Marechal Fontenelle Avenue, they spoke to someone who was in the bathroom and they shot him four times, while he was handcuffed. That's why I say it was a police officer. A criminal wouldn't have handcuffs. And the biggest problem is the inquest will be barred by law next year, because it will have been 12 years.

I was following the Candelária story but I didn't know he was my brother. It was only in 1995, when he came back from Switzerland for the trial of a police officer, who was sentenced to 29 years, and he gave an interview to the press. My brother-in-law, my other sister's husband, read it and said "This boy could be your brother because it's the same story as the one you tell". So my sister contacted the Federal Police Superintendent, who took Wagner to her. But we couldn't see Wagner because he had gone back to Geneva; he was already on the plane. We spoke on the phone for two years. We were only reunited at the end of 1997.

That's when we started in human rights militancy. We met the Acari people, the Vigário people, we got together and started pressuring the government to make things move, so that we could get an answer. Later on we created "Questão de Honra" ("A Question of Honour"), an NGO that fights for justice, respect for human rights and social equality. When you get involved in militancy you have to sacrifice a few things.

I was working, but I want to be a militant. And militancy while working isn't possible. You have to choose one of the two things; either you go on with your militancy or you work. When a tragedy happens, you have two options: either you remain silent or you fight: if you fight, you have to be prepared to be attacked; you have to be conscious of what you want. You have to be there 24 hours a day. There's no stopping.

I think we've achieved a lot already, we've achieved respect, and we can be received by any authority. We can sit down and talk to the Secretary for Human Rights, even with the chief of the Civil Police himself.

Four police officers were sentenced and four were dismissed for lack of evidence. One police officer was murdered.

Selma Batista Neves

Mother of Lucas França

How come people don't understand what I feel?

My name is Selma Batista de Albuquerque Neves, I am 41 years old, and I live in Rocinha. On June 27th, 2005, my son Lucas was assassinated.

Lucas was a student in secondary school and he also worked for his father, helping to carry the workshop material. That Monday, Lucas woke up early, thinking he was going to work with his father. But I warned him: "Lucas, your father said you're not to go up this early, if he wants you to go up, he'll call".

He had a friend who always used to sleep over at our house, since he was a little boy. On that day they woke up, got up, and Lucas and his friend went up to fill the tanks, because where I live water doesn't come up at night, so I have to turn on the pump to fill the three water tanks. Before he went up there'd been a lot of fireworks, really a lot of fireworks, and shots. But when Lucas went up to the roof it had stopped. I was a bit worried because when there are fireworks, shooting, we don't let them go out in the street, to avoid these things.

So I went up to the roof and saw the two sitting on the couch. I used to call him "baby", because he was a big baby, he was 15 but he was a big baby! So I said: "Baby, look, as soon as you're finished filling the water tanks come down, because there are a lot of fireworks". He said: "Ok Mum, when I'm finished, I'll come down". I went to my room, took my pillow and lay down on the sofa. When I lay down on the sofa, the friend shouted "Selma!" I looked up, startled, and said: "Hi, Clayton". He said: "Go up there and see Lucas!" So I got up quickly from the sofa and went up the stairs. When I got up the stairs and looked, Lucas was already on the floor, on his stomach, with a single shot wound and lots, lots of blood coming out of his mouth and the wound. Desperate, I started to shout: "Lucas, Lucas! Baby, talk to Mummy, talk to Mummy…" And he wouldn't answer. He died in his friend's arms.

My niece came down and people were asking where she was going, she said she was going to get help because her cousin was wounded on the roof. Police officers stuck a gun in her chest and told her to go back. They told her to go up and they went up too. Some neighbours wanted to help me but the police also pointed guns at them, pushing them into the ground. Then they got to my house, went up and spread out. There was one here, one on the roof, another at the door and I started yelling "Get out of here, there are no criminals here! Get out! You killed my son. You killed my son. Go help my son". Then they said: "It wasn't us. It was the criminals".

I said a whole bunch of things. I took the sofa and threw it up, I got really angry, I was pulling my hair, I was shouting, all covered in blood. And they said it was a shootout! When they shot my son, I didn't hear anything, how can they say there had been a shootout here?

My husband always used to say: "Selma, let's leave Rocinha, let's leave, let's buy a house somewhere else. Let's bring up our children away from here". I never wanted to, because my grandmother is there, my grandmother is 87 years old. I used to say: "No, I'm only leaving Rocinha the day my grandmother dies. The day she dies, then I will". But unfortunately, my son went first. Now, I don't know if I want to stay there anymore...

My husband, he doesn't want to anymore. He said our house has Lucas' sweat on it, because my husband taught him his job. From a very young age, he carried materials. It's a four-story building. My son died in the house, where he used to stay and help me. When he wasn't working with his father, he swept the stairs, he swept the roof, he filled the water tanks. When I felt unwell, he did things for me in the house. How many times did he take me to the health station to take my blood pressure?

There are many days when I break down. When I break down, my husband tries to console me, to talk to me, but it's no use. I saw my son. I saw him. He didn't see him. I saw my son dead, fallen on the roof. I think about it when I fall asleep, I think about it when I wake up, it's all that comes into my mind. And when I go into the living room, and I look up, I see that whole scene again. How come people don't understand what I feel?

The case has begun to be investigated by CORE (Office for Special Resources of the Civil Police of the State of Rio de Janeiro – PCERJ). Once the investigation was initiated, the case was transferred to CGU (Unified General Internal Affairs/State Office for Human Rights), where only the CORE police officers gave statements. Leonardo Chaves, Government Attorney's Office prosecutor, started to follow the case, which is now being investigated by COINPOL – Civil Police Internal Affairs, where the family members are again being summoned to give statements.

Iracilda Toledo Siqueira

Widow of Adalberto

Everything made me transform this pain into fighting.

My name is Iracilda Toledo Siqueira, I am 41 years old, I've lived in Rio for 33 years and I am the widow of Adalberto, dead at 44.

On August 30th, 1993, I lost my husband. The day before, four police officers had been killed on Catolé do Rocha square, which is where the police officers would always do extortion. They would come in, extort, then leave. But one day a guy said: "No, I won't pay, they're gonna get it". So they killed the four Military Police officers and carried on as always in the slum.

On Sunday, the 29th, the guards showed up here, in the morning. But we could never imagine that they were entering the community to kill working people. So nobody thought about going home, because we thought that would never happen.

My husband had been working all day. He was a railway worker, a station head, and he worked all Sunday. He came home to see the Brazil-Bolivia game, they were the selecting games for the 1994 World Cup. Brazil won 6 x 0. My husband went to a bar to celebrate Brazil's victory.

The killing began between 9 and 11.30pm. They killed whoever was there: a family of evangelicals who was sleeping indoors, even the people in front of the bar. And as they started killing from the back of the community to the front, there was no way to escape. My husband was already leaving. My husband was leaving with a friend, a very good friend. We used to go to the beach together, go on trips, have barbeques... Then the friend looked in the bar door and saw the police officers, and ran. He was the first to die. Another friend asked him not to do that, and they killed him. The third was my husband. They killed 21 people. They split up and closed the community – some came in through the station, some on the train tracks, some through a hole.

It was a very big shock and it had such a powerful repercussion that even the OAB (Brazilian Lawyers' Order) put in lawyers, prosecutors, to be able to gather all the information, to get the reports. At the time, my father-in-law was the president of the neighbour's association. He was a very kind person and, having lost a son, was even more on our side. We demanded for the Minister of Justice to come to Rio de Janeiro, not to remove the bodies. Because we wanted to know who had done that. It was a question of honour and us proving that they were workers. And we were able to prove that they were all workers, we didn't let them rest. Nowadays, we want justice and we are still fighting for compensation.

It was 21 in Vigário Geral, now (in Queimados) 29. How many more will it be? A hundred? Two hundred? The entire population? You know, that's what we have to do: fight!

And I fight, every day. Women have been fighting for many years. In war, women were the nurses and looked after everyone, but nobody saw them working. I learnt from life that I have to go out and fight. We have to fight for our rights, our children's rights. Because the massacre is not over in Vigário Geral, the massacre went on and the family members started to die.

But that won't stop me from fighting, from making people aware. I'm going to keep on fighting. Everything has made me transform this pain into fighting.

The Government Attorney's Office reported 52 military police officers. Out of these, only seven were sentenced by the Jury Court of Rio de Janeiro. The others were dismissed on lack of evidence. One is still a fugitive.

In 1997, one of the defendants, the ex-military police officer Roberto Alvarenga, was sentenced to 449 years and eight months of imprisonment. Through a *habeas corpus*, his crime was considered as being a continuation of previous crimes, and the STF (Supreme Federal Court) reduced the sentence to 57 years. In 2005, he was tried again and was sentenced, unanimously, to 59 years and six months of prison for aggravated murder. Another defendant who was tried twice was José Fernandes Neto, also a military police officer. In 2000, he was sentenced to 45 years of imprisonment; and, after an appeal in 2005, he was sentenced to 59 years and six months of imprisonment.

Regina Célia da Rocha Maia

Mother of Márcio Antônio

It's not unusual for a woman to lose a child at ten in the morning and to be at the oven, cooking, at five in the afternoon.

My name is Regina Célia da Rocha Maia, I live in Tijuca and I am the mother of Márcio Antônio, 25 years old, murdered in 1995.

I am a clinical psychologist. That was my profession. One day I received at my clinic a person who had lost a daughter, and I cried with them. It was time to stop.

It was November 1st, 1995. My son was alone; he had gone to fetch his wife at her mother's house. Her mother has lived in Salgueiro for 43 years. He got there at about five in the afternoon, daylight savings time, a bright day. The police officers were coming down; they were looking for a kidnapper. When my son whistled to my granddaughter, one of them asked "Why are you whistling?" When the police come to take over the slum, everyone goes into their houses and if you're at the bottom you don't come up. But he didn't know that because his mother-in-law lived down below, where cars went by.

So an argument started, and they said "Oh, we're coming in". My son stood in front of the door. He was shot with a rifle in the head, left arm and shoulder. When the events are registered by the police, they are never guilty of anything. There are always shootouts, the person may not be involved but they put in that there was a shootout. Their word is what counts, and when the family arrives at the site all the evidence has been planted. And then the truth is that you, with the pain of your loss, with everything, on top of all that you have to disprove what has been said. I had to prove that my son was not a criminal, because when the event was registered my son was a criminal.

A month had not passed since my son had died and I began a very intense fight to preserve dignity. Our self-esteem gets very low. It is not unusual for a mother to lose a child at ten in the morning and to be at the oven, cooking, at five in the afternoon. It's a lot of pain. The person doesn't have the right to cry. That hurt me a lot; only I knew how much that loss hurt.

My daughters would wash me. All I would have was coffee and milk, nothing else, I just wanted to die. It was horrific. I got over it; I overcame this phase, thanks to the help of my daughters. That's when my eldest daughter said: "We are alive, we want you with us, you're not going to die with my brother".

In 1998, with five more mothers, we created a programme called "Mothers helping each other". We had three projects in this programme: the first part is the "Self-Esteem" project, the redemption of the pain situation and that you have to look after yourself. Then comes "Smiling Again" which is, as it says, the return to social life that has been denied us in our deepest pain, because society really does stigmatise us. You don't receive anymore Christmas cards, you don't receive invitations... The mother also gets stigmatised, it's easier for men. He can feel the pain, he created the child with the woman, but the nine months belonged to the woman. You see the father forgiving, the father goes to the prison and forgives the murderer, and you rarely see a mother entering a prison saying "I forgive you", because she doesn't forgive. Many couples split up after the death of a child.

When the children are grown up, the man decides to be young again. The first thing he does after the separation is to make another child. For men there is substitution, but not for women.

I and most of the mothers suffer from insomnia, or we have that very agitated, fragmented sleep. You see the day break and you feel exhausted in the morning. So, how do we try to get over this process? Through the "Dreams Workshop", we created a crafts group. I like doing patchwork, taking little pieces and making bedcovers. I had never sewed, never sat at a sewing machine, never done a stitch of embroidery. It was a big success!

Scared? Not me! Only the proof that impunity is our greatest obstacle. And sadness because, after so many things that we went through, so much humiliation, having them turn their backs on us, call our sons good-for-nothings and so many other things, having to go through people who have nothing to do with us, who are using our pain to get ahead.

The main step forward was, as I take baby steps, having at least succeeded in putting in the minds of some people that we deserve to be understood, that people should see us as normal people. We cannot live with stigmatisation; we cannot live with the punishment of being distanced from society because we are controversial people. We put our faces out there so that today other mothers can put their faces out there without fear of being punished, so that they can open their mouths.

The police officer involved was indicted for premeditated murder at the 39th Criminal Court, however, the Government Attorney's Office requested for the case to be closed.

Wilma Jurema

Mother of Thalita Carvalho

They took half of me away with my girl.

My name is Wilma Jurema de Mello, I live in S. Cristóvão and I am the mother of Thalita Carvalho de Mello, murdered at 16 years of age.

Thalita was born in São Cristóvão and ended up departing from here, too. I lived on Carneiro de Castro, near the Malagueta. On October 9th, 1998, at night, Thalita was at home and Carlos André, who was her boyfriend, called saying they were going to the Malagueta club. So she went. Later, they left the club with two friends, William and Ana Paula, but they didn't notice they had been followed by two cars, a white Fiesta and a Monza with six passengers, a total of 11 people. When they were about 100 metres from the gas station where the accident took place, they started to machine-gun the car, hitting it with more than 42 shots. One of the girls actually began to drag herself on the ground, asking for help, but one of them came back, finished killing her on the pavement and killed my daughter and Maria José's son, who were in the car. The intention was to get only one of them, but they destroyed all the evidence. And they destroyed everybody.

On that day they took something that was mine. They took half of me away with my girl; the other half is because I have another daughter and because if I was never to hear the word "mum" again, I would go mad. I think that if I hadn't had my other daughter, I would have gone after them even if they killed me. But at least I would be with her. The only reason I didn't go was because it would be cowardly, my other daughter was six years old at the time, she needed me. They will only know what they did to me if they lose someone they love, because I loved my daughter. If they have someone who they love, they must know the pain they put on me. And as long as I live, I will carry this pain with me, because they interrupted her life. They played God. "You will no longer live".

I've never been afraid to show my face because I have nothing to hide. If they had known my daughter, they would have known that she hadn't, either. I'm not afraid to show them that I loved my daughter. I'm not afraid to show what they did to me. When a year had passed, and nobody had done anything, I started to get involved in this fight and I was in it for three years. Then I saw nothing was happening, and I gave up, because I was working, and studying. I often didn't sleep, to be able to go everywhere. I stopped for a while, but Rede Globo, NGOs and friends never stopped looking for me, but I didn't want anymore. So now I say this: "No, I'm going, because do they think that it's all been forgotten, after seven years? I'm going to show them that I haven't forgotten. If they forgot that they killed my daughter, I haven't forgotten that I lost her, no".

I wasn't scared anymore; I didn't consider my life or my safety. I just wanted them to resolve that, what they had taken from me. The inquest is still going on, there are quite a few people indicted, but nobody has been summoned yet. Eight years. Our last fight is now, up to October 2006, because after that, it will be filed. Some days we think things are moving forward, and they soon stop.

The obstacle is not knowing anyone with political power, anyone who could guide us and show them that we were going after other things. We're going to show our faces, we're going to tell our story... Because my daughter didn't have a cold, she wasn't sick. If they hadn't crossed her path, she would be alive. And I can't bear thinking about it.

Three police officers were indicted for the deaths of Thalita, Carlos André, Ana Paula and William, but to this day none of them have been tried. The three officers were allegedly part of an extermination group known as *Cavalos Corredores* (Running Horses) that operated in São Cristóvão.

Maria José Batista

Mother of Carlos André

And this fight is eternal; it's for as long as I live!

My name is Maria José Batista, I live in Copacabana, I'm 51 years old and I am the mother of Carlos André, murdered at 23.

Carlos André had class in the mornings and evenings. In the morning he studied computing and at night he would go to school. Then, whenever he woke up, he would give me a big kiss. When he came home from school he would say "Mummy, Mummy, I'm home! Haven't you heated up my dinner?" And he played with his sister, with their toy cars, like children. These are the things that we never forget.

On that day, October 9th, 1998, he arrived home earlier because he only had class from 1 to 3pm. He had lunch and went to sleep. At 7 o'clock Thalita (his girlfriend) called and said: "Auntie, isn't André coming to the Malagueta?" I asked him and he said he was going – he always had fun at that club. My children were born and raised in S. Cristóvão, but we'd been living in Copacabana for four months, because our home was being remodelled. Later we went to S. Cristóvão to meet some friends – I, my husband and my daughter. André had gone to his brother's house, because my first grandson had been born on the 3rd. It will soon be eight years and I say it was God who sent this grandson to fill the void that I feel. God put him in my life. At 9 in the evening he arrived. He seemed different; he started kissing me from head to toe. He looked more handsome to me that day. His father was at the bar, he went by and said "Dad, give me a drink because I'm going to stay up all night. I've got to have loads of fun!"

We left him, his sister and his brother at the party. Before that we went through Tijuca, to a bar called "Só cana" and only afterwards did we go to the Malagueta. In the early hours, André, Thalita, Ana Paula and William left together and went to eat at Bob's – like they did whenever they went out; they were always eating at Bob's. When they left the Malagueta they were followed by two cars and, once in S. Cristóvão, they were all murdered. They just executed four people in a car, two defenceless people who were in the back seat, unable to get out.

I didn't sleep that night. I couldn't sleep; there was something that kept alerting me. At 6 o'clock the phone rang. It was a friend of ours, a childhood friend of André, who had passed the place and seen the four murdered people, and he was calling to let me know. I fainted on the spot, I felt sick, I threw up. Then, we drove to the IML (Medical-Legal Institute) and confirmed the fact: André had been murdered.

My life was over on that day. At first I couldn't do anything at all. I only washed because I had to. I spent nearly eight days sitting on the sofa, it was like I wasn't there, just staring at the ceiling. For months, my daughter and I went to a psychologist that my husband's company paid for us. My son Rafael was very angry; he wouldn't accept anything we said. We had to keep telling him not to do wrong things. I always said things to him "If whoever did this has any feeling, they will see that they caused irreparable damage to four people". And my husband couldn't work either. He stayed in the living room, walking from window to window, chain smoking, unable to work.

We didn't have support from anybody. We had to look for support ourselves, we put together a group of mothers who had lost their children and started to fight, seeking a pension, seeing if anything would happen. The first manifestation was a march where we brought all his friends together. There were about 100 people, all wearing the same t-shirts. But to this day, eight years later, we have no answer. We lost our health, our jobs. We lost our peace, because we cannot sleep. Our children go out at night and as long as they're not back we can't relax. I can't hear the sound of a gunshot without my legs trembling.

My children are what gives me strength, because I need to be strong to care for them and fight for them. I'm just like a hen, I won't let anything happen! And I fight for justice for my son who's gone. And this fight is eternal; it's for as long as I live. I'll always fight for justice; I'll always fight for him and to put these murderers in jail.

Three police officers were indicted for the deaths of Thalita, Carlos André and William, but to this day they have not been tried. The three officers were allegedly part of an extermination group known as *Cavalos Corredores* (Running Horses) that operated in São Cristóvão.

It's a very painful pain...

The reports from mothers and other family members are full of stories of suffering, starting from the day in which the execution of the children/family members took place – remembered, relived and described in detail. The impacts that result from the deaths are obviously multiple, and intimately connected to one another. The ways in which they are felt, expressed and manifested resemble a web, making it difficult to isolate each one. In the following pages we identify some of the impacts, lived and described in the first person. During the interviews, meetings and conversations with this group,[58] we found that the traumatic experience affects their lives in different dimensions. We have grouped the different impacts into two groups: *impacts on health* (physical and emotional) and *socioeconomic impacts* (of loss and the fight for justice). The choice to list the type of impacts on the lives of survivors was not due to consider that there is no relationship between them. In reality, the great difficulty is precisely this categorisation, since in practice they are inseparable. The decision was methodological, in the sense of shedding light on each element that has been detailed for us during the process of interviews and interaction with this group.

Health and survival

Epistemological studies show that between 25% and 40% of survivors of extreme violence and catastrophes suffer from health problems (Martín Beristain, 1999). In general, the greater the intensity of the violence, the greater is the occurrence of psychological disturbances and physical symptoms. Thus, deliberate homicides cause a bigger impact than accidental deaths in natural catastrophes, and collective traumas affect the population more than isolated incidents (ibid).

The indexes of urban violence that ravage Rio de Janeiro make the city's population live regularly and daily with the lethality and/or threat of firearms. And this violence, both in its direct and more indirect forms, constitutes traumatic experiences with serious psychological impacts.

During the conversations with the wives/family members of the fatal victims of armed violence it became well-known that these psychological impacts are also the most difficult to overcome, and are commonly associated to the physical health risks presented. However, the symptoms are not identical for everybody and they depend on the way that each person deals with the situation. Besides, and as Carlos Martín Beristain maintains, the presence of certain psychological and emotional effects (symptoms) does not always signify the existence of a disturbance or illness, and if these do exist, they do not necessarily need treatment. Many people present symptoms, some suffer a certain kind or disturbance, and a minority requires specific psychiatric attention (ibid).

The symptoms presented as responses to a traumatic event are considered a natural reaction to these situations by experts. But when these defence mechanisms become the only way of dealing with life, when they paralyse the person for a long period of time, not allowing life to go on and directly influencing social relationships, intervention is believed to be necessary.

Reactions such as ***insomnia, fear, persistence of hate reactions, very deep nostalgia*** *(and difficulty in dealing with these memories)* are examples of reactions to events that are not natural, which were reported by the group of family members of massacre victims in Rio de Janeiro.

> *I hardly ever leave the house, only when it's a meeting of mothers, that's when I leave the house. But I don't leave the house, my life is indoors. Nowadays I don't feel like tidying my house, I don't tidy my house like I used to, I don't look after it anymore.*
>
> Mother

> *Nowadays, if something happened, I wouldn't dare to call the police. I'm scared. I don't dare. They were the ones who did that to my daughter. You know that a criminal is a criminal. What about them? I don't dare. When I see the police go by here, I feel angry, I feel disgusted; I can't even look at them. It makes me feel strange, I can't look at them. I'm even terrified of seeing a police officer's face, knowing that they all belong to a uniform. I don't like it. I turn away...*
>
> Mother

> *When my son died, my father developed a depressive cancer. I didn't even know there was such a thing as depressive cancer. My father died on the 5th. He was hospitalised for 52 days, at the São Silvestre hospital, over in Santa Tereza. He died on the 5th; I buried him on the 6th. On the 8th, my husband died, I buried my husband on the 9th. When I came back from*

[58] Mothers of direct victims of violence made up the majority of the group, but there was also the participation of widows, sisters, some fathers and other relatives.

my father's funeral, my husband died. So, that affects your life. How can I say "I'm not going to fight, I won't do it, I'll let someone do it for me…" because all of it happened to me. (…) No more Nuggets came into my house… or hamburgers… or soup… I never made them again, because it was the food that my son liked. So, sometimes, I try to eat, but the food won't go down. Because he would call me from the barracks: "Hey, Mum, make some steak and chips for your dear son". That is, put some steak and chips on the table, I remember that. You see, I mean, Monday it's even worse.

Mother

You lie down and you can't sleep… you dream of your son, and all that. […]You take medicine for high blood pressure and you go to the bathroom five times during the night, which is my case, and by the third time you're no longer sleepy, you see the day break, you are exhausted when you start the day.

Mother

We found mostly mothers in the groups of family members of fatal victims of armed violence. These mothers spoke recurrently about the *incurable pain*, this *pain that completely changes your life*, and which results from the experience of having to deal with the death of children before their time. Indeed, there is no word or name for this experience: widowhood results from the loss of a companion, the offspring being orphaned. However, the loss of a child has no name. The difficulty in explaining the meaning and intensity of this pain was common to all the conversations.

You marry, you carry a child in your belly for nine months, you suffer to give birth, you suffer to raise them; the man works and the woman stays at home. The responsibility […] *is always with the mother, who deals with these things, right? And then, when there's a loss* […] *it's the woman who suffers… Of course, the man, the father, also suffers with the loss of a child… but it's different…*

Widow

These variables of (post-)traumatic experience, lived by the relatives of the victims of violence, refer to the mourning process. This process consists of the symbolic elaboration of the trauma that results from the loss of a loved one. This elaboration aims to understand what is being felt, what should be done with these feelings and, finally, to accept loss. In the case of Rio de Janeiro, these mourning processes are *altered mourning processes* due to the intensity of the types of violence.

In the case of the survivors we interviewed, the great ***obstacle to acceptance*** was related to the ***sense of injustice*** resulting from the non-sentencing/impunity of those responsible, the ***anger*** felt, the ***impotence*** in face of the aggression and the ***guilt*** for not having been able to prevent the death of the family member.

I lost a daughter and I'm still not okay, because I can't accept it. If it had been an illness, if she had been a bad girl, even then, but you'd have something to soften it. But I don't have that. You know? "My daughter was bad; she did this-and-that..." I don't have that. You see? I still can't accept it. I still can't scratch my daughter from my life or her father's life. I don't accept it. I'll only accept it, forgive me, on the day they kill that wretch.

Mother

The ***feeling of guilt*** was frequently mentioned, often as an attempt to give meaning to what happened. Even though this imposition of guilt is destructive for the person, feeling responsible for what happened can also be a way of thinking that you have some control over the situation you experienced, that it could have been avoided (ibid). With guilt comes the need for ***self-punishment***, provoked by the feeling of responsibility. Although guilt doesn't reveal itself directly, in some of the statements from the mothers of victims, the need to mention the care and protection present in the children's upbringing manifests itself clearly. They stress that the tragedy happened during the only moment when they weren't in control.

My son went out with a group of teenagers; it was the first time he was going out... I had never, never let him, then that group of 30 teenagers came... he was the youngest. But, as he was kind of big, he looked a lot older.

Mother

I only let my children out when there are parties at the weekend, then there's someone grown-up going, then I let them go. But when the person leaves, they come home with them. I don't let them out alone to go to parties, to go out alone, no, I don't let them out. I used to let him out to... go from here to his godmother's house. It was like this, his godmother lives in Jacarépaguá, then he would go out: "Mum, I'm going." Then, right, when he got there, she would call: "V. arrived". Then when he left: "V. is going". When my son arrived, you see, it was like that, because that way we could control the time, the time he would spend going from here to Jacarepaguá and from there to here. So we were always controlling him and warning him, right? Don't talk to any strangers in the street, don't stand in the door of the train, we were always telling him that. And he would go and come back, with no problems.

Mother

Out of the ***physical*** problems, the most mentioned were related to ***cardiovascular illnesses.*** Some women began to suffer from ***high blood pressure*** after the traumatic experience, only being able to attend the periodic meetings when medicated. When they recount the difficulties they undergo in the process of seeking justice, many interviewees link *blood pressure* problems to the pressure of dealing with the *obstacles* they face.

> *So you… it's a constant fight, it affects your emotions, you get (…), just last Friday, when we were in Vigário, when we were listening to those accounts; M. left because she started to feel sick; N. started to feel sick too, then her blood pressure rose, so…*
>
> Sister

Social and economic survival

Many of the female family members of the victims of massacres, especially the mothers, due to their socially-attributed roles, are considered and feel responsible for the psychological, emotional and physical well-being of other family members and of their own communities. The task of helping those who are left behind to overcome feelings of loss often falls upon them, at the same time that they are dealing with their own pain. Caring for ***those who are left behind***, especially the other children, emerged as one of the central concerns of the group. Apart from intensifying already-existing guilt feelings, this factor also emerged as a cause of destabilisation and ***loss of family structure***.

> *The man decides to be young again and takes a friend out to drink beer, "Oh, I don't want to go home because my wife is in a state, all she does is cry, she won't go out, there's no more sex, and so on".*
>
> Mother

> *I can't be with my grandchildren anymore, I can't… I can't. I panic, I have no more patience, I love my grandchildren, but I have no patience… My daughter had to stop working, because she has nobody to leave the children with.*
>
> Mother

Most of the social obstacles faced by mothers result from the need to *carry on with life*, now scarred by the violent experience and by absence. Armed violence in Rio de Janeiro occurs in residential areas. People are often killed inside their own homes or in the neighbourhoods where their families or close friends live. This characteristic makes it highly probable for the survivors to be in contact with the victim's place of death, or ***contact with the relative's body***, after the violent act. In many cases, the solution that some families find – when there is no choice – is to move to another neighbourhood, to escape the memories and protect those who are left behind.

In addition, the relatives or friends often have ***contact with the murderers***, who remain in freedom and who have a visible presence in the neighbourhoods and communities of the family members. This results in constant memory of the loss suffered, the lack of justice and denial of rights to the survivors. This confrontation becomes an experience of extreme violence for the survivors.

In other cases, the families may have to prove that the victim was not a criminal. Murders committed by police officers are often "resolved" – that is, not punished – by resorting to allegations of the dead person's involvement in drug trafficking and their resistance to arrest. There were several mentions to the "kits" carried by police officers in order to plant evidence, in the event of an innocent being killed "accidentally", especially in *favelas* (slums). This stigmatisation has consequences for the lives of family members. A mother recounted that she was fired from her job when her boss read in the papers that her son had been shot in a police operation.

> *Because we wanted to know who had done that. […] So, from then on, we started to create a, not a rebellion, but an indignation and to prove that they were all workers. We didn't let them get away with it.*
>
> Mother

> *They said it was a confrontation that it was a shootout, that six or seven guys were in a shootout with him; but they've been over the facts already and they contradicted themselves. The places they point out were not where they killed my son; in the place where my son was executed they found, two years and nine months later, three capsules and vestiges of blood on the rock where they killed him, it was totally different from the place they made up. And they only came up with that silly story later (…) when they gave my statement when I reported the real place; I investigated, I was the detective, I was everything, everything that the police wouldn't do I did.*
>
> Mother

Violent deaths lead to and sometimes intensify economic or financial problems for the family, especially if the dead person contributed to the home budget. To replace this income, other family members may have to find work or abandon their studies. On the other hand, caring for people who are physically injured or traumatised by violence takes time, making it impossible to maintain paid work outside the home. At the same time it requires money, as the victims may need expensive treatment, which becomes impossible for many families. Also, following legal proceedings, linked to the exclusive dedication to the fight against impunity, does not allow them to work and have a source of income.

> *To be a militant and work isn't possible, because people don't care that I want to be a militant and work. So it's complicated. So, most don't work.*
>
> Sister

Although the economic impacts are visible – especially as, in most cases, the families have low incomes – they are not the priority in the fight of the mothers' group. To soften these impacts, some civil society organisations, especially NGOs, or even politicians and the government itself, resort to palliatives such as the distribution of food supplies. This obviously provokes indignation among the families, as the fight taken on for justice is intrinsically linked to the fight for dignity. The mothers' demand for pensions (and compensation) from the state is not linked to their basic needs, but rather to the responsibility for loss, since the aggressors are mostly police officers. That is, as the mothers point out, they are public security agents who are paid by society to protect its citizens.

> *Then they came, they wanted to give my family food supplies. So I said..., my husband said: "Your problem is you can't control yourself, you talk". Because I said: "I lost a son, I'm not hungry". Because, of course, what I lost was a son, now they want to give me food supplies. I said "No, what I lost was a son". So okay, I went and got the food supplies. When I got here, I brought it, when I opened it I passed it on. So I complained. I said: "That's funny, I lost a son, you want to buy me with food, and there's another problem. I think you saw it like, "oh, they're poor, everybody, poor family…"*
>
> Mother

However, the financial difficulties that are sometimes already present, aggravated by the spiralling sequence of violence following the loss of a family member, translate, for example, into the impossibility of showing up to the various victim support events or meetings with mothers' groups, since, in the vast majority of cases, the trips have to be paid for by the victims' families themselves:

> *Because there are already the problems of getting around. Because you have to survive, have to earn your keep, right? To have the money to get around, which is not always paid for. So we have to be there. So there are many places. We are in many places, because we also have this need, there's no turning back. You know, there's no longer any sense in stopping.*
>
> Mother

The fact that they live in poor and violent communities often constitutes an added difficulty in the fight for their rights and occasionally leads public bodies to treat them differently. The accounts from interviewees reveal an enormous lack of trust in security bodies and the people related to them, in Rio de Janeiro. Indeed, the police and its way of acting are very criticised by the victims' family members.

> *Yes, because the way the police treat people in Zona Sul is not the same as the way they treat people here in the community, for example, I think it was right at the end of November that we were in a meeting in Acari, I was there, and M. and V. were there, and soon the police came in shooting and we nearly die; that's only because the drug dealers didn't shoot once, if they had, we would have been in the line of fire, we were in the middle. What happens? We were walking this way, we had our backs turned, and the police was shooting from here to there, where we were going.*
>
> Sister

Other criticism present in the survivors' accounts falls on the judicial system: for its slowness, bureaucracy or insensitivity to their needs. In almost all of the cases, the victims' family members are the ones who have to assume the role of chasing justice, instead of the state fulfilling its role of guaranteeing the rights of citizens. For many of these women, the first time they become conscious of their rights is exactly the moment when they encounter difficulties accessing justice. The sluggishness of legal proceedings, the accusations that are not followed through, inquests and proceedings that are due to become barred by law, lacking documental or testimonial evidence or ballistic examinations, are a few of the examples cited.

If we don't stay on top of them, they'll keep… in that sluggishness peculiar to the law, blaming bureaucracy, they don't care about bureaucracy, they don't want to know if it's really like that…

Mother

We still don't know why the inquest has been put aside… after 12 years it will be barred by law.

Sister

It's at the Government Attorney's Office. But they've asked for the case to be closed now, you see? (…) In my son's case, it went from the Government Attorney's Office to the police station 11 times, why? Because in 2000 they created the legal police stations, so all the procedures that came before, all the proceedings, inquests, which came before 2000, they were shelved at DEAC, which are police stations that keep official records. So, my case, and other old cases, not the more recent cases, the registry police station cases, the police station doesn't keep that file any longer and doesn't keep the prisoner, he goes somewhere. So, it's a cosmetic police station, because it doesn't do anything (…) so nothing happens. So, the investigator sent it to the Government Attorney's Office 11 times, stating that there were inadequate working conditions.

Mother

When mourning becomes fighting…

The long journey these mothers must make in the fight against impunity has impunity itself as one of its greatest obstacles. However, we found that the traumatic experience of loss and pain led many survivors to seek to share their pain and their struggle with other family members in the same situation. Some mothers, during the journey in search of justice for the loss of their children, found in other mothers the support they needed to fight with more strength, which is, after all, a common occurrence. The similarities of their accounts, the pain carried from the tragic event and the solitary battle they were fighting for the punishment of the murderers were the starting point for their connection, and for them to follow each other's processes, share their sorrows and together seek for a meaning to life.

But if nobody does it, if we don't do it, who's going to do it?
We are driven by our pain, and nobody knew. Pain became the fight, see?

Mother

Because what I feared was to lose my son. What will I fear now?

Mother

In addition, the whole network of social relations that was torn after the murder of their children has the chance to be reconstructed, since other networks of social relations are being constructed, albeit tentatively, due to lack of support. Activism becomes a new motivation for life, and the awareness that they can contribute towards social change, fighting against impunity, often contributes to the total lack of meaning being attenuated.

I know what it's like to lose children. I don't want this pain for anybody. I don't want this for any young person.

Mother

The mourning process starts being shared, that is, the understanding of what has occurred and the meaning of the fight starts having new motivations. Many more experienced mothers/family members, who have been in the fight for longer, have a greater knowledge on the legal steps and the paths to follow, being able to help in more recent cases.

I don't know if I'm going to be alive in five minutes. I'm not afraid of dying. People, that is, there are people who want, who are looking for us, to find out what we do so that they can get justice too.

Mother

The support that these women need... If I could, if God wanted it, I would help them. I'd gather all my courage, I'd help them. Who knows, maybe I'll get there, right?

Mother

Groups such as Mães da Cinelândia, Mães do Rio, Mães de Acari, Rede de Comunidades e Movimentos Contra a Violência (the Network of Communities and Movements against Violence), SOS Queimados, Fórum Reage Baixada and various other NGOs allow, in a way, some connection to public power and the reporting of rights violations. The role of these groups in stimulating activist groups in the communities, in the prevention and reporting of violence and, particularly, in the legal support given, is considered essential by the families.

Rarer, but nonetheless real, is the connection that some of these mothers have with international movements, such as Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo (Argentina). For these survivors, this type of connection, although it is an exception to the rule, allows the fight to become visible at a national and, especially, international level.

> *I was invited by the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, we met in France, in 1994, we had a meeting of women who suffer from violence. Madame Miterrand financed our trip. We were invited by Amnesty International, in 1996; we went to France invited by Amnesty International. We went to Brussels, we went to Rome, we went to Germany, Vienna... And we travelled around giving talks, talking about the history of the Acari case, what it is like to live with the current violence here, about the Military Police, the police officers.*
>
> Mother

Although it is very uncommon, they sometimes also demand the state's recognition of culpability. In these cases, the state offers a pension to the family members of the victim murdered by the "bad" police officers in "deviation from conduct". The Legislative Assembly of the State of Rio de Janeiro offered, in September 2005, a pension of one to three minimum salaries to the victims' relatives, extending up to the victim's 65th birthday or until the death of the beneficiary. However, to this day pensions have only been offered to the victims of the massacres of Candelária (1991), Vigário Geral (1993), Via Show (2003) and Queimados (2005).

Whereas in the majority of cases the interviewees point to bureaucracy and the sluggishness of the law as one of the biggest difficulties they face, there are (rare) cases where this does not constitute an obstacle to the families of the victims. One of the interviewees, surprised with the development of the legal proceedings for the sentencing of the aggressors, cites the witness hearing and the reconstitution of the facts as factors which contributed towards the sentencing of one of the accused police officers.

Our conversations invariably ended with references to what had kept them alive, what had given them strength to carry on. The fight itself, said one of the interviewees, was what had kept them alive, it was the motivation for their existence after the tragedy that occurred in their lives.

> *And my son too, before he died, he asked me, if anything bad happened to him, what would I do for him? I'm doing it now, even after he is dead. I will fight.*
>
> Mother

Final considerations

Looking in the mirror of other experiences as equals[**]

All armed conflict strategies are based on a double logic of territory and population control. Even though it takes the form of irregular armed conflict associated with the drugs trade, the dynamics of urban violence in many slums follows the same logic. The armed players who control the territory impose their rules, generate the conflicts and exert power based on the possession of weapons and their ability to coerce others. The reasons for violence in Rio de Janeiro are distinct from those of a classic armed conflict, however, the methods used by the military or police are sometimes similar to what happens in counter-insurgency contexts (attacks on populations who are considered the enemy; indiscriminate attacks as a type of revenge or aimed at producing terror, etc.).

In contrast, the strategy of population control includes various fundamental dimensions apart from those relating to security or self-protection – for example, information management, the control of movement, commerce, or group behaviour. Managing conflicts, imposing forms of justice or punishment, is something that is part of the control strategy and attempts to legitimise and impose a "new order". In this type of situation, the behaviour of women is often an object of control: customs which dictate the way to dress, family dynamics and the imposition of rules within relationships. All of this is intimately linked to distinct forms of urban violence. They are also factors that legitimise controlling strategies within a socially-excluded population that has been marginalised or discriminated against by the state.

Together, these factors make it difficult to open social spaces outside the force of violence in the context of the conflict. As with other contexts, war or generalised violence, resistance movements need to open a civil space in the midst of a conflict that habitually controls their initiatives. In most cases, the armed players of this conflict regard these autonomous movements with great suspicion – or simply try to control or destroy them – as they question their dominant forms of power. Similar to other cases of civil resistance in war, these movements need an internal pedagogy which has regard to coherent and clear rules thus avoiding the conflict situation Further, they need to establish ways to resolve problems with armed players; and encourage media coverage, and political and social support which would allow this civil space to be kept open.

Faced with these difficulties, it is essential to organise a network operation that provides a link to other initiatives. A network that generates knowledge and can spread these experiences which in turn permit an exchange that helps understand what a peasant leader told us in a meeting about civil resistance for the Peace Communities which we organised a few years ago: "I liked this meeting because we could see that what we are trying to do here in Colombia, others have done in Guatemala. Therefore we are not crazy... and we are not alone".

Fear is the same everywhere. So too are the effects of the loss of a loved one even in situations as dramatic as these. We are looking at mourning processes that have been altered by the violent character of the facts, by the lack of meaning and the pain associated with the traumatic loss of a loved one. Furthermore, due to the fact that most of the time the murders took place during indiscriminate acts, the families are consumed by an inability to comprehend the events and a greater sense of injustice, which questions their global view and their trust in the state.

The impact of the event is aggravated by the effects of impunity. This leads to contempt, invisibility, fear and anger which is restricted and the impossibility of accepting loss. This puts family members under enormous strain when they have to adapt to the new situation.

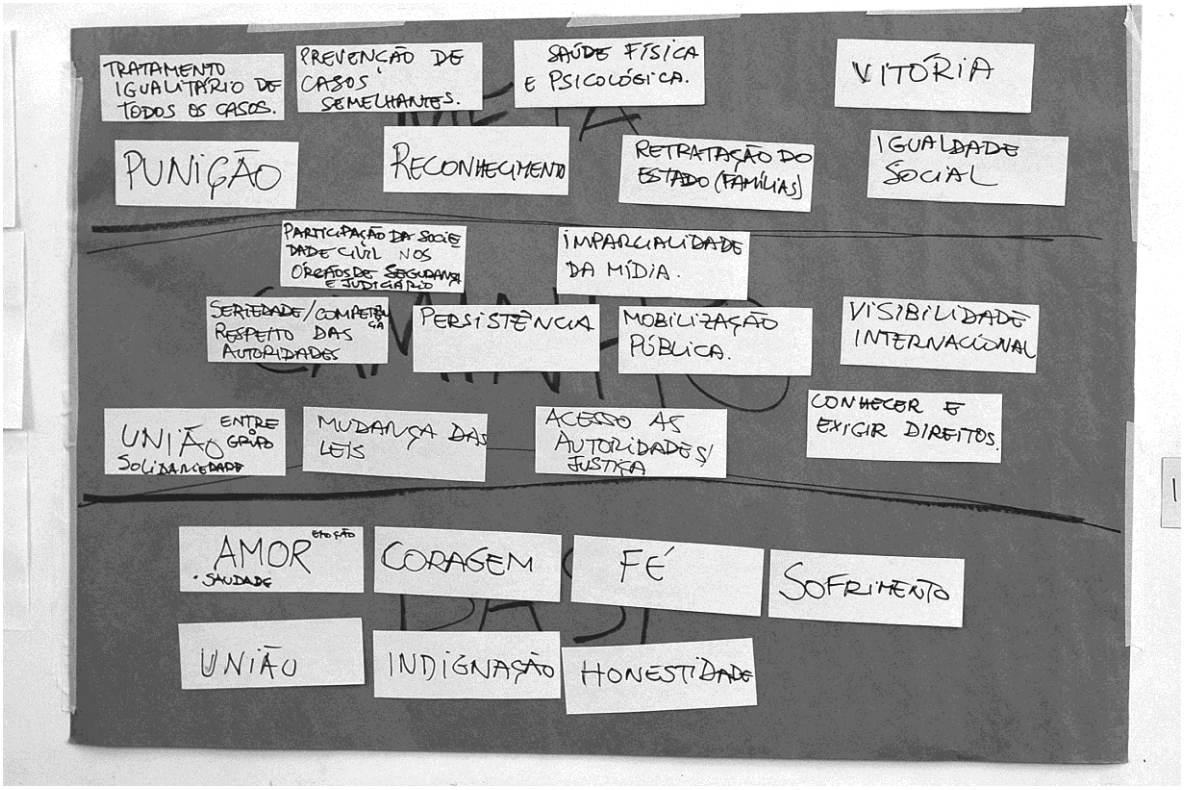
Further stigmatisation and social isolation of the family members is often seen as a result of the suspicious atmosphere that develops because of their origin (in some cases the slums, which are associated with the idea of a population that is violent or involved with the drug trade). The victims, often poor and black (mostly young males) are further subjected to racial and economic discrimination. The mothers and family members display a great need, as in many other cases, to bring dignity to the lives of the victims and question the accusation of criminality that always accompanies the murders. On the part of the accusers, there is a logic which underlies many violent actions: "he must have done something"; "he was involved in something".

In the majority of cases, institutional responses are marked by impunity. This is the case in relation to both the investigation of cases and in the identification and trial of defendants. The few cases that move forward are the result of the efforts and commitment of family members in absence of any assistance from the state, since many perpetrators belong to the Security forces. Similarly, rarely have internal administrative inquiries been completed with effective results which take into account the needs of the victim save in a few cases where compensatory measures have been taken.

[**] This section was written by Carlos Martín Beristain.

Economic compensation cannot, however, substitute justice and, in the absence of truth, justice acquires a different meaning. Indeed, impunity was systematically referred to in various meetings and interviews as a factor that aggravates discomfort and inspires women to confront the situation and organise themselves collectively.

Work with the group



From left to right: Egalitarian treatment of all cases, prevention of similar cases, physical and psychological health, victory, punishment, recognition, the state's confession of error (families), social equality, participation of civil society in security groups and judiciary, media impartiality, seriousness/competence and respect from the authorities, persistence, public mobilisation, international visibility, unity in the group and solidarity, change in the laws, access to authorities/justice, knowing and demanding rights, love and longing, courage, faith, suffering, unity, indignation, honesty.

Apart from the altered mourning processes, women also suffer personal effects at different rates which reveal the need for psychosocial support as well as mutual support from other women and family members who face the same difficulties.

Group activity proved to be an important tool in working with the victims of violence and, at the same time, part of their efforts to confront impunity, seek the truth or find mutual support in an adverse social environment.

For group work to be useful there must be a process of reciprocal identification between the participants that requires empathy, mutual recognition and the beginning of the construction of a collective sentiment ("we" instead of "I"). At first, the identification is linked more to the facts (massacres that left family members as victims) than a shared ideological vision, as is the case with events that have a clearer political character. This construction of a shared vision, which brings meaning to each person's experience based on broader references, marks the beginning of a group process (or the individual processes of those who join the group).

All victims of traumatic events look for a meaning for their experience. This search is part of their efforts to try to accommodate it or manage it in some way. In this case, it is necessary, to strengthen the aspects of individual and collective resistance in order to help the search for meaning and collective support. However, we must avoid reinforcing the victim element; the acquisition of a victim's identity that becomes a person's central feature can reinforce negative emotions or cause chronic discomfort.

Alternatively, while the group is a space for mutual support (collective listening, acceptance, understanding, identification, possibility for expression in a safe environment), it is also oriented towards social change (learning, support for actions such as visits to trials, collective demands, alerting people to the problem).

For the group to be helpful it must meet the needs and motivations of the women and family members. Exploring these motivations, interests and factors which increase the cohesion and usefulness of the group is part of the process to be carried out, in order to better identify the strategies to accompany and support. For example, some of these family members showed their interest in and commitment to the prevention of violence as part of what the group can achieve. In order for the process or future activities to be sustainable, it is also important to consider and reduce the difficulties experienced by the women (transportation, times, place and pace of meetings).

In this research experience we also met with victims and survivors. Similar to other conflicts, the effects of violence cannot be understood as a logical consequence of the violence or limited to a statistic that relates to suffering. It has faces, stories and voices. There are forms of support, organisation and resistance that need to be made visible in order to avoid the victim becoming victimised. It is their demands and needs for justice and reparation, which require support. Strengthening these collective spaces, answering individual needs and fighting against impunity are part of this work. The Mayas said in Guatemala: if you ask the question, it's because you will do it. This participative dimension of investigative-action is also part of the collective experience.

Recommendations

Support for the victims and survivors of armed violence.

1. Build spaces where the victims/survivors can ask for help, whether they are public services, organisations or networks of people who can shelter them.
2. Provide, in these services, a shelter that is also a direction.
3. Systematise knowledge that has already been created (on victim/survivor support) and adapt it to the victims who are seen as indirect, less well-known and forgotten, forming an interface between support groups and social movements.
4. Bring into discussion the question of the victim's innocence: how to create shared identities between distinct groups?
5. Promote interaction among the victims and survivors: *unite the helpless to create resistance.*

AN END THAT IS A BEGINNING[***]

Taking stock

This book – and the research it summarises – seeks to understand one aspect of the reality of violence on an urban scale that attracts scarce academic attention: the different faces of the relationship between women and girls and armed violence. Unsurprisingly, what this study reveals is the unbearable weight of this invisibility: having little statistical relevance, the condition of women victims of armed violence becomes socially ignored. Thus it is only a small step towards filling the great shortage of public policies in this matter, which are adapted to women's specific condition.

The fight for public policies to overcome this grave deficit starts precisely with a more rigorous knowledge of the reality, which can bring visibility to faces and facts that have been consigned to the shadows, simplifying and distorting reality. Only then can inclusive policies for reducing armed violence be seriously and competently created. This is precisely the contribution we have sought to make with this research. And it allows three essential ideas to be presented:

- *Girls and women have a varied relationship within the world of armed violence.* The markedly diverse reality shown by this study clearly sheds doubt on the stereotype of the woman who is peaceful by nature, which – like its counterpart, that of the naturally violent man – has been an instrument that services a strategy to hide the varied forms of female involvement in the practices of armed violence (from direct action to transportation and other logistical support to the authors of these practices). Policies to deal with this phenomenon, which do not insist in departing from this short-sighted presupposition, condemn themselves to failure. Conversely, the motivations revealed by women and girls to explain this type of involvement – from the search for recognition and social integration to the possibility of fulfilling grave material and family needs – show that the success of these policies depends on how much importance they place on economic, educational and cultural factors that greatly precede the practice of violence.
- As victims, women and girls experience very diverse relationships with armed violence. *Even more than as direct victims (injured and killed), it is as indirect victims* – as family members of firearm victims or as victims of threats with firearms in family relationships – *that women stand out.* This fact has a dual bearing. On one side it is because the concept of "victimhood" is enormously complex; it is transformed into the loss of structure in personal, family and social life. On the other side, it is because this condition is also often the support for the active involvement of women and girls in the fight for building alternatives to armed violence. More than victims, we are dealing with survivors. This condition and its concrete social foundation, which this study documents, must be taken as a highly important basis for public security policies.
- The case of Rio de Janeiro illustrates, perhaps like no other, the tendency for rigid frontiers between peace and war to be erased: a city in a country that is formally at peace, it presents armed violence indicators that are often higher than those from situations classified as war. We know the risk that this perception brings. But we are equally aware that even though we are not talking about war – and therefore avoiding the grave mistake of making these territories military – it does not mean that public policies will not make equally serious mistakes, such as aggravated criminalisation and sentencing because it is always, and only, a question of giving priority to prevention.

We believe that the reason for conducting research on this theme in Rio de Janeiro is very clear. Rio has become a kind of icon of armed violence on an urban scale. We therefore did this study in Rio for the worst reasons but also for the best: because newest wars and newest peaces coexist. To be exact, Rio is also a privileged setting for experimentation with prevention and response strategies, which have been conceived and put into practice above all by the social groups most affected by urban violence. There too, women and girls occupy a prominent role. Studying and learning with the case of Rio de Janeiro means, therefore, to assimilate not only the reality of

[***] Peace Studies Group/CES, University of Coimbra.

armed violence in all its nuances but also to understand the complexities and content of the responses rehearsed on the terrain by groups and communities of men and women in direct contact with this violence. The notion of this other side of reality led us to involve in our work social activism structures such as the Promundo Institute,[59] Cinema Nosso School of Audiovisual Education,[60] Crescer e Viver Social Programme,[61] Corte & Arte Popular Cooperative,[62] and Luta Pela Paz Sports and Educational Centre (CEELPP),[63] among others. They are bodies that give life to the fight for very new peace in territories of newest wars and from whom the researchers and authors of public policies have a lot to learn.

Looking ahead

Common sense dictates that there is only one possible reading of the science-citizenship relationship: science demands objective verification and, for this reason, it presupposes distance and even neutrality on behalf of the researcher in relation to the reality that is being researched; citizenship, on the other hand, is seen as something impregnated with ideological and emotional elements; dominated by subjective considerations (and, therefore, supposedly unconcerned with rigour).

For this reason, this separation between science and citizenship is responsible for disasters with a staggering reach: from the ecological catastrophe to nuclear or chemical armament, passing through successive ethnocides. However, apart from these disasters, which have great public notoriety, the division between science and citizenship helps to quietly legitimise the everyday destruction of personal lives in spaces which, provided that they belong to the private sphere, are practically invisible to society.

The research that this book makes public has taken the opposite attitude from the outset. We produce a science that is committed to the demanding application of citizenship; without twisting reality, compromising rigour and precision. In stark contrast: we placed the greatest demand of rigour and objectivity on this research. Yet we do not believe in the neutrality of knowledge. In fact, we know that the reality that surrounds us is too unjust for us to negligently hold any pretence that our knowledge is neutral. Only demanding, rigorous, and truly detailed knowledge makes sense. However, regard should be given to the possibility that authors may appropriate and change this reality. The opportunity to produce a scientific work directed at transforming action, in which knowledge is in itself an element for change, was what gave meaning to this partnership between an university research centre (the Peace Studies Group/CES, University of Coimbra) and a non-governmental organisation (Viva Rio, Rio de Janeiro). In addition, it is not circumstantial but highly insightful that this opportunity guides us to new research developments initiated by this project. Bringing to light the hidden faces of violence has lead us to work with the mothers and families of the victims of armed violence,[64] where we shall try to deepen our knowledge of the real experiences of the indirect victims, or survivors, of the collective responses that they have rehearsed and of the respective impact on the creation and implementation of public policies for justice and psychosocial support.

However, a necessary condition for this commitment to exist between science and citizenship is that knowledge takes into account the different contexts in which the reality of peace and violence is situated. This is because both the settings of armed violence and their corresponding response strategies are realities that have singular local features. But beyond this singularity, some of them become global realities. Therefore, this study can only be a *starting point.* It is, in fact, extremely important that this analysis on Rio de Janeiro becomes a model for other contexts in order to overcome the stigma of the "unique case" and give a more general validity to the hypotheses that have guided our work. For these reasons we are already carrying out (with the support of the Ford Foundation) a comparative study of the realities found in Rio and how they differ from those in other cities such as San Salvador and Medellin. That project is entitled "Women and Armed Violence: War Strategies against Women in Non-War Contexts".

[59] www.promundo.org.br
[60] www.cinemanosso.org.br
[61] www.crescereviver.org.br
[62] Corte & Arte sewing cooperative, made up exclusively of women, situated in Cantagalo. It was created in 2004 as a transformation strategy for the lives of the women who work in it and for reducing poverty.
[63] www.lutapelapaz.org.br
[64] *Implementação do Programa de Apoio a "Sobreviventes" de Chacinas no Rio de Janeiro*, a partnership between the Centre for Security and Citizenship Studies (CESeC, Rio de Janeiro) and the Nucleus for Studies for Peace/CES, University of Coimbra, financed by the Ford Foundation (Brazil).

Notwithstanding all of the above, the journey has only just begun. Having started with this study, we now have a far better perception of the reality. In addition, but beyond its scope, this book reveals that there is still a great vacuum in the literature and social activism with respect to the complex relationship between women and armed violence. In the same spirit of effecting science committed to citizenship, and with the continued support of institutions that share this critical spirit with us, we have initiated new studies that we hope will expand the journey begun here. In this book, we take stock of all the research we have done. With it, we look towards new projects that will allow us to have more consistent knowledge of this almost invisible aspect of what is reality.

A n n e x A

Cândido Mendes University, the Centre for Social Studies/University of Coimbra and Viva Rio are doing an **anonymous** research to discover whether firearms influence violence against women or not. Your answer to this questionnaire will be a very important contribution to all women. Thank you very much.

I – The person you are reporting is:

☐ 1. A neighbour, friend, acquaintance ☐ 3. A husband, companion, boyfriend (or ex)
☐ 2. A relative ☐ 4. Other

II – Where did the aggression take place?

☐ 1. At home ☐ 3. On the street ☐ 5. Somewhere else
☐ 2. At the workplace ☐ 4. At a place of leisure

III – Does(do) the person(people) you are reporting own a firearm?

☐ 1. Yes ☐ 2. No ☐ 3. Don't know

IV – (Answer only if the reported person owns a gun). **Has he or she ever threatened to use a gun against you?** (You may mark more than one option).

☐ 1. No
☐ 2. Yes, pointing the gun
☐ 3. Yes, showing the gun
☐ 4. Yes, saying he or she may use the gun
☐ 5. Yes, shooting into the air
☐ 6. Yes, in other ways

V – (Answer only if the reported person owns a gun). **Does the fact that he or she owns a gun prevent you from reacting verbally?**

☐ 1. Yes ☐ 2. No

VI – (Answer only if the reported person owns a gun). **Does the fact that he or she owns a gun prevent you from reacting physically?**

☐ 1. Yes ☐ 2. No

VII – (Answer only if the reported person owns a gun). **Would you like to end this relationship, but you don't because you are afraid that he or she will use the gun?**

☐ 1. Yes ☐ 2. No

VIII – Would you feel safer if gun sales were prohibited in Brazil?

☐ 1. Yes ☐ 2. No ☐ 3. Don't know

IX – Are you aware of the referendum on gun sales prohibition in Brazil?

☐ 1. Yes ☐ 2. No

OBS: if you want to know more about the referendum, information is available at the desk

X – Are you in favour of the prohibition of gun sales?

☐ 1. Yes ☐ 2. No ☐ 3. Don't know

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