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**Name of candidate: Christopher M. Johnson**

**Title of thesis: "We're from the *favela* but we're not *favelados*: Race, space and violence in northeastern Brazil**

#### Abstract

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In *Salvador da Bahia*'s high crime/violence peripheral neighbourhoods, black youth are perceived as criminals levying high social costs as they attempt to acquire employment, enter university, or political processes. Low-income youth must overcome the reality of violence while simultaneously confronting the support, privileged urban classes have for stricter law enforcement and the clandestine acts of death squads. As youth from these neighbourhoods begin to develop more complex identities some search for alternative peer groups, social networks and social programmes that will guide them to constructive life choices while others consign themselves to options that are more readily available in their communities. Fast money and the ability to participate in the global economy beyond 'passive' engagement draws some youth into crime yet the majority choose other paths. Yet, the majority use their own identities to build constructive and positive lives and avoid involvement with gangs and other violent social groups. Drawing from Brazil's racial debates started by Gilberto Freyre, findings from this research suggest that while identity construction around race is ambiguous, specific markers highlight one's identity making it difficult to escape negative associations with criminality and violence. The discourse surrounding social capital suggests that such individuals can rely on it to overcome these problems. However social capital is used more often as a tool to spatially and socially segregate and consolidate power and opportunity among the powerful and well-connected. That race does not contribute significantly to the debate misses key elements in how social relationships develop and are maintained. This research was conducted over the period of ten months in a peripheral neighbourhood in Salvador through a community social development programme. The study used a mixed qualitative methodology that was part ethnographic examining social networks and protective factors that assist young people at risk from becoming involved in crime or violence.

The London School of Economics and Political Science, Dept. of  
Geography and Environment, Human Geography Cluster

# "We're from the favela but we're not favelados"

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The intersection of race, space, and violence in  
Northeastern Brazil

Christopher M. Johnson

# Abstract

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In *Salvador da Bahia*'s high crime/violence peripheral neighbourhoods, black youth are perceived as criminals levying high social costs as they attempt to acquire employment, enter university, or political processes. Low-income youth must overcome the reality of violence while simultaneously confronting the support, privileged urban classes have for stricter law enforcement and the clandestine acts of death squads. As youth from these neighbourhoods begin to develop more complex identities some search for alternative peer groups, social networks and social programmes that will guide them to constructive life choices while others consign themselves to options that are more readily available in their communities. Fast money and the ability to participate in the global economy beyond 'passive' engagement draws some youth into crime yet the majority choose other paths. Yet, the majority use their own identities to build constructive and positive lives and avoid involvement with gangs and other violent social groups. Drawing from Brazil's racial debates started by Gilberto Freyre, findings from this research suggest that while identity construction around race is ambiguous, specific markers highlight one's identity making it difficult to escape negative associations with criminality and violence. The discourse surrounding social capital suggests that such individuals can rely on it to overcome these problems. However social capital is used more often as a tool to spatially and socially segregate and consolidate power and opportunity among the powerful and well-connected. That race does not contribute significantly to the debate misses key elements in how social relationships develop and are maintained. This research was conducted over the period of ten months in a peripheral neighbourhood in Salvador through a community social development programme. The study used a mixed qualitative methodology that was part ethnographic examining social networks and protective factors that assist young people at risk from becoming involved in crime or violence.

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# List of Acronyms

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ASPAB - Ação Social da Paróquia São Brás de Plataforma or Social Action of São Brás de Plataforma Parochial.

AVSI - Associazione Volontari per il Servizio Internazionale or The Voluntary Association for International Service

BNH- Banco Nacional de Habitação or National Housing Bank

COHAB - Companhias de Habitação Popular or Popular Housing Companies

CONDER - Companhia de Desenvolvimento Urbano do Estado da Bahia) or the City Planning Officer for the State of Bahia

DOI-CODI - Destacamento de Operações de Informações - Centro de Operações de Defesa Interna or Department of Information Operations - Center for Internal Defense Operations

CP - Polícia Civil or Civil Police

GDI - Gender Development Index

FGTS - Fundo de Garantia de Tempo do Serviço or Time of Service Guarantee Fund

FNB - Frente Negra Brasileira or The Afro-Brazilian Front

HDI - Human Development Index

HPI - Human Poverty Index

IBGE - Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatísticas or The Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics

MNU - Movimento Negro Unificado Contra a Discriminação Racial or Unified Black Movement Against Racial Discrimination

MP - Polícia Militar or Military Police

SFH - Sistema Financeiro de Habitação or the Housing Finance System

SNA - Social Network Analysis

TEN - Teatro Experimental Nacional or The National Experimental Theater

UENF - Universidade Estadual Norte Fluminense or The State University of Northern Fluminense

UERJ - Universidade Estadual do Rio de Janeiro or The State University of Rio de Janeiro

UFBA - Universidade Federal da Bahia or The Federal University of Bahia

UNDP - United Nations Development Programme

UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

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## Introduction

Explaining my entree point into the research and how I came to study violence and gang involvement in Bahia is not an easy task. Growing up in the US I was cognisant of race but in a far more personal way. I experienced race on the day to day, dealing with the interactions and trying to make sense of them, given my understanding of how race played itself out. There was an ever larger social, political, and economic divide between whites and blacks in the country during the 1980s and many discussions about race between different groups deteriorated into emotional shouting matches with both sides accusing the other of some wrong beyond individual control. Some whites would claim that blacks were in an inferior position because of apathy without understanding historical barriers while blacks would claim that white aggression and racism was the only factor that contributed to their current situation.

During the 80s the US remained highly segregated despite the successes of the civil rights movement. Indeed the civil rights movement had torn down many of the judicial and institutional barriers without having had success at fomenting dialogue across the many ethnicities and races that constitute the country. The movement played a significant role in breaking down legal barriers and allowing working and middle class blacks to move into neighbourhoods from which they were previously barred during the "separate but equal" era. The result of course was that whites in the US abandoned inner cities for the suburbs. Segregation was maintained through poverty, creating new forms of persistent discrimination. (Fanon, 1963; Bell, 1992; West, 1993; Wilson, 1996; Wacquant, 2004; Venkatesh, 2008).

Growing up in two very different settings as an adolescent made me acutely aware of my status as an African-American male. Looking retrospectively at one's own personal, emotional, and social development is always a difficult process. How did I understand the

urban settings in which I found myself then and how has that changed? The ghetto's of the US, for one who has lived and experienced them, are detached from their academic conceptualisation. One does not often realise the severity of environmental social ills without being able to compare. As a child I remained largely in my own neighbourhood and only began confirming the ills visually when I travelled. I understood the problems my family and the neighbourhood faced, however it was difficult to contextualise them because my limited experience with other children from different backgrounds. My friends and the children with whom I socialised all had similar backgrounds and therefore a lot of the violence and poverty that was endemic to the area had become normalised in my mind. The parents of the children next door were drug dealers and two of my friends were homeless. My older brother was constantly harassed and in fights and I was mugged by another boy from my class all at a very young age. When my family eventually moved from the area into a more working class neighbourhood just on the outskirts of Cleveland, I began to understand the previous precarious living environment. The literature surrounding poverty, inequality, and violence describes, rightly so, a harsh social environment, but for me that realisation may not have occurred were it not for the move and parents actively engaged in my education and upbringing.

The young people with whom I interacted most in Brazil presented some of the same issues I encountered in the US. Many of the boys in particular did not travel outside their community and it became difficult for them to conceptualise the differences and inequality that were so pervasive. It was not until this information was made available to them and they travelled that they began to fully incorporate the severity of the inequities that existed in Bahian society. As I became more aware of my race and the inequalities and difficulties I would face I became interested in learning more about it. I began to read avidly about slavery, civil rights, and various black social movements and as I appreciated the black

experience in the US I wanted to comprehend what that experience was like for others around the world (Dubois, 1903; Stampp, 1956; Haley and X, 1964; Gilroy, 1993; Wade, 1997; de la Fuente, 1999).<sup>1</sup> Latin America was the obvious choice for me. Not only because of its proximity but also because the similarity in experiences *vis a vis* slavery. I drifted into studying poverty and then violence through my desire to understand the black experience in its many varied forms. I wanted to understand young people with similar experiences to my own but was particularly interested in exploring black youth and how they escaped becoming involved with gangs or criminal activities. I wanted to understand how others in similar situations escaped these sometimes desperate circumstances.

There is a not so subtle popular opinion which insists upon the existence of a strong connection between race, ethnicity, class and the perpetration of violence – in the US, in Brazil, and elsewhere – that has driven me to investigate its effects. Popular opinion often shifts in response to the way mainstream media portrays different members of society. Black and brown males in particular have been consistently cast as not only poor but also violent, therefore justifying their vilification. Barker (2005) and Goldstein (2003) suggest that the racial perceptions in Latin America have been tied to portrayals of people of African descent as violent and barbaric through a mixture of media portrayals. Popular narratives featuring bus or street assaults with middle and upper class victims, are almost always depicted as being carried out by poor black youths. Leeds (1996) claims that blacks in Brazil have been subjected to concerted efforts by a variety of institutions particularly the police linking them to the idea of violence and expressers violent behaviour. Despite claims that race is not an

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<sup>1</sup> Much of my learning about race in the US came through both academic study as well as lived experience. My first book about race relations was given to me by my father, "The Souls of Black Folk" by W.E.B. DuBois. I quickly moved from DuBois to reading George Washington Carver, Booker T. Washington and Frederick Douglass and then to more contemporary works at the time by Cornel West, Derrick Bell, Bell Hooks. I was also reading authors such as Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, and Zora Neale Hurston and Malcolm X.

issue in Brazil -- by past governments, some politicians, and everyday people -- it has received tremendous attention because of the constructed reality that links it with violence and poverty. Claims about Brazil being a 'racial democracy' have proven false but have also attracted many researchers like myself to explore the culture that would proclaim such a title (Twine, 2001; Sansone, 2003; McCallum, 2005). The notion of racial democracy was first posited by sociologist Gilberto Freyre in the 1930s and stated that because of Brazil's miscegenous past, the races and ethnicities of Brazil lived in relative harmony. Furthermore each race added a unique quality to the Brazilian ethnicity resulting in a higher quality race. Contentious debates have arisen around the idea of racial democracy where many have argued that racial democracy is a myth because racism, prejudice and racial hierarchies persist and have always been a part of Brazilian society (Degler, 1971; do Nascimento, 1992; Telles, 1992, 2004; Skidmore, 1993, 2002; Needel, 1995; Andrews, 1996; Twine, 1998; Fry, 2000; Sansone, 2003; Htun, 2004; dos Santos, 2005; McCallum, 2008).

In Salvador's peripheral neighbourhoods, black youth living in dangerous neighbourhoods have developed multiple effective strategies to evade involvement in crime and violence.<sup>2</sup> Perceptions of *suburbanos* as primarily perpetrators of both violence and crime levies high social costs as they attempt to acquire employment, enter university, or play a part in political processes.<sup>3</sup> Attitudes associating low-income black youth as criminals challenge them to overcome the reality of violence while simultaneously confronting the support by the privileged urban classes for strict law enforcement and the clandestine acts of

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<sup>2</sup> In 2008 IBGE (*Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatísticas* or The Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics) estimated that just over 27%(27.02%) of the Salvador metropolitan region's population was black and just over 56% (56.28%) was brown (of mixed African, Indigenous, and European ancestry) whereas the white population represented just over 16% (16.02%) of the city's total. Accessed March, 2010 at

<http://www.sidra.ibge.gov.br/bda/tabela/listabl.asp?z=pnad&o=3&i=P&c=262>.

<sup>3</sup> In Brazilian Portuguese it means suburban, a term commonly used to define those living in peripheral neighbourhoods.

death squads in a manner that preserves segregation through fear and physical brutality. As youth from these neighbourhoods begin to develop more complex identities some search for alternative peer groups and social programmes that will guide them to constructive life choices while others consign themselves to options that are more readily available in their communities such as drug dealing, petty crime, or the informal economy. Fast money and the ability to participate in the global economy beyond 'passive' engagement draws some youth into crime related activities yet the majority choose other paths. This research explores the role of a social development programme aimed at discussing the multiple realities of violence and how, participants are able to challenge dominant discourses of social exclusion and the effects of violence in suburban Salvador. The principal objective of this research is to explore the dynamic interactions between race, space and violence among youth in one Bahian low-income peripheral neighbourhood.<sup>4</sup> My principal research questions for the thesis are: (1) What types of social relationships/networks help young people avoid becoming involved in violent social groups such as gangs in communities where they are prevalent and is social capital a useful framework for understanding how young people avoid violence and criminality?; (2) How are changing racial and spatial identities challenging entrenched perceptions that black youth from the periphery are criminals?; and finally (3) What formal and informal institutional structures have played a role in maintaining negative perceptions and how has this relationship affected peripheral community members? Using work from Gary Barker (1998) I answer these questions by examining how young people construct a non-violent ethos as part of their overall identity development. Their racial identities constitute part of this non-violent ethos but in ways that challenge dominant perceptions of them as

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<sup>4</sup> Salvador da Bahia, the study site, is commonly referred to as both Salvador or just Bahia. I will use both Bahia and Salvador. Salvador tends to reference the physical geography of the city while Bahia is a reference not only its physical location but its culture, history, and politics. Bahian in this usage refers to the city as a society.

criminals. Barker's work will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter and throughout the thesis. In order to answer these questions I necessarily framed the analysis within three distinct literatures: (1) the theories of race and racial mixture in Brazil; (2) literature on violence, structural violence, and violent social groups(gangs); and finally (3) social capital. While moving through the analysis it became apparent that while the race and violence literature often overlapped, social capital theorists had relegated race and racial discrimination to the background.. There have been many social capital critiques and this thesis found that without understanding race, its evolution within Brazil, and its contemporary role in Bahian society, it cannot be a useful framework. The debates lack an in-depth discussion about how and why the powerful use social capital to continue their dominance and position within the social, political, and economic hierarchy. Therefore this thesis uses the race literature as a way to critique social capital and explain how groups who are excluded from mainstream Bahian society, manage their relationships, move through space, and avoid violence.

This modification offered a new subordinate question to be asked about social capital and its use in communities that are traditionally excluded from the mainstream: (1) Can social capital be used as a framework to understand racial, ethnic, or economic groups that are traditionally excluded from the mainstream?; (2) How can the race and violence literature be used to critique and/or improve on social capital concepts in order to be used to describe such groups?

The literature on the concept of social capital has been used to describe the benefits of social relationships. Yet, popular authors most notably, Robert Putnam, have not addresses the damaging effects social capital can have on traditionally excluded individuals nor to the interactions between dissimilar groups adequately. At the extreme, gangs or other violent social groups are able to exist exactly because mainstream social groups exclude

certain populations and the social capital these groups accumulate is used as a way to strengthen perverse social rules and norms. Additionally, race and its associated effects play a significant role in how social capital can be used in areas where poverty, violence, and social exclusion are common. Because mainstream social groups shun black/brown and poor populations the social capital these groups accumulate is confined to the environments where its benefits are limited and in some cases are disadvantages.

My claim is that literatures on race and violence offer a useful critique of social capital. The critique demonstrates that social relationships in impoverished communities are often confined to isolated physical spaces hampering the ability of many to use social capital as a means to get ahead. The same processes that bind people together therefore cuts them off from opportunities to establish social relationships with others different from themselves. As will be shown in this thesis, some young people were able to establish these types of relationships but many were confined to the social relationships and thus social capital of the community. In short, social capital is not equal between neighbourhoods, ethnicities, races, and classes nor the powerful and the powerless.

Violent groups such as gangs offer alternative social capital presenting a wide range of powerful incentives to young people growing up in environments where basic services are lacking, there is tremendous social exclusion, little hope for higher educational opportunities or employment, and high levels of social problems. Yet gangs are not the only types of violent social groups that exist in these areas. A common form of violent social group that is not a gang but rather a loosely associated group of young people called *marginals* may sometimes band together to assault buses or rob individuals, and engage in street level violence. The literature on gangs clearly outlines many of the reasons young people join gangs but the vast majority of youth in these environments avoid becoming involved in gangs and becoming perpetrators of violence. What strategies do young people employ to achieve these goals?

What elements of social networks and social capital 'push' young people toward or 'pull' them away from joining violent social groups such as gangs? Gangs as will be discussed throughout this thesis are complex social organisations and although the thesis's topic is not specifically gangs it would be difficult to discuss young people in this neighbourhood and the social relationships that shaped their lives without debating these groups as well.

This chapter examines the trajectory of fieldwork carried out over an ten month between January 2006 to December 2006 in the peripheral neighbourhood of Plataforma on the outskirts of Salvador. It explores the process of data collection through a social development programme as a means to answer questions about non-involvement in violent social groups and the difficulties encountered in collecting sensitive information from youth in a group environment.<sup>5</sup> The full scope of the methodology will be explored in the following chapter, however this introduction serves as a way to examine how I came to use the methods and the difficulties of separating programme information from researcher information. There are obvious benefits of being part of any coordination team for a social programme that discusses everyday violence yet there remain considerable ethical concerns about the presentation of information gathered in this way. Is there such a thing as programme participant confidentiality and, if so, how far can a researcher go in publishing peoples' ideas and comments? What is the role of a researcher/coordinator in the programme and how does his/her presence affect the responses of the participants? And finally how involved can the researcher become in the lives of the programme participants given the relationship of other programme coordinators with the participants?

Additionally, this introduction examines the role of a young black American researcher and how, being constantly confronted with various contradictions of a city with an

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<sup>5</sup> As part of my introduction to the neighbourhood where this research was conducted I volunteered for a social development programme called the Violence and Masculinity project that was designed to keep young people out of gangs and other violent social groups.

overwhelming black majority yet concurrently powerful visible forms of racism, prejudice and discrimination that were often denied by not only the perpetrators but victims alike influences the adopted approach. As racial/ethnic insider with similar personal experiences but a cultural outsider whose own perception of these issues remains quite unique given US history, I wanted to understand and make sense of what I saw as contradictions. There are distinct advantages for the young black male who engages in this type of research because of my own perception of the shared experience of slavery and racism allowing for some level of collective recognition while simultaneously other barriers remained in place at least initially. Although not all the young people with whom I worked considered these histories in our interactions many were curious about what blackness in other contexts and their divergent evolutions meant.

### **A Researcher's Assumptions – Personal reflections about my fieldwork**

Like other first-time researchers, choosing the fieldwork site had a lot to do with personal affinities and interests rather than a clear sense of where the 'perfect' location might be. Each researcher goes through their own personal requirements and judgement for the selection of their fieldwork site. I have been no different, my personal background and interests led me to Salvador in Brazil long before I considered it as a possibility for a fieldwork site. As a black American I have always had an intellectual interest in not only understanding the cultural and social development of black populations in the Americas and the Caribbean but also the ways in which they experience and cope with racism and discrimination in post-slavery societies (Freyre, 1933; Fanon, 1963; Degler, 1971; Stepan, 1991; Gilroy, 1993; Reis, 1995; Wade, 1997; de la Fuente, 1999; Sansone, 2003; Andrews, 2004; Telles, 2004; Dzidzienyo and Oboler, 2005). My intellectual interest manifested in an appetite for reading about these issues and seeking out like-minded individuals with whom I could debate and learn. I eventual

came to study the black American experience in Latin America culminating in a research and undergraduate dissertation on the subject.

I came to study Salvador because of what I thought at the time were strong and visible connections with its African roots yet contradictory ambiguity of racial and ethnic identity making for an interesting case. My initial interaction with Brazil and Salvador began when I was an undergraduate studying race relations in Latin America. Like many young students wanting to learn more about the region I explored various cultures from Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Haiti to Jamaica before discovering a keen curiosity for Brazil. In the mid 1990s, Brazil was beginning to gain an increased visibility throughout the world because of its proclaimed successful transition to democracy and a dramatic economic turnaround after many years of stagnation and decline. In addition, culturally, the Brazilian 'brand', its music and dances, carnival, and the notion of a racial paradise was beginning to receive attention. Brazil's relationship with the United States helped springboard it as a destination for cultural musical exchanges between famous black American jazz musicians with classic *Bossa Nova* artists since the 1960s. In the 1970s two Brazilian *capoeira* masters arrived in the Bronx helping to spawn a popular dance called 'breakdancing' (Assunção, 2005).

Beyond the personal motivations for choosing Salvador as a field site, the city has been understudied in relationship to work on violence and to a lesser extent race. Although there is a plethora of studies about Salvador's culture from religion to music, research about violence and race do not dominate scholarly work on the city. Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo have normally been the targets of such research and I thought it would be an important contribution to examine similar types of issues in a very different context. Salvador does not have the large entrenched drug gangs like those other cities but many of its low-income neighbourhoods remain very violent and segregated from the rest of the city. The opportunity to explore the challenges young people from these types of neighbourhoods face is a strong

contribution to literature on Brazil and presents insights about how violence, race, and space interact with one another in a city less known for its violence than its culture.

The initial assumptions I made about the community and the type of people that I would be observing was more an indication of my lack of understanding of the complexity of the situation that I was to find in Plataforma. One of the reasons for my naivety is the lack of information about violence, gangs, and criminal activity written from the 'insiders' perspective which has the ability, more so than other views, of shedding a unique light on subject matter that is so often shrouded in mystery. Yet I sit in a paradox. Having grown up, for part of my life in a North American ghetto, I understand full well the negative stereotypes that are cast about such communities and yet in a different context I fell into some of the same traps when judging neighbourhoods and their inhabitants. As with the North American ghetto, stories about experiences with poor communities from those who do not live there frequently includes drugs and violence, stories which gain a degree of plausibility with repetition often becoming 'true' even if the reality is far more subtle and complex. In Brazil's case, accounts about poor communities emerge almost solely from Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo where the entrenchment of gang culture in favelas stems from a long history of interaction between criminals, and law enforcement; where there is a tremendous financial incentive for both sides to maintain conflict (da Silva, 1991; Zaluar, 1994). Movies such as *City of God*, *Elite Squad*, and their predecessor *Pixote: Law of the Weak* have all attempted to shed light on the problems confronting the poor. Despite the attempts by the producers of these films to analyse the problems facing low-income communities in an open forum, criticism levied against these films have led to debates in larger Brazilian society about not only the problems these communities face but also the way in which the poor are represented (DaMatta, 1982; Lovell & Wood, 1998; Calderia, 2000, 2002; Espinheira, 2001, 2005; Serpa, 2001; Goldstein, 2003; Telles, 2004; F. Santos, 2005; Arias, 2006;).

I presumed that Salvador would exhibit many of the same characteristics and was surprised to discover with time that this was not to be the case at least in the peripheral neighbourhoods in which I worked. My initial experience with the peripheral neighbourhood in which I was to spend the next year made me realise the complexities and indeed the difficulties of researching violence. On the surface there were none of the visual clues that I was accustomed to in the US or elsewhere such as graffiti and the violence of the neighbourhood was obscured. I would later learn that violence from criminal gangs in the neighbourhood had changed recently and the delicate balance of power between police and gang was unpredictable.

Cultural expressions based in music and dance became increasingly visible in Brazil with the fall of the dictatorship in 1985. *Samba*, *batuque*, *capoeira*, *candomblê*, and a variety of other Afro-Brazilian originated cultural expressions served as a platform for the resurgence of a post-dictatorship Brazilian identity (Moreno, 1982; Simson, 1983 Chasteen, 1996). Bahia in particular and Brazil in general used these cultural expressions as a way to show the world their cultural relevance. Bossa Nova, a derivative of samba music was infused with Jazz from the US and as a result the Brazilian middle class which normally eschewed indigenous cultural expressions championed them. US enthusiasts became fascinated with Brazilian culture and in turn Brazilians saw opportunities to gain greater exposure on the international stage by exporting their forms of popular culture. Unsurprisingly, Brazilians of African descent, but also those who shared in their struggle through common experience did not view the export of an art form they created so positively, if only because of the continued discrimination they felt from the middle classes. However many of those boundaries began to break down as middle class blacks from the US began interchanging with the black Brazilian community. Both communities were eager to share their experiences and blacks from the US saw an opportunity to recapture a lost culture while black Brazilians were hopeful to discover

a way to escape the extreme poverty and discrimination they were experiencing (Degler, 1971; Meade and Pirio, 1988; Hellwig, 1992; Skidmore, 1993; Twine, 1998).

Yet, like many others both outside and inside of the country I remained sceptical of the proclaimed absence of racism. The African/black man has been used as scapegoat in western culture portrayed as the consummate thief, robber, rapist, murderer, and drug dealer and I became increasingly curious as to how this one, out of numerous cultures is able to avoid these social ills so common in other parts of the world. I soon discovered in short that Brazil did not represent an outlier and that racism and prejudice were present but disguised in ways that made people think them absent (Twine, 1998; Andrews, 1996; Santos, 2005). Furthermore these social features were made more insidious as the result of the denial of their existence in official discourse even though not all of Brazilian society accepted this conclusion. This led me to want to understand the Afro-Brazilian viewpoint and whether denial of racism and prejudice was a feature solely originating from dominant white Brazilian society or was it more pervasive.

I travelled to Brazil for the first time in 1999 because of my involvement with the Afro-Brazilian martial art and dance called capoeira angola. Many people that practice capoeira were also involved in Brazil's black consciousness movements and therefore exhibited an alternative to the more commonplace viewpoints that racism was absent. The Movimento Negro, a political movement that emphasizes viewing race relations as bi-polar instead of the more nuanced and shifting version adopted by others, has gained some acceptance with more mainstream audiences. Joel Rufino dos Santos and Wilson do Nascimento Barbosa (1994) describe the *movimento negro* or black consciousness movement as,

"All of the entities of whatever type and all of the action of whatever time [here understood as even those that aim planned on the physical and cultural self defence of the black], founded and promoted by blacks. Any religious entity [such as candomblé houses for example], aid [such as fraternity houses], recreation [such as black clubs], artistic [such as the innumerable groups of capoeira, theatre and poetry]

cultural [such as those diverse centres of research] and political [ like the Unified Black Movement]; and political action movements, anti-discrimination protests, and becoming a quilombo, armed rebellion, artistic movements, literary and folkloric – all of this complex dynamic, ostensive and concealed, extemporaneous and daily, constitutes the movimento negro (pg 157, cited in Domingues (2007: 102)."

During the trip my inquisitiveness about race relations only grew as I conversed with different people around the topic and found the denial of racism to be pervasive in the face of numerous symbols which would suggest the existence of racism and prejudice.<sup>6</sup> Despite the rhetoric, even those Afro-Brazilians that denied its similarity to the US in public often times in private conversations would point to episodes in which they had experienced some form of racism. The complexity went well beyond denial and was at the root of a society whose rhetoric accused dissenters of betraying the nation as the result of a past dictatorship that routinely persecuted nonconformists. Many of the conversations discouraged me about my initial scepticism yet the stark contrast from the way in which many Afro-Brazilians lived pressed me to want to understand the subtleties of race and what it meant to be black in Brazil. The development of a collective black consciousness although not a new idea in Brazil, has been persecuted since slavery and continues to be seen as a threat to the goals of the state (do Nascimento, 1989; Covin, 1996; Sansone, 2003). Despite the end of official governmental support for racial democracy certain aspects of the black consciousness movement undermine a popular consensus that sustains the idea by interjecting into the national dialogue an alternative lived experience of people of African descent. (Burdick, 1998). Skidmore (1993) argues about the movement:

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<sup>6</sup> The idea that race is a fixed category even in the US is being challenged most recently by the scholars such as Nell Painter (2010) in her book called, *The History of White People*. She argues, like other scholars such as Livio Sansone, Cecelia McCallum, and Edward Telles, among others that race is a fluid concept that is determined not only by phenotype, that is skin colour, but also by other classifiers such as class, political affiliation, neighbourhood residence, education, etc.

"that the mulatto is no better off than the black in Brazil. It attacks the prevailing image of multi-racialism as a fraud, which operates to delude and mislead non-whites into believing that the 'mark' of African origin can somehow be ameliorated (p. 381)".

Thus the idea of a racial democracy, is allowed to persist in the minds of many. The black consciousness movement despite being composed of a variety of groups with different aims and goals coalesces generally around political action to achieve the broad goals of racial equality.

Simultaneously, as these casual conversations continued I began to notice the repeated use of episodes of violence to describe race and racial encounters. People casually joked about violence and the way in which these encounters affected their lives. However there was a difference in the way in which black and white Brazilians would speak. For many Afro-Brazilians that lived in the peripheral and low-income neighbourhoods of the city violence was an integral part of their lives while for whites violence was an anomaly that was caused and created by those coming from poor neighbourhoods. Within the subtexts of these conversations the undeniable root was related to the idea that blacks were responsible for the majority of violence that transpired and that it was necessary to separate them from the rest of the population. As the stories of violence became almost endless I thought more seriously about studying this aspect of Bahian culture because it seemed to affect everyone in such diverse ways.

I returned to Bahia in 2003 following up on conversations that had begun nearly four years prior. US society stereotypes its black males expecting them to excel in sports and entertainment while intellectual pursuits are thought of as unsuited realms. I found these same perceptions to be prevalent in Bahian social norms. Society projected onto the Afro-Brazilian population its imagined reality of non-whites being largely poor and therefore necessarily criminals responsible for the perpetration of violence. Many white Brazilians I spoke with during these visits insisted that race was not a factor in this argument but rather it

was about income level. It remained difficult to accept that the Brazilian context was so unique that, unlike any other place in the world, it was possible to separate race and class. Such characteristics of social environments are interdependent and play a role in the way in which people are socially, politically and economically mobile in any society.

With the release of the film *City of God (Cidade de Deus)* based on true events of a real favela in Rio de Janeiro in 2003 and the novel of the same name written by Paulo Lins in 1997, my awareness of the linkages between race and violence deepened as a result of the general reaction the film received. The book elicited praise by many for what was an honest but brutal portrayal of favela life while others focused on the poetics of the substance which seemed to open a new national dialogue that had been absent in public discourse for some time (Schwarz, 2001). The *Folha de São Paulo*, the largest newspaper in the country reviewed the book and later the movie describing it as a cinematic masterpiece exposing violence and criminality and giving shape and form to a reality that was suspected but never verified (Paiva, 1997). Yet not all were enthused about the appearance of the film. The famous rapper, author, and resident of City of God, MV Bill wrote a scathing critique of the film as essentially an exploitation of the neighbourhood. MV Bill (2003) wrote:

"The world will know that this film brought nothing good, of social benefit, or any human benefit to the favela. The world will know that they exploited the image of children from here. What we see is the size of the stigma that they will have to carry only growing with this film. They stereotyped our people and gave nothing in return. Even worse, they stereotyped us as fiction and sold it as the truth (p. 1)".

Reactions from the community were mixed yet a substantial number of residents condemned the film as being divorced from the reality of the place. Even in Paulo Lins's own commentary the conflict between portraying fact and fiction between the reality of violence and the compassion and the triumph of life are apparent (Lins, 2003). In one sense, the release of the City of God brought the issue of violence and poverty in low-income neighbourhoods to a

mainstream audience, but for many this only confirmed much of what they already believed about favela life; that it was a violent place that produced many unwanted social ills.

Yet, this film was not the first piece of visual art to depict blacks and favelas in this way. The dominant feature of media outlets in Brazil is the lack of almost depictions of the black experience. Commercials, films, and the daily television shows called *telenovelas/novelas* (soap operas) were mostly absent of Afro-Brazilians playing major constructive roles and where they were depicted, it was almost invariably as domestic servants, drug dealers, vagabonds, or buffoons. For example, one of the most popular shows during my stay was *Escravizaura* which featured a white woman as a slave in a white plantation. Over the course of several months she experienced some of the challenges that many slaves faced but the brutality of the institution was never fully illustrated. She was surrounded by other slaves who exemplified the classic stereotypical archetypes; the submissive slave, the buffoonish slave, and the revolutionary/rebellious slave. The slave master, like all novelas of this time period, was portrayed as kind and generous never harming his slaves except for the occasional argument. *Escravizaura* seemed to be yet another attempt to re-write Brazil's brutal history of slavery claiming that not only were slave holders kind but that whites were also brutalised to the same extent by the institution.

There were virtually no positive roles played by black actors. These glaring negative illustrations drove me to ask a question. How is it that throughout the development of Brazil's national identity, race and ethnicity have simultaneously been disregarded as pertinent in considering one's social mobility but then identified with, through the use of powerful symbols, violence and criminality? The answer to this question is as complex as the way in which people categorise themselves racially or ethnically in Brazil but strikes at the root of how racial discrimination and prejudice are implemented and the violence that is proclaimed to be associated with it becomes accepted as reality.

## The Role of an Ethnographer in a Social Programme – Duality in the Field

The Violence and Masculinity programme was a social development initiative conceptualised by Cristiane Santos Souza, an anthropologist. It was programme based on violence prevention and drew young people from four different neighbourhoods to take part in weekly discussions on topics ranging from race in Brazil to gender and the family. It began in January of 2006 and ended December 2006 with a staff of 5 and was funded by a local philanthropic organisation called *Fundaçāo Clemente Mariani*. Before I began working with the Violence and Masculinity programme I was living in a low-income neighbourhood where I intended to conduct my research that was very similar to Plataforma only that its violence indicators were substantially higher. I made some connections there but it was slow and when the opportunity to work with the programme presented itself I took it. Similar to other programmes in Latin America like it, I used neighbourhood photography, videos produced by the participants, cognitive mapping and participant led community research as part of the research process (Lynch, 1960; Moser and McIlwaine, 2004; Koonings and Kruyt, 2007; Wheeler, 2009;).

My entrée into Plataforma and the Violence and Masculinity programme came through a personal friend while still in London. He previously worked with the director of the programme for some years while living in Bahia and suggested that I contact Cristiane Souza because the programme goals and my research objectives were quite similar. At the very least we would be able to collaborate by pointing one another toward different sources of information about violence and youth generally. Once I arrived in Salvador I contacted Cristiane and was immediately invited to take a role in the programme as one of the coordinators. My reaction was mixed because methodologically I thought I would run into

serious conflicts of interest while trying to play a dual role between coordinator and researcher. Nonetheless at that moment this seemed like a 'lead' that could turn into something more substantial in the future. In many ways ethnographic work is like being a journalist. One acquires contacts and informants through various personal and professional channels in the hope that one such lead will turn fruitful and bring you closer toward the goal of exploration and then understanding. After reading about the difficulties of other ethnographers in gaining access to populations and speaking with colleagues who were engaging in similar research, I expected my experience to be similar particularly given the topic of my study (Hammersly and Atkinson, 1993; Bourgois, 2001, 2003; Wacquant, 2004; Rodgers, 2006; Venkatesh, 2008).

Cristiane implemented a form of participatory action research in which we all played a role. Action research places the programme participant, programme staff, and the researcher in a nexus that places the problem to be solved at the centre and each of the actors into a dynamic but iterative process of learning, research, and evaluation (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2000; Brydon-Miller *et. al.*, 2003; Miskovic and Hoop, 2006).

When I discussed with people that I would be studying youth violence in the periphery the reactions varied. I was surprised at the reaction of many people from very different sections of society that commented almost uniformly on the dangers of the periphery explaining that it was '*radical*' or having extreme levels of violence. I was warned that I should never travel there at night and to always ensure that someone else was with me. I listened to the opinions of people who had never travelled there and eventually unconsciously accepted their bias as my own while simultaneously insisting on being open and understanding of the reality in which the programme participants lived. I was involuntarily preparing myself to see a group of youth that were visibly impoverished and socially awkward in formal spaces where they supposedly did not have much exposure.

I began to think more critically about the perceptions that are created and perpetuated about the unknown. The philosopher David Hume argued that each of our realities is constructed based upon our individual experiences (Hume, 1739). That is, knowledge or how we know something, is based upon our sensory experience of that specific type of information. In this case the perceptions of the periphery were not known because of previous experience with violent, dangerous, and unhealthy places but rather through the distorted collective narratives that describe these places in such a way as to create fear of them. These narratives, some true some exaggerated, are collectively passed from one person to the next and adopted as one's own experience, proving that the periphery is indeed a dangerous place. It becomes a vicious cycle where cultural insiders, from different class backgrounds feed misinformation to outsiders; in this case, the periphery was a place that was to be avoided at all costs and its inhabitants were socially immoral, robbers, thieves, and rapists. The paradox is that despite the negativity of the endorsements, these narratives originate from a particular social reality, however imagined, and are not simple fabrications of spiteful people. In many instances, such narratives arise from a historical process that has generated preconceived notions of poor and black people being predisposed to this kind of anti-social and violent behaviour.

Each context is undoubtedly different, warranting a diverse range of methods to investigate it. In my own case the research could not have progressed without my commitment to the goals and objectives of intervention in the lives of young people from the periphery. In a conversation toward the middle of my fieldwork I spoke with the programme director. We were talking about the programme and then abruptly she began asking me questions that seemed to test my commitment to the goal of intervention. In essence, she was asking me whether or not I agreed with the approach she had adopted.

*Cristiane: How long will you be with us. I mean do you have any other projects that you're working with? I just sort of need to know because the kids need a constant figure and I'm worried about exposing them to someone who comes in and out and is just watching them all the time. You know what I mean.*

*Chris: Yea I know well I was trying to make some contacts with the neighbourhood I'm living in now but it's not working out so well. (She looks shocked and a bit anxious).*

*Cristiane: I don't want them [the kids] to be some kind of zoo animal. They've had that experience for a long time already and I want to avoid it at least with what we are doing.*

*Chris: I agree (Field notes, February, 2006).<sup>7</sup>*

The idea that the researcher can simply walk in and silently observe in the background was one with which she was familiar and did not want in the programme she designed. For her, if I was to participate I would need to become involved in the daily management and operation of the project and become an integral member of the 'team'. In her designs the project would only function with a cohesive coordination team with a unified set of goals.

The overall goals of a project with the purpose of intervening in the lives of youth set a unique challenge for my own research objectives which are to observe and gain an understanding of the reality in which youth challenged the involvement in violent behaviour or activity. The ethnographer's goals are often to not intervene in a way that profoundly changes the environment or subjects of the investigations although in many ways a mere presence and questions that ask subjects to reflect on their own realities changes the way in which individuals think about their own situations. This is an unavoidable consequence of the way in which we conduct research and contests the claims of the naturalistic approach that holds that we can investigate social action in its 'natural' environment without impact. Yet these impacts were generally unintended consequences of our interaction with the people who were

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<sup>7</sup> Unless explicitly stated all conversations are reconstructed from field notes. Interviews will be indicated with a reference indicating it as an interview.

the principal focus of our investigations and therefore acceptable. In this case conducting a study that is at once an investigation of a particular social reality as well as an intervention with the intention to transform the perceptions of the youths' own reality creates significant methodological complications for those trying to ensure at least some degree of objectivity. It also generates further complication for those wishing to present work to an audience that searches for particular aspects in a research that should be upheld. Miller (1952) describes the problems that are associated with 'over-rapport' for the researcher who extends him/herself too deeply into the world of the subjects being investigated. He states:

"On the other hand, once I had developed a close relationship to the union leaders I was committed to continuing it, and some penetrating lines of inquiry had to be dropped. They had given me very significant and delicate information about the internal operation of the local; to question closely their basic attitudes would open up severe conflict areas. To continue close rapport and to pursue avenues of investigation which appeared antagonistic to the union leader was impossible. To shift to a lower level of rapport would be difficult because such change would induce considerable distance and distrust. It would reveal that the attitude of the participant observer to the leaders was not the same as the leaders' feelings of friendship to the observer...Over-rapport had a second limiting effect of greater subtlety. We have been told of a situation in which rapport with leaders may mean lack of rapport with rank and file individuals. This situation does not merely mean that rank and file members may be diffident in articulating their grievances to "administration men," which is how the observer, who is friendly to the leaders, may appear to them " (p. 98).

The problem of over-rapport was certainly a concern in this research because of the subject. The youth were searching for figures that would touch their lives in the same way they imagined the ideal parent-child relationship. Black males that demonstrated through their lives positive development were particularly absent in the community and so those like myself exhibiting such qualities were in high demand and attachment grew especially quickly. This created a problem for me as a researcher. The line between being researcher and creating a strong friendship became blurred. I did not do much to hinder the development of this type of relationship particularly because of the afore mentioned problems when working with youth in

an intervention programme. In the beginning of the programme while I was getting to know them I attempted to perform the role of the distanced researcher, but as I began to open up and share with them more aspects about my own personal life and build a true friendship they responded almost immediately by inviting me for lunch in their homes, taking me around to meet other youth, and allowing me to sit and speak with them about violence they experienced and its meanings to their lives. Without dropping my guard those interactions most probably would not have occurred.

### Thesis Structure

This thesis is separated into eight chapters each highlighting specific issues that were fundamental in the way young people engaged with their social environments. The second chapter examines the particular methodological approach of ethnography and the multiple roles I had to take on in order to conduct the research within the Violence and Masculinity programme. The social development programme and my connection with it ensured that the research methods would become participatory where knowledge about the subject was not only obtained from the programme participants but that their understanding of the subject would be affected and evolve along with the evolution of the programme. It makes data collection and clear role definitions messy yet was perhaps one of the only ways in which I would have been able to gain access to such a rich source of information. The give and take between myself, my colleagues, and the programme participants resulted in a unique dynamic where the learning process involved everyone.

Chapter Three then moves on to a thorough discussion of social capital. Recent contributors to the theory of social capital have painted it as a positive outcome of social relationships. That is, the social capital developed within social networks and the relationships between different individual acts to produce benefits such as increased vigilance in the

neighbourhood against crime or increased trust between neighbours for the sharing of information. But, as explained earlier the negative consequences of perverse social capital are often overlooked. Descriptions of social capital theory will be provided while later chapters will offer critiques of its use particularly where race, class, and violence are seen as linked in places like Brazil. What is important to highlight in this chapter is the notion that not only is perverse social capital present in excluded communities but because of their exclusion from mainstream networks and their associated norms the communities must develop their own set of social conventions to overcome the challenges of the absence of the state and barriers to other formal/informal institutions. Included in this discussion is an examination of one of the most extreme forms of perverse social capital, gangs, which begins our critique of social capital and socially excluded groups. This chapter also sets up the social capital framework for examination and critique throughout the rest of the thesis.

Chapter Four explores the role of race and the periphery. While these ideas are not synonymous both have become reflections of the other.<sup>8</sup> The periphery has largely come to be known as a place of criminality which is in turn associated quite strongly in Brazilian society with being darker skinned. The lack of government intervention except through the heavy-handedness of the police has resulted in a dynamic where peripheral residents are self-reliant to resolve almost all of the problems they face daily. Although this is changing, at the time of this research the government remained a largely absent positive force in the lives of many peripheral residents.<sup>9</sup> This chapter then moves to discuss the intricacies of race and

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<sup>8</sup> The periphery is an agglomeration of neighbourhoods on the outskirts of the city centres throughout Brazil. Statistically these are some of the poorest and also have the highest incidences of petty and violent crime. Chapter Four explains in more detail the social dynamics that are prevalent within these types of communities in Brazil.

<sup>9</sup> The Brazilian government instituted in 2003-4 several programmes to tackle poverty and assist low income families most notably *Bolsa Família* which combined three social development programs aimed at increasing educational attainment and reducing hunger. The World Bank, which provided financing, recently surveyed the program and has found

its development and popular perceptions within Brazilian society. Bahia is perhaps unique within Brazil because of the concentration of people of African descent within the city. Its culture is strong yet while Afro-descendents compose 80% of the population they have yet to elect a black mayor nor is there large representation of blacks within city government or the upper echelons of the business community. Indeed, leadership roles within the city are largely absent of black faces. The rhetoric of the racial democracy in which Brazil is supposed to exist is quickly breaking down within academic circles but it remains a powerful myth within the psyche of many.

Finally, this chapter will also offer a critique of Chapter Three and social capital through the perspective of race. It will use race as a way to demonstrate that because authors have not accounted for interactions between excluded and included groups in the social capital literature its framework is not easily used when young people and their strategies to avoid criminality and violence. The discussion of race and social capital allows for a more in-depth examination of the literature allowing the reader to consider in what ways it functions for these types of groups.

Chapter Five follows this discussion by examining literature on violence and violent structures, the police and gangs. It demonstrates how both police and gangs act to restrict the options of individuals and other groups in neighbourhoods that are excluded from mainstream society. At one extreme gangs represent a perverse type of social capital that replaces community social norms and rules with its own which are often more violent and support the gangs own self-interests. At the other extreme are the police who are generally one of the only forms of formal local institutions that regularly operate there. Despite their

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preliminary positive effects (Soares *et. al.* 2010). This has introduced the state into many areas where they had a less significant role. The federal government also was currently debating instituting a racial quota system for public universities that was aimed at helping especially black low-income youth.

presence, the police in some cases operate these areas as mini fiefdoms engaging in similar acts of violence against community residents and projecting the notion that the neighbourhood must be excluded because of its population.

Chapter Six discusses the social landscape of Plataforma as it relates to violence. It documents the web of social networks that constitute the neighbourhood and the experiences with violence of key figures not only from the programme but also from the broader neighbourhood. Their narratives demonstrate the complexities and difficult experiences that have shaped their lives in many different ways. The accounts of violence from many voices paint a picture in which violence and the influence of violent social groups have been affected in a variety of ways. It has given many community residents a profound sense of fear while for others it has made them fight to take back the neighbourhood to which they feel such strong attachments.<sup>10</sup> However for others, the social ills associated with the gang and the violence it perpetrates is overlooked because of the monetary benefits it provides for some of its citizens.

Chapter Seven, the final empirical chapter explores the principal question of this research and how youth live in an environment where violence, race, and the exclusion of their social networks from the mainstream often threatens their lives and constricts their ability to seek a good quality of life. For many of the programme participants, their social networks were complicated yet their involvement in them represented their determination to remain uninvolved with violent social groups and construct a positive future. In this chapter the social networks of several of the programme participants is evaluated to describe the implications of

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<sup>10</sup> Government institutions in peripheral areas are weak, ineffectual, and often corrupt pushing many to furnish themselves with the services they need. In Plataforma, basic infrastructure like water, sanitation, and electricity was provided reluctantly well after the neighbourhood had established itself. Other services like decent and adequate schools, rule of law, and improved sanitation, and the enforcement of housing standards are mostly left to the community to decide for themselves.

their linkages with various groups. The social networks of individuals in these neighbourhoods do not all revolve around violence and thus the pro-social and positive social networks all have a strong influence on how individuals can achieve success or get ahead. The quality and strength of social ties allows individuals to progress through an environment like Plataforma and remain uninvolved with the violence or gangs.

### **Conclusion**

I have outlined the programme and the intellectual and emotional journey that I underwent during my stay in Salvador. The process of engaging in an ethnography is constantly evolving and as I discovered in my situation, guidelines of objectivity that early ethnographers abided by had to be adjusted in order to ensure that I could engage with my informants and begin to understand parts of their reality. Yet the subtleties of their lives were difficult to discern and in the upcoming chapters I will attempt to highlight the most salient parts that were touched and affected by violence. Yet as I write this work I also feel torn because I would be doing a grave injustice to the participants if I only focused upon the violent episodes and experiences that were in their lives. Violence, although the focus of this thesis and indeed a significant component in the lives of the young people with whom I engaged, was certainly not the only social interaction they had. The participants throughout the programme and as they became more conscious of their environment on an intellectual level, wanted to impress upon me in particular the idea that violence did not rule their lives but was a feature of social relationships with which they must contend on a daily basis. Its banalisation occurred only by the fact of its frequency but was not something with which many of the participants would have commented as being a 'normal' feature of their social environment. One of the products of our work with these youth was the production of a newsletter that addressed the issue of violence but also pointed out the many amenities of the area, indicative of their desire to erase the stigma attached to their neighbourhood. Within the newsletter they made conscious choices about

what narrative to produce that would not re-enforce the stereotypes with which they encountered daily and tried to paint a picture of Plataforma that was balanced and honest.

# Chapter 2: A Mixed Methodology to Understand Youth Relations to Violent Social Groups

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## Introduction

This chapter is a review of the different types of methods employed during the fieldwork. The methods included ethnographic work, interviews, participant observations, and visual sociology. In undertaking largely qualitative methods during field research with underage individuals I needed to ensure protection to their identities but also recognise the difficulties in gaining access. Ethnographies are conducted in such a way that the researcher attempts to maximise the time s/he is exposed to the life of the subject through either co-habitation or repeated social interaction. Youth are a very difficult population with whom to gain this form of access and thus often it is most appropriate to begin a relationship with them through a third party. Moreover gaining access to young peoples' social networks as an older adult as well as someone from outside of the culture requires an innovative approach and introduction from a third party well-known to those involved. In my case that introduction occurred through my participation and indeed eventual employment with the Violence and Masculinity programme, a social development programme for young people in the Plataforma neighbourhood in which I based my fieldwork. Without the programme's help and credibility my access to the lives of the young people who are the subject of this study would have been more challenging.

The ethnographic work consisted of my continual and repeated social interactions with the youth during and outside of the programme hours. In addition to the Violence and Masculinity programme I spent nearly all of my free time with a mixed group of programme participants that seemed to change with each day. I observed and asked questions of them while they observed and asked questions about me and my life and we came to a mutual

understanding and respect for each other as I became more integrated into their daily routines. Perhaps some of the most difficult moments occurred when I wanted to conduct more formalised interviews and the dynamics of our relationship shifted albeit briefly. As I will discuss later in this chapter securing formalised interviews was difficult because of our established relationship and the role I played as both facilitator but also friend. The Violence and Masculinity programme allowed me to observe and participate in a longitudinal focus group that was conducted weekly throughout the year. Combining a role with the programme and as a researcher was initially very problematic both for me and the participants. It was not until later when I more fully embraced the programme associate role that the participants began to feel more comfortable with me and discuss some of their more personal concerns about violence.

During the initial months of the programme I considered examining the social networks of the participants as a way to explore factors that provide protection against joining anti-social networks or push individuals toward such networks. I used a modified version of social network analysis to examine the networks of the programme participants which will be discussed at length in the final chapter of the thesis.<sup>11</sup> Social network analysis (SNA) is a useful tool that can help in determining relationships and their strength. For this study it helps to represent visually peoples' relationships with different social groups and individuals and the strengths of their relationships as well as which connections those individuals may have. Following Granovetter's (1973) strength of weak ties idea, SNA helps to visually pinpoint the structural

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<sup>11</sup> I refer to it as a modified SNA because I use it only as a visual representation without doing the calculations that refer to strengths and qualities of the relationships. I find it more important to visually represent the connections and then explain their qualities through the repeated contacts I had with the programme participants and other community members. I find the qualitative descriptions to be extremely helpful in going beyond a more simplistic calculation that determines the existence and strength of particular relationships. The qualitative descriptions answer the how and whys of relationships that SNA is unable to provide.

deficiencies that would allow participants to move beyond their own networks and get ahead through connections with individuals and other networks that for example have information about jobs, scholarships or employment training programmes, thereby opening opportunities that help in pushing at-risk individuals toward positive pro-social networks and away from anti-social or violent social groups. My analysis though did not use a full SNA approach but rather re-constructed a visual representation of the linkages participants had. The description of the strength of those associations was analysed as narrative and thus does not conform to a conventional SNA approach. Other researchers have used similar methods but in more participatory ways (see for example McIlwaine and Moser (2001 and 2006)).

This chapter is separated into four sections and a conclusion. The first describes both theoretically and experientially the ethnographic research process. I also explore the aims and goals of the research. The researcher's role is essential in understanding what has been affected and how a research subjects' views can change based upon interaction with them. The Violence and Masculinity programme's intention was to intervene in the lives of young people in a both positive and meaningful way, thus I had to ensure that my role as researcher did not interfere with that process. The second section explores the role of feminism in ethnography. The interjection of this perspective has allowed individual researchers to question the idea that in order to conduct a meaningful and objective examination of research questions one had to maintain social and emotional distance from research subjects. Feminism has encouraged ethnographers to interject their own personalities and to empathise with their research subjects in different ways than other methodological traditions. In this section I explore the meaning of feminism but also how I interjected self into the research process. The next section presents a synopsis of demographic figures for Plataforma and Salvador. The final section examines the Violence and Masculinity programme and its mechanics. I explore my role as simultaneously researcher and

programme associate. The definition of my role changed as the programme developed but I continued to struggle with the duality throughout. Yet each theme we explored successively broke down the walls and distance between myself and the programme participants allowing for more open and honest discussions about violence.

### **Methods and Analysis of the Ethnography**

As will be discussed throughout this chapter, ethnography represents a group of methodologies with participant observation at its core. In the case of this research, I engaged in participant observation for 10 months through a social development programme. I also conducted semi-structured interviews, and cognitive mapping (Lynch, 1960). Although there has been significant work on community mapping by researchers like Caroline Moser and Cathy McIlwaine, cognitive mapping differs slightly because it has individuals re-create their own maps from a set of instructions and is specifically adapted for use in participatory city planning. Each method and its analysis is briefly described here before a more detailed theoretical discussion.

Each of the different methodologies used in the ethnography was analysed separately. The participant observations were analysed by coding the field notebook into distinct relevant themes. Each notebook entry was coded for 20 basic themes and then further distilled to 5 overall themes, that would compose the empirical chapters of the thesis. The 5 themes were social capital, social networks, gangs, violence avoidance, and race. Each of the 5 themes was developed as an outcome of a thorough literature review that explored the concepts of social capital, criminality and violence, and race in Brazil. Under each theme I re-organised the field notebook using quotes and reconstructed conversations. Each theme was then brought into the thesis and only the most important/relevant

conversations and/or quotes were highlighted in their corresponding section of the relevant chapter.

Interviews were analysed in a similar manner. Each interview was transcribed and comments and quotes were placed into corresponding themes developed from the coding of the participant observation. The interviews yielded one additional theme that was then used for the participant observation; history of the neighbourhood. In addition to the interviews and participant observation I collected data on each participant's social network. I developed a 30-question survey asking participants about the relationships they had with different individuals and asked related questions about where they most see that person to be able to map them onto the neighbourhood. The questions helped me to draw a network map of the most influential people in each participant's map and whether or not they belonged to the neighbourhood or were outside of it. In the coming sections of the chapter I explain my motivations for conducting ethnography and engage in a theoretical discussion about its merits and how it functioned in this study.

### **Conducting Ethnography – What is it and how do you do it?**

Until I arrived in Bahia I had not appreciated fully the implications of the decision to focus on youth decisions for non-involvement in gangs. Studying gangs is no easy task in any country for obvious reasons and as one of my supervisors once commented, "You have to either be lucky or crazy to study gangs", the information did not register until I was on my way to Plataforma, the peripheral neighbourhood where I would work for the next ten months, beginning my initial attempts to make contact with gang members. However this intent altered dramatically as I began to understand that studying gangs in Salvador was not only extremely dangerous, but gangs and violence operated differently without the same types of social organisation and norms that have been described for other cities such as São Paulo and Rio

de Janeiro. In these cities, despite the high levels of violence chaos does not reign supreme and there remain a set of well-defined social conventions and rules. In the neighbourhoods that have drug gangs these rules are rarely broken because penalties are severe and meted out swiftly. The groups have become institutionalised and simultaneously represent parallel forms of governance and perverse integration allowing for a certain measure of safety if there are no territory disputes between other gangs and the police have been sufficiently bribed (Leeds 1996; Zaluar, 2000; Arias 2006). Violence in these areas generally stems from these types of disputes and if/when the government decides to show its power by temporarily invading and disrupting these gangs. In Salvador there is some institutionalisation of gangs and in some neighbourhoods their political power extends throughout the neighbourhood, but the situation is less fixed and struggle between gangs over territory is constant creating a far more volatile and dangerous environment for anyone living in the area. These disputes often catch innocent bystanders because of the absence of one overruling drug lord, no guarantees can be made of someone's safety who is not from the area. Highly organised gang structures did not exist in Plataforma at the time of fieldwork. In its place was an ambivalent yet complex notion of violence which presented a more pervasive problem.

As a result, I began to re-think the idea of gangs and how I could modify my proposal to talk about youth and their social networks without leaving the idea of gangs too far behind. I assumed that the general topic of violence in its multiple manifestations was much more relevant to the lives of youth and decided that it would be a good starting point for my study. My questions changed from youth networks, race and gang involvement to exploring the role of different forms of violence and how young people avoid them, race, and the social relationships in the lives of youth living in dangerous and/or violent places. I was soon to find that this was far from the whole 'truth' and that despite violent actions perpetrated against

poor communities the victims were far from powerless and in fact were, in some cases, also complicit in the repressive efforts of the state as will be discussed throughout the thesis.

The research goals were an attempt to create a new discourse by following a path that examines violence from the often neglected perspective of non-involvement. What strategies do youth employ in environments where the use of violence has become socially normalised in order to remain uninvolved in it and subsequently disconnected from being fully integrated into gang activities? In a context where manifestations of various forms of violence emerge and in a regional and national environment that persistently pressures poor (black) youth to conform to stereotypes, our understanding of their strategies to achieve these goals is essential (Moser, 1999). A range of researchers investigating the phenomena of violence explore both the meanings and rationales for its use as a means to pursue various objectives from participating as a consumer in an increasingly global economy to gaining more respect and power in the local community (DaMatta, 1982; Anderson, 1998; Zaluar, 2001; Rodgers, 2001; Espinheira, 2005). There are a growing number of academic studies reflecting on the factors that pull youth away from involvement in violence.<sup>12</sup> I feature work from several authors including Barker (1998) who, in his study, describes six principal factors that push young people away from becoming involved in gangs or youth violence including: (1) constructing a coherent narrative or life story and using this story to construct a non-violent male identity; (2) Having a skill, a realm of competency or a meaningful connection to a mainstream social institution; (3) Belonging to an alternative peer group that reinforced a non-violent version of masculinity; (4) Having an important relationship or multiple relationships

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<sup>12</sup> Organisations such as Sou de Paz, Viva Rio, AfroRegge in Rio de Janeiro and a multitude of other organisations have all been engaged in providing an alternative for young people in peripheral areas other than gangs, but evaluations of their effects have not been fully detailed. The Small Arms Survey has produced a number of studies that examine gangs and their role in society. See <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/> date accessed 10, February 2011.

with someone who modelled alternative ways of being male, who provided connections to relevant resources and who was supportive; (5) Finding a sense of competence and a purpose of life in fatherhood and a relationship with a partner; (6) Having anger control and coping strategies. His concepts are woven into my discussions on social capital.

The literature surrounding gang and drug violence in Brazil has generally focused upon understanding the role in which gang and criminal involvement affects the lives of youth and the community (DaMatta, 1982; Pinheiro, 1983, 1993,; Zaluar, 1994, 2001a, 2001b; Caldeira, 2002; Espinheira, 2001, 2005). Within other Latin American literature researchers have examined gang avoidance strategies. Moser and McIlwaine (2004, 2006) in two studies for the World Bank, studied resiliency factors in their work on Colombia and Guatemala. Other authors such as Winton (2005) examined youth violence, gangs, and spatial mobility in her work also on Guatemala. Rodgers (2003) studies gangs and youth violence in his ethnography in Nicaragua and found that belonging to a religious groups enhanced one's ability to avoid joining youth gangs. Dowdney's (2003) work on Brazil and drug gangs shed light on those most vulnerable to becoming involved in youth violence and gang life. Unfortunately, gang avoidance has often been the by-product of larger directed studies at political violence, drug violence, criminal gangs, and other related topics. A further discussion of research of the literature in this area follows in the next chapters. A direct study on gang avoidance strategies, I propose, is not only a valuable intellectual exercise but has obvious practical implications for those local community groups and international NGO planning interventions.

A secondary but equally important aim of this research is to interject more forcefully the notion that race and ethnicity play fundamental roles in the linkages between social exclusion, poverty, violence and criminality. Additionally this research uses social capital as its overarching theoretical framework to discuss the strategies that are used by young people

to avoid criminality and violence. Throughout the construction of Brazil's national identity, race and ethnicity have simultaneously been disregarded as pertinent to considerations of social mobility while being identified with, through the use of powerful imagery, violence and criminality (Freyre, 1933). As Brazil began to adopt the notion of a racial democracy, the development of a collective black identity was superseded by the need and desire to fulfil the rhetorical goals of broader society's wish to portray itself as beyond race. Yet in the process of adopting this ideology, poor and mostly black communities were ignored and brutally repressed through the use of perverse social capital reflected in state institutions principally the police and children welfare agencies (Linger, 1992; Leeds, 1996; Scheper-Hughes and Hoffman, 1998).

The theoretical debates surrounding the benefits and disadvantages of adopting different methodological approaches have been consistent within social science yet emerging out of these discussions the field has settled on utilising variations of the naturalistic approach as a means to produce a picture of the reality being studied (Denzin, 1971; Geertz, 1988; Hutchins, 1995; Seale, 1999; Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). Although this approach is not perfect it does provide an insertion point from which we can debate the merits and disadvantages of its use in the context of my own research. The progression from positivism to naturalism was an attempt at gaining increased acceptance from other disciplines within the social sciences particularly those closer to positivist traditions such as economics. According to Hammersley and Atkinson (1993:6) naturalism argues, "that, as far as possible, the social world should be studied in its 'natural' state, undisturbed by the researcher. Hence, 'natural' not 'artificial' settings, like experiments or formal interviews, should be the primary source of data". Naturalism is the logical progression of positivism because it moves beyond the notion that knowledge is gained through experience by adding that 'true' knowledge can only be gained through experience and/or observation of a specific subject in its 'natural'

environment; that is without outside stimuli or influence. Both notions have been used as guiding principles for conducting ethnographic research, the vein of social science methodologies that attempts to describe the social world of a particular area through the extended lived experience of the research. Hammersley and Atkinson (1993:7) comment further that, "From different starting points these traditions all argue that the social world cannot be understood in terms of simple causal relationships or by subsuming social events under universal laws. This is because human action is based upon, or infused by, social meanings: that is, by intentions, motives, beliefs, rules, and values". In order to capture subtle information naturalists argue that we must insert ourselves into the social context to understand the emotions, feelings, and nuanced meanings of social actions and without such immersion it will be nearly impossible to achieve this goal.

Nevertheless the question remains what exactly is ethnography? The answer is quite elusive. Almost any practitioner has difficulty describing how to engage in an ethnographic study for good reason. As a delicate process there can be no codified or structured methodology gained through the definitive lesson of classes; although helpful, one cannot truly 'teach' ethnographic research but give a very general sense of the overall experience. Shaffir (1999:678) argues that there, "is simply no formula, scientific or otherwise, to follow to achieve the best results". Furthermore, the enormous variety of social contexts where ethnography can or has been used makes it nearly impossible to structure the way in which ethnographic research is carried out across the many disciplines that make use of it. Ethnography is by its very definition a methodology best understood by doing. Some definitions have been attempted. Gubrium and Holstein (1999:561) define ethnography as, "the careful and usually long-term observation of a group of people to reveal the patterns of social life that are locally experienced. Ethnography presents details of living not always evident in stories and other accounts, which are notable from the "disinterested" perusal of

interactional and narrative occasions". And Hammersley and Atkinson (1993) define ethnography in terms of the various methods it employs as a means to collect and gather information about a given subject:

"We see the term as referring primarily to a particular method or set of methods. In its most characteristic form it involves the ethnographer participating, overtly or covertly, in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions – in fact, collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the focus of the research (p. 1)".

Agar (1996:53) substantiates these comments by adding, "Ethnography is an ambiguous term, representing both a process and a product. As a product, ethnography is usually a book. The book almost always focuses on some social group, though it may be guided by any number of theories and methods. Although the book usually has some central point, the discussion of the social group often covers a lot of territory".

Ethnography as a method represents a collection of techniques ranging from formal and semi-formal interviews to surveys but at its core is the participant observation. What perhaps makes this approach unique in comparison to other methodologies is its focus on extended immersion of the researcher and the idea that the researcher can gain knowledge through his/her experience as part of a given social context and not simply as a bystander with pen, paper, and a recorder conducting interviews and surveys. Participant observation is the principal method employed in this type of research and is a deliberate attempt to blur the lines between the researcher and the subjects of investigation through direct experience of particular events. Tope *et al.* (2005) argue that the benefits of immersion; being part of the social context in which one is researching allows trust to build and breaks down barriers to information that would otherwise be inaccessible. 'Being there' as they explain, is a necessary part of ethnographic work that helps the researcher shift his/her role from 'outsider' and therefore unable to access and share lived experiences to 'semi-insider' or 'insider'

allowing for near to full integration. Hammersly and Atkinson quote Schutz (1964) commenting that the ethnographer undergoes a similar process akin to that of immigrants arriving in a foreign society/country. They arrive as outsiders with a distinct perspective about the society in which they have just arrived but as time progresses they gain privileged insider position but are believed to maintain a certain emotional and logical distance from the social reality allowing them to analyse social practices without emotional interference. "The latter live outside the culture, and tend to see it as simply a reflection of how the world is. They are often not conscious of the fundamental presuppositions that shape their vision, many of which are distinctive to their culture" (cited in Hammersly and Atkinson, 1993:9).

Yet there are problems with this assumption; cultural insiders may be unable to investigate objectively their own realities. The study of human behaviour necessarily places the researcher in a complicated role where informants often become friends and the lines between one's position as researcher or friend is often challenged, readjusted, and confused. The model of the emotionally and physically distant researcher has been contested by the involved and integrated participant who shares in the daily lives of the people who s/he is investigating. In examining the influence of the Chicago School's contributions to the conceptualisation of ethnography, for example, Adler *et al* (1986) state that:

"Although the roles of complete observer and complete participant are articulated, most Chicago School fieldworkers adopt one of the two modifications of these polar stances: the observer-as-participant or the participant-as-observer. Critical to both of these roles is the balance between involvement and detachment; researchers should avoid immersing themselves too deeply in their settings. The appropriate tack is to hang around with, get to know, and follow the flow of research subjects, but to refrain from becoming personally or emotionally involved with them (p. 364)".

The notion that one can acquire knowledge from participant observation without becoming "too" involved is flawed and will depend almost invariably on the given context. Generalisations cannot account for the difference in field site and indeed the desire from

subjects for the researcher to commit in some way to their collective goals. In many contexts it is nearly impossible to maintain this emotional and personal distance while simultaneously acquiring information. In a sense we repeat the same mistakes of "taking" without offering anything in return. In her 1986 book, *Death Without Weeping*, Scheper-Hughes offers her own analysis of the meaning of 'giving back' to a community and the struggles she faced trying to de-limit her boundaries and do the work of an anthropologist while simultaneously being considered one of the community because of her past work as a Peace Corps volunteer in the local hospital immunising children and babies. Ultimately giving becomes a way to balance, in part some of the scales, within the relationship that is created between researcher and the observed. This is particularly true in communities and social contexts where social capital is a principal way of gaining access to resources. Researchers finding themselves in such contexts will find it particularly difficult to engage in a 'marginal' role without offering some form of return to those they are with. Such communities are not passive agents in this process and as they are increasingly exposed to the idea of research and 'being researched' they may begin to make more claims to ownership, at least in part, to the products of ethnography.

Initially, sharing may almost be completely one sided as the researcher tries to relate personal stories and details about his or her life to encourage more openness from informants. Yet s/he simultaneously attempts to maintain an emotional distance that in many ways hinders acceptance into a particular environment while also attempting to gain intimacy. This paradox can place strain on a researcher-informant(s) relationship and in many cases one has to choose between transforming the relationship into a friendship or remaining distant but perhaps not gaining access to important pieces of information. Adler *et. al.*, (1986) argue that there is a constant risk of 'going native'; that is, losing all distance between the researcher and the observed as well as the ability to assess and analyse what is being

observed. Ensuring a balance between full immersion and remaining distant is one challenge that many ethnographers have to face. The frequent assumption is that with time informants will begin to 'drop their guard' and share more openly with the researcher but only after the establishment of some form of trust and mutual understanding has been solidified. The researcher in many cases has a general but thorough understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of what he/she is studying at the onset and is at the whim of informants who control and regulate the amount and type of information that can lead to more nuanced awareness. Bourgois (1996) pushes further suggesting that as a result of 'going native' or over-rapport some ethnographers attempt to 'sanitise' studies about poor and violent neighbourhoods in attempts to challenge stereotypes. While I agree that it is the responsibility of the ethnographer to describe and analyse observations as they are observed, studies of this type inherently confront these negative perceptions because they portray neighbourhoods in ways that are far more complex and in fact similar to other areas than many would acknowledge.

### Power, Positionality, and Ethics

In Bell Hooks' book, *Yearning: Race, gender, and cultural politics*, she comments that

"Ethnography is actively situated between powerful systems of meaning. It poses its questions at the boundaries of civilizations, cultures, classes, races, and genders. Ethnography decodes and recodes, telling the grounds of collective order and diversity, inclusion and exclusion. It describes processes of innovation and structuration, and is itself part of these processes (Hooks, 1990: 152)".

Ethnography represents a constant back and forth interplay between researcher, informants, and social environment and events in which a specific interpretation of the social reality that exists in a given context is interpreted and analysed. Ethnographic products do not represent the only 'truth' but one of the many concurrent interpretations. The process of conducting ethnography is necessarily exploratory with loose boundaries rejecting any attempts to make

findings generalisable across other contexts because of its adherence to the naturalist approach. The theory wielding ethnographers are thus becoming increasingly rare as researchers opt to explore, observe, and participate in the very human behaviour in which they are considering. Much of this change is a result of the continued distancing of ethnographers from rigid positivistic studies that encourage the manipulation of variables and implementation of methods that can be used across multiple studies and the recognition that researchers construct narratives that are at once as much their own story as that of the people who they are studying

Ethnography in its early stages struggled with how the researcher was to represent his/herself. Accounts from Malinowski and Evans-Pritchard illustrate the way in which ethnographic research was conducted where the researcher was an integral component to the process but intellectual and emotional distance from the 'subjects' was maintained (Malinowski, 1929, 1944; Evans-Pritchard, 1937, 1956, 1981). The challenge of this process has resulted in a more robust approach to fieldwork that recognises the many identities that we represent as researchers in the field. It embraces those qualities and attempts to transform them to strengths to be drawn upon while undergoing fieldwork. Clifford (1986:13) states, "The ethnographer's personal experiences, especially those of participation and empathy, are recognised as central to the research process, but they are firmly restrained by the impersonal standards of observation and 'objective' distance". However with the challenges to western centric views of the other by feminist theory these perceptions are no longer the only approaches in which ethnographers engage. The study of ethnography has now become a careful process where self-representation and position are equally important to the way in which the social reality of the 'other' is conceived and then interpreted.

Feminism and its antecedents informed my research because I wanted to find a way of relating to the subjects without exploiting them for their experience without sharing with

them any of my own. I wanted to make an exchange between the experiences they had with regard to violence and my own but I was unsure of how to do this initially. I wanted to ensure that my own trajectory did not follow the path of 'taking' information without giving something in return. The only reasonable way forward was to volunteer my time to the Violence and Masculinity programme and help in any way that I could. One of my first lengthy conversations with Cristiane, the programme's director, highlighted her own experience with foreign researchers and hardened my resolve to volunteer the majority of my time.

Cristiane told a story of how she worked for a Spanish researcher as a research assistant in the periphery,

*"She seemed very nice at first. We got along well even though she was pushy. I thought that perhaps we could share some information and she could help me out since I was helping her. She knew I was doing my Master's and she knew that eventually I wanted to do my PhD so I suggested that maybe we could write an article about the research together. She immediately went into this speech about how her university would not like that and that her research was proprietary information and that anything that came out of it was her own work and that I couldn't publish or write anything about it. I was shocked. Here I was helping this woman out who otherwise would not have had contacts in the neighbourhood but then she just turned on me" (field notes, February, 2006)*

After that conversation I became determined with making sure that any incident of that nature did not occur. I offered my time and my efforts and promised to collaborate with Cristiane in any way that I could, including co-writing articles and trying to obtain more funding for the project.<sup>13</sup> I pondered about how I would situate myself within the project because of a past experience working in a similar project in the US that did not turn out the way in which I wanted. "The project looks similar to the one I worked for in Philadelphia. It's gonna be a good opportunity to correct some of the mistakes I made during the first time. I learned a lot from that experience and I hope I can help in whatever way I can" (field notes, February,

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<sup>13</sup> During the first few months of the project we collaborated to apply for a Landes Supervised Fieldwork Grant. We are in the process of discussing how we can collaborate on an article about our research experience during that year.

2006).<sup>14</sup> I obsessed about not only working for the project to give back but also actively adopted the feminist-informed viewpoint of working with the project because in many ways I identified with the problems many of the young people were facing and wanted to share my experiences. I did not want to be a distant observer trying hard not to change their realities but rather to be an instructive force for the participants that needed to see positive results and understand that there were alternatives to a life involved in criminality. The feminist viewpoint not only helped me to work with the project which was critical for access to the youth and also the neighbourhood in which I would work but also to work with young people in a way that allowed them to feel comfortable with me and share information (Strathern, 1987). I viewed my work with the project as an exchange. I would volunteer my time and help the participants and in return I would have insights to the stories and experiences of violence that impacted their lives and shaped their decision-making processes so profoundly.

Feminism contributed significantly to the idea of 'positionality' and the representation of self (Rosaldo, 1980; Strathern, 1987; Moore, 1988). Feminist theory argues that integral to ethnography is not only the voice of the informant but also the experience and personal view of the researcher coming together as a collaborative work rather than one in which the all-knowing foreign researcher descends upon a community to 'study' indigenous habits and behaviours. Strathern (1987:288) comments:

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<sup>14</sup> I worked for a similar social development project in Philadelphia just before I began my Masters programme at the University of Pennsylvania for one year. The programme was similar in that its goals were to keep young people in a violent, impoverished North Philadelphia neighbourhood away from gangs, selling drugs, and other criminal activities. The programme had many problems due to mismanagement but also my own misunderstanding of how to work with young people. The programme director also had some negative interactions with youth and I could not connect with them. They saw me as aloof and not part of the group because of my unwillingness to roll up my sleeves and be part of them as opposed to someone who managed the programme. Tensions came to a head when I got into a verbal altercation with several of them leading to interventions from other programme directors.

"In allowing the so-called informant to speak in his or her own voice, the ethnography replicates the interlocutory process of fieldwork which always rests upon collaboration between anthropologist and informant. Anthropologists and their reactions are thus part of the data, rather than being mysterious hidden hands. The anthropologist's own experiences are the lens through which others of his or her own society may achieve like understanding".

Ethnographers therefore remain part of the equation and must think about and analyse the preconceptions that they bring with them as they make observations and judgments about other people and the environments in which they live.

Feminist ideas especially have challenged the notion that objectivity is a necessary requirement for the production of an effective and valuable piece of intellectual work pushing to illustrate the researcher's role in the investigation process (Strathern, 1987; Moore, 1988; Stack, 1993, Scheper-Hughes, 1998). The dominant male position advocated objectivity as a goal within ethnographic research as a way to acquire 'truth'. The impact upon ethnography is to detail the researcher's role and do away with the idea that one could interact with other social actors without impacting or altering their lives. The idea was to build research together with the subject taking as active a role within shaping the research as the researcher. This reflection process was partly responsible for a new way of thinking about ethnography helping to create such methodologies as participatory action research which was determined to integrate the subject within the research process (Freire, 1970; Chambers, 1994; Brydon-Miller, Greenwood, and Maguire, 2003; Hoop and Miscovic, 2006). Stack (1993:88-9) adds, "As feminist ethnographers we take on a knotty paradox of social responsibility: we are accountable for the consequences of our writing, fully cognisant that the story we construct is our own". Central to their critique, and this is particularly true of the developing world, is the idea that we cannot look for elements of western society within other societies as if to judge them based upon their relationship with and indeed progress as measured against the West (Rosaldo, 1980).

Feminist researchers who were studying the role of women in society further argued that because they had similar experiences to women everywhere they were able to make a more empathic connection with their informants and thus produce more detailed ethnographies that were able to get closer to the 'truth'. Stack (1993:81) writes:

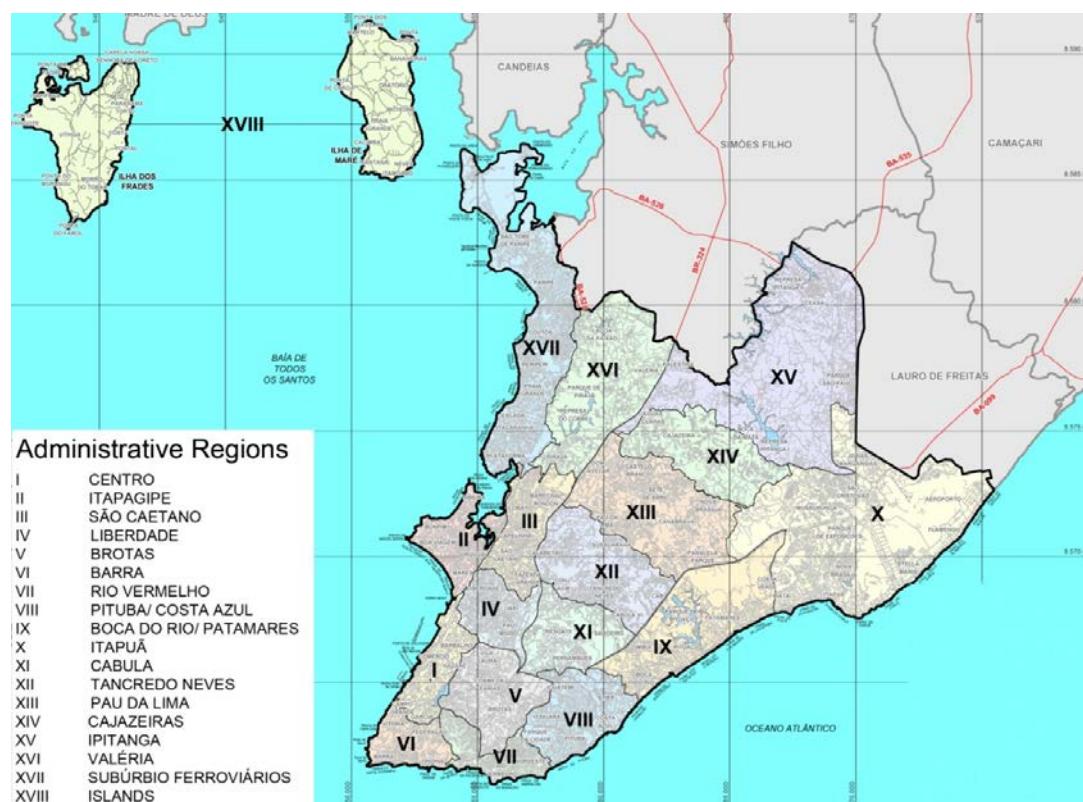
"The feminist critique of fieldwork and the writing of ethnography in the 1990s is far less sanguine with respect to what constitutes "good social science". The flat accent on reliability and objectivity of data has been transformed through the filter of critical and feminist theory. Moreover, we are unconvinced that any attempt at clarifying our positionality does more than situate the perspective from which we believe we are "writing culture". The goal is to explore and experiment – learn and write as much about our own understanding of how we locate our voice in our writing as possible. We acknowledge that how we position ourselves in our research and writing must be finely tuned with respect to the times, the region, the setting, and race/gender politics of the historical moment".

Research about masculinity also emerged complimenting feminist studies on positionality ensuring that the informants' voices were heard. Much of masculinity studies, as feminists studies have been, have examined male roles in relationship to the female but with specific attention to male and the use of violence. In Matthew Gutmann's (1996) book, *The Meanings of Macho*, he describes the male role in a *colonia* in Mexico City by using classic positions that men take up such as fatherhood, alcohol abuse, sex, domestic violence, and *machismo*. His research is instructive because it demonstrates the complexities of masculinity and the pressures experienced by males who in some ways are consigned to the same types of expectations as are women. Gutmann describes how the role of the male as provider and protector is often confounded in areas where unemployment is high and the traditional roles are constrained. Societal norms and cultural expectations pressure males who react to their inability to fulfil traditional roles creating conflict for households. Male dominance and one of its many outcomes, violence are displayed differently as a result of the adaptations necessary for living in an environment where many identities are constrained because of the lack of basic necessities.

As if ethnographies are not complicated enough, conducting them in potentially dangerous or violent places adds further problems to an already complex research environment. Investigation in potentially violent or dangerous places which includes the transference of often extremely sensitive information pushes the researcher to form alliances with informants whose actions may conflict morally with their own. In this case how does the researcher reconcile his/her need for information versus the morally questionable behaviour of the informant(s)? Or how does one balance this need with the emotional and physical protection of informants? These questions raise a number of issues that when researching in such contexts become an essential element in the entire process of data collection. Ethical issues become more relevant and learning how to balance the need for information and the protection of informants becomes essential. As I became involved in the Violence and Masculinity programme I began to consider many of the different ways I would have access to information. Initially I saw my involvement as a way to gather information for my research, however as time progressed my role transformed from researcher to coordinator to friend. Each role began to become more and more confused and the lines between each were crossed almost constantly. It was difficult to maintain a professional distance, but I realised that without this confusion and perpetual breaking of barriers I would not have had access to information from the project and would have not been asked to take on such a fundamental role within the programme.

## Salvador, Plataforma and Violence

Figure 2.1: Salvador Administrative Regions and the study site of Subúrbio Ferroviário



Source: Sistema de Informação Municipal de Salvador accessed at [www.sim.salvador.ba.gov.br](http://www.sim.salvador.ba.gov.br)  
1 March 2006

The city of Salvador sits in the Bay of All Saints in the Northeast of Brazil. The city competes with Belo Horizonte, further south for the status of Brazil's third largest city. Its population in 2007 was just under 3 million. Figure 2.1 shows the 18 different administrative regions for the city. The site of this study occurred in administrative region 17, the subúrbio ferroviário. Rural families began moving from the interior of Bahia state to Salvador in the hopes that they would be able to capitalise on the growth of the city. The migration resulted in the formation of communities along the periphery and in the central parts of the city. Neighbourhoods such as *Liberdade, Pelourinho, Forte de Santo Antônio* as well as most of the *Cidade Baixa* (*Massaranduba, Ribeira, and Uruguai* initially) received large numbers of former slaves shaping the settlements' early history but also the way in which these neighbourhoods would be dealt with by future governmental institutions. Vasconcelos (2006) comments that just before abolition, these neighbourhoods were 75 percent constituted by poor blacks and

mulattos and when ex-slaves began pouring into these areas its socio-economic composition did not vary greatly.<sup>15</sup>

The discovery of petroleum in 1939 in the Recôncavo of Bahia gave a powerful boost to the industrialization process and in 1950's the first petroleum plants were constructed by the newly formed Petrobrás.<sup>16</sup> This discovery created a 'pull' factor for rural families searching for better opportunities to migrate to the city and like the former slaves that came before them they settled primarily in the periphery and low-income central areas of the city. At this time other industries began emerging in the periphery as well. A large textile plant was constructed in the *Plataforma* area of the *Subúrbio Ferroviário* and the first workers' towns appeared as a result, in *Plataforma* and *Itapagipe*, with around 1,600 workers in the 1940's (Vasconcelos, 2006). Bahia's population growth rates were not vastly different from the rest of the country between 1940 and 1960 it was between 3.32 and 4.82 percent but steadily dropped just after 1960 (Carvalho *et. al.*, 2003). Vasconcelos (2006) adds that in 1960 61 percent of the population in Salvador were new migrants from the interior of the state. Bahia's population in 1955 was approximately 455,467 and rose to more than 800,000 in just ten years as a result of the influx of these migrants (IBGE, 2005).

The urban landscape was rapidly being transformed by not only the substantial increase in population over a relatively short period of time, between 1950 to 1980, but also

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<sup>15</sup> Before slavery was abolished in 1888 and throughout its history in Brazil manumission of slaves was a common practice creating a significant population of free blacks in cities like Salvador as well as rural areas (Graham in Hanchard, 1999). Manumission though was not a compassionate act. It was one that made economic sense especially for children whose rearing costs would be high. Men and women were also freed but often paid former slave masters through the work in which they engaged. In 1871 the Free Womb Act was passed freeing every child born to a slave. Similarly, in 1885 just 3 years before abolition any slave at the age of 65 was automatically freed (for a more detailed description see Graham in M. Hanchard, 1999; Silva, 1993)

<sup>16</sup> Petrobrás is Brazil's the state owned petroleum company that was formed in 1953. Since its creation under President Getúlio Vargas, it has ceased to have sole control over oil extraction and refining in the country.

the demand for services and the completion of various installations of infrastructure from the provision of water and sanitation to transportation linkages.<sup>17</sup> In 1922 the *Avenida Oceânica* was completed connecting many of the middle and upper income neighbourhoods situated along the coast. More recently, the completion of both the *Avenida Paralela* and the *Avenida Suburbana (Avenida Afrânio Peixoto)* have changed the city as municipal government began taking an interest in recapturing high valued areas in centralised locations. Revitalisation programmes forced long time residents from their communities: the most notable was the 'revitalisation' of Pelourinho during the early 1990s, a central part of the city that was designated a historical preservation zone (see Pinho, (1999) for a full description of the revitalisation programme of Pelourinho). Nearly all of the original 4,700 residents were removed from the area (Zanirato, 2004).

The influx of rural migrants created a severe affordable housing shortage throughout the transition period particularly in areas close to employment. In 2000 it was estimated that 29 percent of the population in the city was residing in 357 favelas (CONDER, 2004).<sup>18</sup> Nonetheless the number of migrants outnumbered available employment spurring the further expansion of an already robust informal economy. Serpa (2001) notes that the identity of the neighbourhood was constructed around the community's connection to its factory and those who were not working within the factory itself maintained linkages by providing services to the workers and their families. Small family owned and operated businesses, many times located in one's living room, continued as remnants from post-abolition where recently freed slaves relied upon mutual solidarity for support in commerce.

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<sup>17</sup> The urban population in Brazil grew from 19 million in 1950 to more than 137 million in 2000 (IBGE, 2000). In 1950, the growth rate of urban areas climbed to 5.2 percent as historical events, globalization, and political decisions shaped the domestic migration patterns

<sup>18</sup> CONDER (Companhia de Desenvolvimento Urbano do Estado da Bahia) or the City Planning Officer for the State of Bahia.

Early in Bahia's history ethnographers, anthropologists, and other scholars began examining the city's role in contemporary Brazil. Many of the first studies examined the role of traditional African-derived religions that often play substantial roles in supporting poor families without access to jobs at the factories. Ruth Landes seminal work in Salvador in 1938-39 illuminated the world of candomblé by incorporating a participant methodology where she gave voice to many of her informants and the individuals she encountered through her research (Landes, 1947).<sup>19</sup> She was able to describe how the religion acted as more than a site of worship but served as a community where members aided one another through collective action. This was one of the early works in Brazil and Salvador specifically that detailed how black communities coped with poverty. However, Landes did not comment on race directly arguing that racial problems in Bahia at the time did not exist, though the conversations she records in her book suggest otherwise. Other ethnographies about the daily lives of black and/or poor Bahians emerged later, notably the work of Pierre Verger (1985, 1995), a photographer and initiate of candomblé, and studies of race, class, and religion in the city (Pierson, 1939; Linger, 1992; Kulick, 1998; Hautzinger, 2002; Pinho, 2005; McCallum, 2005; Veissiere, 2010).

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<sup>19</sup> Ruth Landes was a controversial figure as during her fieldwork she became intimately involved with her primary informant leading many to disqualify her findings.

Figure 2.2: Map of the Subúrbio Ferroviário



Source: Fábio Baquiero

Plataforma, the site of this study, is located in the conglomeration of neighbourhoods in the Subúrbio Ferroviário in Salvador. It consists of four neighbourhoods - São Bartolomeu, São João do Cabrito, Novo Alagados (locally known as Boiadeiro), and Plataforma - and lies

just north of the central part of Salvador.<sup>20</sup> The Subúrbio Ferroviário's population in 1980 was just over 125,000 inhabitants but with an annual growth rate between 1980 and 1990 of 5 percent by 2000 the population had more than doubled to over 260,000 residents. The area, like the city, is principally composed of people of African descent. Officially, data from the city's records show that those self-identifying as black are relatively few, only 17 percent, as a result of the continued stigma associated with being considered black (City of Salvador, 2006). Yet the parda population of Plataforma stands at about 65 percent and when combined with the self-identified black population equals about 83 percent of the entire area's population. The 38,000 residents that make up Plataforma are also overwhelmingly low-income.<sup>21</sup>

The Subúrbio Ferroviário group of neighbourhoods is commonly called the periphery which has developed a negative connotation over time because of its low-income status and as an area with a high proportion of former rural migrants from the interior, an association with high rates of crime, violence, and also blackness. Plataforma grew as a neighbourhood from 1875 due to the presence of a garment factory that attracted poor families from the interior (F.Santos, 2005). The closure of the plant in 1959 had a drastic economic effect and pushed it into a downward spiral of economic decline. Poverty and unsanitary health conditions worsened as residents faced limited employment opportunities caused in part by discrimination against poor or black people from the suburbs. In 2006, Salvador's overall unemployment rate was 15 percent (14.7) while the rate for the suburbs is estimated to be

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<sup>20</sup> Novo Alagados presents severe inequalities and poverty, not least in the form of housing. The emergence of palaftas – housing built on stilts over water - was first seen around the 1940's initially in the neighbourhood of Alagados and then Novo Alagados (F.Santos, 2005).

<sup>21</sup> 38,635 inhabitants is provided by the 2000 census. However this number excludes the area called São Bartolomeu because within the census tracts it was added to the area Peri Peri/Mirantes and cannot be separated from those numbers. Despite the inability to tease out data for the area I would estimate it to have no more than about 500-1000 residents as it is small with relatively little housing just on the edge of Parque São Bartolomeu.

between 30 to 35 percent (Salvador's Mayor's Officer, 2006). However the IBGE estimates an unemployment rate for the Plataforma area as around 18 percent less than the suburb average but still well over the city's as a whole. More than 25 percent of those unemployed look for work for an average of a year or more before finding suitable jobs (UFRJ, 2006). The vast majority of heads of households earn between 1 and 3 minimum salaries (60 percent of the workforce in the area) compared with the higher income areas such as Pituba or Barra where the majority of heads of households (71 percent) make between 10 and above 20 minimum salaries (Salvador's Mayor's Office, 2006).<sup>22</sup> In Plataforma 92 percent of working residents 10 and over make between 0 and 3 minimum salaries (IBGE, 2006).

Housing in Brazil, like in other Latin American countries during the 1970s and 80s was driven by inequalities in the housing finance market. Brazil's financing mechanisms have long been inadequate to deal with the explosion in rural to urban migration. Public housing schemes that were put in place did little to ameliorate the situation and many rural families began a process of *self-help* housing.<sup>23</sup> Eventually the local government was forced to act in Plataforma because of increasing pressure in the late 1980s and early 1990s both from the local community in the form of street protest but also international pressure. In July 7, 1980 Pope John Paul II visited the region placing a tremendous pressure on the local and national government to begin slum upgrading projects. Between 1985 and 1986 the first real interventions began, first in the Alagados area but then also in Novo Alagados and São Bartolomeu (F.Santos, 2005; de Carvalho, 2003). The project was to affect some 135,000

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<sup>22</sup> At the time of this research the minimum salary was \$R354 or USD \$177 per month (IBGE, 2006).

<sup>23</sup> Self-help housing is a concept that was promoted heavily by John Turner. Self-help is the idea that disadvantaged poor communities incrementally construct their housing and community through sweat-equity. That is, they build housing gradually as resources allow to the specifications needed. This is why in many low-income areas they seem a constant construction site because families can only afford to incrementally pay for construction materials.

residents by removing the stilt housing and creating new land in the bay for the construction of permanent housing with water and sanitation infrastructure.<sup>24</sup> Due to a lack of space many families were moved to the opposite side of the Avenida Suburbana where new housing was also constructed for those that could not be allocated in the bay near their original stilt housing. The resettlement project was to be completed in two phases: first the stilt houses were to be removed while simultaneously new land would be created in the bay extending out the bay. Second, infrastructure would be added to the site connecting the community with the rest of the city. Within this process the residents would be moved from owning their substandard and unsanitary housing to begin to pay part of their salary for model-type housing that did not completely suit their needs.

The next round of interventions planned by the state and local governments stalled and started for almost a decade before any real redevelopment began and it wasn't until financing from both the Italian Exterior Ministry and the World Bank in conjunction with *Associazione Volontari per il Servizio Internazionale* (AVSI) an Italian NGO in 1996 was made available that real progress began to occur (Alexandre, 2007).<sup>25</sup> Although the area represented significant failure by the state to facilitate the acquisition of adequate and affordable housing for its most needy constituents the state and local governmental logic was initially to extend formal market forces through the *Banco Nacional de Habitação* or National Housing Bank (BNH). The BNH which was part of the *Sistema Financeiro de Habitação* or the Housing Finance System (SFH) aimed to provide loans through its housing programme for residents of the community. But because of their almost complete dependence on informal

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<sup>24</sup> One result was that 75 percent of the residents of the area were disconnected from water and sanitation for a time.

<sup>25</sup> AVSI is an Italian international aid organization headquartered in Milan.

employment the provision of capital through this process was made extremely difficult.<sup>26</sup> BNH constituted the federal savings bank and the SFH was the financial system in which it operated. According to McGuire, the SFH was composed of, "81 real estate institutions, 36 savings and loans associations, 40 real estate credit associations, 5 state savings banks, and 1 federal savings bank" (1981: 78). Unlike private banks, BNH was funded by the *Fundo de Garatia de Tempo do Serviço* or Time of Service Guarantee Fund (FGTS), which serves as a worker's pension fund and can be used by employees during periods of unemployment, retirement, or for the purchase of housing. Employers pay 8 percent of an employee's wage into this fund and it was used by the BNH to finance housing loans. Voluntary savings deposits were also made but composed a much smaller portion of the total capital encompassed in the fund. Wages in the fund accrued between 0.5 to 0.25 percent annually. Contributors wishing to purchase or construct housing would be able to withdraw their funds from FGTS and acquire loans from BNH at preferential rates. Since the BNH was not directly involved in the provision of housing, the government created Popular Housing Companies (COHABs) owned by both the state and local municipalities to be involved in the provision of housing for the poor. They also are able to provide site and services lots to households not meeting their standards or whose employment is marginal. It has also been argued that although they were able to assist some families, those in dire need and those in the very lowest income groups were not generally served by the housing finance systems (Aldrich et. al., 1999).

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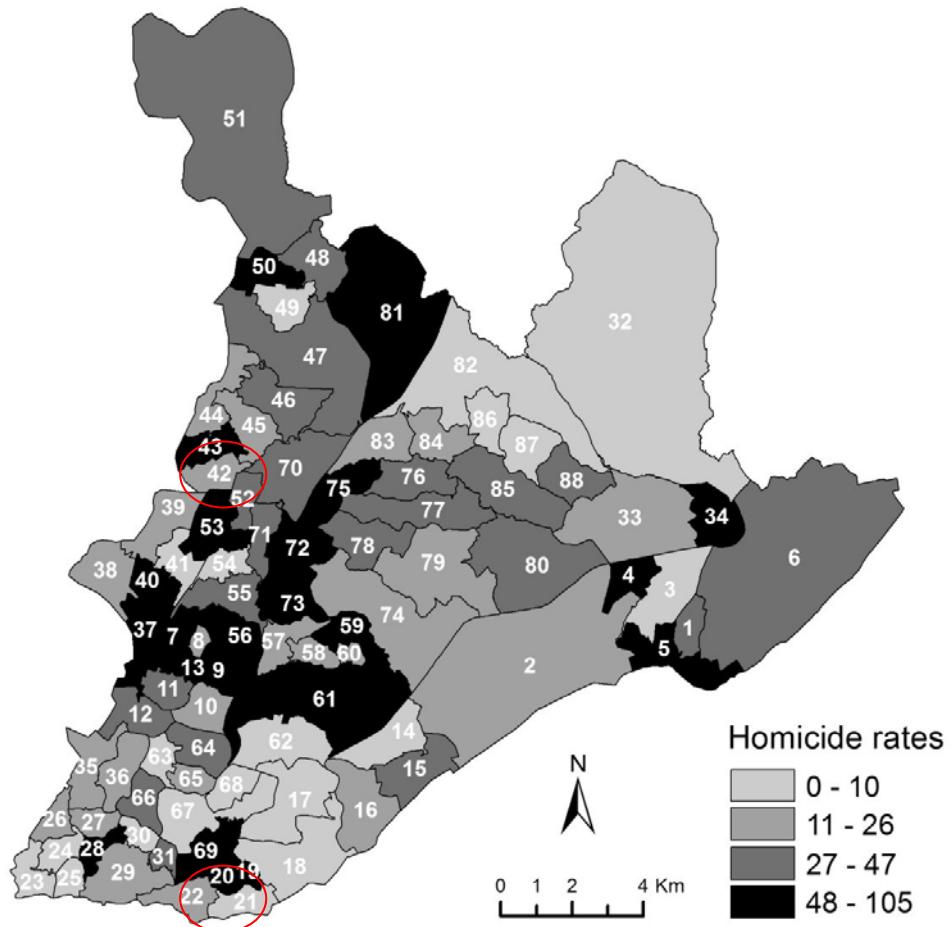
<sup>26</sup> The dominant housing finance system that appeared in the mid-1960's was BNH and SFH. Subsequent to the creation of the fund, the FGTS grew immensely and the BNH was able to fund tremendous amount of housing construction. Between 1966 and 1980 more than 3.1 million loans or about two-thirds of the total housing finance loans were granted in Brazil by BNH.<sup>26</sup> The total loans granted by the BNH financed 4.8 million units of housing between 1964 and 1986. In 1986, BNH was dismantled having debt in the excess of 20 billion dollars.

Various monitoring organisations were created through the state apparatus's yet none seemed capable of moving the intervention process forward. World Bank participation in the programme came through an overall financing programme for urban upgrading and development for the entire city called *Viver Melhor*.<sup>27</sup> In Novo Alagados the programme was called *Ribeira Azul* and administered by AVSI. The intention was to provide a complete upgrade of the city's infrastructure roads, water, sanitation, and health facilities and simultaneously provide these same services to peripheral communities with the aim of integrating them into the urban fabric of the rest of the city. In Novo Alagados the programme installed sewage/sanitation and water with a strong focus on upgrading housing. It removed all of the sub-standard houses from palafitas in Novo Alagados, rationalised some of the streets, added a bay promenade, constructed new housing across the Avenida Surbana, and upgraded some of the local schools and crèches. The programme was called a success by planners and government officials but did not address any of the social issues that have continued to be problems in the community such as violence, increasing drug use, high unemployment and inadequate public schools.

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<sup>27</sup> The *Viver Melhor* programme is a broad urban development program funded in part by the World Bank with aims to 1) Upgrade urban informal settlements; 2) Improve access to social programs in the areas of income and employment generation, health care, education and job training; 3) Enhance state and local government capacity to manage urban poverty reduction strategies (The World Bank, 2006).

Figure 2.3: Homicide rates by census track from 1998-2003 (per 100,000)<sup>28</sup>



Source: Araujo et. al. (2010).

The two red circles (numbers 43 and 69) on the map indicate two very high levels of homicide rates (see Figure 2.3). 43 is Plataforma and 69 is Nordeste de Amaralina another low-income but inner city area of Salvador. By comparison, Table 2.1 below shows data on homicide in

<sup>28</sup> Data on violence especially homicides by neighbourhood is extremely difficult to obtain. The police don't keep accurate records nor does any other official body. Recent data (2010) was created with extensive supplementation of police records, police reports, journalistic reports, and other sources by two organisations the *Forum Comunitario de Combate á Violencia* and the *Instituto Médico Legal Nina Rodrigues*. I have been unable to acquire data from these sources despite various attempts.

three low income areas (N. de Amaralina, Plataforma, and Pirajá) against a high income area Barra. The difference in homicide rates is striking.

Table 2.1: Homicide rates by neighbourhood in Salvador (per 100,000)

City/Year	1998	1999	2000	2001
<b>Barra</b>	4.7	9	9.9	0
<b>N. de Amaralina</b>	120.2	87.3	95	108.9
<b>Plataforma</b>	49.2	33	32.6	47.6
<b>Piraja</b>	95.1	50.8	84.7	68.3

Source: Santana et. al., (2002)

Plataforma and the periphery generally has a reputation for violence partly as a result of the perception that black and/or poor people are the principal perpetrators of crime. Yet the levels of violence that are associated with blackness by popular society are somewhat misleading as a consequence of the overwhelming black majority of the city. Salvador is closer to the mode for mortality rates by homicide in Brazil, around 31.3 in 2000 compared to São Paulo 58.5 and Rio de Janeiro 49.5 per 100,000 inhabitants. The age groups between 15 and 34 are affected the most by violent deaths, with the group 20-24 reaching just over 20 percent of the total age distribution. The distribution of violent deaths also disproportionately affects the black and parda populations; with around 80 percent of the total population in Salvador between 1997 and 2001 they represented 91 percent of people affected by violent

deaths. The white population by contrast represents nearly 20 percent of the metropolitan area population but only 2 percent of the population affected by violent deaths.<sup>29</sup>

Figure 2.3 suggests that Plataforma has a lower homicide rate than for the city as a whole while other surrounding neighbourhoods have higher rates. Pirajá and Nordeste de Amaralina, two similar neighbourhoods have rates that illustrate the problem of violence in peripheral areas. Yet violence rates can vary dramatically over time. In Plataforma homicide rates for 1998 were 36.9 per 100,000 inhabitants and decreased to 31.1 in 2000. In higher income areas such as Barra that rate was 13 in 1998 and 19 in 2000 per 100,000 residents which varied more than Plataforma but less than Nordeste de Amaralina which had in 1998 had 120 per 100,000 and 95 in 2000. Across a number of studies that measure violent deaths, homicides, and mortality rates it becomes clear that the areas affected are largely black and poor located in the periphery or also inner city low income areas (Noronha et al, 1999; Espinheira, 2001; Macedo et al., 2001; Machado and Noronha, 2002; Nunes and Paim, 2005).<sup>30</sup> Dos Santos Santana (2004) adds that not only homicides and violence perpetrated by residents within the community account for increased rates in peripheral areas but also murders committed by extermination groups and the police that take it upon themselves to mete out justice, collect debts, or service contracts.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> The municipal government commissioned a report in 2002 to investigate mortality rates caused by violence and other external factors from 1998 to 2001 called *O Rastro da Violência em Salvador – II: Mortes de residents em Salvador de 1998 a 2001* (*The face of violence in Salvador – II: Resident deaths in Salvador from 1998 to 2001*), where these figures originate. According to Nunes and Paim (2005) the rate of homicides per 100,000 habitants in Salvador in 1997 was 33.9 which decreased to 22.4 in 2000.

<sup>30</sup> Although the official figures show a decrease in homicide rates for Plataforma during this time they must be taken with some amount of suspicion. A large number of crimes and homicides go unreported in the periphery particularly those perpetrated by the police or gang elements. This figure is believed to be far higher while the figures for Barra are considered more accurate because the area is a tourist destination and one that is heavily policed.

<sup>31</sup> By contracts I mean that police and extermination groups are regularly hired by residents, shop owners, or other individuals to kill/assassinate undesirables within the community. In

There are two contradicting notions that characterise violence in peripheral areas of the city like Plataforma and need to be understood when examining the official statistics. First the true level of violence in the periphery is hidden. Many homicides as well as other forms of violent crime go unreported. Homicides perpetrated by gangs are often carried out surreptitiously and the bodies dumped where authorities will not reach them.<sup>32</sup> Police officers who engage in extermination groups find ways to hide their deeds as well ensuring these crimes do not enter the official record. The actual homicide rate in Plataforma is believed therefore to be higher than the data suggest.

Second, the perception that violence is perpetrated by the black and brown population from the periphery fuels the idea that these neighbourhoods are substantially more violent than wealthier areas. While it is true that Plataforma's homicide rates are higher than almost any of the wealthier neighbourhoods, violence generally does not move outside of it.<sup>33</sup> Some residents believe peripheral residents come from their areas to commit crimes in more well to do areas even as the statistics do not show this to be the case. The way in which neighbourhoods are perceived is linked with race. The poorer and more violence the neighbourhood, the more it is thought to be 'black'. Violence is yet another marker of the way in which race is perceived becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy in that communities which are poor and experience high levels of violence are considered 'black' and blacks are considered to thought to be products of these types of neighbourhoods.

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fact, Machado and Noronha (2002) estimated that the cost for contract killing in the suburbs is low and affordable (R\$1000 or USD\$600).

<sup>32</sup> During my field research I heard of one such case where a body was dumped by the gang. My informant mentioned that such violence was not a constant feature of the area but when it did occur those cases generally went unreported.

<sup>33</sup> Additionally, because several neighbourhoods are included in Plataforma the geographical representation of violence cannot be determined. The perception is that not all parts of Plataforma are equally violent. Anecdotally, Novo Alagados is considered the most violent of all the Plataforma neighbourhoods.

### **Brief History of the Impact of Politics in Salvador**

Contemporary history of Salvador, has been directed by a handful of elite white families, that can date their ancestry back to at least slavery, and in some cases well before. No political history of Bahia would be complete without a discussion of the late Senator Antonio Carlos Magalhaes or ACM and his family. ACM dominated Bahian politics for the last 30 years until he died in 2007. During the military dictatorship he was appointed governor of the state of Bahia after having been mayor of Salvador. He made strong allegiances with the ruling party helping him to build a strong base of support in Salvador but also throughout the state. Just before the ending of the dictatorship, sensing the changing political winds, ACM switched allegiances to backing the end of the dictatorship. This allowed him to retain power through a ministerial position before furthering his political career in the state legislature and then on to the governorship once again. In 1997 he was elected to the Senate. Throughout this tenure ACM remained connected to some of the highest ranking political figures in the country. He worked closely with former President Henrique Cardoso as well as with President Lula.

A symptom of politics in Bahia and throughout the country, ACM was forced to resign in 2001 because of a scandal about cronyism. ACM's career was not over however and he was re-elected in 2002 and served until 2007, when he died. His political career was emblematic of politics throughout the country where cronyism and patronism are regular features of the political process. The city of Salvador itself suffers greatly from a political culture that rewards such behaviour and penalizes those that resist against it. For instance, Keisha-Khan (2004) writes that attempts to struggle for land rights and tenure by were always met with stiff resistance especially for blacks and others considered to be on the margins of society. Urban renewal programmes in the 80s and 90s highlighted the economic value of historically black communities and the barriers these populations faced to accessing the political process. In many cases, their blackness and persistent exclusion from mainstream

political discourse forced them to take to the streets in order to fight for their rights. The political machine in Salvador at the time and even now, continues to marginalize the black population and use ties to families from the colonial past to direct its activities. Political elites, like ACM, represent mostly white former slaveholding families that have excluded black politicians from being able to gain power. Some black politicians have been elected to state and national office such as Luiz Alberto (1990s), Milton Barbosa (1980s-90s), and Haroldo Lima (1980s) Johnson (1998). Considering the size of Salvador's black population the representation of black politicians remains extremely low and indicative of the common perception that white privileged men occupy political institutions.

As will be discussed later in this thesis, the black consciousness movement has challenged these notions. The black consciousness movement, or the movimento negro, is a set of groups that hope to do away with the gradations of race in Brazil arguing instead for a more bi-polar categorisation similar to the United States. They claim that other terms such as pardo, do not assist people in overcoming racial discrimination and tend to confuse the notion of race in Brazil making it more difficult to challenge persistent stereotypes. The political machine in Salvador is thus represented largely by racial discrimination and disenfranchisement of blacks Bahians. Despite their overwhelming majority, blacks do not constitute a similar proportion in political institutions.

### **The Violence and Masculinity Programme - Planning and Mechanics**

The coordination team was composed of five people. Cristiane Santos Souza, the programme director and one responsible for writing the grants for funding, designing the programme itself, and then recruiting the other members of the team is a native Bahian who grew up in one of the peripheral communities and considered herself to be 'giving back' to the neighbourhood(s) that she was once a part. Her background in anthropology directed the approach in which she designed for the implementation of an intervention programme. Unlike

similar programmes in the US or the UK, no research on its outcomes were planned and carried out and therefore it would be difficult to determine the success of the programme's approach. The programme implemented a participatory approach to achieve its goals. Cristiane's goal was to construct a team that would engage with problems from their own disciplines and collaborate with each other within the overall framework of the programme to come up with guidance for the participants and alternatives to becoming involved in violence. We met each other through a mutual friend who had worked in Salvador for nearly 15 years and our common interests helped to persuade her that I would be a useful addition to the programme staff.

Haroldo Barbosa is originally from *Pirajá* a neighborhood with similar characteristics as Plataforma but that does not constitute one of the *Subúrbio Ferroviários* communities. *Pirajá* is on the other side of the city but is connected to Plataforma and the Avenida Suburbana communities through the *Parque São Bartolomeu*. He is a student of pedagogy also from the Federal University of Bahia where he obtained a scholarship from the university. Haroldo's ties to the neighbourhood allowed him to get a job at a local community group which helped in the planning of the housing and relocation project. Haroldo was an instrumental community worker in this project which allowed him to make lasting partnerships with many of the different community organisations in the area. Haroldo was well placed in the neighbourhood and was an ideal resident to have work with the programme. Haroldo and I spent a significant amount of time together and he became one of my principal informants about the history of the area and was able to connect me with others as well as provide valuable insights about how violence played itself out. Ediane Lopes, another student, is originally from the neighbourhood of *Ribeira*, a poor neighbourhood in the famous *Cidade*

Baixa district of the city.<sup>34</sup> She is a student of history studying for her master's at the Federal University of Bahia and an active member of the feminist and black movements in Bahia.

Claudina Ramirez, from Chile, moved to Bahia when she was very young. Her professional background is in law, but she stopped practicing and began studying psychology and was invited to take place in the programme as its psychologist therefore completing one of her degree requirements. Her professional approach to the programme conflicted somewhat with the overall goals because of the focus on individualised interventions. It was a conflict that appeared several times during the course of the year and was resolved only after an extended meeting with the entire coordination team.

The intention of the Violence and Masculinity programme was to develop a social programme around the central theme of daily violence and the meanings of masculinity where its participants could discuss and debate their individual experiences with violence and gender through various themes and topics planned by the programme coordination. "The primary objective of this project was to reflect about violence with youth from the periphery that live in situations of poverty and social vulnerability, focusing on the construction of masculinity understood as emerging from the valorisation of 'machismo' and dominance that leads to violent behaviour among youth" (Souza, 2006).<sup>35</sup> Additionally it will, "address the

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<sup>34</sup> Ribeira is also the oldest, most famous, and almost exclusively black neighbourhood in all of Salvador located in what is called the Cidade Baixa or lower city. The lower city was the original location for social inferiors during colonial times and a social stigma about social undesirables remains attached to the area. See Chapter Four.

<sup>35</sup> Cristiane and the programme itself did not attempt to define 'machismo' for the participants despite their experience with it through Cristiane's post graduate study and her involvement in gender relations through various social movements but rather to expose them to the differences in outcomes for males and females in Brazil. They also wanted to show how much violence played a part in the position many women in low income areas like their own held whether physical, institutional or otherwise. Ediane Lopes another of the programme staff was heavily involved in student feminist movement and would advise and council the participants sometimes with this lens. There was no agreed upon definition of machismo but at least for Cristiane and Ediane, the feminist perspective of male dominance informed their views and shaped some of their reactions and relationships with the participants.

divergences among young males and females in various dimensions and spaces of daily life" (Souza, 2006). The programme itself developed, almost organically into a project that went well beyond its aims by exploring different avenues and issues that emerged from the problems the participants were facing. The programme was initially divided into nine thematic areas (see Table 2). Each thematic area was discussed for about one and a half months but some themes were shortened or lengthened depending upon need and relevance, often as a result of incidents occurring outside of the programme but during the month in which the theme was discussed. My integration in the programme allowed me to collaborate with the planning and implementation of various activities and discussion topics that served the double purpose; to enhance my exposure to certain key concepts including racism, exclusion, and gender as they related to young people from the periphery and for gathering data for my research.

**Table 2.2 - Violence and Masculinity Themes**

1	The practice of research: understanding, transformation, and social insertion
2	Perception and production of space
3	Social Research: understanding and the production of knowledge
4	Generation and Family: Youth, sexuality, love, fatherhood and motherhood
5	Gender and Violence
6	Race and Violence
7	Masculinity and the reaffirmation of force: Violence as an element of the construction of male identity
8	Black masculine and feminine body in a consumer society
9	University and public politics: Perspectives of social transformation

**(Source: Souza, 2007)**

The selection process of the programme participants did not conform to any evidence based models that are used frequently in Europe and the US (Henry and Flintrop, 2009). Violence prevention programmes in Salvador do not have a history of using evidence-based and the Violence and Masculinity programme adhered to only a few of the basic premises related to evidence based intervention programmes. As a result of Cristiane's anthropology background she developed a model using a mix of approaches from life skills training and the promotion of alternative thinking strategies to empowerment as means of violence prevention. Souza (2006) writes that the objectives of the programme are:

"to sensitise young public high school residents of Plataforma in the Railroad suburbs of Salvador to possibilities of participation and social action through higher education through experience with social research (basic notions of fieldwork, data, literacy, systematic observation and reflection about the collected data); Construct a picture of violence lived by young people in the neighbourhood, focusing on sexuality, race, and ethnicity, as well as the collective reflection about the situation of violence which are peripheral residents are subjected to, especially young people; Create a

connected institutional network with entities that work in the thematic areas and qualify the young people as social change agents (p. 3)".

A secondary goal is to have the youth participants engage in a short research project of their neighbourhood as a way to overcome the pervasive negative perception that is prevalent among residents of the area. Because of the stigmatisation of these areas which are thought to be dangerous even by residents of other peripheral neighbourhoods, the programme coordination wanted to encourage the participants to learn more about the area and its value by completing a short investigation of its history and its residents. It was thought that by speaking with older residents and peers about the neighbourhood that it would allow them to explore its identity and break down negative stereotypes.

Table 2.3 – Articles in *A Tarde* about the periphery<sup>36</sup>

Newspaper	Number of articles about the periphery	Themes	Number of articles
<i>A Tarde</i> – from July 2005 to July 2006	43	Violence	26
		Leisure	4
		Politics	8
		History of the neighbourhood	2
		Accidents	3
		Human Rights	1
		Infrastructure	2
		Class	1

(Source: *A Tarde* 2006-2007)

The programme staff and participants conducted a survey of the most popular and highest circulation newspaper for Salvador, *A Tarde*. Table 3 demonstrates that despite all the other events that occur with the neighbourhoods violence dominates the written portrayal of the area. As will be discussed in full detail in Chapter Four, violence in Bahia is relatively low in comparison to other cities such as Rio de Janeiro, Recife, or São Paulo yet particular neighbourhoods experience far greater levels of violence than the city as a whole.

<sup>36</sup> I visited the central library to review newspaper clippings about the neighbourhood for the years 2004 and 2005 as a way to begin to understand some of the perceptions that the overall society would hold about this area as well as the type of information that is divulged about the neighbourhood.

The selection of the participants was not randomised and thus no comparison groups were defined nor was it possible to determine if this group was representative of the overall youth population of the area. Recruitment was conducted through distributing information to three local public schools (*Clériston Andrade, Alípio Franca, João Florêncio Gomes e Costa e Silva*) as well as placing flyers near bus and train stops, shops, plazas, and churches, and through interviews on local community radio stations as a form of advertisement. In the first phase of participant selection Haroldo and Ediane were responsible for conducting interviews with each of the participants and 66 (43 girls and 23 boys) demonstrated a desire to join the programme. Out of the 66 who were interested, 36 were ultimately chosen based upon the selection criteria of "interest and motivation for the proposed themes; interest in entering university; understanding of the situation of the community; and interest in social action" (Souza, 2006: 6).<sup>37</sup> Unlike gender which is clearly definable, race is an extremely complicated matter in Brazil and the inscription questionnaires reflected that complexity. The question was left open-ended with the intention of allowing people to choose their race without being herded into a pre-defined category. Of the group ten out of the 20 identified themselves as being black while two identified themselves as mulatto, one identified as yellow and one as mestiço (of mixed Indigenous and European heritage).<sup>38</sup> Thirteen of the participants were in families that lived on only one minimum salary while only six other families were living on between one and three minimum salaries and there was one non-response.<sup>39</sup> The schooling level attained by the participants' parents showed that none had taken the vestibular (college entrance exams) or gone to university. There were four in total that had never attended

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<sup>37</sup> It is unclear why there was such an imbalance in the gender ratio. I did not begin working with the programme until after the selection process and the first session had begun.

<sup>38</sup> Yellow is a category in Brazil used to identify very light skinned people of mixed African, Indigenous, European, or Asian descent.

<sup>39</sup> According to *A Tarde* (February, 2006) The minimum salary at the time of the programme (2006) was R\$ 350 or equivalent to \$USD152 per month.

school and 17 that did not complete primary education and two who had completed primary education. Fourteen of the parents had not completed secondary education while only seven had fully completed secondary education and only one parent did not respond.

Over the course of the year several boys and girls within the programme dropped out and new ones were recruited leaving the final total at 18 (6 boys and 12 girls). We interacted with the participants on a weekly basis every Saturday morning between the hours of 8am to around 12pm. Each session began with a relaxation and focusing exercise and then we began our discussions of the themes that were planned for that particular day. The approach to these sessions followed disciplinary approaches of sociology and psychology. The small group approach elaborated by Olmsted (1978), suggests that the sociological perspective groups are seen as being composed of societies or from the psychological perspective societies can be seen as composed of groups. The small group approach was implemented in the programme as a way to both organise our sessions but also to think about how the overall intervention would be planned. The intervention was seen as re-positioning the small group within the society in which it interacted. As the programme developed our interactions with the participants grew. I began meeting up with group participants during the week after school and on Sundays, spending several hours with them each time we met. Once we began instructing them on how to conduct fieldwork I began spending most of my time with a smaller subset of the entire group that were tasked with executing interviews of community members, taking photographs, and doing walking narrated tours of the neighbourhood. These ideas were largely generated by the participants themselves as were their own research questions. They wanted to understand the untold stories of the neighbourhood and show that their community was not as it was portrayed in the media as violent and full of criminality.

In order to plan for our sessions the staff met each week to discuss previous sessions and to prepare for our upcoming weekend. In the initial two months of the programme the staff interaction with the participants remained confined to our weekly sessions but as the programme developed interaction time was significantly increased. Individual staff members met with participants outside of the designated program time to plan other activities such as the fieldwork but also to give short workshops on different ideas that were discussed in our weekend sessions, travel to local museums, and give them guidance on personal issues. I used this extra time getting to know the participants, spending most afternoons walking around the neighbourhood with a group (three boys and two girls) who became some of my closest informants.

As each theme was developed and then implemented the issue of negative stereotypes about the community remained a constant and it became apparent to the programme coordination that it was necessary to re-enforce the positive aspects of the neighbourhood. As a result, in the first theme we began introducing the participants to the various ways in which professional researchers undergo investigations in hopes that the participants would be able to implement some of the techniques in their neighbourhood investigations. It was an approach that intervened in the assumptions they held about the neighbourhood and encouraged them to begin questioning not only the validity of their assumptions but also from where these perceptions had emerged (Souza, 2006). As explained earlier in this section, the programme had multiple goals of discussing the challenges of living in violent social and physical environments but also to expose them to sociological and anthropological discourses that illustrate the root causes of violence in low income neighbourhoods (Souza, 2006, 2007). Theme II and III were continuations of Theme I and explored more fully the idea of how the perceptions of space are constituted through society. They included discussions about the way in which the area of the Subúrbio

Ferroviário was consistently portrayed as an area that was not to be entered into unless you were a resident and that its residents along with others from similar low-income communities were responsible for crime in the city.

The first activity that I introduced and conducted was the production of cognitive maps by the programme participants. Cognitive mapping is a technique first introduced by Kevin Lynch (1960) in his book, *The Image of the City*. In it he outlines the way in which urban citizens have constructed mental images of their neighbourhoods and that often are quite divergent from one another. He developed a system whereby citizens would draw simple maps of their mental images of the community to be used to visualise information such as areas of danger, areas that need to be cleaned, and how individuals move through their physical space among others.

For my research these maps were used as a way to determine areas of violence in the neighbourhood by having the participants answer a series of questions by marking the corresponding places on the map. The session began as usual with our initial relaxation exercise. I explained to the participants how the exercise would work and gave them each a piece of paper. I asked them several questions regarding their neighbourhood to understand the physical and social boundaries as well as unique identifiers of the area. I also wanted to understand the different spaces that were important to them and asked them questions that would allow them to indicate geographically those places that they frequented the most, felt comfortable in and felt were important for them but also the community as a whole. I then led a series of questions about the dangers that exist in their neighbourhood. All of the participants shared a similar perception about the areas in which drug trafficking was undertaken but differed in the places in which they felt comfortable.

The topic of family for many of the participants is simultaneously a source of positive and negative associations that elicits complex emotions from the participants and as I heard

the various narratives from the others I realised the importance of this subject. These sentiments were particularly strong among female participants as their relationships with their fathers or other adult male figures in their lives were marked many times by sexual violence. Although the theme was discussed during a month that I returned to London, like themes I-III it was a topic that repeated itself in not only our Saturday conversations but also the informal conversations outside of the programme. I met with a smaller group of the participants every Sunday to teach English. Initially the classes were well structured but by the third session the classes turned into 'hang out' sessions where we would just sit and talk about the programme as well as anything else they wanted to discuss. The group generally consisted of boys although girls also appeared and it was a good opportunity to observe and interact with them outside of the programme constraints. Behaviours were, not surprisingly, quite different during these moments and it became apparent during one of these informal meetings that although participating in a programme that advocated against violence pushed many of them away from becoming involved in criminal violence, peer violence was a normalised feature of relationships that none could completely escape, utilising it as a form of conflict resolution.

Theme V seemed an obvious extension of the previous one because of its relevance for the experiences of many of the female participants. The males were visibly less engaged in this theme at the outset. I found it extremely difficult to recreate the same informal conversations and connections with the girls because of various gender roles and social boundaries that I assumed I would be crossing. A foreigner 'hanging out' alone with a young girl or group of girls was not considered an acceptable practice, a point that I became aware of during several conversations with community members as well as the group. There was the fear too of the consequences should something be insinuated that was out of my control. The social consequences for being accused of inappropriate behaviour toward a female minor were severe and there were many accounts of this sort that described a severe beating

or lynching of suspects, guilty or not. In hindsight, I feel my inability to connect with many of the girls on a more informal personal level did not hinder my capacity to understand gender specific topics. Within the group sessions we discussed in great detail differences in the perception of gender and the difficulties that males and females face in the community. Additionally Haroldo was close to some of the girls who sought his advice about personal problems. Haroldo and I discussed some of the issues that the girls were facing, bringing some serious topics up for discussion with programme staff to devise strategies to assist them. From this information, I was then able to interact with the girls in a more sensitive way, to engage them and help them deal with problems.<sup>40</sup> I found as I became better known in the neighbourhood some of these tensions receded and I was able to spend time alone with some of the girls, although in this specific aspect I remained extremely cautious.

Theme VI centred on the intersection of race and violence focusing specifically on the way in which the state and society viewed Brazilians of African descent. It explored the extremely complex notion of race in the Brazilian context where race/ethnicity are fluid identities. Our discussions sought to explain the meaning of race in the Brazilian context beginning with breaking down myths about the idea of Brazil as a 'racial democracy'. It then examined the racial context of the US and its development as a way to show differences that could then be reflected upon and discussed. Working through this theme was extremely difficult for me because of the difference in the way that race is conceptualised in Brazil. I viewed everyone in our group as either of black origin or mixed black/Indigenous/European

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<sup>40</sup> Although sensitive personal information about some of the girls' lives was revealed to me I did not use this information in any way to build a relationship nor gain further insights about their lives. All of the sensitive information was regularly discussed in our group meetings so that each staff member would be aware of any situation so that we could deal with it appropriately. Our responses varied depending upon the situation that arose but we generally discussed the problems individually or referred them on to services if that was appropriate and available. Claudina was instrumental in this process because of her background as a therapist and was generally the person that would initially discuss some of the more serious problems the girls were facing.

ancestry which in the US context almost automatically places them as either black or a person of colour. However their conception of race was much more fluid and I struggled not to impose my view but at the same time explain the social context of which I was familiar. We then discussed how violence was directed at black populations in Brazil by examining various historical and contemporary events. Toward the end of the theme it became apparent that the group had begun to reflect quite profoundly on the meaning of race, racism, and discrimination and their attitudes transformed from very traditional views to a more nuanced vision. As the discussion about the intersection of race and violence became more pronounced they raised several important questions about why blacks in Brazil were consistently at the bottom of society socially, politically, and economically. They also questioned why their neighbourhoods consistently experienced high levels of violence and poverty. Part of this, as will be discussed in later chapters has to do with the nexus between race, violence, and social relationships. Social capital and social connections make a tremendous difference for individuals at almost any level of society. In order to secure a job, get preferred prices at markets, even to get discounts or free vestibular classes it is important to know someone. Yet if you are from a socially excluded group or area where the mainstreams perceives you as undesirable the connections to groups that could then help you achieve these things is highly constrained.

Theme VII merged with Theme V because it spoke to the idea of how violence is at once transferred from state agencies but also originates within peripheral communities as the result of multiple deficiencies such as low employment, the low level and poor quality education, lack of opportunity, and an overall sense of abandonment. It examines how the male identity is assumed to incorporate violence and the threat or use of force to maintain it. The discussions in this part of the project challenged the boys in the group to reflect on their own lives and the way in which they interact with others, particularly other males, in the

community. During the project most people engaged positively with ideas of gender and violence but their actions outside of the programme revealed a more contradictory attitude and practice. It was not that they exhibited drastically different behaviours but rather that violence and the threat of force was a common feature in their interactions with one another. This will be discussed in both Chapters Six and Seven in more detail.

Theme VIII examined the way in which black female and masculine bodies are represented in the media and then simultaneously rejected and employed as symbols of lust, seduction, and sexual predation. We invited several speakers to discuss the black female and male and challenged the participants to discuss and reflect on images they see in their day to day and how they are represented.

The final theme examined how residents from the periphery are excluded from entrance to public universities as a result of an unequal educational system and also inadequate access to vestibular classes that are the primary assessment tool for admission. We conducted exercises having the participants discuss the reasons why they wanted to enter into a certain profession and why they felt their options were limited. A few of the participants identified their desire to enter the public university system and we debated the reasons why despite the fact that 88 percent of the city's population was of African descent that public universities were majority white.

During each session I took extensive notes of discussions, noting my own thoughts about them but also participants' moods as well as reactions to topics. From the 2<sup>nd</sup> of July I began digitally audio-recording each of the sessions. Initially I was quite timid about asking whether or not it was appropriate to record each of our sessions, however I thought that the information gathered could be used for both my own research as well as the results of the programme.

There were two community meetings that were held as part of the programme one in the May and the other as a capstone presenting each of the participants with a certificate of participation in late November. The entire community was invited to participate in both meetings as well as parents, significant others, community leaders, and other community organisations. Each of these meetings represented not only a milestone for the participants but also for the programme as it allowed us, as a group working toward a common goal, to showcase talents, knowledge, and the benefits of the programme itself.

**Table 2.4: Age Distribution of Programme Participants**

Age	Male	Female	Total
14	0	1	1
15	2	3	5
16	2	5	7
17	0	1	1
18	1	2	3
19	1	2	3
Total	6	14	20

**(Source: Souza, 2007)**

Throughout the implementation process there was great difficulty maintaining a distinction between my research with what I saw as research being carried out by the programme participants as part of their research projects. There were certain elements that overlapped with the information that I wanted to gather particularly when it came to interviewing and speaking with older residents within the community about its history as well as interviewing youth in the neighbourhood that were outside of the programme to get a more balanced view of how youth understood the issues of violence in the area. Outside of the daily interactions I had with the youth of the programme I conducted 17 semi formal interviews with various community members, civil society members, and community organisations..

I kept one overall field notebook that recorded all of my interactions with the programme participants and meetings as well as interviews and conversations with informants community members, community organisations, etc. In the evenings after any interaction I would return home and write detailed notes about the days conversations and interactions. I was able to audio-record three interviews with community members out of the 17 and transcribed these interviews into notes. Three of the interviews were with members of the community that had been living there for over 12 years one of which was one of the original 'invaders' of the area. All of these interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed. Four of the interviews were of a younger generation of community leaders that are just now beginning to take over from an older generation. There were two continuous contacts with two different youth that had previously belonged to one of the neighbourhood gangs that are involved in petty crime such as the sale of cannabis and theft/robberies.

### **Conclusion**

Ethnographic research is a rich but complex experience, and my own was both difficult and rewarding. Ethnographies combine a variety of methods in order to capture information about specific moments and places. The amount of time I spent engaging with young people allowed me to capture a glimpse of their lives and understand some of the many issues they faced when making decisions regarding their involvement or non-involvement with violence and violent social groups. I had the unique opportunity to rely upon my own previous experience from the US in order to relate with the programme participants helping me further the goals of my research and build mutual respect which is an integral part of a researcher's arsenal. The information, stories, and personal accounts of each of the programme participants' experience with violence instructed me about the difficulties they face but more importantly how the information I have obtained can be used to further policy measures aimed at intervention

Researching violence is often a hard task particularly when done qualitatively. It requires that the researcher expose him/herself to risks that can be avoided when conducting investigations in other ways. But, there are distinct benefits to conducting research in this way. The relationships and information that can be obtained from research subjects can often be more rich and dynamic because of repeated social interactions with the researcher and a breaking down of barriers between the two. As a result of the often personal and intimate nature of violence these repeated interactions can serve as a bridge to understanding the way in which research subjects may experience violence. Violence is a part of their lives and without comprehensive programmes that have multi-level approaches dealing with not only the violence but also factors that relate to it such as poverty, low educational opportunities, low- or under-employment, governments and civil society organisations will have a difficult time improving the environment in which these young people live. Ethnographies complement other types of research to give us a stronger idea of the meanings behind decision-making processes and thereby helping us to understand the nuances of violence that can be hard to extract while using other types of methodologies.

# Chapter 3 - Social capital, networks, and gangs

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## Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature on social capital in order to offer a critique and illustrate in subsequent chapters fundamental flaws in its promotion as a public good, *vis a vis* race, ethnicity, class and spatial identity. Advocates of the notion do not account for the power relationships between groups of differing social status within a given societal structure raising questions about its current attributes. Furthermore, nor do they bring discussions about the difference in the value of social capital that is held by social, economic, and political elites versus that non-elites to the forefront of the debate. This chapter adds to the criticism that although there are benefits that accrue for some populations, groups regularly use social capital as a way to exclude, discriminate, and maintain the status quo.

The debates surrounding gangs are also reviewed as a way introduce how social capital can be used by groups whose goals and interest are detrimental to broader society's well-being. While the debates surrounding gangs are discussed in this chapter, Chapter Six describes the relationship between the gang and the community while the following chapters (Chapter Four and Five) discuss privileged social classes and the social capital they exercise to exclude groups and individuals based on their perceived racial, ethnic, class, and spatial identities. These chapters demonstrate that not only is social capital used as an informal tool to exclude but the privileged and elite classes employ it formally through state institutions like the police to protect their own power, exclude other undesirable populations from accessing resources, and sustain the current social hierarchy. Gangs employ its use to establish strong bonds among its members, sanction transgressors of the established norms, and pursue their

own goals, while its use has consequences for non-members through the production of violence that exists ironically because of social capital itself. The privileged social classes and gang networks operate in much the same manner by exclusion and the perpetration of violence to pursue interests and maintain unequal power dynamics. This chapter asks three principal questions that also are implicit in both Chapters Four and Five despite having their own set of specific research enquiries: (1) Can social capital be used to contextualise how social networks function in low-income peripheral communities of colour?; (2) What role does race, ethnicity, class, and power play in the ability of low-income community residents to employ social capital as a tool to overcome the challenges they face? (3) How does perverse social capital of gangs create incentives for young people to seek out pro-social networks?

There are three terms that I will explain in turn; social networks, pro-social, and perverse social capital. Social network is a term that is differentiated between social capital because it describes the existing relationship between a group of individuals that share common values, beliefs, norms, and attitudes whereas social capital as will be discussed in the chapter is a type of resource. I use the term pro-social to reference the idea that some networks are more inclined to provide individuals with positive influence and relationships unlike other networks whose influence is harmful both to the individual in the long-run and the community in which it is embedded, like gangs. The term perverse social capital is described later in this chapter but was first used by Rubio (1997). He describes how social capital used by gangs is perverse because it provides benefits to its members and is harmful to outside of it. His idea is easily extended to incorporate the networks of social, political, and economic elites. This point will be described in more detail later in the chapter.

Differing opinions have described social capital as an element that is both a product of but also embedded within social relationships (Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2000). However one wishes to define it, there is evidence that the social relationships we maintain carry value,

something beyond the friendship and bonds that are created through repeated interactions. Social capital features heavily within the thesis because it is a notion that is described by advocates as beneficial in helping the disadvantaged overcome the many challenges and obstacles in their lives. It is my contention that social capital functions to the contrary of their assertions by creating obstructions for low-income communities because of how it is accumulated and then used by mainstream society to exclude undesirable populations from full integration into the city. This chapter does not attempt to settle the debate that figured prominently in the careers of Robert Putnam and James Coleman about how social capital is linked to social relationships but it does provide a reference point for the reader to digest that there is a social hierarchy based upon the perception that race, ethnicity, and class are linked with violence and criminality, justifying the accumulation and use of social capital in ways that promote exclusion, discrimination and the pursuit of narrow self-interests by elite classes as well as gangs and criminal groups alike.

Despite its many problems social capital remains a useful term because it allows for a framework for asking the principal research question of how young people in Plataforma avoid becoming involved in criminality by offering one of many plausible rationales for how they overcome these types of challenges. Young people in Plataforma utilise their networks like others, both strategically and unconsciously. For those wanting to avoid criminality connections with pro-social networks provides a much preferred alternative to criminal groups. Preference for pro-social networks is not necessarily only for the protection of direct involvement --- although that is a valid use --- but also an approach to avoid the influence and negative effects of perverse social capital employed by a variety of groups. Barker's descriptions of how young people avoid gang involvement fit in well with the overall concepts of social capital because they describe factors that are about having and maintaining positive relationships.

The first section in this chapter explores and critiques the debate surrounding social capital before moving on to review literature on gangs. It then discusses the evolution of gangs and the context in which they operate in contemporary Brazil. Finally this chapter begins to examine the social networks that are located within Plataforma as a way to illustrate the constraints that young people have in connecting with social networks that would improve their life circumstances and help them avoid involvement in criminality or violence.

### **Understanding how social capital functions in Plataforma**

Long thought of as a way to access resources and derive benefits such as improved labour market opportunities and access to education, social capital is a concept that resonates with the idea of mutual assistance to achieve common goals (Jacobs, 1961; Coleman, 1988; Putnam 2000). Yet social capital is neither without its critics nor its serious faults. It is a flawed concept because those who advocate on its behalf have failed to fully incorporate distinct but connected debates about race, ethnicity, class, and power. As will be shown later in this chapter, several authors have begun to critique social capital along these lines and even Robert Putnam, its most ardent advocate acknowledges these faults yet does not allow these faults to bring into question his fundamental idea; that is that social capital acts largely as a benefit (Putnam, 2000; Lopez and Stack in Saegert, 2001; DeFilippis, 2001, Fine, 2003).

Although multiple definitions of social capital exist, some accord as to what exactly we mean when discussing the idea has emerged. Early versions of the idea suggested by theorists such as Pierre Bourdieu claim that social capital is:

"the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group – which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity—owned capital, a 'credential which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word" (1986: 21).

Capital accumulation in any form (human, physical, social, or cultural) for Bourdieu thus is reducible ultimately to economic capital. And since economic capital equates to the accumulation of power, it becomes necessary for the elite social and economic classes to accumulate as much capital in as diverse an array of fields as possible in order to ensure their continued dominance over other social and economic classes. He explains that other forms of capital human, physical, and capital itself lead to the acquisition of power through symbols; in other words capital that is acquired through training (education) or appreciation for certain exclusive objects such as art or the classics deliver messages of economic or social class upbringing (Bourdieu, 1986). He writes:

"A general science of the economy of practices, capable of reappropriating the totality of the practices, which, although objectively economic, are not and cannot be socially recognized as economic, and which can be performed only at the cost of a whole labor of dissimulation or, more precisely, euphemization, must endeavor to grasp capital and profit in all their forms and to establish the laws whereby the different types of capital (or power, which amounts to the same thing) change into one another". (1986: 16)

The effect of this, like that of the accrual of different forms of capital, is to maintain social and economic dominance. Thus according to Bourdieu, the fundamental premise of social capital is its aggregation, in order not to share its value with others but to exclude and protect the existing social hierarchy and structure. In more recent debates about social capital, this view has lost relevance. Recent contributions have not debated this approach fully because it brings into question the fundamental purpose of promoting an idea that is in fact more commonly harmful to the people for which it purports to be beneficial. I accept the assertions made by Bourdieu and others that social capital is regularly implemented to concurrently accumulate benefits and exclude others from aggregating the same resources. Nonetheless, the concept can remain useful by incorporating these debates as a means to frame how individuals are affected by their relationships and what they do together to overcome difficulties that by themselves would be impossible to manage.

Glen Loury, an economist and precursor to Bourdieu and Coleman came to many of the same conclusions several years prior. He suggested that an individual's level of educational attainment and progression in one's career are directly related not only to the social connections that one's parents hold but also the total social capital that was held in one's socio-economic position within the overall social structure (Loury, 1977). Loury writes:

"The merit notion, that in a free society each individual will rise to the level justified by his or her competence, conflicts with the observation that no one travels that road alone. The social context within which individual maturation occurs strongly condition what otherwise equally competent individuals can achieve...An individual's social origin has an obvious and important effect on the amount of resources that is ultimately invested in his or her development. It may thus be useful to employ a concept of "social capital" to represent the consequences of social position in facilitating acquisition of the standard human capital characteristics" (1977: 176).

Loury's contribution points to the idea that the value of our social networks and connections are embedded within inherited social relationships. This has far reaching implications for excluded communities. If we assume that social capital is one way for individuals to improve their life circumstances, excluded groups begin life at a distinct disadvantage because of the networks they inherit. As will be discussed in Chapter Four, one's race and class drastically alter life trajectories. For the poor black or brown citizen his/her networks provide them with a type of social capital that is disconnected from mainstream networks and therefore prohibits access to the types of resources necessary to get ahead. Although some of this value can be extracted, the process of extraction and thus accumulation of social capital is limited by the ability to make connections with other social networks outside of those inherited. According to Loury, although the networks to which they belong may protect them from adverse community specific effects such as absolute poverty, because their connections are largely with one

another with few links to resources, it remains difficult to acquire the type of assets that are necessary to be socially, politically and economically mobile.<sup>41</sup>

James Coleman a sociologist, influenced heavily by the writings of Gary Becker (1964), contributed further to the idea of social capital by building upon the logic of human capital. Coleman used the results of his studies that examined the educational attainment of people living in North American ghettos to argue that social capital was largely defined by its function. As he has put it:

"Social capital is defined by its function. It is not a single entity but a variety of different entities, with two elements in common: they all consist of some aspect of social structures and they facilitate certain actions of actors...Like other forms of capital, social capital is productive, making possible the achievement of certain ends that in its absence would not be possible. Like physical capital and human capital, social capital is not completely fungible but may be specific to certain activities...Unlike other forms of capital, social capital inheres in the structure of relations between actors and among actors. It is not lodged either in the actors themselves or in physical implements of production". (1988; S98)

Coleman then suggests social capital should be considered a neutral concept, neither 'bad' nor 'good' but having as equal a potential to cause harmful outcomes as it has to create positive ones. The mainstream academic debate surrounding the notion of social capital has since evolved and shed itself of the more intricate subtleties of inequality and power promoted by Bourdieu, network inheritance suggested by Loury, and functionality claimed by Coleman. Social capital, to its detriment, is no longer discussed in terms of its use as an exclusionary tool but rather a means for poor or disadvantaged communities to overcome inequality and exclusion through accessing the resources within their networks.

Robert Putnam (1996, 2000) is responsible for its modern-day revival. Putnam was able to more forcefully interject within social capital two notions that paved the way for its increasing significance. First he argued against earlier conceptions that categorised it as a

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<sup>41</sup> All social networks are not equal and while some are infused with more power because of the individuals who constitute those networks others are wholly devoid of the type of social capital that is beneficial for improving quality of life.

neutral product of social relationships suggesting instead that it could be seen as both a private and public 'good'. "Social capital can thus be simultaneously a 'private good' and a 'public good'. Some of the benefit from an investment in social capital goes to bystanders, while some of the benefit redounds to the immediate interest of the person making the investment" (2000: 20). Secondly he maintained that it was trust, shared norms, and reciprocity that were the fundamental building blocks for the creation of social capital within networks. As he put it, "Whereas physical capital refers to physical objects and human capital refers to properties of individuals, social capital refers to connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them" (2000: 19). As will be discussed later in this chapter, there has been significant critiques of the idea that Putnam puts forth. That is, that social capital is a public good. Researchers like Ben Fine and Maxine Molyneux among others offer detailed argument against why social capital is not Fine, 2001, 2003; Molyneux, 2002).

Although Putnam recognises that not all social capital is positive he does not fully incorporate this fundamental flaw into his analysis. Putnam's point of view fails to bring to the forefront of the debate the idea that social capital is often used by groups to exclude and consolidate power within their own networks resulting in benefits for members and disadvantages for non-members. In Putnam's view, the disadvantaged would simply need to move to areas with well connected social networks but moving is not enough for excluded individuals to gain access to necessary resources. Bourdieu's ideas are relevant here because they illustrate that even for those individuals capable of connecting with resource rich networks, since race, ethnicity, class and origin are often markers of lower social status in Brazil and elsewhere, acceptance into new groups is anything but assured. The privileged classes use symbols as a way to mark identity and without the appropriate social cues, behaviours, speech, clothes, etc participation in these types of networks is barred. By

suggesting that social capital is a public good, Putnam relegates the fact that social capital is used to exclude and re-enforce social, spatial, and economic boundaries between the poor and the well off, the white and the black, and the educated and the non-educated to an obscure corner of the debate. Social capital accrues to the individuals in different networks but its value is counted differently depending on the social (ethnic and racial), spatial, economic, and political position one holds within the overall social hierarchy. It is not enough for the disadvantaged to have connections to social networks, the individuals within those networks and the position it holds in society can determine if it is able to improve the quality of life for its members.<sup>42</sup>

Social capital has been divided into two forms: (1) bonding and (2) bridging (Briggs, 1998; Narayan, 1999; Putnam, 2000; Halpern, 2005). But these types of social capital can be further reduced to include horizontal and vertical networks where horizontal refers to bonding and vertical simultaneously refers to bridging and linking varieties (Krishna and Shrader, 1999).<sup>43</sup> The principal difference between horizontal/vertical relationships and bonding/bridging social capital lies within the level of analysis and the issues of equality that are seemingly left behind in Putnam's rendition of the concept. Horizontal/vertical generally alludes to structural relationships; that is, relationships between different social institutions (the family, NGOs, health facilities, schools, etc.) whereas bonding/bridging denotes the relationship between individuals and groups of individuals (Grant, 2002). According to Grant:

"Social capital can be seen as comprising both horizontal relationships of social support, between members of a community, family or household, and vertical relationships, between communities and institutions (such as government bodies). Alternatively, social capital can be divided into bonding and bridging capital, where

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<sup>42</sup> In US during the 1960s and 70s black Americans moved to middle class and more affluent areas as a way to gain access to opportunity. The result was 'white-flight' (Frey, 1979; Crowder, 2000). That is the networks in these areas which were exclusively white moved taking the opportunities with them demonstrating that proximity to resource rich networks is not a workable solution.

<sup>43</sup> Linking social capital has been used synonymously with bridging social capital.

'bonding' capital refers to social cohesion within the group structure, and 'bridging' capital refers to the type that links, or cuts across, different communities/groups" (2002: 976)

Using concepts first mentioned by Michael Woolcock, the World Bank offers another form of social capital which "consists of the vertical ties between poor people and people in positions of influence in formal organisations (banks, agricultural extension offices, the police)" (2000: 128).

Woolcock (1998, 2001) and Narayan and Woolcock (2000) argue that instead of shunning the idea the language of such organisations must be confronted in order to ensure that power and inequality inherent in social relationships are brought back to the forefront of the debate. Sreter (2002) comments that by adding the category of bridging social capital it becomes possible to then analyse social relationships through the social capital lens more effectively by ensuring that these important aspects of the debate are not relegated to the background.

Granovetter (1973) describes these linkages in terms of 'the strength of weak ties' claiming that, relationships with people with whom one is loosely associated, can result in the acquisition of access to resources and/or benefits otherwise not available. He comments:

"A natural *a priori* idea is that those with whom one has strong ties are more motivated to help with job information. Opposed to this greater motivation are the structural arguments I have been making: those to whom we are weakly tied are more likely to move in circles different from our own and will thus have access to information different from that which we receive" (1973: 1371)

For the poor, having connections within the neighbourhood is important for 'getting by' that is to overcome the day to day challenges. In this sense, social capital is still flawed but not quite as problematic as its use when discussed in relation to how networks between different communities interact. The term in this usage, allows for us to see how individuals with similar social positions can work toward common goals and the social capital they accumulate with

one another, assists them in this process. This progression repeats itself with young people in Plataforma who seek to avoid involvement in criminality or experience the adverse effects of perverse social capital expressed by gangs or elite networks in the neighbourhood. They are able to use social capital to connect with pro-social networks and enforce the adoption of behaviours and attitudes that shield them from negative social relationships. Those exhibiting negative pathologies are sanctioned or excluded from the group illustrating how social capital can be used by the less powerful to resolve certain problems they may face.

But, being successful and improving one's quality of life is a more difficult process. If, indeed, it is as Granovetter suggests, that in order to 'get ahead' it is imperative to have 'weak ties' then the poor are certainly in disadvantageous positions. The poor are not owners of large businesses or companies where friends or associates can be referred to secure employment. This brings up a pertinent question about the nature of social capital between well-off neighbourhoods and disadvantaged ones such as Plataforma. Foremost, who if anyone has access to bridging capital and what is their role in the community? Those individuals that do possess bridging capital become the gatekeepers of access to resources that could enable at least some individuals to escape the consequences of poverty through more secure and higher-paying employment, acceptance to better schools, even tips on better homes or reduced prices for construction materials for instance. The gatekeepers of bridging capital then set up another conflict because of the imbalance between gatekeepers and regular community residents. Gatekeepers wield a great deal of power and influence in these neighbourhoods because they can either assist or hinder the chances of a 'better' life.

Yet the idea of weak ties, like that of social capital itself suffers from a lack of realisation of its more common usages. DeFilippis (2001: 790) describes how social capital is not a good at all but rather an outcome of inequality:

"The relationships that produce gated communities are based on the protection of their affluence through their class- and race-based social and geographic isolation from much, if not most, of the metropolitan areas around them. It is not connections that partially produce and reproduce their wealth, but exactly the opposite: isolation. Connections, or "bridges" do not, of themselves, make the people in any place rich or poor. The important question is, Who controls the terms of any relationship or connections (or lack of connections)? "Bridging capital" is really needed only if a community's residents are poor and therefore on the losing end of a set of power relations. What needs to change are those power relations, not the level of connections".

DeFilippis goes on to further argue why the elite engage in networking at all, "...yuppies network precisely to get ahead of everyone else. If they shared the fruits of their networking with others, they would cease to be ambitious and become charitable instead" (2001; 793). DeFilippis's argument explains not only how correcting unequal power relations are ultimately the key to improving the livelihoods of the disadvantaged and powerless. In this argument though he contradicts himself by claiming that for the poor, connections do not hold value but for the rich they do. He gives little credence to the idea that connections for the poor are valuable assets which is an assertion that I reject. Connections are an essential part of getting by and getting ahead for the disadvantaged and advantaged alike but promoters go to far in suggesting that is it an unqualified good while DeFilippis is incorrect by arguing that it is worthless. Connections do in fact help individuals but they cannot be divorced from the fact that the relationship between different communities is infused with inequality and the powerful employ their social capital to actively exclude others.

Ben Fine, another scholar has written extensively critiquing the idea that social capital represents a public good. He warns of its broad use by institutions like the World Bank in development and makes the point that there is nothing new in the idea of social capital and that it is often used as an exclusionary tool (Fine, 2003). He claims that proponents argue that social capital trumps all other forms of capital and it promoted as a good rather than what he terms fungible. Maxine Molyneux, another scholar points out that social capital has the

potential to have unintended policy consequences by supporting corruption and cronyism through social capital (Molyneux, 2002).

A more neutral outcome of social relationships having both positives and negatives has been described by Narayan and Woolcock (2000) and Portes (1998). All warn of the excessive claims that can be made upon group members negating its potential positive effects. "Group loyalties may be so strong that they isolate members from information about employment opportunities, foster a climate of ridicule toward efforts to study and work hard, or siphon off hard-won assets" (Narayan and Woolcock, 2000: 231). This view adds the historical context of political, legal, and institutional environments as a background to how social capital can be used to effectively bargain against 1) entrenched dominant interests and 2) for the collective benefit of those without power. Narayan and Woolcock argue that, "the very capacity of social groups to act in their collective interests depends on the quality of the formal institutions under which they reside" (2000: 234). When these two frameworks are combined two further notions augment the notion of social capital 1) complementarity and 2) embeddedness. The ideas of complementarity and embeddedness are notions that attempt to expand the notion of social capital to include the concepts of power and agency, "But when a society's social capital inheres mainly in primary social groups disconnected from one another, the more powerful groups dominate the state, to the exclusion of other groups" (Woolcock and Narayan, 2000: 237).

What is perhaps missing from such an analysis is both the recognition of an imbalanced power dynamic between groups as well as how less powerful groups are able to bargain with distinct actors in order to achieve their goals. This can only be achieved in many instances through power-brokers and agents who are knowledgeable in the functioning of other groups and the state. Krishna (2002) argues,

"Possessing a high level of social capital enables members of any community to act collectively for achieving diverse common goals. Agency is required, however, to help them select goals that are feasible and likely to be achieved, given the constraints and opportunities available within their institutional environment. Agents who have regular contact with state officials and market operators and who are familiar with their procedures and practices can help villagers organize themselves in ways that are more likely to succeed" (2002: 9)

Agents are extremely important actors in the process of achieving collective goals yet they too raise their own sets of problems. In the instances of poor communities, actors that attempt to bargain with either elite communities or the state have the opportunity to do so for the benefit of the collective or for themselves. That is the risk that is run when one or only a handful of individuals are placed in charge of the welfare of the entire group. Conflict at some level seems inevitable. Entrenched dominant interests will not cede or share power easily and only with great effort as well as confrontation will the welfare of poor communities be increased and some goals met.<sup>44</sup>

Portes describes social capital as having, "at least four negative consequences...exclusion of outsiders, excess claims on group members, restrictions on individual freedoms, and downward leveling norms" (1998: 15). If connections with networks are created for the purpose of 'getting ahead' as Putnam (2000) and Granovetter (1973) argue then this exposes the idea that social capital is not a product of social relations that generates benefits for all. Members and non-members are unevenly affected by the actions of networks. Perhaps most importantly all networks are not created equal. There is a strong connection between socio-economic status and one's membership to high value networks (Loury, 1977; Lin, 1999). Institutions of the constituents of any given network will most certainly determine its value and with it afford its members tangible benefits above and beyond members of those

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<sup>44</sup> Lopez and Stack (2001: 33) describe power as a, "Double-sided dialectic, multidimensional, historical, and intra- and extra- institutional, social capital unfolds in multi-group settings in which one social group intentionally or not, may secure advantages that disable others".

that are perceived to be less valuable. Furthermore, dominant/mainstream networks will work hard to ensure their own continued authority. DeFilippis maintains, "Aside from the complete denial of exploitation that takes place within ethnic enclave economies, the problem with this, and every other enclave like it, is that it completely closes off the market, to anyone who is not part of the ethnic group creating the enclave. A brilliant, hard-working, innovative Irish Catholic immigrant for instance who wanted to enter the diamond trade in New York would have an exceptionally difficult time doing so" (2001: 792).

A further source of negative consequences of social capital rests in the idea that not all social networks are created for the benefit of wider society. Rubio (1997) coined the term perverse social capital as a reminder that criminal organisations, gangs, mafias, etc are all examples of social networks that are created to benefit members but are not necessarily productive assets to the broader communities in which they are situated. He argues:

"However, it is feasible to conceive of the existence of a perverse social capital in which the networks, the contacts, the power relations, the legal system, the informal norms of behavior, the political activities, and the reward systems established in this society inspire rent-seeking, or criminal behavior, to the detriment of productive activities and technological innovation. The organizations that develop successfully in this environment privately become more efficient and powerful, and they reinforce socially unproductive rules of the game, given that they progressively restrict the overall opportunities for economic growth" (1997: 815).

Since Rubio (1997) usage of the term many others have since adopted its use (Portes, 1998; Narayan, 2009; Woolcock, 2005; McIlwaine, 2007). Thus networks like gangs or other criminal organisations work hard to preserve benefits for their members but generate conflict with non-members. Criminal networks can exclude and protect their interest through violence while productive networks seek to provide benefit to members through benign links; power geometry may favour the former over the latter.

Portes (1998) argues that, "there are situations in which group solidarity is cemented by a common experience of adversity and opposition to mainstream society" (1998: 17) These

shared experiences create the kind of atmosphere that fosters gangs as social networks and the isolation that is experienced by low income communities allows such networks to flourish and become dominant forms of social structures in poor neighbourhoods. Halpern offers, "The typical persistent young offender is not just disconnected from mainstream social networks – they may also be connected to a 'rival' or deviant social network within which offending may be considered acceptable, even expected, behaviour" (2005: 118). The downward levelling of norms is dependent upon the dynamic interaction between exclusion of the poor from mainstream networks as well as the reaction by the poor to that exclusion. To Portes, their reaction to it views anyone who attempts to connect with mainstream networks as 'selling out' undermining group cohesion and keeping the disadvantaged in their place within the social hierarchy (1998: 17). Although this may be the case in certain communities it would seem unfair to place full responsibility of these pressures on such networks. Indeed it is the active exclusion from mainstream networks by dominant actors that create the conditions for such social processes to occur in the first instance.

### **Conceptualising Gangs**

The question that pertains to this section of the chapter, question three --- how does perverse social capital of gangs create incentives for young people to seek out pro-social networks --- will only be partially answered. The full answer to this question is realised throughout the entire remaining chapters of the thesis but discussed in greater detail in Chapters Six and Seven. This section largely explores the debates around gangs, why young people join them, how they function, and their complex role in the neighbourhoods in which they are situated. This section frames the debate of how I will discuss gangs throughout the remainder of the thesis and thus is an important exercise that extends into later chapters.

Gangs form a type of negative or perverse social capital by generating violence and creating instability in the neighbourhoods in which they are located. Unlike community organisations with which there are some parallels they provide certain forms of stability while also generating insecurity and unpredictability because of rent-seeking behaviour through the use of violence (Arias and Rodrigues, 2006). Common perceptions about gangs are that they emerge out of poverty and/or are comprised of individuals exhibiting anti-social behaviours that shun the norms of mainstream society believing that their social needs are best served in 'deviant' social groups (Hagedorn and Macon, 1988; Spergel, 1988). For the purposes of this research an added question must examine how individuals arrive at the point in which they believe that deviant social groups serve their needs better, particularly deviant social groups that engage in violence to achieve their goals. This section will necessarily review some of the principal assumptions about how gangs form and why individuals choose to join them while simultaneously exploring how the strength of social relationships and capital play a role in pushing young people away from violence and the negative consequences of perverse social capital exercised by the gang. The evolution of gangs in Brazil and throughout Latin America illustrates many similarities. It is necessary for North American understandings of gangs to be juxtaposed with Brazilian points of view as many Brazilian gang researchers have adapted ideas from American universities. The second part of this section reviews Brazilian contributions and explores the evolution of gangs there.

Past ideas about the motivations individuals have for involving themselves in gangs range from psycho-social deficiencies to particular life trajectories and from drastic socio-economic changes to rational choices about one's best options for achieving their goals (Thrasher, 1927; Erikson, 1968; Granovetter, 1973; Vigil, 1988; Jankowski, 2003). However, the phenomena is far more dynamic and involves not only social actors within the community but also their interaction with people in dominant society, the influence mainstream society

has upon these actors' life opportunities, as well as their own ability to organise and overcome barriers placed in their way. Since the publication of Thrasher's (1927) research critical dialogues have started about the symbiosis between people and the urban environment in which they created and maintained through their social relationships (Park *et al*, 1925). During Thrasher's time at the sociology department of the University of Chicago subsequent conceptualisations have reflected the tremendous urban change that was washing over the United States and very few contributions from other parts of the world were recognised. This lack of attention to other debates results from both a lack of influence and affect by the gangs themselves upon the lives of members of society but also a focus on North American paradigms.

Infused within the broader debate about gangs have been clear class struggles for how to define and ultimately judge gangs. Popular understandings of gangs in the era Thrasher wrote about them primarily as young ruffians that would eventually mature out of a turbulent adolescent phase to become contributing members of society (Puff, 1912; Thrasher, 1927; Cohen, 1955). Thrasher described the complexities of urban life which lent itself to the creation of such groups because of a variety of factors including increasing rates of immigration and urbanisation where vast numbers of European immigrants were pushed into newly and rapidly forming slums of the country's major cities. Unemployment and poverty were widespread and there was no formalised safety net to assist immigrant families that were struggling. Some civic organisations emerged at this time as municipal governments were unable to provide the type of sustained support to such a large population. Simultaneously, high levels of migration from the South and Latin America by African-Americans, Mexicans and Puerto Ricans respectively also occurred affecting rates of urbanisation even further (Hagedorn, 2009).

Fuelled by desires to escape racism and acquire employment many black Americans founded new ethnic enclaves on the South Side of Chicago, in Harlem New York, and other industrial cities. Gangs were drawn along ethnic lines, territory and/or place, as well as class (Thrasher, 1927; Decker, 1996; Jankowski, 2003). The extreme forms of violence that are prevalent in today's gangs were not necessarily associated with gangs of Thrasher's conceptions despite the evidence that shows violence as very much a part of life in Chicago and other cities' gang and organised crime scene.

Recent contributions have commented on his seminal work noting the absence of the idea of a group organised around the principal of engaging in delinquent behaviour (Vigil, 1988; Campbell, 1992; Padilla, 1992; Moore, 1998; Klein, 1998; Jankowski 2003, Hagedorn, 2007). That it was void of this feature was no accident. Delinquency was a category that was introduced later as the socio-economic landscape evolved and gangs became increasingly involved in illicit and anti-social activities. Hagedorn (2009) describes this process well, showing that black gangs in Chicago became involved in drug distribution and sales only after their other forms of income were taken by Italian and Irish mobsters.

Wilson (1987, 1996) followed in the footsteps of others, who characterised the environments in which gangs have so consistently emerged. As the literature progressed engagement in violent and/or delinquent acts became a centrepiece of whether or not certain groups of individuals could be classified as gangs or not (Klein, 1998; Vigil, 1988; Cohen, 1955; Yablonsky, 1962; Campbell, 1992; Padilla, 1992; Esbensen & Huizinga, 1993). We can no longer rely on older constructions of what gangs are thought to be to guide us through the theoretical landscape in our understandings of gangs. Unfortunately too many scholars continue to rely on these earlier findings denying the simple fact that social realities in communities that produce gangs have changed substantially. Klein offers that perhaps it is at

the point that the group itself considers itself a gang that we should begin to understand a group as such states:

"Where is the tipping point beyond which we say, "Aha – that sure sounds like a street gang to me"? I suggest two useful signposts. The first of course, is a commitment to a criminal orientation, a point that I have already stressed. Note carefully, however, that I specify orientation, not a pattern of serious criminal activity, as many in the enforcement world might require. There certainly are street gangs with a major commitment to delinquent and criminal activity...Finally, the gang's self-recognition of its character results from, and often reflects, the response it receives from segments of the community as the group becomes more troublesome. Schoolteachers and officials, social agency personnel, police, storekeepers, other nongang peers, many parents, and community residents have far less difficulty than scholars do in identifying a group as a gang. But here I am less concerned with their application of the label than with the group's acquiescence to it, acceptance of it, and eventually its states pride in it. The community serves as a looking glass: Members look into it and see their gang character" (1995: 30).

Klein's reading on gangs though continues to grasp at issues that do not fully give credit to not only the ever changing social landscapes but also individual choice.

Various authors have imported the idea of identity construction as a major pull factor for individuals forming gangs. Vigil postulates:

"The barrio group becomes a substitute for the many caretakers who have failed, a functional equivalent to the family, schools, and other institutions, and provides norms and patterns for emotional stability, social interaction and friendship, protection, and street survival (a tough "male" identity)." (1988: 432)

Identity development and the need for a group that substantiates and even bolsters one's own development through belonging to the group is absolutely a factor but it cannot be seen as the only or even a primary goal for individuals moving toward gang involvement. The adherence to criminal activity as a requirement to be considered a gang although important misses the point about larger structural issues that have facilitated its emergence throughout the world.

Erikson (1968) describes how the process of a 'psycho-social' moratorium, that is the stage of development between adulthood and childhood, causes tremendous turmoil in an

adolescent's life. Adolescence, he argued, represents a special period in one's life where the transition from child to adult can be traumatic and without sufficient social control systems i.e the family, school, positive peer groups, then one is more susceptible to outside influences pushing one to groups like the gang. An instable and/or economical and socially depressed surrounding environment contributes to these anxieties pushing youth further into social groups that are able to fill in this gap. Erikson's explanation though lacks distinction between gang involvement or any other existing social group in the community. One is just as likely to be involved in a church group or after school club as a gang according to such a definition. There is something peculiar about gangs that draw certain youth to them while others remain guarded against it. Vigil attempts to aggregate a number of different theories into a more cohesive approach to understanding gang involvement by using the term multiple marginality (Vigil, 2003). Vigil brings together social environment theories with psychological theories in order to describe that a marrying of the two must occur before a youth reaches the point at which he/she decides to become involved. This argument seems a more likely scenario for individuals who reach the point of wanting to join a gang. Various factors, all of which are mentioned here push youth toward involvement while pulling them away from more pro-social networks. Additionally, as Loury pointed out and will be shown in Chapter Seven, networks and the social capital within them is inherited and for children, cousins, brothers of gang members, social capital functions in a way to normalise gang networks making it a clearer path for those individuals whose lives are touched by gangs because of relatives.

Hagedorn (1991) shows the changing relationship of the gang with the community in which it is embedded but also the wider mainstream society as a result of powerful structural changes in the United States that caused severe austerity of capital investment in basic services and infrastructure in low-income neighbourhoods. The growing presence of the gang was an outcome of this reality. Subtle, but clearly racialised elements emerged in the

literature when the gang not only became synonymous with the urban ghetto but also as being composed of inhabitants of the ghetto whom were overwhelmingly black or Latino in United States. Thus the criminality of the gang was born not only out of a sense of increased violence but also distinct stereotypes that had almost always viewed blacks and now Latinos as criminals, rapists, robbers, and in general purveyors of crime. .

### **Urban Violence and Gangs in Latin America**

There is a long history of scholarly research on urban violence in Latin America. Various authors have ascribed many different factors that lead to urban violence. Leeds (1996) an early contributor to the debate, argued that the rise in violence and criminal organizations in Brazil stemmed from the state's bumpy transition to democracy and inability and unwillingness to provide basic services and protection for all its citizens. She went on to add that as a result, criminal organizations represent were beginning to represent a parallel form of government by assuming many state functions in the neighbourhoods in which they were active. Rodgers (2003) for instance came to similar conclusions about urban violence and gangs in Nicaragua, explaining the structural causes for violence. He writes that criminal violence is a by-product of structural deficiencies that are remnants of dictatorships and military governments throughout Latin America. He argues that dictatorships and civil wars, in the case of Nicaragua, left emerging democracies with very little institutional infrastructure to combat the coming crises of poverty, high inflation, inequality, and economic stagnation. Furthermore, security institutions like the police and military that were linked to extreme human rights abuses were rarely reformed, perpetuating violence and helping to open up space for criminal organisations to operate and flourish. Moser et al (1999) writes about the confluence of factors that help fuel persistent urban violence. She claims, like Rodgers, that macro-level forces have dramatic impacts on urban violence. High rates of unemployment, poverty, and schooling are all affected by the macro-political and economic environments.

Weak institutions unable to cope with transitioning environments are unable to demonstrate a strong governmental presence in areas that would give young people alternative choices to gangs and other criminal groups. McIlwaine (1999), draws from these works and maintains that violence in its many forms, is multifaceted and should be included in the long list of development concerns.

The World Bank in particular has been extremely interested in this subject. Ayers (1998) published a series on crime and violence as a development issue. He argues similarly to others previously mentioned that crime is an obstacle to achieving the kind of growth necessary to overcome rampant poverty. He further claims that violence and crime degrade both physical and social capital impeding growth using Colombia and Peru as examples (pg 7).

Chevigny (1995) wrote about police violence and its impacts especially on the urban poor while Brincoño-León and Zubillaga (2002) confirm that without strengthened institutions that do not abuse power, violence in Latin America would only increase. Caroline Moser, in 2004, published an article describing the different types of urban violence in Latin America drawing from other Latin American research such as Mo Hume (El Salvador), Dennis Rodgers (El Salvador), and Ailsa Winton (Guatemala). Moser separates these into political, institutional, economic, economic/social, and social types of violence. Hume argued though that much of the persistent violence in Latin America was gender based (2000). Moser and McIlwaine (YEARS) continued along this trajectory of categorizing violence into different silos and applying those categories to studies carried out in Colombia, El Salvador, and Guatemala. Other writing about violence and crime in Brazil such as Luke Downey (2003), have wrote significantly about youth gangs in Brazil. He argues that young children are being successfully drawn into joining youth gangs in Rio de Janeiro and other parts of Brazil

because not only the poverty they face but also their perceptions about what kind of future they will have.

The gang issue in particular has been written about extensively by these authors and others. While there is no 'gang theory' per se, many studying gangs in Latin America have described how young people become involved, different methods of prevention, and the structural issues that lead to gang proliferation. In Central America for instance, the proliferation of gangs was directly related to the history of Central America's dictatorships. Groups like MS-13, 18<sup>th</sup> Street gang, Mexican mafia, and even Mexican cartels originate because of structural deficiencies in the state's ability to provide resources and protection for its citizens. In many Central American states, the aftermath of the dictatorship and U.S. prison systems played fundamental roles in allowing such groups to establish themselves and grow. Moser and McIlwaine (YEARS) writing about violence also examined prevention. Specifically they looked at how young people could avoid violence in the first instance by evaluating different violence prevention programs in several Latin American countries.

The history of many of these countries transition to democracy helps illustrate the growth of urban violence and gangs in Latin America. Generally speaking, the transition to democracy was bumpy and most states were unable to cope with growing population needs. Additionally, the institutional culture of using violence and torture against citizens as well as mistrust between institutions and residents remained in place. As these states were democratising, simultaneously urban migration patterns began to explode. In a decade, many of these countries transformed from largely rural and agricultural societies to ones with immense urban populations. Services were not forthcoming and poverty rose as a result. Instead of waiting for city services to reach newly formed neighbourhood, migrants often

employed 'self-help' as a means to provide for their needs (Turner, 1968).<sup>45</sup> Yet even with self-help, poverty remained a persistent problem. The majority of individuals suffered and laboured to change their living circumstances while others found illegal ways to the same goal. Gangs began providing residents with jobs and even paying for basic services in some cases. As a result they grew even further and established mini-fiefdoms where they were able to act as the state by arbitrating disputes, providing protection, and even directing what gets built where.

Avoiding violence and involvement in gangs or other violent groups has also received some attention. McIlwaine and Moser (2007) wrote directly about how coping with violence was gendered response. In their research in Guatemala and Colombia they found that community residents coped with violence by attempting to establish more trust within their social relationships. This often took the form of establishing more community groups or civil society organisations (pg 134).

In Brazil, similarities can be observed as their documented gang history begins with 'enforcers' that were attached to governmental political parties as was the case in the United States. Capoeiras were regularly hired as enforcers or protection despite the ban on its practice until the early 1930's.<sup>46</sup> Yet throughout the dictatorship there was a persistent drive to maintain power over governmental politics and affairs fuelling how the emerging gangs particularly in Rio and São Paulo were perceived. Not only were they from the inner city favelas and periphery of the city but they were also black. As slavery ended and masses of

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<sup>45</sup> John Turner coined the phrase self-help to describe the process in which new urban migrants would come together to help each other build housing and infrastructure for newly settled neighbourhoods.

<sup>46</sup> Assunção (2006) adds that although there was an official ban on the practice the enforcement of these regulations were highly subjective and tended to coincide with political and/or economic objectives of the officials carrying out the enforcement. Capoeira was banned because the colonial and subsequent governments were afraid of its practitioners mobilising militarily against them and recreating another Haiti. The laws stayed on the books despite its continued practice even as those fears diminished over time.

black unemployed families migrated to the cities in search of employment fear gripped the hearts of the middle class and elites. They believe that the poor disenfranchised masses of blacks would descend from the hills to make claims, forcibly, on the country they had indeed helped to build. The favelas grew steadily and there was no mass uprising from the black and poor multitudes. Zaluar and Alvito (1998) in *Um Século de Favelas* show in their study the gross inequalities that exist in those areas of the city and how, because of historical processes of domination and subjugation but also structural and institutional deficiencies, adverse conditions are created that facilitate not just the growth of the gang but also an assortment of community and social organisations aimed at addressing first the needs of the community and second the inequalities in the system.

Criminals caught involved in non-political crimes (assaults, robberies, murders) by the authorities were then incarcerated at a juncture in the political history of the country. Socialist movements in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo were constantly confronting the dictatorship to become more democratic and end military rule and the activists and leaders of these movements were often imprisoned within the general population where this practice specific to Rio de Janeiro. The socialism ideal began to spread amongst the prisoners an idea not foreign to favela residents but one that, once expounded upon, became more tangible and adaptable to use in their own situations. These ideas resonated profoundly with inmates from favelas and they began demanding better conditions and treatment within the prison system (Da Silva Lima, 1991).<sup>47</sup>

Authors from and writing about Brazil have complemented these ideas by adding that not only is it the psychological and social environment that attracts youth to gangs but also the interaction or lack thereof between the poor and the wealthy. In a globalised world where

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<sup>47</sup> This book was written by one of the founders of the *Comando Vermelho* (CV) and details his experience in the organization and its rise as one of the most notorious and powerful drug cartels in Brazil.

television and access to imagery is abundant consumerism has reached new heights. I-Pods, Playstations, brand name shoes and designer clothes all symbolically reveal one's station in society (Bourdieu, 1977; Zaluar, 2001a, 2001b). Consumption then becomes a way for the poor to demonstrate, through clearly visible symbols their right to belong indeed their citizenship. The absence of a supportive and effective state in poor communities has had damaging effects leaving a hole in the nexus between state, family, and society. Because of this, other structures are replacing their functions and roles.

Gang networks have emerged as dominant parallel social structures replacing the supportive role and function the state should perform (Leeds, 1996). Zaluar (2000) commented on the complexity of gang community relationships by borrowing from Janice Perlman's research in Rio de Janeiro applying it to gang -- community relations. She describes the relationship as a form of perverse integration. That is that gangs integrate themselves into the community to provide services the government is unable or unwilling in order to pursue their own interests which are often at odds with those of the community. The gang's purpose for providing services then is essentially to ensure its continued survival and ability to seek profits through the illegal sale of drugs. Just as historical social structures are able to legitimise certain aspects of themselves through the provision of services such as protection, providing health care, and infrastructure improvements the gang has replicated these actions challenging the monopoly over such functions. Such actions indicate both a survival strategy and certain defiance against notions that the poor should remain isolated as well as defer to the will of dominant interests (Schepers-Hughes and Hoffman, 1998).<sup>48</sup> By emerging as a competing geo-political and social entity, the authority the gang is able exert over the lives of residents in its territory over-shadows most attempts by the state in particular to regain its lost control and influence in poor communities. The perpetration of violence by gang networks

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<sup>48</sup> The term 'dominant' is borrowed from Lopez and Stack in Warren *et al* (2001).

further challenges the idea that the state represents a legitimate social entity in poor neighbourhoods because of direct violent confrontation where gangs maintain the argument that they are protecting the neighbourhood.<sup>49</sup>

Hagedorn (2007) argues that the gang performs a variety of functions not simply the criminal one that is made more visible by media and an intentional push to depict the urban poor as villains or untouchables. Hagedorn states "Many of today's gangs are an institutionalized bricolage of illicit enterprise, social athletic club, patron to the poor, employment agency for youth, substitute family and nationalist, community, or militant organization" (Hagedorn, 2007: 23). Venkatesh (1997) confirms this but also details the complexity of the relationship with which the gang and the community interact. In one sense they do fill the void of the lack of state engagement with the community but in another the community remains wary of accepting their charity because of its greater implications. "These strong symbolic ties between gangs and (non-affiliated) residents are themselves grounded in material linkages that have formed between the two groups...accepting street gang assistance is not only a difficult decision for residents to make..." (Venkatesh, 1997: 97).

The complex emotions involved with accepting gifts from gang members conflicts with the community's perception of the state as a benefactor and guarantor of society. Turning to another entity or institution other than the state creates ambivalence about who is in control but also disdain because state institutions are unable to provide basic necessities in effect pushing citizens in such environments toward legitimising gangs as institutions. As Rubio (1997) suggests in his study about juvenile delinquency in Colombia the disincentives for

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<sup>49</sup> Protection of the neighbourhood depending on the gang can be a legitimate goal or represent a rhetoric divulged by gangs to keep the community on its side. Protection of the community although a reality in many cases, is also the manifestation of self-interest that is the desire to control the neighbourhood as a base of operations for the operation of drug-trafficking.

getting an education or joining the formal or informal economy workforce make the decision to join gangs a rational choice in terms of both their future and immediate goals. Those who feel that their prospects for an improved quality of life are minimal gravitate toward the incentives of material wealth and neighbourhood notoriety versus uncertain financial stability and a decreased ability to achieve positive goals.

For young people wanting to avoid involvement in criminality and violence, Barker (1998) offers an interesting model that this thesis adopts as an approach when thinking about how young people strategise to avoid involvement in criminality and violence. As described in Chapter Two, Barker (1998) provides a coherent set of strategies in which young males engage in order to avoid criminally oriented social networks and the violence they produce. Importantly, Barker's analysis describes the types of strategies that help young people stay away from gangs. Belonging to positive networks and having future aspirations for instance help young people remain focused on other elements and surround at-risk youth with role models that demonstrate and alternative to notions about life that have already been formulated. These strategies conform to the ways in which the programme participants also disengaged from criminally oriented networks. This model will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Seven, which explores several cases where these elements were utilised as a means to avoid violence and criminality.

The boys and indeed the community at large had a complex and often ambiguous relationship with the gang that vacillated between acceptance and strong desires for them to leave. The violence that the gang perpetrated made them unacceptable but simultaneously their role as provider of basic needs necessitated that many of the community residents at least tacitly recognise their role. In poor neighbourhoods where the gang has gained complete authority, they act as judge, jury, and executioner in cases of disputes between residents, distribute medicine, provide construction materials, and protect neighbourhoods

from invasions by the police or other gangs. In Plataforma, despite the difference from places like Rio de Janeiro the gang remains a powerful part of the social structure and some of the young people have developed gang culture identities.

### **Social Networks in Plataforma**

The neighbourhood itself is composed of a myriad of social networks that are created through repeated social interaction and sharing of common attitudes, beliefs, and values. In Plataforma, many of the networks are connected with one another and their members overlap and interact facilitating the flow of information about one person or group. Like the neighbourhood, the Violence and Masculinity participants were connected to a multitude of different social networks.

Despite the realities of exclusion and violence, I found a situation where the participants were very much integrated into some parts of informal society both culturally and socially while in more formal avenues they were deterred from participation. Perlman (1976) offers the idea of perverse integration, that is integration into society for many is asymmetrical and despite their ability to move about with very little restriction their integration into the labour market, higher education, even as recipients of public services such as healthcare is extremely limited by their racial, ethnic, class, and spatial identities. One of the greatest influences that criminal networks offered young people was employment and income where otherwise only informality existed. Although the informal economy is often regarded as a ubiquitous and accessible option to the formal, in Plataforma and Salvador there was a perception that it was nearing a saturation point based on comments from several informants.

The social networks of Plataforma exist within an environment where the relationship between the networks in Plataforma and higher valued networks outside of it are skewed. Power does not reside in Plataforma with the exception of some of its most prominent residents and some forms of collective action that have had success at influencing policy.

Social capital in Plataforma works on at least two principal levels; 1) that of the community itself as a unique super-social network composed of a diverse range of sub-networks and 2) connections with resource rich networks that have access to employment, governmental services, and influence with policymakers, etc are limited. The elite social classes of Salvador have excluded areas like Plataforma and their residents from accessing benefits and being able to overcome the extreme inequalities that persist there. Mikova makes a point that resonates profoundly for the lives of Plataforma residents when she states that Putnam acknowledges certain deficiencies in the concept,

"Social inequalities may be embedded in social capital. Norms and networks that serve some groups may obstruct others, particularly if the norms are discriminatory or the networks socially segregated. A recognition of the importance of social capital in sustaining community life does not exempt us from the need to worry about how that "community" is defined—who is inside and thus benefits from social capital and who is outside and does not" (1999:7).

This observation certainly holds true in Plataforma's relationship with the rest of the city and is indicative of its socio-economic position. It is an area that receives little public assistance, has some of the worst transport connections with the rest of the city, has sub-par educational and health facilities, very few areas of leisure, and few entrepreneurial or economic opportunities (field notes, 2006). Lin (1999) adds, "It is conceivable that social groups (gender, race) have different access to social capital because of their advantaged or disadvantaged structural positions and social networks" (Lin, 1999: 483). Plataforma exemplifies this state of affairs. But more profound issues also exist within the networks themselves.

Social development organisations in Plataforma are diverse and provide both bonding and bridging social capital in ways that highlights the vulnerabilities of low-income neighbourhoods and the complexity involved in their relationships with broader society. Although the idea of social capital is useful it cannot be implemented without understanding the social structures in which the neighbourhood is already embedded. The typology of these

organisations range from those designed to help individuals study for the vestibular to training residents in trade skills and preparing them for the workforce. Not only does social capital reside within individuals bridging social capital seems to be concentrated in only a handful of organisations such as the Catholic Church an Italian NGO, called AVISI, and a variety of other community organisations which are described documented in table 3.1. Not all have the same ability to cross into mainstream society and collectively advocate for their rights. It was clear that some of the outside organisations because of their previously established linkages with not just networks throughout Salvador and the rest of Brazil but internationally as well had more success in pursuing their goals through the use of different forms of social capital.<sup>50</sup>

Yet these organisations only assist a small proportion of the overall population due to funding limitations. In the case of the AVSI, it has a small presence on the ground and has been involved in programmes and projects to improve infrastructure but not to form linkages to the world outside of Plataforma. The local church has been much more active in the community providing vestibular preparation classes for young people but the social capital it held through its linkages with other parts of the city and internationally as well as its provision of opportunities for those young people in its programmes was not fully leveraged. Below a list of existing organisations in the neighbourhood gives an idea of the types of services being provided. Despite the length of the list many of the organisations listed do not have linkages with organisations outside of Plataforma and even those that do are difficult to access by community residents.

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<sup>50</sup> Arias (2004) describes how social capital was used in three different favelas in Rio de Janeiro. He argues that it also led to a decrease in crime and violence perpetrated by drug traffickers but also the police who indiscriminately killed 21 community members in retaliation against the death of a police officer. He usefully suggests that success in collective action is achieved by, "bringing together a set of functionally and spatially diffuse actors" (Arias, 2004: 46). Indeed in one of the examples he cites connections with outside groups, media attention, and training from international NGO's as the principal factors in curbing intense police and gang violence in one neighbourhood.

Table 3.1: Social Development Organisations in Plataforma

NGOs in Plataforma	Type of Organisation and Activities
Associação de pais de Novos Alagados	Formed by fathers of Novo Alagados but at the time it was inactive. It was used as a support network for fathers to discuss the problems they faced in their day to day lives.
Associação do Parque São Bartolomeu/ Pirajá	Civil society organisation formed to protect the local park. They were involved in educating the community to preserve the park and its history.
Associação de Moradores de Plataforma - AMPLA	Neighbourhood association for Plataforma which is involved in community planning, advocating for residents on their behalf to the municipal government and interfacing with government to address community needs.
Ação Social da Paróquia São Brás de Plataforma - ASPASB	Social development programme for Plataforma. ASPASB was involved in interfacing with the city planning office for capital improvement in the area.
Cabricultura	A social development programme that housed a support network for youth to discuss the issues they faced in their lives.
Creche Jôao paulo II	Creche an organisation that provided daycare services and support for mothers in Plataforma.
Igreja Católica -- Coequilombo	Community organisation that housed a social development programme. They were the only organisation in Plataforma to offer low cost vestibular classes.
Quilombo do Kioiô	Social development programme provided young people with a space to use for studying and meeting about school related issues.
Rede de Terreiros Egebê	A religious organisation made up of candomblé terreiros in the area.
Sociedade 1° de Maio	A community organisation that provided technical training to young people in the area.
Terreiro Mucundeuá - Afoxé Filho de Ogum de Ronda	Religious organisation

Terreiro Uzo Ganguji	Religious organisation
(Field notes, 2006)	

AVISI, Sociedade 1° de Maio, AMPLA, the local Catholic church, and several others all had varying degrees of bridging social capital. Sociedade 1° de Maio was perhaps the best coordinated and connected with outside groups because of its linkages with UNESCO and the UN system. Other organisations had some outside connections but they were confined to other low-income neighbourhood organisations or the local government. The fact that only a hand full of organisations in Plataforma had this type of social capital meant that gatekeepers, represented by the directors of these programmes could help or hinder individuals to connect with organisations, individuals, and community's outside of Plataforma that had types of social capital that would allow them access to beneficial resources such as information about employment.

In one organisation, the director was accused of using social capital to exclude others, consolidate power and defend her interests. When she learned about the presence of the Violence and Masculinity programme she voiced concern about its goals throughout its tenure making me and others in the programme think she had other motives. As I began speaking with more community groups there was a clear sentiment that our programme represented a risk that disturbed the equilibrium of existing organisations. Not all organisations voiced concern. One community organisation employee was candid about his superior's apprehension over the arrival of the Violence and Masculinity programme.

*Our organisation has been here for a long time and [she] doesn't want to share the territory. There are a limited number of funds to go around and if you guys are successful over there she's gonna have to prove her worth again. She feels like she would have to fight for funding all over again and she's in a good position, understand (Interview, September, 2006)?*

This view was corroborated with other conversations I had with community organisation staff who mentioned that some of the programmes acted as gatekeepers for the community guiding where funding would go, determining what programmes would be offered and who would receive the benefits (Field notes, September, 2006).

This posed a significant problem for community residents. Their networks were concentrated in low-income areas because they were excluded by social, political, and economic elites from participation in the city and thus had difficulty in obtaining the type of social capital needed in order to get ahead. Individuals within social networks in Plataforma share common values, norms, beliefs and attitudes. The networks in the area are composed mostly of low-income workers, families, unemployed young men and women, a retired older generation from the interior of the state, gangs, etc. The norms and values of the community as a whole have emerged as a result of its history and development. As was discussed in Chapter Two, the initial settlement of the area was a coordinated effort by a group of individuals from the interior of the state. The norms that evolved, emerged out of the idea of self-help and mutual assistance. Community members helped build each other's houses, construct dirt roads, build basic sanitation, and provided residents with the aid they needed to begin a new life in Salvador. These repeated social interactions solidified common values that promoted self-sufficiency, hard work, discipline, pro-social behaviour, and a general sense that one could turn to the community and one's neighbours for assistance.

The networks described here represent one portion of the norms and values present within Plataforma. As will be shown in Chapters Five, Six, and Seven the common values shared by gang members act as a counterweight to the values of the community. Because the gang sanctions and engages in violence to achieve its goals, and the state's role in providing security is nonexistent, the community finds it difficult to restrict the negative consequences of perverse social capital.

## Conclusion

This chapter has sought to review the literature on social capital and gangs. It critiques both through the lens that social capital is often used as an exclusionary tool to simultaneously accumulate capital, exclude undesirables by race, ethnicity, and economic status, and protect the inherent inequality in power relations between the powerful and the powerless. Gangs operate within this framework by using perverse social capital to pursue their own interests much in the same way as social, political, and economic elites. Gangs differ only in the explicit sanctioning and use of violence to achieve these goals. The privileged classes connections with structures of violence legitimises the protection of their interests by violent means while they simultaneously admonish similar behaviour by gangs. Although social capital has been promoted as a public good, theorists have pushed its fundamental inconsistencies to the fringes of the debate. It is important that the social capital framework incorporates discussions of how it has been primarily used as a tool to discriminate against undesirable populations. As will be discussed in the next chapter, social capital debates have rarely introduced the linkages in perception between race and ethnicity and violence and criminality to the debate. These linkages are important because they expose the fault lines of social capital however do not render it a useless term. Its utility lies in the complexity of discussing how social capital concurrently represents a benefit as well as detriment depending the type of social networks to which one belongs, one's own individual racial, economic and spatial identity, as well the position of the individual and his/her networks within the overall social structure.

Plataforma, like other low-income neighbourhoods is composed of a dense grouping of social networks which are embedded with social norms and rules that dictate how social relationships are formed and maintained. Within this dense grouping of networks associations between individuals have helped residents bond with one another and cope with an

environment that has few opportunities to get ahead through better employment or education. Additionally, these networks hold linkages with gangs members and other criminals (including corrupt police officers) who are largely responsible for generating violence and creating instability within the overall environment. Social capital works in ways that can both help residents overcome the instability of the environment by connecting with community groups and informal networks but also hinder them because of the networks to which one may belong. Networks are worthwhile as long as those individuals within them agree to the rules by which everyone will operate. The rules for certain networks have been agreed upon by community however individuals and other groups disturb this balance by injecting the willingness to use violence to achieve goals therefore upsetting already established norms of the community. Specific individuals that are more centralised within those networks that do not engage in violence but still hold sizeable amounts of influence within the community skew the types of social capital available to all even further. Community organisations with individuals that hold influence not only in the community but beyond because of their linkages outside of the neighbourhood distort social capital and the ability of residents to use it because they are able to decide how certain opportunities are distributed in it.

# Chapter 4 – Race, exclusion and identity formation in Salvador

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## Introduction

The principal research questions in this chapter are: (1) How do young people of colour from the periphery view themselves in terms of race and ethnicity and how are they viewed by mainstream Bahian society?; (2) What is the experience of race in a social environment where the construction of a collective black identity has been diluted by a national rhetoric that has sought to incorporate certain elements of Afro-Brazilian culture into a broader 'Brazilianness' as a way to live up to its ideal of a racial democracy?; (3) How is the notion of social capital affected by racial discrimination and exclusion?<sup>51</sup> This raises unique sub-questions like, although racial classifications seem dynamic what is the meaning behind linkages between blackness and poverty, blackness and violence, and blackness and marginalisation? And how does the internationalisation of black culture exported from the United States and Europe affect the development of black identity in Bahia? Since violence is perceived by many Bahians, and indeed most Brazilians as perpetrated by mostly the Afro-Brazilian population, this obvious prejudice when juxtaposed against the persistent message of racial democracy, like many other similar conflicting social conventions, casts doubt upon the fluidity of the system of racial classification. The ambiguities that exist begin to not so

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<sup>51</sup> I use the term Brazilian-ness to differentiate between the different cultural legacies that have played central roles in the development of Brazilian culture. On one hand the legacies of Portuguese and to a lesser extent French and Spanish cultures have all been held in high esteem and much of the Brazilian population considers their contributions to be of far greater value than any others. On the other the African and Indigenous elements, which in many ways have had greater impacts upon the country, are valued far less and sometimes not included in the mainstream version of Brazilian-ness or if they are their contributions are appreciated only in music, dance, and food. In this way the contributions remain non-threatening to the idea that although African and Indigenous peoples have contributed to society they have not been powerbrokers or substantial decision-makers.

much as disappear but come into sharper focus making one see increasing similarities in the way that racial discrimination functions throughout the Black-African diaspora. Given the rejection of the idea that racial discrimination in Brazil operates as it does in the US by a number of scholars, government officials and policy-makers, one must consider the disparity between the reality (statistically and experiential) and the rhetoric often championed by not just whites but many Brazilians of African descent as well, in a more systematic way.

Salvador is a city with a long and complex history. As the former colonial capital and now the cultural capital of Brazil, its evolution has raised questions about Brazil's claim of a racial paradise because its majority black population lives in extreme poverty, is at substantially higher risk of violent death, faces severe challenges for obtaining employment and good quality education as well barriers to entering the political process. Part of this is a result of patterns of institutionalised racial discrimination as well as a slave past that relied on clientilistic relationships which continue to exist today but also because of how Bahian society actively excludes who it considers as undesirable from reaping the benefits of participation in the social networks of the city. In a material sense, Salvador remains highly unequal and this chapter examines how spaces, networks, and communities within the city have been racialised and actively excluded. The distinct characteristics of the Brazilian social structure have evolved over time to create an internal image of racial neutrality which I use here to denote that one's race does not significantly impact an individual's chances to advance socially, economically, nor politically while simultaneously projecting that image abroad. Like many black North American researchers I have been at once mesmerised but also sceptical of these claims.

It is my contention that race in Brazil functions as a foundation for many social relationships, influencing social interactions, the perceptions individuals have of themselves and how they are viewed by others. Since Brazilian society associates violence with poverty

and poverty with blackness this connects young black males from either the favelas or peripheral suburbs in a way that fuels racial discrimination and exclusion against them. Yet, black communities contain contradictions. The legacy of racial democracy has created a dynamic where blacks also participate and perpetuate the myth that black communities are violent, full of criminals, and poor.

This chapter sets out to analyse race and racial discrimination by examining the power and persistence of the myth of racial democracy and then explore how the younger generation of Afro-Brazilians perceive themselves. This is a helpful debate when compared against the following section which describes the views of mainstream Bahian society have of black communities in Salvador. Additionally, this chapter examines how race can be used to critique the social capital framework. As suggested in the previous chapter, social capital as a concept is flawed because it does not take such issues into account. Finally this chapter examines the role of carnival as an example of perceptions of black and/or peripheral communities. Despite the rhetoric surrounding the event, carnival highlights many of the inequalities present within Bahian society by imposing a formalised structure of segregation that is justified through the logic of the market, that is the ability to pay.

Although race in Brazil is seen as a fluid and dynamic process where space, time, and social context play substantial roles in determining one's race, a racial hierarchy persists (McCallum, 2005; Schwartzman, 2009).<sup>52</sup> The fact remains that to be considered black in Brazil places one at a distinct disadvantage and at the bottom of the social hierarchy. The darker one's skin colour, the more restricted access to employment and education and the

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<sup>52</sup> McCallum's (2005) article succinctly describes the process by which race has evolved and indeed plays itself out within Brazil. The claim of racial fluidity is one that has merit. However, proponents of this concept do not account for the barriers that exist even within that system of fluidity. Although race can be fluid, because it is connected with difficult to change signifiers like income level and education, its flexibility is severely constrained. To be considered black remains undesirable while whiteness is the most appealing category.

greater the risks to being a victim of violence become (Hasenbalg, 1985; Silva, 1985; Adorno, 1995; Henriques, 2000; de Lima, 2004; Sansone, 1996, 2003; Telles, 2004). While conducting initial research before embarking on fieldwork, I examined the 1999 household surveys undertaken by the IBGE showing that blacks compose about 45 percent of the total population but represent 69 percent of people living below the poverty line nationally yet they also compose 65 percent higher victimisation rate of violent crimes (UNDP, 2005). Every year the IBGE conducts the National Study of Households. Its findings consistently show that while the situation for blacks has improved over time, Brazilian society remains racially discriminatory and one where race plays a significant role in determining one's life chances.

### **The evolution of racial debates in Brazil**

The idea of blackness or whiteness continues to be in dispute in popular culture. The average person as well as some authors such as Peter Fry, an outspoken critic of the adoption of affirmative action policies in Brazilian universities, often claim that Brazilian society cannot be defined in those terms and instead represents a mixture of African, European, and Indigenous ancestry that has created a new Brazilian ethnicity. This argument was first developed by Freyre in his seminal book, *Casa Grande e Senzala* (Masters and the Slaves), published in 1933, that claimed miscegenation to have been born out of the natural affinity between blacks, whites, and indigenous who willingly engaged in sexual relationships. The work created a national rhetoric that pitted ethnicity and the act of creating collective action based upon one's racial/ethnic identity against a broader sense of being identified as Brazilian. Indeed, he insinuated that one could not interject ethnicity/race and also claim to be Brazilian; to be Brazilian was to be an ethnicity in and of itself (Lone, 2002). The book was received with great enthusiasm within intellectual circles and beyond, and soon after publication President Getúlio Vargas began incorporating the concept of racial democracy into political discourse. According to de Sousa and Nascimento, Vargas "forcefully

disseminated these ideas of Brazil, using them to promote national integration and attract the support of the lower classes to his state-led modernisation project" (2008: 130). Freyre's work was used to dismiss the idea that a harsh racial classification system was present in Brazil in the way that existed for example in the ante-bellum and Jim Crow South of the United States (Klarman, 2004; Oshinsky, 1996).<sup>53</sup> A large number of authors have confronted these assertions arguing that instead of Freyre's utopic view, Brazil was/is marked by extreme racial inequality made worse by its active denial (Twine, 1998; Telles, 2004; Goldstein, 2003; Sansone, 2003). Within the last decade studies and social development indicators have brought serious credence to the claims that racial and ethnic discrimination are severe.

Thus Freyre's ideas set the stage for the development of a complicated process of identity development.<sup>54</sup> Although the official rhetoric accepts and acknowledges that racism and racial discrimination are a part of social life, various parts of society particularly middle and upper class networks have not accepted this as an absolute truth and the 'racial democracy' continues to underpin representations in popular culture. Yet almost every major indicator that examines healthy and safe livelihoods and social mobility/equality places blacks at the bottom of the scale. If equality was a central feature of racialised social relationships in Brazil why do Afro-Brazilians fair so poorly? Telles (2004) claims that some of the staunchest supporters of the racial democracy ideal moved away from that message as a result of both

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<sup>53</sup> His ideology was developed in part as a result of his exposure to racial segregation and discrimination he viewed while he was in the Southern United States (Needell, 1995).

<sup>54</sup> As early as the 1920's black political groups spearheaded by black intellectuals like Abdiás Nascimento had been charging that racial democracy was a false image created in order to maintain dominance and wipe away the stain that slavery had caused on the consciousness of white Brazilians particularly the elite classes. They also claimed that racial democracy has been a way for broader Brazilian society to steer clear of a polarized racial classification system and justify the extreme inequalities that exist as economic rather than racially or ethnically based. In 1944, Nascimento created *Teatro Nacional Experimental* (The National Experimental Theatre) (TEN) in São Paulo. TEN was initially a theatre providing performances and performance art with a distinctly political focus becoming more prominent in activist performance in 1946 when the Vargas government collapsed.

international pressure but also and more importantly internal pressures from the growing black movements that challenged the notion of a racially tolerant society.<sup>55</sup>

However during military rule of 1930-45 and 1964-85, political organising was severely limited or all together banned as it was seen as subversive to the government agenda (Covin, 2005; Hanchard, 2006). Racially specific political movements in Brazil have been shaped by these macro political environments stopping their progression and affecting the ability of black political movements to move into the mainstream. This was a result of the political arguments being made about the need for racial equality and inclusion as well as the notion that acknowledgement of racial discrimination and the insistence on a black identity apart from the nationalist framework constituted a direct threat to the harmony of the republic.

This also set the stage for not only how relationships between whites and blacks would evolve but also between blacks and pardos, two groups of populations that are often seen as distinct but whose social and economic opportunities are equally constrained. Pardos, also sometimes called mulattoes, were perceived to have better life opportunities than those who were black but this myth was dispelled by several authors. Degler (1971) was the first to be credited with describing the 'mulatto escape hatch' theory. In it he explains that the brown population was more upwardly socially mobile than their black counterparts. More recent assessments refute his claim demonstrating more similarities between these populations in terms of their access to jobs and education. Hasenbalg and Silva (1990) tested empirically the mulatto escape hatch theory, concluding that mulattoes were no more likely to escape high levels of inequality in education, income, and housing than blacks in Brazil, paving the way for institutions to begin counting blacks and pardos as one ethnicity in the census and other

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<sup>55</sup> Black movements began largely with the *Frente Negra Brasileira* or FNB and were followed by others such as *Teatro Experimental Nacional* or TEN, the *Movimento Negro Unificado Contra a Discriminação Racial* or MNU as well as more recent movements such as the 'black/soul' movement, among others.

demographic estimations. Lovell and Wood (1998: 94) in a study about racial identity concluded that, "the boundary between black and brown is ambiguous and unstable over time, but the boundary between white and non-white is relatively unambiguous and remarkably stable over time". Silva in Fontaine (1985; 43) confirms this notion arguing, "An important implication is that to consider Blacks and mulattoes as composing a homogeneous "non-white" racial group does no violence to reality. Rather than being a mere simplification, the joint analysis of Blacks and mulattoes constitutes a sensible approach to the analysis of racial discrimination in Brazil". Telles (2004) similarly maintains that the difference between browns and blacks was insignificant. Browns and blacks suffered almost identical low rates of education, were prone to be earning the least, and had the shortest life spans. According to the UNDP (2005; 60), "blacks in Brazil represent 44.7% of the population but their participation reaches 70% of the 10% of the most poor and their aggregated salaries correspond to only 26% of the total Brazilian family incomes". Similarly, the UNDP estimated that in 2003, whites earned 110 percent more than their black male counterparts and white females 84 percent more than black females (UNDP, 2005). Blacks received 2.1 years less education than their white counterparts by the age of 25 in 2003 and only 2.5 percent of the total black population had a university degree in 2001 (UNDP, 2005).

As stated in Chapter One, the movimento negro began shortly after slavery ended in 1888 with the first organisation dedicated to the improvement and advancement of Brazilians of African descent in 1891 while others representing similar interest began forming in the early 1900s throughout the country (Domingues, 2007; p103). Black newspapers also formed at this time with the most influential being *O Clarim da Alvorada* in 1924 (Domingues, 2007). In 1931 the *Frente Negra Brasileira* (FNB) was founded in São Paulo. It began as an assistance organisation for community events and social services eventually forming as a political party in 1936. The FNB was considered the most productive and important group

within the movimento negro at the time whose aims were to consolidate the black Brazilian population behind a successful political movement that at its centre made a powerful argument against policies of racial discrimination for increased social, economic, and political inclusion. It is difficult to say how successful they would have been at countering the nationalist rhetoric yet their struggles early on certainly paid some dividends.

When military rule began these groups were tolerated under Vargas until 1937 when they were banned. The FNB, along with all other political parties were disbanded in 1937 as a result of the *Estado Novo* dictatorship under President Getúlio Vargas between 1937 and 1945. From politics to the economy, the state entered into a variety of sectors to directly control and produce, supplying guidelines for how the economy and general state of affairs would function. Repression by the Vargas government was rampant. Political parties were banned and those that had focus on racial equality were subject to imprisonment, torture, exile or assassination. Anyone not swearing loyalty to Vargas was imprisoned and/or killed.

This dealt a destructive blow to the movimento negro and stalled it from realising its goal of 'true' racial integration and becoming a viable political party under which black Brazilians could consolidate. Although some groups remained together they were silenced as a result of the violent oppression of political groups during the time and only became more visible in the years leading to the fall of Vargas and the *Estado Novo* regime in 1946.

In Salvador, as in other cities around the country like Rio de Janeiro, the movimento negro is inextricably linked with the music scene (Morales, 1991; Albuquerque and Filho, 2006; Béhague, 2006). The emergence of new musical forms attacked the idea of a racial democracy and began raising the collective consciousness about perceptions of black people formed the basis for how racial inequality might be tackled in the city. In the 1970s and 80s, the movimento negro struggled to progress and achieve its goals of creating a movement behind which black Brazilians could coalesce both politically and socially. But unlike the

earlier manifestations of groups within the movement on this occasion it engaged other black social and political justice movements from around the world in Europe, Africa, the rest of Latin America and the United States (Albuquerque and Filho, 2006). The *Black Power* and *Soul* movements in the United States of the 1960s and 70s resonated powerfully with black youth in Brazil. They began emulating not only the political movements because of a similarity in experience but also the form by which resistance was advanced. Importantly, the military relaxed its grip on the political process by allowing some groups to form and inviting formerly blacklisted or exiled students and political leaders to federal universities and back into the country (Hanchard, 1994). This allowed some groups to begin meeting informally until in 1978 the Movimento Negro Unificado Contra a Discriminação Racial (MNU) formed in response to a racial incident in São Paulo. Albuquerque and Filho (2006; 209) suggest that the MNU has been the principal organisation in the movimento negro since its inception in 1978 by "convincing leftist organisations" of the importance of the racial question in the struggle against the dictatorship.

At the same time in Salvador a surge of reggae culture inspired by Jamaican musical phenomena like Bob Marley, Jimmy Cliff and Peter Tosh among others pushed a rhetoric similar to the Black Power movement and enthused great numbers of young Brazilians of African descent to engage with a broader debate on race and ethnicity through music. The lyrics resonated with black Brazilians and Brazilian groups began to combine reggae and their own musical traditions of samba into a new genre that was connected to the movimento negro in attempts to raise black consciousness and recast how blackness was viewed (Moehn, 2007). The Soul movement most visibly connected with James Brown and his 1968 song "Say it Loud--I'm Black and I'm Proud", was also an impetus for a re-definition of blackness that valorised blackness and black cultural contributions. Although samba music incorporated messages of racial equality, lyricism became more pronounced and vocal about

the black experience during this time (Morales, 1991; Carvalho, 1994; Béhague, 2006). New musical forms such as the *Blocos Afro*, *Afoxé*, and *Samba Reggae*, emerged with a decidedly political and social message about race, discrimination, and blackness (Morales, 1991; Freitas, 2004).

The blocos afros began in the mid to late 1970s with *Oladum* and *Ilê Aiyê* being some of the first and most prevalent (Freitas, 2004). *Oladum*, perhaps the most visible globally, incorporated elaborate drumming sequences with expert choreography and was featured in several videos for Michael Jackson's "They Don't Really Care About Us" in 1995. Their lyrics meant that no longer would black communities accept a national narrative that equated blackness with poverty, criminality, and low education. New images were being created through *Oladum*'s attempts to re-shape the debate and cast blackness in a more positive light (Risério, 1995).

*Ilê Aiyê* and *Filhos de Gandhi* originated from the musical and ceremonial traditions of candomblé. *Ilê Aiyê* began in the Liberdade neighbourhood in 1974, an area of the city with the highest concentration of black Brazilians. It remains a popular form of resistance as its founder, like the founder of *Oladum*, has generated an organisation that not only performs in carnival each year but also adheres to a platform of fighting for equal rights of black Brazilians. *O Ilê*, as they are commonly called, is also said to be the most militant of the three carnival groups (Morales, 1991). In their attempts to re-classify blackness in a more positive light, *Ilê Aiyê* is said to not allow light-skinned or white Brazilians into their caranval procession (Field Notes, 2006). The effect of the musical scene on Bahia was significant yet the image of black Brazilians did not completely change.

The contemporary manifestation of the movimento negro has coalesced around the debate on affirmative action in Brazil's federal universities.<sup>56</sup> In 2001 The State University of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ) and The State University of Northern Fluminense (UENF) were the first universities to institute a 40 percent racial quota for blacks and pardos (Schwartzman, 2009). This engaged a debate that spread nationwide for and against affirmative action. Unlike the similar debate in the US however, the 'blurred' lines of race have made it difficult to determine who is eligible to apply for admission under this policy. Those against claim that instead of a racial quota there should be an income level quota and that racial quotas do nothing more than divide the country by pushing people toward a racially bi-polar society (Fry and Maggie, 2004). Those in favour argue that race and poverty are linked inextricably and by favouring one over the other past discriminations will not be addressed (Htun, 2004; Schwartzman, 2009). Subsequently the Rio legislature passed a law amending the affirmative action policy to include quotas for economically disadvantaged people.

These policies and the movimento negro have affected the way in which racial consciousness has evolved, in turn playing a role in the way in which young people are challenging old paradigms of race. Schwartzman (2009) suggests that ideas about race are being heavily influenced by the black consciousness movement which exposes Brazilians to the idea that black(*negro*) and brown(*pardo*) experience similar levels of discrimination. Silva (1985) and Hasenbalg (1985) first demonstrated this conclusion giving credence to arguments made by the black consciousness movements. These analyses led to the eventual adoption of race based affirmative action policies in several states in Brazil. Not all were convinced of the need for the introduction of affirmative action policies and felt the racial categorisation system in

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<sup>56</sup> Rio de Janeiro and Bahia have both instituted a racial quota system, similar to affirmative action but far more aggressive. In both states, public universities (considered superior in their education and facilities in Brazil) were to set aside 40% of places for students of African descent, that is black (*preto*) or *pardo* (*preto* is the term used to indicate black while *pardo* is used to indicate mulatto, or a mixture between black and indigenous or European ancestry).

Brazil despite its flaws remains a uniquely Brazilian tradition. Some authors, Fry (2000) and Fry and Maggie (2004) have condemned the wholesale adoption of affirmative action policies because they are seen as dividing a nation that is multi-racial and multi-ethnic. These authors claim that Brazilians believe in the benefits of racial mixing and that blacks as much as whites participate in a shared cultural past where dance, food, custom, and language have been adopted not by ethnic or racial enclaves but by all. Yet such claims exaggerate the level of participation experienced by blacks within a society dominated by Brazilians of European descent. Socially blacks may experience equality but in almost every indicator of well-being and social and economic mobility they lag behind their white counterparts. Peter Fry, the outspoken critic of affirmative action programmes details these indicators in his own article while simultaneously condemning attacks against the idea of Brazil as a racial democracy.

Critics of affirmative action consistently claim that these policies will undo the fabric of the racial classification system making whites resent nonwhites and bringing out tensions between races and ethnicities that did not exist before. These arguments hide the inherent problems in a system where few broach the subject of racism and attempt to distil the experiences of a multi-racial society into one common narrative. I agree with Fry (2000) that such debates cannot come down to imposing US standards on Brazil but must form a new foundation for a uniquely Brazilian system that celebrates the multi-racial past without glossing over the fact that discrimination and racism are rooted in the history and evolution of the nation.

In its connection with musical forms and legal fights to support, affirmative action has gained an influential platform from which to advocate its position about racial equality and blackness. Young people facing the challenges of their parents view their role differently, more willing to openly contest the rhetoric of racial democracy. The more contemporary forms of music again heavily influenced by musical genres from the US like rap and hip-hop, have

become far more agitated and willing to use a rhetoric that is reluctant to compromise in the face of decades of racial violence and repression. The construction of identities has become closely aligned with these musical styles, social movements, and an increasing exposure to black culture from around the world.

### **Young black identity in Salvador and being 'Brazilian'**

The critiques upon the construction of black identity suggest that, like other identity formations, it is not a static process and is highly dependent upon space, time, and social context (Demo and Hughes, 1990; Gilroy, 1993, 2000; Wade, 1997, 2002; Twine, 1998; Sansone, 2003; McCallum, 2008). However Bahian history and the cultural context shapes how individuals develop their own racial/ethnic identities. Black identities have certainly suffered considerable setbacks in terms of their ability to politically collectively organise yet in other ways these identities are robust but complex manifestations of self-expression. Self-identity construction inevitably raises additional questions of how others perceive and define you which in turn, effects how one categorises themselves creating a feedback loop which is both informed and informs identity formation. What is black identity in Salvador and is it possible to develop apart from a collective political ideology?

Like many young researchers before me it seemed natural to interact with my age mates in Plataforma and so I became friends with several students who attended the Universidade Federal da Bahia (The Federal University of Bahia, *UFBA*) on scholarships. As a racial insider but cultural outsider our interactions around the issue of race were open, as if I were talking to any black friend back home and complaining about injustices we saw that impacted our lives. One of the first conversations about race came from a colleague at the Violence and Masculinity programme. He was in his first year at UFBA and when I asked him about his experiences with race, he said

*I never thought of myself as black until I was about 23. I would always look to not see myself as black because I would try and find someone darker than me. I mean I would ask myself when someone called me 'neguinho', how can I be neguinho when my friend over there is darker than me (Interview, March, 2006).<sup>57</sup>*

As he related more of his story he admitted that his perception of race evolved as he began to interact with other black students, read, and learn more about the history of race in Brazil. This evolution is indicative of what happened with many of the students with whom I interacted. During their young adult life they would not be aware of the racism and discrimination that existed within the city and the country. This lack of racial awareness had to do in part with their inability to access the rest of the city and compare their own circumstances with others around them. Additionally it had to do with the rhetoric of race in Brazil that was imprinted upon their parents and the social networks to which they were connected that often denied the idea that racism existed. For many of the students their first forays outside of their neighbourhoods were to other low-income areas and most only began to travel to other parts of the city when they began studying. Others were able to take advantage of programmes with Howard University and a local foundation that facilitated exchanges between blacks from Plataforma and Washington DC. For many who made this exchange, their perceptions about race were altered because of their interactions with black students from the United States and other parts of the world whose view was often substantially different.

Juno, a light-skinned but highly political figure in the community and UFBA student sought me out when he learned I was working with the Violence and Masculinity programme.

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<sup>57</sup> *Neguinho* the diminutive form of *nego* literally means black but can be derogatory depending on the context, how it is said, and who is saying it. Formerly it was derogatory but is now used primarily in Salvador with far less derogatory meaning than the word *nigger* used in English. In a sense it emulates the way the word *nigga* which is used among black peers in the United States however diverges significantly because of its use by not only blacks but also whites and does not carry the same derogatory significance although it can specifically when combined with other descriptors such as *negão cão* or good for nothing nigger.

He had participated in the exchange programme and spent several months studying at Howard University interacting with its students. He had been profoundly affected by his experience in Washington DC and like my colleague he admitted to not having thought of himself as black until he began studying at UFBA.

*Brazil is the country where you hear black people say that there is no racism. I remember when I first got to Washington I still wasn't really thinking I was black. I mean the first question black people there ask, Africans, black Americans is there racism in Brazil. That challenged me. I thought about it. Brazilians had been isolated from the exterior and Brazilians have this perception of race because they had no contact with the outside world during the years of the Republic and Brazil wanted to keep it that way. You know that in the US black people know they are born black. From when they are little kids they are black. In the last years the last 5 years this has changed with the question of the struggle for quotas in the universities the affirmative action. Just the fact of implanting this idea...it has changed our reality. But now this permits the Brazilian to look at himself and say "I'm black". I didn't consider myself black. In Brazil blacks aren't born black. Whites know that they are white because even when they go to the US when they ask them they ask them what are you studying? Black Brazilians they ask what are you doing here. It's different* (Interview, June, 2006).

His description points to an evolution of the perception of race that is happening with the younger generations and has the potential to transform social relationships in Brazil.

Another university student I met had a similar racial awakening through her university experience. She was very light skinned but born, raised, and was still living in the Plataforma area. Many would have accepted her claim of being parda or even white but instead she opted to identify as a black woman in an attempt to re-cast the idea of blackness as something negative. Marcela was a fellow geographer and we met during a field trip with the Violence and Masculinity programme participants to a museum in Salvador that had an Abdias Nascimento exhibition. During our talks about race she mentioned her exposure to race and how her university career and fight for quotas helped solidify her identity as a black woman.

*My brother is light like me but you know blackness it's a state of mind. And here in Brazil the black has been denied. We can't claim it without someone saying that oh*

*that person is not Brazilian or that person is acting like that because they watch American TV* (Field notes, June, 2006).

Ten years ago most people would not claim a black racial identity as it was and continues to be considered the bottom of the social hierarchy.

Even for those outside of the university the idea of blackness is changing. Claudia ran a small non-profit organisation in Plataforma that helped young people develop entrepreneurial skills. In my first interview with her and subsequent visits to her and her husband's home, it became apparent that they were acutely aware of their status as black people. Instead of shunning the identity they embraced it.

*Being black is what I am. I can't deny it like others that deny who they are. What would my mother think, my grandmother. It's how I grew up. Everyone thinks it's such a bad thing and the black really is looked down upon here but you have to live with it. You can't get depressed or sad for yourself. Look at me I'm doing alright. I want to do better like maybe go to university or something* (Interview, August, 2006).

For so many, blackness has become more than an ethnicity but also a political identity that has been shaped not only by their experiences but by society's reaction to blackness. Thus blacks are able to see their culture being valued and can accept the notion that they are equal within society because their traditions and customs are practiced by everyone. Meanwhile the black and pardo him/herself is relegated to a position of social, political, and economic inferiority. Thus perceptions about blackness being linked with negative stereotypes has created a reaction by a younger generation who are not restricted to the social conventions of their parents. This generation has moved to challenge old paradigms and not only claim blackness but attempt to disassociate it with the negative stereotypes.

Stigma associated with one's race, class, and where one grew up and lives is a constant pressure. During one particular episode during the programme, the dynamic of stigmatisation played itself out. Stigma was not only associated with race but also with geography. Living and growing up in a peripheral low-income neighbourhood automatically

identified you as black despite your skin colour. If you were white from one of these neighbourhoods many would consider you to be associated with blackness and all of its negative connotations. Thus social capital of dominant networks sends signals to broader society that blackness is undesirable because it is connected with violence, criminality, and space pushing individuals to downplay these identities in their own lives. As we were beginning the programme one Saturday morning. I was speaking with a group of young girls and they were telling me a story about their friend, who like them was from the area but was going to a school in a middle class part of the city. It was assumed by them that the education was markedly better.

Students: *You know she can't tell anyone where she's from. She's using her aunts address who works as a maid for this rich family there. If they found out they'd throw her out. The kids would just massacre her.*

Me: *Why?*

Students: *Nobody likes Boiadeiro. They think we're all thieves and murderers here* (field notes, March, 2006).

In another episode, two programme participants corroborated this claim and sketched a cartoon about one of their interactions with someone online from another part of the city. It shows the perception and the negative connotations that are associated with the neighbourhood. Although race is not depicted in this cartoon the way in which young people have begun to recapture the meaning of blackness has pointed to a generational shift in perceptions about race. Despite these negative associations young people have begun to reclaim the term "black" and change it into something both positive and political confronting messages broadcast by dominant networks.

Figure 3.1: Cartoon published in the Newsletter produced by the Violence and Masculinity Participants



**Source: *Jornal Mural* by VM programme participants November, 2006**

The captions read from left to right. Panel 1: "Hey, where do you live?". Panel 2: "I live in Barra, you?". Panel 3: "I live in Boiadeiro". Panel 4: "Boiadeiro is full of robbers". Panel 5: "That was close". Panel 6: "Again".

As the Violence and Masculinity programme was finishing, the difference in attitudes about race was apparent. I conducted short exit interviews with all of the participants and asking them questions about the programme but also about their feelings about themselves and how they changed. The two participants that had indicated being white during our session on race made comments that about the neighbourhood and how proud they felt being black.

*The programme was nice! I'm going to miss everyone here. I learned a lot you know about myself, about Brazil about Bahia and Plataforma. I'm proud now of where I come from. I can't let anyone say bad stuff about this place. Being black and being from Boiadeiro is not a bad thing* (Field video, October, 2006).<sup>58</sup>

<sup>58</sup> As noted in Chapter 2 and Three, I filmed participants making comments about the programme during our last few sessions.

Her comments point to the idea that the notion of being black in Brazil has such negative connotation associated with it that virtually no one will claim it as their identity. Although there may be other ways education and exposure to what these terms mean in Brazilian society seems key to breaking down stereotypes that says all things black and all things poor are both related and negative.

We had several sessions about race and ethnicity that began with a talk I gave about race in the United States and how the black identity has evolved through slavery and the civil rights movements. Some in the group were clearly engaged listening intently and asking a variety of questions that generated a robust discussion.

*What was it like growing up in a neighbourhood like this? What's the biggest difference you see between here and Philadelphia? Did you ever experience any racism (Field notes, March, 2006)?*

The debate carried on but two of the girls remained quiet mostly during the discussion until the following session when an invited speaker about African historian presented a more thorough historical explanation of the evolution of race in Brazil. Despite his appearance, he was very much in tune with the ideals and principles set out within the movimento negro. He too, had received a scholarship to study at Howard University as part of an exchange. He constantly criticised the government about its lack of accountability in the development of areas where large populations of black Brazilians live. Like others, he had not accepted the idea of racial democracy and questioned it frequently. The two programme participants, remained quiet again until the conversation steered toward the affirmative action debate. Despite the fact that the vast majority of university students in Brazil are white, they believed that affirmative action degraded black people's attempts to gain equality and felt that it made them seem less capable at achieving success. One commented.

*I don't agree. I mean how are we going to get anywhere if we take handouts. We are just as smart as anyone else* (Field notes, July, 2006).

For some of the other participants it was a topic that they were well versed in and, as I came to know them better understood why. Three of the participants were, by Brazilian standards, black. They self-identified in this way and were seen as black by almost everyone that encountered them. Two of them had parents who were extremely active in the various black social movements or engaged in active discourses in trying to understand the impacts of race in their lives. This seemingly had to do with their unambiguous black identity thus forcing them to engage with it earlier and more frequently. In one of the exercises we had the entire group write down how they identified themselves racially/ethnically. This was toward the end of the our discussions over several weeks about race and thus some of their answers it seemed reflected a conscious decision after being exposed to these debates to identify as black. This is not to say that they did not identify in this way before but only to underscore the ambiguity and complexity of identity formation in Plataforma. Expectantly two of the participants had identified as white but surprisingly more than 5 of the participants had identified as black outside of the 3 that already strongly identified as black while the rest slotted themselves into the brown category. From a North American perspective none of the participants would have been considered white and almost all that had slotted themselves into the ambiguous brown declaration would have been considered black. This portends to the notion that attitudes about race are changing ever so slowly but that with the younger generation, particularly those who have engaged in social development programmes such as the Violence and Masculinity programme or others. This is not to say that the stigma has vanished or that it does not remain pervasive. Rather it illustrates that the more young people learn about the historical roots of the notion of racial democracy and why it was used in Brazil the more they begin to value the contributions made by its African descendant population.

Scholars and researchers of race in Brazil like Sansone (2003) argue that blackness is not a static identity in Brazil and has evolved over time and space depending on the context:

By definition, not all people that can be defined as black in a specific context participate in black culture all the time...Of course, blackness as much as whiteness is not a given entity, but a construction that can vary in space and time, and from one context to another. Black identity, like all ethnicities, is relational and contingent. Black and white exist to a large extent in relation to each other; "differences" between blacks and whites vary according to the context and need to be defined in relationship to both specific national systems and global hierarchies or power that have been legitimated in and legitimize racial terms (p. 11).

For the young people in the programme their evolution was evident in their comments about how their perceptions of the place and indeed its multiple connotations were adjusted. According to Sansone, blackness is an identity that shifts and in my observations could be construed as a conscious choice for some while in other instances it was an unavoidable classification. This is not to say that one could simply and capriciously 'decide' to be white or any other colour. Shifting identities are based upon experiences of blackness, brownness, and/or whiteness and the perception of people in broader Bahian society. The poor dark-skinned day labourer who lives in the periphery or any other low-income and/or stigmatised area of the city has few chances if any to claim whiteness while a middle class black college professor would be able to take command of the definition of his own racial identity. Indeed society would see him differently. "...middle class people are branco, even if individuals may be described as negro, preto, or moreno (McCallum, 2008; 109)."

Sansone (2003) further argues that youth culture in Salvador is creating a strong black identity that stems from exposure to education and social movements on one hand but also an internationalisation of blackness through music (hip-hop and reggae) that provide powerful black symbols and openly challenge dominant white power structures on the other. Young people including students are increasingly being exposed to blackness and the

resurgence of black social and political movements has led many to re-evaluate their relationship with Brazil in distinctly racial terms.

McCallum (2008), like Sansone, supports the notion that race is a fluid concept in Brazil but she also demonstrates that this does not preclude the notion that racial discrimination exists. Indeed, the fact that race is so fluid highlights the symbolism of whiteness as much as it does for blackness. Whiteness is the ideal and placed at the pinnacle of the hierarchy whereas blackness remains the most undesirable of racial categorisations in Brazilian society:

"But sight more than talk is important here---or, whiteness is visually hegemonic in the districts of the city where the better off live and work. Blackness and brownness are patently normal, unmarked, elsewhere, a visual effect of the multiplication of bodies seen in public spaces. Crowds are colored distinctly and, thus the spaces that they inhabit acquire their own hues. So the social maps of the city that residents embody come to be color coded" (p. 107).

Despite the ability in certain instances for Brazilian blacks to overcome their blackness it remains that the fluidity of race for low-income blacks moves in one direction; that is toward whiteness. As a result of the stigmatisation of blackness, whiteness becomes the default *colour* that many aspire to become because of the distinct social, economic, and political benefits that come with being white. Some exploit the rules consciously as can be heard in the varied responses to the question, "What colour are you?" Despite the simplified versions on the Brazilian census, informally individuals have many ways of describing their own colour. For Brazilians of African descent many use descriptors that would move them closer to the white category rather than black.

### **Social relationships, race, and carnival**

As was discussed earlier in the chapter, race is a powerful indicator of an individual's life opportunities in Brazil. Similarly, social relationships, as was discussed in Chapter Three, can

help individuals overcome obstacles that on their own would be difficult to manage through social capital. In Brazil, like other places around the world social relationships matter. Yet what is often left out of the debate on social capital and social relationships is the notion that just as knowing the right people can help, not knowing the right people can become an obstacle and race, like income level, and educational attainment, etc, are factors that determine the composition of one's social network. In Brazil, where culturally many opportunities are offered informally through personal connections and social networks, race plays an instrumental role in how those opportunities are distributed within the overall population. Because blacks are simultaneously perceived as both undesirable and linked to crime and violence, individuals that occupy social networks rich in information and opportunities actively exclude the unwanted from those networks. This creates a segregating effect for black/brown communities whereby information for jobs, actual jobs, study groups for the vestibular, low-cost child care, educational scholarships, exchange programmes, and a general shared knowledge base about opportunities that would help vulnerable populations connect with benefits that would improve their life circumstances, only circulated within the social networks of mainstream/middle-class society. Social development programmes, and the philanthropic organisations such as the foundation which offered exchanges with Howard University attempt to break this monopoly by connecting individuals with more expansive networks.

One of the most glaring examples of how the social hierarchy in Brazil is maintained and excludes blacks by re-enforcing their portrayal as poor and violent, I experienced during carnival. Carnival in Salvador exposes the rigid fault lines of the social hierarchy in Bahian society demonstrating that even in a street festival that is the ultimate marker of being Brazilian, social undesirables are both excluded and under intense scrutiny from not only formal institutions like the police but the everyday person through their speech, actions, and behaviours. There are not so subtle reminders of the persistence of social exclusion and

focused violence that is perpetrated against a poor black majority throughout the year but is put on display for the five days leading to Ash Wednesday. A street festival that was once intended to allow participants to eschew their assigned social and economic roles, carnival now exaggerates those conditions, particularly through the metaphor of the *corda* (cord or rope), used to identify those who have paid to wear *abadás* (Linger, 1992).<sup>59</sup>

Carnaval's origins in Brazil are varied but scholars agree that its roots are in the Portuguese *Entrudo* festival. Entrudo was a carnavalesque type commemoration brought by the Portuguese that was based in religion and the philosophy of man's triumph over mortal sin through salvation (McGowan and Pessanha, 1998). Over time the festival was adapted and changed as elements from Brazil's different ethnicities added their own cultural practices. Dominant within carnival's tradition is a reliance on African-derived cultural and performance practices such as samba (Chasteen, 1996, 2004). Carnival in Bahia began as a street festival that slowly incorporated elements such as *batuque* as early as the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Today Bahian carnival is largely known for its incorporation of musical genres of *Afoxé*, *Sambareggae*, and *Pagode* as well as the *trio elétricos*.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> The *corda* as explained above is a long rope that is carried by people and surrounds the entire lorry that carries the band. It also encompasses the people that have paid to travel with the bloco and separated them from those on the street. In the larger and more popular bands the security is extremely tight and approaching the *corda* will certainly get you pushed out of the way if not more. An *abadá* is a carnival shirt. Each bloco produces its own shirt that allows you entry into the bloco. Carnival in Bahia unlike Rio de Janeiro, is a street festival. Blocos or the carnival bands parade down two principal circuits. Those who pay money are able to travel inside the protected area of the band which is cordoned off to the general public by masses of workers who literally hold ropes to ensure this separation. Anyone wearing an *abadá* that is designed by the band is allowed inside the protected area those who do not are restricted. My first impression of it was confirmed by many conversations with higher classes whose intent was clear about not wanting to mix with the general population because they were dangerous.

<sup>60</sup> *Afoxé*, *Sambareggae*, and *Pagode* are all different musical styles. The *trio elétrico* is a carnival flatbed semi-truck saddled with adult sized speakers all around it. The trios move through carnival with their band on top and revellers following behind.

During the event and as conversations about the multiple meanings of carnival ensued, I was surprised to hear responses that did not seem to differ widely across ethnic groups. As I began to challenge specific aspects of the event the responses began to reflect a difference in experience of not just class but also race. I recall one conversation with a Bahian friend from a middle class background where I was attempting to persuade him that carnival was not just fun and dance and for those that were excluded from it, it represented yet another reminder of social position and status in Bahian society. He insisted that I was taking things out of context and was looking at things in an "American" way. I took that comment to heart and considered it for the next few days until an interaction that I had at one of the first sessions with the programme in Plataforma where several guests from the neighbourhood who were studying at the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA) were invited to speak about their life stories before carnival had begun. One of the guests' stories moved me and made me re-consider my friend's earlier comments. She spoke about her experience as the child of a low-income carnival seller.<sup>61</sup>

*Well carnival...How do I explain it? I kind of hate it you know because of the things I had to do when I was a kid and the way that people would treat you. I mean they would look at you like a piece of dirt a real bicho (useless animal or thing). They wouldn't even look at you in the eye most of them and they would just throw you money. Me and my family would camp out on the streets for the whole time. Basically living where our barraca was just to make a couple of bucks.<sup>62</sup> We had no choice we had to do it because it meant that we could do the things we needed to do buy food, transport and all. (Pause, she begins to cry) During the whole time we barely had enough money to eat. It was terrible. We would just sit there watching all the blocos go by but we always had to wait on someone because everybody was always wanting beer or food or something (Field notes, February, 2006).*

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<sup>61</sup> People who generally sell in carnival arrive a day or two early and camp out the entire 6 days on the streets. They must stay at their spots in order to ensure that no other vendor comes in and takes over. The best vending spots are along the circuit of the carnival. They are mostly low-income from the interior but also many are local vendors.

<sup>62</sup> Barraca is a general term used for small informal shops that are set up throughout the city. Generally they are found on the beach and sell various types of food for beach-goers but can also be used to denote any type of makeshift shop selling wares.

Her comments made me think that my initial beliefs about the way in which carnival was experienced by low income residents varied quite dramatically but yet continued along a trajectory of discrimination and structural violence that ensured their lower social position (Galtung, 1969). As I discuss later, her comments were confirmed to me when carnival began and I experienced firsthand the types of scenes she so vividly described.

As carnival crept closer everyone seemed to be asking one another what they were going to do. Conversations about carnival from my higher income Bahian friends were the same on the surface asking about the band I would accompany during carnival. When I arrived home and began writing in my field journal I reflected about this question thinking that perhaps there was more to it than just trying to find out about my social interests. The subtext of this question seemed to be a way of marking one's economic and racial identity.<sup>63</sup> As Bourdieu (1984) describes it, identity in many places and Salvador included, is denoted through a series of 'symbols', associating an individual with one social group or another. The typology of symbols range from clothes and how one wears them, to speech patterns and language, marking one's rank within a social hierarchy including carnival. This also can represent what he termed as 'symbolic violence' that is the violence that occurs through the signifiers, indicators, and markers of undesirable social characteristics such as race or class. The commentary and idle talk about which blocos to go with represented a way for friends to help me differentiate myself from other low-income and/or black Brazilians.

Physical violence appears in many forms throughout carnival and I remember being warned by seasoned revellers to not go anywhere near the pipoca because they are responsible for random acts of violence against unsuspecting revellers which are frequently

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<sup>63</sup> Many of the common perceptions in Brazil about class and the social hierarchy re-enforce the idea that blackness and poverty ergo violence are strongly related.

carried out by small bands of boys who target individuals assault them and then run off.<sup>64</sup> Although the beatings are generally not serious they can be a traumatic experience for those caught unaware. The cautions freely given by experienced but also higher income Bahians about pipoca were a mix of trepidation and anxiety. It became clear that there was an inherent fear of who the pipoca represented symbolically. Many of the social elites perceived pipoca revellers as low-income black youth dedicated to destroying the fabric of white Bahian society and ruining carnival for the upper classes. Some of the conversations about pipoca danced around the reality of the fear that social elites had of them as well as the idea that race had anything to do with their prejudices. Despite the diversity within some of the ex-pat community in terms of their lives in the various countries they were from, some adopted a position similar to that of higher income Bahians while others attempted to assimilate the position of the "common man".

In the run up to carnival the fear of pipoca was on the minds of friends, ex-pats and higher income Bahians, making their prejudices about pipoca standout.

*Don't go near the pipoca. They'll punch you in the face and then run off laughing. Especially since you're a gringo they'll spot you a mile away. And don't bring anything with you. They will rob you blind. Last year I saw some kids just jump on some poor guy. They took everything from him. The police just got their too late...And you know they all come from the suburbs (Field notes, Februry, 2006).*

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<sup>64</sup> Participation in carnival can be divided into three levels; *pipoca*, *blocos*, and *camarotes*. Pipoca is the lowest level on the carnival hierarchy because of restricted access and the perceived protection from violence that comes from being inside the corda. Pipoca revellers simply follow their favourite blocos without being able to enter into the corda and thus are exposed to the fights that erupt between revellers, the police, or bloco security guards. These type of revellers are most often very low-income Bahians from the periphery or other poor neighbourhoods. Yet even within pipoca there is a dichotomy between those who actively participate and the thousands of families who bring their children to watch on the sidelines as the different blocos pass. The pipoca spectator and the pipoca participant are perceived so differently that the spectators are generally not referred to as pipoca at all and get left out of the conversations. They do not fit the stereotype that has been placed upon the pipoca participant as young, dangerous, and poor. When I asked where the pipoca were from every answer was the same: "the favela"

That particular comment shocked me to hear someone talk about people from the suburbs and other low-income areas as if they were wholly responsible for the problems of violence and robbery during carnival. It suddenly seemed to be ok to be classist because of the image of racial democracy that so many, particularly those of the higher social classes had bought into. Race could not be utilised as a reason to condemn someone despite its obvious presence.

The more subtle versions of violence are apparent in the way that it has been organised and the level at which different classes of individuals participate. The government adheres to traditions that have been a part of carnival since its inception, unconsciously perpetuating the separation of carnival by colour and class in what is a street festival. Others would argue though that this is not the case and that prices for different blocos are not prohibitive. Yet the lowest income levels are only able to participate by observing on the sidelines and being 'around' carnival in the many bars that are open all night in order to accommodate revellers not wishing or unable to be within the crowds. A colleague at the university where I had office space mentioned;

*Look everyone can go. And the smart ones they save up. The minute carnival is over they begin paying for their abadás on a payment plan for next year (Interview, February, 2006).*

He was squarely in the black movement but was ambivalent about his attitudes towards carnival like so many people.

Yet the illustration of carnival and other instances where social mixing is not only permitted but encouraged is used as evidence that racial and ethnic discrimination do not exist. There is a paradox in this notion because of the blatant instances of structural violence transpiring throughout the event from the corda to the camarotes which separate the rich from the poor and the black from the white. The stark contrast of my friend's words and the images

that I saw during the event were indicative of carnaval as a representation of the way in which Bahian society maintains its social and economic order. During the second night as I moved through the crowds I experience another event of a terrified young men running away from the police. A sea of people suddenly and rapidly parted before me and I moved with the crowd to avoid any interaction with the police. The young man was being pursued by what looked to be plain clothes officers that were intent on catching him. Obviously without knowing any of the backstory it is impossible to discern whether this was yet another episode of the heavy handed “justice” meted out by the police or a simple robber and police scenario. Regardless of the man’s guilt though and as soon as he passed, the crowd began whispering about how “*vagabundos*” should not be allowed in carnaval and that every year it was getting more dangerous because of “these people” from the poor areas.<sup>65</sup> Revellers whether low income or higher income seem to all complain about the presence of young “street” children who parade up and down the streets with the various blocos. They are blamed most often for the eruption of violence while the violence committed by police is tolerated and in many cases encouraged particularly against social undesirables.

In another incident, during my procession with a bloco with which I had signed up, we were all waiting in the staging area and interacting with the cordeiros who seemed eager to get their pictures taken and talk and laugh with us. As the procession began and we progressed further along our route a commotion began with one of the cordeiros. He had been accused of not doing his job effectively and essentially participating in carnaval instead of working it. The head security guard who coordinated the cordeiros suddenly strips the accused of his uniform leaving him in his underwear and kicks him from the bloco. The man

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<sup>65</sup> Vagabond is a word that carried a number of connotations. It is thrown around casually among friends most often to poke fun at someone. In this context in others like it which are laden with strict class definitions vagabond is a derogatory term used to simultaneously point out his/her uselessness in society but also that they are from poorer areas of the city and not like mainstream Bahian people.

whom I had joked with earlier and taken pictures with was indeed from a peripheral neighbourhood of the city and was working carnival as he had every year for the past five was humiliated. Having no clothes except his underwear he stalked off into the crowd where I saw him later with a bag wrapped around his body trying desperately to negotiate with the bloco's security to be reinstated. Like all accounts there are different interpretations and does not demonstrate conclusively the inequality that exists within carnival. Yet the humiliation and severity of the punishment and the sentiment of it, the raw emotions that are associated with being stripped of one's clothes and kicked out the bloco are real. The harshness of the punishment and absolute humiliation that was forced upon this cordeiro seemed a result of the entrenched social hierarchies which allow for social higher ups to treat those they deem lower without respect and often in violent ways.

The discrimination encountered by many blacks in carnival through the actions of the police and the established state apparatus that promotes, plans, and executes carnival guarantee's that the black population's participation in carnival is continually cast in its most extreme forms. They are seen as vagrants, thieves, and dangerous elements but also as primitive, quaint reminders of the African past that has been so dominant in Brazilian culture. The two extremes represent rationales for the why structural violence is so often directed at these populations; perceptions are often translated into actions. Bahian carnival beyond being a street festival where people relax and enjoy reproduces the many tensions that exist within Brazilian society between distinct economic classes to one's racial and ethnic heritage exposing the extremity of inequality and structural violence. Being excluded from carnival, one of Brazil's most pervasive markers of national identity engenders feelings of inadequacy and division that the majority of the populous insist do not exist.

## Conclusion

The idea of blackness is changing in Brazil. Although the notion of racial democracy persists it is becoming a far less tenable and easily defensible as more people are able to compare their own circumstances with others from around the globe. Furthermore a very active black social movement has created space for dialogue and debate about the position black communities hold in society openly challenging notions that race is not a Brazilian problem.

Other black Brazilians, not part of the black social movements are also being exposed to alternative ideas of race through music, social exchanges, and the continued internationalisation of black culture vis a vis countries like the US, the UK, Cuba, Ethiopia and Jamaica. Perceptions are also being shaped by experiences within Brazil that have them questioning how black communities in places like Salvador do so poorly while white communities dominate the political, social, and economic spaces of the city. Part of this recognition begins with the notion that the opportunities they have in life are defined in part by who they are, that is, their race, income level, educational attainment, neighbourhood from which they come and where they live, etc. Many are beginning to see that because blackness is connected with notions of violence, criminality, poverty, and other social problems their life opportunities are being constrained because of these associations and how they are perceived by mainstream society.

Carnaval, an event which is supposed to re-affirm one's citizenship acts counter to this idea for those from peripheral and low-income inner city neighbourhoods. The linkages between blackness and undesirability make it difficult for individuals to participate in an event where formal and informal social conventions mark them as unwanted. Although the perceptions of race are changing and individuals as well as groups are challenging these paradigms events like carnival expose many of the problems these types of communities face in trying to re-brand and disassociate blackness with all of its negative connotations.

The ability to overcome more basic challenges such as short term loans from friends for food or to pay a bill through their own networks is readily accessible. But the ability to overcome larger obstacles such as getting a job that will improve one's living standard is severely restricted because of the lack of connections with networks in social and physical spaces located in mainstream Bahian society. Yet this creates a vicious circle acting as an exclusionary mechanism which is simultaneously institutionalised and informal. Black communities therefore must overcome negative perceptions of them before they are able to be accepted within the types of social networks that would be beneficial. The social capital they wield however does not lend itself to the type of capital needed to get ahead. Exclusion based upon undesirable markers of identity restricts those wishing to improve their quality of life.

# Chapter 5 - Violence and violent structures

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## Introduction

This chapter explores why formal and informal institutions like the police and mainstream privileged social networks respectively, disproportionately direct violence towards poor peripheral and inner city black/brown communities. It is my contention that because black and brown populations are perceived to be connected with criminality and the chief producers of violence, mainstream social networks advocate for the use of directed violence against them as a way to maintain social, economic, and political exclusion from networks whose social capital can provide opportunities to improve one's life chances through education or employment. The police as an institution which reflects the values, culture, and attitudes of the mainstream and incorporates these notions into its operating ethos aims to protect the social, political, and economic spaces of the privileged and elite classes through violence. Furthermore many within peripheral poor black communities subscribe to similar notions that individuals within their own neighbourhoods are inherently more criminal and condone the use of violent measures to repress criminality. This chapter asks: (1) How are violent structures like the police used to maintain social exclusion?; and (2) What effects does the directed violence toward poor black communities have on their ability to overcome the social, economic, and political exclusion they face from mainstream social networks?

Finally this chapter briefly explores how low-income communities are often caught between supporting corrupt and violent police officers and violent and unpredictable criminal groups. The physical, social, economic and political exclusion these neighbourhoods face has pushed them to resolve community problems on their own. Through self-help these areas

built housing, basic infrastructure, even roads as communities. Now that the sale of drugs has become a lucrative business where criminal groups often fight for control over key distribution points, the community must assess how it provides security for itself. The police and other governmental institutions have been absent creating space for criminal groups to take over. Both the police and criminal groups now vie for the community's allegiance in different ways and for different reasons as will be discussed later in this chapter.

The police as a structure perpetrates tremendous violence in low-income neighbourhoods. Human Rights Watch estimated that between 2003-2009, the police killed nearly 11,000 people in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro alone (Human Rights Watch, 2008). The corruption that is prevalent in their ranks and the interactions that many young people witness between the police and criminal groups that operate in these areas gives many pause and shapes how they move through the neighbourhood, who they interact with in it, and how they are seen by others outside of it. The interaction between young people from Plataforma and the way in which governmental institutions stereotype and then engage in systematic forms of violence against them creates resentment as well as erodes trust and confidence in all government institutions but perhaps especially in the police.

A theoretical framework for how particular structures of violence interact with residents from the periphery is necessary in order to detail the prevalence of violence and how it impacts the ability of community residents to connect with broader social networks and their associated benefits through social capital. In starting with the definition of violence and structural violence, this chapter explores the boundaries of this interaction before moving on to explore the role of the police as a structure of violence in the reality of peripheral communities. The violent methods of repression used by police to maintain social, economic and political segregation demonstrates how the police as an institution reflects the desires of popular society. The final section of this chapter explores specific examples of directed

violence toward young people in Plataforma by the police. This section exposes how the connection between race and violence creates severe constraints for especially young people from those neighbourhoods in their abilities to improve their life circumstances.

### **Structural violence and definitions**

A number of authors have written explicitly about structural violence but the most prolific and first was Johan Galtung (1969) who provided a broad conceptual bridge from general discussions of violence to outline more specific terms and notions. Galtung states, "Violence is here defined as the cause of the difference between the potential and the actual, between what could have been and what is" (1969: 168). Galtung's expression has drawn many critiques from authors such as Boulding (1977) and Lawler (1989) because it is extremely broad facilitating the possibility that almost any transaction where one does not achieve ones goal results in an act of violence. Despite the breadth of his conceptualisation, it has given way to his more concise view of structural violence which he thought was perhaps the most difficult to detect because it did not necessarily involve the blatant individual harm present in physical violence. Structural violence was more nuanced because it was embedded within the social and institutional structures of society. His concept of structural violence during the 1960's was perhaps the most complex, rationalising an intangible and complex version of both its definition but also, and perhaps more importantly, how it functions. He maintains, "We shall refer to the type of violence where there is no such actor as structural or indirect. In both cases individuals may be killed or mutilated, hit or hurt in both senses of these words, and manipulated by means of stick or carrot strategies...the violence is built into the structure and shows up as unequal power and consequently as unequal life chances" (1969:171). Galtung

argues that violence operates on various levels and can be further categorised by a number of variables.<sup>66</sup>

Høivik (1977) in the vein of Galtung argues similarly about the definitions of structural violence and expands the concept by filling in many of the indefinable characteristics in Galtung's which earlier articles left more raw conceptual forms. Høivik claims:

"We take violence to mean the loss of life from external and avoidable causes. Direct violence has the form of acts directed against specific individuals, and we can in principle, apply concepts that relate to acts. This means that we can identify the victims, agents, means, and intentions of direct violence. In structural violence, the loss of life is caused by social conditions. The victims of structural violence are social groups rather than individual persons" (1977: 59)

Høivik posits the notion that if one cannot satisfy basic needs such as housing, water, and security then structural violence is both inherent but also high. Høivik, like Galtung, attempts to define structural violence by its effect on people. Unfortunately he does not believe that structural violence also has substantial effects on individuals as they interact with the systems and institutions that perpetrate this type of violence. He also attempts to separate directed acts from those that are seemingly by-products of certain institutions or systems. This separation misses the complexity of structural violence and how it interacts with populations at varying levels. Both Galtung and Høivik are guilty of ignoring the micro levels at which structural violence affects individuals. Institutions can and have been used to direct their violence at not only groups but specific individuals as well.

Boulding (1977), a constant critic of Galtung's views argued that his perception was normative and too simplistic often relying upon dichotomies that did not grasp the depth and complexity of violent interactions. He argues:

"[Galtung] tends to underestimate the large elements of randomness in social systems and the extraordinary difficulty which is introduced into the perceptions of social systems by frequent but unpredictable parametric change, that is, by what

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<sup>66</sup> For a full review of the different categorised levels please see also Galtung (1969, 1982)

might be called 'system breaks' in which a previous set of regularities is replaced by a new set" (1977; 78)

Indeed the principal critique often made about Galtung's work is its tendency to be confused with other related notions such as inequality. Iadicola and Shupe (2003) provide a more concise explanation of the notion, "structural violence is violence that occurs in the context of establishing, maintaining, extending or reducing hierarchical relations between categories of people within a society" (315-316). The authors move beyond the definition and apply it to a more empirical analysis suggesting that levels of structural violence can be measured through composite indices of human development which average a number of factors such as mortality, access to public services, educational attainment, income levels, and employment rates.<sup>67</sup> Yet they too suffer from an inability to draw down the way in which structural violence affects individuals on the micro level. The concept of structural violence may be to focus at the macro level on how histories, systems, and institutions that perpetrate violence affect entire groups of people, but context can often be lost and the affect these institutions and the people who operate them have on those that suffer is an important link that must be made.

It is my contention that structural violence is a reflection of the values, attitudes, and beliefs of mainstream society. Active exclusion from participation in mainstream networks is then enhanced by not only the informal levers of social control but also carried out by formal institutions like the police that reflect mainstream values and informal ones that emerge from the social networks of the privileged classes like social clubs. The police are used as active tools in excluding undesirable populations from full societal integration sending a clear message through the use of violence that they are unwelcome and barred from the benefits

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<sup>67</sup> These measures, the Human Development Index (HDI), Gender Development Index (GDI), and Human Poverty Index (HPI) are all averages and thus unable to measure internal inequity as well as levels of structural violence but are able to give us an idea of what kinds of issues communities face in comparison to other nations.

social capital has to offer. Furthermore it is social capital itself that bonds mainstream social networks together so tightly allowing these groups to actively engage in the exclusion of other communities.

Tilly (2003) describes structural violence from a political perspective by assessing how violence is used by a variety of actors to achieve particular goals as well as how the state/governments react to and engage in violence. What is instructive for this chapter is his illustration of actors who specialise in violence and political entrepreneurs who overlap with them but differ in their motivations to employ other methods to exploit boundaries.

"By means of activation, connection, coordination, and representation, political entrepreneurs necessarily engage in inequality-generating opportunity hoarding. They often engage in exploitation as well. They organize opportunity hoarding as they construct or activate us-them boundaries between their networks and outsiders, fend off rival claimants to coordinate and represent some or all of the same networks, draw necessary resources from those networks, and deploy those resources in ways that simultaneously forward collective claims, reproduce the structure they have built, and sustain their own power" (2003; 34-35).

Tilly goes on to argue that these actors often promote the causes of a few over the many even within their own networks, as they are defined. What is important about these actors is their connection with what he calls "violence specialists" who are often used by "political entrepreneurs" to achieve goals that cannot be reached through other coercive methods. Specialists in violence he argues, are represented both by governmental actors, police, secret police, military personnel, politicians, and other governmental personnel as well as individuals within society such as separatists, political agitators, criminals, gangs, violent sports athletes, etc. Both sides engage in violence to achieve their goals yet their motivations can be quite different. Individuals who engage in violence direct their actions toward the very structures that actively seek their exclusion from society for example.

In the case of the police and other governmental actors, their interests may be those of the state, mainstream society, or they may also be opportunistic and act as what Tilly calls

"opportunity hoarders" promoting their own causes when specific moments arise. In the case of Brazil violence specialists, the police, the special police, gangs, etc as well as political entrepreneurs work in concert to achieve the goals of the state which are reflected in the desires and pressures from mainstream society. Violence specialists like the police who manage to root out criminal groups from poor neighbourhoods for the state have been found to "take over" the freed spaces for themselves engaging in drug trafficking while simultaneously providing services to residents. They commit acts of violence against lower income residents as a way to enforce political, geographic, and emotional boundaries between the wealthy and the poor. They simultaneously engage in profit seeking behaviour by taking over drug trafficking operations from criminal groups and enforcing their own system of norms and rules. The police, because of their involvement with illegal activities are perceived by community residents as worse than criminal groups because they betray their basic mission which is to provide all citizens with security. Their involvement with criminal activity creates an image in the minds of low-income communities that the entire state is corrupt and does not hold their best interests in mind. For many, this perception is made reality by their experience of violent interactions with the police. Tilly's descriptions of violent actors is useful for how residents perceive the actors who are engaged in structural violence and how those actors blur the lines between institutions and individual motivations.

Structural violence acts in a way to ensure power structures remain the same and that those who are disadvantaged continue to be so while those dictating the terms of social relationships remain in their positions. Whether the lack of health care, aggressive police forces, social segregation, transportation or poverty are the issues, power remains an elusive yet influential tool by which authorities maintain the status quo. Ho (2007:4) comments, "Structural violence, therefore, originates in this unequal distribution of power among actors and can further trace its origins to human agency". DaMatta (1982) adds yet another

perspective claiming that violence is perhaps a part of the human condition inherent in the structures of society.

Foucault's comments about power relate to the way in which structural violence functions. Foucault's concept of power defines it as a system of relations as opposed to how the idea has traditionally been viewed as an object or quality. In his view power is thus embedded within the social relationships that we construct and therefore how it is used and how it affects society is very much dependent on the shape and form of our social relationships. If those relations are unequal or discriminatory, it will be reflected in the amount of power one group holds versus another but also the way power is used. Foucault argues convincingly that power is used in a way to ensure that the status quo of social relationships is maintained. Foucault argued that power was inextricably linked with knowledge and that power is used as a means of control by regulating social behaviour through institutions. His book *Discipline and Punish*, described how criminals were produced and the behaviours that those in power regulated through institutions like the police and penitentiaries/criminal justice systems. However, Foucault's argument did not arrive at the conclusion that power being exercised through these institutions is irregularly applied. That is, that the control of social behaviours is done not in agreement with society as a whole but as a way to set boundaries within society that are amenable to those that have control of institutions that exercise power. Thus, those outside of the networks and social relationships in power are subject to control sometimes against their will and without consent. The police and other agencies in Brazil both during the dictatorship and now represent an aspect of this argument because of their systematic engagement in violence against political opponents and now the socially, politically and economically disadvantaged as well as the racially and ethnically unwanted.

Structures of authority (health care, municipal/city planning offices, police, transportation departments, child protection agencies, etc) reflect, in many cases, the desires

of the highest rungs of the social structure by relegating undesirables to subordinate positions. In some ways the relegation is unintended and unconscious while in others the impact upon already disadvantaged communities amounts to a series of well thought and coordinated attacks that seek to continue to ensure not only the association of power with certain classes but, and perhaps this is more important, a powerlessness among the poor, ethnic, and disadvantaged individual. In some cases as will be discussed in the final section of this chapter, individuals in undesirable communities and employed by institutions which engage in directed structural violence, use their positions as a way to restore their own power and delineate themselves from others in order to gain some form of agency over their lives.

Structural violence varies but what is at its core is the idea that the violence produced by institutions is a reflection of mainstream society values, norms, and rules. Moreover, these institutions both consciously and unconsciously, create environments where the disadvantaged are forced into less fortunate positions and/or spaces while the powerful are surrounded by protective barriers that are in part represented by institutions but also the people who operate them (Caldeira, 2000). Insidiously, many of the low-level employees that interact most often with the economically and politically disadvantaged come from similar backgrounds who would experience similar challenges if it were not for their employment with these institutions.

Paul Farmer (1999), a more recent but powerful contributor to the notion of structural violence, paints a detailed picture within health systems showing how low-income populations are blocked from having adequate access to medical attention. These ideas are echoed within Schepers-Hughes's (1992) work on medicine, death, disease, and hunger in the Northeast of Brazil where she points out, lack of health care acts as a major contributor to everyday violence with the slow death of sick and/or starving impoverished people. Instead of referring to structural violence as the starting point for her analysis Schepers-Hughes offers

a new term – everyday violence – to refer to the violence that affects the most vulnerable populations making it a struggle for them to overcome daily hunger, avoid contracting communicable diseases that among higher income groups have been eradicated, evade common stereotypes directed at them which portrays them as criminals and thus targets of police violence/brutality as well as similar stereotypes that portray them as lazy and thus unsuitable for employment or advancement. The process of normalisation of these events inflicts significant harm upon the lower economic classes creating conditions where violence is a constant. Schepers-Hughes (1997: 471) comments, “I use this term [everyday violence] to encompass the implicit, legitimate, organised and routinised violence of particular social-political state formations”.

Schepers-Hughes's work has been at the forefront of discussions about the way in which the economically, politically, and socially disadvantaged have suffered at the hands of institutions and systems to have either abandoned or directed forms of violence at them. Like Galtung and others who have written about structural violence, Schepers-Hughes' work does suffer from a similarly overly broad usage of the term but it is not without utility.<sup>68</sup> Everyday violence is useful when used in tandem with structural violence because it adds a layer of description about effects on individuals that is often lacking in other discussions about structural violence alone. Although the intention of structural violence is to examine the macro level effects of violence on groups it remains important to understand how individuals are affected by the violence perpetrated by institutions and systems, Schepers-Hughes' illustration of everyday violence helps make that conceptual linkage. The term everyday violence is useful but does not go far enough to capture the often directed and intentional use of violence against the disadvantaged. Although Schepers-Hughes does describe the abuses that the

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<sup>68</sup> Schepers-Hughes has been critiqued by Bourgois (2001) who claimed, like earlier scholars, that the use of the term everyday violence could include nearly every instance of violence and needed to be refined before becoming a useful concept.

disadvantaged face, in her use of the term one does not get the full sense that the violence of the structures she mentions in her book, *Death without Weeping*, is intentional and designed to not only kill or injure but to sustain the present hierarchy of social relationships. I use the term directed violence or directed structural violence in this chapter and beyond to capture the idea that some forms of structural violence, particularly the violence used by the police is calculated and thus directed at specific populations to enforce the norms and values of mainstream society and its networks. McIlwaine and Moser (2007) add to Scheper-Hughes's work by exploring how fear and violence are products of multiple state inadequacies including severe mistrust in state institutions because of past acts of state-sponsored violence.

Discussion about structural violence within Brazil have built on the foundation of French sociology via theorists such as Pierre Bourdieu.<sup>69</sup> Paulo Pinheiro and Roberto Da Matta, have written frequently about the way in which they have visualised the functioning of structural violence. Pinheiro writes, "In this context, in the developing countries, even in many democracies, violence is endemic and systematic, embedded in the system of social relations, affecting all of society intermittently but affecting the poor and miserable in particular" (1993: 1). He portrays violence as being the outcome of a variety of environmental and social factors similar to those discussed within western sociological debates but differing slightly due to their emphasis, and rightfully so, on the inherent interrelationship of power infused in the concept of violence.<sup>70</sup> Other authors have also described various structures of violence in Brazil. Gey Espinheira, who writes about violence in Salvador explains that violence originates from high levels of inequality rooted in both economics but also race (see

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<sup>69</sup> In his book *Distinction, A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, Bourdieu commented that violence originated in part from symbols and the way that symbols can be used to define identity.

<sup>70</sup> The subject of power although discussed in violence debates has been written about in far more detail in debates about domestic violence. Many of the most nuanced notions of the interrelationship between violence and power originate from these debates (see Ylö in Hansen and Garey, 1998)

Espinheira 1999, 2001, 2005). As Espinheira observes violence is distributed unevenly among mostly poor, non-white populations throughout the city's periphery and low-income inner city neighbourhoods. As I explore in the next section, the key institution that brings state presence, violence and poverty together is the police.

### **The Police as a Structure of Violence**

The evolution and re-organisation of the contemporary police forces in Brazil begin with the roles they played during authoritarian rule. In 1964 during the inception of the second authoritarian rule, *Destacamento de Operações de Informações - Centro de Operações de Defesa Interna* (Department of Information Operations - Centre for Internal Defence Operations) or DOI-CODI was established as an internal police force tasked with monitoring political opposition within the country. In reality it operated as an internal intelligence and enforcement agency working against opposition groups apprehending, torturing, and killing political dissidents (Chevigny, 1990, 1995). The contemporary history of the police in Brazil necessarily begins with the democratisation process in the mid 1980s. Brazil's authoritarian government began re-democratisation in 1985 and with it a dismantling and/or re-organisation of state institutions. The 1988 Constitution brought further change to the police placing them under direct control of the governors of each state and establishing a rational system of integrated police forces split into federal police, federal highway police, federal rail police, civil police (CP) and military police (MP) (Neto, 1997).<sup>71</sup> The federal police are responsible for patrolling the highways, rail lines, and other federal installations while both the MP and CP are responsible for more general policing duties of maintaining public safety throughout the

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<sup>71</sup> The police are managed at both the federal and state levels. The Brazilian federal police are responsible largely for dealing with crimes committed against the federal government and are managed at the federal level by the Ministry of Justice. Both the military and the civil police are managed at the state level and while the military police is largely charged with maintaining order, public safety, and the prevention of crimes the civil police are mostly involved in the investigation and detective work of crimes.

country's rural and urban areas. The MP however have specialised groups that are also responsible for crowd control in public events like carnival but also are used to combat narco-traffickers in favelas. The use of the police force during Brazil's authoritarian rule to maintain control over society and prevent political dissident discourse from entering mainstream debates through extreme uses of violence such as torture has more recently evolved to be used against different populations with similar but distinct goals (Neto 1997). The practices of using extreme violence and aggression have now been turned to undesirable populations, chiefly peripheral and inner-city low-income black and brown communities. Police forces have abandoned their missions of providing public safety and security for all by directing violence toward undesirable populations in order to preserve social, political, and economic separation between them and mainstream Bahian social networks/society. As Scheper-Hughes and Hoffman put it, "With the gradual dismantling of the military police state, the former authoritarian structures that had kept the social classes "safely" apart and the "hordes" of disenfranchised, hungry, and "dangerous" poor children at least symbolically contained to the favelas or in long-term detention weakened" (1998: 353).

The shift in focus by the police from maintaining political disenfranchisement to sustaining an informal separation of the classes and races was directly related to the notion that race, class, and the perceptions of criminality and violence were linked. That is, that because blackness and poverty are seen to be related to criminality and violence, the police have the right to aggressively punish criminals but also ensure that mainstream society and its networks are secured against any undesirable transgressors. This provided a justification for the police to actively repress communities and populations exhibiting these characteristics.<sup>72</sup> Neto (1997: 130) argues that, "This modality to use political violence

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<sup>72</sup> The MP in Salvador, receives training in the classroom as well as outside in a jungle setting in rural parts of the state. The classroom training is part of a broader effort that has attempted

decreased, political violence however did not disappear, it changed to be used as, above all a tool for social control and more specifically one to control criminality". According to Mitchell and Wood (1999) these aggressive attitudes translate into increased targeting of black and/or low-income populations resulting in abuse and deaths at the hands of the police.

Using data from newspapers from 1994-2001 Ahnen (2007) demonstrates that human rights violations by police have reached unsustainable levels and that homicides perpetrated by police are extremely high. For the state of Bahia, more than 15 percent of all homicides were caused by police between 1994 and 2001. With the exception of Rio de Janeiro and Pará state, all other states in Brazil were substantially less just over 7 percent or lower in most cases with states at similar population levels. Despite independent figures confirming much higher rates of violence committed by police officers, official statistics report far lower numbers. For instance from the period of 1980 to 2006 official figures note that only 180 civilians were killed by police officers (NEVS, 2011).<sup>73</sup>

Other authors have offered nuanced critiques about the police and how they operate throughout Brazil. Teresa Caldeira (2002) has argued that the use of excessive force by the police has popular support despite the fact that it affects mostly working class and low-income blacks. Caldeira attributes this to the lived experience of residents who face the violence of criminal organisations as well as the violence perpetrated by the police:

"In situations of crime and violence, the workers feel that they are powerless. They are paralysed between fear of the police, fear of a criminal's vengeance, and a belief

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to reform the police curriculum and infuse teachings about citizenship, law, and social issues among others. Paes-Machado and Albuquerque (2002) argue that the ethos of the MP in particular is to create a warrior mentality and through their training in jungle camps in rural parts of the country. The trainings they receive there, contradict the teachings received in the classroom by instilling aggressive attitudes that are not necessarily compatible with policing in an urban setting. This ethos and the idea that the classes must be separated because the poor and black are inherently violent and criminal engenders a perception by MP officers that everyone in these communities is potentially a criminal blurring realities and justifying the use of force and aggression against all residents who live in these areas.

<sup>73</sup> Reliable statistics on homicides by police are extremely difficult to access.

that the justice system is unable to provide justice. Without protection, their modus vivendi is to adopt silence as a way of maintaining good relations with criminals they might know personally in the neighbourhood. Moreover, if one takes into consideration the arbitrariness and violence of the police, the constant confusion (workers mistaken for criminals, policemen mistaken for criminals), the identification of criminals with policemen (both symbolic and material) and of both with poor people and fear of both policemen and criminals, one can only conclude that the police are far from being able to offer a feeling of security to the working- and lower-middle classes. The population often feels itself to be back up against the wall without alternatives" (2002: 250).

Caldeira rightly concludes that the confusion engendered by the police in Brazil is produced not only by the absence of the state but by their perverse involvement in low-income neighbourhoods. Corrupt police officers working with criminal groups blur the lines between the state and these groups creating a perception that they are the same as criminal gangs by virtue of the violent and criminal acts they commit. Community residents who witness and experience these acts firsthand share stories about police who are involved in beating and killing residents as well as providing weapons or protection to criminal groups cementing these perceptions. Yet there are key distinctions between criminal groups and police in the minds of community residents that often makes them accept the dominion of criminal groups more readily. First, in these neighbourhoods the criminal gangs' leadership and members are often known to residents being residents themselves. In many cases gang leaders and members have grown up and lived alongside community members throughout their lives creating some bond that makes residents feel they have some form of recourse if gangs members transgress. This produces a dynamic whereby some residents view criminal group members as part of the community, a violent and sometimes unpredictable part, but still a part. They are a known quantity. Second, the leaders, in attempts to maintain stability and 'buy' the community's silence by providing 'services' to the community paying for medicines and clinical procedures, funerals, parties, food, etc. This allows them to disparage the role of the state and demonstrate that they are the only ones able to provide the necessary services

to the neighbourhood and make community members accept their rule.<sup>74</sup> The services criminal groups provide and the relationships they establish complicates how residents view the state. Those police who are not corrupt and want to provide for community residents are tainted because of the prior history that police and other state institutions have had in these neighbourhoods. In the next section, we see the violence that is committed on behalf of the police and how it is judged by community residents.

### **Salvador, Plataforma and the Police**

Plataforma, like other similar communities suffers from a paradox in relation with the police. On one hand, there is a lack of positive relationships between neighbourhoods and police despite demand for security, while on the other increased police presence is linked to brutality and abuse often in acts disguised as security measures. In some cases resident support condones the heavy handedness of police forces and community members may be coerced into thinking that compliance will result in increased safety. All too often they discover that their sponsorship allows the police to participate in racial profiling by targeting young black males who 'appear' to be criminals in a general attempt to subdue the lower classes. This occurs because institutional culture at these organisations is contrary to preserving rights and providing public safety to low-income communities.

Community residents within Plataforma abhorred the police and were extremely mistrustful of their presence as I discovered when speaking with a group of older residents outside of the house of a programme participant. I had told them about the police abuse that I witnessed in carnival and they began commenting about Plataforma and their experience.

*Resident 1: You have to live with them. What can I do?. They sit in their office and only come out when one of the dealers pays them. They are supposed to be*

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<sup>74</sup> Arias (2004) argues that the state's perverse integration into these neighbourhoods has often had the effect of driving residents toward drug trafficking groups. Besides providing community residents with services, they also co-opt community associations by placing individuals in these organisations that represent their interests.

*protecting us but I just want them out. We can handle things on our own. We did before.*

*Resident 2: What do you mean we can handle it on our own? Those vagabundos over there would run all over us.*

*Resident 3: They're corrupt. Why do you think the dealers are even still here.*

*Resident 1: All they do is take money, understand. They don't help us. When have you gone to them for help?*

*Resident 2: I did once (field notes, September, 2006).*

The conversation moved in to argument and counter argument before shifting to other topics.

But it illustrates the frustration that many residents in Plataforma experience.

The paradox between encouraging quick, decisive, and often aggressive tactics but also being highly suspicious of the police activities because of past experience of brutality and corruption leaves a real sense of ambiguity and uncertainty. Plataforma certainly had its fair share of incidents with the police suggesting that scepticism toward the police in the neighbourhood was justified. One community resident explained it in this way.

*The police they think we're all vagabundos just like the dealers. And if you complain they tell the dealers and then you either have to move or you might end up dead (Interview, October, 2006).*

After hearing about a criminal getting murdered at the hands of the police, many would comment that the individual 'deserved' it. This highlights a complex relationship between the institutions in Bahian society that perpetrate structural violence. In my view it is not a matter of painting the structures as 'evil' but rather examining how the relationships between these structures of violence and communities play out, remembering that in many instances individuals from similar low-income neighbourhoods represented a significant portion of the police force who patrolled the area. Becoming a policeman/woman was a significant badge of honour that allowed one to be differentiated from other poor residents. It was as if wearing a badge allowed low-income Bahians to display their citizenship despite the way they were

perceived by many in their local areas. The significant popular support for the abuses the police employ exists only because of the limited options for security with which community members must contend.

The police have not been a constant fixture in the neighbourhoods of Plataforma and only within the last decade has a police station been located in the community. It is operated by about 12 Civil Police officers who regularly patrol the area and have a post at one of the major intersections. Some of the police officers stationed there have been accused by community members of being involved in illicit activities in conjunction with the local drug dealers yet nothing seems to get resolved. One prominent community member explained to me.

*The drug dealers operate all over this place and the police don't do anything. What can I do? If I call them they give my name to the dealers and then I'm in big trouble* (Field notes, March, 2006).

The community member exhibited an obvious contradiction in that he understood that in one sense the police were intended to be the natural arbiters of conflict but because of their involvement with the drug traffickers could not be trusted to guarantee his safety. As we shall see in Chapter Six the role played in the drug trafficking in Plataforma was often as complex as the relationships that were developed between the police and community residents.

In the initial few weeks of the programme we had several episodes where some of the participants had violent interactions with the police. One of the most severe occurred with two of the participants who were going to rent a DVD in a local corner store. Not far from their house they were stopped by a civil police officer who almost immediately began to harass them, accusing them of having stolen something.<sup>75</sup> Marcelo and Márcio were both integral members of the programme. Marcelo was one of the oldest in the group and had always

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<sup>75</sup> Accusations of being a thief are quite serious indictments and can often times result in serious injury and sometimes death if caught by community residents.

taken on a leadership role simultaneously representing a big brother figure for some of the younger boys. He had been involved in other groups before and worked with another group of younger elementary school children in a sports programme. Even within the community he was known and was recognised as a potential future leader. Marcio by contrast was more immature particularly at the inception of the programme. He seemed to be experimenting with a variety of different personalities and changed dramatically over the course of 10 months with which we interacted. Despite his immaturity at times he was centred and balanced and his interests particularly in technology drove him to want to stay within the programme and learn how he could attain the goals he had for himself. The encounter between Marcelo, Marcio and a police left the entire group in shock. Marcelo was beaten by the police officer leaving him bruised and with marks on his face. Asked what had occurred, he related his story:

*We were walking down the street and just talking and this police comes up to us. He started asking us a bunch of questions and for our ID's. Then he just started yelling about how there were all these thieves and good for nothings in the neighbourhood. Then he hit me on my face for a while. I think, I don't remember exactly that I could hear my mom yelling. Then he stopped. I got up and saw here in the street shouting at the police telling him I was her's. He just pulled out his gun and pointed it at her like he was gonna shoot then pointed it in the air and shot. Then he just left* (Field notes, May, 2006).

After Marcelo finished Marcio added to the story,

*You know Marcelo lives in a favela but he is not a favelado.*<sup>76</sup>

In a hushed voice Marcio adds. *We think he got beat instead of me because he's darker* (Field notes, May 2007).

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<sup>76</sup> In the sense that Marcelo uses the term favelado it means the mindset of someone who lives in the favela. It refers to someone who is wild and reckless and cares little for others around him/her. He/she would resort to any measure of violence to achieve their goals.

Darker-skinned individuals are scapegoated into the criminal and viewed not just by police but the broader community as perpetrators of crimes. Marcio recognised this incident and felt that his friend was targeted unfairly by the police officer for being both a favela resident but also darker-skinned. He reasoned that because he was not treated in the same way as Marcelo, that it was because of his skin colour.

During the same session Paulo began to describe another altercation between police who stopped their bus on the way home.<sup>77</sup> Paulo was perhaps the most involved in reading and discussing the politics of social exclusion and inequality of the group. He regularly listened to *Os Racionais* a very popular rap group whose lyrics often reference the social problems faced by people in the favelas. Paulo is very creative and eventually won a place in another social development programme that focused on developing and enhancing creativity through media arts. Paulo spoke at the programme only when it seemed he had something important to say.

*They took some of us aside and told us all to strip. I was looking around at everyone shocked. But the police they weren't joking and were threatening us so we did it. They shouted at us and threatened us some more then left. All of us were scared as hell and didn't move for a moment. Then we got back on the bus* (Field notes, May, 2009).

As he went on to describe his feelings about the incident he clearly felt harassed and humiliated further entrenching his already intense distaste for the police. The police in these situations move well beyond their role as keepers of the peace abusing the power given to

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<sup>77</sup> Police routinely stop public buses making all men disembark, subjecting them to a full body search. This measure was drafted as a way to deter the increase in assaults on buses. I experienced this on several occasions during my stay in Bahia and contemplated the meaning of this stop and search procedure. I read it in two different ways but after several months I began to see a pattern that fit in with the other types of social relationships and the way in which the police deal with those they believe are from poor areas and/or black. Many of the stops occur in the wealthier areas on buses that are going to the periphery where a large concentration of low-income Bahians live.

them and creating greater mistrust which in turn pushes the community to resolve conflicts on their own or turn to gangs and other organisations.

Police generally engage in searching buses and checks points are set up at regular intervals in high income areas for vehicles originating from the periphery because of the perception that the majority of criminals originate from those neighbourhoods. The general procedure starts when the bus is stopped. All the male passengers must disembark while the female ones remain onboard. The men are then searched for weapons and if none are found they are allowed back on the bus. The procedure generally takes no more than five minutes. The first time I experienced this was as I was coming back from Plataforma. Although I felt victimised and that my rights had been infringed upon, I looked around at all the men none seemed too bothered by what had happened. Perhaps it was the contrast with an US worldview of how police should act. But the scene seemed reminiscent of imagery from a Jim Crow South or even apartheid South Africa

Janaina, one of the older participants, related a story about her neighbour who she claimed was a CP officer that worked in an adjacent set of neighbourhoods. In the story she related there were various moments in which it was unclear what role he played in a local "extermination squad".

*I can't believe this guy sometimes. He really makes me mad because he talks to me about all the stuff that they do. He says that it doesn't matter. Some people are just "marginais" and vagabundos and they gotta be dealt with and they deserve to die. But he has a son too and this could happen to him. He even told me that he was scared that someone would find out he was in the squad and that they would take revenge on his son (Field notes, September, 2006).*

Police officers as members of the communities which are discriminated against, often exhibit a paradox in the way they understand those same communities. Living in and growing up in such a community sometimes drives members to want to divorce themselves from the negative stereotypes associated with the neighbourhood. As in this instance, belonging to the

police provides an elevated social status both within Plataforma but also outside of it where discrimination, structural violence and exclusion are directed at people who live in low income areas especially.

Toward the end of my research period while visiting with some friends in Plataforma another incident deeply affected the community when two young Afro-Brazilian men forgot their clothing on a bus were shot dead by the police. My friends told me the story as we discussed how the community would react. They told me that the boys chased down the bus while trying to recover their forgotten clothes and were thought to be trying to assault it. When the police arrived, they were unarmed, and before any questions were asked the police began opening fire. The two victims were known to be "good" kids, uninvolved in illicit activities such as drugs or bus assaults. Immediately after the shooting the community organised and shut down the main avenue demonstrating against the police actions for several hours. Police are able to take extreme actions (shoot without questioning) partially due to a lack of municipal enforcement and oversight of their actions but also and paradoxically because of the community's support for severe punishment of suspected offenders.

Despite the violence and fear the police in the neighbourhood generate at least one of the participants viewed the police as a means to avoid becoming a victim. Toward the end of our weekly sessions and several months after a particularly violent encounter with one of the police officers who regularly patrol the area, we conducted a small module for the participants on future careers. Marcelo had not expressed any particular desire for one career over another up until that point. When he was asked about his choice on that day he emphatically said,

*I want to be a police officer (Field notes, November, 2006).*

The reaction from the coordination team was immediate. We were all somewhat shocked to hear him say this because of his experience with the police not a few months prior. We all

noticed a change in him after that incident. I noticed it probably more than others because of the amount of time I was spending with him and the other boys. He had become more aggressive and less willing to listen to others. His latest issue though exemplified how directed violence can function and alter not only the short term lived experience but also mid- and long term decision-making processes. His experience with structural violence through multiple altercations with police had changed his perception of what it was to live in Plataforma and how it was that he would be able to cope with the violence there. His desire to be a police officer was complicated. He felt it would give him back the power and respect he felt he lost because of the incident, but also it would allow him to never have to experience the humiliation of being beaten like that again by associating himself with the very structures that perpetrated violence against him. He felt he would regain that moment through becoming what he hated and feared.

### **Conclusions**

The evolution of the police as an institution in Brazil has lent itself to the incorporation of a violent ethos within its culture that was initially directed at maintaining political order but has since been used to suppress and repress low-income communities of colour. The structural violence of the police affects low-income communities and the residents within them dramatically by sending a clear message that the aggression used by the police against these communities is justified. The directed violence is justified because within broader society, race and poverty is linked with criminality and violence thus allowing the police to view any individual that exhibits characteristics of being from such a neighbourhood as a potential criminal. Broader society advocates for the use of extreme measures to deal with criminals and their values, norms, and attitudes are reflected in a violent police force that uses aggression as a tool to provide mainstream social networks with the perception of security and safety through their repressive actions.

The communities themselves though are also complicit by adopting mainstream values and advocating for the same repressive measures that are largely used against them. The result of the repression is then to cut these communities off from integration into the social networks of mainstream society and therefore the benefits that are associated with them. Social capital within these networks allow for individuals and group to pass information that would improve their life circumstances and because low-income inner city or peripheral communities are denied access through, in one instance the repressive measures of the police, they are at a distinct disadvantage from climbing out of poverty or attaining a good quality education for example. Yet the complicity of the communities is also a direct result of the circumstances in which they find themselves. Since the state does not extend some of its most basic services to these communities they are largely on their own to solve problems. This vacuum though has allowed for gangs, other criminal groups, and corrupt police officers to fill the role of the state by providing security and other services. Community members must decide between supporting corrupt and violent police officers or violent and unpredictable criminal groups. This is not an easy decision and creates even further difficulties for communities hoping to improve their quality of life. This chapter demonstrates that the directed violence of the police places such communities in extremely difficult positions where they are choosing between the bad and the terrible in order to sustain some modicum of security and safety in their own lives. This chapter also shows that the police as an institution act principally as a barrier to the groups and indeed benefits within those groups that help individuals improve their life circumstances. As discussed in both Chapters Three and Four, social capital is a double-edged sword that cuts in many ways. In this instance it is both the cause of suffering of the disadvantaged but can also be one of the answers to improving their quality of life. The next chapter focuses more closely on the perversity and paradox inherent within social capital. It also shows why as a concept social capital is flawed without

considering the notions that make it so complicated such as race, power, violence and equality

# Chapter 6: Dealing with perverse social networks

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## Introduction

This chapter examines the ebb and flow of violence in Plataforma. The narratives described depict a neighbourhood that has experienced change since its establishment. Times of peace and stability have been followed by violence and instability. Gangs, street level violence, and general levels of insecurity have contributed to uncertainty experienced by many residents. The lack of the presence of the state has allowed insecurity to remain a constant struggle in Plataforma because there are few official remedies against crime and violence. The complex interrelationship between gangs, the state, and dominant groups (the privileged and elite classes) has created strains on the way that informal social networks function, making the imposition of sanctions against violent actors difficult because of the willingness to engage in violence generated by gang members and the control they exercise in the absence of strong formal institutions. Yet, in the absence of state institutions, other organisations have tried to fill the void. In Chapter Three, I demonstrated how NGOs comprise one type of institution that has tried to satisfy needs where the state has been unable and unwilling. Gangs also play fundamental roles in providing the types of 'services' normally under the responsibility of government, resulting in a certain level of stability. Without them street level crime and general violence would spike even further. The trade-off is that gangs themselves generate tremendous amounts of violence through the conflicts they have with rival groups, the police, and their willingness to use violence as a means to mediate disputes and pursue goals and interests.

The community's reliance on criminal networks, NGOs, and social networks to step in where the government is absent occurs only because local governments have abandoned the

neighbourhoods to resolve problems on its own. The local government has not invested enough nor made claims to the neighbourhood by extending services in a way that integrates the area more fully into the fabric of the city which is partly a reflection of dominant interest that seek to exclude and discriminate against people from these areas. The research questions this chapter asks are: (1) How is violence experienced by community residents and how do they react to its constant presence in their lives? (2) How does the provision of services by gangs shape their relationship and the way in which they are perceived by the community? and finally (3) What are the consequences of perverse social capital as experienced by the community?

This chapter examines the social landscape of the neighbourhood through narratives of community residents. The chapter begins by exploring narratives of violence and instability to contextualise the experience of community residents. Within the narratives, the young people with whom I interacted recounted the role of the gang but also how its disappearance impacted the stability of the social landscape causing anxiety among many residents. This section of the chapter examines the effects of perverse social capital on the neighbourhood while the final chapter discusses how feelings of fear and danger began to permeate the neighbourhood when the gang, one of its only formal mechanisms of security was killed allowing street level violence to spike.

### **Narratives of Street Level Violence**

When I first began hearing stories about the violence in the neighbourhood I was unsure how to react. Although my curiosity spurred me to want to create the classic informant relationship that so many researchers rely upon, I did not want to intrude in areas of people's lives uninvited, in order to acquire the necessary information to analyse the subject in which they are studying. As I explored more of the narratives of violence it became clear that variations in their narratives reflected a number of different but not contradictory truths. One that stood

out was that despite the disproportionate amount of violence in the area there were various moments in the neighbourhood's history that pointed to the fact that violence was not a constant but rather something that increased and decreased throughout the year. The fluctuations in violence were dependent upon the strength of the gang itself but also of its relationships with other gangs in nearby neighbourhoods and the police. The personal narratives that were told reflected the ebb and flow. The programme participants made a point of reminding me that the neighbourhood was in a period of calm throughout my entire fieldwork.

Goldstein (2003) makes a similar point that although violence was an element of the neighbourhood it was not the central feature and certainly not one that was the central focus of residents. A mother of one programme participant added to this idea of violence being time and place specific. Tatiana Gomes had lived in the area since she was 15 .

*I've lived here for 29 years. I came here when I was 15 with my 5 brothers and sisters along with my mother and father. It was just us and three other houses before. There was nothing here but the sea and palafitas. We used to take dirt from the area to fill in the parts of the sea so we could make our house. [Our family] didn't live on palafitas. It was calm then and we would go to the parties at each other's houses. Then more and more people started coming and the neighbourhood grew. São João already had a neighbourhood association and helped building the first school. But we all banded together to make things work. We didn't have electricity or water anything* (Interview, September, 2006).

Tatiana account fit into a broader narrative of the area that reflected not only the diversity of experience within the neighbourhood but also helps to confirm the idea that violence was time and place specific. Her childhood was one where the evolution of gangs had gone through various transformations and she experienced the neighbourhood in a moment where violence and fear were minimal. Tatiana's accounts illustrate that the social landscape of Plataforma as a constantly evolving mesh of relationships and events. Street level violence depended at times on the overall health of the national economy and its ability to take on unskilled labour

but also for employers to de-link race, class, and spatial identity with involvement in criminality which often barred Plataforma residents from acquiring jobs beyond menial labour or domestic work.

One of the oldest individuals in the neighbourhood, at 76, however, placed the history of the area in perspective with an account from her early days living on palafitas to her new house and the changes that have occurred. She moved to Bahia from the interior after her father died, and subsequently Novo Alagados where she has lived for 18 years and worked as a domestic most of her life. She did not study past the 10<sup>th</sup> grade. As I arrived to interview I realised that it was a part of the neighbourhood that I had never been to before. It was older and more reminiscent of a Rio favela with narrow alleyways and constricted corridors. Despite Novo Alagados being small and adjacent to the main Avenida Suburbana the area where Dona Valdice's house was situated felt much further away from the hustle and bustle of the avenue where kids were sitting on steps chatting and buses were passing by. Her house was at the end of an alley that had only one way out and felt distant from goings on of the rest of the neighbourhood. When I reached the door and sat down explaining the programme and why I wanted to interview her she sat considering me. The minute I stopped and asked my first question there was no hesitation from her. It was as if she had been waiting a long time to tell her own story.

My first questions to her were about violence and the social evolution of the neighbourhood. She confirmed what others had in that there had been a steady decline in violence over the past two years but she was proud of the fact that in their little alley violence had not really been a big issue.

*There is no way out here. You can't just come in do something like that then leave and expect no one is gonna say something or see you* (Interview, July, 2006).

She didn't deny the fact that violence had been a major problem in Plataforma but did not want it to be the only impression I took away.

*I know there is a lot of violence and no one can do anything, I'm not going to deny that* (Interview, July, 2006).

She then talked about the only time she had ever been a victim of street level violence.

*I was attacked on the bus when I was going from here to Lobato. It was the only time on the bus thank God. They were taking money from everyone on the bus. The guys came on the bus and shouted, "I don't want papers I just want money and bus tickets!" I was with a few kids from the neighbour's house going to pay some bills with my little purse in front of me hidden. I didn't know whether to stay or go. And one of the boys passed by me and saw me looking. He grabbed me shouting don't open your eyes. When he let go he pushed my head into one of the metal rails on the bus. I was so shocked I didn't feel the hit. They all got off running. The next three weeks I couldn't sleep because I was scared. I would day dream about the guys shooting me on the bus and the one guy that had the revolver in his hand. I couldn't even work. I was so scared and frightened that I would be shaking all the time. On the night that I was attacked all of my neighbours came over and they left around 11pm. One of them called over to me telling me that they had killed those guys on the bus. The fear that they gave to everyone you know they paid for it. There was nothing that could take the image away from me of this guy. It's not right for people to be afraid* (Interview, July, 2006).<sup>78</sup>

This account and the entirety of her interview illustrated quite clearly the complex nature of violence within the area. She attributed some of the violence to the marijuana smoking and drinking. She commented generally about some of the people she came to know.

*They drink and drink and then start to lose their cool and start fighting. The violence is much more alleviated but drinking affects a lot of people* (Interview, July, 2006).

She seems to separate the violence that originates from alcohol and that which seems to have no purpose and no reason. She ended the interview by reflecting on the different forms of violence that she had experienced and witnessed during her time there.

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<sup>78</sup> Lobato is a neighbouring community on the other side of the Bay in which Novo Alagados is situated. It has similar characteristics to Novo Alagados. It has also been studied prolifically and the recipient of many interventions from federal and local governments as well as international organisations. By some estimations though it continues to have a thriving gang problem where violence has only increased in recent years unlike in Novo Alagados.

*I used to see a lot of marginality but now it has decreased a lot. Lots of kids used to die and it wasn't a joke. But now from about 2 years ago it's a lot better (Interview, July, 2006).<sup>79</sup>*

Her view also highlights the generational difference in the way that violence affects different people. For her generation which is much older, the decreased time they spend on the street decreases the likelihood that they will experience it. Everyone living there understands it to be a problem but have adapted to life where violence can and does erupt often unpredictably so.

In some cases, stories were told to hide aspects of violence in the community while in others they were narrated as a way to highlight that violence was a problem and someone had to step in to assist. Contradictions were common and it was difficult to navigate my way to what I felt represented most closely the 'truth'. The fact is that both ends of the spectrum were true and that violent episodes occurred on a continuum rather than being an either or situation.

When I first broached the subject of violence outside of our Saturday meetings with a small group of boys none of them answered directly and it was as if I had brought up a taboo subject. Looking in hindsight I feel that violence, although a present force in many people's lives in the community, was something of a proscribed subject for discussion with outsiders. Partially due to the fact that the neighbourhood was portrayed in such a negative light that not discussing violence with outsiders seemed a way to shield the community residents from further negative stereotyping and the exclusion that was associated with it. Our initial conversation was stunted and awkward with many denials about the type of violence that I understood occurred however over time this defensive shield was lowered.

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<sup>79</sup> Dona Valdice mentioned during the course of the interview that she didn't see as much violence anymore and she wasn't sure why. I suspected it had to do with the killing of the gang members discussed earlier.

Residents of the area explained the violence that was often directed at them as being perpetrated by outsiders and therefore not a problem that could be easily resolved. When Dona Valdice spoke about violence in the neighbourhood she often attributed it to people coming into the neighbourhood from outside to perpetrate crime. The ebb and flow and constant change of relations between the drug gangs in Plataforma and similar neighbourhoods illustrates the precariousness of the life of its residents. In some ways the quality of many people's lives is determined by who is in power of the drug operations at any given moment and the relationship they have with the community. Juno, one of the programme participants with whom I spent a great deal of time recounted an episode where he was robbed near his house. Juno, like many of the participants came from a single parent home. His mother worked most of the day and it fell to his sister to take care of him and Juno to take care of his younger brother most days. She also had a child of her own. His family was one of the original 'invaders' and before the Ribeira Azul project, lived in a house on palafitas. They benefited directly from the intervention but continued to live with a severe lack of financial resources. His father was not present in his life as a result of his death due to alcoholism. Juno remained very cognisant of this fact and pushed himself to ensure that he did not end up as his father.

*It was stupid. I had just gotten my phone and one guy. I didn't know who it was because it was too dark to see. Came out acting like he had a gun. I wasn't sure but I gave him my phone. (Field notes, August, 2006)*

The other boys joked at him saying that he should have done something. I questioned them about this a bit more, initially thinking that perhaps this robbery would not have been possible under the old way. They answered that under the old gang robberies just didn't take place as much and they were free to walk about almost all hours of the night. Now just after dark everyone goes inside.

### Perversity in networks in Plataforma

In the initial weeks I relied heavily upon Haroldo, my colleague at the Violence and Masculinity programme who was described in detail in Chapter Two. Shortly after we met I set up a formal interview with him to get a sense of how he thought about the programme and also how violence had affected him personally. I wanted to understand his story and how he had come to escape the violence that, as I found out, so many of his peers had fallen victim by either going to prison, joining the gang, or being a victim of a homicide. As we were walking down the long winding hill toward the central plaza he commented jokingly,

*You would never have been able to walk around here like this on your own if you didn't look like us* (Field notes, March, 2006).

With us referring to at least my physical appearance resembling someone who is Brazilian but also someone who belonged in that neighbourhood, someone who was black. An underlying knowledge of certain experiences was assumed and it was expected I would be able to relate to the kinds of experiences people in Plataforma went through.

In our interview and in the subsequent conversations he emphasised the everyday violence clarified by Scheper-Hughes in Chapter Five. He commented,

*That thing about day to day is something like having friends that I was studying with that today are in prison and a few that are already dead and others that are involved in marginality others I don't have any news from them it's like this how these different scenes appear. Like playing football with a friend and he gets shot...Brothers wanting to beat up other brothers it's already something you live with on the day to day* (Interview, March, 2006).

Haroldo recognised that everyday violence affected his life and his ability to achieve the goals he had set for himself. But he was also aware of other forms of violence such as directed violence of institutions discussed in the previous chapter. Despite his ability to overcome these barriers he understood that whether it was actual physical violence or other forms of

more nuanced violence that restricted access to physical or social spaces of the city, many were not as successful as he.

*I believe the absence of the state as one of the principal factors for the cause of this violence...it's something that generally a family doesn't have the financial structure they don't have a proper house to live in... (Interview, March, 2006)*

His own story about the type of violence that affected him came from when he was living in Pirajá.

As he was recounted a narrative to me about his experience growing up, he remembered a figure named Cesar, who was well respected in the community but also involved in the drug trade. The drug trade changed the way that social relationships were constructed. Before the trade became so lucrative everyone respected Cesar and the rules of engagement in the community. Haroldo told a story about some of his first major dealings with Cesar.

*My uncle got into some trouble with the dealers. And it's not like it is now where it doesn't matter if they see you or your brother or mother or sister. It's all the same they'll kill everyone. Back then they would just go after that one person. So my uncle owed the guys. They went into my house 3 times. The first time my mom was there and they just came in asking where he was. The second time I was there with my mom and the last time me my Dad and Mom were all there. That time though they even took my Dad and were shouting at him to tell them where his brother was. He didn't know. When they left they waited there for like an hour or two at the end of the street waiting to see if he would show up. The next day I had to go see Cesar. I told him yea that my Mom was home and she got scared and..He said sorry and asked me if anything had been taken but I said no but that we didn't know where he was. He said sorry again then I left. They caught up with him a few weeks later near the Elevador Lacerda.<sup>80</sup> They brought him all the way back to Pirajá and killed him here. I mean you have to distinguish between here in Plataforma which has Boiadeiro, Cabrito, Plataforma, São Bartolomeu. Pirajá is different. Not even now would they come in and kill your family if you were owed them. Boiadeiro my brother, they don't care. They'll kill everyone husband, wife, son, daughter, it doesn't matter (Interview, March, 2006).*

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<sup>80</sup> The Elevador Lacerda is an iconic part of Bahia where Cidade Baixa is connected to Cidade Alta via an elevator. The construction on the elevator began in 1869 and was finished in 1973. In the past Cidade Baixa was the area of the city where most of the slaves and/or former slaves lived as well as any of the servant class.

His narrative reveals an important insight about how the social landscape of violence is constructed. Plataforma and Pirajá; two different neighbourhoods with very similar characteristics of high crime and high poverty as well as similar histories of how the areas came to exist, have vastly different social norms that have evolved over time. Social norms are not uniform even within neighbourhoods that have been cast as the same. The idea that gangs operate under different rules relates to the neighbourhood in which they ultimately find themselves operating. Each neighbourhood develops different codes of conduct and naturally the individuals despite their deviance from them generally grow up and continue to live in the same areas. Regardless of their current behaviour that endorses the use of violence to resolve territory disputes or the collection of debts for example they remain reliant upon positive social relationships with residents of the neighbourhood. The relationship often shifts back and forth as can be seen in how this plays itself out between community residents of especially Boiadeiro and the gangs there. In Pirajá the code of conduct was to ensure a healthy relationship with the neighbourhood in order to ensure their ability to continue dealing drugs. The neighbourhood often provided a safe haven for gang members that were unable to pursue similar activities in other spaces. Although there are recognisable overlaps in no way is it possible to generalise about how residents feel toward the gang that controls the area. Additionally these relationships are often nuanced and highly complex making it difficult to determine the quality of their interactions without serious consideration.

I wasn't sure where to begin to discuss the gang that I knew existed in Plataforma with the programme participants. Judging from the types of reactions I received when I broached the subject of violence I remained cautious about talking with them because of my apprehension to upset the participants and undo some of the work that we were accomplishing within the programme. Nonetheless at an event to demonstrate the types of skills and knowledge the participants had gained throughout their first months the opportunity

presented itself to discuss the gang with them, its impact upon their lives, and the relationship they had with it.

As we were preparing for the event and I was helping to put together a photo collage of the programme I realised that perhaps we could create a short amateur film about the neighbourhood. Visual representations of completed work often have greater impacts and I felt that I could grab some of the young people there to help me. Armed with my digital camera that takes video (admittedly very poorly) I walked off with two of the boys from the group. They were to narrate as we walked and I recorded. I began asking them questions about the neighbourhood and more particularly about violence and the gang situation there. Initially they were hesitant to answer my questions but then simply stated that gangs weren't really a problem. I felt deflated. Here I was trying to learn about the meaning of gangs to uninvolved youth in a neighbourhood where they did not exist or were not important fixtures of the community. I decided not to insist at that moment and let the matter rest trying to assure myself that perhaps we had not reached the level of trust for them to speak with me on the issue. Their response also contradicted accounts from others who had intimate knowledge of the area and spoke often about the role the gang played. I would learn later that both sets of responses were correct in their own terms. There was no straight forward answer to the gang presence and their relationship had evolved and changed making it difficult to estimate their meaning to the residents.

Later that same week I was in Plataforma until quite late watching a football match. One of the local community leaders had invited me to watch as it was the culmination of a programme they were developing in attempts to give young people activities during the evenings and keep them off of the streets. The group of boys that I worked with showed up during the match and we all sat around talking for a while. After, they didn't want me to walk to the bus stop by myself so walked with me. On the way we passed two 30-something guys

who I thought nothing of until one of the boys pointed out that they were the local bandits and marginals. I boarded the bus reflecting on the meaning of our interaction. Not many words were said but certain dangers were being made known to me and I was unsure as to why. The next day I spent almost the entire day with this same group. I met them at their school where we played basketball, football and dodge ball with a group of younger kids. When we finished we went to one of the local shops to grab some ice cream and I broached the subject of violence again this time questioning them all at length about the situation of gangs in the neighbourhood.

Boiadeiro in many respects does not represent the typical evolution of gang--resident relationships. This is partly due to the interventions that occurred there which effectively divided the community into two during the 1990's (see Chapter Two). As the neighbourhood was cut, so were the norms that ruled it. The space that many once identified with became different despite its close proximity. A psychological divide emerged which allowed for gangs to control the area in a way that created conflict with the neighbourhood and is only now beginning to revert back to its pre-intervention days. Furthermore when I arrived in Boiadeiro it was clear that the area was experiencing a period of relative peace because of the demise of the local gang at the hands of the police. It took months before I was able to piece together the different narratives that explained what happened to the gang. After several attempts to get the group of boys to explain to me what happened they finally felt confident enough to explain in detail what happened.

*Boys: Well you know they used to be a big deal like a year or so ago. But you know it's not like that anymore understand.*

*Me: So what happened?*

*Boys: Well...it's like this. There was the gang that was here. They were all in Boiadeiro but also over on this side and in São Bartolomeu near Haroldo's house. They sold over there and you know just controlled the area. It wasn't like they told us what to do but everyone knows not to go messing around with them. I mean if this*

*was a year ago you would never be able to walk through here like this. Those guys they would ask you all these questions and stuff and if they didn't like you they would rob you maybe ruff you up. They were mixed up with the police too. But that went on for a while until like one of the drug dealers accidentally killed the brother of one of the police. The police were pissed off and were looking all over the neighbourhood for the gang. They couldn't find them though...well it took a while.*

*Me: What did they do?*

*Boys: At first we all thought the gang escaped but the next day some people found them (Field notes, July, 2006)".*

Within one day all of the prominent gang members had been found dead, killed by who everyone believes to be the police. The peripheral members were unable to take over operations because the police remained upset about the killing of the brother and thus the others stayed out of sight for fear of further reprisals. The group commented that at the time everyone was on edge because there was no clear transition from one group to the next leaving the neighbourhood vulnerable to take over from a rival outside gang. Community members felt both apprehension and relief when the gang was killed. Despite the violence they generate, as stated in the previous chapter, they are also a source of stability by providing the neighbourhood with protection from both outside rival gangs but also internally from robberies, thefts, and other criminal activities.

In Plataforma, there was no immediate takeover from a rival gang from an adjacent neighbourhood fomenting anxiety as to what would happen in the coming months. Who would take over and equally important who would protect them from the police were questions that illustrated the precariousness of the situation. After my conversation with the boys I went around trying to confirm the story they told me. Another informant, whom I met early in my time in Plataforma assisted me with understanding some of the nuances of the neighbourhood. Rilane, was college age but did not attend despite her aspirations to go because she could not afford the vestibular courses nor the tuition at the university. She

worked for a community organisation in Plataforma and was very active in her dealings with the community at large belonging to a group of young people who were all striving to go to college and pass the entrance exams. When I approached her about the story that was told to me by the boys she confirmed its validity but added to it.

*Rilane: Did they tell you what's happened since?*

*Me: No.*

*Rilane: Now a police is running the area. Everyone was nervous initially because of what they've done but he kind of took over from the gang. I don't really know what he does but I know that he formed this community watch. Everyone knew him from before and he didn't really have any bad record. The gang deterred a lot of people from crime here. Him less so but at least there is some kind of security (Field notes, July, 2006).*

Their narratives demonstrated a community in constant flux. The level instability that gang networks and the absence of credible state institutions brought to the area impacted the residents dramatically constraining their ability to live 'normal' lives because they were in constant fear for their own security. Security related concerns took their toll on their ability to plan for the future and make decisions that would allow them to reach their goals. Yet residents were caught in between two bad choices. Corrupt police or violent gang members. Through several conversations residents often opted to side with the gangs not only because of their familiarity with them but also because they were the only entity that provided them with any sense of security in the area.

On one particular evening while I was with two of the male program participants we were later joined by some older neighbourhood residents. The boys introduced me as a researcher and foreigner looking at violence in the neighbourhood. Their first few comments were not encouraging. As one put it,

*Why do people always come here and study the bad stuff (Field notes, August, 2006).*

After a few similar comments and a brief discussion though we began talking more specifically about the violence of Plataforma, almost as if it were a subject that no one wanted to talk about but could not resist doing so. Several of them commented that the difficulty of getting rid of gangs came from the gang members' own identity as both community and gang members. In their capacity as community members, even arguably community leaders, they provided for many of the basic needs of the area's most needy residents. One resident explained it like this,

*How can you turn your back on someone who gives you money for food or medicine. One of the neighbours got some money when they couldn't pay their rent, they throw parties too. Around Christmas they give presents to the kids. The city doesn't do anything (Field notes, August, 2006).*

The community did not want to be terrorised by a gang, usually people they knew and grew up with yet it was clear that there was a need for them in the community, a role that they played which was not being filled by the state. From many of the comments I gathered that the gang took over many roles of the state but not all. They were especially involved in providing security but also played a judicial role by arbitrating disputes. Some commented to me that the gang had provided some financial support for the construction of the crèche but this could never be confirmed. Outside of their role as providers of security and an informal judicial system that was by no means fair, they also provided services on a largely ad hoc basis by, for example providing monetary support for residents to buy medicine, pay for clothes, as well as food.<sup>81</sup> Another resident explained how they would operate to keep the community on their side.

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<sup>81</sup> The informal judicial system was largely a way for the gang and its members to protect their own interest by ensuring that disputes did not reach a point where residents would call the police or turn to official channels and thus jeopardise their ability to profit through the drug trade.

In the wake of the demise of the gang a loose affiliation of youth emerged shifting the control of the neighbourhood toward the corrupt police that operated in the area. A weaker gang presence meant that the police were able to operate in the vacuum resulting in what many people considered an increase in police authority and abuse. There was a trade off between the violence of the gang and the violence of the street. Some residents even preferred the violence of the gang because they were people whom they believed shared a common set of values around how to treat community members. Gangs affected the community through their social capital in two ways. First, by engaging with the community and its networks they shared certain values. That is gang members particularly the leader was able to appreciate the collective norms, values, and attitudes of the community which advocated for the basic right to seek a good quality life without harassment or violence. However the gang had the ability to upend these norms because of its willingness to engage in violence to achieve its goals. If any of the norms the community held conflicted or interfered with those of the gang, the gang would automatically be able to impose its will through violence. Thus the norms of the gang would be imposed upon the community and there was little recourse to be able to change them. Second, which feeds into the first creating a vicious circle, is that the social capital between gang members was beneficial only to them, enforcing rules that ensured members were working toward similar goals of profiting from the sale of illegal substances. The norms adopted were the outcome of the use of perverse social capital which benefits members and has negative consequences for non-members. The violence they were able to engage in because of their social capital overflowed to the community creating an unpredictable security, stability, and social environment. Just as in the social capital used by the elite classes to exclude full integration in the city, the gang uses its social capital to pursue its goals which has negative and violent consequences for non-members.

The social capital they employed was sometimes beneficial but only when the norms of both networks matched. Rilane recounted a story about the school and how the former local gang leader intervened.

*Before the gang used to sell right by the school down near my house. But they had a fight with a gang from another area and there was a big shootout. The guy's son goes to that school so he was real mad about it and told all of them that they couldn't sell around the school anymore (Field notes, August, 2006).*

Although this can be looked at as a single reaction because of the leader's son's enrolment in the school it was seen as a way for the gang leader to avoid confrontation with the community in line with how the neighbourhood's collective sense of norms have evolved. Despite the obvious interest in preserving his son's life, community members believed this to be a result of the gang being from the area, the members growing up alongside residents and instilling a certain affinity for the neighbourhood (also Rodgers, 2003). Thus the social capital the gang is able to employ in order to benefit the community works in contradictory ways. It is utilised on one hand to achieve the gangs objectives while on the other simultaneously making the community feel as if it is working in their bests interests.

By contrast, the police were unknown, some were from different neighbourhoods where there was no guarantee of a shared sense of behavioural norms. It was commonly believed that their desire to control certain aspects of community life overrode any affinity that was built over the time in which they operated in the community. Additionally, the community had enough dealing with the police to understand that officers worked for themselves or for the government. Both scenarios were generally not beneficial for the community. If the officers were strictly performing the duties of a police officer as a representative of the government, they reflected the values of dominant networks and thus were part of a system that excluded and discriminated against undesirables. If the officers were corrupt, the used

their own social capital to create networks whose consequences were often negative and violent.

According to Herbert (1996) the police attempt to maintain control over contested space as a way to ensure dominance of the state if only through abuse. What generally tends to occur though is that police abuse and dominance is seen as part of a concerted effort by the state to subjugate low income or peripheral communities. Herbert argues, "There is therefore a geopolitics to policing the street, a set of ongoing tactical efforts to ensure that police presence shall seem all-encompassing and ultimately all-powerful. Police officers regularly exercise territoriality; they seek to influence social action through controlling space. Like other modern systems of social control, police power is realised in and through space" (Herbert, 1996; 226). In the aftermath of the police's obvious intention to 'recapture' space in the community, the emergent loose affiliation of youth maintains a presence in the area despite the obvious shift of power to the police and inability to exert the same pressure on the community to dictate certain collective norms. Instead the community itself collectively monitors social norms through a delicate system of checks and balances that is constantly threatened with being overridden by youth who are brazen enough to challenge the rules through their commitment to engage in more extreme forms of violence or corrupt police officers who wish to intimidate residents through abuse of their own power.

The neighbourhood always feared that their sons in particular were susceptible to the advances of the gang because of what they offer for a young person living in poverty. Cruz (2004) along with McIlwaine and Moser (2007) argue that gang membership often relies on an overwhelming "sense of marginalisation and exclusion (McIlwaine and Moser; pg 128)." Structural deficiencies, discrimination, and the notion that one's life will not get better drive individuals to become involved in gang life because other opportunities are either not realistic or just not there. Recruitment for gangs happens in a variety of ways but being on the street

by oneself can increase exposure and the likelihood that the gangs will begin to take notice and initiate contact. In Plataforma the recruitment process is rarely forced but coercion and the promise of substantial material wealth provides strong incentives. There has always been a large enough population of youth ready and willing to engage with these groups because of the lack of viable alternatives that the gang never had to be forceful about its recruitment process. I asked several of the boys in the programme and they were all emphatic about the fact that generally the gang didn't force people to join. *"They got tons of people wanting to join. They don't really push people."* Marcos commented after I asked them. In fact the demand is generally so high that it has become a status position for many wanting to become involved. Despite the notoriety that comes from joining gangs there is a social norm within the community and the gangs themselves that dissuade younger community residents from joining in Plataforma. Since many of the gang members are community residents themselves they must posture themselves in a way that does not draw the full ire of the community as a way to maintain their position within the community. Forcing youngsters into the gang would cross the line while coercion is far more subtle and less noticeable.

### **Fear and Danger in Plataforma**

Fear and the fear of violence was all too common and was a factor that affected the residents in various ways, changing their behaviour and their attitude toward being a part of the community. Terror and fear were direct results of the violence perpetrated both by the police, the gangs, and petty criminals. Despite some of their best efforts community residents were subject to their fears of what could occur during their outings in the street particularly when the sun set and a real sense of foreboding about the coming night settled on the area. Fear, both real and imagined, was further propagated by the constant stories that reinforced the idea that the neighbourhood was indeed a dangerous place where one needed to be fearful.

Outsiders commented on the danger because they were constantly updated about instability through anecdotes from friends and family that either pass by or live in Plataforma but also a media that portrays the area negatively. These negative perceptions and fear that accompany it are not unfounded but are unbalanced. Clearly the anecdotes and media reports that people hear despite the occasional embellishments are based in fact and real. Yet because these reports are not balanced with other news, an aura of fear of the unknown pervades many who have never travelled there. The following narratives create a more nuanced version of the area that has developed in light of the violence that is perpetrated by those who are able to wield power via their inclination to use violence.

Despite the complex relationship the gang in Plataforma has had with the community it remains one of the primary sources of fear and violence. They engaged in behaviour that created fear and terror substantiating the idea that the area is dangerous. Throughout our sessions a character began emerging whenever we spoke about gangs. She was a resident of the community, not a programme member but everyone knew her either personally or at the very least through anecdotes that were in wide circulation about her behaviour. She was young like the other programme participants and had a 'hard life' even relative to the others. She grew up in Plataforma and with absent parents had been raised on the street by various figures that had passed through her life. The neighbourhood pitched in where it could but could not make up for the fact that she had no fixed place to rest her head nor a family unit that assumed responsibility for her. The narrative that was told about her described her interaction with the gang.

*Ariana (chuckles) is this girl everyone knows her because she's kinda crazy. She's an addict and has been in jail before but she also owes the drug dealers some money. So she steals stuff in the neighbourhood and no one really took it seriously at first until she was caught by one of the dealers. They made her hold a fire cracker in her hand while they lit it. She got hurt real bad, her hand was all bloody and ran off. We didn't see her again (Field notes, May, 2006).*

Despite the gruesome nature of the story it underscores the ambivalence between their role as providers of security from external forces yet also perpetrators of violence within their own communities. Ariana's story helped to solidify the idea that the neighbourhood was violent and the people within it criminals. It was a story like so many others that played in the minds of its residents creating a self-fulfilling prophecy that becomes vicious circular argument continually reinforcing itself.

As I tried to map out what were the most violent parts of the neighbourhood I conducted an exercise with the programme participants. My first direct research outside of the daily participant observations and the weekly focus group sessions was to conduct a cognitive mapping exercise with the programme participants. I decided to use a technique called cognitive mapping to understand the interaction between physical and social spaces. Cognitive mapping was first developed by Kevin Lynch (1960) as a way to give neighbourhood residents a way to visually express the physical features of the neighbourhoods in which they lived. Each resident's map was unique because each viewed the neighbourhood in a different way. The technique could be used to map a variety of characteristics because it is an abstract visualisation but one that has direct meaning to anyone marking maps in this way. Social capital has never been linked to cognitive map making so that the concept can be infused into understanding the social space in which social networks occupy, the boundaries they develop, the amount of influence they hold, and the benefits they provide to their members (Radil, et. al, 2010). During the exercise, I asked a series of questions that helped me to visualise the dangers that the gangs in the area represented and how frequently the programme participants would have to cross their paths. I also asked about the spaces in which they felt safe thinking that these spaces would also overlap with the positive pro-social networks in their lives. I asked four principal questions and developed a discussion around those specific

questions asking follow-ups about other types of related issues in terms of danger and safety.<sup>82</sup>

When I asked the first question most participants responded by saying their home, the Violence and Masculinity programme, a friend's house, a relative's house, or some type of community organisation. Many commented the Cabricultura and ASPASB as areas they both feel safe and also frequent. ASPASB has an indoor football pitch and thus was popular among the boys from the group. Included in their important places they mentioned areas of leisure. In Figure 6.1 one of the areas of importance sits just on the Enseado do Cabrito, and has several bars, a small park, and offers some leisure and outdoor activity for the community. They all mentioned that the *Praça de São Brás* as a popular and very safe area both during the day and night but in order to get there, some had to pass through areas that were not as secure. The other areas where they felt safe included a cultural centre as well as a teacher's house for one of the participants. In this particular case the teacher actively engaged his students inviting them over to his house for discussions about films they watched or texts they read. He offered a safe and comfortable space yet his house was located just next to a known dealer sale point and thus the mix between safety and insecurity remains. Plataforma, or rather the upper region of it was considered far more safe than the smaller neighbourhoods of Boiadeiro, São Bartolomeu, and São João do Cabrito. São Bartolomeu's principal avenue during the evening was to be avoided because it was secluded and bordered the neighbourhood of Pirajá, which many feared because of a strong gang presence there.

Inevitably we began our discussion about dangerous places and the all the participants marked their maps corresponding to the areas where they felt the most insecure. As the discussion developed, the vast majority of the areas they mentioned were areas where

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<sup>82</sup> The four questions asked were: (1) What areas of Plataforma do you feel most safe?; (2) What areas of Plataforma do you feel the least safe?; (3) What areas of Plataforma do you consider important?; (4) Which areas of Plataforma do you frequent the most?

there was known gang activity. Several of the maps they produced highlighted areas (*bocas de fumo*) where the gang actively sold drugs in the past before its demise and the areas they continued selling despite their reduced size. Only a few mentioned areas they did not feel safe in because of infrastructure problems such as poor lighting or abandoned streets. According to the participants it was a question of timing. During the evenings and late at night, it was expected that you went home because of the assaults that occur when the sun is gone. If you are out at night, you have to stick to the main roads and hurry to your destination if it meant going to areas that were poorly lit particularly then, when the neighbourhood was in transition from gang to something else.

Figure 6.1: Cognitive Map of gang activity and important places by the programme participants in Plataforma



Source: Field notes (2006): The map is a collection of the maps that were drawn by the participants themselves. Unfortunately their paper maps could not be transferred digitally.

Safety and security did not always coincide with the home as was demonstrated with one of the girls from the programme. In this case the programme participant was the daughter of a different father and received far worse treatment than that of her sisters. Her father was verbally abusive however did not resort to physical violence. The other areas where they felt safe included a cultural centre as well as a teacher's house for one of the participants. In this particular case the teacher actively engaged his students inviting them over to his house for discussions about films they watched or texts they read. He offered a safe and comfortable space yet his house was located just next to a known dealer sale point and thus the line between safety and insecurity remained blurred.

My initial sense of Plataforma was that one part in particular was relatively calm and did not exhibit the same intensity of violence as Boiadeiro for instance. However as Rilane related to me there is a constant struggle between the police and the gang there. The violence comes from various sources such as the buy-seller dynamic, rival gangs, the police, and gangs providing security in the neighbourhood for example. The buyer-seller dynamic creates violence for those who cannot pay debts owed. This dynamic often spills over to the family when the debtor cannot pay his/her family is threatened and sometimes members can be killed. Rival gangs are an obvious source of violence. Gangs will fight for drug sale points in order to increase their market share. Often rival gangs will begin trying to take over rival territories by creating instability through violence in the neighbourhood. They will send their members to kill rival gang members but in the process try and also kill a by-standers that have nothing to do with the drug gang. They then may approach key community members discussing with them how the current gang cannot keep the community safe. This creates a dynamic where the community no longer supports the local gang leadership wanting either the police or another gang to takeover because of the insecurity being perpetrated by another gang. The community permits gang members to stay through a code of silence. If the

community begins to feel unsafe and insecure they may begin to provide the police with information that would lead to the arrest but more often death of the gang leader. Once the police have come in and killed the gang, the rival gang moves in to take over the territory and provide stability and security. The conflict between the police generates violence in two ways. First, the police operate as both formal legitimate entities but also as informal illegitimate entities and as described in Chapter Five, the line between the two is often blurred. This types of scenarios cause disruption in the lives of the community. They often must find a space in the middle and hope not to get drawn too deeply into the constant feuds and struggles that erupt between the two.

Carla, a vocal and bright programme participant illustrated the fear and danger that go along with having the gang operate in the community. Her brother was indebted to the drug traffickers which caused her tremendous grief almost throughout the entire time she was in the programme. He had fled the neighbourhood but the gang was relentless and toward the middle of the programme had begun threatening the entire family. The situation had reached a point where she was unable to think clearly and was constantly fearful of what would happen to her and her family. Fortunately the gang never carried out their threats on the family but at several points during the year Carla 'disappeared' because she was unable to keep hiding her emotions, for good reason, about her family. Her family lived in constant fear of what she thought was inevitable be it a death of one of her other family members or her brother or herself.

The police who operate in the area were in constant struggles with the gang despite the corruption and police pay-offs that everyone knew occurred. Like the cycle of the gang individual police officers would sometimes rise as neighbourhood protectors but it would not last. Another participant, Vanessa described a neighbour of hers who was a police officer and had made a conscious decision to do something about the violence perpetrated by the gang

in the neighbourhood. Not backed up officially, he created a neighbourhood watch that created their own violence, independent of the gang.<sup>83</sup> As she described it, he was as corrupt as the others and saw opportunity which propelled him to follow through with his actions. The neighbourhood watch he created went beyond providing deterrence through their presence but acted as judge and executioner to reduce violence. One of their acts included killing an alleged rapist in the area. Over a period of a few months several women had been harassed and one assaulted. During that time women in the area did not go outside after dark for fear of being sexually assaulted by the man. The neighbourhood watch talked with several of the victims and finally identified him and killed him without bringing him before an official court. As much as this may be an affront to those who seek to use official channels to resolve these types of situations those channels either do not exist or are extremely corrupted in the eyes of Plataforma residents and thus are not used. Justice many feel is to be taken into their own hands because the state cannot be relied upon to resolve these types of problems. The police officer that helped created the neighbourhood watch took it into his own hands to deal with other alleged criminals and for a time he was able to create a sense of security despite his methods. He was eventually killed by one of the traffickers but his tenure lasted long enough in the minds of many people to help alleviate the constant fear they experienced for a time.

During late nights I was never allowed to walk on my own as a result of the increasing perceived instability of the security in the area. Someone always came with me if they knew I was around and someone was always worried to make sure that I arrived and left safely. I can recall one instance in which I arrived well after dark to meet with one of the

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<sup>83</sup> This type of group operates differently from the militias that are more common in Rio de Janeiro. Groups in Rio often provide abundant services however in the case of this group they were not involved in anything beyond providing security within the area. This group was not formalised as militias often are.

participants to go over some of his homework. When I arrived at his house his mother appeared extremely worried almost lecturing me about the dangers of walking around on the streets late at night. She immediately related a story about how a young girl waiting for the bus alone at night had been raped only several weeks prior and that security was not guaranteed after the sun went down. Our sessions with the program participants continued and as they did other topics which highlighted the marked change of past with contemporary security situation in Plataforma emerged.

As we spoke more about the neighbourhood and the violence that the participants experienced we also discussed how transgressions against community social norms were punished. Most of the participants agreed that transgressors deserved to die if their faults were of a serious nature. Initially the conversation centred around general violent episodes of assaults but then changed to discussing specifically both thefts and sexual assaults. All of the participants reiterated the phrase, "*Ladrão morre*" or 'robbers die'. I questioned them about this and they came to a general consensus that if someone is found to rob from the neighbourhood in an egregious way, they can be hurt severely and in some cases killed. One of the young female participants recounted a story about an encounter with a man who was accused of sexually assaulting a young girl.

*Well that guy he had to run for his life you know. They were coming for him because they thought he raped this girl from around the area. Robbers die but for rapists it's even worse* (Field notes, March, 2006).

There is a definite hierarchy in the way criminals are perceived in the neighbourhood. Thieves and robbers are contended with daily. Despite the fact that no one likes them and the fact that they rob within the neighbourhood the most vehement dislike is reserved for rapists which reside at the bottom of the hierarchy. One of the young girls in the programme, who defined herself somewhat apart from the others was very much in favour of the gang's demise. She

recounted an experience in which the then gang, different from the one whose members had just been murdered, terrorised her family.

*They came into our house with guns. (She pauses) They came in shouting like give us everything you got! But we didn't have anything we just had food. They then started threatening to kill me if we didn't give them anything. I just lost it. I ran out the house screaming (Field notes, June, 2006).*

Two other girls in the programme had similar experiences. One recounted an incident in which her brother was killed by the gang. As she told the story she became extremely retrospective and suddenly somewhat withdrawn because of the obvious closeness she shared with her brother. She was extremely upset at the gang and any of its remnants because of what they did to her brother. As she explained it he was uninvolved in criminal activity and therefore the killing was not justified. This event goes back to the complicated relationship that develops between gang and community. Not everyone is willing to accept their actions as a necessary part of the neighbourhood. They define the group in more negative terms based upon past personal experiences of violent encounters with the gang. During her account she constantly asked why they killed him. She could not understand why a gang would kill someone that was not involved in their criminal lifestyle. Her obvious distaste for their behaviour was also reflected in another similar story about someone who was killed by the gang. The story was of a particular distressing nature because none of the participants could make sense of the motivation behind the gang other than to show that they did it because they could.

One of the boys began telling an anecdote about a neighbourhood street kid.<sup>84</sup> He was thought to be mentally disabled and spent a lot of time on his own collecting cans for

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<sup>84</sup> I use the term street child here very loosely. Despite the obvious poverty of the neighbourhood there were very few visible signs of that level of depravity. Part of the reason for this is that although families do not have a great deal of material wealth responsibilities

recycling. In this particular narrative they said that one day one of the members, who was known to be particularly vicious, mentioned that he was tired of the boy and wanted to play some kind of joke on him. No one could say for sure what happened or definitively confirm that it was the result of the gangs joke, that went too far, that killed the street kid but his body was found a few days later nonetheless. It was assumed the gang was responsible for his death. The reaction of the participants who all shared in the story reflected their ambivalent reception to the gang and often their distaste and distrust for their behaviour. They were very cautious not to condemn them completely but did not want to have them rule their lives in a way that opened them up to be the victims of arbitrary violence.

On the same day another interesting narrative surfaced. One of the girls in the programme lived next to a boy who had recently become actively involved in the gang. He had always been involved through family connections. Some of his brothers and his father were involved, but he was never considered an active member.<sup>85</sup> I asked them why they thought he got involved in the gang.

*I think he got involved because of his Dad. He always wanted revenge and I kept telling him you gotta stay away from that stuff man. But he doesn't listen. Others chimed in about the boy who they all knew. Yea he just saw some bad stuff growing up. I mean most of his family is into all that stuff and then when his Dad got killed he went crazy. He got real mean and just wouldn't listen to anyone anymore* (Field notes, March, 2006).

His change in behaviour was a source of real disappointment for all the participants who knew him and considered him to be a friend. This narrative is somewhat indicative of the dangers of living in such a community and as the participants pointed out to me, his rationale for becoming involved in that lifestyle, despite his connection with other types of people in the

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are shared by the community thus the youth who did not have a home per se, was taken in by various members of the community and cared for.

<sup>85</sup> It was my suspicion that his father was actually one of the members that had been killed by the police during their conflict. However I was never able to confirm this.

neighbourhood was personal and more of a result of his feelings of revenge and disgust for the system he believed betrayed him. This narrative also confuses the central question of the research which is why do some youth become involved in this type of social network while others close themselves off from it? Although the participants of the programmes' families were not involved in criminal networks, they were all exposed to similar patterns of violence through the community. Loury's (1977) writing are particularly instructive here. As Loury points out networks and the social capital within them is inherited and thus this boy inherited them from his father and brothers. For those growing up in gang networks, the social norms are normalised and the logical path would be to continue with the behaviours and attitudes that have been taught since an early age. If privileged children learn and inherit opportunities, wealth, and the social capital to achieve success in their networks, the disadvantaged inherit the social capital from their parents in the same way. In the case of gang networks the social capital they receive is not only destructive for themselves but has detrimental consequences for others around them as well. Thus for the disadvantaged, the social capital used by the elite classes to exclude and discriminate against them represents one constraint while the social capital used by gangs to normalise violent behaviour represents another.

## Conclusion

The instability and insecurity experienced by the community has conditioned how individual residents deal with these uncertainties in their lives. The violence in the neighbourhood accustomed residents to be fearful and caused tremendous amount of anxiety that was hard to overcome. Unable to turn to formal governmental structures to resolve the insecurity in the area, they relied upon informal social networks such as gangs and corrupt police officers who would be able to at least provide the residents with some form of protection. Unlike the governmental institutions whose laws are supposed to protect the vulnerable, there was no

such formal contract with the gang or other informal security apparatus. Although disputes could be resolved through these informal structures, equality, fairness, and balance in devising resolutions is not the norm. Gangs would hand down justice that protected their own interests by severely disciplining infractors to demonstrate that transgressions were met with extreme brutality. This has two consequences. First it shows that the gang is willing to use extreme forms of violence to resolve such disputes reinforcing an atmosphere of fear and anxiety for community residents. Second, it allows the gang to pursue its own interests by demonstrating to community residents their seriousness about crime so the community will see the benefit in their continued presence and not share information about them with the police or other formal authorities.

The ability of gangs and other similar informal networks to provide services especially security to the community created a sense of ambivalence. Various authors studying gangs in Latin America and other parts of the world have highlighted many of the principal motivations gangs have for providing such services such as ensuring that community members 'owe' gang members and ensuring a safe and secure environment to continue their illegal trade as well as how gang have emerged in modern Latin American countries (Perlman, 1976; 2010; Zaluar, 1994, 1999, 2000; Leeds, 1996; Davis, 1998; Rodgers, 2003; Goldstein, 2003; Moser and McIlwaine, 2004, 2006; Kruijt, 2004; Winton, 2004, 2005; Arias, 2006; Manwaring, 2007; McIlwain and Moser, 2007; Penglase, 2009; Wolseth, 2011). On the one hand community residents understood that the gang was, in some ways, filling a role that was the responsibility of the government specifically the police. While on the other acceptance of such services especially those beyond security, indebted individuals to the gang and placed them in opposition to the government and its most visible representation in low-income neighbourhoods, the police. Yet because there was an additional sense of not only abandonment but also rejection by the government displayed through its engagement in

violent methods to exclude and discriminate undesirable populations, community residents were torn between giving their support to the gang or the police. The community though was not completely powerless and had recourses to manipulate situations to their advantage by playing one network against the other. Most did not engage in this type of dangerous game because the consequences were too grave and thus residents had to accept both without the other discovering that their loyalties were split. The community above all desired peace and stability and the power to pursue their lives without interference from violence or criminality. This was nearly impossible in an environment like Plataforma, where social conventions allowed for the use of violence to pursue goals particularly for those in networks whose norms encouraged its exploitation.

Social capital, as it is used by gang members and corrupt police officers was beneficial for members and detrimental for everyone else. As was discussed in Chapter Three, social capital is a neutral by-product of repeated social interactions that can both hinder and help individuals overcome the challenges they face. For the gang, social capital absolutely played this role by pushing its members to engage in behaviour that allowed the group as a whole to achieve its goals of pursuing profits through drug sales. The problem with this is not actually the interest in profit-making but rather the associated willingness to use violence to achieve those goals. Other gang networks engage in violence to claim sale points, increase territory, and settle disputes and in any business the innovator wins. The innovation in this case is violence which has ramifications for how the entire community lives. It is also important to note that perverse social capital of the gang is similar to that of elite groups who employ directed violence reflected in their social norms that condone excluding and discriminating against the disadvantaged through the use of violence perpetrated by formal institutions such as the police.

Nonetheless, social capital and indeed social networks are inherited as pointed out by Glen Loury in Chapter Three. Gang networks and their associated social capital is inherited just as elite networks and their benefits are passed down from parents to children. For those already associated with gang networks through their family, it becomes even more difficult to pursue other interests because of the normalisation of gang values and behaviours. While these individuals may seek out pro-social networks their immediate networks pull them into the perversity of the social capital of the gang. Young people pursuing their goals but growing up in an environment where violence has become routine found it difficult to escape its negative consequences. But they, like the rest of the community had to creatively look for ways to pursue their dreams without falling trap to the violence that surrounded them. In the next chapter, I explore what specific strategies young people in Plataforma used in order to avoid criminality and violence

# Chapter 7: Avoidance Strategies of Non-Violent Youth

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## Introduction

In Plataforma itself of course, violence and conflict are not abstract aggregate notions but long term conditions in the community as demonstrated in the previous chapter. It is important therefore for residents to adapt daily practices and learn to deal with both violence and threats. Many of their coping mechanisms do not come in the form of formalised institutional linkages because of their exclusion from them by elite social classes. Nor sometimes are they even conscious strategies and come partially through the social networks that helped to protect them from some forms of the violence while augmenting others. Their neighbours, friends, relatives and family all played a role in their ability to escape the violence of the street and involve themselves with networks that were not only expansive but connected to broader parts of the Brazilian society and beyond. This chapter shows that residents understood the realities in which they lived and how to navigate from away from the perversity of social capital as employed both by gangs and elite social network toward the influence of pro-social networks and other groups such as social development programmes. The principal research question this chapter asks is: (1) What tools, techniques, or opportunities exist for young people that help them avoid involvement in violence and criminality in their neighbourhood?

In this final chapter I explore the social networks the programme participants relied upon and how they either pushed them toward or away from joining violent social groups. It is not this author's belief that social capital has the ability to transcend other forms of interventions that are necessary in order to support those living in environments that are dangerous but rather it forms an additional element that can aid individuals in the pursuit of

their goals. Despite the idea that social networks do not have the power to transform or challenge all of the social problems that a community may face, for the programme participants the networks to which they belonged played fundamental roles in their ability to navigate between their various social worlds. As I will explain despite the influence of these networks some of the participants were unable to escape the violence of the street and found that the very networks that could have profound positive impacts upon their lives operated in reverse condemning them to violence that was closer and more difficult to understand. Social networks were not the only response to their experience of violence but rather one component of many that pushed the youth participants into avoiding involvement in street level violence or joining violent social groups. Personal characteristics and their belief in their abilities to attain a positive future also played roles in the way that the participants were able to avoid violence. Yet, many of their personal sensibilities derived from the networks and personal ambitions they had for themselves that were strictly against involving oneself in criminal or violent acts. Barker's (1998) dichotomy of non-violent males discussed in Chapter Three is instructive because it demonstrates that social networks play a significant role in the ability of young people to escape violence and criminality.

The principal questions of the chapter focus on the programme participants themselves using their narratives to understand the role that social networks played in their lives and how they were able to harness the social capital within them to avoid becoming involved in violent social groups or how social capital condemned them to participation. Their involvement with the Violence and Masculinity programme is key in understanding how they have come to rely upon the social networks to which they belong in order to escape street level violence. What separates this particular group of individuals that have the same risk factors for becoming involved in violence social groups from those that actually become involved? The answer to this question lies in the details and minutia of their lives not in broad

stroked answers that fail to understand the dynamics and complexities of lives lived in such environments. The idea that impoverished are more likely to become involved in crime just does not square with the research that I have conducted.

The chapter will map out the social networks of a selected group of the participants to understand not only their connections but the strengths of these connections and how they act upon the individual programme participants to push them away from gang involvement. Along with each mapped network an explanation about life experiences will also be important as a mode for analysis and a way to differentiate those that participate in gangs and those that do not. Finally I will explore the one type of violence that many participants were unable to escape; violence within the home. This section is used to understand the reality in which they live and above all to demonstrate not only the pitfalls of exclusively relying on social capital as a means to promote the positive aspects of community but also that certain forms of violence were far more damaging both psychologically and physically and difficult to avoid.

### **Interacting with violence and violent networks**

The Violence Masculinity programme began conducting photography workshops with the participants over the course of three weeks. At the end of those workshops we decided to go through the neighbourhood to shoot video and take pictures of the area. Marcelo, Juno, and Vitória were with me that particular day. Vitória lives a few doors down from Marcelo. Her mother is Tatiana and like other families in the community, is extremely cognisant of their socio-economic position and the problems they face above and beyond other families. That knowledge was clearly imparted to Vitória and she showed a profound grasp of many of the issues we discussed yet for a long while Vitória seemed somewhat uninterested in the programme itself and more interested in simply interacting with the other programme participants. Her interest in the programme though grew and she eventually volunteered

herself to help me and Marcio photographing points of interest in the neighbourhood. We decided to film again with Marcio narrating the things we saw. As we moved from different points we were later joined by Marcelo, who walked with us for a long while. We approached one intersection where Marcio lowered his voice and said,

M: *This is where they sell. But I don't see any of them out here. Referring to the dealers. Don't worry we can still take some pictures no one is gonna bother us.* (Field notes, October, 2006)

Just as he finished his sentence a young male about 16 or so passed by shouting,

Young Male: *You quebrar a maquina toda. or I'm gonna break that camera to bits.*

Immediately Marcelo and Marcio began talking back to him aggressively while I tried to get our group away from the guy. I wasn't sure if he was a gang member or not but I wasn't going to risk any confrontation should he turn out to be involved with them. Marcelo and Marcio were still yelling insults at the guy as I pushed them away and started walking in another direction.

As they began to calm down they starting talking about the boy.

Marcio: *Sometimes I can't stand that guy. He is always trying to cause trouble.*

Me: *Who is he?*

Marcio: *Nobody.*

Me: *Is he in the gang?*

Marcio/Marcelo: *No! He's the son of the baker. Sometimes he runs with them but he is not in it like for real in it.*

Me: *You shouldn't go trying to start stuff with him even if he isn't really in the gang. He could go and tell someone or whatever. I just don't want something to happen.*

Marcio: *We know. It's cool. He won't do anything. You can't let him walk all over you though* (Field notes, October, 2006).

In an instant both Marcelo and Marcio were ready to trade words with the boy. Despite his loose affiliation with the gang they felt they could not let a transgression of that sort go to

ensure that they continued to command respect in their own areas. Marcos, a community leader from a local social development programme whom I interviewed described the idea of respect in this way.

*I remember a while back. Two young people from the area. They were standing on opposite sides of the street and one of the boys thought the other was looking at him. So he said, "What's wrong." The other boy didn't say anything and just kept walking. So then he began shouting at him and the boy who walked away turned around and started shouting back. Then the neighbourhood came out and separated them. Later on both boys go back and told their families and now the brothers, uncles, and fathers are all involved because they don't want to lose face. But you see respect is the only thing they have so they will fight to get it even if they involved the whole family. Eventually one of the brothers and uncles was hurt from the family fighting until the neighbourhood stepped in to resolve it (Interview July, 2006).*

The idea of respect was in many cases one of the only types of currencies that many people felt they had. Any transgressions against one's honour had to be dealt with and harshly in order to ensure one's safety.

### Pro-social networks

Some participants displayed connections with networks that had broader more expansive linkages and whose members could assist them in passing the college entrance exams and getting into a university or point them in the direction of other social development programmes that would assist them in creating linkages with other groups or individuals that could assist them in this. For some, there was an informational vacuum. Many of the opportunities that would be applicable to them were simply unknown.

*We find out about jobs and things from our parents or friends. There aren't that many of them but we make do (Field notes, May, 2006).*

Lana said in response to my questions about how they find out about jobs in one of the focus group sessions. I then asked them how they all found out about the Violence and Masculinity programme. The responses were almost unanimous. They had all found out from only two sources; seeing the flyer or from a friend who had applied. For me, this pointed to an idea that

percolated early on that many of the individuals in the Violence and Masculinity programme represented a network of their own whose members were constantly searching for social development programmes such as this but also other like individuals whom they could rely on to move through Plataforma and encounter the least amount of interference from gangs or other violent groups.<sup>86</sup> However because the participants are only connected with people from their own neighbourhood who largely are involved in the same networks, it remains difficult to find opportunities that would not only protect them from the negative consequences of the perverse social capital of the gang but also allow them to overcome exclusion and discrimination directed toward them by elite social classes. This was a far more complicated undertaking. The majority of the participants could not point to relationships they had with others outside of the neighbourhood who could help them get jobs, obtain scholarships, or get into college entrance exam preparation courses. Those relationships only began with their acceptance to the Violence Masculinity programme and the other programmes. Exclusion from networks with abundance resources and well-connected individuals highlights the imbalance of how social capital is used to maintain unequal social relationships. This refutes the arguments made about social capital's transformative power by illustrating that collective action through social networks can have beneficial affects when utilised in conjunction with the backing of formal structures for example which would enable the disadvantaged to confront and overcome entrenched elite interests.

The primary networks of the participants were my first investigation and I created a narrative for each of the programme participants to understand the role their families played or not in their ability to avoid violent social groups. Primary social networks generally consist of

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<sup>86</sup> This idea proved to be partly true. Although many of the participants had not been involved in social development programmes before the values they had which evolved during their experience at the programme pushed them to seek out other programmes that would provide them with positive opportunities.

one's family (mothers, fathers, siblings, etc) and are the first point of examination because they are the people to whom most individuals have the greatest connection. They are also the people that give individuals their first forms of information and engender the types of values that are infused within social networks of any kind. These networks are also inherited putting the inheritor on a specific path before they are able to make constructive choices on their own. This path is positive if you are born into a network with very well-connected individuals who are willing to share their success. For those born into networks with little access to beneficial resources find themselves having to play catch up when and if they realise the challenges they face. The behaviour learned within the family is thus extremely important and sets any individual up in the position they will have for the future.<sup>87</sup> Each of the narratives that were created were placed into a social network matrix.<sup>88</sup>

Almost all of the mothers of each of the participants worked as domestics in the homes of wealthy families who largely lived within the city. They would leave early in the mornings and not return until late in the evenings. This left many of the participants susceptible to other networks particularly peer networks and others that were within the area.

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<sup>87</sup> This logic does not assume that there is no way to break out of asocial or anti-social behaviour but rather that the information and values, norms and trust that are infused within the individual from the family are their first interactions with social networks and are thus sometimes more meaningful particularly in the onset of one's life.

<sup>88</sup> The primary networks of the participants as mentioned were extremely important and it is important to note that out of the 21 participants only three lived with both their mother and their father.

Figure 7.1: Acerola's network relationships

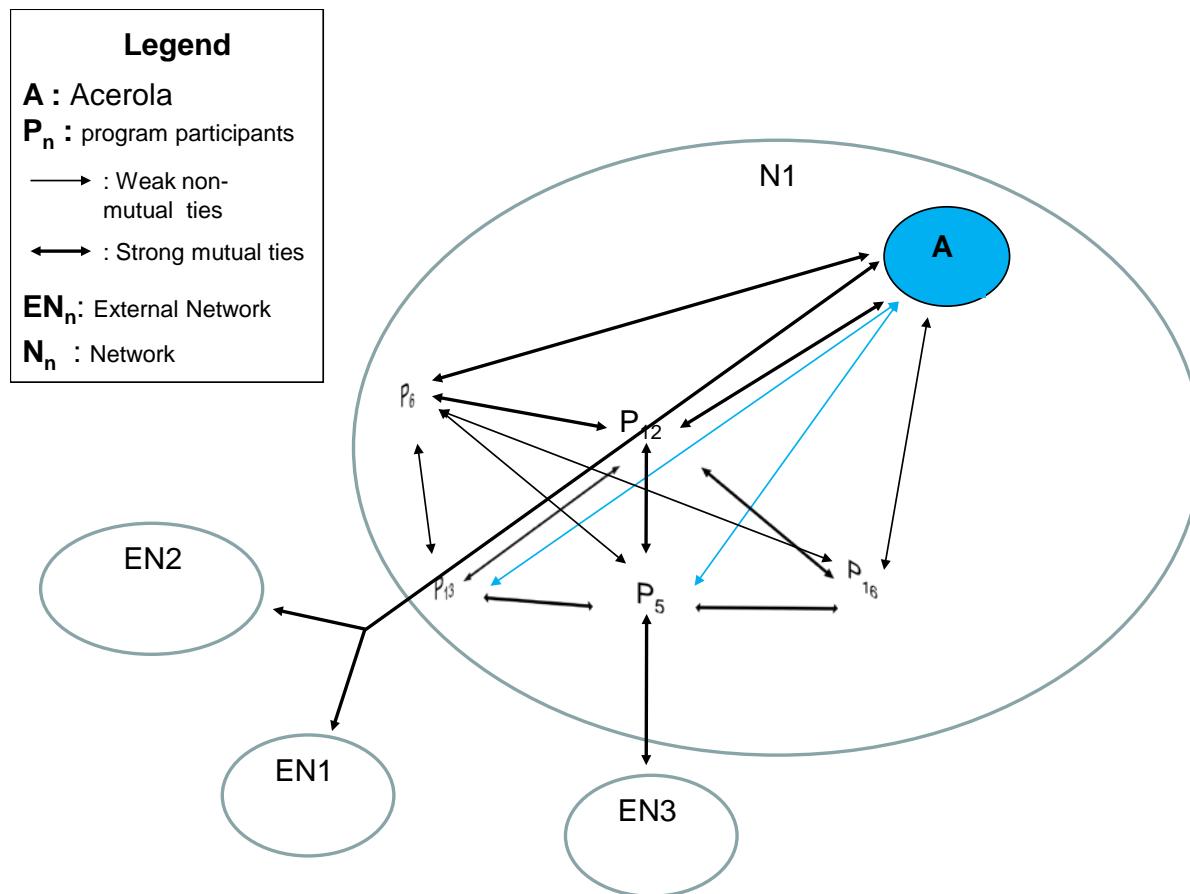


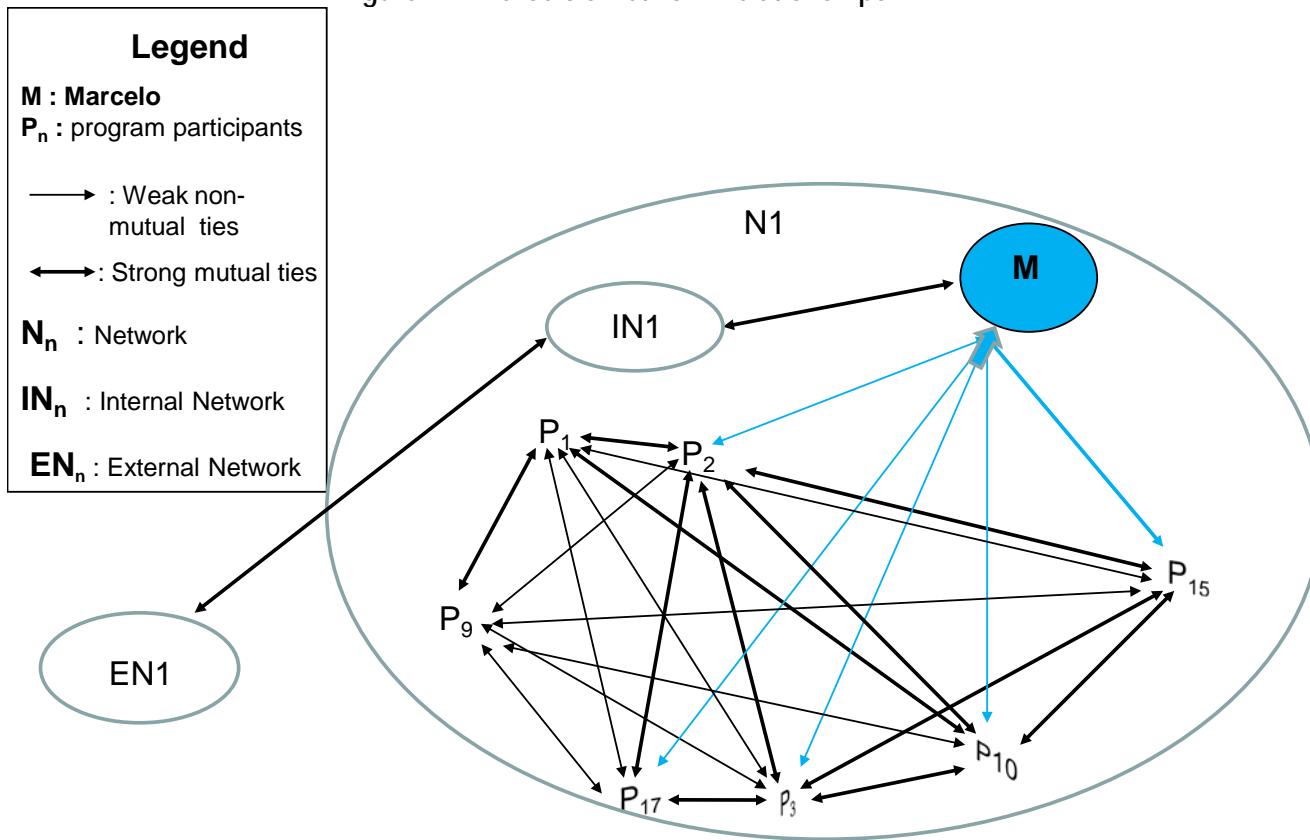
Figure 7.1 shows the networks Acerola and his relationships with external networks. Only three of the participants had links with external networks. Figure 7.1 features one of the older Violence and Masculinity participants, Acerola. His external networks marked by  $EN_n$  show his involvement with two different external networks.  $EN_1$  is a dance/music to which he helped coordinate while  $EN_2$  depicts his connection with the Violence and Masculinity programme. The troupe travelled the city, the region, and nationally. It was composed largely of girls from another low-income neighbourhood in which Acerola's mother lived. His father was an electrician and Acerola's hopes to one day become an engineer were fuelled not only by his father's success but also the consistent and influential role his mother played. She would describe herself as an informed and concerned citizen and she pushed Acerola to take charge of his own destiny especially as it pertained to his education. Although Figure 7.1 only depicts the linkages and not the frequency and quality of these connections which will be described below, his networks were almost all positive and supportive. They range from the individual level and bonding varieties to the more expansive networks that are needed to get ahead and become more socially and economically mobile. He received support from both the dance/troupe but also the Violence and Masculinity programme granting him access to well connected individuals who shared their social capital with him. His family provided the primary and initial hopes and dreams of becoming an engineer through the contact and work in which his father engaged but also the insistence of his mother to get a good education.

Both organisations had broader connections throughout the city and directly gave him access to information about other social development programmes that would be useful to him, a free/low-cost college entrance exam preparation course, as well as scholarship programmes run through a local philanthropic foundation. Acerola's networks provided a positive iterative sequence beginning with his family that was so instrumental in infusing in him the values and norms that were necessary to make him think differently about the challenges

that he faced on a daily basis. The social capital infused in the values of the individuals within the network steered him away from joining the local gang because he had access to superior options.

The networks to which he belonged offered him two things that were far more important and valuable than anything the gang could possibly match. First the networks in and of themselves were expansive and connected him to information that allowed him to achieve the goals and desires that were so important to him. Second his connections made him realise that the future he wanted was possible. The lack of quality education, absence of the state, and the exclusion and discrimination directed at him from elite social classes were challenges that were surmounted in part because of his connection with these networks. Getting an education and becoming an engineer did not pose any of the risks he would face as a gang member and the benefits that gangs offered in terms of strong social bonds were already present in Acerola's life through his family, friends, and colleagues. In Acerola's case the benefits he would achieve within his own networks were far greater than those being offered by gangs. His needs were met and alternative choices were available to him making any decisions to join the gang inconsistent with achieving his goals. One of the many reasons some youth become involved in gangs is because of the socio-emotional role that gangs play in their lives often replacing the supportive function that primary social networks are intended to play in the lives of young people. Acerola was in no need of this type of support because he received it already from his primary network but also from the others to which he belonged. The influence of the gang was therefore curtailed by his placement in other networks that provided even greater benefits.

Figure 7.2: Marcelo's Network Relationships



Marcelo, the participant who was mentioned in earlier chapter also had a diverse range of social networks that extended beyond the neighbourhood before he became involved in the Violence and Masculinity programme. Although his networks were not quite as strong as Acerloa's, they were able to provide him with access to information and real alternatives for his future. His primary network in particular was not the same source of strength exhibited by Acerloa's. Figure 7.2 maps the networks to which Marcelo belongs. His mother, although an important part of his life did not push him in the same way that Acerloa's mother did nor did he have a father who represented a role model for his later career development. His future desires and goals were therefore not as strong and as a result he was more at risk to being influenced by the gang and the benefits it would afford him. This is not to say that his primary networks were not positive and supportive. His mother played a large role and she supported him in the way that she knew how. Yet they were not connected with broader networks that would assist him to achieve some of the goals he desired.

In the year preceding his entrance into the programme Marcelo was a participant in an organisation operated and funded by UNESCO called Sociedade 1º de Maio (mentioned in Chapter Three) that had a long history within the neighbourhood. It was run by a woman from Rio de Janeiro who had broad connections not only within Plataforma but also throughout the city, state, and region. Additionally, she was connected internationally with AVSI, the Italian development agency mentioned previously which funded many of the programmes she initiated within the community. Her initial role in Plataforma was to form and operate a crèche and many of the subsequent programmes that were created flowed out of that original idea. Marcelo participated in a social development programme centred on technical skills (carpentry/electrical) however stayed on with the programme as an employee to help the next class of participants work through the material. His connection with this programme was integral in demonstrating to him an alternative future than the one that was

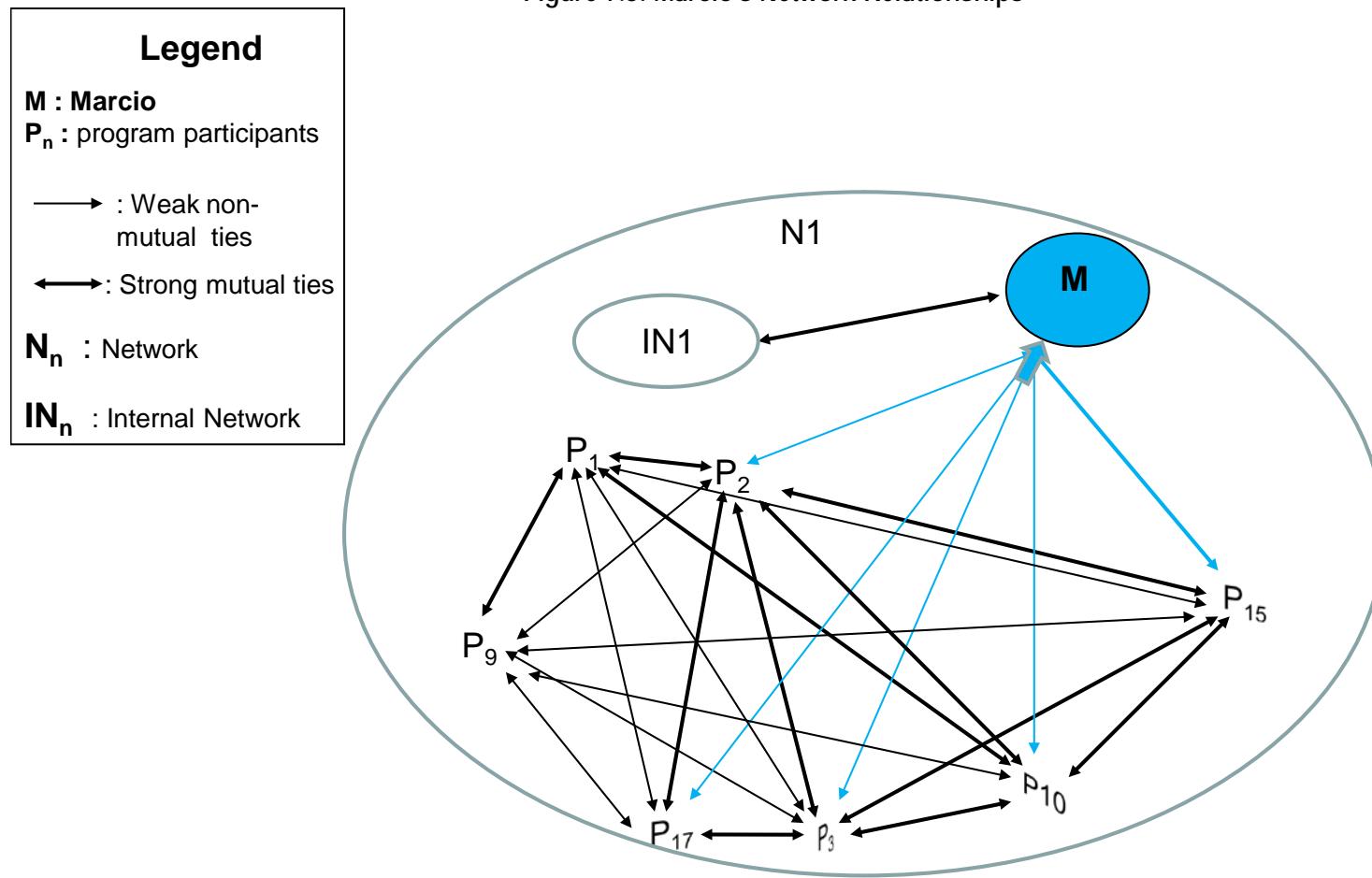
constantly on display in the neighbourhood. His participation opened up a plethora of opportunities to him that the other networks with which he was connected could not.

The director of the technical programme acted as a mentor, using her social capital to link him with her colleagues and associates who were able to offer him various opportunities. This gave him the feeling that his options were not limited to working in the informal economy as a low-skilled worker nor within the formal economy in a similar capacity.

*I like the group. If it wasn't for them I might have gotten hooked up with the wrong kind of people. I wouldn't want to get involved because of my mom but I don't want to end up hanging out on the street when I'm older like some of the guys I see just drinking... The other group I feel real attached to them because they gave me a chance. Now I'm helping working for them a little. I help them with a programme for younger kids. We just watch them and play with them. We play football and other stuff and just try to keep them off the street (Field notes, August, 2006).*

His connection with that particular group was both expansive and strong enough in its own right that it was able to similarly counteract the influence that the gang exerted upon the youth who were most likely to join as well as the negative consequences of exclusion and discrimination. Thus given exposure to the same risk factors as other youth who had joined the gang he was protected because of the network to which he belonged and its promise of a better more certain future.

Figure 7.3: Marcio's Network Relationships



Marcio, was yet another youth within the group that despite his risk factors belonged to pro-social networks that supported him in his goals. When I asked him whether he had ever thought of joining a gang he mentioned two things that kept him away from that lifestyle.

*First, my mother. She raised me so I never really thought of those things. I would be worried about her and how she would feel if I joined one. And the Church. They preach against that kind of stuff and I want to be good. I don't want to get wrapped up in that kind of stuff* (Interview, October, 2006).

Two of the networks to which Marcio belongs influenced him profoundly to stay away from gang life. His family situation was tense. He lived only with his mother until just two years prior when his mother met another man and they began living together. The tensions between Marcio's step-father and him boiled over into a physical fight where Marcio assaulted the step-father. Although the relationship between his step-father was tense and could have provided him with a motivation to rebel and possibly find comfort in the gang, he remained opposed to joining because of his mother and his ties also to the church.

Evangelical Christianity has gained a strong foothold in the poor neighbourhoods of Brazil (Wolseth, 2010; Steele, 2011). Its message has reached a mass of people that, with little else to help them through their daily struggles find solace and hope in the messages broadcast by the many ministries found in low-income neighbourhoods. Although Catholicism remains the country's largest religion and attracts multitudes of people evangelicalism's message of social equality has taken root throughout Brazil's poorest communities. Their message resonates loudly within poorer neighbourhoods not only because of their message but also because of the resources they bring and the networks they are able to create. Plataforma has a large Evangelical Church that sees significant numbers of the community attend their daily ceremonies. Marcio cited his connection with the church as another network that promoted a positive social environment that supported him and helped him develop his own values according to the social norms of the group.

*I go to church a few times a week. Sometimes I go with my Mom but there is a group of kids around my age there too. We hang out sometimes after the service. I think going to church helps me focus..it gives me something to do other than just hanging around the house too (Interview, October, 2006).*

Marcio's involvement with the programme, his feelings about his mother and norms she instilled in him, as well as his connection with the evangelical church pushed him away from any involvement in gangs or their social networks. It was his connection with not only his mother but also two other pro-social networks that helped him avoid becoming involved in violence and the social networks of the gang. Like Acerola and Marcelo's networks, Marcio's groups had external connections that were able to link him with the idea that his future was not fixed and tied to the neighbourhood but rather that he had opportunities to pursue his longer term goals. The strength of this idea is not to be taken lightly and is a current that runs through all three of the highlighted cases. Positive and likely prospective outcomes are a key to providing incentives for young people like Marcio to decide against joining with gangs or other violent social groups where opportunities are certainly more immediate despite the risks involved.

A friend of Marcio's described one of the reasons they did not become involved in gangs. Luis, was a good friend of Marcio's, living just a few doors down. I spoke with him on several occasions but our first interaction was perhaps the most revealing. I was sitting with Vitoria and Marcio when he came around after school. Marcio introduced me to him and he was immediately interested in my experience as a North American. Like the others from the programme he began asking me questions about the US and mentioned that a few others had come through the neighbourhood in the past. Marcio explained to him some of the research I was doing and as we spoke more Luis began to open up about his own experiences.

*I guess I never really thought about why I don't join the gang. It's just something you don't do. My family, my friends they just look down upon it so it never really occurred to me. I know some people do. It just seems like such a desperate choice. Like you*

*got nothing at all so then you join. You know what I mean* (Field notes, September, 2006).

If those same people within his networks were not supportive or had an uncaring attitude toward his own values and social norms then his perceptions and thus outcomes may have been far different.

It is not enough though to simply offer better or more attractive opportunities to young people in adverse situations where involvement with gangs and violent social groups is common. Two factors seem to be important before this can occur. First, young people must be connected at multiple levels to positive pro-social networks. The quality of inter-familial relations is particularly significant if a young person is solely dependent on the family for their dose of pro-social norms and social conventions. If they receive these norms from other networks beyond their family these relationships must connect beyond the social, political, economic, and geographical space of their neighbourhood and offer broader links with communities and individuals that can demonstrate their own struggle and more importantly survival of the kind of conditions in which the young person in Plataforma faces. Second, young people need to have plans and goals for the future. The goals for those individuals that desired to get an university education, a professional career, or something similar ran contrary to the norms and values of gang networks. These goals then worked as an additional barrier to wanting to become involved in criminality or violence. Credibility and believability about the claims of a positive future must be backed up by real life examples of individuals who have gone through similar struggles and were successful at achieving their goals. In all three of these cases the young people had role models within those particular networks that were able to demonstrate this. These were some of characteristics needed for young people to move beyond getting by toward a future that included real improvements in quality of life and life opportunities.

### Rafael and the power of anti-social networks

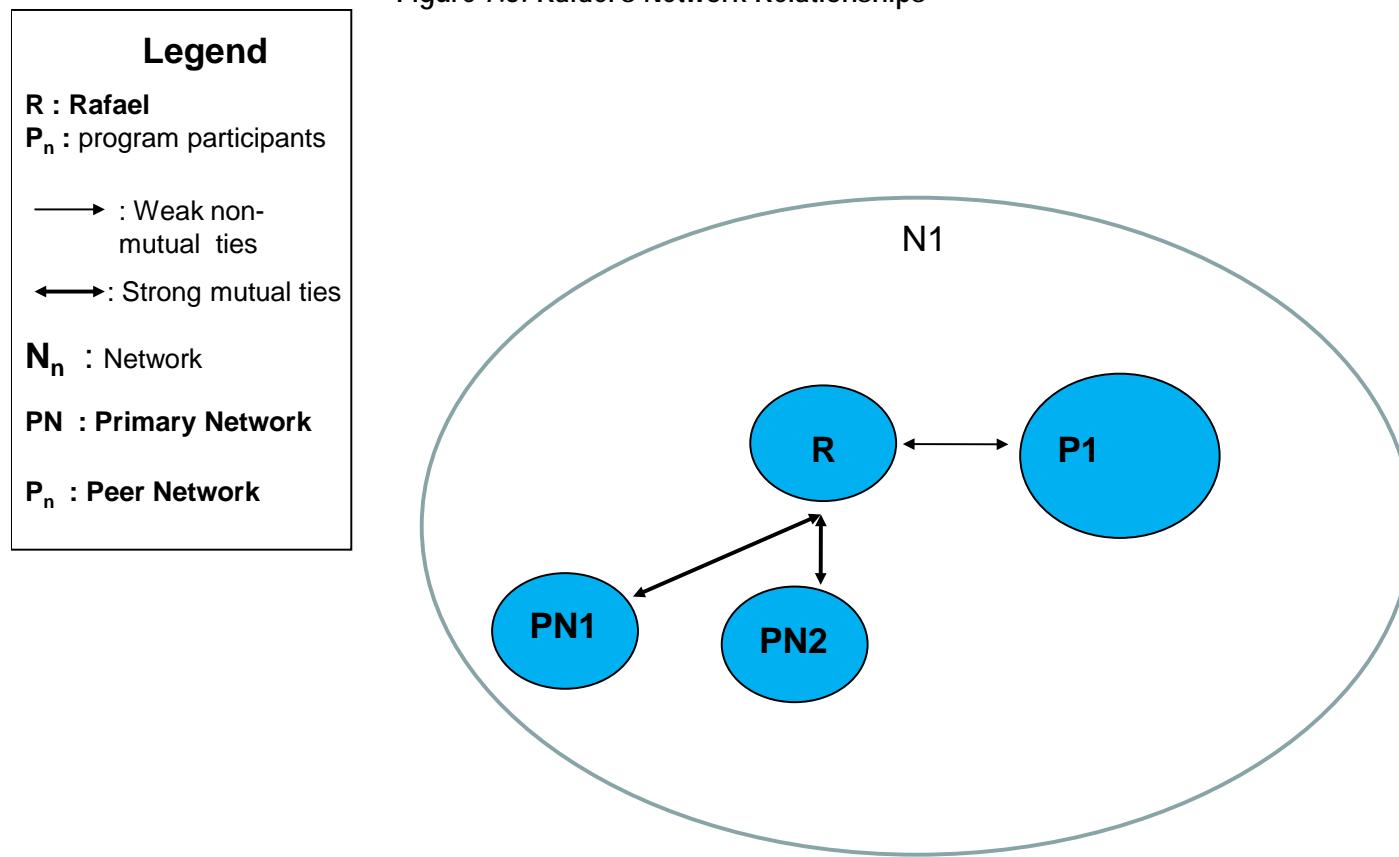
One day in the late afternoon after having spent most of the morning helping Marcelo at his afterschool programme for younger children we stopped at Marcio's house for a reprieve and some lunch. Juno, Marcio, Marcelo, Luiz, all Violence and Masculinity participants and I were sitting and chatting after we had eaten. Marcio's house is an added level to his grandmother's and is located at the corner of the street and on the entrance to his neighbourhood. The street is paved with rocks and stones. His house was one of the first in the neighbourhood; as his grandmother would regularly tell me they were among the first 'invaders' and have been there for nearly 30 years. Marcio tapped me and said,

*We do know this guy you might want to talk too. He's an extreme guy. He is in the gang....All he wanted was revenge. He doesn't think about anything else.*

His story was particularly salient because it was unique to many of the other young people I had been with up until that point. For the programme participants, violence was directed at them and experienced traumatically while in the other it had become part of a combination of 'normalised' patterns of social interaction, means to resolve conflict and achieve goals, and employment opportunity.

The participants constantly mentioned that criminal networks would get them killed or hurt which would obviously make it difficult for them to attain their aspirations. Many of the aspirations involved career choices but others were more basic such as being able to travel to another city or help out their parents. Violence amounted to a risk that would potentially incapacitate them and thus make their specific aspirations unattainable. The norms to which they subscribed did not view violence as an effective means to achieve their goals because of the risk of harm/injury or death and thus they constructed narratives that allowed them to simultaneously navigate street level social interactions whilst not fully engaging in conflict that could escalate to violent confrontations.

Figure 7.3: Rafael's Network Relationships





I met Rafael later during the day.<sup>89</sup> As I was speaking with Marcio's grandmother who almost always sat outside on her enclosed porch, another boy from the area approached the group and began speaking with them. He was there only a few minutes and after he left one of the boys confirmed that that was Rafael. He 'ran' with the gang but it remained unclear whether he was actually a part of it or not. They mentioned that if I wanted to meet with him that they could set up a time. I immediately jumped at the chance and a week later set up a meeting with him. Over the course of the next few months I was able to meet with him several times and we developed a rapport that helped me to map out the networks to which he belonged. He was the closest thing I would get to a gang member and had become involved with the gang through his primary social network; his family. His father and several of his uncles belonged to the gang and were an integral part of his life. Many of his family members were also involved in the criminal networks of the neighbourhood and thus the violence that surrounded him pulled him into it while in the case of the participants it acted as a strong deterrent. Despite the fact that he was raised by his mother his father and uncles by his account were constantly at the house planning and talking. The gang did not represent anything out of the ordinary because they were a constant in his life from an early age. He explained to me his admiration for his father and, like many young children how he looked up to him.

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<sup>89</sup> A special note about Rafael. I was unable to tape any of our conversations and did not attempt to ask him if this was possible. At the time of our conversations he was an active member of the gang and I feared that any taped conversations could be used against him and therefore reconstructed our conversations through field notes. I also felt that taping our conversations would have acted as a hindrance to him speaking openly and freely about his experiences. We were usually accompanied by Marcio, who had good relations with him. I believe Marcio insisted that he was there so forcefully because he wanted to ensure my safety should anything happen during our conversations.

*When I was young I just followed him. He seemed really cool and you know all my other friends their fathers weren't around and mine was. So that was something different* (Field notes, September, 2006).

The fact that his father was around and took an interest in raising him and being there for him was not how many of his peers were raised and because of this created a profound bond between the two. Rafael wanted to follow in his father's footsteps and his father did not dissuade him. He introduced him to the other gang members and regularly told Rafael what he engaged in with others. At that time the gang had a far different character. They were treated as folk heroes in a way much like the folk heroes of the interior of Bahia. The attachment to figures such as *Besouro Preto* made many inhabitants of the area in the gangs early years accept their presence.<sup>90</sup> Furthermore many of the infractions for which they were responsible did not involve the sale of cocaine and marijuana. Violence over drug sale points was rare until cocaine entered the local area. The increased profit from cocaine incentivised gangs to expand their markets in any way they were able, often leading to violence.

Rafael's primary social network then was divided. On one hand he had his mother who, like many others worked as a domestic and was aware of the activities in which her former partner was involved but yielded to it because he provided her household with financial assistance any time it was needed. Her networks, except for her ex-partner were not gang networks but other community members. They were not broad connected networks like those

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<sup>90</sup> Besouro Preto, meaning Black Beetle, was a historical figure from the *Recôncavo* or the inner part of the Bay of All Saints. Many migrants from the interior of Bay came from this region and had similar stories of figures within their past who were considered folk heroes. They generally straddled the world of legality and illegality representing, at least colloquially, the classic Robin Hood archetype defending the poor and sticking up for the down trodden. They engaged in a constant struggle between the police but always somehow managed to escape because of the help they received from the community. Besouro's story is filled with legend. People believed he had the ability to turn into a beetle and fly away and was impervious to bullets because of his practice of capoeira and his involvement with candomblé. Some of the early gangs particularly in the periphery where the majority of the inhabitants grew up with these stories or personally knew similar figures were attached to this folk hero narrative.

in which Marcio, Marcelo, and Acerola belonged but helped each other in times of need. On the other hand he had his father who was a member of the gang and who was an active presence in his life. The norms that trickled down from the influence of that network had become dominant in his life through repeated social interactions.

When his father was killed by a local policeman his world changed and the influence of the gang and his desire to avenge his father overrode the decreasing influence of his mother's networks. Its early influence acted as a road map for him and because other networks were not there when his father was killed he had only the gang to rely upon as a means to deal with the challenges that he would face during his adolescent life. His peer groups were not influential enough to push him away from his life within the gang. Another of the participants who is his neighbour and had become friends with him, Roberta, spoke to me about his situation.

*I always try and get him to come out and hang with us but he doesn't. I talk to him all the time. I'm always telling him to get out of the gang but he's stubborn. He just doesn't listen and he's gotten more wild now ever since his Dad died (Field notes, June, 2006).*

The narrative about Rafael illustrates to me the importance of one's connections and the way one's connections set you up for your future life. Nothing is written in stone and given the appropriate type of intervention I believe Rafael could have been pushed from joining the gang but that is largely dependent on a constant and supportive connection to a network that demonstrated to him that there was a real and positive alternative to joining the gang and possibly ending up like his father.

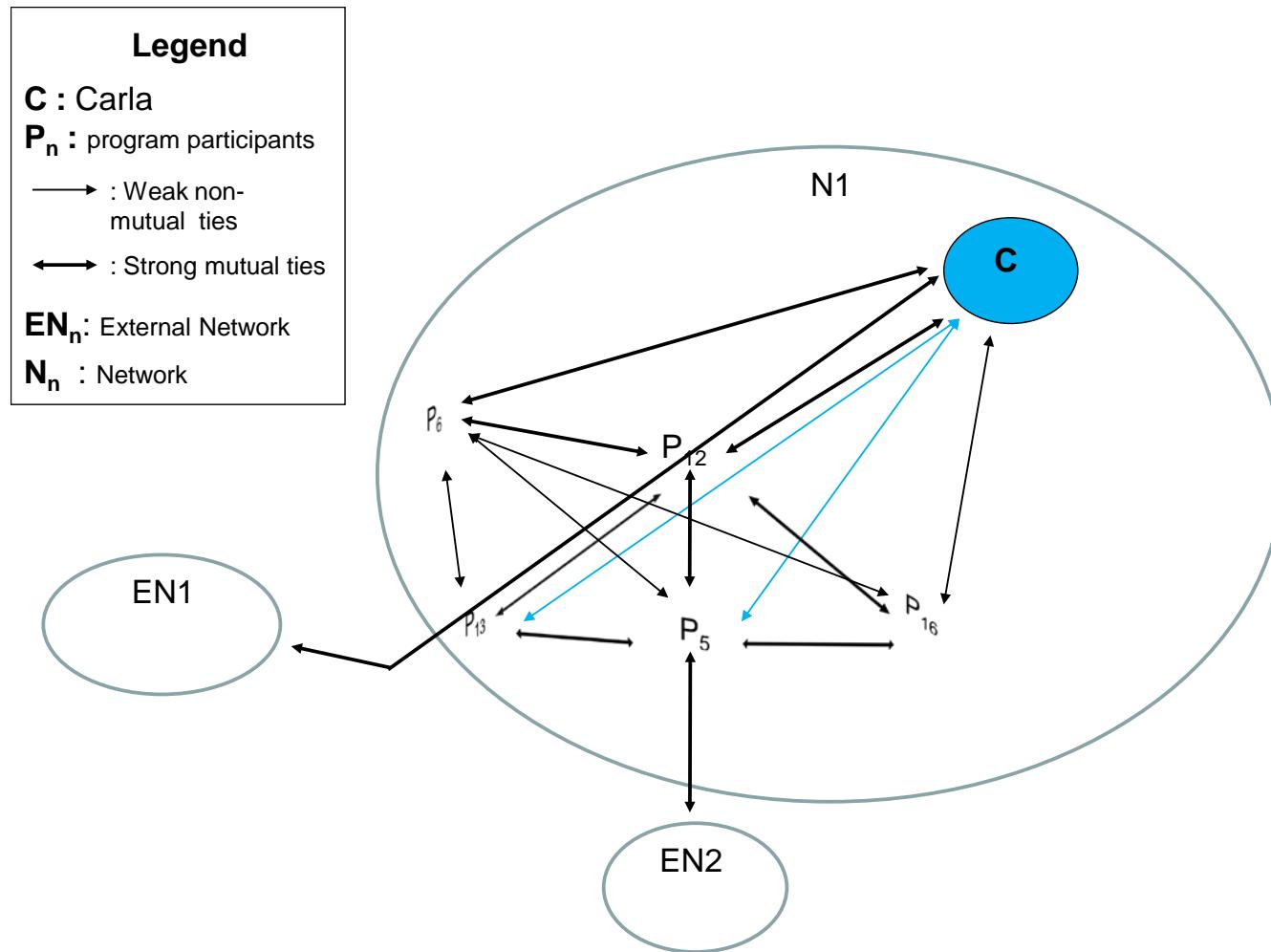
### **Gendered Social Networks**

The networks of young girls from the programme is important to highlight their networks played a role in their lives that differed slightly from the boys in the programme. Despite having similar influences joining the gang was not an option as there was no precedent in Plataforma for

female gang members. Violence for them occurred largely in the home perpetrated by siblings or parents. I highlight these experiences because although this research is focused primarily upon understanding the circumstances that allow youth to avoid becoming involved in violent social groups it is also an investigation into understanding the role that violence plays in the lives of the young people with whom I was engaged. While males were more likely to encounter and have to deal with violence of the street, females were most at risk to being victims of violence at home from their brothers, other siblings and especially their fathers. The spatiality of violence for females then was quite distinct because it offered had characteristics that were even more difficult to avoid than community violence. It was easier for female participants in some respects to avoid the violence of the street because they did not significant amounts of time on the street. The social conventions for young females versus males was that young women should be in the house assisting their mothers taking them off the street shielding them from its violence. Yet in the home, violence was a part of life. Abusive husbands, fathers, or siblings demonstrated that despite being able to avoid one type of violence the space in which young women occupied made them susceptible to another.

This reminds us that despite the fact that a network someone belongs may be largely supportive it does not preclude the individuals within that network from engaging in violence. Carla, a programme participant has an extremely supportive primary network yet the violence in her home inhibited some of her ability to overcome the challenges she faced.

Figure 7.4: Carla's Network Relationships



Carla stood out within the group not only because she entered the programme when it was already in its fourth week of operation but also because she was extremely confident, well spoken, and sure about the direction her life would travel. The group chastised her initially partly because of their perception of her as arrogant but also an underlying current of racism because of her dark skin. Her primary social network is her mother and earlier in her life her father. Both her parents had become important figures in the Black Consciousness Movement (see Chapter Four) which had a profound impact on how Carla began to see the world. Their influence ensured that she would not stray toward social networks that did not support her in her own goals and ambitions but also those of the movement. For that particular network becoming involved in gangs would be a direct affront to everything for which they were struggling.

The Black Consciousness Movement represented by EN1 in Figure 7.4 provided a powerful connection that reached well beyond the neighbourhood to others around the city as well as nationally. Her parents were involved in coordinating efforts in their region but were in constant contact with other groups on a wider national stage that coordinated demonstrations for the equal rights of people of African ancestry. At the time, the movement was involved in campaigning efforts to help pass an initiative to reserve places in the nation's public universities for students of African descent, a type of Affirmative Action programme.<sup>91</sup> Their involvement with this issue also led them to connect with community groups in the US that had experience with the issue and were able to help coordinate some of the groups methods for discussing affirmative action in their context. The parents exposed Carla not only to these debates but previous debates when the movement was just beginning. Carla's situation

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<sup>91</sup> Public universities in Brazil are the most prestigious, rigorous, and therefore difficult to attend. The college entrance exams are particularly difficult and without the correct preparation many do not pass. For individuals from the periphery they are at an obvious disadvantage because of the lack of good quality education in these areas.

demonstrated an example of how networks act to make their marks on the children that grow up within them. Her desire to be involved in the types of debates that went on between her parents and their friends as well as to create her own story that would push her to be involved in making meaningful change were a result of the connections she held with her family. The supportive networks to which the Violence and Masculinity programme was connected these linkages were not the only supports she had in her life. Her desire to be part of the Violence and Masculinity programme was an affirmation of the types of norms and values that had been instilled in her by her parents.

Despite the supportive nature of her primary network, it did not shield her from all of the violence that would become central episodes in her life. Her father beat Carla one night severely enough that she had to be taken to the hospital. The couple eventually split because of this but the community and her neighbours were outraged at the behaviour that was exhibited by the father particularly given his positive history within the area. The neighbours convened that night to threaten the father with violence for what he had done to his daughter; the threats became serious enough that he eventually had to leave the neighbourhood . Carla described the experience to us in one of our sessions.

*I used to be close to him you know. He was around a lot with the people from the movement and he helped me and my Mom with all kinds of stuff. We were family. To this day I still don't really know why he turned like that. He didn't drink that much and it never happened before. He just starting acting weird and flipped out (Field notes, September, 2006).*

Carla's experience was far different from many other young people who had abusive fathers in their lives. In many cases, the victim's mother remain in the house for fear of being beaten herself or have developed an unhealthy co-dependency that at once made them feel they needed the abusive partner and excuse their abusive behaviour.

Carla's network protected her from the type of violence that could have become normalised within her life. Many other young women in the neighbourhood are exposed to this

type of violence yet it remains hidden. This narrative highlights the fact that not all forms of violence can be dealt with through social networks. In this case, the actions of one individual network member resulted in extremely detrimental consequences while the actions of others in another overlapping network aided in surmounting those negative effects.

In Carla's case, violence erupted in the very network that was supposedly supportive but turned into something very destructive. Her saving grace was the fact that others within the network coalesced behind her to protect her from the individual that was causing her harm. In areas where the government is more involved in the lives of its citizens there are other ways to remedy this type of behaviour through more formalised avenues but the networks that are infused within the community react in ways that substitute for more official channels. Her primary network represented at once a grave threat that could have continued and destroyed fundamental aspects of the future she desired for herself and had for so many young women in the area.

Another programme participant, Maria, was having increasing difficulty attending meetings. Like Carla, her primary networks were strong and unlike any of the other programme participants her parents were still together and remained a powerful force in her life. Her brother had been involved in the gang and owed them a substantial amount of money as a result of this she had limited interaction with other networks in the neighbourhood. What was left of the gang had turned against the neighbourhood and was involved again in terrorising many of its residents. They incorporated instead of the attitudes of the older gang members, a new ideology that did not respect the community in the same way. As a result of this, the debts owed by the brother were passed on to the family and the gang began threatening the family with physical harm and even death. Despite her connection with this network through her brother she had developed other linkages based largely upon her exposure with the Violence and Masculinity programme.

One of the sessions involved engaging the participants in creating a photo essay. Carla became ecstatic about the prospect of being able to develop a keen interest that she had nurtured for a very long time but was unable to act upon because of her financial situation. After we finished the classes for photography she wanted to learn more and the director suggested she apply to another social development programme that focused more specifically on the media arts, including photography. She applied to the programme and was accepted. The programme called *KaBoom* was large well-funded offering its participants a thorough two year education on media arts from graphic design and filmmaking to photography and web design. Her attitude and demeanour changed dramatically over the next few weeks as she learned more about photography and became more involved. Both her interest in photography but also her connection with the Violence and Masculinity programme and *KaBoom* gave her an optimism about the future. The situation with her brother was getting worse and although these programmes could not solve her problems for her they provided access to a broader support network that discussed different options with her and her family for alleviating some of the stressors it was causing in her life. Despite the fact that she was not at risk of joining the gang, the social networks she belonged to helped her cope with the consequences of her brother's actions where the penalties could have been meted out upon her and her family.

### **Coming Off the Fence**

At first glance, Juno was one of the boys most at risk to becoming involved in the gang. His primary social networks were disparate and his mother, although a part of his life, worked constantly and thus his older sister was charged with helping to look after him. She had her own child though and thus much of her focus remained upon her infant son. He also comes from the lowest-income family in the entire group and had little financial ability to improve his quality of life. Juno also has a younger brother whom he watched most of the time. Out of all of the male participants he was the least watched and was able to come and go from his house

as he pleased. Juno spent a lot of his time hanging out on the street and was therefore exposed to the daily routines of community members but also the gang and other petty criminals. Juno was constantly exposed to the influence of the gang because his primary social networks did not act as the strong buffer against gangs. His family had migrated to the area like others from the interior of Bahia and his house, just a year prior had been one on palaftas. His family was a direct beneficiary of the upgrading program yet the violence of the gang and their influence within the neighbourhood remained. Juno instead of turning to gangs though to feel the sense of belonging and to gain a broader understanding of his own goals decided to turn to his peers. His peers were simultaneously connected with broader more expansive networks and their influence pushed him toward constructing a positive self-identity. His father died when he was younger due to alcoholism and a violent encounter with someone at a bar. As a result of this Juno vowed not to drink and become involved in violence and the norms within the social networks to which he was connected. He viewed excessive drinking and the violence perpetrated on the street in a very negative way. Those norms and values instilled in him a very strong sense that joining a gang would alienate him from the networks to which he relied upon in his daily life. The benefits gang networks offered were intangible since his only contacts with them were through an associate who he described as 'wild' and the violence they were responsible for within the neighbourhood at various times during his childhood.

A stark difference began to emerge in Juno when we began gathering information about the life stories of Plataforma residents. The programme held two different events for the community to become involved and learn about the programme and the types of issues we discussed, debated, and learned about through its duration. In both of these events a small group decided they wanted to collect stories about the neighbourhood from the residents and showcase it as an appreciation to Plataforma and its diversity. Juno took over the project and

began asking great questions and becoming extremely involved in the process. After a few days the director gave him information about journalism and placed him in contact with a local journalism student who met with him and described to him in greater detail the profession. She also promised to take him to the university where she was studying to introduce him to the other students and professors and give him a real taste of what the profession had to offer. His primary networks were unable to articulate him with such actors. These connections remained embedded within the neighbourhood and therefore unable to grant him access to the types of networks that would foster greater opportunity and a changed outlook on his future. As Barker (1998) points out in his six topics that reinforce the non-violent male identity, having a competence or skill helps to reinforce the identity and Juno became enthused about the possibility of becoming a journalist. His emerging identity pushed ideas about joining the gang further and further away from his reality as he began to assume and adopt more fully not only the norms and values of the networks to which he belonged but to create a positive male identity for himself that opposed the norms associated with the gang. His connection with the director and the Violence and Masculinity programme itself allowed him to strengthen his positive connections.

## Conclusion

This chapter illustrates the complex social relationships which are present in Plataforma. Social relationships matter and the people to whom we are connected can substantially influence the way in which we behave, the norms we carry with us, and our ability to overcome obstacles. One's primary networks and the norms/social capital infused within them can guide individuals to opportunities that far outweigh what is offered through gang networks. In the case of many of the programme participants, the primary networks acted in ways that directed individuals toward other pro-social networks through a shared sense of values. The social

capital infused in Acerola's networks for instance helped him to seek out external linkages and maintain them doing the same for both Marcelo and Marcio. Additionally, his desire for a future professional career pushed the idea of joining a gang or any other similar network out of his mind. In the case of Juno where his primary networks were not particularly strong, other networks and the social capital infused with them were able to instil the norms and behaviours that allowed him to stay away from gangs and other perverse networks. In the case of the females, the violence they were trying to avoid was often present, in part, in the networks they most looked to for guidance. Although this thesis does not specifically address home and domestic violence it is important to note that young woman's networks are complicated by an inability to circulate in the neighbourhood and outside of it more freely. Because young women in Plataforma were expected to be in the home helping with domestic duties they were far more reliant on the primary networks they inherited.

Carla's case showed how difficult it was to escape the violence that is inherited through primary networks. The constraints placed upon her by the actions of her brother could have resulted in a less positive outcome but through her participation in the VM programme she was then able to articulate further with other social development programmes and pro-social networks. These networks were able to help her with her situation at home in some ways but not in others.

As both Rubio (1997) Portes (1998) point out though not all of our networks can be positive and point us in productive and safe directions. Primary networks in other instances can also push young people toward the perverse types of networks that were avoided by the programme participants. Part of Rafael's primary network included his father who was part of the gang. The norms and behaviour from that network were condoned and instilled in Rafael from an early age. In the next and final chapter the thesis analyses in more depth the principal findings of the research and suggests other questions that have arisen from its completion.

Social capital in his case worked against him normalising behaviours and values that were unacceptable within Plataforma and broader Bahian society. Just as in our examples of social capital being used to exclude and discriminate, it is also used to bond people together and sanctions those that do not conform to its norms. The gang uses its social capital to not only sanction people within its network but those outside of it by functioning as a parallel institutions similar to but not the state. Gangs do not perform all functions of the state because their interests run counter to executing that role. Instead it uses its social capital to ensure profits are ever higher through its sale of drugs. The gang then attempts to overlay at least some of its norms on top of those of the community by engaging in extreme forms of violence if community residents cannot conform. This is particularly true for how it resolves disputes. Because of their primary interest, any resident that interferes or is perceived to interfere with their ability to make profit is dealt with harshly and swiftly. The final chapter examines the thesis as a whole discussing the principal research findings and their implications.

# Chapter 8: Conclusion

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## Introduction

The principal question this research asked, how youth living in dangerous environments avoid involvement in criminality, violence, and/or violent social groups. In order to explore this question with young people the research adopted a qualitative approach. Qualitative research attempts to understand the world in which the research subjects live. In this research I explored how the social world around young people affects the manner in which they navigate through it, particularly as it related to the interrelationships between the consequences of social capital, both positive and negative, perceptions of race and ethnicity, and the experience of violence in low income communities. The theory of social capital featured heavily in this thesis for two principal reasons. First, it is a useful framework for discussing and debating how individuals interact, the challenges they face, and the manner in which they are able to surmount difficulties. Social capital provides some aid for young people from the periphery, in a society which actively excludes and discriminates against them because of their racial, economic, and spatial identities. Second, although social capital is a useful notion it remains an extremely flawed concept because it is promoted as a public good and private benefit rather than a neutral by product of repeated social interactions. Social capital advocates relegate discussions about how it is most often used -- as an exclusionary and discriminatory tool --- by the powerful against the powerless.

The intention of this research is therefore twofold. First to discuss how young people avoid violence and criminality from a new perspective.. There has been a great deal of literature investigating how young people join gangs and the factors that lead them to becoming involved but there is a lack of discussion on how young people are able to avoid gangs, criminality and violence. As mentioned throughout this thesis, various Latin American

scholars have paid attention to it but it remains an obscure area of research. Second, to use social capital as a framework for understanding the strategies young people use to overcome their challenges while simultaneously employing the debates about race and racial exclusion and violence and structural violence to critique and improve upon the social capital concept.

I was drawn to Plataforma for many of the same reasons people shun the neighbourhood. Its population is mostly black, with very little education, high rates of poverty, and similarly high incidences of street level violence in comparison with the rest of the city. It is also a part of the city that is isolated, excluded from full integration spatially, economically, socially and because of the discrimination directed at it by the elite classes. Plataforma is a part of the city that has traditionally received very little attention by the local government and as a result has existed not because of strong support but in spite of it. Plataforma residents who initially settled the area built their own houses, constructed roads, basic sewage, and child daycare. Until the 1980's they were almost fully self-sufficient and despite the extreme poverty that emerged took care of their own needs. In the absence of the state, loose bands of young jobless men began forming gangs. The influence of the gangs grew as their economic power grew with the demand for cocaine. Gangs began helping community members financially by giving money for food, the construction of housing, and even a day-care centre. The problems of violence in the neighbourhood but also an invitation from a social development programme were key factors in my decision to use Plataforma and the young people involved in the programme as the principal objects of my inquiry.

### **Ethnography and qualitative research**

Ethnography is a challenging methodology. It is made complex because the researcher must insert him/herself into a social environment that is often difficult to maneuver. Ethnographers must insert themselves into communities with well-developed narratives as outsiders and

gather insights about how individuals and groups live their lives. Not everyone is amenable to having an outsider ask questions and pry into what is sometimes very private personal matters. In my case, I operated on trust. Traditional ethnography attempts to observe and not intervene. This is based upon antiquated concepts of anthropological ethnographies from the late 1800s and early 1900s where researchers would live with different ethnic groups to understand their entire culture. Ethnographers have not abandoned this philosophy altogether but rather adapted it to fit their needs as researchers. Many of the neighbourhoods ethnographers now study have had flows of researchers wanting information about any number of topics and residents have not benefited from these exchanges. Savvy communities that are more familiar with research no longer passively accept a researcher into their lives without gaining some benefit.

Ethnographies about Salvador are rare. Ethnographies about peripheral neighbourhoods and attitudes about race from black Brazilians are equally rare. Research about Brazil's centre's around its large cities such as São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. Research there is important however many of Brazil's smaller cities suffer. The problem is that results from research from those cities gets imprinted all the others and researchers use situations in Rio and São Paulo to explain what happens elsewhere. Salvador, like many Brazilian cities is unique. Its nearly 80% black population changes the dynamics of the discussion about race and discrimination. Crime and violence are also markedly different. Without large drug trafficking gangs like those found in Rio or São Paulo, young people must adapt in different ways. With few ethnographies about life in Salvador and most of them based on its religions (Landes, 1947), middle class perceptions of race (McCallum, YEAR) or unique populations (Viessiere, 2010; Keisha-Khan, 2004), this thesis significantly contributes to what we know about the intersection of crime and violence, race, and social capital among blacks from the periphery of Salvador. It highlights how young people strategise to avoid violence and how

race developed as an integral part of their lives and how they viewed the world. The thesis demonstrates the difference in how violence is experienced in Salvador and sets up a comparison for previous studies conducted in other parts of the country. It also highlights how race is perceived and discrimination is felt in a city that is overwhelmingly black but remains segregated and controlled by a small white elite minority. Although the thesis examines in detail the lives of individuals in their struggles with these issues, it connects the reader with the broader context of Salvador through its institutions (the police) and most popular event (Carnaval).

This research also explores the neighbourhoods within the periphery of Salvador. Previous research has looked at marginal communities within Salvador proper such as Gamboa de Baixo (Keisha-Khan, 2004) and Pelourinho (Viessiere, 2010; Pinho, 1999). Some research has been undertaken about the periphery (Gledhill and Hita, 2009; ) but this research has received very little attention and highlights urban poverty and development in general. My research examines topics about peripheral life in Salvador that are arguably most visible but least discussed if one were to go by the amount of papers, articles, and books published on the subject. The reason goes back to the dichotomy of research in Brazil as a whole discussed earlier. Violence studies are often conducted in Rio or São Paulo while studies about race are done throughout the country. The intersection of the two as a detailed ethnography has not been conducted in this way in previous studies.

I found that the ethnographic process can be facilitated through embedding oneself in programmes that discuss and intervene in the topic of interest. That is, ethnographers can gain access and sometimes trust with their informants more quickly because they are vetted through the organisational ties to the community. This is not the only way to achieve a successful ethnography but individuals with linkages to organisations that work in these neighbourhoods in a sense are lent social capital allowing for increased initial contacts with

community members that would otherwise be inaccessible. This is particularly true for young people who are protected by parents and other relatives from interactions with unknown individuals.

The debate surrounding our roles and responsibilities when undertaking research with people will continue to be extremely contentious. While some offer that intervening in the research process by changing the behaviour of those we observe crosses the research boundaries others believe it impossible to engage in the research of human behaviour without altering it. My very presence as a black American changed the way in which some of the young people I got to know related with their social environments. In some cases it was simply that I was around them discussing, debating, and exchanging ideas that made them reflect on their own ideas and modify them as they saw fit. In other cases the young people I engaged with began to look up to me and think about their future differently because of what they felt I was able to achieve. In the beginning of this research, I was hyper-aware of my role and the impact I would have which constrained me from being able to fully engage with the programme participants. I hadn't committed fully to them by creating barriers that were obvious and had I not opened up more fully could have jeopardised my research. The tensions between me and the programme participants dissipated the minute I decided to share with them about my own life and the problems that I also faced when I was their age. Through my sharing we began constructing a common narrative where they felt comfortable speaking and discussing with me about their experiences.

Before embarking on my field research I knew I wanted to uncover hidden aspects of a young person's life and the nuances of the reality many face. My identity as black, American, foreigner, outsider, insider and my desire to not only observe but become involved in the lives of the young people in which I began to work pushed me toward a participatory approach. I wanted to show that a researcher can give back to the people from which he/she

receives so much. So many researchers build their careers around these types of ethnographies and I wanted to demonstrate that as researchers our code of ethics should begin to encompass a way to provide meaningful assistance to those with whom we become involved. We must avoid the paternalism and colonialism that has plagued ethnographic researchers in the past and engage people as equal partners in the research process. On one hand we are allowed to see a glimpse of their lives and given keys to a world that we would, on our own, be unable to discover. On the other we must show our respect by giving back in the most appropriate way we can. In my case, my work on the team worked well to give back to the community in a respectful way and share the knowledge I had gained from previous work with other violence prevention programmes.

My involvement not only as an observer but as an active volunteer working on the coordinating team for the programme placed me in a unique space. Although I was a foreigner and outsider I had authority which came with both respect and responsibility. The participatory approach to the research allowed me immediate access to very detailed and complex life histories of the participants. Attaching myself to a violence prevention programme as a volunteer functioned as a methodology of sorts that provided me with entrance to my target population and their narratives without having to go through the months of trust building interactions that would normally have to occur to be able to obtain the level of detail in the information, narratives, and life stories I observed. Although it still took time to build trust to a level where I could engage with the programme participants outside of the programme and individually, I was able to gather information from the programme participants in a manner that was not forced and did not lend itself to the dilemma that often emerges when researchers go to low-income neighbourhoods in particular, to conduct their studies and then leave, extracting information without bringing any benefit to the community. The participatory method generally encourages this type of approach but the approach to this

research differed because the programme itself was centred on understanding the life stories of young people and their encounters with violence. Because the programme director was a researcher herself she devised a programme that could serve as a platform from which investigators could gather the type of sensitive empirical data that would normally take months of relationship building and the long process of establishing trust. The identity of the programme as a violent prevention intervention pre-supposes and pre-establishes a certain level of trust because the programme participants are there to share their stories and devise strategies that will help them overcome violence in their lives.

The different exercises used in the programme explained in Chapter Two served multiple purposes. First, many of the exercises conducted helped to further establish trust and build relationships not only between the participants themselves but also amongst the staff. Second, the exercises served as a way for the programme participants to develop new strategies that would help them avoid violence by discussing the issues they faced in their daily lives and connect them with broader social forces. This was the portion of the programme that provided something to the community and thus community members would be unable to complain about researchers taking without giving anything back. The fact that the programme engaged neighbourhood young people and kept them off the streets and away from involvement in crime or gangs was a benefit that the community welcomed. Third, the exercises themselves served as ways to test research methods. Several methodologies were incorporated into this research that were discussed in our weekly meetings as ways to gather information about the community and life stories of the participants. A methodology that was incorporated was impromptu filming and photography in Plataforma. The programme participants received basic instruction in photography and were given cameras to photograph in the area in preparation for the community meeting and the newsletter they produced. I was able to coordinate one group which then led to both filming and photographing some parts of

the neighbourhood. The visual process yielded imagery of the neighbourhood through the eyes of young people. This process was did not connect particularly well with the overall research question because the vast majority of pictures taken represented specific moments in time in the participants' personal lives. It did allow for a glimpse at those times where I was not present without them but without a thorough discussion about why they chose to take the pictures they did the exercise was not able to fully capture their motivations and sentiments. Although the photography did not aid substantially in my own research it did provide the participants with a way to express and show the neighbourhood in a different light than what has been imagined by others. The participants wanted to demonstrate that Plataforma was not all about crime, trash, and danger but rather the daily lives of people exercising, having fun, and hanging out like people do in other neighbourhood all over the world. They wanted to show that Plataforma, despite its violence was a normal community like any other.

Another exercise we engaged in was the drawing of cognitive maps. The cognitive mapping process gathered some unique data about physical and social space of the participants but was facilitated through the programme without any difficulty. The maps aided in being able to blend the social with the physical by highlighting the areas that were most problematic for the participants as well as those where they felt most safe. Analysing the maps brought up several questions that could have been improved upon when conducting the exercise itself. For instance, pathing through the neighbourhood was not as clear as it could have been and more concentrated questions around how the participants moved through Plataforma could have generated a clearer picture idea of the amount of contact the participants had with dangerous spaces and networks like those of the gang.

Finally, through the programme my presence with the participants facilitated my role to be able to 'hang out' with a group daily. My role of programme associate gave me broad access to the participants and allowed me to ask questions and be a part of their lives in

ways that would have taken far more time and with diminished details without the institutional backing of the programme. The idea that they were also getting something out of the relationship we were establishing was clear to them and something that would have been either absent or diminished without the backing of the programme. The Violence and Masculinity programme facilitated this process and allowed the participants to feel comfortable speaking about these types of issues. The programme thus served multiple purposes and facilitated my entrance into the community quickly but also in ways that allowed for, in some cases, greater access to this aspect of the programme participants' lives. This process by far yielded the most empirical data. Field notes that were taken everyday summing out the programme participants' actions, moods, and thoughts were invaluable in my ability to later analyse.

This research suggests that exploring the lives of young people can be facilitated by implementing programmes that simultaneously deal with their own particular needs but allow investigators access to the narratives and stories that can be used as evidence. This overcomes many of the challenges that researcher face when trying to conduct studies of this kind. Logistically, this process is difficult. Not every researcher has the resources to engage in this type of practice nor the connections and indeed luck to become involved in these types of programmes. However opportunities such as these should not be taken for granted nor should they be excluded because of the inherent of aligning oneself with one aspect of a community versus another. At some point during ethnographic research investigators will make choices that will ingratiate themselves to one population while alienating others. Working for community intervention programmes and becoming involved in the community not simply as an observer but as an active participant and actor that provides some form of benefit can be a mutually beneficial exercise.

## Social capital and its implications

Social capital is a simple idea that emerged as a solution to a variety of social problems throughout the world. Social capital has been used in recent years to describe positive results of social interactions. Yet this research attempts to show, like researchers (Fine, 2001; Rubio, 1997) that social capital is not just a positive outcome of social interactions but that it can be used negatively as well. This research interjects much needed criticism by questioning not only whether it is a positive for individuals and groups but also by exploring it through the concept of race and racial discrimination. Fewer author have made this linkage. (Portes, 1980; Souza Briggs, 1998). I explicitly explain that in social capital's current formation, race and racial discrimination are not fully explained. Social interactions are racialised in many contexts and to ignore this brings social capital's utility into question. Race is an integral part of our social interactions. Even in a place like, Brazil and Salvador where many locals argue the contrary, race has played a fundamental role in shaping lives. It is not that black populations have less social capital. It is rather that the white privileged minority in Salvador uses its own social capital to disenfranchise and subvert other groups from accessing full equality into the society.

Social capital in Brazil and Salvador in particular acts as an exclusionary tool rather than something that can help individuals overcome their barriers. This research contributes to the debate significantly by using race as a way to discuss social capital and its limitations. Race allows us to view social capital in a way that makes us question whether it is a trait that is worth promoting on such a grand scale. For some it works, but for those that have been traditionally excluded, it only helps to a certain point. Racial and ethnic enclaves ensure that social capital is used to promote similar individuals not ensure equality or that the excluded or given equal chances at achieving goals that require the help of others.

This research found that while social capital is a useful framework for understanding the interrelationships between groups and individuals, it is a flawed concept because it is often advocated for as a public and private good and its detrimental consequences relegated to the background of discussions. This research also found that without bringing in discussions about power, race, violence and structural violence, the concept is ineffective in its ability to describe relationships between the excluded and those who dictate social conventions, norms, and values.

This research used several literatures as frameworks for understanding how young people avoid involvement in violent social groups like gangs and how they overcame the challenges of directed structural violence of the police and elite social, political, and economic classes. The social capital literature was used as a framework from which to discuss the directed violence of racial discrimination and structural exclusion as well as community and criminal violence of pathological social groups such as gangs. Social capital is a highly contested notion. Although its advocates wrongly promote it as an unqualified public and private good, it has most often been used by the powerful to exclude the powerless. Social capital is not a useless concept but the full range of its implications must be discussed and brought to the forefront of the debate. Discussions about social capital by Pierre Bourdieu and Glen Loury as well as other detractors that highlight its exclusionary and discriminatory role in society must be incorporated into any debate about the concept. While both authors point out its flaws many have not been able to explicitly connect the concept with the idea of race and structural violence. This research attempted to make this linkage more explicit by using social capital as a method to debate race in the context of Brazil.

I argue that social capital, like Bourdieu, Loury, and Coleman describe is a neutral product of repeated social interactions to be deployed by individuals as a means to achieve goals that without networks, are more difficult to accomplish. Social capital is embedded in

both groups and their individual members and come with it a system of values, norms, and attitudes that socialise network members. Members must then conform to the ideals and values of their networks in order to reap their benefits. In Brazil, like in other places around the world that are highly unequal societies, the social, political, and economic elites of Salvador employ their social capital to ensure that young people with distinct racial, economic, and spatial identities are not permitted to fully integrate with the rest of the city. Because race is perceived to be connected with criminality and violence, the powerful use their social capital to exclude and discriminate against the poor, the racially and ethnically different (black and brown populations), and those residing on the periphery or in inner-city low income areas. Their perceptions then are utilised to justify deployment of social capital as an exclusionary tool as a means to guarantee safety and public security for themselves while denying the powerless the same assurances. Because the elite are overrepresented in government institutions their values and norms are dominant in broader society. Their values and norms are reflected in the way in which governmental institutions have all but abandoned low-income communities to deal with responsibilities which are supposed to be assumed by it. The police reflect the values and norms of these groups illustrated by their treatment of groups and individuals perceived to be lower on the social hierarchy. The use directed violence to ensure that these communities remain detached and isolated from the mainstream protecting the interests and desires of dominant networks.

Thus social capital has a perverse quality. Most authors have not used the term perverse social capital when discussing the exclusionary methods of dominant classes however I argue that the manner in which they employ social capital represents perverse social capital. Perverse social capital has most often been used to discuss violent social groups such as gangs but it is entirely logical to utilise the same term when describing the directed exclusionary and discriminatory actions of elite classes and dominant networks.

Social capital is not the unqualified public good that Robert Putnam and other advocates describe. It is used as a way to ensure dominant groups maintain their positions at the top of the hierarchy but also by other networks to sustain their supremacy in their local spaces. Yet not every group works to maintain dominance and exclude. For some low-income communities purposeful exclusion works contrary to the benefits of the community as a whole. Without cohesive bonds and the ability work together toward common goals, the perverse social capital directed at them by dominant groups would have even greater negative consequences. Low-income communities must work together in order to counter the effects of the perverse social capital that is reflected in governmental institutions like the police as well. Without coming together the community and its members are on their own to overcome these unique challenges. Despite their efforts some networks within the community work against its norms and values creating circumstances in which peripheral community residents are tested by various threats to their ability to seek a good quality of life.

The implications that using this framework have are that while social capital is a flawed concept it remains useful for describing, exploring, and examining social relationships. Its remains useful insofar as the researcher is able to bring in perspectives that run counter to what promoters of social capital have advocated. That is, that social capital is used to exclude and discriminate against individuals and groups by dominant networks. Furthermore, the dynamics between dominant and peripheral networks and their members encourages the powerful to exclude in order to maintain their positions at the top of the social hierarchy. In order for peripheral networks to gain agency, social capital must be used strategically by grouping a geographically, politically, economically, and socially diverse set of actors with similar goals and interests to overcome the obstacles placed in front of them by dominant groups.

## Gangs as Networks

This research contributed significantly to this debate by using social capital as a way to frame how gangs work to exclude individuals and have perverse effects on outsiders. From the social capital perspective, gangs act as exclusionary networks that use violence as a means to achieve goals (Perlman, 1976; 2010; Zaluar, 1994, 1999, 2000; Leeds, 1996; Davis, 1998; Rodgers, 2003; Goldstein, 2003; Moser and McIlwaine, 2004, 2006; Kruijt, 2004; Winton, 2004, 2005; Arias, 2006; Manwaring, 2007; McIlwain and Moser, 2007; Penglase, 2009; Wolseth, 2011). In some cases though, as was demonstrated in this thesis, gang leaders belonged to several groups and had to use their social capital in ways that would preserve their own status and not antagonize the surrounding community. This research also departs from other research on gangs in Brazil by looking at a different context where they operate. Salvador has had a severe gang problem in various areas of the city but little research has been done on the phenomena. From this research we are able to understand the complexities of how gangs operate and the differences from larger cities such as Rio de Janeiro.

Although these groups operate in strikingly similar ways, there are subtle differences. For instance, gangs in Salvador seem far more dependent on the community where they operate. Community members seem to be able to negotiate with gang leaders from a stronger position than their big city counterparts. Part of this has to do with leadership structures. Gang leadership in larger cities to the South are not necessarily from the neighbourhoods where they operate and do not share the same social conventions. Many of the leaders of the larger groups are in prison or do not live in the same neighbourhoods changing the relationship between community and gang. While this is changing in Salvador, it remains that many gang leaders still live and operate in the neighbourhoods in which they grew up establishing a greater commitment to the community than would otherwise exist. This

thesis contributes by making a comparison about how gangs operate in two different but similar contexts.

This research also found that gangs, like dominant networks implement perverse social capital to achieve goals yet gangs are often more complex networks because of their embeddedness in communities where they must provide some basic necessities in order to buy the areas silence to continue operating. The literature surrounding the subject of gangs almost exclusively debates their defining characteristics and also how young people join them. This research did not exhaustively explore these debates but rather tried to fit the literature within an overall narrative and framework of social capital. In that context the literature discussed how the notion of gangs has evolved conceptually in the US and then how those ideas have proliferated to other parts of the world. The idea was also to link these debates with those that were transpiring in Brazil. There are great similarities between the two but gangs in Brazil emerged distinctly. Their unique history with political prisoners in the detention shaped the rhetoric they would use to capture geographical, social, and economic spaces in low-income neighbourhoods.

As discussed in Chapter Three, gang members create shared values, norms, and attitudes through repeated social interactions just as in any network. Yet some of their values come from the neighbourhood itself and their historical rhetoric of protecting and providing for the community to which some adhere. Yet there is a fine line between promoting those values and pursuing their interests. The community is at times, at the mercy of the gang because there is little governmental presence except through the police. The fact that the government has not inserted itself into these areas through the provision of services nor security and public safety has left an opportunity for other organisations to assume its responsibilities. In

some instances, NGO's play a significant role in providing for the community while in others the gang has assumed the governments duty. The gang represents what Zaluar (2000) described as perverse integration discussed in Chapter Three. Her notion of the concept describes an environment where gangs have assumed responsibilities of the state by providing employment, security, and ad hoc loans for medicine and food as a way to gain favour in the community and ensure their continued existence. Others have suggested that gangs offer a parallel state (Leeds, 1996). I would argue that gangs are perversely integrated because they are not interested in performing all of the functions of the state. The findings of this research show that while they are involved in providing some services, they are not able or willing to supply all and generally only if it suits their own self-interests.

The discussion around gangs had the purpose of also illustrating how young people avoid criminality and violence which is why it remains crucial to linking these ideas with social capital. Social capital is one of many ways in which young people use their networks strategically to avoid either becoming involved in gangs or being influenced and affected by the consequences of their perverse social capital. There are very few authors who write about young people and the strategies they undertake to avoid becoming involved in them and the negative consequences of their social capital. However Barker (1998) developed a list of six categories that were needed for young people to avoid gangs. Included in his categorisation was the idea that social networks and the relationships that individuals build and maintain as well as the norms and values of the same are fundamental for young people to avoid criminality and violence. This thesis argues that while the other categories described by Barker are important, the idea of social capital and social networks is a more fruitful way to view the problem and explain differences in outcomes.

Gangs are extremely complex networks and what this research tells us is that the linkage between the community and the gang is complex and places individuals in

circumstances where decisions must be made between bad and worse. Stepping in to provide some basic necessities as well as services where the government is either unwilling or able, places these communities at risk of being victims of a constant struggle between police, gangs, and the violence they produce. Additionally, the social capital they produce, unlike what its advocates have described has tremendous detrimental effects on non-members but ironically it is also one of the ways in which young people are able to avoid the negative consequences of violence and criminality.

### **Perceptions of race and violence**

There are strong perceptions of a link between race and violence in Salvador and throughout Brazil. This thesis contributes to this debate by highlighting how these perceptions affect young people from the periphery and by showing the ways young people challenge them. Race and violence are two ubiquitous but complex issues in Salvador. The assumption that blacks and those from the periphery perpetrate crimes or are naturally inclined to perpetrate crime is false. History, social structure, and inequality play a big role in why violence has become such a defining feature of peripheral communities. Media plays a big role in disseminating imagery that makes those unaware of the peripheral experience believe that violence is an everyday occurrence in those neighbourhoods. While violence occurs at a greater rate, it is by no means ubiquitous. Like other communities, they have violence but benign events are seldom shown. Thus the reputation builds that the periphery is a violent place full of criminals because of unbalanced reporting that feeds previously held stereotypes. It does not help that Brazilians of African descent experience severe inequalities in terms of education, employment, and quality of life. The fact that they are often excluded from these realms except at the lowest levels, continues to re-enforce perceptions that they

are indeed criminals and perpetrators of violence because they are incapable of getting an education or obtaining employment.

Young people though are showing their resilience by challenging the status quo. Throughout the periphery, there are many untold stories about how not just young people but many residents overcome the challenges they face. Young people in particular are lifting their voices to show that they are black from the periphery and want to contribute to society in meaningful ways. Groups of black university students are displaying their blackness and claiming it as a badge of honour as opposed to the negative quality that many associate with it. The thesis contributes to the discussion of race by highlighting how these young people challenge stereotypes and claim blackness as not only an ethnic identity, but also a political one. Livio Sansone, in his book, blackness without ethnicity, outlines how blackness is not an identity with shared experiences. While this may have been true earlier, a new crop of young black activists are demonstrating by claiming themselves to be black regardless of skin colour, that there is a shared experience of being black in Brazil.

Race, is a complex issue, particularly in Brazil. Gilberto Freyre, who popularised the concept of racial democracy advocated that African, Indigenous, and European heritage combined throughout history to produce a mixed heritage nationality; the Brazilian. He argued that through racial mixture, individuals co-mingled eradicating race and racism in the country. This is patently false. Racism and discrimination have always played fundamental roles in Brazilian history and the idea that racial mixture succeeded in eradicating this form of discrimination flies in the face of not only empirical data that demonstrates the contrary but the lived experience of so many Brazilians of African and Indigenous descent. Its history of violent political oppression helped ensure that racism and discrimination would be central features in society by denying Afro-Brazilians an ability to organise and develop a collective sense of political, social, and ethnic identity. The Brazilian government effectively barred Afro-

Brazilians from developing collective social capital and the shared norms, values, and attitudes that go with it. This explains why so many Afro-Brazilians continue to subscribe to the idea of Brazil as a racial democracy. Although race in Brazil remains a fluid concept, unlike in other places around the world particularly the US, its fluidity is constrained by dominant perceptions of race and its association with criminality and violence. Race is marked by symbols, described by Bourdieu in Chapter Four. Speech patterns, dress, and visual characteristics mark one along a continuum. However, for those at the extreme ends of the colour spectrum, blackness is inescapable creating a host of challenges that are absent for those considered white. Whiteness remains the ideal and the fluidity that is inherent in perceptions of race in Brazil works in one direction. That is, that individuals tend to want to claim white or its closest counterpart along the continuum to avoid being called black at all costs because everyone understands the associated perceptions and real costs of being considered black. Yet this is changing.

Since the fall of the dictatorship and return to democratic rule, the younger generation has challenged these notions and begun to develop a collective political racial identity. They have used black social movements from around the world as models for their own success. Despite the challenges of implementing affirmative action policies in Brazil, they now exist in several universities across the country and are planned to be adopted in others. The younger generation challenges these antiquated notions of racial democracy by attempting to re-claim and re-define what blackness means in Brazil. They struggle to break the associations that have been placed upon it by dominant networks by claiming it and defining themselves as black even if they are able to claim other racial identities.

The young people with whom I interacted highlighted their experiences and their ever-evolving attitudes toward race. They claim blackness in defiance of dominant interests that attempt to proliferate the norms and values of their networks throughout the country.

Discrimination remains a constant obstacle because dominant/mainstream networks use their social capital to exclude blacks from participation in society. Exclusion and violence against blacks is justified because blackness is linked with criminality and violence.

In Chapter Five, I explore the debates about structural violence using Galtung's definition of the term. He sees structural violence as an outcome of denying one his/her right to achieve goals while I argue that the term he uses is too broad and may encompass just about anything. I find that directed structural violence is a more apt term because it highlights the relationship between the institutions of structural violence (the police, health clinics, social services agencies, etc) and their reflection of dominant network norms and values. Violent structures offer a further glimpse into the social world of young people because of the adverse effects they have on disadvantaged populations. The institutions of city government in Salvador largely reflect the interests of the dominant class despite the fact that low-income populations may have similar demands of the same organisations. The police in particular played significant roles in the lives of the young people from the programme. The violence they generated for instance in the narrative from Marcelo and Marcio created further uncertainties and anxieties about how best to navigate the social and physical world of Plataforma. The police are used by dominant networks to direct violence at black populations in order to maintain the safety and security of mainstream society. The fear, discussed by Caldeira (2000), Scheppele-Hughes (1998), and Leeds (1996) in Chapter Five of black populations, leads dominant networks to use their social capital to preclude these groups from attaining better quality of education, gainful employment, and other successes through the police which reinforce the boundaries of mainstream society and peripheral or low-income black areas. The paradox of the police though is that they are often both corrupt and black/brown themselves. Their corruption leads them to connections with gangs and other criminal networks. Their blackness pushed them to use violence as a means to differentiate

themselves from others in the community and demonstrate that in fact they were not black evidenced by their willingness to engage in violence and uphold dominant network norms and values.

This research found that because the perceptions of race are connected with violence and criminality, young people in particular have difficult times overcoming stereotypes that are used to justify their exclusion or use directed violence against them. Racial identities are complex manifestations of historical, political, and social processes. In Brazil, although race can be a fluid identity, for many, because of the social cues received through things like speech, dress, origin, etc, it can never be a variable concept. Additionally, the idea of fluidity in Brazilian racial categories is being challenged by young people who are attempting to reclaim and re-brand the black identity as something positive and de-linked from perceptions of criminality, violence, and poverty.

### **Avoiding criminality**

The thesis contributes to the debate about how young people avoid criminality by highlighting the different strategies they used and comparing it to previous paradigms, especially Gary Barker's work in Chicago (Barker, 1998; McIlwaine and Moser, 2007). It contributes by expanding on his previous list but also refining it. I argue that while various factors have a role in helping young people to avoid criminality, the networks of individuals were pivotal in helping them to 'stay out of trouble'. I argue, against earlier contributions to the idea of social networks and social capital that not all networks are equal and network membership in and of itself did not preclude one from being involved in violence or criminality. The study participants did not simply associate themselves with any network but rather those they believed would help them achieve their first goal while leading them to others. For some, this was a conscious choice, while for others peers pulled them along to other networks that

would help them both. The development of the non-violent identity was associated with conscious choices to belong to positive social networks that offered young people the hope that they could achieve their goals.

The thesis adds to the debate about why young people avoid criminality and violence by highlighting one of their most powerful assets in a dynamic peripheral part of Salvador that has received little attention. Social network membership was not always a passive act but rather one where young people actively chose membership in networks that would help them not only avoid criminality and violence in Plataforma, but also supply them with the necessary tools to overcome other challenges in their lives. This research determined that, in the case of these young people, social networks and the individuals within them can act as factors that either draw young people away from gangs or further into them. Primary networks in particular have central roles to play in how young people can actively shape their futures or passively accept their fates. Without strong figures in the lives of young people at specific moments where decisions are made, young people can and will make decisions to join what seems more easily accessible. Primary networks that don't function in this way though can be supplemented and even supplanted in some cases by other networks. In the case of Juno, discussed in the previous chapter, other networks like the Violence and Masculinity programme were able to step in and provide guidance where his primary network did not. Social networks are essential to young people and their ability to see different realities and different possibilities for themselves. What worked so well about networks that were derived from intervention programmes like Violence and Masculinity or KaBoom was the fact that young people were able to relate to the facilitators but also see others like themselves with positive futures such as attending college, working, and going beyond the expected roles played in their neighbourhood. Life choices often reflect realities and thus without real and tangible examples of people like themselves succeeding young people with little hope and no

clear paths will look to what is known and accessible. Connecting young people in these types of environments with secondary networks that are also well connected, positive, and able to enlist the help of people from the community to demonstrate how to achieve success is an essential strategy that can work to counteract the influence of perverse networks like gangs and involvement in crime. Additionally where primary networks do not function, support is needed for those young people that are not always able or initially willing to make the connection with strong positive pro-social secondary networks.

Counteracting these multiple forces of violence can be combated through repeated interactions with positive pro-social networks. The positive social networks exerted their influence in other ways as well. Connections with networks that contained linkages to communities, individuals, or institutions outside of the neighbourhood were able to act as mentors guiding young people to real possibilities of positive future. These connections can prove to be extremely powerful in pushing young people to involve themselves in more positive networks. Just as key figures in their lives help push them away from gangs and act as a buffer those same types of figures that are involved in gangs can push young people to join gangs. In this research young people who had multiple individuals in their primary networks (i.e. fathers, brothers, and uncles) were substantially more likely to also become involved in gangs. Further investigation is needed to understand the generalisability of this finding to other cities across the world where gangs are prevalent and attract young people to their ranks. The more information that is attained from disparate areas such as this one on how young people make their decisions in the face of adversity the more we are able to answer questions and most importantly devise strategies that will assist young people in developing positive self-identities and also giving them real possible options for the future the more we will decrease the influence of gangs and thus the power they hold over such neighbourhoods.

## Conclusions

Throughout this entire writing process I had an extremely difficult decision to make about how to portray Plataforma. My experience there was mixed. I witnessed and observed acts of kindness and community, beauty and friendship while at the same time violence and the threat of violence permeated the air placing people on edge. In a way I was always expecting for it to happen and in a few instances I did witness some of the violence of the neighbourhoods however the neighbourhood could not be defined by the violence alone. I have struggled to give a balanced view of the neighbourhood and ensure that the depiction I have rendered here does not conjure images of complete lawlessness and criminality. The strong undercurrents of discrimination toward both the poor and brown and black populations lead many to believe that poor neighbourhoods breed crime and violence. As I spoke to people who were not from the neighbourhood about the research I was conducting they were extremely fearful for my safety suggesting many times that I should either choose a different topic or study a different safer neighbourhood. My experience there though showed me that although violence was a part of the daily experience it did not rule the neighbourhood and the vast majority of people living there were hardworking honest individuals trying to survive in the circumstances they found themselves.

Social networks have featured heavily in this thesis because it is my belief that they be employed as a useful framework for understanding social relationships between distinct groups. The idea of this research was to bring to the forefront literatures on race and violence as a way to critique the concept but also improve upon it so that it can ultimately be used to analyse relationships within peripheral communities and the external forces that have affected their development and evolution. Despite the fact that social capital is used by

dominant networks to exclude others and maintain its own position within the social hierarchy, it remains a useful tool in describing how these relationships function as long as it is not thought of as some form of unqualified benefit for all. The literatures on race and violence illustrate how young people use the social capital they inherit and create but are severely constrained in not only avoiding violence and criminality but also in achieving their goals and improving their quality of life. The social capital of both gangs and dominant networks acts as a counterweight to their ability to connect with other groups that will aid them in their ability to get ahead. Race in particular and its perception within Brazil has created severe difficulties because of its fluidity as well as the way in which one's race is perceived by others. Moreover race has been made more complex because of its connection with violence and criminality further complicating how young people use social networks to overcome the challenges they face.

This research has several implications. First, in order for black and poor young people in peripheral neighbourhoods to escape negative perceptions of them as violent and criminal they must strategically use their social networks to connect with a geographically, politically, socially, and economically diverse set of actors with similar interests and goals. Dominant networks work hard to use their social capital to exclude young people from the periphery from the benefits of true integration to the city. Concurrently, the negative consequences of perverse social capital of gangs effects young people through the violence they produce. Young people must engage with pro-social networks that can act not only as buffers against these detrimental forms of capital but also propel them to move beyond simple survival and improve their quality of life through accessing educational opportunities, and better employment options. Second, the emergence of a collective racial-political identity for young black Brazilians could prove an important way to reclaim and re-brand the idea of blackness in Brazil. The evolution of young black Brazilians marks a new chapter in social

relationships as blacks begin to form a collective consciousness that argues for equal access to the benefits of societal integration. De-linking the notion that violence and criminality is associated with blackness and poverty is an important first step that the new emerging collectivity can challenge. Finally, these findings could be translated into benefits from political and social action through the networks in which young people are associated by placing pressure on traditional hierarchical social and political structures. With the emergence of this new generation, and the use of their social capital they can upend traditional social relationships by pressuring them to provide basic needs and services to peripheral communities that have been abandoned by government. This also has the effect of undermining the negative consequences of perverse social capital and the power that gangs wield in these areas allowing for community residents to pursue their lives without fear of violence.

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