

**CHILDREN AS VICTIMS OF SOCIAL VIOLENCE :
A PRACTICAL THEOLOGICAL APPROACH**

Mireya Baltodano

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The University of St Andrews
Faculty of Divinity
Department of Practical Theology

**Children as Victims of Social Violence -
A Practical Theological Approach**

by Mireya Baltodano

Thesis for a M. Phil degree (Mode A)

September 30, 1994



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To my daughter

Amanda

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INTRODUCTION

Violence is intrinsic to Latin America for historical reasons. During the last decades it has taken diverse and intense forms that collude with the impoverishment of the people. As a result, an increasing social violence has spread widely along the sub-continent.

The term social violence, left purposely wide to cover its various manifestations, ranges from the private sphere of the family to the warfare conflict. From a holistic perspective it is important to consider all these variations, because all social factors are concomitant in the spiral of violence. However, the emphasis and finality is placed on the form of violence that is rooted in social inequality and injustice, and that consequently has a social effect for the majority of the population.

The theme is focused on children as victims and subsequent accomplices of violence. However, family violence, which is commonly regarded as the typical violence against children, is viewed obliquely. Although family violence is a universal and important problem, it is not the greatest nor the most dramatic in this geographical area. Children are seen here as a group which faces a specific struggle within the general demands of the people, such as the cases of women, black, or indigenous groups.

A child is the most defenceless of human beings given his/her physical weakness, his/her development, and his/her emotional

dependence. The child is perhaps the most deprived among those marginalised as a result of the abuse of power. The theme is all the more relevant because childhood is a stage experienced by all, and because children are the largest part of the Latin American population.

Notwithstanding this, there are signs of hope within this desolating panorama. The people organize themselves to restore social unbalance. Among different movements, the Church, which has often been accomplice or indifferent to the social punishment of the people, has now awakened to denounce and share the effects of social violence on the impoverished. Although violence is an anti-value for Christians, paradoxically the Church has been involved in a long history of violent events.

Latin American theology proposes new approaches for the evangelist and pastoral roles of the Church amidst a bloody world.

The present thesis looks for an inter-disciplinary understanding of the issue. Theoretic elements from Sociology, Psychology, and Theology combine to review the actual situation of violated children.

The climate of violence and specific violent acts against children are described in the first chapter. Within the wide range of manifestations, violence on children is here described in the concrete situations of child labour, trafficking and sale of children, institutionalized children, and those punished by war.

The second chapter is a socio-psychological analysis of concrete child circumstances described in the first chapter. An ecological approach to human development is used as a framework.

The analysis looks for conditions in the ample social sphere and connected institutions that infringe and promote violence on children.

The last chapter presents a historical review of approaches of the Latin American Church to the problem of violence. It also proposes alternatives for pastoral care with characteristics pertinent to the context, according to the sub-continental reality and to the prophetic role of the Church.

The third chapter presents a biblical analysis from the Latin American perspective with the purpose to recognize the ministry of Jesus in the violent context of his period, in order to find biblical keys in the approach street children.

For various reasons this research was carried out over a long period (1989-1994) in which many socio-historical changes occurred that reverberated on a world level, above all in the political and economic realms. These effects were undoubtedly felt in the social arena, especially in the most impoverished sectors, not only because the market economy became stronger but because of the loss of socio-political alternatives that obliged the popular sectors to rethink their utopias. Because of these changes, the situation presented in the first two chapters worsened dramatically for the population of this study: the Latin American childhood. On the other hand, it has also been a rich epoch of rethinking at the socio-economic and theological levels.

As an example of what occurred during these four years it is worth mentioning two contrasting stories: Ignacio Martín-Baró, whose analysis about violence is used in the second chapter, was one

of the victims of the killing of the Jesuit priests in El Salvador, in November of 1989. In opposition to this violent act, Rigoberta Mechú, whose experience as a young worker is related in the first chapter, was named winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1992, in recognition of the American indigenous resistance which began over 500 years ago. These two stories talk about the context involved in the present research: a time and space for violence and repression as well as a time and space for resistance and hope.

CHAPTER I

CLIMATE OF VIOLENCE IN WHICH CHILDREN GROW UP IN LATIN AMERICA

This analysis has as its objective to locate in facts and real circumstances the actual situation of Latin American poor children. The facts are the daily life of such a childhood and the circumstances are the tangible climate of violence which surround them. What do Latin American poor children do? What do other people do to them? How does what they do or what has been done to them affect? The description of their situation will lead to its analysis, in terms of psycho-social consequences. This analysis as well as the description will be contextualized in the cultural, social and historical frame of Latin America.

A. Operational concepts

The description of children's life experiences demands the previous operational definition of some concepts. It is necessary to delimit the climate, the social habitat and the living atmosphere that serves as a daily scenery for the growing children in Latin America.

Latin America will be spoken of as a single entity, although it is not always easy. The differences between countries are directly related to their own particular culture. But there is also a common matrix in Latin American history that serves as a frame for the problems being referred to in this chapter. As Dussel says:¹

¹Enrique Dussel: *A history of the Church in Latin America - Colonialism to Liberation (1492-1979)*. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Michigan, 1981.

...to comprehend fully the individual natural cultures, one must consider the structures of Latin American culture as a whole. It is a serious mistake to postpone an analysis of Latin America until the study of our national cultures has been completed, for the structures of the whole can be explained by the morphology of the individual parts.

1. Childhood

For theoretical and methodological reasons, the child -girl or boy- will be in this analysis the person who has not reached enough biological, intellectual and emotional maturity to face the climate of social violence. This violence is intrinsically incorporated as part of the environment which is involved in the development of the personality.

This definition could be ambiguous and chronologically unlimited since there are adults who do not reach a full maturity. But in the theoretical analysis of the facts, this apparent ambiguity will be superseded, since, obviously, age will be limited by the groups of children participating in it.

The theoretical reason which leads to the flexibility in the present definition of childhood is to be free in analyzing what ontological weight the climate of violence has on humans on the growing human beings, the children. Even when we could say that boys and girls in their teen ages could not be considered as children, it is important to include adolescence as the prolongation of childhood since it is a key stage for the achievement of identity. The moratorium, according to Erikson², that society concedes to adolescents after their biological maturation, is not possible for most poor children in Latin America. This is clearly manifested in the case of working children: they are pushed into start living very early as adults,

² Erik Erikson: *Infancia y Sociedad*, Paidós, México, 1971.

but their development is still pre-adult in the mental and emotional aspects. For this reason adolescence is important to be included in the analysis.

The methodological reason for keeping this open definition of childhood definition is that the problems to be described in this chapter are diverse and not all occur in the same ages. For some of the problems described adolescence will be an important stage, for other their incidence is more significant at earlier stages.

2. Poverty as expression of violence

In the consideration of institutional violence, poverty and oppression come together as a binomial that have emerged historically in Latin America and that prevail as main causes of such a violence. Alienation arises as a result of both.

There have been multiple works on trying to define poverty as an isolated concept which afterwards could lead to other kinds of social problems. The intentions of such a definition of poverty have an economical view of the issue and give some indices to measure the magnitude of it.

The most common way to define poverty is through the use of the Gross National Product (GNP) per person as an indicator of economic growth or as a measure of well-being. Townsend criticises this procedure saying that GNP is a measure of production and selecting it as a criterion for development and international status could distort the view of the world and discriminate against the developing countries.

Another way to define poverty (and perhaps the first used) was the biological approach, which affirms that primary poverty occurs when the total earnings are insufficient to obtain the minimum necessities for the maintenance of mere physical

efficiency³. Obviously there are more than physical needs in a person. It is precisely the specification of basic needs and the inability to fulfil them that has become, in recent times, the most common way to identify poverty.

Other approaches mentioned by Sen have a comparative focus: stratification of society in terms of distribution of wealth; relative deprivation in situations where a group of people possesses less of some desired things in comparison with the other reference group; measurement of poverty based on certain given standards as a result of balancing the community capabilities and desires.

There are many obstacles to defining poverty or developing levels. The point of departure is indeed from an economical character. The problem begins when the economist finds that wealth is not equally distributed, so some become rich and others poor. This unjust distribution goes beyond the economics field and leads the issue to a sociological field. The present study goes further into the psychological and theological fields.

But even in the strictly economical studies, poverty is not a question of numbers. It is always seen as a fact in relation to another fact. And the poverty is in people, and then the poor people are compared to other people, wealthier or poorer. This implies a transposition of culture and life styles from one society to another, or from one group to another. Obviously poverty is defined from the wealthy ones' perspective and from the predominance of a highly consuming society. This is possible because of the power of the international market system in which all countries are compulsory immersed.

The economic system increases the wealth and power of a small group of countries while creating and re-creating an

³ Amartya Sen: *An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation*. Oxford University Press, New York, 1981.

endless poverty in others. In the economic system prices are determined as if the parties buying and selling products had equal bargaining power. But poor countries do not have bargaining strength and over repeated transactions they will systematically lose power against rich countries. The economic gap becomes wider and wider.⁴

Rapid population growth, wrong administrative policies, laziness or ignorance are arrogated as reasons for poverty. Most of them could be analyzed as consequences rather than causes. But none of them could be self-explanatory nor significant for impoverishment. As Townsend says:

In many important respects it would be fair to conclude that the structure of underdevelopment has been created by centuries of association with the mercantile and colonialist nations. It would be naive in the extreme not to recognize that western countries may have much to gain economically and politically even today from the poverty of the so-called developing countries though they may also have a lot to lose by policies of exploitation. Theories of development may unwittingly safeguard western ideology.⁵

But contrary to what Townsend says, there is no such "unwittingly" in economical or development theories. The neoliberal economic policy in the present time is submitting the social and economical policy of the State to the logic of capital accumulation. It is a new kind of interventionism addressed against the social State. This is the ideology of the Total

⁴ George Kent: *The political economy of hunger - The silent holocaust*. Praeger Publishers, New York, 1984.

⁵ Peter Townsend: *The Concept of Poverty - Working paper on Methods of Investigation and Life-Styles of the Poor in Different Countries*, Heinemann Education Books, London, 1974, p. 9-10.

Market⁶. The ideological struggle of the total market is to understand society only in so far as its relevance as a profitable market. This is the mystique of market forces to which all components of society submit. In this ideology there is no answer for the problems of poverty, unemployment and destroying the natural environment. The only automatic answer is: more market. Market automatism tends to instability that results in impoverishment of the majority in our societies.

The marginalization of many people from their minimal subsistence is a constant and systematic violation of human rights. Nobody should satisfy his/her own needs by sacrificing other people's lives. As Hinkelammert says:

To fulfil these human rights, it is necessary to change the social relations based on productivity in a way that every human being may have the possibility to be included by his/her work in the social division of work and to earn a salary that allows him/her a dignified life, that is to say, to have at least his/her basic needs solved.⁷

3. Oppression and alienation

As it was said at the beginning, poverty and oppression come together. It can be seen at global level in the unjust linkage within the international market system. It can be seen in a smaller sphere, within one country, where small sections of society keep the wealth that is taken out from a majority who are lacking satisfaction of minimal needs. It can be seen among people in different kinds of relationships. It started with wealth that turned into power. It was acquisition of power in the first instance and then became power to control ideas, behaviour, being...

⁶ Franz Hinkelammert: *Democracia y Totalitarismo*. Departamento Ecuemenico de Investigaciones, Costa Rica, 1987.

⁷ Free translation from the text by Hinkelammert, *Op. Cit.*, p. 152.

As Hanks⁸ says, oppression is perceived in the Old Testament as the basic cause of poverty. Among twenty or more different causes of poverty that he found, oppression remains as the main cause, and it is also comparable with idolatry as a basic cause. Idolatry as the basis of oppression has been extensively developed by Latin American theologians, from the perspective of the poor.

For the analysis it is necessary to emphasize the relation of poverty to oppression. A poor person is not necessarily an oppressed person. Liberation starts as he/she begins to perceive critically the themes of their time, and thus intervene actively in reality. This is a long and difficult process that persons living in an oppressive situation go through.

Freire defines oppression as follows:

Any situation in which A objectively exploits B or hinders his pursuit of self-affirmation as a responsible person is one of oppression. Such a situation in itself constitutes violence, even when sweetened by false generosity, because it interferes with man's ontological and historical vocation to be more fully human. With the establishment of a relationship of oppression, violence has already begun. Never in history has violence been initiated by the oppressed. How could they be the initiators, if they themselves are the product of violence? How could they be the sponsors of something whose objective inauguration called forth their existence as oppressed? There would be no oppressed had there been no prior situation of violence to establish their subjugation.⁹

⁸ Thomas Hanks: *God so loved the Third World* - The Bible, the Reformation and Liberation Theologies. Orbis Books, Maryknoll, N. Y., 1983.

⁹ Paulo Freire: *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Penguin Books, England, 1982, p. 12.

It must not be lost sight of that the concerns of this study are: Latin America - poverty - oppression - violence - children. There is a tight relationship in all these subjects. Children are the victims of this relationship. And as we go further into the theme of oppression, we find that the consequences of oppression on children are largely dramatic. If, as Freire says, oppression comes when "A objectively exploits B", what will the result be if "A" is an adult and "B" is a child? "A" could also be a lonely street where the child lives. "A" could be the absence of parents. "A" could be State lack of minor protecting policies. "A" could be the military guard who posted as "missing" his/her parents and gave him/her in adoption to another military guard. The list of "As" is impressive. The list of exploiters, violators, violating situations, oppressors is extensive. They are not merely other persons but climates, systems, movements, ideologies, all the product of dehumanized people. Dehumanisation again is an ontological possibility as an historical reality, as Freire would say. Hence, children growing in dehumanized realities and being objects of dehumanized people may become dehumanized as well. This would be a primary hypothesis.

Some of the results in a dehumanisation process are: internalization of the image of the oppressor, fear of freedom, refusal to appeal or listen to others or own conscience, gregariousness rather than comradeship, adaptive attitude toward circumstances and more¹⁰.

Gustavo Gutiérrez, in his experiences working with poor people, describes the complexity of being poor and oppressed as follows:¹¹

¹⁰ These human characteristics are amply analyzed by Freire in his books *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, *op.cit.* and *Education for Critical Consciousness*, Shead and Ward, London, 1973.

¹¹ Gustavo Gutierrez: *We drink from our own wells* - The spiritual journey of a people. Orbis Books, Maryknoll, N. Y. 1984, p. 25.

Beyond any possible doubt, the life of the poor is one of hunger and exploitation, inadequate health care and lack of suitable housing, difficulty in obtaining an education, inadequate wages and unemployment, struggles for their rights, and repression. But that is not all. Being poor is also a way of feeling, knowing, reasoning, making friends, loving, believing, suffering, celebrating and praying. The poor constitute a world of their own(...).

Contrary to what a certain romantic notion would hold, the world of the poor is not made up simply of victims, of solidarity and the struggle for human rights. The universe of the poor is inhabited by flesh-and-blood human beings, pervaded with the forces of life and death, or grace and sin. In that world we find indifference to others, individualism, abandoned children, people abusing people, pettiness, hearts closed to the action of the Lord (...).

But it is also true --and this adds to the complexity-- that the specific form these characteristics take bears the mark of an intolerable poverty, of the struggle for basic human survival, of boundary situations. Thus it is often difficult to pronounce definitive judgement with categories belonging to other contexts.

In Freire's words, "the great humanistic and historical task of the oppressed is to liberate themselves and their oppressors as well"¹⁵. This is a painful task and listening to the testimonies of poor and oppressed people, there is much suffering before and after the self-conversion toward humanization of people. It is previous deprivation and marginalization that move people to struggle against oppression and oppressors. In response, oppressors answer with more violence on the already suffering people. But those people whose consciences have become aware of their oppressive situation find themselves as integrated persons, subjects, in contrast to the former adaptive ones,

¹⁵ Paulo Freire: *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. op. cit., p. 43.

objects. There is a new capacity to make choices and decisions that bring to their lives meaning and hope, within their still deprived daily life. Human oppression has been overcome, but still not the oppression caused by poverty. Contrarily, persecution has been added as an answer to the new subject that has emerged from his/her restrained situation. This is the long chain of violence that is perpetrated by generations and every time returns to its departure point: to have rather than to be. But to have more than the rest of human beings.

Here we are dealing again with human feelings beyond their bodily needs (also human). People are placed in a choosing situation. In the face of their oppression, what options do they have? To allow others to determine their life expectations, or to intervene actively in their reality. Their decision will depend on the capacity they have to perceive the contradictions which occur in their society.

But children's situation is different. They are not completely formed, and their ability to choose is still in early stages.

Piaget and Inhelder¹⁵ affirm that chance is gradually learned along with the mental development which achieves its fulness in adolescence (after 11 or 12 years) when there is the power of deductive thought. Before that stage, since their birth to 7 or 8 years of age, children have an intuitive anticipation of things because there is not a capacity to perceive the totality; it is a prelogical thought. After this stage and before adolescence (7/8 year to 11/12) children can operate within a logical order but on an essentially concrete level; this is the antithesis between chance and operations. Hypothetical-deductive thought in adolescence becomes synthesis, formal thought.

¹⁶Jean Piaget and Barbel Inhelder: *The origin of the Idea of Chance in Children*. Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1975.

The socialization process is a dynamic relation between the person and his/her environment. The way the child relates with other persons, the way the child relates with his/her daily situations establish an *inter*-personal relation with that social environment that afterwards becomes an *intra*-personal relation when the experiences are introjected. This process could also be defined in Piaget's concepts of assimilation and accommodation.

In an outstanding analysis on children's fear of infanticide, Dorothy Bloch¹⁷ affirms that there is a universal predisposition of children to fear infanticide and that its intensity depends on their physical and psychological development stage and the incidence of violent events in relation with the love and protection they have received.

Bloch mention several factors that increase children's fear:

- their size and sense of defencelessness
- their dependence on parents' will
- their limitation to accommodate violence and violent feelings (intra-personal process in socialization)
- their tendency to put in the same level thoughts, wishes, feelings and facts
- the magic character of their thoughts may make them feel responsible for the events surrounding them
- their aggressive feelings are fed by the violent environment in such a devastating way that it makes them feel guilty.

The present study will involve children in an wide range of ages and living in different situations of violence. The

¹⁷Dorothy Bloch: *Para que la bruja no me coma* - Fantasia y miedo de los niños al infanticidio. Siglo XXI, Mexico, 1986. The title in English is *So the witch won't eat me* - Fantasy and the child's fear of infanticide.

description of the analysis will be made within the social and family situation. The notes outlined above have been an introductory explanation to locate the facts to be presented. In the analysis other parallel studies will be taken into account, as well as a theoretical frame.

B. Immediate repercussion of violence in children

1. Working children

The International Labour Organization (ILO) in 1985 considered as a moderate estimation that 50 million children under 15 years were economically active in the whole world and the great majority (98%) lived in developing countries¹⁸. The report mentioned that working children considered in this number are not adolescents that work a few hours to have pocket money, but children of all ages that prematurely live an adult life, working many hours a day for an unjust wage, in dangerous conditions for their mental and physical development, in some cases far away from other relatives, and deprived of the possibility of education and a better future.

There is a tangible lack of accurate statistics and national studies on child labour in Latin America. All reports consulted agree that the roots of child labour are poverty that ends in unemployment, under-employment, precarious incomes, low living standards, insufficient education opportunities, etc. Child labour substitutes or complements the work of adults in their families, and in some extreme cases their wages are the only income for the family group.

¹⁸ ***El Trabajo Infantil***. Documento de la Organización Internacional del Trabajo. Extracto de la Memoria del Director General a la Conferencia Internacional del Trabajo, 69a. reunión, 1983, primera edición en 1985, OIT, Ginebra, Suiza.

On the other hand, child labour is advantageous and profitable for some kind of small enterprises that are illegal and unstable, because children can be dismissed at any time since they do not have labour rights nor the possibility to affiliate to a syndicate. The labour relation established with their supervisors are of a "patronazgo" style. Under these circumstances child labour becomes occasional and the high turnover rates help employers to absorb fluctuations in production. Children also are a significant sector in migrant labour which constitutes in some countries an important proportion of the workforce¹⁹. But the main reason to employ children is that they can be paid lower wages.

a) Working hours

The time children work depends on their kind of job. When they only work, their regular work schedule is 8 to 10/12 hours a day. When work is combined with studies they also dedicate many hours to their joint responsibilities without much time for playing. Children living in rural areas start working from when they are very young. At the beginning they work two hours, but the labour time keeps increasing until they work at least eight hours a day six days a week. Agricultural work does not recognize differences in sexes in the time dedicated to work. But domestic service in urban areas demands the longest working hours and is entirely done by girls.

There is no social recognition given to children's work, and economically child labour is undervalued. The salary, according to the reports from several Latin American countries, is generally under the minimal salary established and normally never reaches adults' salary for the same task.

¹⁹ Assefa Bequele, Jo Boyden: "Working Children : Current trends and policy responses", in *International Labour Review*, Vol. 127, 1988, No. 2, Geneva.

In a survey made in four Latin American countries (Paraguay, Brasil, Bolivia and Perú)²⁰ three of these countries reported that children's salaries were 34, 26 or 12 percent of the minimal salary. It is important to have in mind that many adults also are not receiving the minimal salary. But many children surveyed in Brazil answered that they were earning more than their parents.

Paying low wages to children gives employers a competitive advantage over other related enterprises. In some industries payment combines cash and kind. This is particular to works contracted in isolated areas, where workers receive food and medicines, as an advance of their wages, at high prices settled by the employer's criterion. It is common that at the end of the covenant children do not receive any salary because of the deductions applied for items consumed during the contracted time. When the amount due is less than the amount owed, children must continue working until the difference is made up. In a study made in Peru on this kind of agreement, only 51.8% of children returned home with cash²¹. In some cases, when parents have received payment in advance, they pledge their child labour in return, in a practice through which children may be committed to work her/his entire life to the same employer; this is a kind of slavery in the twentieth century.

b) Legal dispositions

In Latin American countries there are legal dispositions for child labour, which establish an age limit under which children can not work. The limit is set depending on the risks that different jobs have. The limit is mostly fixed in 14 years of age, even when the International Labour Organization recommends 11-

²⁰ William E. Myers: "Cuatro encuestas sudamericanas sobre los niños que trabajan en la calle" in *Revista Internacional del Trabajo*, Vo. 108, 1989, No. 2 (publication of International Labour Organization, Geneva).

²¹ Jesús Guillén-Marroquín: "Child Labour in Peru - Gold panning in Madre de Dios" in *Combating Child Labour* (Chapter 4), edited by Assefa Bequele and Jo Boyden. International Labour Office, Geneva 1988.

12 when children have finished primary school. The Law also commonly excludes out of its applied sphere work in family enterprises, in training centres, domestic services and agricultural work. But there is a great distance between law and reality. Obviously children keep working but in more marginalized and unprotected conditions. In Colombia, some larger enterprises have suspended child labour largely because it has been substituted by machinery. In Peru, in a specific reported situation, agencies do not recruit children (migratory labour people) but put them in contact with the employers.

c) Education

All Latin American countries have legally constituted that children must receive free education up to at least primary level. However, under-funding for the educational budget, lack of school places, lack of family resources to buy books, uniforms and shoes mean that many children cannot attend school. The progress seen in school attendance in the seventies has been slowed down or reversed during the economic crisis of the eighties.

There is an estimation that half of working children do not go to school²². Others combine school and work. This is favoured by the established half-day system of school attendance in public education in many Latin American countries. In the survey made in four countries in that area, three out of them reported that 77% of children surveyed were studying. It is amazing that they keep studying even when they have to work. Many of them are working to pay their own studies. But it is to be also understood that the fact of working reduces scholastic performance, and is a factor that exacerbates school drop-out. It is interesting that most of the children interviewed preferred to be at school studying rather than working.

²² Assefa Bequele, Jo Boyden: *Op. Cit.*

School attendance depends on the actual possibilities due to economic or other objective reasons. But equally important is parents' attitude toward their children's education. In surveys where this attitude was analyzed, a high percentage of parents did not attend school in their own childhood, or dropped out early and were forced to work. So the adults' early childhood experiences seem to be influencing school attendance in their children. Some of the parents think that school is not going to help them to find a job, or that it is their duty to work, or that it is better for them to work instead of loafing around in the neighbourhood and becoming 'good-for-nothing'.

There is also a marginalization of working children that go to school with the marks of their extreme poverty. Other children in a better economical situation consider them inferior or dirty, and even teachers do not pay attention to them despite the effort taken to attend. In response to this kind of treatment, poor children tend to see themselves as unfit for school and their interest in study diminishes. Both children and teachers who reject bear the marks of a classist society.

On the other hand, children do not receive any training for the work that might help them to go into new, better paid, and more interesting activities. They generally do not have the opportunity to choose their jobs, because employment responds to social rather than to market factors.

Attitudes toward education go hand in hand with life aspirations. Some children have assimilated parents' attitudes and dislike to go to school arguing that they prefer to earn money. Work is highly valued, but their aspirations are modest and realistic. The majority of working children look for a conservative improvement in their economical situation and tend to see in their future mostly technical rather than professional occupations. It seems that poverty has limited their horizon of hope and they have become realistic and pragmatic.

d) Kinds of work

Children have different kinds of work:

In urban areas they are seen washing and tending cars, cleaning shoes, doing personal services, looking after buildings, in ambulatory vending of all kind of items (specially food and newspapers), collecting garbage, selecting recycling materials from garbage, in manufacturing activities, in food processing enterprises, participating in family enterprises, in petty trading, in small neighbourhood shops ("pulperias"), as helpers of mechanical repair garages, apprentices of all kind of industrial or confection enterprises, etc.

In rural areas they cultivate with their families or employers all kind of crops (cotton, coffee, corn, sugar cane, etc.). They clean the land, collect firewood and water, go hunting or fishing, prepare food for other workers, go underground into mines, and pan for gold, etc. In this area the demand for child labour tends to increase during the harvest.

There are also illegal activities where children get involved (mainly in urban areas): robbery, prostitution, drugs trade, or other activities socially despised.

Many of these working activities represent risks for the young age of employees. Children's needs are different from adults'. They are more exposed to accidents due to lack of attention, tiredness, judgment or ignorance.

e) Working conditions

Some working conditions are extremely dangerous for their physical development: being underground in mines; exposure to toxic products in agricultural work; dangerous manual machinery; excessive physical effort; harmful body positions in which they work for hours (squatting, bending, on knees) with the risk of suffering bone deformity; lack of protection from dust, humidity, noises; insanitary working conditions; no facilities for clean

drinking water in some rural areas; exposure to bites of insects or other animals, with the result of illness like malaria; malnutrition and anaemia; loss of vision caused by badly illuminated working areas; and many other consequences from exploitative working conditions.

The World Health Organization (WHO) have studied specifically health consequences on children working in inappropriate conditions²³. They found that the most common occupational diseases in working children are: skin diseases as allergy, contact dermatitis, noise-induced hearing impairment, infections and parasitosis, pneumoconioses, occupational asthma, vibration induced diseases, and poisoning.

They also affirm that children are at greater risk of injury because of the size, shape and mass of most tools and machines which are designed for adult workers.

Growth and development are affected subsequently at a short term. Some of the physical and psychological results are: in bone growth and haemoglobin level, lung capacity, cerebral effects of lead poisoning resulting in behavioural problems and mental retardation; some infections stunt growth; intellectual development is retarded by repetitive and monotonous work.

The World Bank in 1981 reported that among the absolute poor, 4.500 million children (in that year) are sick for much of their lives as part of the under-development. Among these absolute poor people is the greatest concentration of working children²⁵. This number should be significantly increased by now, since the economic crisis was just beginning in Latin

²³ *Report on Child Labour and Health*, published by World Health Organization, Geneva, 1982, page 6.

²⁵ David C. Pitt: "Child Labour and Health", in *Child Labour: a threat to health and development*, second (revised) edition, published by Defence for Children International, Geneva, 1985.

America in 1980 decade. Furthermore, UNICEFF affirms that 40.000 children die every year from preventable diseases²⁶.

Evidently some working conditions represent risk for the psychological and social development of children. Working environments are for adults rather than for children (treatment, conversations, habits, etc.). The main risks for them occur when they are unprotected by parents. Their isolation permits exploitation and abuse by employers, taking advantage of children's docility and subordination.

There is an increase of psychosocial morbidity in working children in developing countries²⁷. Adverse psychological outcomes include role confusion, decreased coping skills, affective disorders, suicides, criminality, drug abuse, alcoholism and sexual problems.

f) Selected typology of working children

Among all the different kinds of work mentioned before, three will be emphasised in this description: street working children, girls working in domestic service, and migrating workers in rural areas. These three different working conditions may help to explain the real drama that children have to survive. Three different struggles will be covered: public (street children), private (domestic service) and isolation (migrating workers). They also deserve special attention because there appear other oppressions concurrent with each one of them: abandonment (street children), gender discrimination (domestic service), and cultural marginalization (migrating workers).

f.1) Street children

²⁶ *International Investigation into the Rights of Abandoned Children*. Report for Children International, Geneva, 1989.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

Poverty can not be hidden. Countries which had improved their economical situation in the late sixties and throughout the seventies have seen now how their streets are full again of people selling a long list of articles to earn some money just to survive. Other countries have seen how more and more the streets have been invaded by ambulant traders. Among all these people, many children badly dressed, alone or in small groups, approach the passers-by to offer items or services.

They are the "gamines" of Colombia, the "palomillas" of Boliva, the "pelusas" of Chile, or the "pachuquillos" of Costa Rica. They have their own world and popular culture. But they have been also stereotyped by the common people as a nuisance, an "anti-social" group, vagabond and delinquent youngsters. This view is also shared by governmental authorities and police. Newspaper "La Tarde" of Asunción, Paraguay narrated the case of some street children that pay police for their "right" to sell sweets in the entrance of the city's main bus terminal. Children also denounced police brutality²⁸. In Dominican Republic street children are rounded up and arrested by police when a dignitary visits that country, as happened in 1984 when Pope John Paul II was there. An article of 1987 in "Los Tiempos" newspaper described a "clean up" operation conducted early in the morning, arresting and holding in detention 100 children in Cochabamba, Bolivia²⁹. Poverty is seen as an endemic illness and different countries have the same remedy.

Different reports from several Latin American countries gather information to give the profile of "street children": male, 7 years old upwards; if family ties are maintained, they live in peripheral areas of cities; they mainly come from rural areas; their parents do not earn enough money to cover family's basic needs.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, page 24.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, page 10.

The Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar (in Colombia) classifies street children in two groups; this classification and definition has international acceptance in Latin America³⁰ :

"Children of the street: those children who have severed all ties with their family, live on the street in gangs, are 14 years and above and benefit from no services whatsoever.

"Children on the street: those who spend 6 to 8 hours per day on the street but who still retain ties with their families and come from different backgrounds, namely: children who have been 'led astray', children of immigrants, children who accompany their fathers at work, children who are exploited and used for sale of drugs or begging".

Along with these definitions, street children are always at risk, some more severely than others. The difference is established by the family link. A report from Uruguay recommends adding the concept of "latent abandonment" to refer to *those children who spend all day alone because of working mothers and/or the separation of the couple, or children who, in general terms, lack basic care and protection*³¹. These children are the next candidates for street work. According to a Colombian report, children from 7 to 12 years old are the group that leave home from their initiative, in reaction to negative living conditions. In all countries it is common that incidence in abandonment is greater among boys than girls, because they are more useful for housekeeping, their education is cheaper, and because boys defend themselves more easily.

Street children have a great labour mobility, but as they grow they work in more stable activities. They tend to develop a continuity in the tasks assigned or chosen, and a notion of "vocation" grows toward their work. But other children have the

³⁰ *Ibid.*, page 7.

³¹ *Ibid.*, page 13.

idea that they do not work because their perception of work is for more structured activities, with salary and social benefits. The disdain they feel for what they do seems to echo society's disapproval.

The wrong ideas of what work means are also reflected when street children are asked about the time they work. They equate working time with their availability time. That can be explained because of the "dead time" these activities include. But instead, they work many hours (8 to 12) to earn more money.

Children who are living with their parents or at least one of them, frequently face family disintegration. The product of their work goes to the family common fund. But other children literally live in the street in total abandonment. That means that added to lack of protection from their parents, they are also without social assistance as they are not registered under the family system in these services, or not attending an education centre as a referral point for health controls. The consequence in health are evidently enormous. Malnutrition and all kinds of illness are the result of such an abandonment.

Children working on the street are also exposed to abuse and exploitation. There is an increasing involvement of young girls in prostitution from 7 to 15 years old. It may be the result of being forced to bring home some money. Normally they have been victims of sexual abuse of step-fathers or other male relatives before going into prostitution practice. There have been reports of children aged 8 to 10 years old suffering from venereal diseases, which they continue transmitting to other children. Sometimes they face sexual abuse by older children who lead gangs.

They also complain of fights with other children. In children interviewed, 71% (as a global percentage in Brazil, Peru, Paraguay and Bolivia) were fearful of being robbed or suffering any kind of

violence. In comparison, they preferred to be at school, playing with other children and being protected by a teacher.

Many Latin American countries have declared street children in high risk.

f.2) Girls who work in domestic service

Under this type of work will be considered those domestic services (only girls) that are paid. Domestic service covers a variety of short and repetitive tasks that take 10 to 12 hours a day, seven days a week. The work is as tedious and boring as reading the above list of activities. It is tiring and unstimulating work for adults and more so for children, especially when it is not shared or appreciated. It implies responsibility, manual ability, judgment, and a combination of concentrated and dispersed behaviour; all these under stressful and exploiting conditions.

Girls given by parents to domestic service are generally very young (nine upwards). They are abruptly put into new and unknown situations, far away from their family, almost prisoners in a strange place or sometimes geographical area. Often under the orders of commonly unkind persons who see them as inferior and lacking intelligence, "just for being a servant".

Despite the long hours they work daily and the diverse service done, their salaries are very low. They have the lowest wages levels among all working children. On the other hand, girls doing the same job at home while parents are out working do not receive any remuneration. In this last case, it is common that very young girls (around 5 years old) are kept at home in charge of looking after younger brothers and sisters, and their parents lock the house to protect them from outside dangers. Very often one can read in the newspapers how trapped children at home die because of a fire or another accident.

The marginalization among those already marginalized brings a double oppression. These girls are suffering class and gender oppression. The submission they are forced into is an intelligible mark that accompanies their identity as women. Also their femininity suffers another distortion when their lives teach them that their bodies are their value rather than their whole humanity. It is very common that young girls in domestic service are sexually abused by men living in the house where they work. The next step is that those girls become prostitutes as a profitable and easier career.

Girls that work as maids far away from their houses do not have any place where to go in the free day they may receive weekly. They are exposed to all kind of vices in unrecommended places. They can be linked in relations with men in which manipulation and dependency is the rule. Very frequently girls become pregnant and abandoned by their families. New children will be the next victims in this vicious circle.

Girls in domestic service don't have social security and when they become ill they have to buy medicines which are usually expensive. They generally are not well nourished and in some circumstances eat what the served family have left.

But perhaps the really severe exploitation occurs inside the house, in a private and covered situation, where rules are established by despotic mistresses. Young girls arrive as apprentices and are the object of cruelty and rejection for their ignorance and lack of experience. As they learn and adapt to the new situation, they do not receive affective support. All their human relations are asymmetric in which they play a dominated role. Sometimes this labour relation is hidden under an "adoption" arrangement between naive and desperate parents and the employer. This is another situation close to slavery.

f.3) Migrating child workers

As it was mentioned before, migrating workers are an important group within the workforce. Their exploitation becomes special because they are obliged to leave their town and families (or travel with them) for several months. During this time they live in the most dehumanized conditions. Their suffering is exacerbated for cultural reasons. People from one region are transported to another completely different one. The situation is worst in countries with a high percentage of Indian population, who speak the indigenous language and can not communicate in Spanish. This could be the case especially in Brazil, Guatemala, Perú, Ecuador, and Bolivia.

Along with adult people, children migrate to work, or are forced to accompany their parents because the whole family goes out to work. In agricultural activities men and women work in the same tasks. In mineral exploitation work tasks are divided into the traditional sex roles. They stay for some months and then return home to attend their own harvest.

People that migrate are mostly peasants that can not survive with the product of their harvest. They usually grow grains and vegetables for their own meals, but need money to afford other articles. So they go to work on large farms ("finca"). Their contract includes transportation. Meals, medicine and other needed items are given as advance of their wages. It was described above how at the end of their contract a high percentage of them do not receive salary because it was consumed in these purchases.

It is important to focus on children's lives among migrating groups. In the following testimony by an Indian girl from Guatemala,³² it is easy to understand (but not to stand) the conditions of migrating workers:³³

³² Guatemala has a majority of indian population, but they live a sort of colonization inside their own country. The dominating group has a mixed Indian and Spanish culture ("ladinos") and segregate the Indians who try to keep their culture and language. Among Indians there are more than 20

From when I was very tiny, my mother used to take me down to the *finca*, (farm) wrapped in a shawl on her back. She told me that when I was about two, I had to be carried screaming into the lorry because I didn't want to go. I was so frightened, I didn't stop crying until we were about half-way there. I remember the journey by lorry very well. I didn't even know what it was, but I knew I hated it because I hate things that smell horrible. The lorry holds about forty people. But in with the people, go the animals (dogs, cats, chickens) which the people from the *Altiplano* (highlands) take with them while they are in the *finca*. We have to take our animals. It sometimes took two nights and a day from my village to the coast. During the trip the animals and the small children used to dirty the lorry and you'd get people vomiting and wetting themselves. By the end of the journey, the smell --the filth of people and animals-- was unbearable.

The lorry is covered with a tarpaulin so you can't see the country-side you're passing through. Most of the journey is spent sleeping because it's so tedious. The stuffiness inside the lorry with the cover on, and the smell of urine and vomit make you want to be sick yourself just from being in there. By the time we got to the *finca*, we were totally stupefied; we were like chickens coming out of a pot. We were in such a state, we could hardly walk to the *finca*. I made many trips from the *Altiplano* to the coast, but I never saw the countryside we passed through. We heard other lorries and cars, but we didn't ever see them. (...)

I remember that from when I was about eight to when I was about ten, we worked in the coffee crop. And after that I worked on the cotton plantations further down the coast where it was very, very hot. After my first day picking cotton, I woke up at midnight and lit

different languages; some of them have writing. All these groups had a common mother culture: the great Mayan civilization devastated by Spanish invasion in Century XV.

³³ Elisabeth Burgos-Debray, editor: *I... Rigoberta Menchú- An Indian Woman in Guatemala*. Verso, London, 1984, pages 21-22.

a candle. I saw the faces of my brothers and sisters covered with mosquitos. I touched my own face, and I was covered too. They were everywhere; in people's mouth and everywhere. Just looking at these insects and thinking about being bitten set me scratching. That was our world. I felt that it would always be the same, always the same. It hadn't ever changed.

The same inhuman working conditions are related in a study made in a group of children working in gold panning³⁴. They were 11 to 18 years old. They come from the high mountains (Andes Branch) to the jungle. For one dollar per day they work 8 hours in emaciating and dangerous work. Girls work in cooking. They work more than boys, 14 to 15 hours a day with no day free.

Children live in an impermanent and precarious lodging made of plastic, wood and palm leaf roofs, without walls. They are exposed to snake and insect bites. For this reason malaria is a common illness in workers, but there is not medicine included in their payment. As malaria's fever, chills and trembling usually commence about 5 p.m., children who get ill don't stop working, but they get very weak. They also have anaemia because of the malnourishment for a prolonged time.

Exploitation is accentuated because of ethnic marginalization. Employers take advantage of language and cultural differences (considered as inferior from their dominant culture). The following narrative (again from Guatemala) gives a vivid comprehension of this exploitation:³⁵

We'd been in the *finca* for fifteen days, when one of my brothers died from malnutrition. (...) Two of my brothers died in the *finca*.. When my little brother started crying, crying, crying, my mother didn't know

³⁴ Jesús Guillén-Marroquín, *Op. Cit.* Survey is made in Perú and most of the working children involved come from Indian groups belonging to the great ancient Inca Civilization devastated by Spanish culture.

³⁵ Elizabeth Burgos-Debray: *Op. Cit.*, page 39-41.

what to do with him because his belly was swollen by malnutrition too. (...) The time came when my mother couldn't spend any more time with him or they'd take her job away from her. (...) We didn't know what to do because in our group we were with people from other communities who spoke different languages. We couldn't talk to them. We couldn't speak Spanish either. We couldn't understand each other and we needed help. (...) They're all Indians but from different ethnic groups who speak different languages. (...)

The little boy died early in the morning. (...) The *caporal* told my mother she could bury my brother in the *finca* but she had to pay a tax to keep him buried there. My mother said: 'I have no money at all'. He told her: 'Yes, and you already owe a lot of money for medicine and other things, so take his body and leave'. (...) So my mother decided that, even if she had to work for a month without earning, she would pay the tax to the land-owner, or the overseer, to bury my brother in the *finca*. Out of real kindness and a desire to help one of the men brought a little box, a bit like a suitcase. We put my brother in it and took him to be buried. We lost practically a whole day's work over mourning my brother. We were all so very sad for him. That night the overseer told us: 'Leave here tomorrow'. 'Why?', asked my mother. 'Because you missed a day's work. You're to leave at once and you won't get any pay. So tomorrow I don't want to see you round here'.

2. Trafficking and sale of children

Newspapers sporadically report on trafficking of children abroad. But little accurate information can be found due to secrecy. Parents involved in this trade try to protect their adopted children's former identity. However, international organizations which defend children's rights have gathered information from different newspapers. An investigation on this subject was successfully performed in Argentina by an inter-disciplinary and international commission. Most of its detailed and thorough

analysis is the base of the present analysis. There are also include reports from Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Guatemala, and El Salvador.

In analyzing the selling of children a moral problem is involved. This is borne out of social and economic factors. Children (mostly babies) become objects of trade and transaction. This act is hidden under the cover of humanitarian, loving and protective attitudes, but the starting point is poverty of people. In the local market families in a stronger economic condition buy children from poor families. In the international market families from wealthy countries buy children from families of the poor countries. Between both ends a team of unscrupulous people take advantage of both poor and infertile parents. But in the Argentinian analysis,³⁶ they found that the economical factor is subordinated by the pressure of the demand. A Brazilian report makes the same analysis.³⁷ The fact is that when demand exceeds the supply, pressure also increases: threats, manipulation, inducement to hand over children, lack of support for mother-child attachments, etc.

It is important to differentiate between abandonment, adoption and trafficking. To adopt a child, he or she must be legally declared as abandoned by parents or relatives. When their family's protection fails, the State has the responsibility over them. Children then are given in adoption. Most of the countries report³⁸ that States are not providing adequate protection for children through welfare services. It is scarce and there is a lack of appropriate physical and psychological attention. Welfare

³⁶ *Investigación: Venta y Tráfico de Niños en Argentina*. Defensa de los Niños Internacional- Secretaría de Salud y Acción Social de la Nación (Argentina), Geneva, 1989.

³⁷ *Protecting Children's Rights in International Adoptions. Selected documents on the problem on trafficking and sale of children*. Defence for Children International, Geneva, 1989.

³⁸ *Investigation into the Rights of Abandoned Children*, p. 9.

institutions are also lacking funding. They tend to ease legal adoptions or the privatisation of child welfare services.

The process of child abandonment can be divided into acts of commission (willful abandonment of children) and acts of omission (impossibility to take care of them). The researchers find that the great majority are cases of omission. Family and rearing of children are culturally reinforced in Latin America. In the real extreme poverty where many families live, it is remarkable how they handle living costs to keep their children. Hence, giving children is not a national attitude but a personal struggle.

Legal adoption is a practice common in all Latin American countries. Law permits international adoptions in most of the countries, except Cuba and Nicaragua. Though law favours local adoptions.

Adoption requires legal, social-work and psychological procedures to protect the child's welfare and adaptability to his/her new family. But, sometimes laws are ample and its application depends on the criterion of the judge.

The adoption procedure usually takes a long time, months or more than a year, due to bureaucracy and lack of personnel in the institutions involved. On the other hand, adoptive parents prefer to receive babies within the first year, or with a determined sex. For that reason they have to wait sometimes for years. Hence they take the easy way and get in contact with trafficking.

The reason to analyze child trafficking is not to raise the flag of morality and condemn the abuse and illegality of a profitable business with human beings. These are all surely condemnable. But for the purpose of this study, another kind of violence is before us: the loss of the right of all human beings to keep their identity, that is to say, original family, culture, country and perhaps language. This will be more evident in countries where ethnic characteristics differ from the child's

own. The fact that the adoptive family accept and love a child as its own does not necessarily mean that he or she will be adopted by society. Sectors of the population of "white" societies reject immigrants.

Again, this kind of violence emerges from a main root which is poverty. There could be other reasons involved, but the economical factor seems to be determinant. Latin Americans have the cultural tradition to be warm and caring to their children. These usually stay at home until they form a new family. Maybe this is not the right way to bring children up, but culturally it means love and caring. Latin Americans like to have and nurture children. But poverty has pushed families to give up and deliver their children, in some cases, as a way for survival. But there is also a lack of solidarity that has been arising in some sectors of the population, where people struggle for their own existence and ignore or behave indifferently to what is happening in the next house's door. It is an eroding of cultural and national identity.

The most pathetic cases of this kind of violence were adoptions of children of missing parents by families in military forces, the very ones who killed their parents. This happened in Argentina, during the Military Dictatorship between 1976 and 1983. These children were separated from their parents or kidnapped from a mother who gave birth in captivity. They were sold, given as a presents to military's friends lacking children, or abandoned in institutions, always as "N.N." (without name).

In the international market children are recycled from the misery of Third World countries to a lovely middle-class home in the First World. This is the liberal economical formula: the law of supply and demand, correcting a tragic imbalance; in the north there is a deficit and in the south there is a surplus.³⁹ This

³⁹ *Investigación: Venta y tráfico de niños en Argentina.*, p. 44.

conclusion, as sarcastic as it may sound, is a reality. It will be seen now how it operates. There is a demanding sector, an offering sector and a mediating sector.

a) The demanding sector

Locally adoptive parents belong to middle class. They are professional, business people, traders or executives. Their motivation to adopt a child varies but it normally involves their inability to give birth to their own children. They see themselves as charitable persons, who bring children from a deprived to a privileged situation. Because of the standards of society, they cannot accept their own sterility. They may also have the human need for generativity or transcendancy that may compel us all at certain ages. But to fulfil these true needs they surrender to the clandestine selling of children. They do not consider the pain other parents might suffer in this business, or ethics nor human values. The apparent charity collapses when they select ethnic groups, sex, and age. Many chose their children by a photograph.

The foreign adoptive parents share in most of the same motivations and social characteristics. They come mostly from United States and Central Europe. Some countries prefer "exotic" children, but most of them tend to want children with the same ethnic characteristics as their own. These preferences have made the market more profitable in countries with lesser indigenous features. There is a book "How to adopt from Latin America" which recommends that those who want to adopt a 'white' child, look for him/her in Chile, Costa Rica, and Argentina.⁴⁰

b) The offering sector

This could be better described as the "at risk" sector. They are especially poor single mothers, or pregnant women with many children. Beside their poverty, lack of family support also

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

contributes to their difficulty of keeping their children. It must also be considered that they have a total lack of or low educational level. Children can be a result of an extra-marital relationship or from an incestuous one. A very common case is that of young maids, living far away from their families and home. On the other hand, this sector neither have the economic capacity to avoid pregnancy due to high costs of contraceptives.

Despite the facts mentioned before, for cultural and human reasons, poor mothers do not give up their children as an easy solution to their economic troubles. On the contrary, as the different countries report, they feel robbed and deprived of their children, obliged by major forces, or victim of abuse. The following testimony is a sample of two children who were victims of this trafficking, the adolescent mother and her sold baby:

When I was 14, I came from my village to work in the city in a lawyer's house. When I was 15 I got pregnant and I told my bosses my decision to go back to my town, where my family could bring up my baby. But they said they were going to help me, and so, days before the birth, they went with me to my town where my baby was born, but after the delivery I couldn't see him. My mother then told me that she and my father signed to give the baby because I was a minor, and that my boss had paid them a good amount of money that helped them a lot. I came back to the city to look for my bosses, but they had moved to another city. That happened a year and a half ago and I am still looking for my son.

(Interview of a maid; 17 years old (Rosario) Argentina, 1989)⁴¹

c) The mediating sector

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 17 (free translation from Spanish).

They are health professionals (doctors, nurses, midwives), lawyers, judges, and social workers. They work in specialized clinics or in adoption agencies. They judge that poor children will sooner or later become delinquent, as if what they do is not an illegal practice. Some of them could be doing this work as a personal solution for their poverty. But many, without any prejudice, trade in children for their own profit.

These attitudes are easy to prove through the means they use to recruit children and then sell them. They usually use the despair and lack of hope of poor women. Their persecution is a combination of ridiculous monetary incentives and promises for their children's comfort and happiness. There are testimonies from mothers who gave their children for sums as little as \$1, for a sandwich and a Coke, or for a TV set. It is amazing how extreme poverty affects social values. In fewer cases mothers can receive exorbitant amounts of money, depending of their negotiating capacity.

There are also reports of children robbed from their neighbourhood, or while playing at playgrounds, or even from their mothers' arms. There was a case of a woman in Bolivia who carried a bag containing children clothes to change children abducted from streets or the front of their houses. She sold them to a lawyer for \$11.80 each. She abducted 30 children in this way.⁴²

In all the cases adoptive parents always pay high prices for their children, plus expenses, especially when they go overseas. Prices vary depending of the child's physical characteristics and their age. Babies with blue eyes and a white skin have the highest prices. Prices range from \$10.000 to \$20.000.

The modus operandi to sell the children in an apparent legal way varies. This procedure needs the complicity of medical

⁴² *Protecting Children's Rights in International Adoptions*, p.13.

doctors and lawyers, and in some cases of judges. Nevertheless, obsolete laws to protect children, or political instability in certain cases, favour the condition for illegal practices.

In Argentina it was found that some private clinics are also involved in this business. The objective is that the newborn baby be registered with the identity of the adopting parents. Thus false documents of different kinds are made. Biological mothers are usually living in "caring houses" during their pregnancy to guarantee a healthy born baby. In other cases, when children are a little older, unscrupulous judges play a main role in this business, applying a broad interpretation to adoption law or keeping the files as confidential.⁴³

3. Institutionalized children

Institutions seem to be the prisons where children, victims of violence, end up for the sake of society and their own protection. In most of the Latin American countries these institutions are called "Centro de Adaptación de Menores" (Centre for Adaptation of Minors), or "Centros para Observación y Re-educación de Menores" (Centre for Observation and Re-education of Minors), etc. The emphasis is on age, and on correcting what they have wrong in order to make them good citizens.

As will be seen, in many occasions children must to be protected from "society" (all political, legal, economical, and social structures included in this word). On the other hand, the word "minor" is also a difficult concept to apply. As for child labour, age becomes here focus for either support or punishment. In almost all Latin American countries adolescents face legal prosecution or arrest when they are over 16. But for other purposes, age majority is 18 or even 21. At the age of 17 a youngster can be put in jail for social offences, but she/he

⁴³ *Informe sobre venta de niños al extranjero (en Chile)*, December 1986. Defence for Children International, Geneva.

cannot marry, or drive a car, or sign legal documents, etc. It seems, then, that responsibility toward society comes before individual responsibility.

Reports from different countries indicate that significant and positive changes have taken place on legal regulations for minors, as well as the facilities where they are imprisoned. These changes occurred during the 60's. Despite these efforts, the conditions of the buildings and the re-educational programs are far behind the real needs of children to be reintegrated.⁴⁴ Countries with national economic deficits keep penal systems under-budgeted. Prejudice towards delinquency may well accompany this economic limitation. Furthermore, in countries where political and war situations prevent governments from fairly applying the law, dramatic situations are observed.

a) Faults punished

Delinquency must be located in a context. Economic failure has caused a deterioration of living standard in Latin America. In a broad sector of population its incidence is extreme and deplorable. Thus delinquency has increased side by side with poverty. But this is a new kind of delinquency. It's not the professional one known before. Since the beginning of the debt crisis, illegal acts are being committed by people without criminal antecedents of their own or within their families. They are generally young people, between 10 to 25 years, with a low educational level, and without access to dignifying employment.

Theft is the offence with the highest incidence. Professionals report from different countries the belief that much juvenile theft is directly related to the economic situation

⁴⁴There is a group of Non-Governmental Organizations that prepared a draft on "Standard Minimum Rules for the Protect of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty" that may help as a reference for special requirements of children in this situation. It was published by Defence for Children International, Geneve, 1987.

of the family. There is also an increasing phenomenon of parents who depend on the criminally-generated income of their children.⁴⁵ One boy interviewed in Colombia said that his mother was suffering from cancer and he had no money. His friends had told him that an earring was worth a lot of money; he decided to pull an earring from a woman in the street, who lost part of her ear and he was sent to jail.⁴⁶

A Chilean jurist analyzes that the Positive Right, which affirms that all persons are equal before the law, does not have a counterpart in the inequality people have in their access to employment, health, education, shelter, etc. She also affirms that many criminal acts are seen by poor people as desperate survival strategies. She says that traditionally in Chile, trial courts have accepted as exempting those cases of "famished thief", it is said, when a person is impelled to rob to avoid starvation. But these practices are not applied any more.⁴⁷

There are many other offences whose incidence is notoriously low in comparison to theft and are not significant for this study.

b) Regulations and conditions for child prisoners

There is a consensus in the juvenile systems that minors are persons who, for their legal incapacity, cannot make valid their rights by themselves. This fragility obliges the State to protect them with a special jurisdiction. One of the principles of the juvenile justice system is that minors are to be rehabilitated, not

⁴⁵ Daniel O'Donnell: *The detention of minors in adult facilities in Costa Rica*. A study prepared for Defence for Children International, Geneva, December, 1983.

⁴⁶ Alberto Donadio: *Report on the status of children in prison in Colombia*. For Defence of Children International, Geneva, December 1983, p. 14.

⁴⁷ Garate, M., Needaardt, K., Pérez, C., Ramírez, I.: *Investigación sobre la situación de menores detenidos por razones políticas y por delincuencia juvenil en Chile (1973-1984)*. Study for Defence of Children International, Geneva, November, 1984.

punished. Rehabilitation, according to judges, should preferably be conducted by parents or protectors. Detention should be resorted to only when rehabilitation cannot be accomplished at home.

Written laws promulgate special treatment for the rehabilitation of children who have to be institutionalized. The most significant of these regulations are that children must not be kept in centres where there are older prisoners; that their detention may play a preventive role through rehabilitation programs; that children keep in contact with their family; and that institutions must offer facilities which encourage development. Reports from Costa Rica, Chile, Colombia, El Salvador, Jamaica, and Guatemala illustrate the fallacy that these reformatories can actually rehabilitate youngsters. All countries, some more severely than other, lack rehabilitation programs. Minors drift without purpose in these centres, or are kept for many hours in their cells. They have little or no access to radio, newspapers, or television. They do not take part in sport or any other physical or mental recreation. In some of the centres there is an educational program, but attendance is irregular. Space in rooms is very limited, and there is a lack of proper furniture. This, along with the overcrowding prevents any privacy at all. Most of the reports indicate that minors sleep on a mattress on the floor. Food is scarce and diets lack variety and are nutritionally inadequate. Sanitary provisions are extremely limited (one toilet per 100 people in some cases) and they do not receive soap for bathing or washing their clothes.

Scarcity of resources and social attitudes towards minors with backgrounds of delinquency lead to more serious problems for inmates. All reports denounce sexual abuse by older inmates. They are raped or younger inmates surrender because of their vulnerability to stronger and older inmates. Such sexual practices are common for male and female institutions. Abuse of young prostitutes by older inmates is also a recurring problem.

Sexual abuse is also used to keep the age hierarchy in which the youngest give personal services to the older ones.

Guards play an important role in rehabilitation. They are seen as policemen by minors: they wear uniforms, comply to military regime, and behave in a very stern and authoritarian way. Their treatment varies according to different countries' reports. The report from Chile affirms that physical aggression is common, as well as insults, robbery of minors' belongings ("levelling" after minors' relatives visits), or the selection of "favourite ones" that provoke jealousy and fights among other inmates.

It is evident, as for street children, that cultural attitudes towards "bad children" go across family, school, and rehabilitation centres. Programs are often aborted when there is no real comprehension of the conditions of life a child has experienced prior to their "delinquency".

c) Children in special imprisonment circumstances

The complexity of political situations in some countries is reflected in their juvenile legal system. Special reference will be made to Chile (with a National Security regime still in 1989), El Salvador (with a civil war), and Guatemala (surviving the longest military repression, with the worst human rights records in Latin America).

In these countries the concept of centres for rehabilitation is extremely broad. They keep as inmates, as well as the convicted juvenile offenders, orphans (caused by the war), abandoned children, and children of imprisoned or hospitalized parents. Special mention will be made of children imprisoned with their parents for political reasons in regular prisons.

In Guatemala estimates of orphans resulting from the violence range between 100.000 and 200.000 between 1976-1986. The largest figure was provided by the Minister of Social

Welfare.⁴⁸ There is a number of church-run orphanages, but very often orphans enter the minor centres together with abandoned children, or those from troubled backgrounds. There is a new category of inmates in State institutions, that of children of absent parents either hospitalized or imprisoned. These constitute 21.9% of all inmates.

In El Salvador the plight of an orphan has not the same magnitude as that in Guatemala. There are several church-run orphanages. But there is also the complaint that abandoned children are detained together with convicted offenders. Due to the war, legal irregularities are committed against children's rights. Child combatants are held illegally, others have been interrogated by military forces, and even been compelled to accompany the military on subsequent search operations. Others have been detained together with adults in an adult men's prisons.⁴⁹

In Chile --as should have happened in Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay, during their respective periods of National Security regimes-- there is a special category for child political prisoners. In this category are included: adolescents detained and tortured, children kept as prisoners and obliged to see the torture practiced on their parents, children born and kept in prison after a pregnancy that survived beatings and electric shocks (others were dead when born), and children who disappeared after being detained with their parents.

There are heartbreaking accounts of cases of children in secret torture chambers. To measure the dimensions of violence of security police in Chile, a general description will be made. The following years after the Military Coup (1973) minors ranging in ages from months to 18 years old were kept in prison with

⁴⁸ Roger Plat: *The rights of the Child in Central American*. Report for Defence of Children International, Geneva, 1986, p. 4.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* , p. 13 and 15.

their parents, without any special facilities in the already deplorable situation. They were witnesses or direct victims of torture. In many cases political prisoners were together with regular convicted adults. Despite their deprivation, they lived the daily anguish of being separated from their parents. Finally all children in prison were exiled, some after two or three years of being in prison.

After several years of the coup, torture and kidnapping are still common practice for the secret police. They effect massive arrests of minors, especially in the poorest zones of the cities. Children can be detained for one day or one week. They are tortured physically and psychologically. After this first detention they are sent to Minors' Juries where their case is closed due to lack of evidence.

There have also been selective detentions of students. They are forced to undress on the street and after burning their clothes they are obliged to put out the fire with their feet, or to sit on the fire. A few years ago there was a much publicised case of a couple of teenagers who were burnt by the police in the street. The case received wide publicity because the boy was a Chilean immigrant U.S. naturalized.

Until very recently there were many "secret houses" for torture operating all over the country. Detained children in these houses witness that prisoners are kept with their eyes covered with sticking plaster, or kept in cells with dogs tied up. Torture practiced on children include: electric shocks, blows on the ears, hanging by extremities, immersed in baths filled with urine and excrements, insertion of objects into genitals, and others.⁵⁰

As it was said before, during the first year of the Chilean dictatorship, many of the children detained disappeared. Some were killed, other (very young) are freed without any identity, or

⁵⁰ *Op. Cit.*

declared in abandonment without any identity. Some of them were sent to exile. Some of them were abducted from their imprisoned mother and given in adoption, sold or registered as their own, even by the same repressive guards.

In every country involved in conflict where disappearances occur, groups of relatives and professionals organize to search for their families. There is a remarkable group in Argentina that specifically dedicate their efforts to search for their missing children. They are "Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo" (Grandmothers of May Square). After years of intense searching (under threatening and persecution) they have been slowly finding some of their grandchilds. They have proposed a legal project for the creation of a National Bank of Genetic Data, where the genetic map of everyone can be registered. This is the so-called "index of grandparentage" that is possible to obtain under very specific genetic tests through hematological analysis of grandparents, uncles and aunts of any child. Even without the presence of their parents, children can be identified without any doubt.⁵¹

4. Involuntary emigration

The phenomenon of forced emigration is not new in Latin America, but gained attention more recently in the 70's, due to large numbers of people who left their countries because of repression and persecution. That was the decade of the Doctrine of National Security, adopted by several governments in Latin America, mainly in the Southern Cone. This doctrine practiced State Terrorism against the inhabitants inside the country.

Conservative figures (dated in 1977) indicate that in Uruguay there was one political prisoner per 600 inhabitants, and 25% of the population left the country for political and economic reasons.

⁵¹ *Cuadernos de Derechos Humanos*. Vol. 1, No. 2, Diciembre 1985, Serie América Latina.

In Argentina, with a population of 30 million, 30.000 persons were declared missing, one out of 1.2000 inhabitants was in prison for reasons of conscience, and hundreds of thousands left the country. In Chile, during the first two years of the dictatorship, 42.486 persons went to prison accused as political offenders, and more than one million people left the country.⁵² There are still migrations at the present time, mainly of students and young people, for political and economical reasons. The Brazilian military dictatorship began in 1964. Famous are the practices and developed techniques in torture chambers. Hundreds of thousands also fled from the country to more secure places.

The revolutions of Cuba and Nicaragua also generated the migration of hundred of thousands. The majority did so because of their opposition to the new governments' ideology. Others escaped to avoid trials for being responsible for crimes against the people. Citizens with economic possibilities emigrated to the United States. Nicaraguan poor citizens who are against the new government cross the borders walking to Costa Rica and Honduras. Nicaraguans not only emigrate for ideological but for economic reasons, or in order to find a safer place from war.

It is necessary to distinguish between those who abandon their country for political divergence from those who leave to preserve their lives or integrity. Cuban and Nicaraguan revolutions broke long lasting dictatorships. The ideologies sustaining their revolutions obviously caused opposition from many. Other countries, such as those in the Southern Cone, suffered a transition from constitutional governments to military dictatorships. These regimes declared war on their own fellow citizens. In spite of this difference, all migrants suffered the human consequences of becoming strangers, with nostalgia for their countries. There will be more profound effects for those

⁵² Enrique Guinsberg: "Salud mental, paz y Terrorismo de Estado", in *Revista Nueva Sociedad*. Guerra, Violencia, Guerrillas, No. 89, Mayo-Junio, 1987, Caracas, Venezuela.

who left the country after prison, torture, asylum, and the impossibility to return, than in those who took the decision to leave for a better future.

In Central America the emigration phenomenon brought other effects. In addition to refugees in neighbouring countries, some sectors of the population were removed from their towns and systematically located in other regions strange to them. They are "desplazados" (displaced). This becomes an internal exile.

Such is the case in Guatemala. Since 1954 the army assumed control of the government directly or indirectly and as a consequence repression has become chronic. This intensified between 1981 and 1983, especially aimed at indigenous peasant communities in the highlands. In that period, 90 communities were demolished (population, cultivations, and buildings). The result of this military operation was around 20.000 people dead, and more than one million people were displaced or in refugee camps inside the country, and near to 120.000 are exiled, mainly in México.⁵³ It has been estimated that at least 60% of refugees are children and adolescents, and hundreds of thousands are the child population within those internally displaced.⁵⁴

El Salvador has been facing a civil war since 1980. As a consequence, around half a million of people (about 10% of its population) have been displaced or become refugees inside their country. A recent study calculated that each displaced family had an average of one child under 5 and two between 5 and 16.⁵⁵ Hundreds of thousands have left the country.

Other kinds of refuges are the recently created "sanctuaries" in United States, where Salvadoreans are protected by the

⁵³ Raúl Vergara, et. al.: *Centroamérica: La Guerra de Baja Intensidad*. CRIES-DEI, Costa Rica, 1987, p. 55-57.

⁵⁴ Roger Plant, *Op. Cit.*, p. 5

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

churches. There are around 500.000 of Salvadorans living in the United States alone, and nearly all of them are undocumented.

Other countries with severe migration in different periods have been Bolivia, with a long history of military repression; Haiti and Paraguay, with lifelong dictatorships that only recently ended; Peru, with a warlike conflict and economic deterioration; and Colombia, with an intense spiral of violence through death squads that have forced many people to leave the country.

Every nation has had periods of enormous stress that forced people to emigrate. The historical conjuncture in every country has marked different types of exiles. In the interest of understanding what harm could be produced on children, the particular kinds of forced emigration will be mentioned. They are all regarded as being involuntary or unavoidable for the individuals' safety. They are also characterized by the impossibility of returning, temporarily or permanently. In the following description, free migration for a decent life will not be considered.

In the large involuntary emigration in the Southern Cone, many young parents left with their children. Testimonies by women in different publications credit their children as their great companions in exile, when very often marriages succumbed to stress. What parents lived, children shared.

Exile has to be related to repression and return, as previous and posterior phases of it. Many emigrants had tremendous suffering before leaving, because of prison, torture, asylum, etc. If such pain was not lived, their departure was prepared under considerable fear and painful uncertainty. Those who suffered prison had to restore themselves physically and psychologically. Children were involved in these circumstances, directly or indirectly.

During exile a chain of losses occurs, but a central one is the loss of the external reference frame. This rootlessness affects

the sense of identity. There is also loneliness, a deep nostalgia, sorrow for all left behind, lack of meaning in life, anguish to face a transitory way of living and an uncertain future, 'cultural' strains, guilt feelings for children, etc. In certain situations, language is a limitation. A sense of conviction and punishment may also be felt.

These general human feelings invade and impregnate with uncertainty the simplest things of daily life. Parents look weak and fearful before children. Roles often change at home and work. Changes may also precipitate separation in couples.

Within this family environment children have to deal with their personal struggle at school, with language (if different), with ethnic rejection in some cases, and with the incongruity between a country's cultural demands and parent's cultural rules.

People who migrated from countries in the Southern Cone started to return after many years, when the political situation changed, or when authorized to re-enter. For children this is a new crisis in their development. They have again to learn to live in a culture unknown or forgotten. For children the true exile starts at the returning.

A study made on the Chilean return estimated that 57.4% of returning people came to live in Chile with relatives, in a limited space.⁵⁶ For adults their country became unknown after many years of absence. Problems registered during exile persisted (loneliness, lack of confidence, unclear identity). They regained their country, traditions, culture and family, but on the other hand, the reality of a poor country and still under a dictatorship regime destroyed their golden dream of return. They also found

⁵⁶ *Regional Workshop on Social Work with Refugees in South America*, Montevideo, July 1987, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Geneva.

rejection and misunderstanding from people who had remained and suffered the direct punishment of the current regime.⁵⁷

In the study mentioned before, some of the problems found in returned children during the first three months were: language limitations (speaking, reading and writing), and as a consequence they are segregated in some schools, and children resist to go to school; they miss their former country and want to go back (it was not their decision to return to Chile); some present psychosomatic symptoms (headaches, allergies, stomach aches).⁵⁸ Other testimonies witness rejection suffered because of the ideology of the country where they live in exile. It is estimated that with the support of family and groups organized for this purpose, children adapt and recover their identity after seven to eight months of arriving.

Many Central American children who have left their countries with their families live in camps for refugees with very limited conditions. They are over-crowded and lack adequate education, nutritional requirements, clothes, health, etc. Furthermore, the life in a camp involves restrictions on mobility. Despite the efforts of many organizations, children can not be provided with a healthy environment for their normal development.

Displaced people within their own countries suffer the most desperate living conditions. Although efforts are made by non-governmental organizations to provide shelter, in El Salvador thousands have crowded churches or parish houses converted overnight into emergency refuges. Some have lived there for more than six years. A report on El Salvador affirms that among displaced persons a massive number of children uprooted from

⁵⁷ María Angélica Celedón, Luz María Opazo: *Volver a Empezar*. Pehuén, Santiago, 1987.

⁵⁸ *Regional Workshop on Social Work with Refugees in South America*, p. 185.

their homes, with traumatic effects of war, have neither reliable prospects for education nor a better future.⁵⁹

The following testimony gives an idea of the life of many children in El Salvador:

...Until she was eight, Pastora lived in the Salvadoran department of San Vicente, which is a disputed zone in the current civil war.

The National Guard swept through one day, in a typical "search and destroy" operation, and caught her entire family in their peasant hut. One of the soldiers knocked her mother unconscious with his rifle butt, another shot her father through the head and then killed her two small brothers, who were screaming, while Pastora, huddling in a corner under the bed, watched the carnage.

She and her mother managed to escape, hiding in a tatus, or manmade cave, until the last of the Guards had passed through. Little by little, other survivors of the massacre came out of their hiding places and, without burying their dead, commenced their exodus at nightfall. Their flight, in single file, toward the Lempa River which forms the border between Honduras and El Salvador in that region, was an nightmare that has been repeated thousands of times since then...

When babies cried, their mothers would stop their mouths so the Guards wouldn't hear them, or offer them their dry breasts to stop their shivering from hunger, thirst and fright. One small boy would not stop screaming until his father, in desperation, stuffed a handkerchief in his mouth, and he died of asphyxiation. During four terror-filled days and arduous nights of forced marching, they followed the banks of the Lempa, nourishing themselves on roots and leaves and an occasional wild berry. During the days of hiding, helicopter gunships patrolled overhead, firing rockets at anything that moved. At night, the

⁵⁹ Roger Plant, *Op. Cit.*, p. 16-19.

adults took turns carrying the wounded in makeshift litters.

On the morning of the fifth day, a detachment of Guard appeared ahead of them, cutting off their retreat, and they were forced to cross the river into Honduras. Whose who could, swam across. The others clung to rotting logs, and someone had brought an inner tube and a rope for such an eventuality. There were more deaths at the crossing: a number of small children, some of the wounded and one pregnant woman.⁶⁰

This is a real and cruel story that reoccurs in almost every child forced to leave home and country because of the war.

5. Punishment of the war

Throughout the description of the climate of violence in this chapter, war has been repeatedly mentioned. In those countries where warlike conflicts occur, population is directly or indirectly involved, even when fighting is mostly concentrated in rural areas. War is lived through actions of death squads, governmental regular army, "contra"-revolutionary^{61a} groups, and the popular military forces. But it is also felt through national budget restrictions to support the army, damage to infrastructure, economical strain due to the decrease in the productive apparatus, etc. As it has been mentioned in the first chapter, Latin America is under a "total war" sustained by the doctrine of War of Low Intensity, which covers the military, economic, political, ideological, and religious fields.

⁶⁰ Alicia Partnoy, editor: *You can't drown the fire - Latin American Women Writing in Exile*. Cleis Press, San Francisco, 1988.

^{61a} The military forces financed and advised by the United States to pull down the Nicaraguan government are called "contras", or "contrarrevolucionarios", which means contrary to revolution.

For the purposes of analysis, reference will be made here to warlike actions, in order to estimate the consequences on children. Many aspects have been already mentioned, especially in the sections of imprisoning and exile. The intention is to determine with precision particular aspects of this kind of violence.

Warlike conflicts are present with greater intensity in Central America, Colombia, Peru, Haití, and Bolivia. War has caused in small countries of Central America around 200.000 casualties, two million refugees and an economic setback to standards of living of the 50's or 60's.^{61b} In Guatemala alone, a country with approximately eight million inhabitants --3.8 million of them children under 16 year--, estimations of orphans resulting from the violence are around 200.000 for the period between 1976-1986.⁶² In El Salvador, the war has caused in the last five years casualties near to 50.000, economic losses of about 1.200 millions of US dollars, and 90.000 homes destroyed. In Nicaragua, in the war to overthrow the dictatorship (between 1977 and 1979), around other 50.000 people died. In the new war Nicaraguans are fighting, other 32.290 casualties have occurred, and economic losses of about 1.979 million US dollars.⁶³

In Guatemala, a country predominantly indigenous,⁶⁴ life has completely changed for children living in the highlands, by reason of the destruction of their towns and the massacres led by governmental military forces, especially during 1981-1983. The military offensive, denominated "Operation Ashes" has been

^{61b a} Raul Vergara Meneses, et. al.: *Op. Cit.*, p. 11.

⁶² Roger Plant, *Op. Cit.*, p. 4.

⁶³ Gabriel Aguilera: *El Fusil y el Olivo - La cuestión militar en Centroamérica*. DEI-FLACSO, San José., 1989.

⁶⁴ Guatemala has 22 indigenous ethnic groups descendant from ancient Mayas, a well developed civilization when Spaniards arrived in America. After five centuries, these groups have been able to conserve their cultural traditions and different languages.

described as *ethnocidal*, because beyond the criminal objectives, it had the intention of destroying the habitat which is very important for indigenous culture, and altering social life, and cultural and religious beliefs of the people that they have tried to keep so carefully for centuries. The military government created what have been called "Polos de Desarrollo" (Poles of Development), which are sorts of concentration camps, where a sector of indigenous population was slowly transferred. The rest of the affected population fled and hid in the mountains. The population crowded in these camps receive a systematic ideological, cultural and religious indoctrination, changing indigenous language, clothes and habitat into Western style.⁶⁵

The *ethnocidal* activities that the Guatemalan government are handling is another face of the war. Indigenous children are no longer allowed to inherit their parents' culture which has a marked collective way of living. A sample of this is that orphan indigenous children (who are the majority) are taken up by relatives or the community and brought up as members of their own family.⁶⁶

Displaced children reside temporarily with their families in the corrugated iron huts of relatives until they construct a similar hut in a vacant plot nearby and enter the informal urban economy. These shanty-towns lack the most fundamental services. Even when this migration phenomenon to urban areas is shared in all Latin America for economic reasons, in countries where warlike conflicts prevail, its occurrence is enormous. This is mainly seen in Guatemala and El Salvador.

The secondary consequences of war have no comparison with the immediate experiences that children have experienced in the war front. The cruelty perpetrated by regular military forces is

⁶⁵ Raúl Vergara Meneses: *Op. Cit.*, p. 57-60.

⁶⁶ Roger Plant, *Op. Cit.*, p. 5.

intolerable. Horrendous eye-witness describe deliberate slaughter of children, or slaughter of parents in front of their children. In Guatemala children have been used for practice shooting to targets. In other circumstances babies have been killed striking their heads on rocks in order to avoid bullet wastage. Others are savagely tortured, mutilated or burned.

Respect for human rights in Guatemala and El Salvador have not improved in despite of the governments reports. Disappearances occur daily, bodies of kidnapped and murdered people are left on the streets, youngsters are kept in prison without trial, etc. Indiscriminate bombing of civilian occupied zones are still practiced, although it reached its peak as in 1982 to 1984 in El Salvador, and 1981-1983 in Guatemala. On the other hand, both regular army and popular forces are blamed for recruiting young boys.

It is impossible to untie the specific consequences of war on children, because this is a collective problem. But among all individuals affected, defencelessness of children emerges and places them again in the priority order. Psychological works that have being performed in El Salvador and Guatemala report that the damage is greater in elder children. What they have seen and lived is a nightmare that will come back for many nights. Yet these are traumas at the personal level. The drama of thousands of children living in deplorable conditions for because of the war will reflect in the coming years.

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CHAPTER II

EFFECTS OF VIOLENCE ON HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

The above description of the climate of violence where Latin American children live covers an ample spectrum of the term violence. There it is referred to as "the lack of... for the good of...", or "the aggression by... for the bad of...". Violence is considered as all that which attempts to work against a healthy human development of children: it could be total lack of, scarcity, deprivation of, despoilment of, marginalization from, etc. All these terms could be connected with the most essential basic needs children demand for the complete development of their potentiality. So, violence here is not only interpreted as an act of commission but as an act of omission as well.

It could be asked what are they, these essential needs for a plentiful human development. Indeed there are many definitions for this question. But from the perspective of the Latin American context, the essential needs are the basic ones, which can be condensed in one word: life. Not only the right to exist in some extreme cases, but a human quality of life.

There is no pretension to make an accurate analysis on how violence develops and affects children. This would require a prolonged longitudinal study of a given sample. Attempts will be made to highlight some characteristics of the life of Latin American children that certainly affect their development, in a way that they become objects and subjects of violence.

A. Framework for analysis

Violence and its association to human development is analyzed from different theoretical perspectives. Researchers tend to give special attention to family violence, which is more evident in Western first world societies. Technical, practical, and funding considerations make it more difficult to develop longitudinal studies on violence, which involve society and

individuals as a whole. A few cross-cultural studies however are found more recently in the literature on the subject.

Levinson¹ makes a summary of nine main theoretical perspectives that researchers have recently used as basis to analyse the causes of family violence. Even when the present study is not limited to the family, but to society as a whole, a brief review of these theoretical perspective may be valid and illuminating on the dimensions of the problem. Furthermore, as children are the central subjects in this analysis, family violence is intrinsically involved.

The theories are:

1. Resource theory: Within the family, power and control rest for a large extent on the member who brings in more resources to the relationship. The nature of the resources could be financial or social status. This perspective suggests that violence is more likely to occur when an individual's power or status is inconsistent within the particular stratum of society, or when norms governing status in the family are ambiguous or changing.

2. Exchange theory: Violence in family occurs to the extent that it means rewards rather than costs. Costs are often low, and there is not adequate social control to inhibit or prevent violence. At a social level, it could also be suggested that certain social norms and arrangements encourage weak control of family violence: male aggressiveness, nuclear family living arrangements, or sexual inequality.

3. Culture of violence theory: In a pluralistic society, some subcultural groups emphasize the use of violence to a greater extent than is deemed appropriate by the dominant culture. The theory also suggests that there may be violent and peaceful

¹ David Levinson: *Family Violence in Cross Cultural Perspective*. SAGE Publications, London, 1989.

societies, and as a consequence family violence will occur more often in the violent ones.

4. Patriarchal theory: Most societies have been and are presently male dominated, with women classified as possessions by men. From this perspective, violence will be used by men to perpetuate their control.

5. Social learning theory: It rejects that aggression is an inner drive, but instead that aggression is both learned and takes place in a social context. It affirms that a combination of contextual and situational factors cause family violence. Within this theoretical perspective, special attention has been given to the proposal of "intergenerational transmission of family violence". It maintains that individuals who observed or experienced family violence in their childhood homes' are more likely to be involved later in violent acts.

6. Ecological theory: It links family violence to the broader social order. To understand the causes of child abuse and neglect, it is necessary to take into account the family history of parents, present family situations, social networks in which the family is involved, and culture.

7. Evolutionary theory: This theory has an anthropological background. It proposes that human societies change over time in an evolutionary pattern from the simple to the complex. Social relations and organizations and family structures change as well. As regards family violence there is an interrelation between structural and economic complexity and child-rearing practices: in more complex societies, caretakers often use physical punishment on children; in less complex societies, caretakers emphasize independence and self-reliance.

In evolutionary terms, this pattern emphasizes that compliant and obedient behaviours are expected in societies with a hierarchically organized social structure, in which there is the need to share accumulated wealth among the population, and in

which many activities occur in social encounters outside the home.

8. Sociobiological theory: Two notions support this perspective: parental certainty and inclusive fitness. Upon the first one, parents are more ready to invest resources in their children or in biological relatives than in others. Inclusive fitness theory suggests that individuals will act in order that their genes will be passed on to the following generations. Both propositions combine to support the argument that child abuse will occur more frequently in handicapped children, step-children, and children in lower income families with fewer resources to spread around.

9. General Systems theory: Family violence is a product of a positive feedback social system. This system operates at the individual, familiar and societal levels. The model comprehend factors from other theoretical approaches. Its main proposal is that the interaction of different factors leads to increase or maintain the same level of family violence.

Even when these theories aim at a particular kind of violence --family violence--, they could be used to analyze other sorts of relationships among individuals, not necessarily consanguineous ones. The features each theory highlights seem to be present in social and human relationships: properties and social status as sources for power (*resource theory*); social isolation (*exchange theory*); accommodation to violence (*culture of violence theory*); gender inequality (*patriarchal theory*); generational spiral of violence (*social learning theory*); genetic dominion (*sociobiological theory*); beating as a means to keep the Establishment (*evolutionary theory*).

The theoretical contents reflect ways of socialization. They all resemble asymmetric linkage between individuals, where inequality, domination over others, repression, and oppression are the norm. As it is seen, theoretical proposals to measure or

explain violence within the family are easily applied in forms of violence between individuals in any social role or between groups in the social structure. But, even when these approaches can be transferred to the social arena, each one presents a partial focus of the problem. Only two of the theories offer room enough to include an ample panorama of violence issue, as the way it is analyzed throughout this study. These are the Ecological Theory and the General Systems Theory. The last one has a complex model that is hard to test. The Ecological Theory offers a broad perspective from which it seems possible to analyze violence on children, in a particular historical and social context.

B. Ecology of Human Development

The Ecological Theory makes theoretical and instrumental contributions for research in human development. This approach *focuses on the progressive accommodation, through the life span, between the growing human organism and the changing environments in which it actually lives and grows.*²

The accent in this definition is on the mutual accommodation between individuals and environment. Both ends of this linkage are dynamic. Changes occur and affect both poles. The *ecological environment* is an arrangement of structures that interrelates to a broader extent, beyond the family and immediate social groups.

Prior to definition of the structures which compound the ecological environment, it is necessary to become familiar with the term *setting* which includes the place, the individuals, the activities they engage in, and the role they develop. Separate from traditional psychology, ecologists of human development give emphasis to the operative role of the subjects involved in a research. So, they see the traditional *behaviour* as an *activity*,

² Urie Bronfenbrenner: "Toward an Experimental Ecology of Human Development", in *American Psychologist*, July 1977, p. 513.

and give importance to its content (e.g. the nature and purpose of the task).³

Having made this clarification, the structures distinguished in an ecological environment are as defined below:

Microsystem: is the complex of relations between the developing person and environment in an immediate setting containing that person (e.g. home, school, workplace, etc.).

Mesosystem: comprises the interrelations among major settings containing the developing person at a particular point in his or her life.

Exosystem: is an extension of the mesosystem embracing other specific social structures, both formal and informal, that do not themselves contain the developing person, but impinge upon or encompass the immediate settings in which that person is found, and thereby influence, delimit, or even determine what goes on there. These structures include the major institutions of the society, both deliberately structured and spontaneously evolving, as they operate at a concrete local level. They encompass, among other structures, the world of work, the neighbourhood, the mass media, agencies of government (local, state, and national), the distribution of goods and services, communication and transportation facilities, and informal social networks.

Macrosystem: refers to the overarching institutional patterns of the culture or subculture, such as the economic, social, educational, legal, and political systems, of which micro-, meso-, and exo-systems are the concrete manifestations. Macrosystems are conceived and examined not only in structural terms but as carriers of information and ideology that, both explicitly and implicitly, endow meaning and motivation to particular agencies, social networks,

³ *Ibid.*, p. 516.

roles, activities, and their interrelations. What place or priority children and those responsible for their care have in such macrosystems is of special importance in determining how a child and his or her caretakers are treated and interact with each other in different types of settings.⁴

This scheme will be useful to organize the different levels in which poor Latin American children develop. As this study is not an experiment but an analysis of reality, there is not control of parameters and variables to preserve results. Furthermore, for ecologists of human development, experiments and researches should have the objective *to analyze systematically the nature of the existing accommodation between the person and the surrounding milieu.*⁵ In this design, interactions between and within structures are viewed as interdependent, and must be analyzed in systems. As the relation between a child and environment has the properties of a system with a momentum of its own, acts and climates of violence may become part of that particular system or a disturbance to the existing balance.

C. Methodology for analysis

The ecological perspective gives an ample definition of human development:

the process through which the growing person acquires a more extended, differentiated, and valid conception of the ecological environment, and becomes motivated and able to engage in activities that reveal the properties of, sustain, or restructure that environment at levels of similar or greater complexity in form and content.⁶

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 514-5. (Highlighting is mine).

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 517.

⁶ Urie Bronfenbrenner: *The ecology of human development*. Harvard University Press, Massachusetts, 1980, pp. 288-289.

What seems very pertinent in this definition for the Latin American context is, first, the operativity and participation of individuals in the modification of their environment, and second, the global concept of environment. Both elements will be brought frequently in to this analysis.

The framework offered by Bronfenbrenner will give structure to the analysis, but it will be fed by other theoretical resources. In this perspective children will not be seen in isolation, nor just within the familial structure, but inside the full societal environment.

This will be a broad analysis, providing remarks on some special issues. The theme presents methodological and theoretical limitations, since there have not been found researches that focus social violence as it is seen here in the specific world of children, even less in the geographical context proposed. There are abundant studies of family violence in cultural contexts different to Latin America. As social violence is a peculiar problem of the Third World, and due to lack of resources, there are few accurate researches made in the region. The theme of violence has caught the attention of many authors in Latin America, but their works are focused more within the political and sociological fields.

On the other hand, it is not the objective of this thesis to demonstrate categorical findings in an experimental way, but to offer traces and suggestions on the problem.

The procedure used for the analysis is as follows:

A list was made including all the signals or forms of violence narrated before, and gathered together as in the description: child labour, trafficking and sale of children, child prisoners, forced migration, punishment of war. All these observed features will be located in the different levels of settings, as proposed by the ecological theory of human development.

As explained before, family violence is a category not considered in this study, but if pertinent, it will be mentioned as a possible consequence of more generalized violence.

Jan Belsky⁷ analyzing child maltreatment, adds a new step to the chain of interrelation of settings of Bronfenbrenner. She affirms that it is important to know how parents are brought up to behave posteriorly in an abusive manner with their own children. In the present study this *ontogenetic development*, as proposed by Belsky, will be considered to analyse the results of social violence on the children of today and its possible manifestation in their adulthood.

When studying human development, the usual way to do it is by following the stages of socialization of children, from birth to adolescence. The same pattern is used by the ecological theory, from microsystem to macrosystem, as the child is getting involved in new settings, starting from the dyadic relation within her family. But for the social scope of the present study, it seems more useful and pertinent to invert the pattern. As social violence starts from the widest social sphere, the analysis will start on the macrosystem level, and will end in its more particular expression in the microsystem, concluding with the ontogenetic development already mentioned.

D. Summary of features of social violence

The following is a summary of elements of social violence in every sub-title of the above description. Some elements that are common for the different sub-groups are not repeated.

-- Child labour

- Premature labour as a means of survival

⁷ Jan Belsky: "Child maltreatment - An ecological integration", in *American Psychologist*, Vol. 35, No. 4, 320-335.

- Excessive amount of labour and time (labour exploitation and slavery)
- Sexual discrimination
- Substitution of study by forced work
- Assigned but not chosen jobs
- Uncertain improvement in labour situation
- Servitude type work under authoritarian control
- Illegal labour activities
- Higher demands in labour skills according to child's immature capabilities
- Unappropriated and insanitary working conditions
- Stereotyped and negative social status
- Abandonment by or weak ties with parents
- Lack of adults and societal support, family geographical isolation
- Lack of health services
- Tedious, boring, unstimulating, and mechanical work
- Dangerous tasks
- Sexual abuse, distorted femininity or masculinity learning models
- Adult manipulation of children's needy situation and ignorance: low and unfair salaries, pledges, no wages
- Frequent, periodical and drastic changes in habitat (migrating workers)
- Ethnic segregation

-- Trafficking and sale of children

- Illegal adoptions through money interchange (national or international)
- Manipulative despoilment and robbery of children for selling
- Loss of inherited identity (if adopted overseas)

-- Child prisoners

- Forced to "starvation theft"
- Inadequate imprisonment facilities
- Torture
- Kidnapping
- Corruption and forced to delinquent acts inside institutions
- Disappearance, or despoilment of identification
- Abuse and disrespect from adults

-- Forced emigration

- Denial to the right to live in the home country
- Incongruity between parental and new living country cultures
- Re-adaptation to new living settings (at return)
- Restricted and limited physical and social space in refugees camps (internal exile)

- Restricted and limited physical and social space in refugees camps (internal exile)

- Deplorable or insufficient facilities in refugees camps

- Punishment of war

- Orphanage

- Forced to witness terror and human cruelty

- Forced to change habitat

- Forced military recruitment

- Imprisonment for political reasons

The exercise --to make a systematic summary of situations that violate children during their growing process-- forces the question that is analyzed in the first chapter. To what extent does social violence promote in the individual the ability to respond, adapt, confront, or change the violence of which he or she is the object? All these attitudes are forms of accommodation to environment.

Is the young delinquent committing violence or is she or he the object of social violence when forced to rob to eat? Is a woman committing violence when changing her child for food, or is she forced by poverty to do so?

In some circumstances the line between being an object of violence and becoming a subject of violence is very subtle and diffuse. Violence will become part of an individual's responsiveness to environment depending in many factors involved in his/her development. The important fact to keep in mind is that in this process of person-environment accommodation, humans play an active role, even when environment may be as oppressive as it is in some contexts.

E Analysis of the effects of social violence on child development

1. Macrosystem

The macrosystem is the system of:

general prototypes, existing in the culture or subculture, that set the pattern for the structures and activities occurring at the concrete level.⁸

In other words, the cultural elements, the ideology, the beliefs, the traditions, the symbols, myths, the political and economical situations, social structures, etc. are all factors that impregnate a particular way of living for a group of people, say a country, and ethnic group or a sub-continent as Latin America.

For the Latin American context it is paramount to include the influence of the macrosystem in human development, because beyond the obvious societal involvement in the person's growing process, the social events in these countries occur dynamically and very fast. Undoubtedly, every adult person in the region has lived in his/her life span any of the drastic social changes described in this presentation: deep economical crisis, war, dictatorship, or revolution. These substantial changes affect in greater or lesser dimension personal or family lives.

The stronger the social crisis is the more profoundly it penetrates the minds of people. The countries that suffered a government which practised State Terrorism soon saw their citizens suffering a paranoid syndrome, mistrusting their former friends and relatives, and living indoors to avoid risky and dangerous involvement. It was better to ignore, than to be aware of, what they felt helpless to change. In 1981 in Argentina (in the eighth year of military dictatorship), a pro-governmental

⁸ Bronfenbrenner (1977), *Op. Cit.*, p. 515.

magazine published the alarming information that in hospitals the psychological-psychiatric treatments were the precursors of somatic illness; that more than 20% of population of Buenos Aires (the capital with 6 million inhabitants) were under private psychological or psychiatric therapy. This situation was later aggravated after Las Malvinas (Falkland) war, and upon the crisis of foreign debt.

During the same period, in this same Argentinian social context, there occurred the greatest departure of babies to be sold to foreign adoptive parents. Beside the economic factor that pushes mothers to give up their children, Argentinians (ad posteriori) make a self-analysis of the lack of family and social support to poor single mothers. Thus, the fragile sense of collectivity that is sustained in the capitalist societies is broken into pieces in a fascist regime. The result is selfishness, loss of community and societal support, paranoia.

At the same time, in a similar or worse situation in Chile (still under terrorism state doctrine), political prisoners tell how they care for each other after torture sessions, how they shared their belongings and cried about their misfortune. The same testimony is given by Doris Tijerino, a Nicaraguan woman, when at night in her solitary cell, as a political prisoner, knew through a clandestine battery radio that her husband was killed in the mountains, fighting. When she asked her fellow prisoner in the neighbouring cell if she was sleeping, she and all the rest of the fellow prisoners answered: "We are all awake".⁹ They shared the pain of the fallen *compañero* and the friend's lover.

Before there were experimental studies, these testimonies helped to explain how a severe repression in these three countries (Argentina, Chile, and Nicaragua) produced different reactions in people. It could be said that some individuals grow with the

⁹ Margaret Randall: *Todas estamos despiertas*, Siglo XXI, México, 1982.

adversity and other absorb the uncertainty of the environment in a personal deprivating manner. Facing a super-structure that is formed to subjugate the human confraternity to keep complete power and control, groups organize under all risks to preserve the hope, to cultivate human solidarity and look for justice. Among many, this is the case of organizations such as Vicaría de Solidaridad (Vicarship of Solidarity) in Chile, Socorro Jurídico (Juridical Succor) in El Salvador, or Madres y Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo (Mothers and Grandmothers of May Square) in Argentina. These groups use legal means to defend human rights. All of them defy the powers which violate human integrity and dignity.

From an ecological perspective, ideological structures organize society's members and their daily life. Human development is a summary of many interdependent factors which affect individuals during their life span. So, events happening during childhood may reflect their more profound consequences in adulthood. Bronfenbrenner (1979) mentions two researches made on very stressful social situations. The first one is a research done by A. R. Luria in the Soviet Union, in 1931-32, during the period of most radical restructuring in that country: elimination of illiteracy, shift to a collective economy, and readjustment of life to new socialist principles. Luria's findings led him to the following conclusion:

The basic categories of human mental life can be understood as products of social history --they are subject to change when the basic forms of social practice are altered and thus are social in nature.¹⁰

According to Luria's conclusion, social history predominates and promotes personal changes at all human levels: emotional, intellectual and social. This is an important and fundamental

¹⁰ Bronfenbrenner, *Op. Cit.* , p. 265.

thesis for the involvement of social structure in human development.

The other case is a longitudinal study made by Glen Elder during the Great Depression in a group of eleven-year-old children in the United States. The study included periodical follow-ups until these children reached middle age. This research offers many important results and interpretations, but for the present study, the pertinent conclusion is that social events of this magnitude have a repercussion within the life of those who lived the crisis. For some of the children involved in Elder's study, the crisis meant an opportunity to mature and evolve self-confidence and productivity in their adult lives. Other children were affected negatively and became adults with low self-esteem and with tendency to withdraw from adversity. The differences rested mainly on family and personal particularities.

In other words, phenomena occurring at the macrosystem level, as a part of the ideological system, or through a drastic change of that system, or through a temporary crisis (social, political or economical) have a deep influence on human development of individuals that conform to such a particular society, but its incidence may vary depending on factors at other levels closer to individuals. But definitively, its effects will show at short or long term.

From the picture of the climate of violence in Latin America, the greatest problems are located in the macrosystem level, for their ideological and political character and their projection to the majority of society: social injustice, poverty, oppression, violence as a means to impose and keep power, etc. These social characteristics are the ideological umbrella for the hard situation the people live. Among them, children remain defenceless, because at the macrosystem level they are not co-authors of their life process, but merely victims. Children are not only suffering the direct consequences of the problems, in their minds and body, but absorbing a violent way of life which

could be reproduced in the future. Children learn the meaning of violence when hungry, when left abandoned, when tortured, when receiving no-education, when kidnapped, when their homes are destroyed, or when their families are killed. But not only a violent system is learned through a tangible violence. Other children not living in a poverty, or a situation of war or heavy repression, equally are part of the intrinsic violence in society, that discourages them from caring for others and learning the meaning of solidarity. As seen here, this is a structural problem that affects all society, and the world of children, who directly or indirectly suffer the immediate consequences of violence. What is broken here is the delicate balance of fraternity by the narcissistic "me first".

What kind of way to live with others are children taught? The capitalist model of the way to live in society is centred on the individual and not on the community of individuals. In this model, those who have gained power and economical comfort own privilege and respect. The achievement is based on competition rather than cooperation.

Under this model, unavoidably many will remain out of the game, these in Latin American societies become the majority. As a consequence, the privileged sector will try to maintain its comfort through keeping power and control over the rest of the community members. At this stage social violence is already perpetrated against the majority who have lost their rights for a dignified human life. But if the marginalized ones claim their rights, more violent acts will be applied to them.

Children learn this model in the first instance through family, and then through other social settlements such as school, media, work, marriage, and any kind of human inter-relations. Although the influence of these institutions in human development will be analyzed in their corresponding methodological levels, the ideology that emerges from the current social system gives them content.

As for children, capitalist ideology supports the principle that offspring is the property of the parents, but it establishes family institution as the basic and main reproducer of ideology. Social intervention for the welfare of children is both poor and limited when a family fails in its social commitment bringing them up. Isolation of the family within a stressful environment of social violence is a potential formula for spiral of violence, at a domestic and social levels.

Beyond the individualistic attitudes, capitalist social order accuses all efforts of conscious groups for restoring fraternity as disassociated, erratic, conspirator, illegal or anti-social. The response of the oppressor can range from the discrediting of the nature of the movements to repressing them brutally. In any case, the image of the enemy promoted by the dominant group becomes a new concept which unwittingly penetrates the minds of the people.

At a macrosystem level it is interesting how a culture of a marginalized group can resist the social violence imposed by the dominant culture. Such is the case of indigenous groups in Guatemala, which are repeatedly mentioned in this study, for their own virtue and for the vast documentation on Mayas culture contained in the magnificent book *I, Rigoberta Menchú*. In her autobiography, Rigoberta (who is a young Indian woman and a Christian leader) explains how indigenous groups have a highly valued concept of life. It starts with the respect they have for nature, manifested in the ceremonies they practice to ask permission to mother land to let them cultivate their food in her. This respect for life is shared with animals who become co-workers for their food, as well as symbols of human characteristics. The respect for life is lived through their respect for wisdom of their ancient cultural members, and for communal leaders, who virtually become fathers and mothers of all the members of the community. Members of the community are invited to witness all the major happenings in human life (birth, marriage and death). Their presence in these ceremonies

is not merely a social event but in fact a fraternal or parental role upon those who are just born, or married, or the dead's offspring. This is corroborated in a report on Guatemala, which affirms that orphans of indigenous groups (as product of the war against them), are not put into institutions, because they are taken by relatives or community members.

Guatemalan indigenous groups know by cultural tradition the meaning of ecology. Their culture doesn't know violence as way to preserve cultural and human integrity. Their social force is a sense of life in community and respect for life. But these principles are anathema in a bloody country like Guatemala, and the expected and consistent answer of the system is to destroy this ecological culture --an ethnocidal war--, and a systematic despoilment of their culture through the "Development Poles" program (mentioned above).

It could then be said that at a macrosystem level, the incidence of a climate of violence in children is as strong in what is not done as in what is done. To be more explicit, violent acts will touch children at more immediate levels, as will be seen later. But for their human formation those ideas prevalent in the cultural and ideological system will permeate the impact of the tangible acts of violence (direct aggression), or social violence as omission (poverty and oppression), for good or for bad. In a fraternal and supportive culture, violent actions would be disregarded as a way of living. In an egocentric and competitive milieu, violent actions could be assumed and reproduced.

A real anecdote may illustrate this proposition. In the peaceful Costa Rica (100 years of democracy within its 159 years of independent republic), 45 years of constitutional abolition of the army, and a current Nobel Prize president), a couple arrive at one private primary school, taking their 6-year-old boy for a civil celebration of the heroic act of Juan Santamaría (the great national hero). The boy is wearing the traditional peasant custom, that is usually worn in these festivities. But, how great

is the couple's surprise to find a group of 7 to 8 year old boys, wearing fatigue uniform as for the war, carrying automatic toy weapons, and playing an imaginary battle between Sandinistas and Contras, sectors in war in the neighbouring Nicaragua.

Costa Rica, which raises the peace flag as a promotional identity, ideologically lives a war against the new and different political regime in Nicaragua, strongly orchestrated by the media, and nourished by an old historic cultural rejection for Nicaraguans. Children easily absorb (with the strength of their families) the "anti" sentiment and consistently project it in their understanding of a historical heroic gesture. In this particular context, where war as such is rejected through a political will, war is symbolically played through the ideological discourse of rejecting and condemning the different, which per se is savage, ignorant, atheist, oppressive, etc. Here is again the image of the enemy being used to break fraternal co-existence among nations and promoting violence. War can be then fought mentally and ideologically, and as for children, in this case violence is introjected as hostility and devaluation of the other: the historically different one. This attitude is promptly transferred to the poor, the marginalised, the inferior. In this way, poor are no longer acknowledged as subjects.

At the macrosystem level, traditional theology becomes also an instrument for ideology, above all in a region where the majority confess the Christian Creed. Upon the arrival of the first Spanish conquerors, evangelization of the Indian population of America was done as another way of dominion, in alliance with power. Since then the Catholic Church (as hierarchy) plays an allied role to the unjust system in almost all countries. Protestant confession was introduced through missionaries who because they were foreign proclaimed the Christian faith outside any political involvement, in addition to acculturation of those baptized. These forms of "evangelization" have created a flock apart from political power, indifferent to their political and social responsibility. From the perspective of the

traditional theology, social problems are seen as individual problems which are solved in a personal relation with God. When they are seen as collective problems, the solution is presented as a reformulation of the problem and not as a structural conflict.

Liberation Theology emerged as a new way to "do" theology in a world of oppression. Through a historical analysis of reality, and a new hermeneutical approach to the Bible, poor Christian people become aware of their potentiality and co-authors of their historic process and live their faith in a commitment with the oppressed. This new identity enables the former marginalized person to become a subject.

From a psychological perspective this is personal human growth, as well, aside from the social role that the poor person assumes; because for Liberation Theology, a liberated person becomes liberated with the others and for the others. Faith is practiced in solidarity with the suffering and no more as a personal reassurance.

For analysis of violence at a macrosystem level, the Church of the Poor constitutes a form to restore the confraternity broken in humanity. But again, this new force that is born in the believers is as well anathema for the current violent system, which responds with more violence. This is the case of many martyrs who lost their lives practicing their faith amidst their brothers and sisters.

For those children who are in the phase of starting to ask themselves "Who I am?", ideology and theology are compelled to give true answers to their search for identity in a world that has fractured the ecological balance of creation. Within the climate of violence there are signals of hope that give perspective to coming generations, as very young boys and girls are organized and participating, jointly with adults in the popular movements and Christian basic communities. As said before, children are victims and not co-authors of the violent system, but their age

has not been a limit that prevents their incorporation in the organization of those who believe in the integrity of humanity. These youngsters have crossed very early into adulthood, forced by historical circumstances. A transition in their development has occurred.

2. EXOSYSTEM

Bronfenbrenner (1979) affirms that in order to demonstrate the influence of the exosystem on human development, at least two steps should be considered:

(a) to connect events occurring in the external setting to processes occurring in the microsystem of the developing person; or

(b) to link the microsystem processes to developmental changes in a person within that setting.

He adds that the causal sequence could also go in the opposite direction, when the developing person may promote changes in the external sphere from her/his microsystem.

As for poor children in Latin America, social structures (at the exosystem level) vary depending on the region and its socio-historical circumstances. Largely important is their parent's world, outside the restricted family life at home. Parents' world of work, community or neighbourhood, and welfare institutions are mentioned in the literature as the more influential spheres for children at this level. For the purpose of this analysis relevant situations and institutions will be considered to the extent they affect the groups of children under study from the perspective of social violence.

As this study refers to child victims of social violence, it should be noted that the moratorium that society concedes to adolescent to study and become economically productive later on

is not allowed for the majority of adolescents in Latin America. Along this line, the present analysis could include at this level the world of the working children, rather than their parents'. But in order to keep a methodological sequence in the analysis, the consequences of adult unemployment on children will be considered in this exosystem level, and working children in next mesosystem level.

As the analysis enters the more personal spheres of the individual's life, class differences become more apparent. The macrosystem level analyzed before marked all the population, although their effects were projected differently in the sectors of society. At the present level the analysis refers primarily to poor children, the object of this study. But it is important to have as a reference group those children who despite sharing the same country, have no contact with many of the situations lived in poor countries. In many aspects privileged children could have more in common with children living in wealthy countries. Although blameless for the social inequality, their advantageous life places them in the disadvantageous position of probably becoming oppressors in the future.

a. Parental world of work

In the world of the poor, salaries are evidently low, working conditions are generally unsatisfactory, and job prospects are limited. Children see their parents working so hard often in exploitative situations. The world which surrounds parents and children is one of struggles, and at the same time hopeless. Poor people are also socially marginalized within a competitive and consumer society.

In this milieu not much is expected from poor children. This pre-concept is applicable to parents, educators, and authorities in

general. J. U. Ogbuk¹¹ performed an ethnographic study of interrelations between school and other settings in the larger society. The study was made in Burgherside, Stockton (California), with a population predominantly black and Mexican-American. He discovered that school failure among "subordinate minorities" is an *adaptation to discrimination and attendant barriers to occupational and social achievement in adult life*.¹²

He observed that students simply did not attempt to maximize their scores nor try to get the highest possible grades in school. From the observations of students and parents, he inferred that parents were communicating a double message. They urged their children to succeed in school and look for higher status occupations, but at the same time they also told their children they were going to be victims of discrimination. On the other hand, the middle class residents dominated meetings and rules in school before the silent (although resentful) attitude of minorities. Several devaluating myths about minorities also made it more difficult for relations between these two groups.

This research, even when it was made in a different context, shows how adults' lives, attitudes and expectations can unwittingly influence the developmental process of a child. Social and individual myths tend to organize the social and family life in a way that many children absorb a sense of defeat. But on the other hand, real life facts prevent many children in Latin America from performing better in school when they are able to attend. This is easily inferred from the situations of poverty described in the previous chapter.

The work setting of parents can influence their interaction with their children. Studies have found that low levels of job

¹¹ Cited by Bronfenbrenner (1979), *Op. Cit.* p. 250-257. The study is titled "The next generation: an ethnography of education in an urban neighborhood. New York, Academic Press, 1979.

¹² *Ibid.* p. 250.

satisfaction may lead to punishment of children. Other research has found that there is a correlation between the nature of work and the practices of child rearing running from self-direction to obedience to authority.¹³

Gil¹⁴ calls attention to the fact that competitive and exploitative human relations in the work place and its hierarchical and authoritarian structures tend to cause psychological stress and alienation that ultimately lead to alcoholism, drug addiction, crime and --as the most frequent locus for acting out the stress--, conflicts and abuse within the family.

Women with low incomes have traditionally worked in agricultural activities, manufacturing and handicraft industries, in the exchange of merchandise, trade, and domestic services.

The Inter-American Development Bank¹⁵ affirms that about 35% of heads of households are women, especially in the Caribbean. There is also a direct correspondence between the percentage of households headed by women and the increasing incidence of poverty in those households. Nevertheless, the importance of women labour finds barriers at all levels and their economic function is underestimated.

Research also reflects these prejudices against women's labour. Studies on economic decline are predominantly made on displaced men and their children, but numerous studies have been done on the effect of working mothers upon their children. It has ignored the increasing number of women as head of families, and the real need for many of them to contribute to the family budget.

¹³ Jay Belsky: *Op. Cit.*, p. 327.

¹⁴ David G. Gil: "Unraveling Child Abuse", in *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, Vol. 45 (3), April, 1975.

¹⁵ *Economic and Social Progress in Latin America - 1987 Report* - Special Section: Labour Force and Employment. Inter-American Development Bank, Washington, 1987.

There are other existential considerations that will not be mentioned here. However, irrespective of employment status, single mothers are under more stress and they have a greater tendency to anxiety, depression or health problems.¹⁶

The effects of maternal work on children vary depending on their developmental age and is linked to other intervening factors, such as the father's role and attitude, the resource of other institutions for the child's welfare, and the family organization and attachments. In societies where there are positive conditions for children with working mothers favourable effects are found, especially in girls, whose mother's image encourage higher expectancy in adult's life.¹⁷

For poor families in Latin America, the day-time absence of the mother from the house means house work for children and a double-job for the mother (outside and inside home). The *machista* structure of family is very generalized and deeply rooted. If the mother is a single parent, her children will be at a greater risk, forced by the circumstances and the lack of social support. A favourable condition that still remains in Latin American societies is the support of relatives for child-rearing. Here conflicts are of a different nature, but at least children have company and supervision.

a.1 Parental Unemployment

There is a more severe case which is of those families where parents are unemployed. The phenomenon of unemployment is world-wide. In Latin America it is particularly bad and there is no state support for the jobless.

¹⁶ Vonnie C. McLloyd: "Socialization and Development in a Changing Economy", in *American Psychologist*, February, 1989, Vol. 44 (2), p. 293-302.

¹⁷ Sanford M. Dornbusch and Myra H. Strober (editors): *Feminism - Children and the New Families*. The Guilford Press, London, 1988.

Labour markets in Latin America have the following characteristics, as estimated by the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB):

- In 1985 it was estimated that 70% of the total labour force was in the urban areas, which reflects an imbalance between labour supply and demand.

- Since 1983 most of the countries (except four) have visible unemployment: above 10% of available work force.

- Before the economic crisis, unemployment mainly affected the secondary work force, which includes women who are not heads of households, and people under 24 or over 44 years of age.

- Since 1981-82 unemployment has greatly affected lay-offs compared to new available work, for heads of households, men, people in the most active years, and the least educated.

- Lay-offs are higher among workers involved in the production of goods (the secondary sector).

- The duration of unemployment has increased in comparison with the periods of joblessness before the economic crisis.

The report affirms that in order to have a complete view of the chronic underutilization of human resources, underemployment has to be added to open unemployment. The underemployed sector is around the 20% in Latin America. These are:

- Visible underemployment: people who work less than they would like to work (daily, weekly, seasonally).

- Invisible underemployment: disguised underemployment, hidden unemployment, and the prematurely retired.

At the same time, there is also an "informal sector" which are small businesses established, operated by and belonging to one or few individuals with little or no capital, who use

rudimentary production processes, without access to a formal finance system, and are not legally recognized. This sector can be defined as self-employed work (excluding professionals); non-remunerated household workers and domestic workers. It is estimated by the same report that this sector is around 35% of the total urban employment.

The report also mentions that more than 40% of the Latin American urban population earned incomes below the poverty line (basic shopping basket) in 1981-1983.

The report mentioned above offers data of particular interest for this study. The lack of jobs has dimensions that goes beyond considerations of income, and that affects the individual, the family organization, and the community structure. Of primary importance are the changes in neighbourhood due to the heavy migration of families from rural areas. The family has changed its internal organization in many cases. The traditional nuclear family has shifted to an extended family in order to survive under a common shelter. The traditional parental role has also become more flexible in those cases where mother and children replace the former bread-earning role of the now jobless father.

These transformations within the family have social and psychological consequences. Working children as a direct result of unemployment will be particularly considered in the next stage of the present framework. At this point, the facts of analysis remain in the surrounding world of the child.

a.2 Paternal unemployment

Many studies have been made upon the effects of paternal unemployment on children. Unfortunately the research is made within different contexts, where there is more state and private support for the unemployed. Nevertheless, findings offer interpretations generally applicable to the Latin America situation. Some aspects of the population observed are common to the Latin American context: economic crisis has mainly

affected the working class and least educated people (blue collar workers); the father is usually the provider for the family; job loss or reduced income is a stressful event for the family life. The levels of poverty in the following studies have no comparison with those in Latin America.

Work provides more than income. It gives a sense of identity and purpose, ways of socialization, and for men the basis of their socially defined role as provider. This role is intrinsically connected with his identity. For this reason it would be expected that the loss of job and the impossibility of restarting a more productive life style will have personal and familial results, particularly for men.^{18a}

McLloyd^{18b} affirms that there are different factors that mediate in the effects that the unemployed father has on the family. These are: the father's personality, the father's appraisal of his unemployment, the social support, the duration of his unemployment, and wife and children's attitudes.

Unemployed men tend to be depressed, anxious and hostile. They suffer feelings of victimization, auto-dissatisfaction and often increase their consumption of alcohol. Somatic and mental health are also connected with unemployment. These symptoms intensify when men focus their unemployment as a failure towards their family, especially if they have dependent children. Feelings are stronger in those cases when wives get a job after their husbands' lay-offs, or when children who also go to work give their wages to the mother.

Unemployment alters a father's status and bring to those formerly dependent an economically productive role. This could

¹⁸ Loring Jones: "Unemployment and Social Integration: A Review, in *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare*, 1988 (December), Vol. 15(4), p. 161-176.

^{18b} Vonnie C. McLyod, *Op. Cit.*, p. 294-295.

be the consequence for a lower class family which is suddenly punished by the unemployment of the traditional householder, the father. The *machismo* which structures genders and family roles, make interrelations more rigid. Hence unemployment becomes a familial crisis. A crisis may immediately bring the family together. This is the initial reaction described by Bakke as *momentum stability*.¹⁹ This is followed by a second stage of *unstable equilibrium* where conflicts appear. Crisis now becomes a chronic stress that will probably drive families apart.

The family relationships during the unemployment period can be predicted by the state of the pre-unemployment relationships. Egalitarian marital relationships will be more likely to promote continued family stability. But parental conflicts will eventually become children's conflicts with an increased competition among family members for scarce resources. Then, family disorganization occurs.²⁰

Different researches mentioned by McLoyd state that the father-child relationship during the unemployed period could be affected positively or negatively. Effects will depend basically on prior father-child relationship, the role of the mother and the personality of the child.

When there was a positive father-child relationship prior to job loss, fathers of young children gained status and kept their parental authority before their offspring. On the contrary, when there existed a deteriorating relationship, after the loss of a job, parents became less nurturing, more punitive or coercive, unreliable or disinterested. There are indications that the available time then shared at home with the children increases

¹⁹ E. W. Bakke: *Citizens without work*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1940.

²⁰ Loring P. Jones: "The effect of unemployment on children and adolescents", in *Children and Youth Services Review*. Vol. 10, 1988, pp. 199-215.

the opportunity for conflict. It has been also observed recently that when there has been significant economic support during the unemployment period there are no reports of deterioration in parents-children relationship.

Studies made by Elder²¹ during the Great Depression demonstrated the powerful influence that a wife's attitude played in father-child relationships. If she lost respect for her husband, or blamed him for the lack of funds, she then undermined the father's authority. Furthermore, her personality proved to be determinant in the family's equilibrium. An affectionate mother reduced the father's maltreatment of children. Wives suffer along with husbands the individual emotional strain, depression and anxiety, particularly when the husband's role deteriorates.²²

The temperament of the child as well as his or her physical attractiveness intervenes in the father-child interaction. The difficulties with temperament incompatibility start prior to job loss and intensify afterwards. Elder's research found that fathers became more punitive and less supportive of physically unattractive daughters, but for boys, physical attractiveness did not affect the father's behaviour.

It is amazing how a dramatic event that emerges from spheres beyond the family control make such an impact within the familial structure, in a way that unconscious myths become evident and permeate the familial inter-relation: an irrational interpretation of reality, pre-conception of gender values, confusion of identity which debates between what you have or what you are, predominating of physical over human values, etc. Obviously each family has its own myths, but those mentioned here seem to be universal and socially promoted. This again leads to the ideological model assigned by society to family.

²¹ Bronfenbrenner, *Op. Cit.*, p. 267.

²² Jones, *Op. Cit.*, p. 203.

a.3 Maternal unemployment

As mentioned before, generally the emphasis is put on studies on men and children.

Women seem to be least psychologically affected by unemployment, because their roles as mothers and wives provide self-gratification and self-definition when men do not derive from their own roles. On the other hand, there are substantial effects on the mother and children, when work is a major source of her identity, self-esteem, and psychological fulfilment. Determinant are those cases when the mother's wages are the only income for the family. These families have fewer financial resources and a higher risk of living in poverty.²³

Poor women who are householders, when employed full or part-time leave work at home and responsibilities to their children. The older take care of the younger or of elder relatives living with them. When the mother is unemployed, child labour is the immediate resource of economic support. In both labour circumstances, children could be exploited if their work prevents access to education, leaves no time for recreation, or the combination of responsibilities go beyond their immature stage.²⁴

a.4 Effects of parental unemployment on the child

Some of the effects of parental unemployment on the child are derived from the individual or couple's emotional consequences, as already described. Direct effects on children will also pass through the family network but go beyond the family context. The effects are not uniform for all children. The age is an important variation to take into consideration.

²³ McLloyd: *Op. Cit.*, p. 300.

²⁴ U. S. Naidu: "Exploitation of Working Children : Situation Analysis and Approaches to Improving their Conditions", in ***Battered Children and Child Abuse***, edited by Z. Bankowski and M. Carballo, World Health Organization, Geneva, 1986.

The immediate and general effect on children is the restriction of their former life style. Levels of education, health, nutrition, housing and clothing will be reduced. But children who enjoyed a relatively comfortable standard of life will see their recreation (toys, books, vacations) denied. Small children are less sensitive to the family's loss of social status because their environment is more circumscribed to their family; but for school children and adolescents, the effects will echo at emotional and social levels.

The effects of parental unemployment on children to be mentioned here come from observation of children in developed countries, who have also been affected by an increasing unemployment. The findings can be attributed to middle and low classes in Latin America that have become poor during the current economic crisis. It is important to indicate that the majority of poor children have been born in families where poverty and unemployment or underemployment are chronic evils. The effects of chronic unemployment are quite obvious as amply described in child labour. Its emotional consequences will be analyzed later.

Socio-emotional effects on children are manifested in the internal and external spheres. Children become more emotionally sensitive, depressed and lonely. Some reflect the stolen security of their parents and develop low self-esteem.²⁵

Young children tend to misinterpret the real reasons of their parents' unemployment. Some blame themselves for the situation and adopt an attitude of resignation and hopelessness, atypical for this age. Others express fears about getting enough to eat and having enough for their needs.²⁶

In the social sphere, children tend to withdraw from peers because they are embarrassed for the family's lost of status.

²⁵ McLloyd: *Op. Cit.* , p. 298.

²⁶ Jones: *Op. Cit.* p. 207.

Adolescents may feel resentment about their inability to cope with peers' social activities.²⁷ These sentiments are acceptable and reasonable for children who enjoyed a good social level within a consumer society. Children who have always been poor connect easily with peers in the neighbourhood, but have no friendly relation slips with children in other socio-economic classes.

Researches have demonstrated that economic hardship is related with delinquency or drugs use, but is not determinant. Parental attachment is a decisive factor in social behaviour.

Income loss influences school failure in children, but as observed in different studies, other factors intervene: reduced educational expectations, emotional distress, lack of parental assistance, teachers' perceptions of economical deprived children as less adjusted, etc. There is a general pessimism about life and the future that involves the whole family. The lack of parental achievement dampens children's aspirations. Girls are more prone to limiting their own expectations. It has been seen that in economic adversity, parents tend to favour boys education compared with girls'.²⁸

In conclusion, the findings of so many research in this issue manifest shared conflicts within the family as a result of unemployment. Nevertheless, economic hardship sometimes exacerbates latent family discord. A visible intervening factor is the isolation of the family during the economic crisis. Social interchange seems to be directly related to money, from a consumer's perspective. Poverty then becomes a handicap that has further consequences in the differing spheres of life. In the world of chronic poverty, unemployment reflects negatively in the basic needs of individuals. The suffering of children forced to

²⁷ McLloyd: *Op. Cit.* , p. 206.

²⁸ McLloyd: *Ibid.*, p. 300.

work is the consequence of parental unemployment. The conflicts described here are more than likely to be present in chronically poor families, but their daily life is immensely more difficult. The findings of research in less severe situations are helpful in providing an understanding of the Latin American situation, if they are then projected through a magnifying lens.

b. Community and socialization

Community and neighbourhood are settlements important for children at the exosystem level. In this part, special emphasis will be given to children who have to adapt to new communal situations, due to forced migration, relocation, refugee status, or adoption in a foreign country.

These situations have different characteristics, but all share the loss of an external reference frame. External migration could lead to more intense conflicts because of cultural shock. Those who are resettled within their own country, while sharing language and culture, have lost their habitat which is part of their identity. For children, mobilization is something that happens to them because of obscure reasons that belong to the adults' world.

There are several kinds of conflicts that need to be faced when someone is abruptly moved from his or her known environment and settled in an unknown place. As mentioned in the description, problems of daily living that naturally affect their physical, emotional, and social well-being. This analysis, nevertheless, will emphasise the existential situation, common to all those who are forced to change habitat.

Researchers have made associations between socio-cultural change and mental health. Berry and Annis²⁹ use the term

²⁹ John W. Berry and Robert C. Annis: "Acculturative Stress - The Role of Ecology, Culture and Differentiation", in *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, Vol. 5, No. 4, December 1974.

acculturative stress to describe those affective states and behaviours linked to acculturation, and which are usually subsumed under the term mental health. The authors found greater acculturative stress in:

(a) cultural groups with a greater cultural and behavioural disparity from the dominant culture;

(b) where there was stronger pressure placed upon the group to become acculturated;

(c) individuals who were less psychologically differentiated, that is less independent of events in their milieu;

(d) societies with characteristics of migratory, low population density, and low stratification.

While this is an ample characterization of acculturative stress lived by the emigrant, which does not include the case of forced emigration, it can be helpful to understand the process of adapting into a new cultural environment. Concomitant stress as product of unwillingness to emigrate obviously magnifies the existential strain. Equally important is the fact that those who emigrate for political reasons have previously lived through persecution, threats or torture.

b.1 Situation of exile

The situation of being foreign is always stressful. The disparity between cultures was deeply felt especially by Latin Americans who arrived in Europe, or the United States, as testimonies confirm. The new country is seen as the stepmother who substitutes the abandoned or rejected mother (the country of origin).³⁰ Forced emigration implies a bereavement for the loss of identifications established with external objects: persons, places, traditions, geography, language, food, political situation,

³⁰ In Spanish land and native country are feminine: *motherland*.

etc. The particular characteristics of this mourning is that the objects are not dead, but absent and abandoned. The elaboration of the mourning needs to accept the loss and readapt to the new reality. This process becomes highly complex when migrants are in fact planning their return as soon as they arrive. But the future is uncertain and generates anguish, while the decision to leave generates guilt. This conflict is expressed in many different ways.^{31a}

Children may well live their own mourning process, but because of their age, they have not accumulated as many identifications with the lost land as their parents did, nor experienced the series of losses that life imposes. Their plasticity helps them adapt more quickly. Nevertheless, sometimes children have more complex problems than adults due to the fact that they are still growing. On the other hand, they are more likely to experience greater stress on their return, especially those that were too young when they left their original country or those born in the foreign country.

As Berry and Annis found in their research, individual factors are involved in acculturative stress. In the case of forced emigrants, the new referential frame is felt a massive threat to their identity. In psychological terms, the new cultural context is felt as "schizophrenizing" and "paranoidizing", although it is not actually so. For the migrant the real world is divided ("schizophrenizing") and ambiguous and contradictory (paranoidizing). In a way, this is a regression to early relations with objects.^{31b} This process of reorientating their identity awakens old anguishes from the past that were not completely elaborated. It is then that ruptures frequently take place within the family.

^{31a} Laura Achard de Demaría and Jorge Galeano Massera: "Vicisitudes del Inmigrante", conference given to the Psychoanalytic Association of México, México D.F., March 1986 (unpublished document).

^{31b} Achard and Galeano, *Ibid.*, p. 5.

Children suffer the parent's personal mourning as well as eventual separations.

When idealization of the lost land diminishes, the mourning starts to lessen. But for children the lost land is vague and diffuse due to reasons of space and time, and because new cultural elements have been incorporated. On the other hand, traditions and expectations for their return remain strong for the parents. In this sense, Latin Americans have shown a strong tendency to preserve their cultural values over several generations, as has happened in the United States. Those values are mainly reflected in family roles.³² So for parents who feel themselves to be living in a transitory stage, the "foreignizing" of their children is seen as an unconscious betrayal of their own expectations for return and loyalty to the homeland.

One of the main source of problems in children is their failure to understand their parents' reasons for emigrating. Children have not participated in the decision to leave (first exile), or to return (second exile). The return seems to be more traumatic because the attachments to the adopted homeland are stronger than those acquire in their first years of life. In both cultural insertations they become a minority. But when reincorporation to their native land has taken place, these children will have an enriched cultural life, in the intent their previous losses had elaborated.

b.2 Local forced migration

Other forms of forced migration described before are becoming a refugee, displacement or relocation of some sector of

³² Javier I. Escobar et al: "Depressive Phenomenology in North and South American patients", in *American Journal of Psychiatry*, Vol. 140(1), January 1983.

the population, for reason of political or war. Groups are placed in refugee camps, or settlements organized by the government. A special form of relocation is the Polos de Desarrollo, in Guatemala, which is based on ethnic and political objectives.

People who are circumstantially forced to leave their home, community or geographical area experience similar emotional processes as those described above. However, there are some characteristics particular to the composition of the groups. Those that are exiled are generally people with a well developed political awareness and tend to be better educated. This helps them in their understanding of the objective situation although the subjective processes will be painful. Such people are also more likely to have been persecuted, their lives been at risk, or suffered imprisonment and torture.

The population that arrives at refugee camps or at settlement for the displaced are from the lowest class, often without education, mostly rural inhabitants and sometimes with different ethnic values. This last group are made of voluntary or forced migrants. But in all cases there was an ultimate unwilling reason that motivated their flight.

There is always grief for the lost homeland. The stress is greater in the case of rural groups that are organized in urban areas. As they have ties strongly related to the earth, the acculturative stress is profound, because of the myths, symbols and cultural values that are given to cultivation of the earth.

The period of permanence of refugees in a camp varies. Their future will be uncertain and will not allow them to organize themselves. It is usual that refugees become dependent within a paternalistic system imposed in such settlements.

For those groups relocated under structural plans of the government the process deals more with their acceptance and re-organization in the new home. A difference could be considered between those who migrate voluntarily and others that resisted

the change. The response to relocation is not homogeneous.³³ Berry and Annies (as mentioned before) found that the acculturative stress is greater if pressure upon the group to become acculturated is stronger. These two conditions are found in Guatemalan Indians oppressed by the governmental plan, *Polos de Desarrollo*.

Relocated people may go through the following process:³⁴

(a) After mobilization (forced or voluntary) the population lives through a transition stage where stress leads the people to respond conservatively to reduce stress and reconstitute their lives physically, psychologically and socioculturally. Their tendency is to cling to all that is familiar to them: be close to relatives, look for similar occupation, with the same co-workers, remain in contact with familiar habitat, etc. This is what Scudder (mentioned by the authors) has denominated *cultural involution*: a community that is an open-ended system responds as a closed system due to stress.

This phase can vary from less than two years to long after the second generation. For some, especially the elder, the transition stage ends only with death. Some refugees, as with the Palestinians, after the third generation are still in the transition stage. It could be thought that the same result would be likely with the Guatemalan Indians who have protected their culture during 500 years of conquest and external and internal colonialism.

(b) The following stage will show the dynamics of an open-ended society, measured by rising standards of living. But it also shows widening wealth differences, social stratification and

³³ Art Hansen and Anthony Oliver-Smith (editors): *Involuntary Migration and Resettlement*. Westview Press, Colorado, 1982, p. 261.

³⁴ Hansen and Oliver-Smith: *Ibid.*, pp. 274-275.

class structure. In many cases this stage is never achieved and the people disperse.

(c) The last stage that may never be reached takes place when the people are again living and working in a familiar environment. This is not a phase that has been well studied.

While in this study there is no specific reference to effects of resettlement on children, it can be posited that the success of relocation ultimately rests on children's acculturation. The process gone through to perpetuate the new settlement will more likely be one of repression-conformity model of education.

b.3 Foreign adoption

Children who are adopted by parents of foreign countries will hopefully gain affectively. Their physical appearance which announces their different origin might not have a negative result as long as their adoptive parents respect and encourage the children to understand their original culture.

The present study shows that the sale and trafficking of children, whose fundamental cause is poverty, is a violation of the basic human right to maintain one's own cultural identity.

At this stage, when analyzing community and immediate social environment of specific groups of children, the incorporation of adopted children into new cultural environment is important.

According to Piaget, a child's understanding of society is a continuing construction. As in knowledge, children learn through the interrelation with persons and things. The encounter with society or with social institutions is an indirect one which involves parents' views (themselves influenced by society), symbols, ceremonies, customs, and school, among others. Children of 6 years of age seem to have some understanding of societal concept of class, but their attitudes and feelings are

mainly determined by their social environment. Also, logical understanding about country and nationality develops quite slowly during primary school. In an earlier age there is an intuitive grasp of national symbols.³⁵

In a racist society to bring up a child with different ethnic characteristics is difficult for both parents and children. The hostility of the society for the child's race or for the mixing of races will be felt as rejection.

A study made on adoption in England give some examples of the difficulties these families face.³⁶ The children had black ancestors and were adopted by white parents. They showed gifted intellectual levels compared to the rest of the sample composed of white children. Some of them had behaviour problems not attributed to colour difficulties. All of them were 8 years old.

Half of the children (8 in total) had not yet been told that they were of mixed race (some were fair). Only one child had serious troubles with his cultural identity, because he was adopted when he was 7 years old and had previously identified with black children in the institution. The rest of the children were often called names because of their colour at school, but were generally accepted. It is possible that at that stage of their lives they did not have a real concept of themselves as black, and the teasing is not taken to heart. Their confidence rests in their knowledge of being loved, attractive and talented.

But surprisingly, with only one exception, mothers showed racial prejudice. Children's race was seen as equivalent to a handicap; another made racist jokes; one mother tried to deny the darkness of her child's colour; and another attributed negative features of the child's personality to his ancestors' culture.

³⁵ Harry McGurk (editor): *Issues in Childhood Social Development*. Methuen, London, 1978.

³⁶ Barbara Tizard: *Adoption: a second change*. Open Books, London, 1977.

These parents loved their children but didn't have much respect for their original culture. They tried to protect the child by concealing his or her origins, or assumed that their love was enough protection for the future. Only one mother was teaching her child to be proud of his culture.

Even when children did not present serious problems because of their race, some confusion arose about their identity, which is expected to increase as they grow up. The late disclosure of their cultural origins presumably will be more disturbing than the disclosure of their adoptive status.

As this study demonstrates, paternal prejudice could be the first and most important obstacle for a mixed-race adopted child. It seems predictable that couples that pay high prices for a child with white skin and blue eyes will be unlikely to encourage them to admire their own cultural origin. If there was no respect for humanity during the buying of the child, it is presumable respect not only for culture and related identity, but also the personal needs of the child will fail during the rearing process.

c. Effects of the war on children

The forms of war performed in Latin America are extreme expressions of the social conflict. They are the response to popular demand for political and social democracy.³⁷ The war, under the guise of national security, or counter-insurgency doctrines, is ultimately a political war that goes beyond the classic fields of military struggle and invades *all* the social and political spaces of national life.³⁸

The barbarous acts practiced by human beings against other defenceless fellow creatures can only be possibly explained as

³⁷ Gabriel Aguilera: *El fusil y el olivo - La cuestión militar en Centruamérica*. DEI, San José, 1989.

³⁸ Raúl Vergara et al: *Centroamérica - La guerra de baja intensidad*. DEI, San José, 1987.

the result of dogmatic ideological blindness. In this indoctrination the concept of *enemy* is widely manipulated.

The enemy is the threatening and harmful foe for whom one has hatred and ill-feelings. The idea of an enemy is evidence of an existing conflict between at least two sectors. So, the use of the image of the enemy serves different purposes, all aimed to give strength to one's own cause and for defeating the opponent.

Finlay³⁹ analyzes the function of the enemy from psychological, social and political views. He affirms that this concept necessarily must include the three perspectives.

Psychologically, reality is interpreted through the lens of the experiences accumulated throughout life. Early experiences of love and hate lead to the polarization of the world. Furthermore, enemies (available or created) are always needed for projection of an individual's hostilities and self-rejected features of personality. Through identifying the enemy as the incarnation of evil, the individual, the group, or the nation assumes the posture of self-righteousness. The good-evil polarization that humans internalize is similar to the god-devil axis found in religions, and more recently transferred to science and politics. The quality of a demon for an enemy intensifies the struggle between the pure and impure, between identity and non-identity.

This transcendence of the concept leads to depersonalization of the enemy, eliminating his or her human qualities and transforming him or her into an object, rather than a subject.

This could be the key to understand how torture is possible.

Sociologically, the existence of the enemy fosters cohesion. When the enemy is perceived as particularly threatening, the anxious and fearful group is more likely to turn to leaders or

³⁹ David Finlay, Ole R. Holsti, Richard R. Fagen: *Enemies in Politics*. Rand McNally & Co., Chicago, 1967.

authority. To this extent, manipulation of the image of the enemy serves to mould behaviour and beliefs in consonance with the authorities' expectations. Individuals respond according to their training and social norms.

The political use of the concept of the enemy has effects in the realms where ideas, behaviour and roles are formed. Its most important instruments are education and mass media. Ideological dogmatism restricts the variety of experiences for the individual, who is indoctrinated in supra-individual causes. "*Supra-individual causes depersonalize conflict and the enemy, while continual struggle in the name of the cause tends to produce irrationality and to breed fanaticism.*"⁴⁰ Under this state, the idea of the enemy is applied to non-believers and non-conformists. The result is a *purging milieu*⁴¹, where impurity has to be eliminated.

This blindness can be illustrated with the thought of a member of the Peruvian army:

*We are in a war and in war it is not possible to know who is and who is not. Everything is valid and even children are the enemy.*⁴²

The words belong to sub-lieutenant Telmo Hurtado, who commanded the massacre of 29 children in Accomarca (Perú), on the 14th of August of 1985. Twenty-two of those children were under 10 years of age.

In such extreme situations of violence as experienced in countries under the national security doctrine, there is no clearly visible enemy, but an imposition of an anti-popular policy and a

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* p. 21. The term cited by the authors was used by Robert Jay Lifton, *Thought Reform and Psychology of Totalism*, New York, Norton, 1961).

⁴² *Taller sobre el Niño y la Violencia Política*, p. 191 (free translation).

generalized violence which is seen by the population as an undetachable part of the State (State Terrorism).

Guinsberg⁴³ analyzes some of the mental consequences from this kind of violence in Argentina. He states that psychic consequences of fear are individual and collective:

- anxiety facing an unstructured dangerous situation;
- persecution feelings (not paranoia because there is a real persecution);
- distrust in inter-personal relations, avoiding strong attachments and frank communication;
- defence mechanisms such as a "useful repression", practiced voluntarily for protection against external repression;
- projection over reality and social life of the dichotomization absorbed from outside (good/bad people, just/unjust people, friend/enemy people, etc.).
- introjection and identification with the superior image;
- negation of reality (the population does not want to know what is happening to others);
- Psychotization of daily life: loss of relatives, pain, lack of friendship, unemployment, surrounding danger, uncertain future, changes in habits, creation of new language to substitute forbidden words, lost of spontaneity, fear of changes.

War belongs to the adult world but undoubtedly children are directly affected, and among them the poor are greatly punished by its effects. It is very difficult to establish particular consequences of the war on children. Events in warfare are

⁴³ Enrique Guinsberg: "Salud mental, paz y terrorismo de Estado", in *Revista Nueva Sociedad* - Guerra, violencia, guerrillas, No. 89 (Mayo-Junio), Caracas, 1987.

always connected with other circumstances that affect the whole family. A word that could define this complex suffering is loss, different forms of loss. As analyzed above, forced migration is one of the consequences of war. At this point of the study, and following the characteristics of the exosystem stage, war will be analyzed from the perspective of the effects caused on children via family and social environment. Intrinsically the army is the institution under analysis in this section. The specific cases of parental imprisonment, torture and disappearances (as forms of war) will be analyzed as to the consequences these events have on children's lives.

All torture, imprisonment for political reasons, and disappearance are instruments of state terrorism. Beyond individual suffering, social alienation occurs as a result of the disruption of a sense of social belonging and the imposition of a master-slave based social structure. Those who have not been kidnapped or disappeared are alienated through the terror of suffering the same.

Identification is moulded by the parental and social discourses. In free social contexts models are varied, but when the structure of power is dictatorial social models are few and pre-established. There are two ways to respond to the frequent traumatic events that spring from the social context under a state of terrorism. The first one is the classic trauma. The second is one where the psychic apparatus *"separates itself from society as a whole in a search to belong to a non-conflictual social micro-group. Social life is alien and alienating."*⁴⁴ In consequence, groups are an excellent force against state terrorism, but as such are strongly persecuted. Hence for the individual there only remains the narcissistic flight and the adoption of indifference to the external world.

⁴⁴ Puget: "Social violence and Psychoanalysis in the Argentinian Context", *British Journal of Psychotherapy*, Vol. 5(3), 1989, p. 365.

c.1 Disappearance

When this threatening situation touches one member of the family, mainly the husband or father, a break occurs within the organization of the family. It is difficult to structure the family in the new situation. New roles are imposed on all the members. The mother becomes mother-father and older children become father-mother of the younger. Adult members block their capacity to feel pain in order to survive during this time. They also repress their own needs and feel guilty when their activities are not aimed specifically at looking for the disappeared member.

The internal process overlaps with the general sentiments generated by terrorism in the population. Very often women of missing husbands opt for lying, to stop talking, thinking and feeling. The unthinkable and the unthought are mechanisms to defend themselves from perceptions that can arouse intolerable emotions which cannot be translated into words. The intolerable events stay in memory, but they will only transform into experience when there exist another person capable of understanding. Only in the encounter with the other will the unthinkable or unthought become thinkable, and words meaningful.⁴⁵

This openness to listen was given by groups of relatives of those detained and disappeared (Familiares de Detenidos-Desaparecidos). These groups (evidently also persecuted) have also given support in the treatment of children.

Statements and questions children pose are: where is my father?, what does it mean that he disappeared?, who made them disappeared?, People don't disappear! The term *disappeared* was an abstraction used to hide concrete happenings to people detained at home or kidnapped elsewhere. It was later discovered that they were taken to secret jails, and tortured to death very

⁴⁵ Puget: *Ibid.*, p. 368.

often. The disappearance is a method also used to frighten, paralyse and isolate people. It is the fear to stop existence, the fear that silenced solidarity. In this threatening social environment the family who has a missing member finds no social support.

In a study made in Chile (during 1977-1978) by the Group of Relatives of Detained and Disappeared, they found that 79.8% of children suffered significant disturbances in their behaviour: isolation reaction, fear reaction, consistent sadness reaction, frequent crying, disturbance of sleeping and appetite, gastrointestinal disorders, language disorders, loss of hair, developmental regression and general affective problems.⁴⁶

Children that survived the trauma were those that were members of families that strongly united after the loss and during the searching for the missing parent; they were the families that gave true information and kept explaining successive events, who shared emotions and allowed themselves to express their sorrows, fears, anguish and anger.⁴⁷ The family is unable to mourn the lost relative as it is always facing the question "where are they?" Disappearance erases the border between death and life.

Many children have also disappeared with their parents. As described before, those who survived lost their identity, in some cases under the cruel circumstance of being adopted and educated by their parents' killers. In other cases, children found by their relatives, knew about the traumatic history of their kidnapping-adoption, and had to readapt again to a new family.

c.2 Imprisonment and torture

⁴⁶ *Taller sobre el Niño y la Violencia Política*, pp. 274-275.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* p. 276.

Imprisonment of one or two parents (most frequently the father) means the child becomes a sort of orphan. The immediate effect is economic hardship for the family, and lack of attention for children, as the remaining parent has to dedicate time to the penal prosecution and to give support to the imprisoned parent, in addition to providing the family's economic sustenance.

Under ordinary circumstances, the civil penalty of imprisonment is always a stigma for a family. In the case of a political prisoner, families will not only carry the social affront, but also the isolation because of the fear of other people of "getting involved".

Children with an imprisoned parent face a situation that generally goes beyond their rational comprehension, because the reasons that their parent in jail belong to the world of ideas and beliefs. For older children, who have some grasp of the reality, their parent's prosecution engenders their beliefs and helps to define their own way of struggle for liberation.

For the younger child of a political prisoner, language and ideas become distorted. While the father or mother are "seditious", school teaches that the police is a friend. The same family can be divided ideologically and the imprisonment of one of the members exacerbate the fracture.

During the time of imprisonment the relationship between the parent and the child is harmed by the space and time limitations that prison imposes. Visits to the prison can be a source of happiness and frustration. Separation is a permanent threaten.

When a member in the family is absent, idealization is a frequent mechanism that helps to overcome the loss. This ideal image contrasts with the real one when the relative returns home. A new accommodation becomes necessary within the family structure which developed in the parent's absence, as well as in the mutual perception of family members. Neither the returned

parent nor the rest of the family are the same any more. The children have grown and all the family has been changed by the separation.⁴⁸

In case of a returned parent that was tortured, the reincorporation to the family is more dramatic. The objectives of torture is to make the victim lose his or her self-esteem, to desintegrate the personality structure, and break the identity, aims and beliefs.

Viñar⁴⁹ distinguishes three successive phases in the experience of torture:

(a) the annihilation of the individual, the destruction of his or her values and convictions;

(b) an extreme experience of disorganization within the subject in relation to him/herself and the world; this phase is called the *demolition*;

(c) the experience ends in the crisis point and the reparative behaviour which then takes place.

The critical state of demolition occurs when the subject arrives at the point when there is a constant intense physical pain that breaks all affective links with the personal world, and is thus totally at the mercy of the torturer. At this moment all other perceptions of the world cease to exist, except for the present painful experience.

In consequence, rehabilitation is needed in order that the person's dignity can be re-established and the lost identity can be recovered. Physical and psychic damage demand professional help and a great amount of affective support from the family. If, as in

⁴⁸ *Taller sobre "El Niño y la Violencia Política"*, caso de Uruguay, p. 170.

⁴⁹ Marcelo Viñar: "Pedro or the Demolition - A psychoanalytic look at torture", in *British Journal of Psychotherapy*, Vol. 5(3), 1989, p. 359.

Freudian terms, an elaboration within the individual does not take place clinical psychosis develops.⁵⁰

Some children have not only had a parent tortured; but have themselves suffered torture or witnessed their parents' torture. These experiences generate anguish and insecurity. Beside the physical consequences of torture, complete personal regression is often a common reaction: frequent crying, mutism, nightmares, shyness, solitary behaviour, etc.⁵¹

In societies where torture became a regular occurrence a multiple effect is inescapable. Viñar says that the reality of horror is placed between the real and the fantastic. People need to bring out torture as a constant theme of conversation as a way to refute a view of reality or a phantasy.⁵² But as mentioned by Puget, generally in groups (even in group therapy) people avoid talking and isolate the person who brings the theme to avoid contact with a reality that create fear. There is a social paralysis produced by a general narcissistic attitude to save individually from the terror. An analysis from Chile, after several years of suffering torture and all kinds of violation of human rights, taught the people to lose fear and reorganize their life projects. The experience of torture taught them to look backwards and become aware of the other forms of tortures that had taken place previous to this last highly technical one. As they say, torture always existed, even in the rearing of children, but they didn't know that it was there.⁵³

⁵⁰ Kevin J. Fitzsimmons: *De las víctimas de la tortura y cómo superar el miedo*. (Unpublished document), California, 1986.

⁵¹ *Investigación sobre la situación de los menores detenidos por razones políticas y por delincuencia juvenil entre 1973 y 1984 - Chile*. Defence for Children International, Geneva, 1984.

⁵² Viñar, *Op. Cit.*, p. 362.

⁵³ *Taller sobre "El niño y la violencia política"*. (Chilean Case: "Algo se quiebra dentro de mí"), p. 256.

d. Television as a socializing agent

The media is an instrument at the service of the current ideology that have a universal influence. In Latin America television is an appliance present even in the poorest shanty towns. Most children's programs are imported from the United States and Japan. They are full of open or implicit violence. Programs produced in Latin American countries, though with more local culture elements, reflect human relations of competition and destruction. A very high percentage of the population is devoted to "telenovelas" (soap operas). These 'serials' become the joint activity of the families every day (including children). The images of "telenovelas" follow the conflicts of rivalries, classism, racism, and miraculous events that help and restore the social status of the poor and marginalized.

In a survey made about television in the city of Bucaramanga, in Colombia, among children of 4 to 12 years old, 57% answered that the United States was the most important country, and only 25% found their own country the most important; 40% would have liked to have been born in the United States and not in Colombia, and 70% expressed that the way to be successful in life was through theft, fighting, crime and fraud, *as in television*.⁵⁴

Much research has been done on the effects of violent television programs on children and adults. The main concern in these studies is to measure the aggressiveness that children learn through seeing violent scenes in television programs. Although through different experimental ways researchers find that there is enough evidence to affirm that violent television programs reproduce aggressiveness in at least some children, the

⁵⁴ Germán Rey: "Televisión: hacia una cultura de la violencia?" Conference addressed in Fundación Rafael Pombo, in Bogotá, Colombia, in May 1988 (unpublished document), p. 24-25.

aggressive response will depend on other factors in their social learning.⁵⁵

Freedman finds that the research lacks real evidence that violent programs in television stimulate aggressive responses in children. He argues that all experiments are made in laboratories and that it is not definitely established that the same aggressive response could occur in a natural setting.^{56a} The interesting thing is that none of the researchers raise the question about the way television programs are becoming increasingly more violent. As Martín-Baró^{56b} reports in a study made in El Salvador during one week, in three channels, 4.280 violent scenes were presented (204 daily violent scenes per channel).

The fact is that television is a successful instrument for propaganda and advertising. If it were not effective, business corporations, politicians and lately religious corporations would not use it. Its success rests in the almost universal scope, the real and convincing image that projects, and the long time most people dedicate to watching it.

For the interest of the present study, it is not only important to analyze the effects of the violent scenes on the television audience, but also the hidden images carried in the programs' content. As it has been mentioned before, ideology is not only projecting actual violent acts, but directions towards whom to aim violence at.

⁵⁵ Huesmann, L. Rowell' Eron, Leonard D., Klein, Rosemary', Brice, Patric; Fischer, Paulette: "Mitigating the imitation of aggressive behaviors by changing children's attitudes about media violence", in *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 1983, Vol. 44, No. 5, 899-910.

⁵⁶ Freedman, Jonathan L.: "Effect of TV violence on aggressiveness", in *Psychological Bulletin*, 1984, Vol. 96, No. 2, 227-246.

⁵⁷ Freedman, Jonathan: "Television violence and aggression: a rejoinder", in *Psychological Bulletin*, 1986, Vol. 100, No. 3, pp. 372-378.

^{56b} Ignacio Martín-Baró: "La violencia en Centroamérica: Una visión psicosocial", in *Revista Costarricense de Psicología*, Nos. 12 and 13, p. 21-30, San José, 1988.

Images projected in children's programs usually support stereotypes that unwittingly are incorporated into their minds. Some of these, after a superficial television watching, are: individual heroic performance (the hero is a solitary individual, mostly masculine, without family, with extraordinary powers, white); black or red colours are related to the "bad" side; "goods" are at the side of the "law"; conflicts are always solved through violence and the strongest win (helped with a high technology), etc. Freedman, unconvinced of the negative effects of violent television programs on children, cautiously consider that children could learn through imitation that is not indiscriminate. So, children will imitate powerful and successful figures more than they will do weak and unsuccessful ones. They will also imitate rewarded behaviours instead of unrewarded behaviour. The author candidly reasons television influence in this way:

If the programs typically show unjustified or illegal violence being punished and justified legal violence being rewarded, the expected effect would be a reduction in unjustified aggressiveness but an increase in justified aggressiveness and so on.⁵⁷

This is a statement that not only confirms television programs as transmitters of ideology, but presents an interpretation of the facts heavily burdened with ideology. Violence is justified or unjustified by the law. In reality sometimes law is questioned as being in favour of the interests of a powerful minority. Or law is used to preserve the social order, a social order that goes against the majority. The hidden message to imitate then becomes clear under a historical analysis, but obscure to the innocent spectator: children.

In his study on media effects,⁵⁸ Berkowitz affirms that ideas activated externally can prompt automatic (involuntary) thoughts, actions, and even some controlled behaviours that are semantically associated with them. Individuals who lack semantically related ideas with the portrayed event will not be affected in the same way. (But activation of thoughts or actions is temporary and declines with the passage of time). The audience will be more disposed to engage in antisocial behaviour if the media implicitly or explicitly indicate that such behaviour is permissible or profitable. The massive exposition to violent television scenes induces the audience to see violence as more trivial or acceptable, but this doesn't mean that the inclination to aggression decreases. The violent images become stronger when there is clear understanding of aggression (as a deliberate injury to another), when there is an identification of the observer with the media characters, and when they are realistic or assumed as actual events. Finally, studies have shown that especially adolescents cultivate a concept that the world is violent, evil and dangerous, and could develop a paranoid concept of their environment.

Bronfenbrenner⁵⁹ finds that the main harm that television is doing in family life is to substitute the former time for conversation and group joy and entertainment by a passive common activity. Following this same idea, Rey⁶⁰ affirms that television fills the conditions of a *socializing agent*:

- it has incidence in the daily life of people;
- it exercises a seductive power upon those watching;

⁵⁸ Leonard Berkowitz: "Some effects of thoughts on anti- and prosocial influences of media events: A cognitive-Neoassociation Analysis", in *Psychological Bulletin*, 1984, Vol. 95, No. 3, pp. 410-427.

⁵⁹ Bronfenbrenner (1980): *Op. Cit.*, p. 290.

⁶⁰ Rey: *Op. Cit.* p. 30.

- television programs state opinions on daily matters;
- because intentionally or unintentionally television has fixed social objectives;
- because television has become a ruling instrument within the family (it is used to reward or punish); and,
- because television is a means of reproduction of oral tradition.

In summary, the socialization process through which children imitate models, real or fictitious, is also reinforced by the television alongside family, school and similar institutions.

e. The Church as an institution

Following the framework, the Church will be seen here from outside, as a social institution although peculiar for its religious role. Before, reference was made to the Church from the perspective of the theology that determined its social orientation. Here, the Church will be focused in its ecclesial performance. The Church from inside will be the whole content of the last chapter, in an attempt to respond to the violent world in which it is placed.

The institutionalized Church began geopolitically in the eastern Mediterranean world and it started socio-politically oppressed within the Roman Empire. Today it is part and parcel of the nations that oppress the *peripheral* countries, often allied with the power.⁶¹

Religiousness is a central value for Latin Americans. The mysticism of indigenous people was mixed with or substituted by the catholicism of the Spanish and Portuguese colonizers in the

⁶¹ Enrique Dussel: *A history of the Church in Latin America - Colonialism to Liberation (1942-1979)*. W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Michigan, 1981.

15th Century. Protestantism was introduced by European or United States missionaries in the 19th and 20th Centuries. African slaves brought other forms of religious expression. Religious movements (sects) and the electronic church are recent phenomena that aggregate within the complexity of Latin American Church.⁶²

Since Christianity was introduced in Latin America, it was always allied to power in every nation, except in Mexico (for constitutional reasons). The Catholic Church which gathers 80% of believers is the state religion and has social and legal privileges for their institutions. Protestantism is self-identified as apolitical. From these postures, the Church has usually played, if any, a timid role in the social conflicts experienced in the sub-continent. Its explanations of and approaches to poverty have been superficial and individualistic, and when poverty has been appreciated as a collective problem, the orientation of its aid programmes has been paternalistic, without promoting the active role of the believer, as a social subject.⁶³

Since 1960 a new awakening occurred within the Church. The Latin American Episcopal Council (CELAM), following the Second Vatican Council, met in Medellín (Colombia) in 1968, and elaborated a document that recognized,

...that in many instances Latin America finds itself faced with a situation of injustice that can be called *institutional violence*... We should not be surprised therefore that the 'temptation to violence' is surfacing in Latin America. One should not abuse the patience of a people that for years has borne a situation that would not be acceptable to anyone with any degree of awareness of human rights.⁶⁴

⁶² T. Beeson: *Vision of Hope*. Praeger Publishers, New York, 1984.

⁶³ Beeson, *Op. Cit.* p. 34-35.

⁶⁴ Conclusions of Medellín, cited in Dussel, *Op. Cit.*, p. 146.

Some aspects of the new understanding of the role of the Church among the poor, according to the Medellín Conference (1968), were: the relation between sin and unjust social structures; denouncement of institutional violence; call for the participation of common people in the construction of a new society; new role for laity; ecumenical openness; and the Church as voice of the people.

The ecclesiological expression of Medellín Document, confirmed later in Puebla Conference (1979) is the *popular pastoral* practiced by Christian Basic Communities (CEBs). After being 'benefited by', the poor became subjects and even more, protagonists of the practice of the Church and of its pastoral within the popular milieu.

The Church is now evolving theologically and ecclesologically with the signs of the time. The CEBs in their prophetic and evangelical roles grow and mature. After Puebla, the protagonic social role of pastoral action diminished, as the dictatorships were falling one after another. Justice is now analyzed from a new angle, when the interdependence between politics and economy becomes clearer with the debt crisis. Historical changes have helped the CEBs to mature their identity through the unity and commitment with faith values, evangelization and Christian solidarity.⁶⁵

While in a self-critic gesture the popular pastoral action finds itself lacking deeper religious and doctrinal formation on the great questions of the faith, CEBs and Liberation Theology have injected a missionary dimension to Latin American pastoral practice.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Segundo Galilea: "La pastoral popular en América Latina - Balance de 4 décadas", in *Pastoral Popular*, No. 194, septiembre-octubre, 1989, p. 14.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* p. 16.

Beyond being a communion of faithful people, from a secular perspective and amidst a violent and hopeless environment, CEBs are a social space for the poor. A research group of psychologists of Arizona characterizes CEBs as *the Latin American counterpart to the mutual support group movement in North America*.⁶⁷

They affirm that CEBs, having nothing but hope and faith, give social and individual support. There is an individual empowerment and a sense of reference and identification with those who share similar problems. These factors lead to a concrete community development and organization. Children are one of the groups greatly supported. A CEB in Huascar (Perú) organized a "common pot" that serves daily more than 100.000 unemployed people throughout three poor communities.⁶⁸

The authors observe two potential problems in CEBs. They might become a pacifying rather than a motivating force for the people, unless the groups can be directed not only toward personal development, but grow toward community and society development. The other problem is that the very existence of a unified group such as CEBs augments violence from the ruling class, who feel challenged and threatened by them.

3. Mesosystem and Microsystem

For the purposes of this study, Bronfenbrenner's theoretical stages of mesosystem and microsystem will be analyzed together. The age of the children who are the objects of this study starts from the second stage of infancy (approximately 5-6 years old on). This fact, plus their premature involvement in adult's tasks, necessitates a joint analysis of intra and extra-familial worlds, that is human inter-connections within each settlement and

⁶⁷ Benedict T. McWhriter, Ellen Hawley McWhriter, J. Jeffries McWhriter: "Groups in Latin America: Comunidades Eclesial de Base as Mutual Support Groups", in *Journal for Specialist in Group Work*, Vol. 13, May, 1988.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

among settlements. As in earlier stages, the analysis aims to discover social elements that encourage the development of potentially violent individuals. The conclusions of the present and earlier stages will be reflected in the subsequent ontogenetic stage.

The mesosystem is a set of settings where the child is an active participant. As the child grows, he or she enters into new activities outside his or her family structure. This transition from one setting to another is called *ecological transition*.⁶⁹ The number of different settings that the child is part of, and the quality of the inter-connections among settings are paramount for the child's development.

The direct relationship between the different settings is referred to as a *primary link*. Other persons who participate with the child in the same settings are referred to as *supplementary links*.^{70a}

The supplementary links established in the different settings where the child is involved need to be supportive to enhance personal development. A supportive link meets the following conditions: encourages the growth of mutual trust (between adult and child); offers positive orientation and goal consensus between settings (as school and work); and gives room for an evolving balance of power on behalf of the child.^{70b} If these supplementary links are either non-supportive or absent, the conditions will be unfavourable for the child's development.

⁶⁹ The term "ecological transition" is applied by Bronfenbrenner in human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, *Op. Cit.* p. 210). The same term is used by cultural anthropology to designate the development of an anthropocentric orientation toward the physical environment, characteristic in human groups. The ecological transition could be equivalent to cultural evolution. (John W. Bennet: *The ecological transition*, Pergamon Press, New York, 1976) . Bronfenbrenner adopts the term in a socio-psychological meaning.

^{70a} *Ibid.*, pp. 209-211.

^{70b} *Ibid.*, pp. 214-215.

The supplementary link is also important when a child experiences an ecological transition: the first time he or she enters an educational or social setting. This could be the case of the initiation to school life, or a child engaging in his or her first labour activity. The third party --mostly the parents-- serve as a source of security, provide a social interaction model, and reinforce the child's initiative.

Children are normally expected to spend their time at home, school and other child's activities with peers, such as clubs for entertainment, sports or special training, Church groups, etc. The larger this network is the richer the environment becomes for personal growth.

For poor children in Latin America the mesosystem stage, as suggested by Bronfenbrenner, is a combination of settings for a more mature individual. As described before, children soon combine school and work, as an imperative task for survival. Many leave school for this reason or never enrol in it. Peer group activities develop mainly with other working children. Both family and working settlements should fill the conditions of supportive links, but very often family ties are weak or absent, and at work labour conditions are exploitative (by other adults). The number of children under these circumstances are counted as millions in countries such as Brazil and Colombia, and as hundred of thousands in other countries.

If children commit a delinquent act, institutionalization will also offer an authoritative model of interaction and diminishes the alternatives for development. Schools seem only to offer education for academic skills and nothing for personal and social development.

Although the mesosystem stage offers ample possibilities of analysis on child development, at this level the analysis will restrict to working and institutionalized children. Their links

with adults and peer groups will be reviewed in the attempt to discover actual and potentially violent patterns of relationships.

The microsystem theoretical definition aims to describe the complexity of the relationship between the child and other individuals in each settlement. Thus intra-setting and inter-setting connections will be analyzed from here on.

a. Child Labour

As perceived in the description of child labour, this is a term which embraces an ample range of types and working conditions. While work might encourage activity towards development, the actual situation of working children indicates that their premature labour participation prevents them from developing all their socio-emotional and intellectual potentiality. Undoubtedly some children that need to work will gain from the experience, provided that family and peer ties, and school life remain unaffected. A balanced combination of work and study has proved to be very stimulating for children's learning and comprehension of their world. Different experiences support this hypotheses, such as the cases of Cuba or Israel in their own versions.

What frustrates this ideal model for learning are the conditions and human relationships in children's work, family, and school. The major harmful aspects for working children were summarized before. Interestingly this list reflects strongly the general weakness of the child (physical, emotional, decision power, etc.) and the dominant role of adults and the environment itself.

a.1 Corporal needs and consequences

From the description of Latin American working children, the following characteristics are derived from the physiological perspective: Higher demands in labour skills according to child's immature capabilities; dangerous tasks; inappropriate and

insanitary working conditions; and lack of social health service for this group.

The typical working child, as described above, is at the age when a growth spurt occurs: 10 through 16 years in girls, and 12 through 17 years in boys. This phase of fast growing demands greater nutritional intake. When the child is working, their need for calories is even greater. Studies comparing working children with non-working children, in the same socio-economic level, have found that child labourers had lower growth status and among them girls were more malnourished than boys. It was also found that children who started early in life (around 9 years old) suffered from a serious deterioration in nutritional status. Another study found that anaemic children suffered a 30% decrease in their maximum working capacity, and children with a past history of severe malnutrition have approximately 60% of working capacity compared to normally nourished individuals.⁷¹

Strenuous physical effort is demanded in some of the work in which children are involved. These conditions related to growing physical demands in puberty and adolescence, plus decreased nutrient intake make an evil formula with harmful effects in the present and future. It is a vicious circle in which malnutrition condemns children to longer working hours to accomplish their tasks, accentuating their bodily problem further.⁷²

There are innumerable harmful consequences resulting from the link among a growing organism, malnutrition and exploitative work. Visible consequences are mutilations, bone structure damage, broken limbs, head injuries, many kind of diseases,

⁷¹ The above-mentioned studies were realized in India and East Africa. They are referred to in P.M. Shah: "Health status of working and street children and alternative approaches to their health care", in an offprint from: ***Advances in international maternal and child health***, Vol. 7, 1987, Oxford University Press.

⁷² David C. Pitt: "Child Labour and Health", in ***Child Labour: A threat to health and development***, 2nd. edition, Defence for Children International, Geneva, 1985.

hearing loss, and very many others. But these effects are not restricted to the child's corporal realm. The body is involved in the development of a sense of identity from birth. The ego is in the first instance corporal. When the body is under such strain it acquires an enormous dimension among all other human needs. The body is remarkably important for young children and adolescents because it is a permanent reference of their apprehension of living, feeling: being.

Nowadays, in Latin America the corporal integrity moves between life and death for many. Killing, torture, hunger, or disappearance resemble destruction of bodies. It was analyzed before how in torture the intense and permanent physical pain *demolishes* the socio-emotional integrity of the individual who surrender to the torturer's will. Associating this terminal painful situation to chronic violating conditions of working children, it could be said that the constantly denied corporal needs will lead to similar effects in the long term, expressed as alienation.

In the hierarchy of human needs, bodily ones become fundamental for the achievement of socio-emotional development. Body sensations such as hunger, fear, or fatigue are responses to the perceived environment which appears violent. These experiences are accompanied by socio-emotional feelings linked with external objects and persons. Hunger or fatigue are not abstract concepts. They are actually physical happenings which may alter children's perceptions of the surrounding world. Children's bodily, mental and emotional capabilities are hence jointly shaping their own world.

a.2 Socialization and identity

The mesosystem of a child is one of intensified socialization. Models of attitudes, views, understandings of social behaviour are reproduced by children through social interconnections. Working children prematurely widen their social

surroundings by establishing new links: with their bosses, with other working peers, and with people related to their new activity. Ideally, these recently established relationships in combination with family and school links could favour children socially. In fact children benefit from multiple inter-connections which are supportive because their social world is open to alternative models of experiences.

As described before, this is not the case for the majority of poor working children. The exploitative conditions affect all the aspects of work. A study made in Kenya with working children revealed that such exploitative conditions developed specific psychological disorders, such as: withdrawal, resistance, inferior status, regressive behaviour, and premature aging. Children withdrew fearing employers and their harsh discipline; children ran away, joined hunger strikes, or preferred to continue their impoverished life style.⁷³

This study shows the importance of affective relationships for developing children. Although children in Kenya reacted by resisting or withdrawing, others, in the same or a different context, stay and accomplish their tasks despite their frustration. Hence, responses to exploitative situations vary according to personal, familial, socio-historical, and cultural conditions. All these conditions permeate the socialization of an individual.

Although life is a permanent process of socialization, its most intense stage is experienced in childhood and adolescence, in terms of achieving identity. Psychoanalysis gives great importance to the oral phase (0-1 year) when infants learn to trust their providers as a premise of trusting the external world, and then developing an internal security. The dyadic child-parent

⁷³ P. M. Shah: *Op. Cit.*, p. 79.

interaction becomes a basis of confidence for subsequent multi-relationships.

Social understanding begins very early in the context of family life. Children in their second or third years are motivated to understand social rules and relationships because they need to know who they are within the group of parents and siblings. Family approval or disapproval, pleasure or displeasure, questions, narratives, jokes and games become keys for the child's sense of belonging to the family group.⁷⁴

The development of the child's self interest is dependent on both the cognitive development and the interactional skills of the family. A wider and stronger socialization takes place during schooling. Piaget affirms that the equal power relations between peers teach children the concept of cooperation and justice as they negotiate and respect game rules. On the contrary, he suggests that a morality of constraint (blind obedience to adults' rules) does not provide a basis for the concept of justice or for children to grasp the idea of mutual collaboration.⁷⁵

Erikson argues that during the school age, when other intensively affective stages have been surpassed, children tend to concentrate efforts in developing skills which give them a sense of productivity and social belonging. Failure to fulfil, suppression, or mishandling of this stage creates an inferiority sense of inferiority within the individual.⁷⁶

During this school stage many poor children enter the world of work. As evidenced in surveys mentioned above, children in Latin American value their work highly, and some derive

⁷⁴ Judy Dunn: *The beginnings of social understanding*. Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1988.

⁷⁵ Jean Piaget: *Seis estudios de psicología*. Editorial Paidós, Buenos Aires, 1980.

⁷⁶ Erik Erikson: *Childhood and Society*.

satisfaction from learning new skills which enhance their self-reliance as providers for themselves and their families. This new activity develops a sense of independence and a social role. Children may be responding rationally to the reality of their poverty. In a world of deprivation, work is a source of meaning and purpose.

a.3 Family, work, and school as socialization agents

There is a debate about what rearing model is adequate for children. Historically up-bringing, the role of offspring in the family, and the balance of power in the parent-child relationship have evolved as a consequence of socio-economical changes. In western societies parental supervision tends to be permissive and indulgent. Authority is often diffuse. Children are spoiled by material excess, but on the other hand, many miss attention and affection from parents. Bronfenbrenner (1979) sees this way of bringing up children as the cause for juvenile vandalism in United States children. Lasch affirms that the absence of parental discipline prevents children from having healthy identifications with adult models; as a result, children tend to be narcissistic. This could be the case of some upper middle class and wealthy families in Latin America.

For poor children the reality is extremely different. Traditional socio-psychological theories are in many ways insufficient in providing an understanding of human development in an unequal society. Development is generally defined for children free of responsibilities. School and jurisdictional institutions follow this model of childhood which conflicts with the reality of child labour.

It can be readily affirmed that child labour is a reason to quit school. As described in Chapter II it is amazing how working children manage to combine study and work given their disadvantageous situation. National constitutions declare free and compulsory elementary education for children. But prejudice,

classism, inadequacy of school programs and schedules, alongside some parents' myths on formal education, are preventing poor children from receiving basic instruction.

The family also maintain the traditional model of dependent children (when they actually are economically independent) and control them authoritatively, or use them as economic resources. Mutual economic dependence does not reflect a symmetric relationship between parents and working children. Traditionally parents are source of economic and educative support. Notwithstanding, child labour has shifted this familiar structure. In Bronfenbrenner's words, "an ecological transition has occurred within the family structure, which inevitably should modify members' roles. The conflict arises when adults do not recognize the need for an accommodation to new inter-connections and remain controlling authoritatively the *proto-adults*, working children. Hence these often leave their homes, or parents give up their stressful familial situation and abandon children.

In summary, the economic crisis that is severely punishing the poor population is also challenging social institutions to restructure principles and rulings in order to respond to social reality.

The case of working children is seen by Salazar⁷⁷ as similar to the case of women. Both women and children perform works that while productive are invisible and subordinated. She also affirms that labour participation is for both groups a potential source of autonomy. However, she adds, in Latin America parental authority seems to be stronger when there is a greater as greater contribution from child labour for the family.

There are other forms of adult authority over working children. The enlarging of family size due to economic problems

⁷⁷ María Cristina Salazar: "La explotación empieza cuando se nace - El trabajo infantil en América Latina", in *Nueva Sociedad*, No. 99, México, 1989.

(from nuclear to extense) has given authoritative roles to grandparents and other adult relatives. Furthermore, extra-familiar adult relations in some circumstances substitute parental roles. Such are the cases of teachers and godparents, especially the godfather.

Compadrazgo or co-parenthood that appeared in Catholic families as a way to ensure care and education of children in religious traditions, in case of death of parents, has become in addition an alliance with instrumental purposes, due to marked economic division in Latin American societies. It is typical that poor parents have a patron or a richer person as a *compadre* or *comadre* (co-father or co-mother). In general this kin association brings benefits largely to the powerful co-parent through services and extra work by the poor co-parent. The godchild is always expected to show respect to godparents.^{78a}

When child labour is rooted in co-parenthood relations, very often there exists situations of exploitation: as when a girl is brought from rural areas and given by parents to urban godparents; her domestic work is done in exchange for food and shelter. Another case is that of a boy accepted by his god-father as an apprentice; additional child work is paid with food.^{78b}

The variety of adult-child relations pointed out here are patterns of socialization and models for children to identify with. Apparently these alternative interrelations, as the multiple roles that the child is engaged in when entering to work, could enrich their potentiality to develop. So, the quality of the relation is determinant. Longitudinal studies need to go further into the effects exploitative relations have on working children.

^{78a} Joseph B. Aceves: *Identity, Survival & Change*, General Learning Press, New Jersey, 1974, pp. 148-150.

^{78b} Salazar, *Op. Cit.*, p. 165.

The Robbers Cave Experiment⁷⁹ demonstrates the consequences of three contrasting leaderships in boys aged 10 or 11 years old. The leadership conditions were "democratic", "autocratic" (authoritarian), and "laissez-faire". Relevant behaviour was recorded in the interaction within the group, between leader and boy, expression of aggression, and productivity in group. Children gathered in groups of five rotated different leadership styles. The results were as follows:

- aggressive behaviour: was either very high or very low under authoritarian conditions; was extremely high under laissez-faire conditions; was intermediate under democratic conditions.
- productive behaviour: was higher than or as high in authoritarian climates (when the leader was present) as in democratic climates; but much lower when the leader was absent; moderately high and independent of the leader's presence or absence in the democratic climates.

There was also a considerable individual variation in boys' responses to a given type of leader, particularly to a democratic approach. For some, democracy was difficult to achieve while for others it was easier. The variation was related to the actual type of parent-child relationship in the boys in study. The investigators found that there was a cluster of intercorrelated personality characteristics, that they collectively referred to as *conscience*, which include honesty, modesty, perseverance, and nonaggression. Their conclusion was that:

the parents whose children become *conscientious* are likely to be those with the greatest warmth of affection and the greatest firmness or consistency -- not severity-- of discipline.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Bronfenbrenner (1979), *Op. Cit.*, p. 101-102. This experiment was made by Lewin, Leppit and White, of University of Iowa (1939, 1940, 1960 respectively).

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

The above experiment brings out two aspects closely related in the analysis of working children: how they behave upon a specific adult supervision, and how is their performance at work under a specific adult supervision. These two questions lead to the understanding of socio-emotional development of working children. The experiment relates parent-child link with leader-child link in another settlements where productivity is important.

It could be presumed that children working under exploitative conditions (authoritarian leader) will show a very high or very low aggressive behaviour, and that their productivity will be high if the boss is present, and low if the boss is absent. In other words, socialization through exploitative working conditions may lead children to become aggressive or alienated (passively aggressive), both as forms of resistance to institutional violence (labour exploitation). Work, instead of being creative and an instrument for development could a punishment. This could be the explanation for the phenomenon known as the "discouraged worker", one who gives up searching for a job on the assumption that changes are meaningless.⁸¹ In a way passiveness and prompt withdrawal in looking for a job in adulthood could be the repetition of earlier resistance to exploitative job conditions.

The reasoning is not so simple, but rather complex. Evidently the response of children to exploitative work will also be conditioned by his or her own personality, and by the kind of familiar attachments. A supportive link with family members will help them to face and overcome hard situations in extra-familial environments. The investigators in the experiment previously mentioned define this supportive link as a combination of warm affection and firm discipline. In reports on working

⁸¹ *Economic and Social Progress in Latin America*. 1987 Report of Inter-American Development Bank, Washington, D.C., p.121.

children strong family ties seem to be determinant in the reduction of social risks.

Affective links within the family are also conditioned by external factors belonging to the macrosystem level. As Bronfenbrenner (1979) affirms, roles of family members are given content by societal expectations. It is for example expected that there exists a mutual affection among family members. Thus, the embeddedness of roles in the larger social context define the way the individual behaves in a given situation.

Social expectations of family contrasts with real modern family life. Originally the family was a base group for subsistence, where children were welcomed as co-workers in the domestic production. Family members' relationship were closely tied with their productive role. Nowadays social division of work has withdrawn from the family its productive role and its members, who leave home to work, relate to each other on a basis of assumed affection, solidarity, authority, etc. In general children are no longer a source of support for the domestic productivity. Even when children are planned and wanted they represent an economic burden.

In rural areas peasant families keep their structure as a domestic production group, but living standard has been severely affected, even to hunger level. Many have lost their land and migrate to urban areas looking for a better living, but normally join those that are unemployed or underemployed.

As Warman affirms, those peasant families who can hardly survive with the profits from their production are forced to reproduce themselves in order to increase their labour force.⁸² Children are an important part of this force. During the times of their own crops unproductivity, the whole family become

⁸² Arturo Warman: "Peasant production and population in México", in Joan P. Mencher (editor): *Social Anthropology of Peasantry*, Somaiya Publications Pvt. Ltd., Bombay, 1983.

migrating workers into other lands and geographical areas. Children intensify their exploitative role as it has been reported extensively in the prior chapter.

Both technological development and consequent unemployment changed roles within the family: women entered work and family size tended to reduce as a result. Biological reproduction became an option for women when children rearing became an obstacle for personal achievement. So biological reproduction was subjected to social reproduction demands. Women who kept active as biological and social reproducers were not joined by a new male role, nor by sufficient institutions to replace child care during working hours. There is permanent stress in the modern family.

Enormous sectors of society were deeply affected by industrial development. Unemployment, loss of land, and lack of social support combined to strain impoverished families. Children reassumed a co-worker role, not yet as a domestic producer but as a waged exploited worker.

Under such stressful circumstances children are silenced, beaten or abandoned affectively or physically. Over-burdened adults tend to react violently with children. There is no time, space, or disposition for affection in stressful and deprived home situations. In some cases family violence may respond to individual pathology as in the chain of battered children who become violent parents. However, from a social perspective, both parents and children get involved in a violent environment which is imperceptible to them. Family violence as a social consequence is disguised by cycles of 'aggression-guilt-reparation' in parents, or 'violated-self blame-displacement of aggression' in children. Social-induced family violence is also marked by cultural aggressive rearing traditions and punitive religious beliefs.

For Latin American families there is a need to understand the violence process in which they are immersed. Children should apprehend their deprived social world with a parallel understanding of its causes. Poverty is not synonymous with alienation or a motif for alienation, as it will be discussed later.

b. Peer association

Children who's family ties have been severely damaged abandon home and live in the street. These are the children of the street. They substitute family ties by new links with peers of similar age and problems. Streets are transformed into home.

Street gangs are forms of association which serve as a socializing agent, provide an identity to members, assist them in achieving common goals, and establish some degree of social control over their members. Children find in the gang a reference group that is meaningful to them; at least they do more than their broken families do.⁸³

Streets provide a particular living environment and coverage for some group activities. In the central and usually run-down parts of larger cities, different groups carry out diverse activities for their living, which are culturally classified as criminal. For ethnographers, people who spend much of their lives on city streets have acquired a culture of their own. Thus, in the same geographical area, the pickpocket, the religious minister, and the police officer see people's behaviours from different perspectives. Hence, complex societies are made up of different cultures, sub-cultures and cultural scenes.⁸⁴

Children of the street live in a world that has been described as culture of poverty, or more recently as culture of violence.

⁸³ Joseph B. Aceves: *Identity, Survival & Change. Exploring Social/Cultural Anthropology*. General Learning Press, New Jersey, 1974, pp. 155-156.

⁸⁴ Robert S. Weppner (editor): *Street Ethnography*. Sage Publications, California, 1977.

The main characteristics of this culture is the isolation of individuals from social institutions, amidst a money-oriented world. In response, individuals create a design for living, as an adaptive capacity and not because they want to be poor and marginalized.⁸⁵

Sader describes children of the street as owners of a great acuteness to be able to judge people, as a result of the intense accumulation of experiences. They live in the 'here and now'. While they distinguish perfectly in abstract ethic principles, such as respect for other people's rights, they find barriers to integrating those values to their own concrete behaviour. This disintegration between thought and action occurs as a consequence of the form of socialization that children are submitted to.⁸⁶

As the author also affirms, the culture of violence crystallizes when it becomes autonomous of the situation from which it originated. It gets a mechanism of its own. Children's lives become articulated as a way of survival in defence against a world which excludes them, also violently. In a way, according to the author, a delinquent child may have more humanity than others that resignate to the destiny imposed by society.⁸⁷

However, a culture of violence is not only originated by marginalization from the global society, but fed from the socially established models of interrelation. Individualism, authoritarianism, isolation, atomism, masculinity, and consumerism are ideologically integrated to the general behaviour in the general society. These characteristics are exalted by street survivors against the other sector of society. Violence

⁸⁵ Harvey A. Siegal: "Gettin' it together", in Weppner, *Op. Cit.* pp. 89-91.

⁸⁶ Emir Sader: "Cultura da Violência", in *Tempo e Presença*, No. 246, Year 11, CEDI, Rio de Janeiro, October, 1989.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

intensifies when both antagonistic groups believe themselves to be defending their rights.

Zaluar mentions that within the street gang some violent relationships are also reproduced. The authoritarian control of the experimented leaders of groups over children lead the latter to develop submissive roles in the interrelation. At posteriori the same children would reproduce violence with the victim, fed by the illusion of absolute power, or as a reaction to former violence experienced by police or chiefs.⁸⁸

b.1 Delinquency

Abandonment of children is the first stage but not the condition for delinquency. Even poverty is not a factor of delinquency, although an important concomitant one. As Loreto states, shared poverty is not a reason for anti-social behaviour, unlike living in inequality. However, delinquency is not only explained by violence in the social organization, because even when this is the starting point, delinquency acquires a life of its own later on. Original causes remain structured in the personality. Cause and effect are not dialectic any more. While prisons are full of poor people, in only a small percentage is there a direct relationship between a delinquent act and hunger. But, for the author, an individual who since his/her first year of life internalized a negative self-image through damaged family relations, the process seems to be irreversible. Only those who have not yet surpassed some limits, or broken some values towards the world and people, can be recovered.⁸⁹

Delinquency is a term with a cultural mean of deviance. Deviance is then a behaviour perceived as threatening to the

⁸⁸ Alba Zaluar: "Criminalidade e pobreza", in *Tempo e Presença*, No. 240, Year 11, CEDI, Rio de Janeiro, April 1989.

⁸⁹ Oswaldo di Loreto: "Onde começa a delinquência?", in *Tempo e Presença*, No. 240, Year 11, CEDI, Rio de Janeiro, April 1989, pp. 19-22.

social system. This definition is given by authorities, the group in power. On the other hand, here it has been analyzed how the so-called deviant behaviour had its origin in the violence imposed by the ruling class the same that define what is wrong and what is right. This again is a question of power.

Thio proposes what in his concept is a holistic theory on deviance, that integrates traditional and modern theories.⁹⁰ He calls it power theory. Through it he states that inequality in society is wide spread in all types or relationships, not only in class: within family members, co-workers, between genders and races, etc. Those in a disadvantageous position are powerless before the dominant ones that he calls powerful. So power inequality affects both quality of life and quality of deviant activity. Observed crime in society demonstrates that powerful people are more likely to engage in more profitable and sophisticated types of deviance, such as fraudulent advertising, commercial bribery, and even war against people. Powerless people get involved in less profitable deviance, such as murder or mugging. The first deviance is more likely to remain impune while the latter have higher risk of legal retribution.

There are two components that support Thio's theory: subjective deprivation and social control. Subjective deprivation is the feeling of discrepancy between what is desired and what is possessed. People with more privileges (powerful) are prone to have this feeling because too many opportunities raise aspirations. If aspirations are not fulfilled easily there is more motivation to use illegitimate means. Logic would indicate that

⁹⁰ Other theories on deviation that Thio has previously considered are: the positivist concept of social constraint, and the humanist concept of individual freedom. In this wide division he includes anomie (Merton, Cohen, Cloward, Ohlin), differential association theory (Sutherland, Glaser, Burgess, and Okers), control theory (Reckless, Nye and Hiraschi), in one side. In the modern theories included are: labeling theory (Becker, Kitsuse and Erikson), phenomenological theory (Douglas, Matza), conflict theory (Turk, Chambliss, Quinney, Marx). Alex Thio: *Deviant Behaviour*, Harper & Row Publisher, New York (second edition), 1983.

it is necessary to exercise stronger control over powerful ones. Paradoxically deviance perpetrated by the powerless are strongly punished. Again, power here confers more influence to the powerful to make and enforce laws. In this way, while the powerful face less social control, social inequality tends to perpetuate itself.

Finally, Thio affirms that both types of deviances are symbiotic. His proposition is that *deviance by the powerful induces deviance by the powerless, that in turn, contributes to deviance by the powerful.*⁹⁰

The powerful exert direct impact upon the powerless to commit crimes from their top positions, hidden or publicized. On the other hand, in committing crime, the powerless deflect, weaken or nullify the social control over the powerful. Also, powerless' crimes provide a contrast effect that makes the powerful look morally superior. The result is that in this relationship of cause-effect and vice versa, poor people become more oppressed, rich complacently keep on using police action against crimes by poor, and consolidate the structure of social inequality by enjoying less social control over their own crimes.

c. Institutionalization

Juvenile institutionalization in Latin America shows both a military or a religious conception to rule inmates. Such approaches offer strict control over internalized children. It is presumable that guards with a military training and nuns with a convent education add the weight morality to their legal authority.

Institutionalized children are supposed to be reformed and protected from their violent environment. According to prior description, there are deep differences in the treatment that

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

children receive in the centres, depending on the economical situation and socio-political conjuncture of each country.

Obviating the cases of strong violation of human rights in prisons,⁹¹ the emphasis will be placed on the cases of children that are institutionalized because of their ambulatory living in streets, or arrested as juvenile delinquents. The analysis is a continual search for the roots of violence in human development.

Institutionalized children offer a typical case of social-induced violence. The traditional juvenile centres reinforce the chain of violence that street children have always suffered. In the description of child prisoners it was notorious that the combination of short and badly administered funds, along with social prejudice and mishandled authority, prevented institutions from becoming re-educational centres.

Having in perspective that juvenile centres are managed as prisons rather than re-educational institutions, it is worth to use as a reference a study made by Toch on the relation between police, prisoners, and violence. He states:

Criminal justice organizations must obviously be more oriented towards violence concerns than other human service enterprises. They presume to deal with a violence-prone clientele, and have the mandate of protecting us from violent crimes. This mandate is reflected in an emphasis on potential danger.⁹²

The author also affirms that both guards and inmates share the problem of how to manage fear. Staff fear dangerous clients. Prisoners fear powerful staff and other prisoners. Fear-enhancing pressures increase the potential climate of violence. There is a confusion of one's private reactions with expressions

⁹¹ Particular cases of violation of human rights are discussed in analysis on war effects, torture, disappearance, or exile.

⁹² Hans Toch: *Peacemaking: Police, prisons, and violence*. Lexington Books, Massachusetts, 1976, p. 6.

of one's role: individuals fighting personal battles, or organizational problems taken as personal crusades, or racism, etc. The model of combat and warfare is implicitly used when both parties view each other as enemies, or peers see themselves as trench mates⁹³.

Sense of belonging is an important factor in the behaviour of those institutionalized. Both staff and inmates are not autonomous. They organize in groups (polarized) which do what is necessary to be accepted or gain status. In this process of becoming part of a group, the stereotyped roles of 'good and bad', 'police and robbers' are reenacted. Assumed roles are performed inside the institution just as they might be played in the streets.

In the tension between authority and inmates, stereotypes and prejudice become determinant factors. The social expectations for both authority and the institutionalized greatly influence their relationship. This premise is illustrated by Bronfenbrenner with an experiment performed at Stanford University:⁹⁴

Twenty-four individuals (male, largely from middle class, physically and mentally stable, and college students) participated in a simulated prison situation. On a random basis the group was divided in equal number of 'guards' and 'prisoners' assigned roles. The experiment was planned to last two weeks, and each participant would be paid \$15 per day. 'Guards' were instructed to *maintain reasonable degree of order within the prison for its effective functioning*.⁹⁵ 'Prisoners' were apprehended (with collaboration of the local police) in a surprise mass arrest at their homes. The general purpose of the study was *to explore the*

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁹⁴ The experiment entitled "Interpersonal dynamics in a simulated prison" was conducted by Zimbardo, Haney, and Banks (1973). Cited by Bronfenbrenner (1979), *Op. Cit.*, pp. 86-94.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

*interpersonal dynamics of a prison environment through a functional simulation of a prison in which no prior dispositional differences existed between prisoners and guards.*⁹⁶

The experiment could go no further than the fifth day. Unexpectedly, within two days violence and rebellion broke out. 'Guards' harassed, humiliated, and intimidated 'prisoners'. These responded by ripping off their clothes, barricading themselves inside the cells, shouting and cursing at the guards. As the rebellion and discomfort of 'prisoners' increased, 'guards' also increased brutality and even used sophisticated psychological techniques to break solidarity, and create distrust among 'prisoners'. 'Prisoners' were one by one released from the experiment due to showing of severe emotional disturbances (disorganized thinking, uncontrollable crying, screaming, etc.), or developed a psychosomatic rash. On the fifth day, the remaining group of 'prisoners' had desintegrated and became docile, suffering an acute loss of contact with reality; meanwhile 'guards' showed an increased delight in their sense of power.

This classic experiment has been well analyzed by many researchers. The conclusion of the experiment's authors is that the reaction of the subjects in the experiment represented *patterns of response specific to particular roles and institutions*⁹⁷ in present society, and not merely manifestations of enduring personality characteristics. The authors' conclusion is supported by another analysis, which also conclude that 'prisoners' and 'guards' entered a power relation in which the action of the latter had institutional validation. Their role was legitimate for a prison environment, and was reinforced through authority investiture from the University experimenters. Finally, 'prisoners' also assumed a submissive and dehumanized role imposed by the behaviour of the 'guards'.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

The above experiment supports the thesis here sustained that the prison model in juvenile institutions is not the answer for children at social risk. In an evaluation made by UNICEF upon the Declaration of Children's rights versus Institutionalization,⁹⁸ among others, there are detected contradictions in minors' institutions: child's lack of freedom and dignity in a closed-door milieu (dungeon, isolated cells); promotion of child's submission; searching for a uniform behaviour among children; massified treatment and affective distance; in the so-called re-educational programs children are passive objects, and not participative subjects. The exploitative situation in the streets is continued within the institution, but more pernicious because of its legal cover.

Alternatives have been found for the critical problem of institutionalization of children at risk. Even when they do not have universal application they are models to imitate. In Brazil, where the problem of street children seems to be the worst, new approaches offer optional theoretical models to focus the problem. Non-governmental organizations learned that institutionalization was bad for children, because it increased their psychological and social marginalization and did not allow them to cope with the real world. On the other hand, re-educational programs were not attractive for children when they did not offer the possibility of an income.⁹⁹

In the alternative model of non-governmental organizations, despite the diversity of their tasks, children are not removed from their families and communities, but helped to cope with their situation. Respect is shown for their liberty; they are given

⁹⁸ Francisco Espert S.: *Apertura y Humanización Institucional. Alternativas para menores de internados, orfanatos, reformatorios, cárceles juveniles y afines*. UNICEF, No. 7, Bogotá, 1989.

⁹⁹ William Myers: "Alternative Services for Street Children: The Brazilian Approach", in Assefa Bequale and Jo Boyden (editors): *Combating Child Labour*, International Labour Office, Geneva, 1988, pp. 125-143.

space for personal development through transforming work from an alienating instrument of marginalization into an opportunity for integral growing.

Among non-governmental approaches to the problem, of special interest for this study is the Child Pastorate programme of National Conference of Brazilian Bishops. This program has expanded from one church community in 1984 to 3.750 at present time; 236 dioceses currently reach over 700.00 children through different activities for child welfare.¹⁰⁰

The Brazilian government, with UNICEF funding, offer another model which is a community-based project. Against their traditional institution model, this project, which works at national level, has been "de-bureaucratized" and managed by voluntary work from communities. It has been accompanied by an educative program for the public, through press and television, about the real circumstances of street children.

One of the many consequences of these projects is that the vision of street children as victims has been substituted by the discovery of their potential of becoming agents of their own progress. Intrinsic to this development is the need to break down children's isolation and to establish contact among them, so that they build a collective wisdom, through sharing and learning from each other. Volunteers in this model are facilitators rather than bearers of truths. They provide room for interactive learning and dialogue for mutual discovery.

Evaluations of such programs find that the training method of collective reflection upon their work has been one of the most essential reasons for it success.

Venezuela presents a different alternative in what has been called an open institutionalization. Institutions are restricted to

¹⁰⁰ *Economic and Social Council - Brazil*, UNICEF, Geneva, March 1989.

children with severe behaviour problems, threatening familial connections, or the abandoned. All services were reviewed with the purpose to humanize the institution. One of the main changes that occurred was with personnel. Within four years of the implementation of the program, 200 battering "teachers" were fired and 200 resigned when they were discovered as having maltreated children. In this change of approach to child re-education, shifting the authoritarian concept of discipline proved to be the most difficult to implement due to the resistance of the personnel.

D. Ontogenetic Stage

The analysis in this chapter has been a permanent searching of sources for human violence in the restricted Latin American context. The ecological perspective used aimed to see the whole picture of social inter-connections where the child grows. Children have been seen as receptors and potential promoters of violence.

This last stage will suggest proposals, presented as conclusions from the previous stages. Step by step the analysis of every level offered clues for finding the intervening factors in the spiral of violence. It was learned that violence involves a complex array of circumstances and motivations. Different theories and researches contributed to the understanding of violence. Among these, one concept emerges as preponderant: power. Who has the power defines the rules in social relationships. But the powerful needs correspondent subordinates. Obviously, children are the most powerless. Children, however, learn the "power lesson" and may respond to it with submission, defiance or reproduction of the violence experienced.

In general, people behave as they have subjectively learned to behave. Their behaviour is reinforced by roles, as social expectations, it has been repeatedly supported through the

present study. Different beliefs about aggression and violence prevail. They are rooted in people's behaviour in their daily life, irrespective of their irrationality, or actual origin. Here, knowledge is irrelevant to beliefs.

Goldstein calls general beliefs the *mythology of aggression*.¹⁰¹ The basis for the myths about violence rests on the established hypothesis that humans are instinctively aggressive.¹⁰² From this premise many people explain and justify daily acts of violence. Goldstein argues that in assuming this myth, it brings comfort not being one of those who suffer the 'disease'. This not only takes away the importance of personal responsibility of one's own acts, but again causes a division between 'good' and 'evil' ones, and nullifies the participation all human beings share in the violent co-living system.

From the analysis it is clear that a violent climate generates more general violence. It is also clear that many factors and conditions must be involved for an individual to become violent. Personal disposition to aggression because of domestic violence is not isolated from social conflicts. In the same manner, socially-induced violence needs to find correspondence with personal predispositions to turn an individual violent.

Considering violence inherent to human history rather than genetically acquired, it seems useful to make special mention of at least three forms of violence observed within the analysis.

1. Instrumental violence

¹⁰¹ Jeffrey H. Goldstein: "Beliefs about human aggression", in Jo Groebel and Robert A. Hinde: *Aggression and War*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989.

¹⁰² The most influential exponents of biological basis for aggressiveness are Konrad Lorenz and Sigmund Freud. Lorenz investigations have given foundation for other theories on affective relationships. Freud's theories of instincts of life and death (*eros* and *thanatos*) are one of the founding principles for psychoanalytical theory .

Violence has been denominated instrumental when it is directed to non-aggressive goals. Even when the act of aggression aims deliberately to injure or destroy some target, the injury is not the primary goal of the attack.

This kind of violence distinguishes from the other through which the aggressor wants purposely to harm an individual; collateral results are in this case secondary. This latter behaviour is defined as hostile. It could be exemplified with the case of adolescents whose violent behaviour became their only way of relating to people (violence with a life of its own).

It seems difficult to differentiate between violence that is instrumental or hostile. As a theoretical exercise, it could be derived from the analysis that cases of instrumental violence range from an act like that of the boy that injures a woman in the street to rob her of money to buy food, to the case of the military that kill children to defeat the enemy. Or it could be the case of a government that kills the people by starvation, in order to maintain the status quo, or the poor people who also kill to defend their rights.

Evidently the cases are different. They differ in the target, but the means may be similar. This demonstrates that people have learned that violence is above all efficacious. Despite that some violent acts are likely to be punished (others, covered by legality, remain immune), people have learned that violence is a useful vehicle to reach some objectives. History has left little room for peaceful alternatives.

Social institutions enhance effectiveness of violence, as it was seen in the ecological perspective. Human interrelations confirm daily and unconsciously teach people that violence is the way of life. It could be that extreme acts of violence awake the conscious towards human cruelty. But 'low-intensity violence', such as the brethren without bread, remain unperceived.

As suggested by Martín-Baró, a *militarisation of human mind* is promoted to attenuate human sensitivity to cruelty.¹⁰³ Thus, the dehumanisation of the enemy, or the sophistication of the technology distance the perpetrators from his/her victim and diminish his own anxiety and guilt. This proposal leads to the following characteristic of violence.

2. Violence as an act of submission

The question repeatedly emerges as to how humans are emotionally capable of consciously harming others. Instrumental or hostile, violence always causes a perceptible harm to other people, whose pain would sensibilise any normal individual. The sleeping of the conscience due to ideological reasons turns people insensible to the pain of spreading poverty. But for the intense and direct physical suffering caused in an individual or a population, such as in cases of war or severe repression, the ideological obscuring is reinforced by the cover of legality. When a perpetrator of an injury is backed by a authority or by the law, he or she is assumed to be relieved of responsibility for his or her actions.

This was clearly seen in situations such as torture, imprisonment, war, and even in some cases of child labour. As analyzed, social promotion of the idea of the enemy enhances violence. But the sense of righteousness protected by the law diminishes guilt.

Milgram has conducted an experiment the findings of which support what has been said above.¹⁰⁴

The experiment was made in Yale University with the participation of a wide range of individuals living in New Haven

¹⁰³ Ignacio Martín-Baró: *Op. Cit.*, p. 21-30.

¹⁰⁴ Stanley Milgram: *Obedience to Authority*. Tavistock, London, 1974. (Notice: The experiments were performed in the sixties, and again in 1974, in revised versions).

(balanced in occupation, age and sex). They were offered \$4.50 per hour of participation. Subjects were recruited by an advertisement in a local newspaper, through direct mail, or telephone contact.

Three people were involved in each experimental session: the recruited subject (in the 'teacher' role); the 'learner' (played by a middle age and likable man, trained for his role), and the 'experimenter' (a young man with a suitable appearance for his role). As far as the subject knew, the 'learner' was also a recruited volunteer.

The 'teacher' was instructed to give electric shocks to the 'learner', who was secured to an 'electric chair' in next-door room. The supposed objective of the experiment has told to the subject was to study the connection of punishment and learning in people. Participants were advised that while shocks could be extremely painful, no permanent tissue damage could cause.

The 'learner' would have a task to learn. Upon each wrong answer, the 'teacher' would apply shocks, some times firmly instructed by the 'experimenter' to continue the punishment. The 'learner' would protest accordingly to the supposed intensity of the shock. Silence from the 'learner' was also considered a wrong answer. So the 'teacher' would also apply increasing painful shocks.

The majority of participants obeyed, despite the crying of the allegedly victimized 'learner'. Others dropped the experiment for ethical considerations. The behaviour of those who stayed included sweating, stuttering, profuse trembling, uncontrollable nervous laughter, and an extreme loss of composure, in general.

At the end, participants were interviewed and had the real objectives of the experiment explained to them. Respect was shown to the participants and they were given a written report of the experiment design, and asked through a follow-up questionnaire about their participation, thoughts and feelings.

Milgram's analysis of his experiment provides clues on obedient behaviour towards authority. He affirms that during a long life under an institutional system of authority, people acquire an internalised basis for obedience. Obedience is encouraged by reward, while failure to comply is punished. In this way, individuals feel gratified with their compliance and, at the same time, ensure the continuity of the hierarchical form of social relations.

As it occurred in Zimbardo's experiment, mentioned before, in Milgram's experiment, the participants accepted authority because of its perceived position in the social structure. The physical composition of the scene also placed the subjects in a subordinated position.

The crucial point in obeying authority is its legal investiture. Its character is suprahuman because it goes beyond human wishes. This ideological conception of authority, upon Milgram, is the principal cognitive basis of obedience. Under this understanding and acceptance of authority, the individual feels responsible *to* the authority and not *for* the content of the action. Morality here acts to qualify the performance of the subordinated individual not the consequence of it.

Supported by law, the most horrendous crimes have remained unpunished, as with some of those described before. In the following chapter, law will also be analyzed in connection with divine authority and its role in violent acts.

3. Reactive violence

This is the kind of aggressive behaviour that for some authors is the second violence. There is a primary violence which comes in forms such as the negation of a decent life for people. Having no viable alternatives, the people respond violently, defying in different ways the primary violence. A third violent reaction appears from the original violator that now feels threatened.

At least two different reactive violent acts can be distinguished. The first one is what Berkowitz defines as a response to situational conditions. He affirms that violent conduct *is the product of some latent qualities that enhance the likelihood of aggressive responses to appropriate situational stimuli.*¹⁰⁵

This definition leads to the association of reactive violence with conformity to authority, as previously explained. Both behaviours are a result of a long process of learning. Although their learning models certainly might be different, introjected relational images can produce acts of violence: one under the command of the authority, and the other exacerbated by a situational condition. The latter form of response is closely related to the one defined before as hostile.

The other form of reactive violence does not have a latent or situational condition as its source of origin. It is the bellicose way that the organized people have taken as a means to claim their human rights. Violent path is taken by conscious organizations based on a deep historical analysis.

From the perspective of legal authority, the people organized in warfare tasks, with clear popular objectives, are equivalent to delinquents or murders. This is an ideological interpretation of the situation, in which the other is seen subjectively as the bad one, because their violent acts are unjustified.

As Martín-Baró affirms, violence cannot be considered abstractly. To analyze violent acts, it is necessary to know the content of the act, who performs it, under what circumstances, and with what consequences. The violent act per se is not bad or

¹⁰⁵ Berkowitz, L: "Situational influences on aggression", in Groebel, J. and Hinde, R.: *Aggression and War*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989.

good. Its goodness or evilness arises from its social meaning and its historical consequences.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ Martín-Baró: *Op. Cit.*, p. 25.

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CHAPTER III

SOLIDARITY AND RESISTANCE

This chapter will focus on the theme of social violence from a theological, ecclesial and pastoral perspective that intrinsically includes a socio-economic vision of the phenomenon. Being a continent of believers within a convulsive and dynamic society, this intersection between theology and the social sciences is an interpretative key to the Latin American reality,

1. Exclusion from the Market

Triumphant ideologies and the announced "end of history" have appeared with the historic crisis of Socialism.¹ This assumes a present without political alternatives to Capitalism. The market chooses those who will live. The excess population, that which cannot participate in mercantile relations, is sacrificed. This sacrifice is translated primarily into lack of employment and a lack of access to consumer goods necessary for survival. The search for greater market efficiency makes necessary the sacrifice of many.

This is the sacrificial theory of the market, because the market discards those who are not transformed into servants of others. It is among this excess population that the subjects of this investigation are found: marginalized children or their unemployed families.

Key to the sacrificial theory of the market is the concept of exclusion. The market excludes an important sector of the population from the possibility of work, a primary human right, and condemns them to poverty. In past decades the term

¹Gallardo, Helio: "La crisis del socialismo", en *Pasos*, (enero-febrero, 1992), DEI, San José.

marginalization or marginalized was used in the sense that those persons who could not enter into the capitalist mode of production looked to the informal sector of society for their means of survival.² This marginality was conceived within the theory of economic development. Although marginality came out of a theory as an economic concept, it had social implications. At that time, to be poor meant to be backward, outside of modernity but never to be despised at the levels seen today.

Today we cannot speak of dependency because this dependency has become so enormous. It cannot be recognized officially because that would be seen as state interventionism. Those values that were universally held in the 1960's are no longer shared, but rather denied by the bourgeoisie. The reformist bourgeoisie, who in the 60'-70's presented a human face to capitalism and at the same time demanded a socialism with a human face, have now taken off their mask with the fall of socialism.

The concept of exclusion, substituting that of marginality, is much more crushing. An "excluded" person is someone who can be discarded, thrown away, someone who is not missed. The "poor" are now excluded, they are the ones who must die that others might live. The State used to try to protect the marginalized; now the market discards the excluded because they don't produce or consume.

The concept of exclusion is directly linked to globalization. Latin American societies have no control over the world market; it is global and it excludes. This globalization is facilitated by the transnationalization of political decisions because of their subjugation to the obligations of the foreign debt. Because the model of human being that has been created and idealized does not fit the Latin American poor: white, heterosexual, wealthy, adult,

²Aníbal Quijano and Francisco C. Weffort: *Populismo, Marginalización y Dependencia*, EDUCA, San José, 1976.

male. It is important to note in this analysis that the exclusion which originates from an economic standpoint, has ethical repercussions with clear effects on the identity of the disfavored and immediate consequences for social relationships.

In the face of this global and excluding neoliberal model, the fear of being expelled becomes a key element in social relationships, breaking down solidarity and inviting competition and, in the final analysis, violence. A transfer occurs from mercantile relationships to affective relationships that reaches its highest level when the abstract model of how one should be is internalized by the person. Thus false subjects are created, because they are ignorant of the conditions that have made them into pseudo-subjects.

2. The Sacrificial Theology of the Market

In its confrontation with the neoliberal economic model which proclaims the theology of sacrifice, promotes the globalization of human beings and the exclusion of many, the Theology of Liberation defends the right to be different and proposes an evangelization that respects culture. Moreover, it finds in exclusion a key to understanding that the theology of justification is given by faith and not by law, as we will discuss below. In its beginnings (from 1960 - 1970) Liberation Theology had as two of its great themes structural sin and institutionalized violence. In response to the strong repression experienced during the regimes of National Security of the 70's, the theological debate centered around the issue of life-death, the theological place of the poor, and the Exodus. In the face of increasing foreign debt payments in the 80's for Third World countries, there was an emphasis on human rights - in the sense that all humans have the right to a certain quality of life - idolatry was identified with the Capitalist system, and the sense that God is a God of life was rescued. Now, after the so called

"Lost Decade" of the 80's that imposed a new model of economic growth that excludes a great sector of the population, the theological-economic analysis offers valuable interpretive keys for our study.

Franz Hinkelammert³ analyzes the theologization of the market in the following manner. The compliance with the law, in the Mosaic sense appears with the demand for payment of the Third World's external debt. The Commandments (Mosaic Law) establish a code for ownership of private property that is then applied to bourgeois laws⁴ and which is also being applied in socialist societies (property of the State). These laws stem from mercantile relationships, not from the State. On the one hand, the payment of the foreign debt is a law, but this debt in itself is fraudulent because in its establishment legal violations were committed. On the other hand, to demand payment is also unjust because it kills.⁵ The debt is illegitimate because it violates human rights (life for all). The rights of the people must have priority over the law, or in other words, the law is for human beings, human beings are not made for the law.

Hinkelammert is emphatic in affirming that sin is committed and injustice is done when it is required that this law be obeyed, and not when it is broken. These rules originate out of social injustice, therefore, complying with them means that again injustice is committed because it leads to death. Those who demand the fulfillment of the law don't kill, but let others die, which is the same as killing. The effect of complying with the law (the impossible payment of the debt) is to let people die; this implies sacrifice. Therefore, in fulfilling the law, human

³Franz Hinkelammert: *Democracia y Totalitarismo*, DEI, San José, 1990 (second edition).

⁴The author refers to the sacrificial thought manifest in Friedrich Nietzsche and John Locke. See Franz Hinkelammert: *Sacrificios Humanos y Sociedad Occidental: Lucifer y la Bestia*, DEI, San José 1991, p. 33.

⁵Franz Hinkelammert: *La Deuda Externa en América Latina*, DEI, San José, 1988. According to this author, the foreign debt, which is unpayable, forces the debtors to submit to requirements that they cannot fulfill and thus leads to the destruction of life.

sacrifice is practiced on the altar of the law. But those who enforce the law do not perceive it as a sacrifice but as deaths that occur in a natural way. This is the ideology of the law.

The ideology of the market - as law - requires that not only the product be subject to the law of supply and demand, but work as well; work that human beings need in order to survive. The growth of the market demands the elimination of part of humanity for the well-being of the rest. So then, in terms of the market-law there is no unemployment but just surplus people, therefore to achieve social harmony this surplus must be eliminated.

This ideology denies human rights. From the perspective of the market, every human being is born with equal access to opportunities. As a result, rights or claims are not earned through the struggle of social organizations but as a result of the market. For example: salaries did not improve because of union struggles but because of marginal productivity; slavery didn't disappear because of abolition laws, but because the use of machinery made slave labor no longer justifiable.

Historically Christianity has incorporated sacrifice into its practice of faith although not in the same sense as Jesus' sacrifice. During the Middle Ages, the church sacrificed in Jesus' name those whom the church considered were committing an outrage against Jesus' sacrifice, making Jesus' death on the cross in vain. (the logic of the Crusades). In Latin America this mystical sacrifice reached its maximum expression with the arrival of the Christians to this continent and the resulting holocaust of the non-believing Indigenous peoples.⁶

Hinkelammert states that in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, this interpretation of Christianity was replaced by the logic of bourgeois society that imposes the law of the market (from the time of John Locke), assuming it to be a natural law, a

⁶Franz Hinkelammert: *Op. Cit.*

law of God. From that time on, there was no need for a Christian cloak; the law became secularized. John Locke, in Hinkelammert's interpretation, considers as enemies of the human species those who do not live according to the law of the marketplace or who resist it. This is a new law of God, as natural law; it is equivalent to medieval religious law. Various interpretations are given for those who resist the dominant power: In the Middle Ages: death to those who sacrificed Christ. Locke: slavery for those who refuse to make slaves. St Just: no freedom for the enemies of freedom. Popper: no tolerance for the intolerant.⁷ In other words, those who do not submit to the laws of the market are sacrificed, but their sacrifices are seen as anti-sacrifices because they guarantee progress. In the terms of Hayek, not all lives are sustainable, but only some.

Therefore, as in the Middle Ages when those who rejected the shed blood of Christ were sacrificed so that they would not continue crucifying him, today, in the same way, the sacrificial logic of the market appears as a new law of God, secularized as a natural law. This law affirms that those who do not live under the law of the market, or those who resist it, are considered enemies of humanity. Those who resist or do not bow down to the market are accused of being tyrants and are counter-attacked with an even stronger tyranny. For this reason Hinkelammert contends that the sacrifices made by the market in the name of humanity take on an anti-sacrificial sense; that is to say, that any act that does not submit to the market should be eliminated so that it can not occur again, because if not, chaos will reign.

Seen from the logic of the market, street children are despots when they assault in order to eat. In order to combat this tyranny it is necessary to sacrifice those who practice it.⁸ This is

⁷Ibid., p. 30.

⁸Hinkelammert states that in the time of John Locke and Adam Smith almost all regions were ruled by illegitimate despots except England. Smith describes the sacrifices that the bourgeois society should carry out in order to overcome despotism, so that there will be no

the criterion utilized by Brazilian merchants who have contracted death squads to kill the street children in the street of Rio de Janeiro. According to Hinkelammert, it is a sacrificial circuit in which everything is licit. Human sacrifice transforms itself into a moral obligation.

Another example is the payment of the foreign debt. The payment is never seen as illicit and immoral, what is seen as illicit is not to pay, in spite of the mortality and anti-life consequences of repayment. In the words of Hinkelammert, "the West repressed the increasing consciousness of guilt with the aggressive policies of the total market."⁹

In confronting the problem of an unpayable debt that implies human sacrifices, we face ethical and theological considerations. Even before Christianity, guilt was attached to debts. In the pre-Christian era, sacrifices were offered to God in payment for errors committed. With Jesus, the forgiveness of debts became a central point of his message. It is clear in the message of Jesus that for a person not to have debts with God, they must forgive the debts that others have with them. In that way, human beings owe nothing to God. For this reason, with Jesus, sacrifices are no longer necessary because the God that Jesus preaches does not demand payment, but liberates. God is a God of freedom and not of the law. But this freedom is lost whenever human beings are not capable of forgiving the debts of others.¹⁰

The teaching of Jesus is offensive to authority and to the law. In the Lord's Prayer, that originally asked for forgiveness from God in exchange for our forgiving our debtors, the word "debts" has been replaced with the term "offenses".¹¹

more sacrifices. Smith knew that the bourgeoisie is more despotic than other despotism, but he justifies it as the despotisms of freedom.

⁹Hinkelammert: *Op. Cit*, p. 42.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 57-58.

¹¹According to the author that we are following, this change occurred precisely with the appearance of the foreign debt crisis, which began in the 1960s. *Ibid.*, 61.

According to Hinkelammert, the message of Jesus challenges the law of value and consequently Roman law (not Mosaic law). This means that the reference to the law is universal, applicable in our time. The teaching of Jesus confronts any attitude that looks for justice through the fulfillment of a law, because to look for justice through the fulfillment of the law can lead to death for those who can not fulfill it. When that is the case, the law is transformed into a carrier of injustice because it sacrifices and destroys. On the contrary, Christian freedom is sovereign over the law. In the sense of Jesus, the law should be fulfilled if it does not dispute the love of neighbor or if it does not violate the neighbor by demanding payment of an unpayable debt. The love of neighbor is not another law in itself, but the criterion of discernment through which laws are interpreted. Faith is what justifies and makes justice, not the fulfillment of the law.¹²

3. Faith that Compels the doing of Justice

Elsa Tamez¹³ presents an analysis of Paul's letter to the Romans that permits us to apply it extensively to the social situation of the present. In Paul's world, under the Roman Empire, the presence of injustice and structural sin created a situation in which no one could be just, not even if they proposed to do so. They lived under a power that dominated persons, that reached into interpersonal relationship, relations with God, with nature and with themselves. According to Tamez, Paul uses the metaphor of slavery to describe the inability to remove one's self from this impious and unjust world because of sin. It is for this reason that Paul discredits the law as a means of justification, because the

¹²*Ibid.*, p. 65.

¹³Elsa Tamez: *Contra toda Condena*, DEI, San José, 1991.

law only permits the knowledge of sin, but not the knowledge of God.

Paul announces the good news of God's justice, as a gift of God that is revealed in history through the faith of Jesus Christ. It is extended to all persons who receive it by faith, independent of the law. ¹⁴

For Tamez, the key to justice is the faith of Jesus Christ who was obedient to God until death. This faith allows human beings to receive the gift of God's justice with the same faith that Jesus had. Justification is not attained by faith in Jesus Christ, as has been taught from a sacrificial theology that leaves the Gospel reduced to reconciliation with God. It is by faith in the life and practice of Jesus:

Jesus's life of faith marks the end of the sacrificing of the innocent. He takes them upon himself once and for all, making possible a new way of life. The Christian faith consists in receiving and making one's own the faith of Christ (to live in Christ). ¹⁵

Now, according to Tamez, to justify -- in the Pauline sense - is to transform human beings into subjects who do justice; we enter into the order of faith and not that of the law. We receive from God the gift of justice through faith, so that human beings recover their generating capacity for justice in a world, as we said in the beginning, in which "there is no one who is just, not even one".

Hinkelammert's hermeneutical analysis of the payment of the foreign debt is comparable to Tamez' analysis on justification in Paul. In both cases the action of justice and forgiveness falls on

¹⁴The author uses as the central text of her analysis Romans 3:21-26. See Tamez, *Ibid.*, p. 126.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

the person who has recovered, by faith, his or her capacity to forgive and to do justice as grace received from God. In this sense, it is through their practice or their works that persons find redemption and re-create situations of social injustice. God forgives our debts in the same measure that we are capable of pardoning those who owe us.

In Tamez' reading of Paul's letter to the Romans, she rescues four fundamental theological concepts about justification that are tremendously helpful for reading the Latin American reality today.

a) When Paul speaks of justification by faith, he places all persons and nations on an equal plane, bipolarities are overcome and the Christian faith is universalized. Exclusion is overcome and the excluded is included in the plan of salvation.

b) Paul is knowledgeable about the situation of injustice in which the poor live under the Roman Empire. He sees in this empire an economic, political and military structural power, that hides behind the cloak of protector and peacemaker, but that in its interior practices injustice. He sees it as an idolatrous power, absent from God, that carries its structure of sin into social relationships in such a way that those who believed themselves to be doers of justice (the Jews), fulfilling the law, were really doing injustice.

c) The message of God's justice brings new life to the Christian community, giving it hope, because with the freely given grace of God they dare to do justice despite the harsh domination and the unjust system.

d) The communities Paul's time, insignificant in the face of Roman power, recovered the force of the Spirit which filled them with the power of God. It enables them to enter into the logic of God as God's children, as heirs with Christ, as freed from slavery and as heirs of their history.

Tamez broadens the sense of exclusion to include not only those marginalized by the market but also other oppressed groups, among which are street children, marginalized socially because of their poverty and their inability to live up to the social expectations of childhood. Their poverty is produced by the exclusion from the market but at the same time, their poverty forces them to exclude themselves psychologically. That is to say, the physical, cultural, and social dehumanization can not be separated from emotional dehumanization.

In this reign of death which legitimizes exclusion, the excluded become identified in the Christ of the cross who ended up there because of a life of solidarity with the excluded, and who in his hour of death was abandoned. The excluded become justified in the resurrection, through which God gives justice to all. They become conscious that they are not alone, that they have at their side a God that suffers with them; they recover their sense of human dignity and look to re-create life with justice. It is this image of God in solidarity with Jesus, as a prototype of the excluded, which promotes solidarity between human beings and the rejection of exclusion. This three dimensional process counteracts individualism:

Human beings are justified precisely so they can be reconciled with themselves, with their neighbor, with God, and with their environment, and so they can carry on the ministry of reconciliation. Solidarity among human beings is a sign of God's solidarity. Without solidarity there is no justification at all.¹⁶

To feel that one is worthy of justice requires an awareness of the roots of the situation of exclusion, and an act of receiving the solidarity of God. It requires us to live God's grace with other excluded people and thus build the body of Christ. This salvific

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

process returns persons to their sense of self and allows them to become subjects of their own history. It reaches liberating dimensions at the personal and collective level. It embraces the totality of human beings in their physical, emotional, and spiritual sense.

This sense of faith and justice is reinforced in the Old Testament book of Job. Job's situation could not have been worse and is comparable to the lives of many of the poor at the present time. Nevertheless, in the midst of his unjust suffering, Job understands that grace does not oppose the search for justice, but gives it its meaning. That is to say, Job opens up to the affliction of others, and demands that justice be placed within the framework of God's gratuitous love. There is no opposition between grace and justice; but there is opposition between grace and a justice that demands that the law be obeyed.¹⁷

The sacrifice of Jesus is not seen as the payment of sins in order to receive divine pardon. According to Tamez, the Jesus' death was not necessary, but inevitable because his life confronted the empire. What was necessary was the resurrection: to conquer death, confirm life and to reaffirm the practice of Jesus that leads to life. In this way, Jesus' sacrifice unmask all those sacrifices that are not necessary and declares the end of sacrifices. Anyone who speaks of the need of human sacrifice is denying the resurrection of Jesus and justification by grace.¹⁸

4. Reading of the Bible from a Latin American perspective

In this section we will present a pastoral proposal based on our analysis of a Biblical text. This analysis of the Scriptures seeks to find the meaning of Christian solidarity as a manifestation of God's grace and as a way to do justice.

¹⁷ Gustavo Gutiérrez: *Hablar de Dios*, CEP., Lima, 1986.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 179.

Obviously we are living in a time when the meaning of solidarity has lost its value. For Michel Camdessus, general director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), solidarity is the principal objective of the IMF because, to "adjust" Third World economies (even though thousands are sacrificed) means the wealthy countries will again have the confidence to loan money to these local economies. This is called solidarity.

The International Monetary Fund was created to place international solidarity at the service of those countries in crisis so that they can be strengthened in order to make their economies more efficient - a search for efficiency in and for the market. And you know as I do, how related efficiency and solidarity are, after all: we are talking about the same thing. Besides that we are citizens of the same Kingdom that is being built here.¹⁹

Here again we are speaking of retributive justice, that is to say, only by paying the debt can we ask for that which is necessary to get ahead. To pay the debt, the local economy is "adjusted" by closing social programs and firing thousands of workers so that the economy can become more efficient. This permits paying off the creditors and, because the countries are now worthy of trust, finally then there will be solidarity. This is a clear inversion of God's grace and sense of justice.

In our search to understand the message of Jesus, we will focus our reflection and study on the story of the demon possessed Gerasene in Mark 5:1-20. This account offers illuminating theological and pastoral elements for a ministry with the excluded of our time. This text was chosen because of the similarities between the excluded it refers to and the marginalized children and young people of our time.

¹⁹ Quotation from speech by Michel Camdessus, General Director of the International Monetary Fund, addressed to religious leaders in Lille, France, published in the *Bulletin of the Secretariate of the Conference of Bishops of France*, July-August, 1992, #12.

We will do this reading from a Latin American perspective. In Latin America there has arisen the practice of a popular reading of the Bible. It is a way of listening for and knowing God in the every day lives of the Christians and their grassroots struggles. The Latin American hermeneutic is founded more on interpretation than on exegesis; at the same time it is complemented with academic research by exegetes who give textual, contextual and historical orientation. The popular reading of the Bible is principally developed by the Christian Base Communities. This way of reading the Bible allows the community to transform itself at the same time that the community transforms the text.

The interpretation of the account about the Gerasene demoniac that is presented here obviously is not a collective study done in the style of the Christian Base Communities, but it is done from a Central American perspective resulting from my own life and experience as a Central American Christian. The methodology used is a reflection of the Latin America popular hermeneutic. It is an intellectual exercise, without the rigors of academia, since that is not the purpose of this investigation. It refers to some studies that exegetes have done on the book of Mark and specifically this passage. We will also refer to the social sciences, especially psychology, in our attempt to make a psycho-pastoral contribution to the subject of social violence.

In this popular hermeneutical exercise we will try to capture the sense of the text: how it is written, how it addresses us or calls us to account, what does the text as written transmit to us. We will also try to find its historical sense: under what historical circumstances was it written, what is the history of the text itself and in what way can it influence historically in peoples' lives today. We also will approach the spiritual sense of the text that will help us discover the word of God and how God is revealed in our context.²⁰

²⁰ Pablo Richard: "Lectura popular de la Biblia en América Latina", in *Revista de*

5. The Context in which the Text is Written

The Gospel of Saint Mark is presumed to have been written about 69 C.E. in Galilee, according to archeological, literary and historical researchers.²¹ The time in which the Gospel was written, as well as the geographic context will be of great importance for our understanding of the "miracle" of Jesus that takes place in our text. Many studies have been done on this Gospel. For the purposes of this study we have found the writings of Ched Myers and Paul Hollenbach to be tremendously valuable.

Geo-politically, Galilee was located on the periphery, Jerusalem being the center of power. There was tension between these communities, principally because of the tribute that the small towns had to give to the Temple (the tithe of the production in the country side), and the taxes that were imposed by the Roman authorities and the cities.²² It means then, that Galilee was a poor peasant community, marginalized from the center of power.

Historically, Galilee is known as a center of intense popular struggles that took place there between the years of 63-135 C.E. and culminated with the disappearance of Judea under brutal Roman repression. According to Pixley, the popular movement had its beginnings as early as 6 C.E. but was weak and lacked strong leadership. This movement had various expressions, among them Jesus of Nazareth, preceded by John the Baptist and followed by the Sicarii (in the 50's) Between 66 and 74 C.E. the first big war against Rome began that culminated with the fall of the Fort of Masada. This war involved almost all of the Jewish population most of whom were peasants who fought intensely but were

Interpretación Bíblica Latinoamericana, DEI, San José, No. 1, 1988.

²¹ Ched Myers: *Binding the Strong Man -- A Political Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, 1988.

²² Jorge Pixley: *Historia Sagrada, Historia Popular*, DEI, San José, 1991, p. 112.

subjugated by the crushing Roman power.²³ It is within this historical context that the Gospel of Mark is placed. In the words of Myers with respect to the this Gospel:

The apocalyptic moment represented both liberation and debacle, beginning and end. But his understanding was radically different from that of the Roman collaborators or the Jewish rebels of the time. The year 69 C.E. was indeed one of difficult and costly choices--which is to say, it was precisely the right time to write his good news about Jesus of Nazareth.²⁴

The literary analysis of the text (Myers) reveals a poor community, mostly peasant, persecuted within a polarized political environment. It is possible that they were clandestine, that there were traitors among them, suspicion, lack of trust, lack of solidarity, in other words as we have mentioned before, the psychotization of every day life. The text speaks of suffering, martyrdom, apostasy, blindness. But at the same time the author presents the counterpart of human weakness: it speaks of the practice of forgiveness, of solidarity, of reconciliation. Mark as a follower of Jesus responds to the apocalyptic moment with a call for resistance in facing the "strongest", through the practice of a radical discipleship.²⁵ At the time in which Mark wrote the Gospel, the community was small, founded by some of the Apostles that returned to Galilee from Jerusalem. They constituted the first generation of Christians after the death of Jesus.

6. The Gerasene "Demoniac" - Mark 5:1-20

¹They came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gerasenes. ²And when he had stepped out of the boat, immediately a

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 115-120.

²⁴ Myers, *Op. Cit.*, p. 414.

²⁵ *Ibid.* p. 421.

man out of the tombs with an unclean spirit met him. ³He lived among the tombs; and no one could restrain him any more, even with a chain; ⁴for he had often been restrained with shackles and chains, but the chains he wrenched apart, and the shackles he broke in pieces; and no one had the strength to subdue him. ⁵Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains he was always howling and bruising himself with stones. ⁶When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and bowed down before him; ⁷and he shouted at the top of his voice, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me." ⁸For he had said to him, "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!" ⁹Then Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" He replied, "My name is Legion; for we are many." ¹⁰He begged him earnestly not to send them out of the country. ¹¹Now there on the hillside a great herd of swine was feeding; ¹²and the unclean spirits begged him, "Send us into the swine; let us enter them." So he gave them permission. ¹³And the unclean spirits came out and entered the swine; and the herd, numbering about two thousand, rushed down the steep bank into the sea, and were drowned in the sea. ¹⁴The swineherds ran off and told it in the city and in the country. Then people came to see what it was that had happened. ¹⁵They came to Jesus and saw the demoniac sitting there, clothed and in his right mind, the very man who had the legion; and they were afraid. ¹⁶Those who had seen what had happened to the demoniac and to the swine reported it. ¹⁷Then they began to beg Jesus to leave their neighborhood. ¹⁸As he was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed by demons begged him that he might be with him. ¹⁹But Jesus refused, and said to him, "Go home to your friends, and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and what mercy he has shown you." ²⁰And he went away and began to proclaim in Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him; and everyone was amazed.²⁶

7. The Locus of the Evangelizing Action: the World of the Other

The narrator begins the account with the arrival of Jesus and

²⁶ Copied from the New Revised Standard Version.

his disciples to the province of the Gerasenes. To arrive there they had to cross the lake. The mention the author makes about the crossing is not fortuitous. The lake of Galilee separated the Jewish community from that of the Gentiles. The author makes many references in his book to the crossings Jesus makes of this lake. According to Myers, this repetition has the intention of setting the geo-social space of the happenings and it symbolically extends a bridge between the two controversial worlds (the Gentile and the Jewish). The Evangelist is trying to demonstrate the inclusiveness practiced by Jesus. This idea is strengthened on analyzing the use of the word "sea" to refer to the lake of Galilee. Myers affirms that the concept of sea evokes danger, storms, and therefore the call of Jesus to break the reigning socio-economic order (imperial and dehumanizing) and reestablish one of human solidarity.²⁷

Starovinski gives the crossing of the lake an ontological-theological sense. For him, the other side represents that which is different, the inverse, the opposite, anti-life. Jesus opens up this border and enters the world of the other in a sacrificial movement of universal character.²⁸

This reveals to us an inclusive evangelizing model that respects the other, that opens up barriers to build bridges, to restore that which has been inverted to that which is humanizing. The reflection about Jesus' geographic movements returns us to the present and to the migration, ethnic, economic and social barriers of our day.

The Evangelist insists on underlining the importance of Jesus' mission of "crossing to the other side". To stay on our side would mean deafness, blindness or indifference to others. It is an accommodating position that makes believe that the poor don't

²⁷ Myers, *Op. Cit.*, p. 186-190.

²⁸ Jean Starobinski: "El endemoniado gadareno -- Análisis literario de Marcos 5:1-20, in Roland Barthes and others: *Análisis estructural y exégesis bíblica*, Aurora, Buenos Aires, 1973.

exist because we don't see them, because we don't participate in their world or cross over "to the other side". Governments encourage this blindness when they "clean up" the beggar children in their cities when an important visitor comes to the country.

Decapolis is the *locus* of the encounter between Jesus and the demoniac. Decapolis is seated in the Gerasene region of Hellenistic culture. Just the mention of a herd of swine tells us that this is not a Jewish community where Mosaic law is observed. Decapolis means ten towns that commemorate the federation of the territories on the border of the Roman empire. The Gentile character as well as the designation of the region as a Roman symbol, speaks again of a situation of exclusion (impure) and of repression (imperial domination). Nevertheless, the Evangelist does not use these symbols in a pejorative manner, but to underline the presence of Jesus in the midst of the rejected and to repudiate the dominating empire, as we will see.

Even more, Jesus has entered into a forbidden area, among the tombs, which in our times would be like the red zones of the underworld and prostitution, or those marginalized zones that are inhabited by delinquents. It is evident that the man in this account has been abandoned by his family and community and banished to dark and forgotten sites of the city, as the street children living in our cities today.

The way in which Jesus comes to the "demoniac" within his own social area is similar to that of many who work with street children. The street has become the socializing area for the ambulatory children. Their daily life happens there. The street as a social area becomes a substitute for the family, the school, the community and the church as the traditional agents of socialization. It is in the streets where distinct behavioral norms are established that permit them to survive in a violent environment and thus gives them self affirmation. A distinct everyday life is created.

8. The encounter: the distinct does not separate but recreate

The narrator is very specific in relating that "when he had stepped out of the boat", "immediately" the man went to meet Jesus. Both interlocutors looked for this encounter. Jesus had trespassed into the forbidden, the inaccessible, the blasphemous and with this movement he generated a movement on the other. From the beginning there was a will on both sides. We know that no one had been able to restrain this man. He did not even have control over himself. Nevertheless, the presence of Jesus invited him to the encounter, to the dialogue.

Here the problem of an encounter of two distinct lives is raised. Translating this to our time, the daily life of abandoned children challenges and stirs up guilt in those who approach them with sensitivity because one's own daily life is privileged in comparison. The starting point of a true encounter, in spite of the differences, is that each one knows who he or she is or is not, and knows what he or she has or has not. That is to say, each one assumes the responsibility for their own daily life in order to be able to establish what they can and desire to do together. In this way a specific kind of life can be defined, along with its space and limits.

In this account, Jesus creates this space of encounter by balancing the drawing near with the moving away. He manifests his capacity to meet with and to separate from, so much so that the "demoniac" has difficulties in maintaining his emotional space. He demonstrates a succession of symbiotic relationships: he runs to meet Jesus (v.2), he bows down before him (v.6), he begs not to be sent, if we take as part of his false identity "my name is Legion" (v.10), he begs Jesus to let him be with him (v.18). Jesus helps the man construct a new life, reintegrating him to his home, his family and his community. Jesus breaks the symbiosis by insisting that he not follow him but to go home and

Jesus himself then continues his own life. Jesus does not try to attract the man into his daily life but permits him to re-create his own life.

9. The "Demoniac": Victimization and Resistance

Within the narration of the encounter, the text introduces a description of the characteristics of the "demoniac" (vs. 3-5). He had an "unclean" spirit in which he identified himself as Legion, he lived among the tombs, he couldn't be restrained from breaking all shackles and chains, he harmed himself, he was active both night and day and shouted to himself in solitary places.

In the social categories of our day the man was "crazy". In the social categories of Jesus' time, he was a "demoniac". In both contexts his behavior was not usual, expected or "normal". In the times of Jesus, depending on the kind of sickness and social status, the family was the one who generally took charge. Some of the less violent ones appeared in public but many were totally uncared for and abandoned to the mockery of society.²⁹ The same thing is true in our time, although the attention to some "abnormal persons" has been institutionalized - in psychiatric wards or jails. This phenomenon has been repeated throughout history in highly repressive societies. The same thing occurs within repressive families.

The author of the text allows a symbolic glimpse to this situation by calling the false-self of the man by the Latin term "legion" (v. 9) which refers to a division of Roman soldiers. At the same time, other military elements such as the use of "herd" when referring to the swine (v. 12), which is a term used for the conscripted military, and the words "send" or "dismissed" and "rushed" or "charged" in Greek are also military terms. They are all veiled indications of the strong Roman repression that

²⁹ Paul W. Hollenbach: "Jesus, Demoniacs, and Public Authorities: A Socio-Historical Study", *The Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, XLIX/4, 1981.

generated madness.³⁰

Nevertheless, these elements do not only reflect the imperial domination as a cause of madness. The actions of the "demoniac" and those of Jesus are projections or displacements of the true impulses that were moving the characters in this story. Let's suppose for a moment that the author is not telling a story but rather a dream he had. His unconscious is where all the desires and drives that cannot be expressed are, and are therefore repressed. These are then re-elaborated into a new discourse full of condensations and displacements. We can also surmise that the one having the dream gathers up the collective consciousness of his community or his people. This content (the account of the dream or the narration of a happening) would then be unveiled in its latent content (that which the repression did not allow to be communicated).

Within this above scheme, we can state that the author of Mark, a witness to a history of terror and liquidation by the Roman Empire, condenses in the false-self "Legion" the Romans, not only because the term reminds us of the military but because these are "invaders" of the identity of the "demoniac". The action of transferring the unclean spirit into the swine displaces the Roman invader identity into the unclean swine. The author projects his original drive (the repudiation of imperial domination that can't be expressed) into the rush of the swine down the steep bank into the sea: death to the invaders and oppressors.

Until now, we have tried to recuperate the sense of the text hidden behind symbolic words, in order to understand why the man in this account had come to such a level of self destruction. In truth, the subject who was being analyzed up until this moment was the author as a representative of an oppressed community, that looked to express itself through this account. What interests us now is to discover the protagonists themselves in their socio-

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 473.

emotional process.

A person reaches such levels of madness as that described in this text through a prolonged process of detachment from reality. This process occurs when faced with a threatening situation. The self of the person¹⁵ with the purpose of developing and maintaining their identity and autonomy and so as to be able to feel secure when faced with threats, detaches themselves from their own selves and detaches themselves from the relationships of others. They convert themselves into the object with whom they relate. In other words, they take back all the affective bonds that have been given to those outside themselves and turn them towards their own interior where they will only meet with themselves. The relationship with others is delegated to a false-self that distorts reality until it reaches a level of total loss of contact with it. Therefore, an empty interior is created and there is a sense of loss of contact with even their own body. (It is spoken of as a non incarnated self.) It is total isolation; a severe form developed to defend oneself and to protect oneself. In an attempt to experience real and live feelings, the person may try to provoke intense pain upon their bodies, as could be the case with the Gerasene "demoniac".³²

The process suffered by the "demoniac" reflects how he identifies interjectively with his tormentor, that is to say that he internalizes the identity of the aggressor into his false-self and turns upon himself all the aggression that he can't express in another way. He lives a tremendous restlessness pursuing through the tombs and mountains those aggressors that he has incorporated into himself. His madness then, is an expression of resistance. By not tolerating domination nor oppression, he takes it into himself, drawing it into his own identity so that from there he can protest against it. It is the only possible way he can

¹⁵Understand as "I" the sense of self-hood that the person has, that gives an identity before oneself and others.

³² The description of this involutive process of the self has been taken, in shortened form, from Ronald D. Laing, *El yo dividido*, Fondo de Cultura Económica, México, 1964.

confront the repression. As we will see further on, other members of the community adopt an identity of a pseudo-self as an answer to repression.

The protest of this man as he confronts the violent environment in which he lives is comparable to the conduct of many street children. They opt to identify themselves interjectively with their violators (family and society). They punish their interjected violators by destroying themselves with drugs or alcohol. Alternatively, they re-project this adopted identity on to other persons and make them their victims assaulting or abusing them as they were abused. In both cases a circle of violence is established. At the same time, their conduct attracts more violence against them, so that they are repressed again for not adjusting to social norms as happened in the case of the Gerasene who was shackled and chained.

10. The Community Faces the Excluded: A Challenge to Change

The violence that is unleashed by the community against the Gerasene is so severe that the man discharges it onto himself. The text doesn't give any indication that the man was a danger to the community, nevertheless, the people tried to keep him tied up. Neither does the text give evidence as to why the people wanted him to be shackled in chains. We could suppose that they were afraid of his fury, or that his howling was hostile or maybe he was shouting things that could be dangerous in a repressive context. What ever the reason, it is clear that the conduct of the Gerasene generated a defensive attitude in the people. We will try to discover what the peoples' defenses concealed and how the same situation presents itself today in front of our "crazies" or our Street Children.

In the text it seems as if there are two types of fear: that felt in front of the "sick" man (vs. 3-4), and that felt in front of the "healthy" man (vs. 15,17). This makes one realize that fear

does not necessarily come out of the confrontation with the other but that it emerges from inside. The external causes germination in the internal. The external confronts then produces the defenses, either to nullify the one that confronts (binding up the "crazy") or repelling him (that he go away).

The socio-historical context in which these happenings took place was one of repression and poverty. It possibly occurred in the community, which in the previous chapter suffered what we called the psychotization of daily life. That is, when it is no longer possible to trust in anyone and persons retreat into themselves: individualism. In such a context, to get close to this man, who in his madness is a symbol of protest and resistance, means that ones personal security could be risked by the dominant powers. This same thing occurs today in situations of great repression as when a family knows that to reclaim a son or daughter that has been found dead and tortured could mean jail or death for them as well. Or as when a family of a young delinquent claims his minor status, they risk themselves being classed as accomplices of the crime. This could be an explanation of the first kind of fear that the community feels facing the Gerasene "agitator". It is "everyone for themselves" when confronted by the repressor.

The violent treatment of the Gerasene is done in alliance with the oppressor. The dominant class neutralizes or expels those that do not fit in the society. Hollenbach makes an interesting analysis showing the relationship between the dominant class and the "mentally ill" as two sides of the same coin. "While the weaker seek salvation by possession, the stronger seek salvation by ostracism."³³ Both behaviors have their foundation in fear. If we see it as a sociological phenomenon, it is a manifestation of the struggle for power. If we analyze it from a psychological angle, it is seeking to strengthen one's self by attacking someone who is weaker: strength is built upon the

³³ Hollenbach, *Op. Cit.*, p. 577.

weakness of the other and not on one's own personal security. This of course is a characteristic of a social context that promotes this sort of relationship, where repression reigns or where there is a patriarchal, excluding, social structure. In terms of Laing³⁴ this group phenomenon is a collusion, that is to say, a "game" in which persons deceive themselves, one complements the other in their mutual insecurities and mistrusts. As we said above, this is another defensive way of acting when facing fear.

The second type of fear (*vis a vis* the healthy) is related to the above, and appears when the defenses are broken, collusion is revealed, and the status quo is altered. The immediate reaction is to reestablish what was. There is a basic fear of change, a resistance in confronting the new. There must be a discovery of the new that does not want to be confronted. We will discuss this in the following paragraphs.

It is important to underline how costly it is to change. If we take the text literally, it can be deduced that the community fears for its economic interest. The loss of the "great herd of swine" was considerable. This loss assigns a commercial value to the healing of the "demoniac". It evidently seems as if the cost is too high; it seems it would be preferable not to have these human restitutions if they are going to cost so much. Seen from this angle, it is like today when commercial value is given preference over human value, reducing human relationships to commercial relationships. Within this relational framework there is no room for solidarity. This being the case, we can state that what is being avoided is the call to solidarity.

11. The Significance of the Healing

Jesus' action made the people feel uncomfortable. The

³⁴ Ronald D. Laing, *El yo y los Otros*, Fondo de Cultura Económica, México, 1974.

healing of this man - deranged by the Roman repression - challenges the dominant order by symbolically drowning the invader and reestablishing the social order. According to Myers,³⁵ as soon as he left the boat, Jesus encountered resistance in the man's demon "invaders". There follows a strong confrontation of struggle and negotiation about where the invaders should go, (vs. 8-12) until finally they are sent out of the man and for that reason symbolically out of the oppressed community as well. This would be an initial political reading of Jesus' "miracle": a repudiation of domination and repression. With reference to this political significance, Myers states:

...the meaning of Jesus' struggle against the strongman is not reducibly solely to his desire for the liberation of Palestine from colonial rule, though it certainly includes that. It is a struggle against the root "spirit" and politics of domination...³⁶

In a sociological sense the action of Jesus challenges the community's accommodation to domination because they have internalized it and become accomplices of the dominator. It is not the "demoniac" who should be pointed out and repudiated; justice should be done to him for having borne his situation of expulsion. This is Job's complaint fulfilled. The Gerasene should be seen as the "emissary goat" (acting out collective madness) and not as the "scapegoat" (purging collective guilt). Nevertheless, the community is unable to open its eyes to its own complicity, but it maintains its role as pseudo-subject and asks Jesus to leave and not confront them. In the words of Hollenbach, Jesus disturbs the social stability by doing an exorcism that has healing social value but, when all is said and done, will bring them into conflict with the authorities. The Gerasene thus turns into a prophetic activist, disturber of the peace.³⁷

³⁵ Myers, *Op. Cit.*, p. 192-194.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 427.

³⁷ Hollenbach, *Op. Cit.*, p. 584.

The same conflict appears with those city dwellers who feel affected by hostile, delinquent street children. Adults stand back from the problem and debate in the newspapers about the solution for these gangs of problematic children. Adults generally will not recognize that these children find themselves in this kind of a situation because of lack of support from their families and society. An example of this occurred on July 23, 1993, when repressive agents killed eight street children and wounded more in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The government confirmed that it was one more act that added up to a series of cases of police repression.³⁸ The adult society does not assume responsibility to become involved in the situation of the excluded, but responds with more repression. This attitude is not much different from that practiced on the Gerasene.

In reference to the significance of Jesus' healing act, there are two stories that run parallel: the community's story and the personal story of the Gerasene. In both stories we can discover ourselves as individual products of society and as society members. Until now we have suggested political and social meanings with reference to the Gerasene community. We will now analyze the personal sense of Jesus' act.

"They...saw the demoniac sitting there, clothed and in his right mind, the very man who had the legion"... says part of verse 15. This description is ingenuous but at the same time very significant because of how the Evangelist uses it to demonstrate the healing. He alludes to three important aspects in the life of a human being.

To be seated evokes a site, a place in the world, and a return of calmness and peace after his desperate search through the mountains and tombs. As persons we need to feel at home in a place, we need to develop a sense of belonging that attaches us to

³⁸ Summary Report prepared by Maggie Black for UNICEF in *Street and Working Children*, 1994, p. 50.

people and places. It is part of the interaction that returns to us a sense of identity. The very fact of having a place to seat one's self represents confirmation on the part of others as well.

To be clothed alludes to the recuperation of an incarnated self, to be in his body, with revalued self-esteem. The former nakedness was used as a scandalous and challenging letter of presentation, as a smoke screen for his weak and suffering self. By covering his body he restores his self-body integrity and his contact with others is no longer distorted or exhibitionist.

To attribute to him now his right mind, indicates that his capacity to discern has been recuperated. Whereas before he perceived by disordered force he now interprets with elements of wisdom and connected to reality. The annotation "right mind" does not induce one to think in alienation but in rationality, proved later by his capacity to communicate and to tell what had happened.

The recuperation of the Gerasene is integral because it embraces his emotions, his body, his mind, and it offers him a role and a task to fulfill in the future with his community.

12. The command of Jesus: "Go and tell"

In this passage Jesus is presented as a prophet. The exorcism enacted was an act of scandalous liberation that was intended to spread the news of his ministry. Through the years and in the Christian era there has been a tendency to see the miracles of Jesus in an apologetic manner, that is to say, as proofs of the divinity and power of the Son of God. It is necessary nevertheless, to recover the sense of the miracles as liberating actions which reveal God's compassion, a compassion which can not be contained or limited. It is a love that breaks limits and rules.

It is precisely for this reason that Jesus wants the Gerasene

to fulfill a prophetic task and sends him to give testimony to what has happened. His shouting through the mountains are changed into proclamations of the grace that he has received. The effect of his message was equally disturbing, but in a positive sense: "everyone was amazed". What amazed everyone? The first ones who knew about his healing were afraid. We have already analyzed the possible reasons for their fear. But those who heard his story afterward, from the lips of the healed man himself, were amazed. The key of their amazement could be the content of his message.

It was not a hollow message, but an incarnated one. It was an action-reflection message, that is to say, a story that had words and actions. Jesus had not only spoken but had also acted. The Gerasene not only told what had happened to him but showed himself as an heir of grace. If we were to place ourselves in the time of this event, how surprising, innovative and admirable it would have been to know that an unclean Gentile, discarded because of his madness, was an object of mercy for a prophet. The community could have been amazed immediately because the healing of a person is so close to every day life. But, in such a stratified society, the healing of a Gentile would have caused tremendous amazement. The surprise caused by the action of the prophet Jesus was the inclusiveness of his character when facing excluded ones and the reversion of the established social order by breaking the norms. In a violent world of social segregation this had to have been good news, a fresh rain, a glimpse of hope. For this reason, proclamation must be accompanied with concrete expressions about a new social order, according to Myers.³⁹ That is to say, grace had to be presented accompanied with justice.

The passage of the Gerasene "demoniac" inaugurates the ministry of Jesus. His ministry, as related in the Gospel of Mark, continues full of acts of justice and grace: food for the hungry, healing of the sick, companionship with the excluded, liberation

³⁹ Myers, *Op. Cit.*, p. 436.

of the captives, social confirmation of women, the raising up of children, taking in strangers, etc. His action eviscerated the different forms of violence and dehumanization of his time and that persist until this day. It is an action that touches the violence that has been internalized by persons and that which structures society, as we analyzed in the case of the Gerasene.

The ministry of Jesus proposes a social reordering. Myers⁴⁰ presents it in the following way:

a) Jesus makes a clear preferential option for the poor of Palestine through his actions among the marginalized.

b) He promotes the ideology of receptivity and reciprocity that does not remain an abstract idea but practices a true integration between the different social groups, living with the people and understanding them from their own perspective.

c) He leaves us a communitarian model for sharing goods so that even the poorest can have, creating a new system for the distribution of land, houses, and the economy in general.

Jesus' proposals are immensely simple and at the same time profound. It is the center of the economy itself and the social order where the roots of violence are found, a violence found in the great and the small. He denounces the inversion of the social order and reverts it to proclaim to all that there is hope, that the miracle happens when that which has been inverted is turned upside down. But he does not send us to just proclaim it but to do it, to re-create community, and to build community with a sense of solidarity.

The message of Jesus has been taken by the Christians and popular groups that identify themselves with the prophetic content of his message. They re-create community when they see human contradictions and re-structure the community by changing patriarchal, generational and class schemes. Confronted with the

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 439-447.

assault of the market empire and commerce-based relationships, the struggle to fight this social inversion is being done by groups of women, Indigenous peoples and environmentalists. These are not times of great revolutionary struggles, but of resistance.. As there were in the community of Mark, there are signs of hope in the present desperation that are manifested in the solidarity of the Christian Base Communities, in the popular struggles, in the reclaiming of the rights of women, young people, Blacks and Indigenous. In the terms of Qoheleth, a sense of powerlessness moves human beings to recover the faith dimension, and this gives them energy to live, removes paralysis, and affirms life.⁴¹ Even so, there is urgency.

⁴¹ Elsa Tamez, "La razón utópica de Qohélet", in *Pasos*, No. 52, DEI, San José, March-April, 1994.

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Conclusion

Social violence is manifested not only in aggressive and hostile actions against the victim but in denying access to the means of survival. There are sectors more vulnerable than others to this violence, among them are children, because added to their deprivations is the loss of affective human contact that confirms their sense of being.

Social violence, in its many forms, generates more violence and dehumanizes its perpetrators as well as its victims. It creates a spiral of violence that leads to the institutionalization of violent means to repress violent acts provoked by the original violence. Violence also leads to the polarization of society, in that those who place themselves on the "good" side, do not recognize either their aggressiveness or complicity in the violent circle. Therefore, violence leads to the dehumanization of both the victim and the violator.

In Latin America, childhood is violated through poverty that denies the possibility of a holistic (integral) development. Children are abandoned by their families and a society that pushes them to wander through the streets without any adult support. They are abused through exploitative child labor, through the traffic of their bodies or parts of their bodies for the emotional or physical benefit of those with money, through torture, imprisonment and forced migration. These are the situations of social violence toward children analyzed in this study, but there are others.

Violence has strong economic roots, expressed in the monopolizing of consumer goods by one sector of society against the other. This phenomenon occurs when a great part of the population does not participate in mercantile relations. This is because the market, in order to be efficient and lucrative, needs less and less labor. This then creates a surplus population that become the excluded. Those who are excluded are marginalized from sources of

work, education, health care, housing and adequate food. Not only are they condemned to poverty but their condition of poverty and exclusion has repercussions in their self-esteem and in the respect they show to themselves and others. This effect is very noticeable, especially in children if they are unable to trust anyone as they are growing up. This means that they are unable to develop their potential.

Our analysis of the situation in Latin America of this excluded childhood, using tools that allows us a macro-social perspective as well as a view of the immediate environment of the child, has made it possible to see how the economic roots have generated forms of violence that have repercussions even in the most intimate parts of a victim's life.

Social violence as a theme of study, given its complex combination of cause and effect, challenges an inter-disciplinary analysis in order to have a global understanding of the problem. The relations between the theories of economics, sociology, psychology and theology have been used in this investigation for this purpose. This is the hermeneutical requirement (biblical and social) in a context that is as convulsive and combative as Latin America.

In his life and ministry, Jesus was always at the side of those excluded by society. A reading of the Gospels, interpreted from the perspective of an impoverished childhood in Latin America, rescues the solidarity and inclusion that Jesus promoted, his denouncing of injustice and the revealing of the "inversion" of society; the proclamation of God's grace for all, preferentially given to the poor and marginalized. The life of Jesus invites and dares the church to imitate his life and his teachings; to be a prophet as he was, in a repressive social context and to be worthy of his grace in calling for justice for all. The life and teaching of Jesus is an inheritance that arms us for resistance as a way to fight against social violence.