TAMING CHIMAERA

Demystifying the youth violence phenomenon in Lima, Peru

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CONTENTS

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PREFACIO Y ADVERTENCIA

Antes de presentar la introducción del tema y objectivos de este estudio me parece necesario enfatizar las limitaciones que afectan a este ensayo y que a la vez determinan el uso que se le puede dar a este documento. El tiempo invertido en esta investigación y la información obtenida durante mi estadía en Lima no permite una evaluación de la efectividad de programas u organizaciones involucradas en el tema de la violencia juvenil en esta ciudad. Cabe recalcar que este no es el objetivo de este estudio. Este estudio no pretende evaluar organizaciones y programas, sino iniciar una discusión sobre como la violencia juvenil en la ciudad de Lima a sido y es socialmente construida por diferentes actores y factores sociales, históricos, culturales y económicos; fuerzas que forman percepciones hoy materializadas en estrategias que pretenden intervenir a grupos de jovenes violentos.

Los comentarios en este ensayo, especialmente en el Capitulo IV, son enteramente míos y las limitaciones que afectaron mi estudio determinan su orígen y formulación. Este análisis, parcial y limitado, no puede y no debe ser utilizado como testimonio fiel de la efectividad o debilidad de alguna organización o estrategia descrita. Este documento debe ser discutido como un estudio enfocado en un aspecto especifico de la temática de la violencia juvenil en Lima que usa las experiencias de organizaciones relacionadas con este tema estrictamente como ejemplos. Así pues, este ensayo presenta una perspectiva de investigación que no se concentra en medir efectividad y logros, sino en discutir modelos explicativos y percepciones existentes en un afan de demostrar los conflictos y harmonías que surgen cuando se pretende solucionar un problema que aun no ha sido identificado y medido efectivamente.

INTRODUCTION

The urban youth violence phenomenon has received increasing attention in recent years from Peruvian social scientists and intellectuals (Saavedra, et al, 1999; Tong, 1997; Perales, 1995; etc). During the past five years local newspapers and television have reported extensively on this issue, usually recounting stories of young gang members or *pandilleros*[1] in Lima, presenting them as vicious adolescent beings at the margin of all moral sense and reason, perhaps one more breed of social monsters that reside in the Peruvian Parnassus of urban social decadence. Indeed, it has become common to witness how these young individuals resolve their conflicts resorting to the use of knives, broken bottles, and rarely fire arms to hurt one another, acting as if they were unaware of the potential outcome of their actions, violent confrontations that may lead to situations as irreversible as death (Tong, in Martinez: 1998).

Recent times have also witnessed the appearance of peculiar generations of violent youth groups[2] that, identifying themselves with one of the many local soccer clubs, have formed groups that craft a particular identity based upon their membership to a specific soccer team. Upon encountering rival groups in the streets or stadiums, these *barras bravas*[3] engage in intense war-like confrontations that usually lead to severe injuries and occasional fatalities suffered by warring groups. The *barras bravas*, like the pandillas, adopt aggressive names and display their graffiti signatures as a way to demarcate their territory, the neighbourhood in which they live.

While no neighbourhood or district in Lima has been left untouched by the activities of different violent youth groups, it soon becomes obvious that the majority of these violent children and adolescents come from urban poor neighbourhoods in the outskirts of the city. This fact has contributed not only to an increased concern over this issue by local social scientists and individuals interested in the ecology of this social phenomenon but also to the perpetuation of negative perspectives and stereotypes related to the perceived backwardness, violent and almost savage nature of those who inhabit these areas of the city among residents in other districts (Castro in Cruzado et al, 1998:14).

While much has been written about youth violence in urban poor settlements, the formation of youth gangs and the dynamics within these groups (Tong, 1998; 1999), these documents are essentially qualitative in nature and scope, attempting to provide for general functionalistic theories, disregarding the potential for these generalizations to overlook the distinct multidimensionality and complexity of the subject matter we are still unable grasp.

Information about outreach strategies and intervention programs created to address this issue is not available. There are few sources of relevant quantitative data related to this subject and finding documents that provide for in-depth analyses of this situation in a specific geographical context is virtually impossible. Indeed, this theme is quite new and grows every day in importance as communities realize their inability to harmonize the contemporary dynamics of their youth with those that may provide for future social betterment in the area.

Community workers and organizations based out of the different pueblos jovenes[4] have recently started to develop certain strategies for the solution of this community concern. Religious, public, private

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[1] The term "pandilla" will be used from now on as I believe the term "gang", extensively used in studies about urban youth violence in the North American context, may lead us to attribute certain characteristics of these later groups to the Peruvian pandillas. Pandillas have very specific dynamics and characteristics directly related to the urban context they developed in. Acknowledging the uniqueness of these groups may in fact provide for effective and fair strategies aimed at addressing this particular urban population.

[2] The term "violent youth group" will be used throughout this essay as a broad term that may encompass many different manifestations of collective youth violence.

[3] The term "barra brava" literally translates to angry mob. However, the word "barra" translates to the 'section of spectators' in an event.

[4] The term "pueblos joven" was introduced by the military government of General Velasco (1968-75), through the National Organization for the Development of Young Towns or ONDEPJOV. This was an attempt not only to accentuate an innovative policy directed at marginal communities, but also as a way of liberating these areas from any derogatory terminology that would undermine their struggle for autonomy and freedom (See Collier, 1975 in Lowenthal, 1975:137, 144). We may understand pueblos jovenes as "residential communities formed by low-

and non-governmental organizations have begun to implement different strategies derived from their own experiences in the context of youth violence. These strategies have not been discussed at length. Furthermore, many publications that address the issue of pandillas stay away from the expected question: What to do about pandillas? Most documents provide for idealistic, perhaps even naïve suggestions to answer this pertinent question (Mejia and Miranda, 1997: 45; Cruzado, 1997: 35).

Today, urban poor communities in Lima are in need of tangible and practical approaches to the issue of youth violence. We are confronted with the task of starting a serious discussion, opening a debate on certain aspects surrounding this theme that I believe have been left unattended, issues that will demand a process of intense social introspection.

Context for (Bellerophonean) objectives

Writing and discussing youth violence in the context of Lima presents many issues that need to be accounted for before launching into any form of an intelligent argument. Let us begin by separating the terms we will be juggling throughout this entire document: *youth* and *violence*. We will begin to notice that these terms store different meanings, dimensions and characteristics related to social, economic and political contexts after acknowledging that we are in fact dealing with urban *Peruvian* youth and violence.

The discussion of contemporary Peruvian youth has recently acquired new dimensions and preoccupations. Local intellectuals and social scientists emphasize the need to formulate new paradigms that will allow us to address this complex issue in a responsible manner (Tanaka et al, 1991; Vega, 1988). In the same fashion, violence as term and idea has harvested and continues to reap more and more definitions, sub-definitions and contexts for analysis (Velasquez, 1999; Arroyo, 1997). Hence, we are confronted with two seemingly clear definitions that are in fact characterized by immense symbolic and intellectual content. When we amalgamate both terms in the context of the city of Lima we encounter a doubly challenging subject to address. Furthermore, when we are confronted not only with the amalgamation of these two terms, but also with the task of attempting to provide for solutions to its produce, we immediately find ourselves immersed in a most complicated affair. I intend to address this task throughout this essay. This seemingly Herculean (or Bellerophonean, as we shall see) affair need not be perceived in such manner. I must state that in fact, while the direction of this essay is in fact one which attempts to outline potential solutions, I will be concentrating specifically and quite simply on opening the debate on specific themes related to the youth violence phenomenon in Lima that I deem as important and in need of thorough discussion. Only after we discuss such questions thoroughly will we be able to begin formulating solutions.

If I had written this introduction months ago, I would have probably stated my main objective as: "to provide suggestions to aid community organizations in crafting efficient strategies aimed at addressing youth violent groups in urban poor neighbourhoods". While extremely needed, the formulation of these suggestions would have disregarded certain primordial questions that have not yet been dealt with by individuals and organizations attempting to provide for solutions. These unanswered questions are related to a need to *demystify* the youth violence thematic giant before attempting to tame it.

Notice my careful choice of the words *demystify* and *tame* in the above sentence. The choice of these ostensibly normal words is important. These are in fact loaded words and terms that harvest various thematic controversies and that will help us understand certain issues that need to be discussed before attempting to solve the youth violence riddle. At this point it is important to note that the use of the word "phenomenon" should be understood as "an occurrence or fact that is directly perceptible by the senses" not as a "marvel or unusual element", the later being a definition that may obscure our search for light.

My initial goal was in fact related to the specific perspective with which I approached my field study experience in Peru. I was part of a team of social scientists and medical practitioners involved in the

income families in which the houses are constructed in large measure by the residents themselves and which are generally, but not exclusively, formed illegally" (See Collier, 1975 in Lowenthal, 1975:129).

design of an intervention program in youth violence. Their main objective was to provide for an intervention program that may ultimately aid youth populations in the district of Independencia who were involved in local violent groups. The team, led by an anthropologist and a nurse, had outlined the first stage of this project as one that would essentially study the Independencia district, the specific violent dynamics local pandillas where engaged in, and the relevant background related to this subject. One of the main goals under this first stage of study was to plot the universe of organizations and institutions that addressed the issue of youth violence in the area and discuss the nature of their programs; how these groups understood the problem and designed strategies accordingly. I concentrated on this goal using a 'focused ethnography' strategy and the perspective of an individual that was part of a group looking to provide for a solution.

Today I come to realize that this objective (to provide for a solution) may nurture a dangerous bias. It can keep us from digging into essential and pertinent questions that may provide for essential perspectives and paths of action. By aiming to provide a solution we are intrinsically siding with the fact that (a) there is a problem/something is wrong and (b) it needs to be fixed or resolved. Needless to say, to approach research on youth violence with a preconception that (a) and (b) are true is limiting. The recognition of this limiting bias may facilitate the discussion of violent youth groups and strategies designed to address their existence. In fact, the experience and recognition of this bias leads this essay to fundamentally question the origin and validity of (a) and (b) throughout its pages.

This essay consists of two general objectives; both intertwined and connected. The first objective aims to provide a discussion on the present body of knowledge available regarding urban youth violence in Peru, addressing different perspectives held by pertinent intellectuals and social scientists on this matter. It is necessary to discuss the youth violence phenomena from different perspectives, concentrating not only on explaining potential socio-economic causes for this phenomenon, but also discussing contemporary frameworks for analysis used to understand this phenomenon.

The second objective in this essay concentrates on the *demystification* of the youth violence phenomenon; discussing the influence of civil and organized society on the construction of this phenomenon. The carefully chosen word, *demystification*, has been selected as a term that will refer us to a most relevant discussion found in Ian Hacking's "The Social Construction of What?" Hacking's discussion on different grades of constructionism will be used to approach our discussion of what the youth violence phenomenon represents in the context of Peruvian society. His arguments will help us cement the analytical structure of this essay, a strategy I will discuss at length in the following sub-section.

In my opinion, one of the most important topics related to urban youth violence today is one that relates to the use of a *constructivist* perspective in the study of social phenomena and its potential usefulness in the formulation of tangible strategies aimed at solving a perceived social malaise. Ian Hacking's (1999) treatment of this subject will aid us in framing this discussion. In other words, I hope to contribute towards the understanding of the youth violence issue in Peru not only by discussing the conflicts and harmonies different initiatives designed by organizations may present, but also by questioning the perceptions that may have been constructed around this subject, walls that are not built purely from imagination but, as we shall see, from a human process that maps and crafts ideas, influenced by social, historical, political, economic and cultural forces. I consider the process of *demystification* as a more relevant contribution to the development of strategies targeting these youth groups at this point in time. Serious and thorough debate between organizations, social scientists and the youths themselves has been left aside, perhaps because of the perceived urgency in providing for a practical solution to this growing problem. Essential questions have been left unattended, as we seem to have concentrated on creating seemingly haphazard palliatives.

An element that will aid us in our understanding of the subject matter is the analysis of a particular urban poor district. We shall use the Independencia district as a micro-universe where different forces, various social actors involved in one way or another with the youth violence phenomena, interact and, as we shall see, conflict. Through interviews with medical practitioners, nurses, social workers, religious agents and intellectuals working in Independencia, I will concentrate on and plot the profile of a

side (the side that attempts to provide for outreach strategies) of a universe that has been left unattended by social scientists and intellectuals. Today this abandonment begs to be reversed, as organizations and strategies that attempt to be effective require thorough (and constant) discussion and study.

Discussing the strategies organizations use when addressing the youth violence issue is not enough to provide for solutions. It will become clear that not only are we unaware of *what* organizations are doing in the field, and *how* and *why* is this being done; we are also unaware of specific forces that shape our particular understanding of the subject matter, social dynamics and ideologies that have provided for an interesting "looping effect" (Hacking, 1999) where our potentially misleading opinions on the existence of the pandillas feed the perceptions that determine these groups' actions. This is in fact the greatest concern this paper addresses. Being unaware of the influence our present models used in understanding this issue have on the way this phenomenon manifests itself, provides a vacuum that distorts direction and deters effective action.

Analytical Framework

Why is Hacking's discussion on constructionism (1999) useful when designing our analytical framework? It would be easy (and in Hacking's eyes perhaps an absolute *cliché*) to state that youth violence in the urban poor neighbourhoods of Lima is socially constructed. Indeed, I will not be addressing the issue of youth violence in an attempt to assert this plausible fact. Instead, I will use Hacking's arguments on different issues of constructionism in an attempt to shed light on the complexity behind the youth violence phenomenon, a reality that represents more than the sum of its parts.

Hacking (1999:4) explains that he is not out to define social construction, but to discuss it, to ask *what is the point* behind certain constructions. He presents several interesting insights regarding, for example, the interplay of product vs. process, the idea of interaction between the process of categorization and the individual, and the use of metaphors in explaining social phenomena. All of these themes are relevant to our study of youth violence. Let us briefly browse through some of the relevant arguments that relate to our present study and its framework for analysis.

I understand *the demystification of youth violence*, as a process that will utilize the different "grades of constructionism" described by Hacking (historical, ironic, reformist, unmasking, rebellious and revolutionary) as starting points to approach the discussion of the youth violence phenomenon, as a means to clarify and facilitate the understanding of the occurrence of such phenomenon. These grades of constructionism are simply different degrees of reaction (and thus, commitment) to the following beliefs over *X*, where *X* is what is being socially constructed (e.g. gender, economy, women refugee, youth violence, etc):

(1)   *X* need not have existed, or need not be at all as it is. *X*, or *X* as it is at present, is not determined by the nature of things; it is not inevitable.

(2)   *X* is quite as bad as it is.

(3)   We would be much better off if *X* were done away with, or at least radically transformed.

(Hacking, 1999; my adaptation)

For now it will suffice to state that these grades of constructionism may provide us with insights on the complexity and multidimensionality of the youth violence phenomena, its expression and interpretation. However, Hacking presents a precondition (0) before listing (1), (2) and (3) as described above. This precondition states that "in the present state of affairs, *X* is taken for granted; *X* appears to be inevitable" (12). My main argument in this essay is derived from a need to demystify the youth violence phenomenon by questioning this precondition as it relates to *X* = pandilla. Our discussion on "the idea of

the pandilla" will allow us to focus on the central character, the obvious protagonist of this particular story.

I believe that the pandilla (as a social construct, "the idea of the pandilla") is taken for granted; and that it *appears* to be inevitable. Then I move on to (1) "*X* need not have existed, or need not be at all as it is. *X*, or *X* as it is at present, is not determined by the nature of things; it is not inevitable". Indeed, I believe that *the idea* of the pandilla is not inevitable, and that it needs to be understood differently. I believe this reshaping may in fact provide for solutions, yet solutions that rely on substantial changes in perceptions as main agents for these solutions.

In a discussion of the "child viewer of television", Hacking (1999) mentions, "to talk about the child viewer is not exactly false, but it uses an inapt idea. It presupposes that there is a coherent object, the child viewer of television" (27). Hacking explains that in fact we are witnessing a reification of the child viewer of television, the transformation of this *kind* of person into a thing, an object of study. *X* (as seen in the phrase "the social construction of *X*") can have different meanings as "people can have different "whats" (*X*'s) in mind". The reification of *X* and the idea that people may have different ideas of *X* in mind holds true when X = pandilla. In my opinion, the pandilla, just as the child viewer of television, has become a seemingly coherent object. In fact, it has acquired the traits of a new species of individuals, separated from other youth, haphazardly categorized and classified under certain general attributes this species is believed to have. This situation provides for confusion when discussing this phenomenon, let alone when we attempt to "provide for solutions". Indeed, this phenomenon has lost its phenomenal quality, changing from an occurrence to a coherent object of study.

Hacking goes on to state that "the idea of the child viewer of television" actually interacts with the child viewer as "ways of classifying human beings interact with the human beings who are classified" (31). This concept of *interaction* is quite important in the context of this essay. It will be come evident that pandillas in Lima interact with "the idea of the pandilla" too. This occurrence is clearly exposed in articles by Santos or Castro (both in Cruzado, 1998), where we see how local press and television feast on the experience of violent youths in Lima, and these in turn feed from these sources' usually skewed perspective on youth violence in the city (67).

A constructivist perspective includes both a process and a product (Hacking, 1999: 36). In other words, when referring to the social construction of the pandilla, we are not only referring to the product (the pandilla) but a process (how it has been constructed through historical, socio-political processes); the process explains the product. Needless to say, "the idea of the pandilla" does not exist in a vacuum. According to Hacking (10), these ideas exist within a "matrix", a womb. In the case of the pandilla phenomenon, the matrix is the urban poor setting, the complex of institutions, organizations, newspapers, magazines, police, court hearings, lawyers, reporters, anthropologists, sociologists, schools, families, etc. (not to mention material infrastructure like detention centres, courtrooms and minors clubs) that influence the construction process. We will discuss the matrix that has nurtured the "idea of the pandilla" in Peruvian society and its particular historical, social and cultural components.

This essay represents an attempt to open the debate on the degree to which Peruvian society has provided for the construction of "the idea of the pandilla", how this process has been mediated within its particular matrix, and how today, this construction presents us with multidimensional obstacles, as we attempt to address the existence of violent youth groups in the city through strategies and intervention programs. In order to fully understand what is the nature of this multidimensionality, I have equipped this essay with an important argumentative tool: an allegory.

TAMING CHIMAERA

In a study that focused on discussing contemporary Peruvian youth identities, Martin Tanaka (1991) criticized different theoretical and conceptual approaches used when addressing this issue and,

while recognizing the contributions all these paradigms provided, accused them of providing limiting, unilateral perspectives with which to appreciate Peruvian youth in the twentieth century. According to Tanaka, these perspectives fail to systematically and comprehensively account for the different manifestations of reality found in Peruvian youth culture:

> We believe that one of the main obstacles in understanding popular youths [in Peru] is to have attributed relatively rigid rationalities and action paths to them, as if these where directly related to their identity […]. Thus, everything that does not correspond to a predefined identity, almost in a metaphysical manner, tends to be avoided. Furthermore, to reflect through schemes of this [metaphysical] kind makes the complexity of reality appear as incoherence, a contradiction. We cannot agree with a thought process of this kind, because it is incorrect and specially not in the context of contemporary times, where our country goes through profound changes in very unstable conditions, and where all identities are fragile and in constant change (Tanaka, 1991: 53, my translation).

I believe that this lack of multilateral, systematic and comprehensive conceptual and theoretical frameworks of analysis may account for the absence of effective intervention programs on youth violence in urban poor districts like Independencia. Furthermore, I believe that in order to formulate effective intervention programs we need to *operationalize* these lacking frameworks. Hence the discussion and application of the *mystification* process mentioned above and the use of the *Chimaera allegory* in this essay.

Tanaka's criticisms lead this essay to provide for a conceptual level of analysis that may help us not only to discuss the "complexity of reality" described by Tanaka, but also to discuss the consequences of our present understanding and the effects of our matrix. Thus, together with the use of Hacking's (1999) constructivist arguments, I have decided to develop what I refer to as a 'multidimensional key'. This key adopts the form of an allegory, an *implied reference* that might open many doors and, together with the constructivist approach, unveil certain paradoxes found when dealing with this subject matter.

Our allegory & its meaning

According to biologists, a *chimera* is an unusual hybrid produced by grafting tissue from different organisms. Patterson (1993: 912) uses this metaphor as a descriptor for antisocial traits developed by children through time. He argues that newly acquired antisocial traits act as grafts on the overall antisocial behaviour pattern of children. Using the chimera metaphor, he argues that additions of new antisocial traits account for the appearance of the "snake-tail" and "lion-head" on the eventual chimera being:

> Academic failure and peer rejection components constitute the addition of the lion-countenance to what is still essentially a goat. By mid-adolescence, the additions of substance abuse and police arrest produce an aroused society and complete the conversion of a simple goat to a fire-breathing monster with the tail of a snake (1993: 918).

Paterson stresses that this change in the original "organism" needs to be accounted for. We should to consider this new individual as a different and distinct being, in need of different and specific analytical models (1993: 918). While we may find his use of this metaphor extremely dramatic, let us not perceive it as necessarily pessimistic or negative. This essay will take the chimera metaphor a step forward, using it as a tool to explain certain characteristics of "the idea of the pandilla" in Lima.

From a developmental perspective, the chimera begins as a goat and always retains its goat-like essence. As time goes on (and according to Patterson, as new antisocial traits are acquired) the once goat-

like creature transforms gradually into a monster. The realization that these elements *can* be analyzed separately but *should be* addressed as a whole so as to acknowledge the particular agency and meaning this new creature has *as a whole*, is one that may be applied to the study of youth violence in Lima. In other words, we may dissect "the idea of the pandilla", viewing it as an organism composed of different socio-political tissues (poverty, violence, race, class, age) yet consider it a conceptual whole when discussing its agency and nature.

I do not wish to use the Chimaera metaphor simply as an implied reference to the developmental and organic characteristics of the subject matter. I wish to transform the Chimaera metaphor into an allegory, a feature that contains an underlying meaning as well as the evident one. In this case, this underlying meaning is related to the monstrous quality of the Chimaera, the actual mythical Greek creature. The Chimaera was a monster, a being that transmitted fear and was deemed invulnerable until Bellerophon vanquished it. Similarly, pandillas in Lima have been attributed this monster-like personality and deemed as almost invulnerable to strategies that aim to tame this phenomenon. This "social monster" awakens fear and uneasiness from those who claim to have seen it, as opposed to compassion or sympathy. In this essay, I equate the "idea of the pandilla" with the Chimaera, as this construct has not only developed from the amalgamation of the different "tissues" mentioned above, but it has also acquired life of its own, a personality and agency, resembling that of the infamous Greek's monster.

I hope the Chimaera allegory will serve as a *multidimensional key;* operating at different levels of discussion and ultimately providing for a pivot point with which to transfer our attention from a limited area of perception (and thus, limited action) to a zone where new avenues may materialize as we peel off the many layers that mystify the youth violence issue. This 'limited area of perception' by no means refers to the different studies conducted by many Peruvian social scientist, investigations that have provided us with valuable information with which to expand our knowledge on this issue. This 'limited area of perception' refers to an imprisoned zone where I believe contemporary intervention strategies are found, as they unknowingly attempt to tame "the idea of the pandilla" under pragmatic, yet futile approaches.

To tame is to domesticate. The word implies human intervention, actions that control and subdue. I believe that the use of this word sheds light on a latent paradox that is born when we convince ourselves that we can control "the idea of the pandilla", the Peruvian Chimaera; a quasi-mythological being created by a society, perhaps to inform us of the dangers that lay in Hades, the underworld; located beyond the River that Speaks and outside the gates of the City of Kings.

A NOTE ON METHODOLOGY

A study completed last year by the Community Mental Health Department of the National Institute of Mental Health "Honorio Delgado-Hideyo Noguchi, stressed, "the pandillas are a phenomenon that greatly preoccupies the district's population" (1999). This situation prompted the Community Mental Health Department to begin the elaboration of an intervention program aimed at addressing such concern. The information presented in this essay was obtained during a three-month visit to Peru, where I was able to participate in the initial stages of design for this program. As a temporary member of such department I was assigned the task of approaching pertinent organizations in the area, obtain information related to the youth violence issue and record the experience these organizations had or had have with violent youth groups in the district. Most key informants approached during my field study where contacts previously utilized by the Community Health Department.

Due to time and logistical limitations, I concentrated mainly on organizations found within the Tahuantinsuyo neighbourhoods, one of the six subdistricts found in Independencia, and on institutions that, while not based out of this geographical area, have addressed the issue of youth violence in this subdistrict. My choice of the following institutions and programs discussed should be understood as an attempt to map and represent the wide variety of actors involved in the youth violence context in Independencia:

- Policia Nacional del Peru
- Iglesia Santa Rosa
- Ministerio para la Promocion de la Mujer y el Desarrollo Humano
- Instituto Peruano del Deporte
- Defensoria Municipal del Niño y del Adolescente
- Centro Proceso Social
- Schools (a note)

I benefited from the occurrence of a "Youth Violence Workshop" organized by the Community Mental Health Department that was held at the National Institute of Mental Health at the beginning of my field study. This workshop convened the institutions listed above and allowed me to identify the need to discuss social construction issues related to the youth violence context, a discussion that finds residence in this essay.

After the workshop, I made daily visits to the Independencia district where, through participant observation, I got acquainted with the dynamics of community life in the district and the different government institutions, non-government and religious organizations listed above. Using a semi-structured questionnaire, I compiled information regarding the experience these institutions had with the youth violence phenomena in the area, their perceptions surrounding this theme and the initiatives they had developed to address such issue.[5] I must stress that while this study is concerned with understanding strategies formulated by local organizations to address the youth violence phenomenon, it does not concentrate on discussing or describing the institutional profile of the organizations studied, nor their structure or history at length or in detail. Reference to these particularities will be made when relevant, however, we will limit our analysis to the explanatory models and ideas about the pandillas these organizations exhibit.[6] My observations while spending time on the Independencia neighbourhoods visiting local organizations and different information obtained from local residents in conversations will also be used to substantiate the arguments presented in this document.

I was unable to contact youths who were presently members of pandillas in Independencia. It soon became clear that not only would I need more time to accomplish this, but that I could not contact the pandillas by myself, as all contact with these groups could present security risks. People that have been working for several years with youths in Independencia have been unable to maintain a constant rapport with the pandillas; they would promptly warn me of the dangers in associating directly with these groups and the fact that they themselves had been unable to establish a safe relationship with them. These security concerns limited this study to conversations with youths that knew about pandillas in their area or that had previously been involved in a pandilla in Independencia. As this study may present security risks for my informants, I have changed several names so as to protect their identities and safety.

In an attempt to obtain information about young people in the district *from* young people in the district, a focus group was organized with members of the Santa Rosa Church religious youth group "Vamos a Caminar". The information obtained was complemented with substantial information from focus groups conducted by the National Mental Health Institute about youth violence in the area. Working with such institution allowed me to obtain information to compliment my analysis of pandilla activity and dynamics in the district, specifically information related to the perceptions of residents on the activities of these youth groups (INSM, 2000:184-202).

One must argue that working with second-hand information obtained from local institutions, neighbours in the district, and a limited number of youths may skew or severely limit our study and present discussion. This, however, need not be true if we understand the humble intent of this essay; an attempt to open a debate over issues of constructionism and perception related to the youth violence phenomenon in Lima. This paper is not concerned with providing the reader with an ethnographical

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[5] See **Annex 1** for sample of informal, semi-structured interview.
[6] For detailed information on the institutional profile, history and programs developed by these organizations see "Diagnostico Situacional de la Salud Mental en Independencia" (INSM "HD-HN", 1999).

account on pandillas activity in Independencia nor numbers and graphs that may objectify the issue at hand. Discussing whether the organizations' perceptions are flawed or if their initiatives are effective does not concern us. Distancing our attention from the difficult task of judging a program as effective or valid will direct our study towards a discussion on the nature of an organization's paradigms for action; the models that will argue have shaped the way youth violence manifests itself in Lima.

The structure of this document has been articulated around the Chimaera allegory, attempting to address the issues that may account for the creation of this "social monster". Chapter I addresses the social matrix that has shaped the manifestation of the pandilla and it includes a section that discusses the way residents in the Independencia district conceive of this phenomenon. Chapter II discusses what I refer to as "professional constructions". This section includes a discussion of perspectives held by Federico tong and Aldo Panfichi, two local social scientists concerned with the study of violent youth groups in Lima, and the role played by the media in this context, exerting tremendous influence on how people perceive of violent youth groups in the city. This chapter briefly discusses the Peruvian legal system and the mechanisms developed to deal with violent youths. The final section of this chapter deals with the way people in Independencia perceive of the pandilla phenomenon in their district.

Chapter III discusses the different organizations in the Independencia district listed at the beginning of this section, and the strategies these apply when addressing violent youth groups in the area. Finally, Chapter IV brings forth Hacking's arguments as they relate to our subject of study, concentrating on two main issues that I believe require further study and debate, issues that relate to the identification of violent youth groups and the avenues through which we may effectively channel change and intervention.

CHAPTER I
'WHERE AND WHEN CHIMAERA LIVES'

Let us begin by situating Chimaera, "the idea of the pandilla" in time and space. This process is one does not aim to provide lengthy expositions and thorough discussions of demographical data, as a means to objectively portray the social reality lived in the urban context, the spatial context where pandillas area found. I believe that, in the context of our study, discussing graphs and figures is a useless enterprise that may in fact misdirect our attention, stopping us from discussing the subjective factors related to youth and violence that, as we shall see in a later chapter, greatly affect the nature of certain strategies aimed at violent youth groups in this context.

Chimaera cannot be quantified or attributed to numerical data and statistical trends, as it exists in temporal and spatial context that is built through perceptions and ideas. The perceptions and ideas I shall discuss in this section pertain to two general themes that relate to our understanding of "the idea of the pandilla": the nature of the socio-economic reality in these areas, and the debatable legacy of the Shining Path in pueblos jovenes like Independencia. We shall discover that Independencia is a unique community in terms of its geographic, social and historical configuration. Understanding the relationship between these configurations and the identity of Independencia as a pueblo joven is essential.

INDEPENDENCIA; PUEBLO JOVEN

Just fifty years ago, Peru was a predominantly rural and agricultural society. In 1940, 65 per cent of the total population lived in rural areas. The growing difficulties of rural life, coupled with the opportunities of unemployment and better social services in the capital, fed the waves of rural migration to urban centres. *Laissez-faire* attitudes by governments in the 1950s allowed migrants to organize massive land invasions on the city outskirts, where they built precarious dwellings and struggled to obtain basic services. Indeed, the pueblos jovenes generally lack running water, electricity, sewage, public transport, health and educational facilities (Chambers, 1997: 290).

The pueblos jovenes grew considerably throughout the years. In 1961, 316,426 people lived in the pueblos; about 17 per cent of the overall population. By 1981, 1.5 million people, nearly a third of Lima's population, resided in such areas. Today, 70 per cent of Peru's inhabitants are city dwellers, and 30 per cent live in Lima. Lima's growth has been spectacular: a city of 500, 000 in 1940, Lima today has 6.4 million inhabitants (Chambers, 1997: 289). It is estimated that today, 3 to 3.5 million Limeños live in pueblos jovenes - about half of the capital's total population (Driant, 1991).

According to Leeds (in Dietz and Moore, 1979), to generalize about the pueblos jovenes of Lima is both risky as well as a fruitless task, since the differences among settlements are so profound (28). Stokes (1995:13) in looking for a 'typical' pueblo joven where to conduct her study of social movements in Peru chose Independencia because it was a district "that was built up gradually through a combination of land invasions and government housing programs, [following] a more typical pattern". While we may consider Independencia as a shantytown that followed a typical pattern of development, we have to account for and emphasize specific characteristics that make this district different from other ones, especially as these differences may relate to the experience of youth violence in the area.

Independencia was founded in 1960, and its beginnings are those related to the migration processes of people from rural areas to the capital city. The geographical origin of residents in the district is mainly from the Sierra region. However, not all the population moved in from outside the urban centre; some of Independencia's first residents came from the Callao and Lince districts.

The first evident characteristic exhibited by the district is its unique geographical context. Independencia is dominated by a mountainous topography that provides for small community "pockets", valleys that have allowed for the different subdistricts to grow somewhat independently from one another (See Map 1). Independencia's five subdistricts are, from west to east: Tupac Amaru, Tahuantinsuyo,

Independencia, la Unificada, El Ermitaño and the Industrial Sector. One may argue that in fact the unique physical characteristics outlined above have provided for close-knit communities, allowing each subdistrict to develop a particular communal personality.[7] Unificada, Ermitaño and Independencia are newer settlements that followed the formation of the Tahuantinsuyo and Tupac Amaru subdistricts.

Three stages of development can be outlined to help us better understand the growth of the Independencia district. The first stage (1959-1969) is a period when migration waves to the city centre were forming the new barriadas. This is how the growth of areas outside the city centre began, areas which are today known as "conos" or city cones. Independencia exists in the Northern Cone of the city of Lima.[8] Occupation of the Independencia during this stage took two forms: land invasions and the planned occupation of Independencia's popular urbanization, Tahuantinsuyo. Land invasions started in Pampa Cuevas; what today is known as the Independencia subdistrict. On the other hand Tahuantinsuyo, formally founded in 1963, had roads, community facilities and plots of land already delimited. 40 per cent of the territory in the district was occupied during this period, and the most accessible terrains and flat lands were targeted first.

The second stage of urbanization (1970-1979) is one of consolidation. The military government affected this stage and the government adopted the role as leader of social development strategies in urban poor districts. The creation of the SINAMOS in 1971 provided for an increased interest in the development of the barriadas. This is a stage where Independencia is consolidated as a district, where certain strategies aimed at reordering the district's public space take place. The largest number of invasions took place at the end of 1978. After this stage, it became clear that most habitable areas in the district have been occupied (CIPEP, 1990).

During the third stage of development (1980-1990) housing was needed, not only by migrants from outside the district, but also by the sons and daughters of the first migrants to occupy lands in the district. At this point in time, expansion of the urban centres of Independencia was not possible anymore. Less densely populated districts like Tahuantinsuyo and Tupac Amaru began to house people who were unable to find residence in other subdistricts. Asentamientos humanos multiplied in all subdistricts, especially in the highland areas where access to transport routes and services was unavailable. As a result, plots of land became overpopulated and areas reserved for specific social infrastructure development in the district were occupied. In 1990 the lower areas of Independencia had higher concentrations of people per residence, more than 300 people per occupied hectare and only forty 40 per cent of the territory in the district had been successfully occupied (CIPEP, 1990). According to the 1993 "National Census of Population and Housing" there were 183, 297 people living in the district, 49.3 per cent males, 50.7 per cent females and 37, 867 homes. The economically active population was 44.5 per cent and 9 per cent of the population was unemployed. Residents in the Independencia district were mostly working class people, a characteristic that remains visible today.

In a study conducted by the National Mental Health Institute (INSM), a qualitative distinction was made between the highland and the lowland areas of the district (INSM, 2000: 13). This distinction was centred on the evident differences between the urban population context (lowland) and the asentamientos humanos context (highlands). The former is an area in which residents have access to running water, electricity, sewage, roads and sidewalks. The later is one where at least one of these services is unavailable. According to the INSM, 40.6 per cent of Independencia's residents live in asentamientos humanos while 59.4 per cent live in the urban areas. The INSM argues that apart from the demographical data we may use to infer differences between the highland and lowland areas in the district, the community itself expresses a distinction between these contexts that is based on social differences between these areas; the highlands are regarded as ones were there are higher levels of poverty, family violence, youth violence, drugs and alcoholism.

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[7] Interview with Carlos Gutierrez (17/07/00)
[8] The Northern Cone of Lima is comprised of the following districts: San Martin de Porres, Independencia, Santa Rosa, Ancon, Puente Piedra, Ventanilla, Carabayllo, Comas and Los Olivos.

MAP 1 - THE INDEPENDENCIA DISTRICT
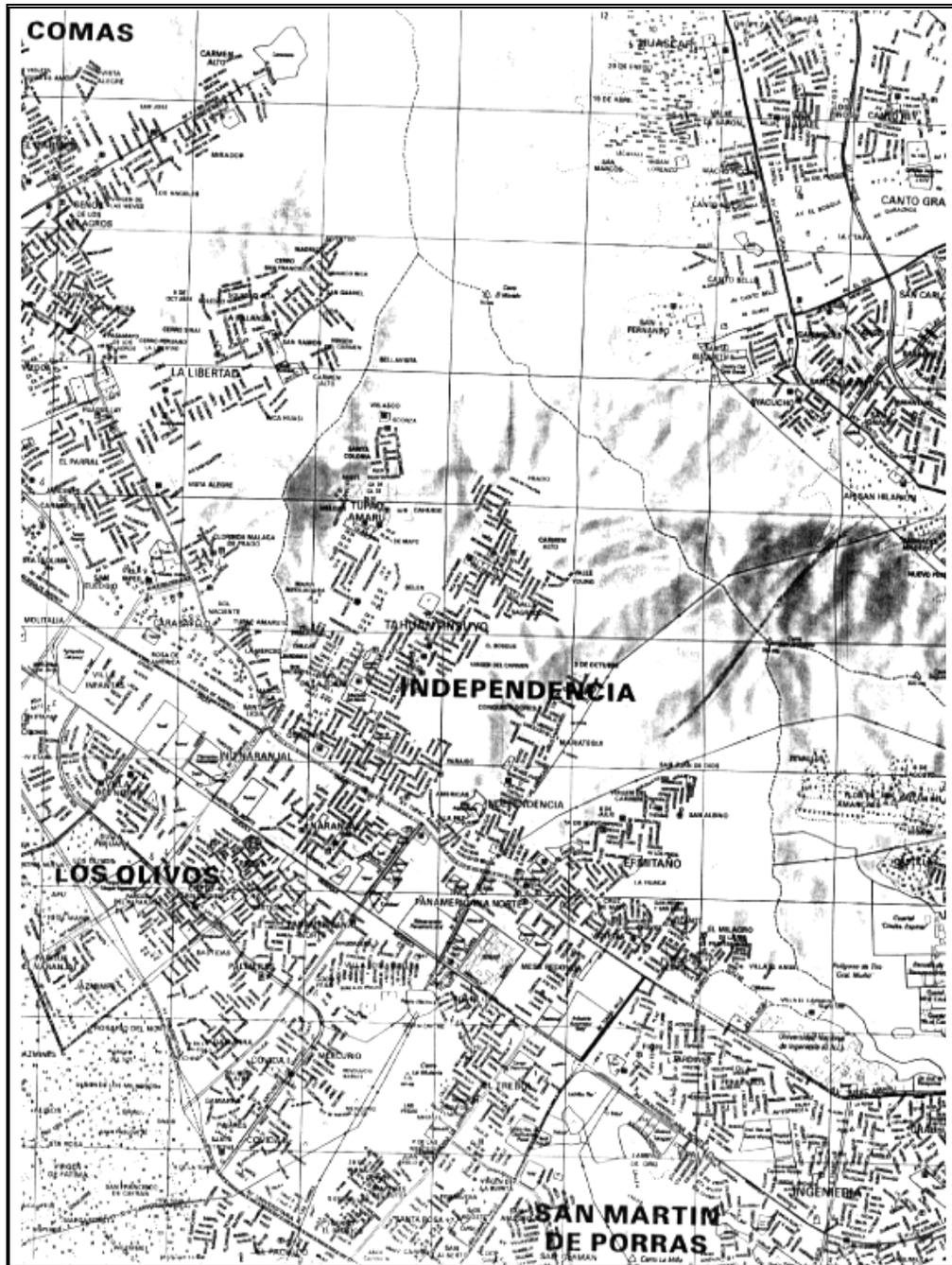
(Lima Plano 2000, Editorial Lima 2000)

In a study by Perales and Sogi (1995), the average family size Independencia is described as consisting of 6 to 9 members. Aldo Panfichi explains the average family structure in Independencia may provide us with interesting insights on the manifestation of youth violence in the district.[9] He argues that what makes Independencia different from other districts like Barrios Altos, for example, is that most households in Independencia consist of extended or multiple families, not nuclear ones. Thus, many children are able to effectively establish their first social bonds with relatives: cousins, brothers, or brothers-in-law, for example. In other words, they are not as limited or as affected as children who may only count with a nuclear family structure (which is usually disintegrated anyway) to formulate their first social bonds.

Panfichi describes how in Independencia we may notice that the houses people live have been built through "generational waves". In other words, the people who originally invaded the land were the ones that financed the construction of the first floor of their house. Then came the second generation of family members that would build the house's second floor. This goes on and on, allowing us to find houses with four floors in the district; different families live on each floor yet it is the same extended family that owns and inhabits the building. Panfichi argues that in districts like La Victoria, youth are almost immediately expelled to the street, the public space, because the house cannot keep on physically extending. In districts like Independencia there are less children being socialized to the street and more home environment to raise children in. The extended family structure not only provides for a better socialization dynamics in children but also provides a cushion for poverty, one that benefits all family members.[10] Panfichi argues that this factor has provided for less violent youth groups in Independencia, and that the context of youth violence in the district is not as grave as those of other urban poor districts like La Victoria, Barrios Altos, Rimac or Carabayllo.

When discussing youth violence in the pueblos jovenes we are likely to encounter different hypotheses on the legacy of the "Sendero Luminoso" (Shining Path), a terrorist movement with substantial political presence in the country during the 1980's and beginning of the 1990's, and its influence on the manifestation of youth violence in urban poor neighbourhoods. According to Panfichi, this legacy coincides with a time when today's pandilleros were children. He presents a hypothesis on the legacy of terrorism on violent youth groups in Lima and argues that there has been a transfer of "forms" from the Shining Path era to contemporary violent youth dynamics. This is a transfer of styles of a culture of political violence that "dramatically affected the local, neighbourhood and social context [in Peru]"[11]. This is not a transfer of ideologies aiming to harvest neither political objectives nor a situation where structures for political organization are passed on. Instead, it is a transfer where the paradigm of the warrior, the soldier, the revolutionary songs and names are passed along. In other words, Panfichi argues that a cosmovision has been transferred. He uses the example of a situation seen in some schools where we find older kids charging younger ones "cupos" (quotas) to allow them to use the cafeteria services or the washrooms. Panfichi argues that this exercise of power and oppression was first seen in the highlands, when Shining Path members demanded food quotas from peasants in exchange for their lives.

Panfichi believes that children in the pueblos jovenes have been socialized to a culture of terrorism by their families, their surroundings and especially by the media as "they were born in a country that lived a civil war". He explains how the pueblos jovenes where regularly targeted by the army, continuously raked by anti-terrorist squads, how the "civil war" included numerous car bombs and power cuts in the city of Lima, events that were heavily and continuously reported by the media and internalized by Lima's residents. He continues by stating that if we were to make a list of the names of pandillas today, we would notice the common use of warlike names: "Los Rangers", "Los Sicarios" (the assassins), "Los Malditos" (the damned ones), "La Armada" (the army), etc. According to Panfichi, most of these evidently bellicose names are derived from the context of a war. "This is a culture [of terrorism] where imposition and violence are perceived as modern and legitimate mechanisms through which to relate to other people", he explained. Panfichi believes that the culture of terrorism perpetuates the idea that the

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[9] Interview with Aldo Panfichi (24/07/00)
[10] Interview with Aldo Panfichi (24/07/00)
[11] Interview with Aldo Panfichi (24/07/00)

winner is he who defeats the other, not he who forms a pact or an agreement with someone. The winner is he who symbolically or pragmatically kills, exterminates: "Victory in this case entails the physical destruction of the other, just as in the context of a war".

While Panfichi's hypothesis is a suggestive one, employing plausible examples, we are still left dealing with assumptions and no empirical information. Because we do not count with empirical analyses of this phenomenon, this essay will consider the Shining Path legacy as one related to the history of violence in Peruvian society, but not as one that can be held solely or largely responsible for the existence of pandillas in the pueblos jovenes. While it may be true that "for Sendero Luminoso the large and growing population of urban poor was a fertile terrain to build a support base for their revolution" and that these sectors were perceived as key political objectives (Burt in Chambers, 1998: 291), we have to acknowledge that the consolidation of this terrorist movement's presence in the city was not fully accomplished. The January 1992 edition of *El Diario*, a Shining Path's clandestine newspaper stated, "Lima and the surrounding shantytowns are the scenario in which the final battle of the popular war will be defined" (Burt in Chambers, 1998: 292). This "final battle" however, did not take place; Abimael Gonzales, the movement's leader, was captured in 1993 and since the Shining Path has virtually disappeared from the national political scene.

However, it is a fact that Independencia experienced Shining Path activity during the 1980's and that local organizations interacted with members of such movement. Pedro Gonzales, the coordinator of the confirmation program in Independencia's Santa Rosa Church, remembers that in 1986 religious youth group meetings were suspended because members of the Shining Path and the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement[12] began infiltrating community associations like his own[13]. While it is true that many children and families living in poor neighbourhoods have coexisted closely with terrorist violence and that many children have had family members in either side of the conflict, in the police forces or in the subversive contingent, we have not been able to establish what was the real effect of this situation on urban poor populations. While many social scientists like Panfichi may argue in favour of this plausible argument, this essay will regard such relationship as one subject to controversy and in need of further research. While this hypothesis can be supported in commonsensical fashion it cannot be supported empirically and thus should be noted with caution.

I must emphasize, however, that this reservation to accept the Shining Path's legacy as main influence in the manifestation of youth violence in the city is strictly related to the discussion of the pueblo joven context; the violent legacy of the Shining Path on youths in provinces like Ayacucho, Apurimac, and Huancavelica has been clearly accounted for (CEAPAZ, 1997). The presence of the Shining Path in the Peruvian highlands provided for the deaths of more than 30, 000 people and the forced displacement of approximately 600, 000 individuals fleeing from the conflict and its effects. It has also been established that the antiterrorist response by the Peruvian army generated a crossfire violence context that worsened the situation (CEAPAZ, 1997:9).

It is interesting to note that a discussion of the influence of the Shining Path's legacy on the legal tools and structures developed by the state to deal with violence in the last decade has begun. CEAPAZ argues "the criminalization of the child and adolescent, produced especially after 1992, exposed them to an emergency penal system, where human rights were systematically ignored" (1998: 26). While this statement refers specifically to youths that were forced to participate in terrorist actions through their involuntary recruitment, this comment may help us understand the type of legal system that developed throughout the 1980s in direct reaction to the terrorist presence in the country; the same type of legal system that would eventually receive violent youths, the pandilleros, in the 1990s. The design of Legislative Decree #889 implemented in 1998 and aiming to deal with the pandillas clearly echoes the laws applied to individuals involved with terrorist activities. We shall return to this subject in Chapter II.

An issue that I believe has been left unattended by social scientists and institutions interested in the study of youth violence in urban poor areas is the relation between this phenomenon an the cultural an

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[12] The "Movimiento Revolucionario Tupac Amaru" or MRTA is a terrorist group that appeared in the mid-eighties.
[13] Interview with Pedro Gonzales (24/07/00)

ethnic makeup of the community were violent youth groups exist. I was unable to find studies that dealt with the impact of generational and ethnic identity differences between youths and their parents in the urban poor context. While I will not discuss ethnic or generational controversies in this essay, there is a particular issue related to these themes that I do wish to briefly address.

Thornberry (1997: 26) explains that youths who exist in a context where their biological age does not match their social age exist in what he refers to as a "maturity gap". This five-to-ten-year-old vacuum is created when youths who are biologically mature (able to reproduce) are asked to delay "the most positive aspects of adult life", like independence and autonomy for example. While youths in rural areas exercise their adult role relatively briefly after they reach biological maturity, youths in the city have to wait longer, remaining dependant and allowed few decisions of any real import in society. According to Thornberry (1997: 26), this maturity gap may force youths to look for ways through which to legitimize their maturity; some may even decide to imitate the attitudes of other young individuals who, despite their belonging to society have managed to assert an autonomous and self-sufficient identity; even though these youth's activities may be morally sanctioned by society.

Assuming that youths in pueblos jovenes, the sons and daughters (or granddaughters and grandsons) of people who once resided in rural areas, may be regarded as being trapped in this "maturity gap", it would be logical to suggest that their interest in joining pandillas is related to their interest to assert their maturity by morally sanctioned yet rewarding means. This hypothesis is one that cannot be proven or disproved today, as we lack substantial studies of generational and ethnic identity conflicts among youths and their parents in urban poor neighbourhoods. However, I do believe that such idea is worth research and concern, as future studies may reveal that particular differences in generational identities among urban poor settlers may account for some of the reasons youths may have to join the pandillas.

The urban poor context, the "matrix" Hacking refers to (1999:10), is one that has been affected by certain processes that have not only shape the way youth violence manifests itself in these areas, but also the way people inside and outside this reality react against it. Let us keep in mind the potential perceptions towards people in these districts that may have developed throughout the years of invasions and occupations of these areas. We may find that appreciations of the urban poor context may be partly blurred by relentless hypotheses on the severe effects of terrorist violence on the population and by the social stigmas that may accompany the identity of an economically depressed community. As future studies may unravel real or unreal links between poverty and violence, let us now move on to discuss Chimaera's human personality; the perspectives that are used to understand the pandillero's *raison de etre*.

CHAPTER II
'WHO IS CHIMAERA?'

Chimaera, "the idea of the pandilla" has been formulated trough different interpretations of the youth violence phenomenon. This section discusses a number of interpretations that have and will continue to have an important influence on the way Peruvian society perceives of the pandillas, their identities, motivations and objectives. I have chosen to address four particular interpretations I refer to as "professional constructions". These constructions pertain to individuals and entities that have addressed the existence of violent youth groups in society according to their specific professional interpretative roles. We will see how media informs on the existence of pandillas, how the existing legal system judges pandilleros and how two social scientists elucidate the youth violence issue through functionalist models. This chapter's last section discusses the particular interpretations of pandillas and their actions by residents and youths in Independencia's Tahuantinsuyo subdistrict, perspectives that usually conflict with most professional constructions. Discussing this myriad of interpretations will help us better understand Chimaera's elusive identity.

PROFESSIONAL CONSTRUCTIONS

Federico Tong and Aldo Panfichi are two social scientists involved in the study of violent youth groups in the city of Lima. Tong has conducted research within pandillas, becoming particularly acquainted with violent youth groups in the El Planeta neighbourhood in the Cercado de Lima district. On the other hand, Panfichi specializes on the study of barras in the city and is quite involved in strategies that aim at addressing the activities of these youth groups. Let us begin by discussing the internal structure of a pandilla, using an interpretative model provided by Federico Tong.

What makes (and breaks) a pandilla?

Tong (1998) explains that pandillas articulate themselves through two elements of identification that allow for effective group cohesion: (1) the role of the pandilla leader and (2) the identification with their territory. According to Tong, the role of the leader is transcendental in the development of the pandilla. A leader is in fact the groups' guide; he goes where no one else has gone. The pandilla's leader transmits security to its members and his attributes include recklessness, physical strength, and speed in decision-making situations. The barrio, the territory in which the pandilla develops, is an area to be protected and respected by the pandilleros (1998:76).

Tong argues that three factors are needed for a pandilla to exist: (1) a group of young people with specific goals (2) a minimum degree of organization that allows for shared dynamics among the members and (3) certain ways of reacting to the immediate environment the group lives in. He suggests we understand the pandilla as a group with "operational characteristics", with a history through which members learn, if not perfect, internal networks of communication, establishing a vocabulary and differentiating the roles within the group (1998:75). Tong confirms Whyte's (1943) thesis, explaining that what brings these type of groups together is a habitual group composition, the lack of clarity and security on the future to come by its members.

Perhaps one of the most paradoxical and enigmatic qualities of the pandilla is the fact that it combines elements of human cohesion and solidarity with those of open hostility and aggressiveness. The hostility and strength a pandilla may acquire through its antisocial behaviour may grow exponentially and reach dangerous levels that are in fact difficult to predict though the study of its individual members. According to Tong, the later violent elements have received greater attention (1998: 77).

Solidarity & human cohesion

The pandilla generates dependency networks among its members, mutual necessities and exchanges. These groups formulate rules and prohibitions that when violated lead to specific explicit or implicit sanctions. Sanctions against betrayal are in a way decided in an experimental fashion; there are no strict rules for specific negative actions (Tong, 1998). The leader and members learn from the effects of their decision and the expulsion of pandilla members is not uncommon. This procedure happens usually when members disregard the groups' internal norms and expectations in their actions. Tong (1998:78) presents the example of a pandilla in Chorrillos, a district in the southern region of the city, where certain members of the pandilla would attack their own members and steal from people in their own barrio. These individuals violated two commonly fundamental principles found in pandillas: (1) solidarity with your peers and (2) respect for your territory, and they were thus expelled.

Members of the pandilla are held accountable for their actions in front of their immediate peers. According to Tong this is an important fact that requires much attention. Pandilleros feel responsible towards their group, not towards the society that lives outside of it. These groups do not comply with legal or moral principles out of the realm of the pandilla, but instead they are loyal to their peers and equals, friends from school or their neighbourhood. Unknown or anonymous citizens or *desiguales* (unequals) are unimportant to the pandilla members; they ignore the rules of a society that ignores them (1998:76).

A homogenous group, the pandilla soon develops a particular language of its own that permeates its internal norms. Trust is based upon loyalty and expectations such as *sacar la cara* (defend someone), *no arrugar* (do not "shrink"/be a coward), *no ser soplón* (do not rat), *no ser maletero* (do not speak behind someone's back) are essential codes of honor to be maintained as a means to validate an individual's membership to the group (Tong, 1998: 77).

Hostility, aggressiveness and violence

For Tong, violence as used by the pandillas, is a multidimensional tool. In this context, violence has a spiral quality and there is no intrinsic use for it; "it spirals as the confrontation between to pandillas develops". Violence is a *mediation tool* used by pandillas and develops according to the opponent's response. However, Tong (1998:80-84) suggests we analyze violence in this context through different angles. Let us briefly address these perspectives of violence,

a. *As an expression of cultural crisis*

Though the exercise of violence, the young person aims to manifest his need to appear on the social stage. This need to be noticed is sometimes mediated by the media.

b. *As a medium of access to consumerism*

Adolescents in urban poor neighbourhoods are excluded from political participation, economic, social and cultural production. They obtain certain economic independence through petty robberies, allowing them to consume alcohol or drugs, dress better and provide for their family's economy. This independence is a reaffirming factor of their personality, and sometimes may become a way of life. These marginalized groups find a survival strategy in violence, a way of integrating themselves to the larger process of consumerism by our global society.

c. *As a source of emotions*

Violence becomes a sub-culture; a way of living accepted and validated by the pandilla. Non-violence, on the other hand, is considered a counter-norm and may be a reason to devaluate the individual's persona.

d.   *As self-defence - As discourse*

A specific discourse is generated when groups consider violent activities as justified. Violence is seen as a mechanism for self-defence, the aggression always coming from the other side and a need to protect oneself against it. This discourse sheds light upon an interesting construction of *self* and *other* that postulates the existence of a group of people with which "*we do not share any similarities with, not even a discernible human part. Not only are these groups different from *us*; they are also less worthy, less moral, and less good. Having diminished the human qualities the *other* may possess, *we* are liberated from any responsibility for violence against the *other* or any feeling of guilt*". Added to this subjectivity that frees the group from responsibility is the diffusion of responsibility that occurs when many individuals participate on a collective violent action (Mullen in Tong, 1998).

e.   *As factor for the construction of identity*

Violence provides for public recognition of a group's presence. It earns fear and respect from the general public. The desire to earn respect and be recognized is earned through violent activities by pandillas. This mechanism acts not only at the group level but also at the individual level, where a young person will strive to be the most aggressive, the most violent in an attempt to define his own persona.

According to Tong (1998) "violence within gangs pre-exists ideology". However, this does not imply a 'death of ideologies', but the realization that pandillas do not base their existence in utopian goals but on present day needs. According to the author, two youth movement currents have coexisted in Latin America. One we may refer to as the "militant current". This current is associated with left wing movements, progressive church groups, militarized or not. Its greater influence was felt during the 60s. The exercise of violence was notorious among these groups, especially on those that saw armed struggle as tool to transform society (1998:84).

The other current could be referred to as the "spontaneous current". The forms groups under this current may take are quite varied and thus all sorts of groups and clans may be incorporated under this banner. The formation of these groups is related to personal projects and orientations for actions. These groups respond to the necessity to share subjective experiences, to express desires, projects and ideas. According to Tong, it's in this spontaneous and informal current that we may find the pandillas (1998:84).

There are those that consider pandillas as clear indicators of a contemporary crisis where the young population is unable to organize itself politically, because it is disoriented and confused. However, one may also argue that these new groups are a much better reflection of the needs and realities lived by marginalized youth groups that come from popular sectors (Tong, 1998).

For Tong (1998) the pandilla is an expression of that quasi-gregarious youth spirit. These groups formulate survival strategies for its members and serve as forums for the construction of identity models and of significant referents to confirm its identity. The pandilla is the place that re-elaborates the use of spare time to be used collectively and the place where today thousands of young people and adolescents prepare themselves for adulthood (1998:78).

Barra versus Pandilla

After 1992, immediately after the most intense moments of political violence experienced during the 1980s, a massive irruption of youth groups into the stadiums took place. This irruption not only implied an increase in numbers of young people going to the soccer matches, but also the noticeable presence of youths *as part of a group* in the stadium. Panfichi explains that these groups may be referred to as pandillas, clans with a strong neighbourhood identity. Through this recent dynamic the barrio

(neighbourhood) goes to the stadium and the rivalries seen exclusively in the context of the stadium in the past are now carried back to the group's barrio. The later transfer reformulates local neighbourhood problems and conflicts, partially redefining them and attributing them greater elements for group identification. We can say that after 1992 a new actor appeared in the football scene: the pandilla, now transformed into a local barra. [14]

According to Panfichi, supporting a specific soccer club grants these youths a centre for their activities, it allows them to participate in a corpus of ideas that identifies the group with the club and, quite importantly, it allows them to organize their routines: they are pushed to develop an organic existence, with meetings, elections of "jefes de barras" (chiefs of barras), trips to provinces following the team, etc. Panfichi believes that the relation between soccer and pandillas is a positive one. He explains that many pandillas or groups of young people that belong to this secluded sector of society find in soccer a way of incorporating themselves to a global social dynamic. Soccer provides them with a centre, a sort of base on which to build on. The context of barra allows them to formulate a group dynamic centred on collective activities destined to support the soccer club they identify with. [15]

Panfichi believes that the support for a soccer club enriches the life of the pandilla. He explains that a pandilla that does not subscribe to these dynamics is basically left at the level of conflicts for territory and for the maintenance of the dominant leader's prestige. Panfichi argues that this type of groups are more likely to fall into delinquent activities and that their own existence is perhaps more ephemeral because it is linked to the leadership by one individual and not to a specific collective corpus derived from the belonging to a specific club, its history, and its symbol. Thus, a pandilla that does not enter subscribe to the dynamics of the barra is left without a centre for activity, support, routine; for bonding and linking the group to the greater society. A member of a barra becomes acquainted with other youth groups, turning into a collective actor linked to the members, players and struggles inside the local soccer club. [16]

According to Panfichi, both the pandilla and the barra share their support for violence as a way to resolve conflicts and relate to others. The type of violence that is exercised by these youths is not in the format of a fistfight; there is no physical full-contact situation. Instead, it is a fight at-a-distance using stones, slings, bottles and in the worst case scenario, guns. It is a collective fight, more distant and massive, where individuals with good long-range aim (the artillery, so to speak) are very important actors in confrontations. Like in soccer matches we find pandilleros that are referred to as the "paradores" (stoppers). The paradores are those who go in front, dodging stones.

Panfichi argues that there is a kind of war dance that takes place during confrontations between barras. One group chases the other until a certain point, then the other group chases the opponent, coming and going in a battle where apparently the most important thing is to push the other outside of a specified area and to corner the other group. The mini-recreation of pandilla territory dynamics is evident in this example. Confrontations, explains Panfichi, can incorporate 300 adolescents or more. These violent encounters usually consist of a mass of people against another; there are few fistfights if not any.[a] However, in the context of pandilla dynamics, confrontations do reach a one-to-one physical encounter simply because these youth groups are smaller. Panfichi argues that the pandillas and barras are different in the dynamics of violence they exercise. However, the barra cannot be defined merely as a pandilla that has adopted certain dynamics related to their collective support for a specific soccer club. "The barra is a network", stresses Panfichi, "its a network of networks that articulates the presence of different pandillas in the stadium". The direction a barra takes is a correlation of forces from the different pandillas that are part of the barra. The pandillas are forced to make alliances in other to build a collective yet unified power. In this way, Panfichi argues, we may say that the barra behaves like a political party. [17]

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[14] Interview with Aldo Panfichi (24/07/00)
[15] Interview with Aldo Panfichi (24/07/00)
[16] Interview with Aldo Panfichi (24/07/00)
[17] Interview with Aldo Panfichi (24/07/00)

Panfichi explains that there are hybrids, pandillas that primarily engage in delinquent actions during the week and adopt the identity of a barra during the weekend, when most soccer matches take place. This duality presents a conflict that intimately affect dynamics among people caught within it.

Pandilla versus Gang

In reviewing material related to pandillas, gangs and youth violence in general, a question rises: What differences are there between pandillas in Peru and gangs in the United States, for example? Panfichi argues that there are different factors that affect the dynamics of youth groups in these different settings. First, we could say that in the United States ethnicity plays a very important role in defining the identity of a gang. The ethnicity variable is not present with such strength in the Peruvian context, explains Panfichi. Here, the social class variable as organizational criteria for the pandilla is stronger than the ethnic one.[18]

A second element that differentiates these two contexts is that, in the United States, an element of consumer culture also affects the ethos of a gang. The corpus of norms and values is expressed though dress and consumption of a specific type of music, for example. In Peru, this consumer culture variable does not provide for strict frontiers or lines of differentiation. Furthermore, in the case of Peru we are talking about adolescents who are absolutely excluded from any possibility of entry into the economic system or the context of public or private institutions. In the United States the situation is different because there is a greater institutionalism that actively supports different cultural groups in the country. Indeed we find that there is an organized support from the Chicano or Puerto Rican community to influence the public schools they attend, for example. In Peru, youths lack these networks of potential support.

A third element is the use of violence and weapons seen in these two contexts. Panfichi argues that in Lima, pandillas will save the firearms for the culminating moment in a confrontation or the protection of their territory. In Lima the usual weapon is the stone, the bottle, the stick. However, in the United States most people involved with gangs own a gun. Panfichi argues that violence is more permanent in Lima, yet its magnitude is limited, more corrosive without reaching "gangsterism".

We cannot discuss Panfichi's and Tong's arguments before addressing the role of the media in the interpretation of pandillas, the perspective the Peruvian legal system has adopted to deal with members of pandillas and, more importantly, the interpretations of violent youth groups by the residents of the Independencia district; the people that share the same spatial and social context with the pandillas. I believe that Chimaera, "the idea of the pandilla" has been articulated through the interaction of these interpretations and the understanding of these interactions by the general public. This corpus of interpretations form Chimaera. However, these interpretations do not work in tandem, but mostly independently. We shall juxtapose these interpretations at the end of this chapter, discussing the harmonies and disharmonies that exist between them, relationships that determine Chimaera's personality.

CHIMAERA UNDER THE MEDIA SPOTLIGHT

One of the most important factors that need to be addressed in order to understand Chimaera's personality is the influence of the local media in shaping the identity of the pandilla, as well as socially-constructing the mythical robes these groups wear in recent years. Cruzado (1997) provides one of the few available collections of essays on this theme, a topic that has not been dealt with in sufficient depth. He argues that the local media perpetuates a strong association between young people and violence

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[18] Interview with Aldo Panfichi (24/07/00)

through the information it dispenses. It is not uncommon to find most newspaper articles on youth connected to a violent incident or context. Furthermore, Castro (in Cruzado, 1998) argues that the media has heavily insinuated the connection between pandilleros, violence and their seemingly unmistakable origin: the pueblo joven. Clearly, this insinuation may allow for the perpetuation of tension between social classes.

In my opinion, another issue of concern is type of information that people in the pueblos jovenes have easiest access to. Most people in the pueblos jovenes are forced to buy the least expensive newspapers, or "diarios chicha". These popular journals are renowned, not only for reinforcing a connection between young people and violence, but also for their use of blatantly racist, sexist and homophobic and socially degrading idioms of all sorts throughout their pages. Future studies that may concentrate on the effect of this type of mass information on people from urban poor areas may provide us with insightful information.

Santos (in Cruzado, 1998:67) describes a painfully common scenario where the media approaches pandillas, adopting a pseudo-participant-observation technique, and actively influences their behaviour, prompting them to be more aggressive for the camera and their story. This skewed representation of the pandilleros by the media provides for vicious circle that continues to feed an exaggerated image of fierceness and degeneration that today pervades public opinion. Let us compare the following extracts from a newspaper and a magazine reporting on the same pandilla in the *El Planeta* neighbourhood:

(a) February 1995

"There, [in El Planeta] we find Cirilo and his youth group called *Los Caminantes*, the most powerful and feared in this neighbourhood; from the 2 de Mayo Plaza to the Rimac River. Expecting to find stones and knives we discover a group of youths, tender and happy, like any other group, although their lives are marked by violence" (article in Cruzado, 1998:70, my translation).

(b) September 1995

"Their leader goes by the name of Cirilo, 23 years old, called "the monster" not only for the way he looks but also for what he may do to people during a fight. Generally, these are youths between 15 and 23 years old that spend their day in their precarious neighbourhoods, stealing from neighbours to fund their partying on the weekend. The same party in which the tales of how they opened up someone's head or got paid to kick the life out of a school boy, turn into a sadist ritual of initiation. An initiation into delinquency, nonetheless" (article in Cruzado, 1998:71, my translation).

It is interesting to note that while a superficial analysis of both extracts would led us to believe that (a) is more sympathetic appreciation of the pandilleros, it may be argued that both extracts share a similar negative concern. Santos (in Cruzado, 1998: 70) explains that while (a) uses the term "banda juvenil" (youth group) and (b) uses the term "pandillas" both have "violence" as their basic preoccupation and interest.

Santos (in Cruzado, 1998: 71) explains that the dates of publication (February and September) may account for the different perspectives adopted by each article. He argues that while society's concern with pandillas already existed in 1995, the emotional climate on these dates was fundamentally different. In September of 1995 many articles on youth violence were published and documentaries on pandillas and their violent activities were aired. The Peruvian Congress coordinated a forum during this time, a gathering that brought many sociologists together to present their views on this new pressing problem, "a new civilian security concern". Needless to say, September was a more emotionally charged month and hence it's published fruit.

It is important to note that (a) is an extract derived from interviews in which Cirilo, the leader of the pandilla, had attended wearing special attire. According to Santos, when Cirilo knew he was going to be interviewed, "he was wearing a T-shirt with demonic figures. He wore an earring, a ring and a handsome watch" (1998: 69). This process of self-representation, unusual in Cirilo's everyday behaviour, can be understood under Hacking's concept of *interaction* (1999: 31); the "idea of the pandilla" interacts with the member of a pandilla, through a vicious circle that may ultimately affect the manifestation of the violent youth group.

VIOLENT YOUTH AND THE LAW

Some time should be spent discussing the development of laws created to deal with juvenile delinquency in the twentieth century, structures that have been recently crafted to address the violent actions of pandillas and barras bravas. The evolution of these official legal procedures has influenced the way Peru, as nation state and society, perceives the pandillas. Let us briefly outline certain important stages in the development of such legal procedures, phases that reveal constant changes in the way the state has understood and judged violent youths throughout the last hundred years.

During the nineteenth century, minors received the same penal treatment as adults. This situation provided for a movement that was concerned with liberating children from this equation. This context facilitated the creation of the first Juvenile Court founded in Chicago in 1898 (Palomba in CEAPAZ, 1998: 8). During the first decade of the XX century, the tendency was to elaborate special norms and laws applicable to children and adolescents, especially for those young individuals who lived in "a situation of abandonment, material or moral danger". The doctrinal base for these new norms was the "irregular situation of minors". A minor "in irregular situation" was regarded as unable to adapt to society because of physical, mental or social deficiencies. This particular legal framework was a compassionate yet repressive one, dismissing what we known uphold as fundamental rights of children and adolescents.

In Peru, the appearance of the 1924 Penal Code was inspired in the "irregular situation" doctrine, addressing children and adolescent who committed legal infractions and those who were considered to be at risk of engaging in delinquency as potentially dangerous individuals. This model was based on an argument of guardianship that rejected the idea of punishment. Young offenders were regarded as needing "corrective treatments", and those who lived in abandonment were dealt with through similar procedures that attempted to deter their potential for criminal behaviours (CEAPAZ, 1998). Based on the "irregular situation" legal framework, the 1924 Penal Code handled a criminal perspective that viewed the young offender as a sick individual, suffering from a moral pathology. Furthermore, the young offender was considered a danger to himself and society, an individual in need of isolation, confined until his or her negative behaviour was somehow modified (1998: 14).

The Peruvian Minors Code established in 1962 was also derived from the "irregular situation" doctrine. It also included sections that dealt with minors living in abandonment, and in material or moral danger. This Code emphasized the need to evaluate the young offenders' actions through psychological analyses that aimed to establish the endogenous and exogenous causes determining their deviant conduct. This "personality assessment" strategy was a priority, while norms and legal rights possessed by young offenders acquired a lesser role (1998: 22).

The end of the twentieth century would witness the appearance of a new legal paradigm emphasizing an "integral model for the protection of childhood". This new model was born from the recent international adoption of the Convention on Children's Rights, approved by the United Nations in 1989 and implemented in Peru during the 1990s. Perhaps the greatest legal contribution this new model of "integral protection" provides is the recognition of children and adolescents as individual possessing certain inviolable rights. This new paradigm implied that children were not mere objects in need of society's guardianship, or individuals defined by their lacks and defects; they were not to be considered "minors", but complete and capable persons with legal and human rights (1998: 33).

Peru ratified the International Convention of Children's Rights through Legal Resolution 25278 in August of 1990. In 1993, the "Codigo del Niño y el Adolescente" (Children and Adolescent Code) came into effect. This Code was to act as a national juridical instrument based on the principles and norms of the International Convention of Children's Rights. According to CEAPAZ, the new Code reflects, with substantial validity, the principles and norms asserted by the International Convention. This new doctrine contributed to the eradication of the "irregular situation" doctrine that had prevailed for so long. The young offender would now be a subject with active rights and not an object for guardianship (2000: 48).

According to Teresa Maquilon[19], district attorney with jurisdiction over the Northern Cone's legal procedures related to children and adolescents, the new Code has provided for a positive redefinition of the concept of guardianship (in cases of material and moral abandonment) and the condition of young offenders as legal subjects. Young offenders are not treated as individuals who have committed delinquent activities but instead "have engaged in antisocial behaviours". While the application of this new Code is undoubtedly positive, it has encountered many obstacles and contradictions when interacting with other laws promulgated in recent years, a fact that deserves substantial study and resolution. The recent Legal Decree No. 899 "Pandillaje Pernicioso" (literally, "harmful/damaging gang activity") provides an example of this legal disharmony.

Already incorporated into the Children and Adolescent Code in a new official edition, Legal Decree # 899 or "Ley the Pandillaje Pernicioso" (pernicious pandilla law) presents inconsistencies when juxtaposed with the new Code's legal philosophy. According to CEAPAZ (2000: 80), norms under this law are incoherent with the principles behind the "socio-educational confinement measure" outlined by the new Code. This law provides for confinement as the only socio-educational measure applied to youths found guilty of being pandilleros. Through this law, penal time is determined according to the level of participation in the pandilla activities, distinguishing between "simple" or "aggravated" offences, outlining a special treatment for individuals that have acted as leaders of pandillas. Each sentence dictates different penal time. Simple offence entails confinement for a time no less than three years while an "aggravated offence" entails confinement for no less than three years and not more than six. For identified pandilla leaders, confinement time may last for no less than two years and not more than four. CEAPAZ (2000) argues that this law goes against the principle of "exceptionality of the privation of liberty" that the International Conventional and the new Code consecrate. CEAPAZ suggests that judges should consider treating minors under the normal legal system, using the socio-educational measures outlined by the new Code, saving law #899 as a last resource.

Legal Decree #895 addresses crimes of "Terrorismo Agravado" (aggravated terrorism) and presents an even grimmer legal treatment for young offenders. It violates different principles established by the International Convention and the new Code like the exceptionality principle related to the privation of a minor's freedom, the principles of "humanity in administering sentences" to minors, and the right of minors to engage in rehabilitation processes, to name a few. According to this law, adolescents between the ages of sixteen and eighteen, found guilty of "aggravated terrorism", can be prosecuted by military judges in a military court (CEAPAZ, 2000). Sanctions of up to 25 to 25 years of penal confinement can and have been administered, time that should be spend in prisons of maximum security under permanent individual confinement during the first year, where social contact is prohibited and all penitentiary benefits are absolutely restricted. Needless to say, this law does not support the social reintegration of the offender in society, but encourages his or her neutralization (2000:80).

The issue of legality and violent youth groups is an important one. In fact, we may argue that the creation of law #899 is an indicator of the government and society's concern with the youth violence issue in the city of Lima. This first legal reaction provides for many obstacles for organizations that are interested in addressing the existence of pandillas through a strategy of education an understanding, as posed to an authoritative, repressive response. Institutions like the DEMUNA in Independencia express that their particular interest in youth violence issues begun shortly after law #885 was implemented, as a reaction to the negative effects of such legal doctrine and the confusion it has created among judges and

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[19] Interview with Elizabeth Maquilón (11/8/00)

attorneys dealing with young offenders and pandillas. According to Carlos Gutierrez, director of the DEMUNA in Independencia, this law provides the judge with total subjective control over sentences that have immense consequences on youths. Perceptions on race, gender, and social class interact with the permissive nature of such legal doctrine, lending itself to sentences based on stereotypes and prejudices.[20]

Having discussed the dynamic relationship between the pandillero and the stereotype of the pandillero facilitated by the media as well as the way the Peruvian legal system attempts to deal with the pandillero by neutralizing its actions and criminalizing its existence, we move on to an important question. How do youths in Independencia perceive of the pandillas? So far we have dealt only with "professional constructions" of the pandilla phenomenon. All of these explanatory models, representations and legal systems reflect one side of the problem that we shall continue examining in the next chapter when we address the perceptions of organizations attempting to address the youth violence phenomenon. We shall now turn our attention to those youths in neighbourhoods like Tahuantinsuyo, individuals who not only have an opinion about the pandillas, but also deal with the immediate existence of such groups as part of their lives. Let us compare how the "professional constructions" outlined above may or may not fit with the interpretations of people that actually exist in the pandillero's social context.

VIOLENT YOUTH IN INDEPENDENCIA

As I mentioned in this essay's introduction, the pandilla context presents a security risk to the casual observer and even more so to the curious anthropologist. While several efforts were made to meet with people who could serve as liaisons with pandillas in the Independencia district, the result was unsuccessful.[b] However, certain conversations with different youths in the area, interviews with local organizations and a focus group with members of a religious youth group may help us better understand, to a limited extent, certain characteristics of Independencia's youth violence and pandilla activity context.

Before discussing youth violence in Independencia we should note the implications of our complete dependence on oral accounts to illustrate this context. Oral accounts in this section should be regarded as ones potentially charged with a great deal of moral discursiveness derived from a popular perception of violence as an amoral dynamic; one that is sinful in the religious context and downright negative in the social milieu. This situation is further affected by the fact that this morality does not stand by itself, but is also permeated by negative social stereotypes and discrimination. Hence, we must be aware of these potential biases and regard this information with caution.

"Vamos a Caminar" is a religious youth group that was formed with the aid of Pedro Gonzales and with the support of Independencia's Santa Rosa Church. This group is meant to serve as a continuation of the confirmation ceremony most catholic adolescents prepare for during their last year of high school. Manolo, Luis, Laura, Marcos and the rest of the group are all residents of the Tahuantinsuyo sub-district. Most of them have finished high school, and attend the group's meetings every Sunday afternoon. A focus group was conducted with ten of its members, concentrating on the issue of youth violence in the district.

According to Pedro Gonzales[21], responsible or the existence of "Vamos a Caminar" and coordinator of confirmation program in the Santa Rosa Catholic Church, pandillas have been present in the district since 1979. He explains that these groups were mainly neighbourhood-related: "the ones from Ricardo Palma", "the ones from the Fourth [Stage]", "the Bad Boys", etc. [22] He described that twenty years ago these groups were strictly delinquent in their activities and that today "even "zanahoria"[23]

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[20] Interview with Carlos Gutierrez (17/07/00)
[21] Interview with Pedro Gonzales (24/07/00)
[22] There are four "stages" or politically recognized geographical areas in the Tahuantinsuyo urbanization.
[23] The term "zanahoria" means "carrot". In this context the term is part of urban slang, a pun on the word "sano" which means "healthy". Being Zanahoria being tranquil and vice-free.

youths in the district are pandilleros". Amaro Perez [24], program coordinator of a non-governmental organization in Independencia, supports this last statement explaining how young people in his programs have pointed out that, while pandillas do exist in the district, there are also "grupos" or groups of youths that are non-violent yet are labelled as pandillas. He explains that many non-violent groups in Independencia adopt names and labels just as pandillas do, in an attempt to assert their group identity within the district. This issue of categorization of pandillas is extremely important in understanding Chimaera within the urban poor context. Outside the Independencia district pandillas are regarded as intrinsically violent. Within the district pandillas may be non-violent, a difference in the local understanding of violent youth groups that is especially important when designing intervention programs that will address pandillas in Independencia according to the former, violence-determined yet inaccurate definition in the case of Independencia.

The distinction between "grupos" and pandillas is not explicit in descriptions of youth groups in the area. Most people in Independencia, including the youths in our focus group, use the term pandilla to define both violent and non-violent groups. Hence, we must proceed with caution when attempting to understand pandilla dynamics in the district. During all interviews and focus groups I made my especial interest in violent youth groups explicit. This prompted my informants to concentrate on the pandillas like the ones discussed by Tong and Panfichi in a previous section. Henceforth we may resume our discussion and assume that testimonies and examples provided refer explicitly to violent pandillas and not the non-violent "grupos".

According to "Vamos a Caminar", there are around thirty pandillas in Independencia. Apparently, the age range in these groups has increased. Pandilla members are younger and pandillas have increased in size, now consisting of thirty members or more. "They [pandilla members] were around seventeen or sixteen years old…now they are thirteen or fourteen", Luis commented. He added that there were also pirañitas (little piranhas) in the area. The pirañitas are perhaps one of the most shocking examples of marginalized youth groups in the city of Lima, consisting of hoards of usually intoxicated children between nine to twelve years old who systematically attack and rob pedestrians, leaving them literally naked and injured. Manolo explained that there lots of these children in Independencia, many coming from Maranguita, a well-known juvenile detention centre in the city. However, in a later interview, Carlos Gutierrez, director of Independencia's Municipal [Ombudsperson] for Children and Adolescents, contested such statements and denied the presence of pirañitas in the district.[25]

 Most pandillas in Independencia define their identity in relation to the particular local soccer club they support.[26] It is interesting to note that the names of pandillas mentioned during the focus group follow a specific set of what I will refer to as unspoken "name rules". If a youth group supports the Club Alianza Lima, the group will generally attempt to use a name that contains the letter 'A'. Similarly, a group that supports Alianza's nemesis, the Club Universitario de Deportes, will attempt to use a name that contains the letter 'U'. Groups that support Alianza Lima will avoid using the letter 'U' in their names as this may lead to the modification of their graffiti signatures on walls in the district by members of the rival team who, by virtue of the presence of their letter on a wall, will write their signature over their opponents' mark. Youth groups follow "name rules" that in fact allow the casual listener to easily determine what club each youth group supports simply by knowing its name. I believe that this phenomenon contests Panfichi's appreciation of the adoption of bellicose names by pandillas as a result of the Shining Path legacy in urban poor areas. I suggest that, in the case of Independencia, the adoption of names by youth groups responds primarily to the "name rules" outlined above as opposed to the influence of a legacy of terrorism in these areas.

When asked about the dynamics within a specific pandilla in Independencia that supported the " Universitario" soccer team, Marcos, a former pandilla member responded:

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[24] Interview with Amaro Perez (02/08/00)
[25] Interview with Carlos Gutierrez (17/07/00)
[26] Focus group (30/07/00)

> They are very organized…they meet every Friday night. They even have a treasurer and a secretary. Nobody can miss the meetings… [27]

He mentioned that the meetings held by pandillas were very organized and usually took place before going attending the stadium where their team was playing. Sometimes pandillas would merge when going to the stadium, or when confronting pandillas from neighbouring districts like La Victoria and El Rimac, for example. "The stadium is their objective, their maximum goal is to worship their team" explained Luis, a member of the religious youth group. [28] This dynamic echoes Panfichi's thesis on the relationship between pandillas and barras. However, in Independencia the soccer club component is especially strong, existing almost as a norm among the pandillas. In this case the pandilla does not act as a barra only in the context of the stadium but also on the neighbourhood. It was surprising to discover that some pandillas have actually established links with local clothing importers, managing to print T-shirts for their group, a unique attire that is used especially when attending soccer matches. Some members of "Vamos a Caminar" suggested that pandillas without specific affiliation to a local soccer club usually exist to provide its members with access to drugs[29] and to facilitate theft activities by the group in the district.

The group noted the existence of pandillas formed exclusively by women in the district and provided an example of a pandilla called "Chicago Chico" from the First Stage in Tahuantinsuyo. There used to be a pandilla called "Chicago Chico" which did not allow women in its ranks. This situation motivated the appearance of a female version of the original pandilla. According to the group, this replication and coexistence was possible because both groups belonged to the same neighbourhood. [30] Apparently, the number of girls in pandillas has increased in recent years. Some of the group's members believed this increase was due to the fact that girls are trying to imitate the behaviour of boys in the district. Others believed that girls were allowed in the pandillas so that the male members may take advantage of them when drunk or intoxicated.

Maria commented that she felt no pressure to be in the pandillas from pandilla members in her neighbourhood. She explained how her brothers are friends with such members, in an attempt to establish and friendly relation with them. "Now that they now I am my brother's sister, they don't harm me", she explained. [31] According to Maria, being in good terms with the pandillas in her neighbourhood was necessary especially because she lived close to a public school. "Before, they [the pandillas] used to get out of school and a huge fight would take place". This does not happen anymore because the neighbours had organized themselves and would call the police each time these confrontations took place. Today, the pandillas in Maria's neighbourhood hang out in the corner of our street without disturbing its residents. [32]

Maria's comment sheds light over an interesting issue related to youth violence in the district. During my study noticed that, when asked about pandillas and their activities in the area, many people would usually offer stories of violent confrontations between youth groups *after school*. Some residents related pandilla activity to this setting; a situation where groups of students would fight against each other in war-like fashion, throwing stones and sticks at each other. Marcos commented that before it used to be worst; the fight included the use of knives and sometimes teachers in the school came out to fight, or pandilleros would literally throw them out of the institution's facilities. [33]

Perez[34] states that there is difference between violence by pandillas and youth violence as seen in the context schools within the district. This is an interesting situation that identifies yet another context of youth violence dynamics in need of study and definition. There is no relevant information on the context of violent youth groups in schools in Independencia. While we will not discuss this context at length, we

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[27] Focus group (30/07/00)
[28] Focus group (30/07/00)
[29] According to "Vamos a Caminar", commonly used drugs in Independencia include marihuana, cocaine, liquor, and "combinados"; concoctions of the substances mentioned above.
[30] Focus group (30/07/00)
[31] Focus group (30/07/00)
[32] Focus group (30/07/00)
[33] Focus group (30/07/00)
[34] Interview with Amaro Perez (02/08/00)

will briefly discuss the strategies schools pursue in an attempt to deal with this violence in Chapter III. These strategies are particularly interesting because of most of them focus on the individual and not the group, using workshops that reinforce self-esteem, moral values and norms. For now, it sill suffice to state that we need to discern between the context of violence in schools and in the streets, at least until substantial qualitative information may allow us to effectively relate contexts these together.

According to "Vamos a Caminar", there is no pressure from pandilleros pushing them to join one of these groups. However, Manolo suggested that obtaining protection from a pandilla could be a strong motive to join one. He explained how some pandillas show a sense of solidarity with in their same neighbourhood. Marcos, once the student president of his school, provided an example of this solidarity describing how one night he was responsible of taking home a large amount of money his school had made in a celebration. The pandillas in his barrio were robbing pedestrians at that time but when they saw Marcos they recognized him, told the rest of the pandilleros to leave him alone, and "nothing else happened". [35] Manolo commented on how he had attended three meetings of a pandilla in his neighbourhood, just so they may know him and not harm him.

Youths in the focus group commented that the pandillero is a person who is usually admired and respected especially by youths in school. Many of these youths join the pandillas because they want to obtain respect from their peers in their school or in the street. A relationship with a pandilla provides support in case of conflict with other groups and a sense of prestige and respect. Manolo argued that fighting in the pandilla is a condition to earn this respect from the group itself, and a confrontational attitude is a requisite to one's acceptance as a member. He commented on how he, a fan of the Alianza Lima Club, attends a school in an area of the subdistrict that supports the Universitario team. Members of that neighbourhood's pandilla are almost conditioned to throw him outside their territory every time they see him. [36] Gonzales', referring to the role of violence in pandillas, commented on how a youth that he regarded as possessing a tranquil personality told him that when he was in the pandilla he felt motivated "to protect his people". Youths develop a sense of ownership towards the pandilla, and their duty becomes to protect what is theirs. When asked about the potential for inflicting serious physical harm on others the youth told Gonzales that "sometimes one just forgets". [37]

Perez explains that many of the youths he has worked with in the past easily connect the pandillero's persona with a hard life, one in which the individual is affected by drug abuse, family violence and other emotionally harmful social components. They believe this exposure to a harsh social and family environment provides for violent behaviours and usually determines if an individual is involved in the pandillas or in the non-violent "grupos". Marcos's story relates to this hypothesis. He says he joined a pandilla because he couldn't stand being at home dealing with the conflicts between family members, and because the people in the pandilla were his friends. However, Marcos left the pandilla after witnessing a violent confrontation between two of its members involving the use of a broken bottle as a weapon. He vividly describes the harsh environment lived within the pandilla context and remembers a fight where a pandillero bit another pandillero's finger off. The victim did not surrender and counterattacked by biting a piece of the aggressor's ear off. The body parts were found the next day[38]. It is interesting to note that the factors that possibly pushed Marcos into a pandilla are the same ones that pushed him out. When asked about why he did not return to the pandillas he responded: "I stopped following those leaders, those that were leading me to fights and problems. I looked for a leader that guided me to that which is correct, and that leader is Jesus Christ".

When asked about what she thought could be a potential solution to the problem of youth violence in the area, Laura argued, "It is up to them to want to change". Then she suggested that "they should look for the support of real friends" and join groups like theirs, one that attempts to contribute to the social well being of the district. Marcos, on the other hand, suggested a more pragmatic approach; leaders in the pandillas should be targeted, as they were the ones that always looked for fights and

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[35] Focus group (30/07/00)
[36] Focus group (30/07/00)
[37] Interview with Pedro Gonzales (24/07/00)
[38] Focus group (30/07/00)

confrontations, coercing you to engage in similar activities.[39] Gonzales himself has attempted to find out where the pandillas meet so that he may motivate these youths and their leaders to join "Vamos a Caminar". However, many pandilleros that know him have told him "If you go, *te vamos a aboyar*[40]".

When discussing the role of the police in this context, the youths from "Vamos a Caminar" coincided on describing this institution's indifference towards pandillas in the district. They explained that the police are not interested in responding to this type of violence. Marcos mockingly added, "They only come if someone dies".[41]

Violent pandillas do exist in Independencia. "Grupos" or non-violent youth groups exist in the same context and are also often referred to as "pandillas" in popular discourse. These non-violent groups also use names and labels, a fact that seems to indicate a trend among the district's youth. The use of the term "pandilla" to refer to both types of youth group dynamics is affected by an implicit attribution of violence to any group referred to or accepting its "pandilla" identity, whether violent or non-violent. This attribution of violence taints the perception of the "grupos", immediately including them in the context of violence in the district. Furthermore, the context of youth violence in Independencia also includes episodes of confrontations between violent youth groups after school. These confrontations may or may not be attributed to violent pandillas, as we are unable to outline the specific dynamics that prompt such episodes outside educational institutions. This phenomenon is also attributed to the pandillas, establishing another *de facto* relationship that is often taken for granted, further clouding our appreciation of youth violence dynamics in the district. I believe these unapparent inclusions confuse those attempting to understand the context of violence in the district and address violent pandillas in the area.

Pandillas in Independencia subscribe to specific soccer clubs and interact according to their identity as supporters of such entities. We could say that Panfichi's observation on how "rivalries usually seen exclusively in the context of the stadium are carried back and into the groups barrio" holds true in this context. Pandillas that do not subscribe to a specific soccer club are considered as strictly delinquent in nature. One may argue that these are borderline groups that are associated under the pandilla category with certain hesitation by the members of the community.

Tong's functionalist model outlines certain internal pandilla dynamics that may be found in the context of Independencia; the importance of leaders, rules and inter-group dynamics. However, this model's validity in the context of Independencia may be assessed only after thorough ethnographical studies are conducted in the area. Nevertheless, I must argue that Tong's interpretations on the use of violence by pandillas attributes excessive and unwarranted importance to a tacit desire to assert their presence in the social and global stage (See page 20). Tong states that pandillas base their existence not on utopian goals but on pragmatic needs. I believe that access to a global consumer society is not specifically a utopian interest, but one that it is clearly non-pragmatic in the context of pandillas in areas like Independencia. Furthermore, I believe that Tong fails to discriminate delinquency from violence. Is it valid to regard theft in this context as a (violent) tool to access to global consumer society? While it may be true that youth in urban poor neighbourhoods are groups excluded "from political participation, economic, social and cultural production", we may contest such claim by stating that *everyone* inside the urban poor context may be see as excluded from social and economic production and power by virtue of this socio-economic context. In other words, this exclusion does not pertain to youths alone. Is it valid to consider pandillas as interested in accessing global consumer society? I believe this is an unwarranted statement that views pandillas as working towards the achievement of notoriety and power in society; a hypothesis that contradicts the "pragmatic needs" mentioned by Tong as determinants of pandillas' existence.

While violence does grant pandillas with public attention, regarding violent behaviour as a tool to assert the pandilla's presence in society or to access the global consumerist society is unreasonable. We

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[39] Focus group (30/07/00)

[40] "Aboyar" literally translates 'to dent or nick'. This is slang for "physically harming or killing someone".

[41] Focus group (30/07/00)

have already discussed the interaction between the "idea of the pandillero" and the pandilleros as facilitated by the media. I believe this interaction does not include an underlying interest by the pandilla to "assert its presence" on the social stage. I would suggest that the assertion of a pandilla's presence through violence is one that is responds directly to the presence of other pandillas in the area, other young individuals that exist in this particular universe. Like the living being (human or non-human) that watches its reflection on a mirror for the first time; the pandilla interacts harmoniously with the media. But this curiosity and interest is fleeting; the human poses and the animal growls, gradually losing interest in its reflection. The media began reporting intensely on the existence of pandillas only five to six years ago. While a harmonious relationship between the media/mirror and the pandilleros exists today, one may only hypothesize over how long this fascination and accord may last.

My main concern with Tong's model is related to its limited concern with the ecology of the pandilla, presenting this groups without providing a discussion of the environment (family environment, poverty, lack of education, etc) related to pandillas and the factors that may or may not affect the origin and role of violence as seen in the context of these youth groups. How is the experience of pandillas in the *El Planeta* neighbourhood shaped by its particular geographic, historical, social and cultural context? I believe further studies should concentrate on providing for a discussing on the ecology of the pandilla and violence as seen in this context. This information may in fact help us not only understand the existence of pandillas but also the way through which violence becomes a familiar dynamic among these youths.

We are not able to fully assess if Panfichi's argument on how pandillas without a link to a soccer club are more likely to fall into delinquent activities holds true in the case of Independencia. However, we can argue that pandillas related to a soccer club seem to be regarded as more grounded and present in the context of youth violence in the district. Future studies may reveal that the existence of pandillas-not-barras is indeed more ephemeral due to its disconnection to a specific collective corpus derived from the support for a specific soccer team. For now we can only state that generally, pandillas in Independencia identify themselves with a soccer club and define their identity accordingly. The expression of such identity not only takes place in the context of the stadium and determines the interaction among pandillas in the neighbourhoods and the activities within each group. The process through which this identity is formulated is unclear and in need of future studies. Understanding this formulation may help organizations craft programs in relation to this adherence to soccer club identities.

By now it should be evident that there is substantial overlapping of terms, definitions, factors, and ideas about the pandillas. Factors that define youth groups as pandillas in the context of the pueblo joven are not strict. The lack of diagnostic studies on pandillas in the district provides for a void that in turn nurtures Chimaera's presence in this community's context. One fact though, is particularly clear; the pandilla, understood in different ways by different individuals and entities, has become the primordial manifestation of youth association dynamics in the pueblos jovenes.

CHAPTER III
ADDRESSING CHIMAERA

Most programs that attempt to address violent youth groups are quite recent, some government-sponsored initiatives having started just over a year ago. This situation allows us to explore this particularly interesting moment in time, when organizations are beginning to formulate strategies based on their present understanding of youth violence dynamics in the city. Each organization's experience may provide us with different explanatory models, paradigms used when attempting to address this local concern, each program and initiative shaped by a specific organizational context.

While most organizations have worked in one way or another with pandillas or pandilleros, few of them have actually created programs specifically targeting this issue. It is important to discriminate between programs that are especially concerned with violent youth groups and those that focus of other youth issues yet inevitably encounter this concern. We shall see that most programs deal with pandillas because they have to; as recent years have demanded the inclusion of such groups in the programs as a reaction to the apparent gravity of the situation. Because the pandillas are part of the districts' youth scene their acknowledgement in programs for youths is almost inevitable.

As I mentioned before, the analysis of the different organizations and programs designed to address the youth violence issue in the Independencia district will not rely on an assessment of institutional profiles. Our analysis concentrates on the discussion of the explanatory models and discourse used by these organizations to make sense of what they are dealing with. Most information in this section was gathered through interviews with key informants within the organizations; people responsible for the different programs and strategies designed to address the youth violence issue. It should become clear that we are dealing with *information as discourse*. Thus, we must be quite careful in assessing the content of these interviews, the motivations and context behind the testimonies offered. Most interviews are not free of an underlying political agenda, a moralistic discourse or the influence of a particular institutional public relations strategy.

We are not concerned with discussing the factual truth behind actions, structures, or strategies employed by these organizations. Similarly, we are not interested in measuring the actual efficacy or successes of such programs. Instead, we are interested in knowing how these organizations and institutions create their strategies, according to what conceptions do they validate their actions and the existence of their program, what triggered their attention on the subject of youth violence, and ultimately, what paradigm determines the direction of their actions. While a study and thorough evaluation of strategies aimed at addressing violent youth groups is much needed, this study will only concentrate on discussing the institutional and non-institutional constructions that may determine how organized-civil-society reacts against the pandillas in a district like Independencia.

Organizations examined in this study have been grouped into three main categories for analysis: professional constructions (already discussed in Chapter II), institutional constructions, and non-institutional constructions:

- **Professional Constructions**
    Aldo Panfichi & Federico Tong
    Media
    Law

- **Non-Institutional constructions**
    Mr. Gonzales (through parish)
    Mr. Chavez   (through police department)

- **Institutional Constructions**
  PROMUDEH
  IPD (Gente D)
  DEMUNA
  Proceso Social
  Schools

These categories have been arbitrarily chosen and formulated. We will attempt to map the discourses according to these categories, relating them to specific historical events that may account for their existence, as well as cultural and social paradigms that shape their manifestation.

NON-INSTITUTIONAL CONSTRUCTIONS

One of the most important questions we need to ask ourselves when dealing with organizations and their programs is one that relates to the origin and agency behind such initiatives. In other words, we need to find out who is in fact responsible for the existence of the program and in charge of the direction the program may take. We may sometimes find that what we originally perceived as a strategy developed by an institution or as part of an institutional agenda is in fact the product of one or two individuals' work and that attributing such program to the institution as a whole would be somewhat inaccurate.

Thus, the "non-institutional constructions" category should be understood as one encompassing strategies that have been articulated essentially by one or two individuals, initiatives that would most likely disappear if such individuals were not on charge[42]. It was found illogical to compare such cases to other situations where a program is not only coordinated by a staff of ten or more trained individuals, but forms part of an institutional agenda. In this essay, this category includes two examples of individuals who, while working under an institution, have been solely responsible for program related to violent youth groups in the area. They are in many ways volunteers, charismatic figures that are interested in youth issues in the district and whose actions evidently go far beyond their "call of duty". This is the case of Pedro Gonzales, coordinator of the confirmation program for a Catholic Church in Independencia, and Angel Chavez, a police officer in charge of a youth program based out of the district's police department. Both examples provide interesting examples of explanatory models permeated by what we may consider moralistic and religious discourses.

SANTA ROSA CHURCH AND CONFIRMATION PROGRAM _____

Aldo Panfichi stresses that in Independencia the churches and schools are more significant public spaces than in other districts, serving as important places of socialization for male and female adolescents. He also mentions that Independencia has a strong history of political participation by youths, especially witnessed during the 1960s and 1980s.[43] Pedro Gonzales, the assessor for the confirmation program in the Santa Rosa Catholic Church, belongs to this generation of politically minded youth. His contact with violent youth groups in the district has occurred not only through his work as coordinator for this program but also as through his role as facilitator of two youth groups formed by young members of the Church. The age range for the youths he works with fluctuates between sixteen and twenty-one years old. While the confirmation program does not directly target violent youth groups, Gonzales has welcomed some individuals who were immersed in the pandilla context in a recent past. His experience and observations provide us with an example of a strategy that attempts to "motivate" young people not to return to such groups through religious doctrine and experience.

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[42] Another term that could have been used to describe this category is "lay constructions". However, we will be addressing a program that is religious in nature and agency, thus making this label inadequate.
[43] Interview with Aldo Panfichi (24/07/00)

The confirmation program consists of three "study blocks". The first one concentrates on the youth's self-esteem, "anti-values", and personal feelings. It includes the participation of the family members in a one long day conference. "We try to state that the youths are often misunderstood by their parents", Gonzales explains. Testimonies of "life experiences" where individuals tell personal stories of hardship and struggle to the youths are also part of the program. These success stories attempt to make youths acknowledge that even the most difficult situations in life may be overcomed. Workshops with parents and youths include "socio-dramas"; quasi-theatrical performances were youths "act out" how they would like to be treated by their parents. Parents will also participate, presenting their own visions for a better relationship with their children. [44]

In the second "study block", members of the program discuss the social reality lived by youths in the district. Society's "anti-values" that youth are confronted with are addressed, as well as issues concerning human and civic rights. This study block also includes a "forgiveness therapy" where youths and their parents forgive one another. The program's third and last study block is strictly ecclesiastical, including a religious retreat that lasts three days. Gonzales explains that this retreat presents many "life experiences" presented by youths themselves. This context serves to identify youths who use drugs and alcohol, and those who may be prostituting themselves to earn some money. Stories of youths who have been lived through violent encounters and relationships, drug addiction and rape, also come to light. The identification of youths that are or were part of pandillas takes place in this context.

According to Gonzales, the retreat serves as a climax to the program and a tool to encourage youths to participate in the Church's activities after they participate in the confirmation ceremony. The need to provide for a continuation to the confirmation program and offer a sense of constant support for youths in the district prompted the creation of religious youth groups, facilitated by Gonzales with the support from the local Catholic parish. He comments that these groups were also necessary to provide youths with the possibility of addressing, not only issues related to the ecclesiastical context, but also to address problems faced by youths in the district. The religious youth groups provide a 'safety net' for ex-pandilleros, keeping these youths from returning to the pandillas. This is how "Vamos a Caminar", the first youth group facilitated by Gonzales, was created. This group's observations regarding the district's youth violence context were presented in the previous chapter of this essay.

"Vamos a Caminar" only acts within Tahuantinsuyo's First and Second Stage. This situation prompted the formation of "Jovenes por la Vida" a religious youth group or Tahuantinsuyo's Third and Fourth Stage residents. According to Gonzales, this last group attracted people involved with pandillas in the area, as well as alcohol and drug addicts who would learn about the program by word-of-mouth or through the youths who had participated in the confirmation program. Today, this religious youth group is attempting to attract more people and create outreach strategies targeted at youths involved with pandillas. "The idea", explains Gonzales, "is to provide youths with a space where they can meet, where they can feel like they are accomplishing something and thus feel fulfilled."

Gonzales understands the existence of pandillas as one linked to the absence of a family environment for youths to relate to. He believes most of the pandilla members have lived in a state of partial abandonment by their parents, sometimes living with a distant relative and unable to feel their parent's love. According to Gonzales, youths will hopefully join the religious youth groups because they provide for a family-like environment, one that is similar to the one provided by the pandillas yet safer and healthier.

Gonzales is mostly concerned with the need to expand the support system these youth groups provide to other areas in the district, especially to those that are more economically depressed; the communities found in Independencia's steep hills. The formation and articulation of more youth groups are a priority for Gonzales this year. He wants to use the religious youth groups that exist today as a tool to facilitate the creation of religious youth groups in the district's asentamientos humanos. The objective of his networking is,

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[44] Interview with Pedro Gonzales (24/07/00)

> To motivate youths to change their own ideas and morally wrong values, and to stimulate them to motivate other youths to search for changes in their lives and especially affect youths in the human settlements.[45]

Gonzales stresses that youths need to learn how to motivate and organize themselves. He believes that the confirmation program's group dynamics, games and retreats can motivate youths to think differently and stay away from pandillas, drugs and delinquency.

Gonzales shares the story of one of the youths in "Jovenes por la Vida" who began encouraging members of the pandilla he was once part of to join the religious group, "but the restlessness to rejoin the pandilla reappeared in him". Gonzales describes how they have had to talk to him and "motivate" him not to go back. When asked about how this "motivation" is negotiated, Gonzales mentions he counts with the help of a psychologist, a friend of the parish. The psychologist conducts sensitization and motivational therapies" that encourage youth not to "fall back into [the pandillas]". According to Gonzales, this psychologist addresses themes like "falling in love", drugs and delinquency. The presence of the psychologist in the confirmation program's activities is quite sporadic, occurring only once or twice during the three study blocks.

In terms of the religious doctrine imparted through the confirmation program and the youth groups, Gonzales stresses that he finds it necessary to make youths feel that, despite many things, Christ is with them and that "one may talk to him as a friend". This freedom "facilitates the youths' praying for them not to fall back into the pandillas".

Gonzales describes how many youths have helped to facilitate the creation of youth groups in different areas of Tahuantinsuyo but many of them have now grown, started to work, study or help their families, a situation that has distanced them from the Church's youth groups. He describes how many members of the religious youth groups who were once in pandillas are now studying and "following more positive paths". However, he also expresses his concern for members of the religious youth groups who are leaving these safe contexts, anxious to study or find jobs with which to help their family's economy.

A ten soles (US$ 3) fee required from each member that joins the confirmation program at the Santa Rosa Church. These funds help finance the yearlong confirmation activities. "We make miracles with that money", Gonzales explains and comments on how this amount barely covers the program's expenses. Members of the youth groups make efforts to provide the program with financial resources, organizing bake sales and using religious festivities to collect money. However, financial resources are not the only limitation for the confirmation program and its youth groups. One of the biggest limitations this program faces is related to the little time Gonzales is able to volunteer towards the program today. "When the motivator fails, the youths leave", he stressed.

POLICIA NACIONAL DEL PERU

Officer Angel Chavez is the only staff member in the Independencia Police Department in charge of the "Protection and Support Strategy for Peruvian Children and Adolescents" program created in 1996. The program has no specific theoretical foundations and Chavez is fully responsible for its design and implementation. He explains that the program was designed using the *Children and Adolescent Legal Code* as a strategic framework for action. However, the use of the Code as strategy does not imply a full systematization of its goals and approaches. In fact, it refers mostly to the interpretation of its message by Chavez and his awareness upon what the Code outlines. Chavez did not keep the code in mind when he designed the program; he also drew information from different documents that address the violence and mental health context seen in the Independencia district, publications by institutions like the National Mental Health Institute. Similarly, he compiled observations and suggestions from community members

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[45] Interview with Pedro Gonzales (24/07/00)

and reviewed police records on complaints and crimes related to youth and family violence in the area, information that has influenced the way Chavez perceives of youth delinquency issues in the district.

The program consists of the Minors' Club activities during the summer months and the training of School Police volunteers during the rest of the school year. Chavez describes that both initiatives under this program were born from a concern for the civic values in children and adolescents in the district, and the communities' preoccupation with the increasing consumption of drugs and alcohol and pandilla activity in the area. Chavez adds that his personal motivation to change community perceptions towards the police also influenced the development of such program.

The Minor's Club or "Friends of the Police Club" targets children "who have nothing to do during the summer vacations". The lack of cultural and recreational activities for children and adolescents to get involved with during the summer months and the high cost these activities may imply also prompted the creation of such initiative. The Club is active during the school summer vacations, when it acts as a summer school or "vacaciones utiles" (literally, "useful vacations"). "What we do is prevention work", explains Chavez, "we prevent kids from using their time in negative ways". Other program objectives are to instil in children and adolescents patriotic and civic values and to foster sports and discipline among them.

Chavez explains that youths in Independencia come to the Minors Club either because they want to practice a sport or because their parents want them to be involved in a productive activity during the summer. In order to join the club one simply needs to fill a form and obtain a signed letter of compromise by his or her parents. In fact the Minor's Club attempts to incorporate the children and adolescents' families by inviting to participate in the program's sport activities. Chavez explains that few parents attend the Club with their children, and that families are usually weary of allowing their kids on field trips outside the district; one of the activities the Club aims to accomplish during the summer months.

When asked about the specific objectives the summer school may have, Chavez explains, "initially there were no specific goals". He mentions that recently the main goal has been to increase the Club's membership to 500 participants in the Summer School program and 1200 youths trained as School Police volunteers. Chavez explains that the School Police volunteers serve as a nexus to communicate the worries of students to the institution's authorities:

> The school police in other words, act as support for the teacher or the educational centre so as
> to effectively develop the activities the school's staff has outlined, right? They contribute to
> the discipline [of the classroom].[46]

According to Chavez, youth violence originates in the family environment. It does not matter if it is a home that counts with both father and mother. Parents do not accept their roles as tutors and they are surprised when their kids are fall into delinquent lifestyles. He emphasizes that the "principle of authority" is another factor that influences the origin of youth violence in the area. He believes this principle, is not strong enough in the Independencia district area, as it is not seen in the political or workplace context, for example.

Chavez believes that "el buen uso del tiempo libre" (the good use of free time) is needed to keep children away from negative youth groups. It is interesting to note the particular use of the word "*the* good use of free time". The idea of "*a* good use of free time", has been substituted by "*the* good use of free time", a fixed idea that has been arbitrarily defined to fit adults' understanding of what recreational time for children should include. The assumption is that adults know better than youths when it comes to administering their leisure activities and they are thus entitled to enforce their preferences on the young.

It seems that he idea of "*the* good use of free time" is related to moralistic views where the *bad* use of free time is defined by youths spend time on the streets or amongst themselves, without the guidance of an adult. The *good* use of free time is one where time is spent working, studying or participating in a program like the one Officer Chavez leads during the summer months in Independencia.

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[46] Interview with Angel Chavez (09/08/00)

This idea is particularly interesting in the context of the urban poor neighbourhoods where a *bad* use of free time is generally not determined by youths themselves, but perhaps by overpowering economic and social stresses that ultimately keep these populations on the street, amongst themselves and away not only from programs that may be available but also from their parents, who usually absent from home. The idea of "the good use of free time" idea becomes a paradox, a very difficult expectation to be fulfilled by children and youths and a generational obstacle that subjects youths to constant moral scrutiny.

Chavez has dealt with pandilleros through his work in the Minors Club. He explains that as activities are taking place in the club, pandilleros or members of the barras are spotted and "a different treatment is administered":

> We make them feel important, but in positive ways. We give them the leadership of a big group of young people, giving them recommendations on how to guide them. For example, if we have to go from here to the sports area, I give the young person the responsibility to take the whole group, providing indications to be in columns, lines, nobody separating…The young person tends to accomplish this, realizing that his voice is authority.[47]

Chavez considers that pandilleros aim to lead, but do so in wrong ways. He attempts to correct these negative guides through a special treatment, based on the delegation of power and responsibility as and to transform the pandilleros into "positive leaders".

The percentage of children and adolescents from Independencia involved in the Minor Club's summer activities is minimal. However, Chavez explains that while this initiative has never been formally evaluated, the increasing participation of children and adolescents participating in the Club's activities is perhaps the best indicator of its success. Indeed, the number of students involved in this initiative has increased significantly throughout the years, counting with nine hundred members today. "If young people have assimilated the practice of a sport in a manner that it is positive towards others, then that is a success", he explains. He adds that young people react to the club's activities in positive ways as "they become identified with the police's activities, they are more courteous and dynamic".

The program, targeted at youths between six and seventeen years old, is the only initiative related to children and adolescents facilitated through the National Peruvian Police in Independencia. Apparently, similar initiatives exist and are based out of police departments in each of the city's districts. The "Protection and Support Strategy for Peruvian Children and Adolescents" program has been formalized under the "Proyección Social" (Social Projection) strategy, an institutional branch of the National Peruvian Police that is concerned with social an community issues.

However, it is important to note that the program is not funded by the Police Station, not even by a division within the National Peruvian Police. In fact, Chavez finances the summer school activities through friends and individuals that support the program. He uses the police station's parking lot as a soccer field and struggles to keep police cars outside the area everyday during the summer. Prospective physical education teachers attending the Enrique Guzman y Valle University have a chance to conduct their pre-professional training through the Minors Club's summer activities, working as volunteer coordinators. In terms of publicity, Chavez has recently managed to produce posters and fliers to promote their program in the future. Before they counted on young people learning about the club only through its previous members.

Chavez mentions that the program is receiving public recognition from the community and that they are beginning to count with participation from both parents and schools. He explains that "social solidarity" among community members keeps the program alive, "Sometimes people stop me in the street when they see me doing exercise with the kids and express their wanting to support the program". According to Angel Chavez, the program will continue to exist so long as it counts with the Police Stations' recognition.

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[47] Interview with Angel Chavez (09/08/00)

INSTITUTIONAL CONSTRUCTIONS

As it was mentioned before, programs or strategies under this section are those that are not only coordinated by a staff of ten or more, but also those that are in fact part of an institutional agenda and that will perhaps outlive the presence of any specific individual in the institution in charge of coordinating such strategies. We will discuss strategies presented by very different institutions in an attempt to map the various approached and visions these organizations apply when addressing violent youth and pandillas in the district.

INSTITUTO NACIONAL DEL DEPORTE (IPD)

According to Aldo Panfichi, "the key to any intervention program in youth violence is sport".[48] He explains that sports provide a stage for intense competition, yet one where aggression is heavily sanctioned and channelled into the game itself. Soccer is a representation of a battle, a symbolic confrontation between two peoples, countries, towns, or even neighbourhoods. These groups come together to define who is the best in a context where competition is regulated by a referee and by rules. Panfichi believes that soccer awakens a healthy and safe passion for competition where both teams deal with the same conditions in a "democratic" context. Through sports, one may teach respect towards authority and others, and rules can be de-structured and restructured serving as modules to develop certain values. Panfichi believes that in most cases, a sports-oriented educational environment is more in tune with the intellectual capacity most pandilla members have. This sport also presents certain marketing benefits as it may easily convene not only youths and their families but also sponsors and philanthropists.[c]

Certain programs have attempted to incorporate some of the benefits and perspectives that Panfichi outlines above in their attempts to address violence among youths in districts like Independencia. "Gente D" is one of such programs implemented by the Instituto Nacional del Deporte (National Institute of Sports or IPD). Before 1999, the IPD was part of the Ministry for the Advancement of Women and Human Development (PROMUDEH). During this time, the president requested that the health, education and human development government sectors implement violence prevention programs. Gente D was developed to fulfill this demand. Today the IPD exists as an independent government entity, and Gente D has found residence under IPD's Dirección Nacional de Deporte Fundamental (National Office of Fundamental Sports or DNDF). The DNDF is in charge of large number of social development projects that address labour, university, disabilities, senior citizens, recreation and youth issues. The program is partially funded by the National Commission Against Drugs (Contradrogas)[49], and by donations from the Netherlands. The rest is financed by the IPD.

Before being appointed as general coordinator for Gente D, Alicia Castro worked in the Pan-American Health Organization as Research Consultant. The Peruvian Institute of Sport (IPD) requested her leadership in the creation of a project that would address adolescents in Lima. The "Programa de Deporte Contra las Drogas" (Program of Sports Against Drugs) or Gente D was at first a pilot project. The staff of Gente D began approaching districts on January of 1999. [50] It had a three-month evaluation period and nine intervention points in five districts at that time. The five districts and Contradrogas requested the program be expanded to other districts in Lima's Northern Cone. By June 1999, Gente D was working with the Inter-district Coordinator of the Northern Cone, a municipal coordinating body. Seven out of the nine districts in the Northern Cone signed a letter of commitment with Gente D; the Independencia district was among the signers.

Gente D's mission is to promote the training of adolescents as community leaders and "promoters of a culture of health and peace" among their peers in schools and neighbourhoods. Castro explains that

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[48] Interview with Aldo Panfichi (24/07/00)
[49] For more information on Contradrogas visit http://www.congreso.gob.pe/compendio/contradrogas.htm
[50] Gente D translates to "D People". "D" from "deporte" which means sport. Notice the marketing strategy behind the name, almost analogous to the well known "X-men" cartoons.

this training is facilitated through the practice of sport and by providing youths with relevant information concerning youth issues (sexuality, drugs, etc). The objectives of the program are to train adolescent leaders in schools, which are referred to as "preventive school groups". The goal is to have these leaders establish youth clubs, to have adolescents create and have access to their own socially healthy environments. "We want to sensitize youths so that they may make good use of their free time", Castro explained.

At this moment the program's strategy follows five lines of action: (1) sensitization and training of the youth population, (2) formation of Gente D clubs led by youths, (3) Sensitization workshops for parents, (4) a campaign against violence in sport which includes the sensitization of fans in soccer matches so that we may forge an appreciation for competition and recreation free of drugs and violence, and (5) sensitization workshops for sports technicians, members of the IPD. Gente D has also facilitated the creation of "Brigadas Escolares por la Vida" (School Brigades for Life). Today these brigades work under Gente D's mandate and are responsible for recruiting people to participate in prevention workshops organized by Gente D, sessions in which information concerning youths is dispensed and where sports activities are used to reach this population.

Gente D counts with twelve psychologists working together with four sport technicians, a social communicator and two coordinators. The program takes a preventive, community-oriented approach and the psychologists utilize and display community-based strategies and tactics to approach the adolescent. Castro explains that Gente D works with the population they want to keep away from being in at-risk situations. "They themselves come from families that already promote these at-risk situations", she explains. Indeed, Gente D works with the youths' parents to "sensitized" them, and compel them to promote the practice of sports by their kids and the "good use of free time". The workshops provided for parents are adjusted to different necessities they may have in terms of information. It is not training but a process of sensitization, Castro explained.

Gente D considers sports activities as more than group dynamics to strengthen cooperation, solidarity or teamwork skills. "The practice of sports activities is a key element in being able to analyze the youth's personality", explained Castro. Sports help coordinators establish the adolescents' personalities and characteristic behaviours, appreciations that determine the capacity these youths may have to act as leaders and guides among their peers.

Last year Gente D developed questionnaires, instruments for the selection of adolescents that where to be members of the "school brigades". The selection process was done together with teachers in the school and according to a profile that would help to identify whom the program considered could be a "brigadista", or student leader. Castro describes their surprise when evaluating the results; Teachers (tutors or school psychologists) tended to select the same adolescent to participate in various programs. The student leader is a Health Leader, School Leader, Sports Leader and even School Mayor.

Having learnt this lesson, Gente D is working differently and the participation of youths in the program is not made by appointment but in a voluntary basis. Today Gente D's convocation strategy consists of arriving to schools with tents, calling each classroom to join them, using pictures to promote the program, "letting young people that Gente D are dynamic, fun, sportsmanlike, determined, owning their own life, with a complete philosophy on adolescence and on what being an adolescent is about".[51] After this introduction, Gente D applies 'training modules' with the interested youths. The first module promotes a healthy and peaceful culture of life. If the adolescent completes the first module and goes onto the second one, he becomes a leader.

The age range for the school brigadiers is between twelve and eighteen years old. When the adolescent turns eighteen, Gente D considers that he or she has to move on and leave the program. The program concentrates on adolescents from marginal urban areas. Recently, the program has been implemented in the district of Surquillo, Villa El Salvador and Chorrillos. Similarly, the program is offered in schools from other districts. Today, Gente D works in 45 schools, and there are 16 clubs in the thirteen districts the program has been implemented in.

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[51] Interview with Alicia Castro (08/08/00)

Castro comments that there is a Gente D youth club in Independencia. In 1999 there were 197 brigadiers from schools in this district. However, Gente D's experience in Independencia does not please Castro because the adolescents selected as brigadiers had previous obligations, and already held leadership positions within their schools. Their time was destined to fulfill previous engagements and their participation in the Gente D program was minimal. As of 2000 Gente D began to work in two schools within the Independencia district: the Gran Bretaña School with a population of 37 adolescents and in the Francisco Bolognesi School with 28 adolescents. Castro explains that the number of students involved with Gente D in Independencia has decreased and mentions an example of the neighbourhood known as "El Milagro" (the miracle) where a youth club called "Decididos a Liderar una Nueva Generación" (Determined to Lead a New Generation) has been recently formed. It consists of 18 very active members, some of which have received special training different education NGOs on how to play chess and design fliers and pamphlets. Today Castro is trying to provide Independencia with more of Gente D's staff resources in an attempt to motivate greater youth involvement in the area.

Castro explains that the formation of youth clubs within districts is a strategy that aims to guarantee that these adolescents will insert Gente D's vision of youth networking and action in the district, even after these youths leave the club or turn eighteen. According to Castro, these youths will be accustomed to the creation of healthy environments for themselves and others. She describes this continuity as a vision Gente D aspires to achieve and the social contribution the IPD will provide the districts with.

According to Castro, the adolescents' reaction to Gente D is a very positive one. She claims that sports facilitate communication with adolescent groups and integrates adolescents, while also contributing to the promotion of the Gente D program. "The adolescent feels good to be part of the IPD", she stressed. Castro argues that the president of the IPD, Teofilo Cubillas[d], "is a man who has never drunk or smoked" and that adolescents are aware of this and see him as a role model. She explains that Cubillas, once a famous soccer player in the 1980s, is a positive role model whose leadership role within the institution provides for a positive image of authority and sportsmanship to be followed by youths.

The IPD follows applies different strategies to sensitize fans about not taking violence into the sports context. Castro explains how after some important soccer matches they make adolescents from Gente D run into the field with balloons and banners with phrases such as "Be yourself" and "Play fair", slogans that exhort people to lead and play without violence. "The adolescent", she explains, "definitely feels as a part of the country, and that he or she is doing something big". According to Castro, these are "high risk impact actions" that define Gente D and mark youths in a positive sense and context. The campaign against violence in sports has just begun and Castro believes it promises to be quite strong in message and impact it desires to have on soccer aficionados.

Last year, Gente D facilitated eight "pactos de vida" (life pacts). These are events where adolescents agree to "commit to life". In a 100-meter banner all adolescents, together with Mr. Cubillas, stamped their hands while very ceremonious music plays on the background. Stamping the banner meant that the adolescent entered the new millennium saying to himself: "I have my hands free of drugs of violence". According to Castro, these are "very significant rituals for the adolescent".

Castro argues that youth violence should not be perceived as pertaining only to pandillas or barras bravas, but also to adults and their active role in the manifestation of violence in Peruvian society. She believes youth violence is related to the indifference by authorities in a district; the indifference by those who are suppose to look after recreation and sport spaces (parks, sports complexes, stadiums) and instead allow for adults to be found in this places after competitions, getting drunk and mistreating adolescents, for example.

Castro argues that it is interesting to note what adolescents, the individuals to whom this violence is attributed to, think about what the source of violence is. She comments on the occurrence of an event on June of 1999. This forum, organized by the institution, was entitled "Free time, sports and prevention" where the theme of violence was the main issue addressed during the conferences. The forum counted with 600 students representing 45 schools in the city. These adolescents used information, previously prepared in school workshops, and presented the forum. For these students, the source of such violence is

found in violent adults and those adults who do nothing in their capacity as authority figures and individuals with responsibilities towards others.

Castro explains that forums like this one will continue, "Because fair sport is in endanger by the violence exhibited in this context". While we may be led to consider the barras bravas as main contributors of this violence, Castro believes that the managers of certain sports clubs should also share these charges. She comments on how managers from sports clubs in other countries have been linked to crime networks, drug traffickers and fascists[52]. She explains that adolescents do not know they are sometimes being manipulated and mentions how in the urban poor district of San Juan de Lurigancho buses, allegedly hired by local soccer clubs, pick up youths involved with barras bravas and take them to the soccer matches. She explains that they could actually be seen as victims, puppets manipulated by managers of the soccer teams. "So then I ask myself", continues Castro, "can we still talk about youth violence?"

According to Castro, the issue of youth violence is more complicated than it appears to be. She suggested that the barras bravas and the pandillas, just as any other group, have an amiable organization and that they have deep values that should be respected and learn from, so that we may facilitate the creation of other non-violent groups with the same degree of group cohesion and spirit. When questioned upon Gente D's work with violent youth groups in the different district this program has reached Castro commented,

> We [Gente D] do not work with pandillas, or with adolescents that consume drugs...But that doesn't mean that among the adolescents under our program there is someone who, who knows, is smoking [marihuana], right? Without one knowing...That is something that may occur, but our intention is to direct youth groups towards sports through information and that is why that is the strong line of action the program stresses.[53]

Castro admits that "there is still a lot [she needs] to learn about the theme of youth violence in the city", which make actually comes as a surprise considering she is in charge of a program that deals with youth and the concept of a "culture of peace" among violent adolescents. She explains that she cannot state what psychosocial factors are most important in determining the manifestation of pandillas, yet she comments that it is quite certain that the aetiology of such manifestation consists of multiple factors, hence we cannot argue that one is more important that other. She continues:

> It's very easy to say, right, the families are well, the first space of socialization and according to models we may talk about the violence that generates there, but there are models that come from our authorities, politicians, our group, etc.[54]

According to Castro, "the goals of the [violent youth] group are ones that have been badly established", as have the means through which these are accomplished. She believes that the "human resources" the violent youth group counts with can be used for bad or for good. Castro explains that some of the most important achievements by Gente D during 1999 are not only establishing the program's presence in seven districts of Lima's Northern Cone, but also having reached a population of close to 3,000 school leaders. She explains that evaluations of the program are needed, as well as access to infrastructure and human resources in the districts.

CENTRO PROCESO SOCIAL _____

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[52] Castro is probably referring to Italian soccer clubs, associations that have been found to be connected to delinquent activities.
[53] Interview with Alicia Castro (08/08/00)
[54] Interview with Alicia Castro (08/08/00)

Proceso Social is a non-governmental organization that has worked in the Independencia district since 1981. The goal of the institution is to support citizens' participation on the community as a strategy for development, democracy, gender equity, defence of health and environment, putting political and decisional power in the hands of the people. Proceso Social began working in Independencia through a program concerned with female reproductive health. Since, it has diversified its interests and programs, and today counts with 18 staff members who concentrate to developing and implementing various types of programs for the district.

Amaro Perez, promoter and responsible for the centre's childhood, adolescence and youth area, believes youth violence in Independencia is a theme of concern for many schools in the area and for many youths affected by the existence of these groups in the district.[55] He explains that the centre does not work directly with pandillas, but that they have had contact with such context through the centre's programs.

The "Programa de Educación, Cultura y Recreación" (Education, Culture and Recreation Program) is concerned with children in urban poor neighbourhoods. The program's objective is to train youths in the district to develop educational, cultural and recreational programs for children in their neighbourhoods, turning these individuals into active and trained educational resources. These youths learn how to create "educational games" for children. The training of this educational approach is complemented with the systematization of an educational project that the trained youth will implement in his or her neighbourhood. The program stimulates trainees to create networks after they leave the centre so as to maintain a constant discussion on the problems faced by children in their areas. According to Perez, the program follows what the Children and Adolescent's Code as it emphasizes the important educational necessities of children.

The requisites to join this program are to have finished the last year of high school, to count with the support of a neighbourhood organization, and to commit to the program. The training received trough this program centres on a number of themes related to the education of children. Different professionals from different education-oriented NGOs serve as teachers for the different themes they are acquainted with. However, as it was mentioned before, the main methodology that trainees become familiar with "educational games" strategy. Notebooks and homework are not part of this educational strategy as everything is based on games, group and psychomotor dynamics. These games can include developing cartoons, or games that may teach children to learn how to count or develop the child's intellectual reasoning.

Trainees develop and implement an educational program, using the techniques and theories they have learnt, as a final requirement for their graduation. These programs are implemented during the summer vacations and it ends when children go back to school. Youths that complete the program's requirements leave the centre with a certificate that states they are ready to work in their neighbourhoods. Many of the program's graduates have become educators, worked in the district as teachers, as in different NGOs and government educational programs, where they have focused on infants and children.

The program began training youths in 1990. Perez describes how there was a constant decrease in the number of graduates of this program. The number of promoters has decreased considerably throughout the years and today the program counts with only fifteen of them. This is interesting, considering the fact that the training is free of charge. Perez explains this decrease by stating that when the program started, people saw it as an opportunity to volunteers; today the program is perceived as one that can provide for job opportunities. Perez explains that this vision of the program as an opportunity to obtain jobs is not one transmitted by the program yet this perception comes as no surprise in face of the economic stress most trainees live under.

The program has trained 301 promoters in the 1990-99 period and although it is mainly active in Independencia, other districts have shown interest in adopting this program as part of their district's development strategy. Perez sees this demand as an indicator of the program's success. Today, while this program is somewhat centralized on the Independencia district, it has extended to the Comas, Puente Piedra, Los Olivos, Carabayllo and San martin de Porres district.

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[55] Interview with Amaro Perez (02/08/00)

Another program coordinated by Perez is called "Programa de la Niñez y el Medio Ambiente" (Childhood and Environment Program). This program trains promoters to raise awareness about environmental issues in the district, promoting the rights of children to live in a healthy environment. These promoters are trained on what the idea of a healthy environment is, what is it that affects the environment and what is the relationship between being human and living in the environment. Perez explains that the program aims to train promoters to elaborate action plans, develop activities and awareness campaigns focused on the environment. Perez explains that this program is derived from an interest in promoting a perception of the "immediate" rights of children, adding a dynamic quality to the understanding of these rights; not just rights that stay in our minds as an ideal but ones that require agency and direction.

Perez comments that perhaps that most interesting feature of this program is the facts that youths participating in the program have developed the concept of environment themselves. They have added a "social component" to the general notion of environment. This component was derived from those things they perceived as negatively affecting their immediate surroundings: conflict in their household, violence in their neighbourhoods, violent youth group activity, alcoholism, drug addiction, etc. Perez explains that youths in the program consider not only animals and plants as environment, but everything that surrounds us too; family, parents, streets, etc. They discussed these aspects and established what that social component was to be about, a vision of environment that has been recently adopted by other local organizations. This success led to the creation of an environmental network that today links six schools in the Independencia district, institutions interested in raising awareness about the need for a socially and biologically healthy environment.

The "Programa de la Niñez y el Medio Ambiente" once worked with children from the San Juan de Dios community. Perez explains that these were very aggressive children, affected by increasing violence in these areas during the 1990s. Through the program, Proceso Social attempted to provide these kids with values of tolerance, participation, confidence and solidarity. However, it soon became clear that while children were being provided with positive values, they were also being stripped off the strategies they themselves had developed to deal with their own violent surrounding. "We were making them much more vulnerable to their harsh environment" Perez explained. After realizing this, Proceso Social balanced their approach; being careful on the changes they were facilitating, yet still encouraging the children to think about what needed to change in their surroundings.

Perez considers that there are two important factors that affect the manifestation of youth violence in areas like Independencia. The first one relates to the individual's family context and the second to the individual and adolescence, a stage in life that presents many conflicts.

MINISTERIO DE PROMOCION DE LA MUJER Y DESARROLLO HUMANO (PROMUDEH) _____

Patricia Crosby[56] is the Director of the "Gerencia de Promocion de la Adolescencia" (Office for the Advancement of Adolescence) in the Ministry for the Advancement of Women and Human Development (Promudeh). She explains that upon its formation, the Promudeh assumed the function of directing the childhood and adolescent national thematic and become an eminent reactor of these issues. The Promudeh's involvement with violent youth groups in the city occurs through a program called "Red de Líderes Adolescentes" (Network of Adolescent Leaders) which is concerned with youths between twelve and eighteen years old. The program counts with eight staff members working in the main Promudeh office and one facilitator per site where the program takes place.[57]

Crosby explains that the methodology used in the program is one of "par entre pares" (peer among peers). The idea of adolescent leaders working under a "peer among peers" philosophy is very effective, as it harvests authentic solidarity bonds among youths. She explains that the theoretical and

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[56] Interview with Patricia Crosby (10/8/00)
[57] For more information on this program visit http://www.promudeh.gob.pe/gpna/opva/redes.htm

conceptual frameworks for the program gave been developed through multidisciplinary approaches, using the experience of psychologists, social workers, lawyers, sociologists. However, the fundamental doctrine permeating the program is the doctrine of the "Integral Protection of Childhood and Adolescence' outlined in the International Convention of Children's Rights and the Code of Children and Adolescents (See page 27). The program has also used the experience of the Cairo Action Program[58], the Beijing Conference[59] and other similar international initiatives. She explains that all international conventions that emphasize the strengthening the youth's participation as main decision makers in the family, community and school context have been revised.

Crosby explains that the program has moved from a focus on preventing at-risk conducts to talk about extensively about adolescents' rights. The principal right of adolescents is one of participation, education and to be allowed and able to take decisions concerning their lives and social environment. "This program, working with and from the adolescents, is a reflection our wanting to promote these rights and our desire to break certain negative youth paradigms" Crosby explained, "We do not begin by preventing and prohibiting; we open spaces, give options and hence the adolescents distance themselves from at-risk conducts".

The program concentrates on adolescents from contexts of poverty, individuals who have "less possibilities of access to their personal development". Crosby explains that leaders selected for the program are not usually part of an at-risk population (like pandillas), but there are some leaders who at some point where part of "negative youth groups". These youths are accepted as equals by their peers in the program; they are incorporated in the program, a link that keeps them away from engaging in negative behaviours.

Many times, she explains, peer leaders bring kids who have been in pandillas into the program. Sometimes, the members of pandillas come by themselves, having learnt of this alternative "paradigm of belonging". Youths who come from this background have distanced themselves from these conducts, from those groups with negative influence, and have transformed their "opciones de vida" (life options).

Crosby explains that program applies a preventive strategy and an approach based on deterrence, regarding the youth violence issue. The ex-pandilleros that are part of the program have had a very negative leadership experience within these groups; they have had to dramatically modify their lives. Crosby explains that these individuals had very intense encounters with violence and participate on the program by doing prevention work also, attempting to break up the pandillas they were once part of.

Crosby argues that many times the main factors influencing the manifestation of youth violence are found in experiences of family violence and lack of communication with parents coupled with a search for referents outside the family. "We do know that [belonging to a pandilla] is a necessity to belong to something", she explains. When there is a violent environment in the family they escape this context and become trapped in a setting where they become both aggressors and the victims of attacks. Crosby argues that youths involved with pandillas haven't been able to let go of a life based on violent confrontations.

Crosby describes that other factors mentioned by youths as influences on their belonging to pandillas are ones related to violence promoted by the media, and the time of terrorism in the city. "Those [of us] who have lived through that time have been scarred by it", she emphasized. Crosby believes that the economic factors affecting youths in urban poor neighbourhoods are important and do influence the pandilla context of violence. However, she comments on how youths that were once part of these violent groups and where also members of poor families express that poverty was not the main reason for their participation in pandillas. Crosby argues that in fact, one of the main reasons for youths to escape their family environment is related to the fact that they could not find an available interlocutor in their homes; they saw violence all the time, and thus became involved in such violence. Families are direct models of moral reference, yet negative leaders that exist in the streets are also models to follow; these negative leaders sometimes seem as worthier of the youth's attention and respect.

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[58] "International Conference on Population Development" held in Cairo, Egypt visit http://www.undp.org/popin/icpd2.htm
[59] "Fourth World Conference in Women" held in Beijing, China visit http://www.undp.org/fwcw/daw1.htm

Crosby explains that one of the main indicators of the success of the Network of Adolescent Leaders Program I marked by the fact that program members are multiplying in a spontaneous way, as youths themselves are attracted to the program and youths inside the program are attracting others. This, she believes, is due to the fact that they are seen as main protagonists for change; they are accompanied but their spaces are respected. According to Crosby, the program began by training 130 leaders, a number that has increased to 7000 leaders today. Today the program is partly funded by Contradrogas and negotiations have begun to receive financial aid from the German Cooperation Fund. However, Crosby explains the Promudeh does not aim to keep the program's direction; they aim to provide for a sustainable strategy, transferring the leadership of the program to community or municipal organizations. They also hope that this project will be expanded into a national program.

DEFENSORÍA MUNICIPAL DEL NINO Y EL ADOLESCENTE (DEMUNA) _____

Carlos Gutierrez is the Chief of the "Defensoria Municipal del Niño y del Adolescents" (Municipal [Ombudsman] for Children and Adolescents or DEMUNA) in Independencia, municipal entity that has existed since 1994 in every district in Lima. During its first two years, the DEMUNA concentrated on attending different cases involving children and adolescents. There was not direct chief in charge of this office and it was formed by a group of law school students that served as Defensores Municipales (Municiapal Defensors), providing legal assistance to people victims of different abuses, like child abuse for example.

The DEMUNAs work with children, adolescents and youths under 25 years old. Gutierrez explains that the DEMUNA in Independencia does not strictly define these groups. "Adolescent" is not word used by the population is Independencia yet programs on youth violence are usually concentrated on "adolescents" and not youths. These initiatives sometimes fail because the implications of such strict arbitrary definitions are not foreseen.

The DEMUNA began working on prevention programs for youths in 1999. At the beginning, strategies concentrated mainly on family issues, domestic violence, and violence against women and children. Gutierrez explains that people that worked in the DEMUNA were once trained to work with youths under the concept of "norms of conduct", seen youths already as a problem, as individuals generating violence simply because of their negative attitudes.

Two years ago, with the appearance of the "Ley the Pandillaje Pernicioso" and "Ley the Terrorismo Agravado" presented by Congress and elaborated by the Ministry of Justice, a contradiction with the National Code of Children and Adolescents was found (See page 27-28). The DEMUNA is presently working with attorneys and judges in the Northern Cone, discussing this issue, its implications and potential solutions. The DEMUNA attempts to bring forth the social issues related to youth violence, discussing how to understand the youth *before* talking about violence. Gutierrez explains that the DEMUNA perceives the place violence has taken in the discussion of youth as one that is very as programs. "All programs are related to violence; violence against children, violence in the family, violence against women, and now its violence among youths", explains Gutierrez. "What other violence is going to come afterwards?" he asks. He argues that it is almost as if initiatives on violence can obtain financial resources, as the theme of violence is today in full fashion. He believes that considering the theme of violence as theme and basis of all programs may almost predispose its manifestation.

Gutierrez explains that the work by the DEMUNA is of an educational nature. "The biggest problem in urban marginal neighbourhoods is disinformation", and they attempt to not inform people about what being an adolescent means but also to provide adolescents with information, "real and complete information".[60] The DEMUNA is also greatly concerned with the role schools may or may not play in informing youths about their rights and responsibilities. "If schools would educate children and

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adolescents on what human rights are, that all violent act should not be justified, things would change," he stressed,

> We would have more denunciations, more informed youths that know how to defend themselves. This would allow for the effective internalization of the idea that violence is harmful and that if you want respect from others you should also respect them.[61]

Gutierrez believes that there is not enough pressure from the Ministry of Education and educational institutions and to reprimand faculty members that use violence against their students. Children usually inspire more compassion from adults and violence towards them is sanctioned more often than violence against adolescents. "People tend to believe that if an adolescent is reprimanded it is because he or she is a spoiled brat and deserves punishment", explains Gutierrez. This perception can be seen in attorneys' offices and also in the police department.

The proper sanction for a student that gravely misbehaves is one that suspends the student for two days. However, if a teacher were to insult and slaps the student offender, nothing would happen. The teacher will not be expelled from the educational institution, nor will he or she be asked to ask for forgiveness in private or in public. The police will never respond to a denunciation in such terms, professors will support the negative actions by their colleagues, and the director will state that he cannot act against his staff, not even if there are valid witnesses. According to Gutierrez, this state of impunity allows for violence to grow and expand among youths.

Two schools in the district have applied "Reglamientos Internos" (Internal Rules) in their institutions, a strategy where students themselves are responsible for imparting punishment against students and teachers. This makes students more conscious of their role and the role of others towards them. This strategy aims to uphold laws in all dimensions, not just for teachers and not just for students.

Gutierrez explains that the DEMUNA has trained at least one staff member from 34 out of the 37 schools in the district on the rights of children and adolescents. These individuals receive training throughout the school year on how to do prevention work, what procedures are to be followed in the cases of abuses against youths, and what the rights of adolescents are. The director from each school signs a document that states that these individuals are official monitors for the institution; they can come directly to the DEMUNA and communicate takes place in their specific institution. The DEMUNA has the legal power, through the Municipality and the Code of Children and Adolescents, to intervene. The DEMUNA then goes to the school and talks to all teachers, not only the guilty one, on what the consequences of these abuses can be. Gutierrez explains that this strategy is working but slowly, as school directors are not active or interested enough to have this strategy be an integral mechanism of justice in their institutions.

Gutierrez explains that most youths do not know the existing rules of their institution. They are not aware of the rules that fall upon their teachers and themselves, they do not know the sanctions that are supposed to be administered to violent faculty members. These rules are almost never discussed with the students, even though access to this information is a right they posses.

Gutierrez argues that family violence is a determinant of youth violence and that one cannot talk about youth violence having not dealt with family violence first. Gutierrez explains that the experience of the DEMUNA with youths in pandillas has shown that people involved with violent youth groups are not free of a violent family environment. "We aware that in an attempt to educate, most parents in [Independencia] prefer to abuse, harm and basically oppress their children", he commented. According to Gutierrez, this tension at home may be traced back to the fact that the majority of homes in Independencia are ones formed by people who live together, not through marriage and not because they were in love, but because they didn't use contraceptives and had a child too fast. We may argue that these statements conflict with those presented earlier by Panfichi (See page 16). Gutierrez presents the Independencia family as one that does not provide for the support system described earlier by Panfichi as being present in most homes in Independencia and accounting for the low levels of pandilla activity in the area. An

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[61] Interview with Carlos Gutierrez (17/07/00)

intelligent interpretation of family violence frequency and household structure in Independencia may help us clear this and Panfichi's hypothesis.

One of the most evident problems Gutierrez sees in the family setting is the loss of the love relationship by parents in a household. There is no love seen between parents, only confrontation derived from economic stress. This affects youths terribly because they lack models of healthy relationships. Youths, attempting to create a space and an identity for themselves, look for models and find them in their dysfunctional home, where father hits, humiliate and oppresses mother in an attempt to assert his authority, territory and control.

Gutierrez has had substantial experience facilitating workshops for parents. He explains that the "Escuela para Padres" (Parenting School) provided by the Ministry of Education is one based on sermons and speeches that are counterproductive, as they make parents feel like they have done something wrong; that the negative behaviour seen in their kids is due to their failure as parents. The work Gutierrez does through the DEMUNA consists on discussing certain themes and utilizing methodologies that the Escuela para Padre is not familiar with. While we will not discuss such strategies in detail, it is interesting to note that Gutierrez uses a "systemic approach" when dealing with family conciliation strategies. The systemic approach is related to the organic, ecological model that attempt to concentrate on the different parts that make the organism (the family in this case) work in harmony.

In the context of family conciliation, the model stresses acceptance more than tolerance and integration. "What we found was that this families where very stressed in their function as parents, frustrated by the psychologists comments on how ineffective these people were as parents" he stated. The idea is to make parents put together *their own* model for a healthy family, making them aware of all the parts that *they believe* make up the family environment, taking in account their economic, social and educational limitations, and encourage them to see their role as one that mediates these parts to obtain harmony. Gutierrez explains that one does not need to be a psychologist to be a "systemic family therapist" and that he is familiar with such approach through his experience in France working for six months with the "Points d'Information" mentioned before. He explains that the USAID and institutions in Palo Alto and Milan have been quite successful when using this approach.

Gutierrez explains that in Independencia, although it is not an area free of violent youth groups, there are few individuals involved in pandillas. "If we compare the total number of youths in the district with the number of youths in pandillas, we will see that this number is not more than five percent", he commented. Gutierrez provides us with an interesting comment in terms of the exact number of pandillas and youths involved in violent youth groups in the district:

> For example, in the Independencia sub-district, there are around 3800 adolescents and youths. We calculate that 150 of these are in pandillas. But these 150 individuals have managed to make the area to be perceived as violent, and people are almost predisposed to believe that when a youth is walking down the street, dressed in a specific way, he or she is part of a pandilla.[62]

In other words, someone who complies with the perceived characteristics of a pandillero will be suspected as being part of a violent youth group, but this relationship will be affirmed. This statement relates to the observation provided by Amaro Perez, that the perceptions of people towards pandillas are sometimes flawed and permissive, yet strict in their judgement of youths and violent youth groups in the district. Gutierrez believes that youth violence is based on a generational problem. Adolescents communicate amongst them but problems rise when they interact with adults. "Today, when one gives a talk in a school it is terrible, [students] taunt you; they almost want you to treat them badly", he commented.

According to Gutierrez, while pandilla's objectives are negative towards themselves and others, the fact that these groups organize themselves is a positive one. Youth organizations in Independencia are few, three or four, and use very strict models of association, ones closely resembling those of adults.

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[62] Interview with Carlos Gutierrez (17/07/00)

Gutierrez argues that the lack of information on what to do with their free time and the limited access to youth organizations in the area also provides for youths joining the pandillas. However, he comments on the Police Department's summer school coordinated by Angel Chavez (See page 37), and states that the problem with programs like this is that they depend on an adult.

In other words, there are no programs that *support* the formation of youth groups, instead this programs *form* groups for youths to join them. This situation motivated Gutierrez to create the "Centro de Información para los Jovenes" or Ci-Joven, an information centre for youths based out of the DEMUNA. This centre started on February of 2000. Gutierrez explains that the centre's existence is based on the example of the "Points d' Information" (youth information centres) developed in France. "This makes our work much easier", explains Gutierrez, "because the municipality does not have to invest a lot of time, energy and resources on running programs for adolescents". Instead, the Ci-Joven concentrates on supporting and facilitating an "associative lifestyle" within the district. The Ci-Joven's goal is to have many different types of youth associations in different areas of the district, not only "the typical soccer clubs". More importantly, they want to see not only associations that adults like, (like folk music and dance troupes) but also associations that youths appreciate and believe they need. "We want to channel the energy, desire and necessity these adolescents have to obtain their own territory, but in a positive way", he stressed.

The information centre covers different information areas. One of them provides youths with information on the military service, and how to obtain ID documents. Gutierrez explains that they have found, especially among young mothers, that adolescents do not have any kind of identity documents. This impedes the legal recognition of their children, and they are also unable to present denunciations if necessary. The Ci-Joven also provides information about universities, higher learning centres, and job opportunities. Training programs are also available, providing youths with practical skills with which to enter the job market. Information on sexuality and drugs is also available.

Four programs will be implemented by the DEMUNA in coming years, provided they may count with the required funding and support from Contradrogas. One of such programs is the "Brigadas Escolares por la Vida", the program facilitated by the IPD and under the direction of Alicia Castro (See page 40). The DEMUNA's work with the IPD will begin on September of 2001, and will follow a strategic plan from 2000 to 2005. The project's main goals are to lower the levels of legal drugs used by adolescents and the levels of youth violence among them and from society towards them. The program will be implemented through schools, but will have the DEMUNA and not the educational centre as main coordinating body for all activities. However, the DEMUNA attempts to have an NGO-like coordinating body in charge of such project in the future. According to Gutierrez, the program will touch upon youth rights, family issues, self-esteem, and family relations issues.

The DEMUNA receives 3600 soles (US$ 1000) from the Municipality of Independencia to finance all its activities. Because these funds do not cover much at all, they have looked for financial support from international institutions in other countries, including the United Nations.

A NOTE ON SCHOOLS

Schools in Independencia are the scenario of violent confrontations between youth groups after classes (See page 29). The origins and mechanisms of this type of violence have not been clearly determined although people in the district tend to attribute such violence to the pandilleros who attend these schools. I do not count with sufficient information to discuss what the dynamics determining this specific type of youth violence manifestation are. However, there is a specific issue related to the Ministry of Education's response to the violence within educational institutions that requires attention.

Through the "Programa de Prevención de la Violencia" (Violence Prevention Program) created in 1994, the Ministry of Education elaborated a "Manual de Prevención de la Violencia" (Violence Prevention Manual). This manual is meant to help schools facilitate "Talleres de Habilidades Sociales"

(Social Skills Workshops), which are to act as a prevention strategy for violence in these institutions. The manual describes the social skills workshops as,

> Systematized clusters of psychosocial activities that promote and strengthen factors that determine the integral development of the adolescent, diminishing risk factors and consolidating social and family support systems, so that the adolescent may achieve social insertion in a satisfactory and responsible way. (Ministerio de Educación, 1999)

Parents and teachers are also included in the psychosocial activities outlined by the manual. These concentrate on "formation and change of attitude techniques", "techniques for the development and strengthening of values" and "decision-making techniques". Workshops include role-playing games, group discussions and short quizzes. This strategy, presently implemented in almost fifty schools in the city, is undergoing a period of evaluation before its eventual implementation as part of the educational curriculum in every school. This manual is the only prevention tool that schools count with to address the issue of violence in their institutions.

Likewise, the Community Mental Health Department of the National Institute of Mental Health "Honorio Delgado – Hideyo Noguchi" is presently elaborating a 'Manual de Habilidades Sociales para la Prevención de Conductas Violentas en Adolescentes" (Social Skills Manual for the Prevention of Violent Behaviours in Adolescents). The strategies and activities outlined in this manual are analogous to those outlined in the Ministry of Education's manual; its objectives are almost identical, outlining four thematic modules that concentrate on self-esteem, communication, affirmativeness, and decision-making skills. The document is not limited to the school context and is designed to be used by police, church, municipal or educational authorities.

As I mentioned earlier, the Community Mental Health Department is presently working on the design of an intervention program on youth violence in Independencia. They department is interested in targeting pandillas and other violent youth groups in the area and will use their experience and findings from the creation and evaluation of the manual described above as starting points for the creation of this intervention program. While the evaluation of this manual has not been completed, the Department has noted certain situations that may help us discuss the potential validity and effectiveness of such manual's psychosocial activities in addressing violent youth groups in Independencia.

The staff shared an account of a youth who was regarded as the programs' "success story", a perfect example of an adolescent who, after completing the four modules, had demonstrated a positive change from his original negative behaviours. A few days after the program's last workshop took place, the same youth was caught stealing the school's sound system and confessed to his plans to sell the electronic device and make some money. The Community Mental Health Department was dumbfounded; the youth had been the best student in the social skills workshops they had facilitated, obtaining the best grades and reports.

While we are not able to establish if this youth was a pandillero, this account sheds light on the potential limitations of the manual's techniques and the likelihood of a youth to "learn the right answers" and behaviours needed to excel in the workshops, while demonstrating negative behaviours outside the workshop setting. Furthermore, one may argue that both manuals' focus on social skills will not prove effective when addressing pandillas because it pays no attention to youth group dynamics in its methods and objectives, placing great emphasis on the development and strengthening of skills which I believe are not weak nor absent in the pandillero's persona. Aldo Panfichi[63] and Federico Tong (1998:76) have mentioned that pandilleros, and specially leaders of pandillas are "natural born leaders", their assertiveness and decision-making skills noted as outstanding.

While I will not go into a further discussion on the manuals' effectiveness, it is worth noting that a one-to-one encounter with the pandillero as a means to harness moral consciousness and deter such individual from engaging in future violent activities has proven to be ineffective. Diana Benitez, a nurse

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[63] Interview with Aldo Panfichi (24/07/00)

in the Centro de Salud Tahuantinsuyo Bajo and responsible for the "Programa de Salud del Escolar y el Adolescente" (Adolescent and Student Health Program or PSEA) has noted on how a one-to-one therapy session is virtually useless when dealing with an adolescents involved in pandillas.[64] Benitez has had experiences with two pandilleros who were brought to the centre by teachers from a school. These individual's were "punished" with a visit to the psychologist who was confronted with individuals who conformed to the session's therapeutic methods, promptly returning to the pandillas after the encounter.

While I have not been able to witness encounters between psychologists and pandilleros, nor the application of the psychosocial dynamics on youth groups containing members of pandillas, we may argue that this strategies, as they exist today, will more than likely fail to deter youths from joining or participating in pandillas because of they focus on the individual detached from the group or on social skills that may in fact be found in members of violent youth groups.

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[64] Interview with Diana Benitez (31/07/00)

CHAPTER IV
TAMING CHIMAERA

      Pandillas or violent youth groups, consisting of individuals usually between the twelve and twenty years old, generally under the direct guidance of a young leader and engaging regularly in delinquent activities and violent actions against other similar youth groups and the general public, are piercingly real. Their existence in urban poor areas has been noted frequently, and their presence has raised serious concerns from residents in these and other areas.

      While acknowledging the existence of Chimaera, "the idea of the pandilla" may mislead some to believe that Chimaera does not *really* exist (and thus cannot be tamed) I must dispute such idea. Chimaera *is real*, consisting of the corpus of professional, institutional and non-institutional constructions or interpretations on the existence, motivations, objectives, origins and significance of the pandillas described above. The urban poor matrix, presenting a harsh socio-economic reality and a history of marginality and presumed violence has often framed these interpretations, ideas that act in turn as independent forces orchestrating the formation of a construct that has acquired the personality an agency of a pervasive social monster. This socially constructed monster inspires fear and insecurity among the general population and even more so among those who, deceived by this being's apparent monstrosity and pervasiveness, have limited their actions to the neutralization, condemnation and criminalization of the pandilleros, without pausing to touch a mirage that while real may disappear if successfully demystified.

      Chimaera, "the idea of the pandilla" exists by virtue of our lack of knowledge over many issues that pertain to the pandilla. It is almost as if we were using a telescope with a scratched lens when examining the pandilleros. This lack of visibility places Chimaera in front of the pandilla, as we channel our assessing energy through assumptions and moralistic ideals that immediately sanction violence, the tool that Tong (1998) refers to as supplying the pandilla's "present day needs". I disagree with Tong's in both his understanding of "violence as a tool" and his definitions of "present day needs".

      I postulate that "the tool" is not violence but instead the group itself; the collectiveness and gregariousness that is created when a group finds a name, follows a leader, defines itself by rejecting others through violence or non-violent means. I suggest that identity in this context is not achieved by virtue of violence against others but by the *implications of existing within a group*. We cannot understand a youth in a pueblo joven as we would understand one that was born in another national or social context. The urban poor youth is one that has grown without a family and he or she will join a pandilla in order to attain an identity, obtain independence, receive validation, feel appreciation and affection; all adolescent pragmatic needs. I believe that we are so concerned with the amoral and irreligious nature of violence that we have designed prevention strategies that aim to eliminate the creation of the group, in an short-sighted attempt to put and end to its use of violence, when in fact the violence appears to be a natural medium of communication for youths that, as noted and confirmed by all organizations and programs described in this essay, may often come from disarticulated or dysfunctional families.

      Violence as seen in the pandillas is a language that was learnt while growing up in the context of the pueblo joven, not the context affected by poverty stigmas and ideas on the effect of terrorism in these areas, but the factual context, one that is formed mostly by dysfunctional parents that cannot spend time with their children simply because they are at work; attempting to cope with the extreme economic depression that affects them and other people from the same areas. Family violence, aggravated by economic distress and its implications, is not rare. However, even more familiar is a life in an aggressive context where one has to use aggression to protect oneself from others. Perez's account on children from the San Juan de Dios community is particularly elucidating on this point (See page 44). He described how

children who were taught tolerance and confidence where stripped of their mechanisms of protection, an indispensable guard for their emotional survival in a violent context.[65]

In context of Independencia, violent pandillas have been noted to be scarce and generally delinquent in nature. I believe that the perception of pandillas as being a pressing problem in this district is related to the adaptation of the term "pandilla" as inclusive of non-violent, quasi-violent and violent youth groups, and to the great notoriety of infamous episodes like those seen after school, when students violently confront one another in groups. In Independencia, a stigma of violence is transposed on all forms of youth associations, providing for a greater mystification of violent youth group.

This last observation prompts me to suggest two themes that I believe deserve great attention and debate when approaching the creation of intervention programs on youth violence. These are concerned with the process of identification of violent youth groups and the mechanisms for the intervention of such groups, aspects that will have to be discussed by groups such as the Community Mental Health Department at the National Health Institute when designing an intervention program.

Identification
"*To prove or recognize as being a certain person or thing; determine identity of***"** [66]

Any intervention program that targets pandillas will have to discriminate between the different manifestations of violent youth groups that are present in the district. This essay has described the existence of a series of youth groups in Independencia: pandillas, non-violent pandillas ("grupos"), pirañitas, barras, and violent youth groups that confront each other after school.

The issue of identification is related to a need to further our understanding of an identified reality through qualitative as well as quantitative studies in districts like Independencia. Today, we find ourselves attempting to intervene the unidentified and un-quantified, a situation that reinforces Chimaera's presence in this context. This, unfortunately, is no surprise considering we have already legislated over the unidentified. Quantitative studies approaching the understanding of the youth violence issue in Independencia will also have to account for changes overtime, longitudinal appreciations of the forces and factors pulling or pushing youths into the pandillas.

Violent pandillas, in Independencia are diverse in their actions, personality and manifestation. Some incorporate women in the pandilla, others consist of women only. Some are known to be familiar with drugs and delinquency, others are perceived as mainly concerned with the protection of their territory, while others are seen as particularly concerned with their identification with a local soccer club. While all these attributes overlap, no pandilla appears to be the same. Studies will also have to determine the relationship between drug use and pandilla activity, as a strong connection between drugs, delinquency and levels of group violence displayed has been established in the past (Van Kammn et al, 1991). Few programs attempting to address youth violence in Independencia deal with drug use in the same context or through other initiatives.

Another issue related to the identification of violent youth groups is one related to a need to establish a "control" in our investigations on youth violence. In other words, when attempting to identify the violent youth group or individual, we must first ask ourselves what constitutes non-violence or "normality" among youths in the urban poor context. Studies that concentrate on understanding the youth cosmos in the context of the pueblo joven (and not only the *violent* dimension within this universe) may help us better define the abnormality we aim to target. We may discover that that which we regard as abnormal through our social scientifically biased eyes is only a particular shade of aggression, that more than familiar is indispensable in the context of the pueblo joven.

According to Amaro Perez, the main problem with pandillas in Independencia is that these are not registered by municipal or police authorities.[67] I agree with Perez's comment yet argue that this registration needs to be paired up with an effective mechanism of identification, so as to prevent a flawed

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[65] Interview with Amaro Perez (02/08/00)
[66] Definition in Collins New English Dictionary, 1997
[67] Interview with Amaro Perez (02/08/00)

registration and misguided intervention to take place. It is logical to assume that these different manifestations of youth associations may overlap, exhibit varying levels of violence use, or existing in particular contexts. Blum and Singer (1983) argue that the failure by strategies aimed at aiding youth-at-risk population is due in part by the tendency to try to force all youths into a single conceptual category and to utilize a single explanation for their behaviour. An intervention program targeting violent pandillas in Independencia will have to determine not only what group it will intervene, but also the mechanisms that will best fit the context where this violence manifests itself in order to provide for an effective intervention process.

Intervention   "*To influence or alter a situation in some way*"[68]

        The Independencia district presents an example of a community that has only recently began to address the presence of youth violence in the area. Most organizations started working on this issue in 1999 and others profess intent in creating programs specifically targeting violent youth groups in a near future. This recent trend responds to demands by the general public and the government, ones that may in fact be motivated by the effect of Chimaera on the general public's perception. That is not to say that such demand is unwarranted; accounts like those described by Marcos (See page 30) are not only real but also frequent and prevalent.
        The correct identification of the violent youth group will determine the appropriate or most effective mechanism for intervention. The intervention process will have to discriminate between the different dimensions that may be affected in order to provide for positive change. This essay has described a myriad of organizations and institutions that are, in one way or another, attempting to address violent youth groups in the district or involved in the provision of strategies that aim to improve the context youth exist in within the district. Each organization or program described may be regarded as exhibiting both limitations and potential benefits when addressing the existence of violent youth groups in the district. The ideas and interpretations that give direction to the different programs designed by the organizations described before respond to the specific institutional context that has nurtured them. While this essay is unable to provide an assessment on the efficacy of organizations or the strategies these have developed to address the youth violence phenomena in Independencia we may point to some features exhibited by some programs that promise to provide interesting outcomes.
        Initiatives like those facilitated by Pedro Gonzales (church) and Angel Chavez (police) respond to the actions of charismatic individuals who, under the support an ideology of their respective institutions, attempt to lure individuals away from the pandillas. "The good use of free time" is an ideology that will need to incorporate independent associative activities in order to become an acceptable paradigm of youth recreation for the prevention of violence among youth groups. A program that regards groups as being exclusive transmitters of violence in these areas will create a void that may in fact harvest more social stress on communities like Independencia. Chavez's and Gonzales belong to religious and civic authority centres that will always have an influence and role to play in the context of youth violence within the districts. While their programs are limited, they may serve as starting point for the internalization of such desired goals as art of clear institutional agendas, ones that will demand the complete participation of these entities as means to provide for effective change.
        Many organizations that do not work specifically with pandillas are comfortable in providing youth violence prevention programs that aim to keep youths away from the influence of the pandillas. Programs like those designed by the Promudeh and the IPD tend to psychologize the pandilleros, and provide for the fabrication of young role models that are to be followed by youths, preventing them from getting involved with pandillas. I believe that these programs are limited through their disregard for pandillas when implementing violence prevention programs for youths. They seem forget the actors that

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[68] Definition in Collins New English Dictionary, 1997

will probably have more influence on youths in urban poor districts the existence of this entities define adolescence for many of these individuals.

If Proceso Social's program on socio-environmental awareness was to successfully expand throughout the district, we may witness a reshaping or betterment of the socio-ecology of violence in the district, one that will includes not only the immediate surroundings but the actors within this context: families, governments, organizations, etc. Perhaps the alternative educational strategies presented by this organizations may be most effective in transmitting the values that schools attempt to transmit through their social skills workshops, especially because the former concentrate on children as opposed to youth.

This emphasis on children may actually prove to be the most effective prevention and intervention strategies on youth violence. The overwhelming majority of pandilleros have been noted to leave the pandillas when leaving their teen years, as they begin to work or start a family. Recognizing and further exploring the transient dimensionality of the violent youth group experience may direct our attention to children. Familiarizing these infants to a new coherent understanding of the pandilla as a positive actor in the development of the district may in fact guarantee a non-violent quality to future youth associations and groups. Wole Soyinka could not have suggested it better: "forget about the dead, forget even about the living; concentrate on the unborn".

New strategies designed by these organizations have to be pared with a reformulation of the present laws that affect the pandillas. The present legislature treats the pandilleros as de facto delinquents. Laws concentrate on the neutralization of Chimaera through the incarceration of youths who are confronted with a system that has criminalized their existence. The criminalization of pandillas has occurred by virtue of our own ignorance. Models like those provided by Tong (1998) that do not elaborate on the ecology of violence in pandillas have provided for a strictly functionalist interpretation, outlining the perverse structures that account for these groups' savage nature. Not only have we legislated the unidentified; we have perpetuated a stigma crime and violence over any type of youth association that is not mediated by adults. It is also clear that the government's relationship and obligations towards children and adolescents has been under constant legal revision, leaving us today in a new stage where old conservative notions conflict with modern progressive visions for change.

I believe that a program like the The DEMUNA's Ci-Joven that consciously promoted *independent* associative life in the district will be key in reshaping the conception on youth groups that pervade the pueblo joven and providing for real alternatives for youths searching or the gregariousness that the pandilla offers. Indeed, I believe that the provision of new associative paradigms through programs like the Ci-Joven may prompt youths to choose non-violent associations over violent ones. Programs that do not incorporate alternative associative dynamics in their prevention strategies and give marginal importance to the influence pandillas exert on youths in the district, are deemed to fail, simply because pandillas, as we have seen in the context of Independencia, have become integral actors in the youth cosmos.

Future studies may determine which program has provided for most significant outcomes. However, a great deal of time and resources needs to be spent in obtaining the quantitative and qualitative information mentioned before. Without this information all intervention programs will be relegated to work under assumptions and flawed interpretations. As Blum and Singer (1983) commented when discussing intervention strategies aimed at addressing youth issues, "we tend too often to do what we know how to do". This tendency needs to be corrected and paired with an intense evaluation of present strategies targeted at youths in urban poor areas. We may discover that present initiatives are not only providing for limited changes but also allocating excessive energy on the disarticulation of mechanisms that may help children to cope with an aggressive context and the absence of a family environment, situations that are outside the sphere of influence and impact a program may have.

The Independencia district is an example that demands the creation and definition of new strategies and alternatives for change that may be more effective if structured from a perspective focused youth and not the violence seen among these generations. I expect the demand for programs addressing youth violence in pueblos jovenes to increase in the coming decade as society becomes increasingly aware of Chimaera through the waves and quality of media attention that this issue receives. The

relatively novel existence of these groups, has served as perfect news material, prompting the media to report extensively on this issue, generally framing the existence of the pandilla under a discourse that emphasizes the savage, almost animalesque and primitive nature of these "urban tribes" (See page 24 [b]). A serious and meticulous debate over issues of identification and intervention needs to take place before more programs are designed, recognizing and correcting the apparently misguided attention these youths have received so far from media, government, general public and local organizations. This debate should convene the different types of organizations and institutions described earlier in this essay, as they are all actors in the districts' social stage, all occupying important roles not only in our understanding of the issue but also in the potential influence these may have, each on their own dimension, on the betterment of the youth violence situation.

Conclusion

The pandilla has become the form of popular youth organization *par excellence*. The presence of this form of association has increased dramatically in recent years and appreciation for collective battle-like violence has been widely internalized. Organized society has responded through a myriad of programs and initiatives that are based on different interpretations of causality behind this issue, all accounting to a corpus of knowledge that facilitates the formation of Chimaera. The pandilla, just as the child viewer of television (Hacking, 1999), has become a seemingly coherent object, haphazardly categorized and classified under certain general attributes this new species is said to have. The truth is that today, there is no such "coherent object of study" and intervention.

Most qualitative and quantitative questions remain unanswered while steps have already been taken to legislate over the violent acts committed by these youth groups. The media has provided for the general population's intense attention to Chimaera. Biased interpretations on the shining path's legacy and on the relationship between poverty and violence have provided for the psychologization of the pandilleros, portraying manifestations of youth violence as ones derived from the traumatic experience of being poor and having families that have been in closer to the terrorist element than other sectors of the urban population.

A particular social matrix, one that incorporates professional, institutional and non-institutional influences has created "the idea of the pandilla", one that has acquired the Chimaera personality and composition. Different tissues or themes that have been conceptually grafted together provide for the appearance of a perverse social monster. I have attempted to deconstruct Chimaera in an attempt to elucidate certain issues that may help us better define the target of future intervention programs, the mechanisms through which intervention should be approached. It should be clear that these mechanisms are ones centred on the correction of our scratched telescope and the dismissal of misguided moralistic assumptions as main compasses in our search for direction. Chimaera, the elusive construct, will be tamed through the recognition and treatment of the potential biases that guide our actions and through the facilitation of information that may help better understand the factual reality behind youth violence manifestations in the area.

Organizations utilizing the scarce knowledge available on these groups have in fact facilitated the construction of a powerful reality, "the idea of the violent youth" in the city. The term "pandilla" and "barra brava" have become almost cliché labels used freely, abused by members of a sector of society to whom many people will turn to while looking for solutions and cures. The assumed coherence of the pandillero's identity has facilitated the transformation of this *kind* of person into a thing, an object of *limited* study, intervention and debate. Let us hope that future years will bring the debate presented in this essay to the forefront, and that all remaining qualitative and quantitative questions will be effectively tackled. In order to solve the riddle of Chimaera's existence, we must first acknowledge that we have created it, and that those violent youths kept hidden behind this monster's presence are not only human, but also very real and in need of real and full attention.

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APPENDIX 1

███ **Guía para entrevista a organizaciones relacionadas**
     al tema de violencia juvenil en el distrito de Independencia

Entrevistador   Lugar   Fecha   Hora

La mayoría de estas preguntas son abiertas y deben ser ampliadas durante la entrevista. Cada pregunta pretende introducir diferentes temas relevantes al tema de violencia juvenil en Independencia. Las preguntas seguidas por un asterisco (*) son aquellas delineadas en la 'Propuesta para Estudio y Diseño de Intervención en Violencia Juvenil en el Distrito de Independencia' (1999:6) .

1. Nombre de persona entrevistada

2. Nombre de la organización/institución a la que pertenece

3. Titulo dentro de la organización

4. ¿Cuánto tiempo ha estado trabajando en esta organización?

5. ¿Qué tipo de trabajo lleva acabo dentro de la organización?

Características de la Intervención

6. Nombre del programa(s) _____ .

7. Fecha de inicio de programa   _____ / _____ / _____ .

8. Tipo de programa
    ( ) Preventivo promocional   ( ) De atención   ( ) De rehabilitación

9. Objetivo(s) del programa   _____ .

10. Area geográfica de intervención

    ( ) Tupac Amaru   ( ) Independencia   ( ) Tahuantinsuyo
    ( ) Ermitaño   ( ) La Unificada   ( ) Zona Industrial
    ( ) Otros...........................

11. Personal que ejecuta el programa

    ( ) Medico   ( ) Técnico de Enfermería   ( ) Enfermera
    ( ) Psicólogo   ( ) Asistenta Social   ( ) Promotor / Agente comunitario
    ( ) Maestro   ( ) Policía   ( ) Otros...........................

12. Numero total de personas que trabajan en el programa _____ .

13. ¿Que metodología utiliza el programa? (Que hacen, como lo hacen)

14. ¿Qué marcos conceptuales apoyan a este tipo de intervención? (Por que lo hacen)

15. ¿A que clase de jóvenes esta dirigido el programa? ¿Cuáles son sus criterios de selección? (edad, genero, etc.)

16. ¿Hay algún trato especial o diferente para aquellos jóvenes que están dentro de una pandilla o barra brava?

17. El programa tiene contacto con las familias de los jóvenes?

18. El programa tiene contacto con los amigos/amigas del joven?

19. ¿Cómo es que su organización entiende el fenómeno de la violencia juvenil? (modelos explicativos, marcos teóricos)

20. ¿Qué factores (sociales, económicos, culturales, educativos, etc.) son vistos como mayores influencias en la ocurrencia de la violencia juvenil en el distrito?).

21. ¿Qué actividades de promoción se llevan acabo?

22. Este programa ha sido evaluado? De que manera?

23. ¿Cómo son financiadas estas intervenciones?

     a.   ¿A cuanto asciende el presupuesto anual?

     b.   Fuentes de financiamiento

        ( ) MINSA   ( ) Cooperación Externa
        ( ) ONG   ( ) Otros.........................
        ( ) Municipio

24. ¿Qué motivó la creación de este programa?

25. ¿Que logros han obtenido mediante la intervención? *

26. ¿Qué tipo dificultades han encontrado al intervenir? * ¿Cómo cree que estas podrían ser superadas?

27. ¿Que limitaciones existen en cuanto a la intervención? * ¿Cómo cree que estas podrían ser superadas?

28. ¿Que vinculación tienen con otras instituciones/organizaciones en el campo de la violencia juvenil? *

29. ¿Qué proyectos futuros tiene su organización?

Características de los grupos violentos

De acuerdo a su experiencia:

30. ¿Que características tienen las pandillas en Independencia?

     a.   ¿Cuántas pandillas cree que existen en Independencia?

     b.   ¿Cuántos jóvenes cree que están involucrados en estas pandillas?

     c.   ¿En que áreas del distrito se les puede encontrar? (territorios, puntos de reunión, etc.)

     d.   ¿Qué tipos de actividades realizan?

     e.   ¿Como están organizadas? (lideres, jefes)

     f.   ¿Hace cuanto que hay pandillas en Independencia?

     g.   ¿Como es que la comunidad percibe de estos grupos?

     h.   ¿Como es que la comunidad lidia con este problema?

     i.   ¿Conoce otros programas locales de intervención en violencias juvenil?

31. Pedir documentos y/o informes respecto a la organización y sus programas.

32. Pedir información acerca de posibles informantes claves.

END NOTES

[a] The establishment of Law No. 26830 "Ley de Seguridad y Tranquilidad Publica en Espectaculos Deportivos" (Law for Security and Public Tranquility in Sports events) promulgated in 1997, clearly shows the government's increasing concern on stopping violent conduct by barras and pandillas in the stadiums, and outside after the matches. During my field study in Peru, the new Universitario Stadium was inaugurated. Described as the largest most sophisticated facility in South America, the stadium fell victim to the actions of the barras during and after the inaugurating match. Several vehicles belonging to the spectators where completely destroyed and many stores and houses surrounding the stadium where vandalized. Anti-riot police squads were called in and scores of fans were dispersed with tear-gas. Neighbors in the area have taken the Stadium managers to court as the facility remains closed and awaiting legal sentence (CARETAS magazine, July 2000).

[b] The Community Mental Health Division of the National Institute of Mental Health has recently managed to contact certain ex-pandilla members and it seems that full contact with pandillas may be established in the coming months. We can only wait and see what this new information may reveal and suggest.

[d] While editing this essay, Mr. Cubillas presented his formal resignation from the IPD, after Alberto Fujimori was qualified as "morally unfit" to keep the presidency. Cubilla's resignation stated that he could not work for a morally unfit government (CARETAS magazine, December 2000).