

Latin American Youth Violence: A Case Study of Lima Gangs

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Conceptualizing Latin American Street Gangs

From the standpoint of the great communications media that uncommunicate humanity, the third world is peopled by third-class inhabitants distinguishable from animals only by their ability to walk on two legs. Theirs are problems of nature not of history: hunger, pestilence, violence are in the natural order of things (Galeano 2001, 1).

The essence of violence in Latin America has shifted from a socio-political question to one which is now socio-economic in nature. According to Rodgers (2004, 1), “the most visible forms of violence stem not from ideological conflicts over the nature of the political system but from delinquency and crime” (p.1). While the violence that plagues the region is nothing new, the levels of violence have increased so dramatically over the past decade that some Latin Americanists recognize that the current wave of violence steaming from crime and delinquency presents Latin American states with serious challenges to economic and social development programs in the twenty-first century.

Before we delve deep into this issue we must first recognize that increased violence in Latin America is attributable to gross socio-economic inequalities. Over time, these inequities have furthered the polarization of classes in Latin American societies. What are the effects of economic and social inequality on the behavior of the region's youth - the future of Latin America? The impact of such an examination is significant considering the fact that youths compose a considerable percentage of the population in the region. For example, in 2004 Moser and van Bronkhorst report that “adolescents ages ten through nineteen represent roughly twenty-two percent of the population in the Latin American region, ranging from seventeen percent in Uruguay to almost twenty-six percent in El Salvador.” (1).

Within this segment of the population there exists an alarmingly high rate of violence committed and experienced by marginalized urban youths in the region. Although the socio-economic and socio-political experiences of these youths are not uniform, there are several “environmental, social, and familial conditions that are common to many young people in most countries in the region” (Moser & van Bronkhorst 2004, 1). As we will see later, this case study is particularly concerned with the effect that these conditions have on the marginalized urban youth of Lima society and its impact on the proliferation of urban youth street gang violence throughout its marginalized districts.

For our purposes the term *violence* must not be categorized equally with the word *crime*. The violence that we will be discussing at length in the following case study analyzes the term violence in accordance with various context specific

factors present in marginalized urban districts in Lima-Peru. In general, youth street gangs are not new to Latin America. However, their rapid growth in marginalized urban areas coupled with the rise in violent activity attributed to them is a new phenomenon that requires critical examination.

Unfortunately, scholarly material regarding this phenomenon is wanting. Moreover, the research indicates that “it is difficult to quantify the proportion of criminal and delinquent activity directly attributable to youth gangs”. But, the violence they account for is a “significant, although variable, share of actual and perceived violence” (Rodgers 2004, 1). Consequently, we need a theoretical framework of gang organization that will allow us to deconstruct the violence that they are accredited for.

What are the various motivations for creating or joining a street gang? As you will see later, some gangs have political objectives, while others criminally organize themselves into gangs of professional thieves for the accumulation of wealth. Still others join a street gang to obtain a sense of identity and social status (the subject of this manuscript). Not only do street gangs differ organizationally, but they differ cross-culturally and trans-nationally as well. For instance, in the US most street gangs are divided along racial or ethnic lines. In terms of Latin American street gangs, when we speak of gangs as marginalized urban youth street gangs the differences amongst the physical ages of gang members is considerable. In short, the term *youth* is an abstract concept for the societies in the region. Becoming an adult in Latin America begins when one fulfills and answers to an approved social role, such as becoming a husband or a wife and having children, etc. Such an ambiguous notion of youth poses problems for providing a definite age range that represents marginalized urban youth gang members for the entire region as a whole.

Also, the age ranges of gang members differs for each country in the region according to the specific cultural factors that comprise each individual marginalized urban society within a particular country. For instance, marginalized urban youth gang members in Colombia range in age from sixteen to twenty-four years. Comparatively, in Brazil they can be as young as fifteen and as old as twenty-nine years of age. Not only do marginalized urban youth street gang members differ in age trans-nationally throughout Latin America, they also differ in their associations with each other and society as well. In general, the urbanized societies of Latin America conceive of the marginalized urban youth street gang member as criminal and violent by his very nature.

The research suggests that such conceptualization is merely an extension of the preconceived stigmatic stereotypes placed upon urban youth hailing from marginalized districts by the upper classes in Latin America. For example, the marginalized urban youth street gangs of Brazil are heavily involved in the

international drug trade resulting in criminal outbreaks of violence. On the other hand, Guatemalan street gangs are nothing more than associations of rebellious youth engaged in legitimate pursuits that sometimes lead to insignificant fights or petty theft. But, as Rodgers stated in 2004, “both are considered to be youth gangs by society because they are inherently associated with illegal and violent behavior” (Rodgers 2004, 2). As these two comparisons suggest, no matter what kind of association marginalized urban youth street gangs have with each other or with society, they are still viewed by their communities under a negative microscope.

However, the different forms of violence displayed by each distinct type of marginalized urban youth street gang in Latin America is not the central issue that should be explored when attempting to secure sustainable social development for future generations in the region. Instead, emphasis must be placed upon the socio-economic structures of violence present in marginalized urban areas. These structures create what Shaw and McKay and also Whyte have described as a special “social disorganization” (Rodgers 2004, 4) of inner city poor that nurtures youth street gangs and the violence that they are attributed for. As we will see in the following case study, marginalized urban youth street gangs are social groups that form around very specific pursuits.

In terms of the marginalized urban youth street gangs studied here, they exist as replacements for important social identity providing institutions that are crumbling in the face of debilitating inner city poverty, such as: the family unit, public education, and the employment market. Furthermore, as you will see in the case study of marginalized urban districts in Lima-Peru, rampant poverty has led to administrative breakdowns in the urban system causing most municipal services to be diminished or ineffective altogether. Thus, the following case study has conceptualized Lima's gangs and the violence that they are accredited for in accordance with the cultural factors native to Lima society.

Marginalized Urban Youth Street Gang Violence in Lima-Peru

Divided between a child and a man, neither one nor the other, he is all things juvenile, violent, sharp, flung towards cruelty, towards brutality and obedience, condemned to slavery and vile deeds. He is vile because he is a nageenager. Carnal, because he is a teenager. A destroyer, because he is a teer (Gombrowics 1982, 46).

Within our modern conception of the world today, being poor signifies that one does not have the material and the necessary means to sustain everyday life. At the same time, this understanding of modern day poverty is defined socially by comparing the different living standards of the world's poor constituting what Reyes calls *relative poverty*. According to Reyes this concept depends on the, “subject's level of access to the consumer market, health care facilities, educational

institutions, entertainment centers, and nutritional factors” (Reyes 1995, 8). Consequently, a chronic deficiency in two or more of these categories signifies that a subject is living in *absolute poverty*. Obviously, being poor in a highly developed country such as the US is not the same as being poor in an underdeveloped nation like Peru, where the symptom of absolute poverty is chronic and the principle cause of suffering is exclusion.

According to Puch fifty percent of the population of Peru lives in absolute poverty (Puch 2003). The stigma of being poor excludes the underclass from participating in the nation's political process, furthering their alienation from society without any voice or possibility for negotiating a better life. In effect, Peru's poor have found themselves excluded from the globalized economy and from taking part in the discourse that has resulted from the impact of globalization's positive and negative effects. Why does the Peruvian state exclude the majority of its population?

The poor are excluded by the government because its officials and those who support them view the poor as insignificant laborers whose skills are irrelevant to a modern economy. Going a step further, the Peruvian poor are excluded “because they do not possess the resources to participate in consumption” (Puch 2003, 3). The incoherent need for Peru's upper classes to acquire the products, achieve the values, and goals perpetrated by Peru's mass media - a media which has clearly been influenced by North American consumerism - has created a false internalization of self worth within Peruvian society. Individuals from all social classes (specifically in Lima) base their self worth on what and how much they are able to buy. Consequently, the purchasing power of Lima's upper classes is admired by the underclass, but not without serious psychological consequences.

Puch reports that this admiration - coupled with the lack of purchasing power - has caused the underclasses to stigmatize themselves as inferior and refer to themselves as *pobres fracasados* or failures. As much as the underclasses believe that they are failures, so too does the government. Now, the root cause of the exclusion of Peru's poor is revealed. The poor are excluded in Peru because globalization's message to the global south is: to combat poverty you must produce and consume like the global north. Not only is this message illogical but it is impossible for most of the countries of the south - including Peru - to follow.

For example, a 1999 study conducted by Peru's market watchdog DATUM states that only an elite fifteen percent of the population (composed mainly of Lima's inhabitants) participates in the consumption of benefits and services that globalization promotes. In other words, “this figure shows that the vast majority of the population is left wanting and aspiring to consume like the rich do, in vain, destroying any dignity that they had left as they stand at the outskirts of globalization” (Puch 2003, 5). Consequently, the poor are excluded from participating in Peruvian society because they do not have the ability to act upon

globalization's message. From another point of view, they are insignificant because they do not have the ability to consume.

Now that we have a brief understanding of the socio-economic climate in Peru, we can analyze a specific sub group from within Peruvian society to realize the effects that exclusion has had on its members. According to Cruzado, "society excludes others in order to liberate itself from the responsibility of addressing the very problem it has created, a series of social enemies" (Cruzado 1997, 7). And so, the argument of this case study is that the issues of rapid urbanization, debilitating poverty, and social inequality endemic to Lima society are directly responsible for the violence propagated by one 'so called' social enemy - the marginalized urban youth. Specifically, this case study examines the lives of urban youth street gang members in the *barrios marginales* or marginalized neighborhoods that lie on the fringes of Lima-Peru. The barrio of concern is known as *Yerbateros* (pronounced Yeah-r-vah-te-r-os) located in the district of *El Agustino*.

The objective of this examination is to unravel the codes that marginalized urban youth street gang members use to give themselves an identity. To unify, to create a sense of belonging and that ultimately allows them to survive by incorporating values such as solidarity - among others. This study is the product of two months of observation and critical analysis of youths living in *Yerbateros* and other marginalized areas. The observations were combined with extensive library research conducted while the author was completing a human rights internship concerning at risk youth from June through July of 2003.

Analyzing Youth Violence from a Different Perspective

I know that even as you smile, laugh, and give out high fives, you are sad. You are sad because you know that even a young man such as yourself can be led astray. But you want to be good: I know. But if you have failed, it is because of your family, destitute and poor; because of your zest for living, because of your barrio which is nothing short of hell on earth, and because of your Lima. Because Lima is the temptation that devours you; cinemas, casinos, billiards, bars, and money. Most of all money, it must be made by any means necessary. But I know that you are good. One day you will find a heart that agrees with your innocence (Cruzado 1997, 9).

The phenomenon of youth violence is perceived by many Latin American governments as one in a short list of significant problems that threaten the security of the state. In reality, if we look past the gang fights, the assaults, and the insecurity we will find nothing but confusion, fear, and stigmas inside most studies that attempt to bring marginalized urban youth street gang members back into society's fold. In terms of Lima society, Cabrera identifies that the real problem is that most studies consider marginalized urban youth street gang members to be "mentally unstable and deprived of all hope" (Cabrera 2003, 59).

Unfortunately, this bias causes most researchers to propose antiquated solutions that have always been proposed to address this social problem, such as: repressive police interventions accompanied by excessive judicial punishment.

However, when we put aside our biases a whole new world of possibilities opens up in front of us. This vantage point allows us to understand that the problem is not a result of age or mental instability, but of a vast social sickness that we are all guilty of producing. Thus, the solution to problems of this nature can be found at the root of any given society. In this case it lies at the root of Lima's society. More importantly, the solution must involve everyone living in it.

Over the past several years in Lima a misconception or labeling of adolescents has been used by legally employed adults from all social classes. The misconception is: "if adolescents, do not go to school or do not work they are bums, delinquents or worse - terrorists" (Canepa 1993, 127). Currently, this label has been transformed into an absolute truth due to the alleged rebirth of *Sendero* (The Shining Path) and reports or rumors of Sendero's remobilization in the provinces. However, this absolute truth has been established without any proof or concern for reality. The truth is that this label is promoted by the government to serve as a smoke screen hiding what is really going on with Lima's youth.

Curiously, the smoke screen does not envelop youth from all walks of life. Instead, it covers up the reality of those youth who are marginalized and misrepresents their rage as natural and not having anything do with a system that rejects them. Obviously, being young and poor are not the only factors that cause a youth to develop violent behavior. Not all marginalized youths display such behavior. But it is more likely that a *cholo* from *Yerbateros* will act out violently than a *gringuito* from *Miraflores* (an upper class district in Lima). Why is this so?

We must first come to understand that urban life means inequality. We do not transport ourselves by equal means. We do not participate in recreational activities in the same manner. Nor do we enjoy the same living conditions. However, Lima's catch phrase plastered over the bridges that sit atop its downtown highways beckoning immigrants from afar says that Lima is a *Ciudad Para Todos* or a city for all. It is a city "where everyone can satisfy all the necessities of their existence in *equal* urban spaces" (Canepa 1993, 149). And it is from this perspective that we will begin to study the lives of Lima's marginalized urban youths. By analyzing the *unequal* urban spaces that youths inhabit.

Analyzing the Urban Spaces Lima's Youth Inhabit

There is no human being on earth that looks upon the outside world from her prison walls with utter yearning the way in which an adolescent does...No one else on earth feels such a profound sense of solitude and thirst for human contact and understanding as the adolescent (Cruzado 1997, 17).

According to Tavera, "if the city we live in or survive in (Lima) is built and continues to be built under the premise that the urban spaces available for youths to inhabit will satisfy all the necessities of their existence we must define what those necessities are" (Cruzado 1997,17). For many the basic necessities are food, shelter, education and recreation. This is necessary so that the youth have opportunities to move to a higher social class and so that they have an outlet for their high energy levels once their survival needs are satisfied. Unfortunately, marginalized urban youths are not provided with such opportunities.

In terms of education, most classrooms in marginalized districts are run down. They are furnished with broken down desks, cracked chalk boards, little or no chalk, and patched up instructional materials. However, the two most significant problems are lack of space and high student/teacher ratios that do not allow teachers to individually address the problems that their students encounter. For example, the classrooms of Lima's marginalized sectors are half the size of an average US high school classroom that hold anywhere from 40 to 50 students at any given point in the semester. (Note: These conditions were recounted to the author by a US high school teacher participating in a teacher exchange program.)

In terms of recreation, every weekend thousands of youths divide themselves amongst soccer and volleyball teams to invade the soccer fields, parks, beaches, streets, and alley ways to play the sports they love so much. Is there adequate space for them to play in Lima? No, there is not. According to urban planners, "cities should provide eight meters squared of active and passive recreational space per inhabitant" (Cruzado 1997, 151). In Lima, this is not a reality. While recreational parks and fields abound in upper class districts such as *Miraflores*, Tavera estimates that most marginalized districts barely have 0.9 meters squared of recreational space per inhabitant (Cruzado). In some marginalized districts no recreational space is available.

Such is the condition of *El Agustino*, whose adolescents display their adaptability by playing soccer in the dirt roads that surround the district. They creatively invent goal posts by spacing out cardboard boxes or empty glass bottles between the goals. The passive observer might conceptualize the lack of recreational space in *El Agustino* and its impact on recreational activities in a manner that compliments the district's youths on their powers of adaptability.

While this can not be denied, the passive observer fails to understand that the lack of recreational space demonstrates the type of exclusion present in Peruvian society. It is one where even the gates of recreation are closed to poor youths. Preventing them from positively escaping their hostile environment to play, relax, and dream in an environment conducive to leisure activities.

Analyzing Yerbateros

There is no meeting place of greater importance to the life of urban biological and social human beings than that of space...space is eminently cultural...space is impregnated with ideologies and values (Margulis 1996, 54).

The youths who inhabit the barrio of *Yerbateros* (located in the district of *El Agustino*) live in a climate of violence and extreme poverty that is characterized as unstable and dangerous. It is so dangerous in fact that when outsiders walk the streets after sundown it is recommended that they remove accessories that signify wealth, such as: gold chains, earrings, and glasses. Also, it is recommended that one walk upright and with a stern look about one's face simulating the hyper-masculine stance of a Peruvian military officer. Aside from the aura of imminent danger that stigmatizes the barrio, the real danger - which is painfully evident to even the most casual of observers - is the lack of basic municipal services.

The author identified nine characteristics that summarize the living conditions in the barrio: archaic urbanization, lack of or nonexistent sanitation services, poor water quality, lack of electrical services and street lighting, insufficient recreational space, poor educational services, lack of or nonexistent health care facilities, nonexistent modern methods of communication, and haphazard public transportation services. These deficiencies are accentuated by the living conditions of the barrio's inhabitants, such as: crowded family living spaces highlighted by several generations living in one or two room homes, inadequate protection against the elements, and improper ventilation.

According to Riofrio, the lack of urban planning coordination for barrios like *Yerbateros* amongst the authorities of Lima highlights one of the city's most significant bureaucratic weaknesses (Riofrio 2003). However, Riofrio attributes the lack of municipal services available to residents of barrios like *Yerbateros* to low municipal income and the lack of organized municipal administration. In general, "the municipalities have only paid attention to the need for urbanized land, but not to the provision of services and equipment, such as: housing production issues which are principally in the hands of the central government" (Riofrio 2003, 3). Although categorization of the deficiencies in municipal services that abound in barrios like *Yerbateros* is important for practical purposes, proper conceptualization

requires an analysis over the way in which its inhabitants use the space that is give to them.

In other words, “what signifies life in the abyss, in the most inhospitable of places, whose roads are not paved; in the center of a barrio surrounded by a market where distinct informal events occur” (Margulis 1996, 54)? These questions are distinct and can only be understood as Geertz would say, “*Si uno ha estado allí?*” (Margulis 1996, 55) or if one has seen it for themselves. From this point of view, the author will attempt to describe a place, a barrio that is beyond the imagination of most observers from the US. The barrio of *Yerbateros* is located on the periphery of the district of *El Agustino*, which is derogatively referred to as an *area tugurizada* or a slum zone where *solares* or slum tenement buildings proliferate and suffer from perpetual overcrowding and decay. Comparatively, the district of El Agustino would be considered the inner city in the US. However, the area of concern (*Yerbateros*) is classified as a *pueblo joven* or a new low-income settlement/shantytown “in which people first live, then construct, then install services” (Riofrio 2003, 4).

These new settlements house the majority of Lima's low income rural immigrant population who began immigrating to the city since the 1950s from rural provinces. In terms of urban planning, these new settlements are important because they have served as Lima's central model of urban development since the 1960s. For example, Riofrio estimates that new settlements house approximately thirty-five percent of the city's population, which includes the descendants of families from the same settlement and from other low income settlements. New settlements are officially conceptualized under three separate categories. The first category represents sixty percent of the population of shantytowns and is classified as a *barriada asistida* or a government assisted shantytown. Here development adheres to strict state urban planning guidelines.

The second category represents a decreasing twenty percent of the population of shantytowns and is classified as a co-operative in which settlers begin living in the settlement before state development projects are complete. The third category represents an increasing twenty percent of the population of shantytowns and is classified as a *barriada convencional* or a conventional shantytown. Here there exists no government sponsored development plan. The type of settlement that occurs in conventional shantytowns is spontaneous in nature and occurs on marginal land that is “either close to or far from the urban core” (Riofrio 2003, 5).

The barrio of *Yerbateros* is considered a conventional shantytown constructed in and around an enormous hill of marginal land that stands at the periphery of the urban district of *El Agustino*. For all intents and purposes housing should not exist in this area because the hill is made of soft dirt and loose fitting grass, which is nothing short of treacherous foundation. Most homes are made of concrete bricks left over from construction projects and topped by tin roofs found by garbage pickers. The author was told several times and witnessed for himself

that these homes are extremely cold in the winter and intolerably hot in the summer. While these homes (in the author's opinion) are death traps where diseases such as Tuberculosis run rampant, it is important to understand that the people living here have no other option or the resources to live anywhere else.

At the base of the hill below the shantytown one can expect to find narrow, cracked, paved roads that are surrounded by small businesses that make up part of the formal economy. In actuality, the majority of these businesses represent large segments of the informal economy. Everything from fruit to electronic goods are sold in informal markets where goods are either bartered or bargained for in order to receive a wholesale price. Particularly, these informal markets are best known for their chop shops. Most of the auto parts sold to customers here originated from automobiles stolen in upper class districts brought in by car thieving *bandas*.

In general, *bandas* are professionally organized criminal gangs composed of marginalized youths dedicated to "pulling themselves out of poverty through crime" (Rodgers 2004, 12). They focus all of their energies towards maximizing the illegal profitability of a specific criminal enterprise. In terms of criminal activity, car theft is a significant problem ranking second in the number of incidences of registered street crime in Lima every month. For example, in 2002 the UNODC Country Office Peru reported that for the month of November, three-hundred-fifty-five separate instances of car theft were registered in Lima ranking second behind three-hundred-seventy-four separate instances of registered armed robberies. Although these figures may not seem imposing, it is important to note that in 2002 *Instituto Apoyo* (a Peruvian consulting firm) reported that sixty-two percent of the perpetrators of armed robberies were youths ranging in age from sixteen to twenty-five years. However, sophisticated acts of criminal violence - like car theft - perpetrated by Lima's *bandas* must be distinguished as entirely separate from the low levels of amateur violence steaming from non-criminal marginalized urban youth street gangs or *pandillas*. As was noted earlier, confusion surrounding these classifications exists because of the ambiguous socio-cultural framing of the definition behind what constitutes a youth within the Latin American context. From the standpoint of Lima society and culture, *bandas* and *pandillas* are the same thing. They are both youth gangs, suggesting to the general public that they should be pursued, detained, and reformed by security officials in the same manner.

However, the research indicates that *bandas* tend to be organized in highly specialized professional groups of what US criminologists would consider to be no more than twelve adult males dedicated to securing their economic well being. Conversely, *pandillas* tend to organize in groups of what US sociologists would consider to be twenty to thirty adolescent males ranging in age from twelve to nineteen years engaged in the pursuit of self identity rather than improving their economic condition. As we shall see later, being that *pandilleros* are mostly teenagers,

as a social group, *pandillas* require a much different analysis than an analysis over *bandas* per se. What will be revealed is that Lima's marginalized teenagers are attracted to the urban street gang life due to the social exclusion that they face and their psycho-social need to create an identity for themselves.

Returning to the analysis of *Yerbateros*, the streets of the shantytown can be likened to the backwater dirt roads of the American rural south. However, in the author's opinion no image exists that can explain the defiled nature of the barrio's streets. To begin with, the number of stray dogs and alley cats that roam the streets is high. This is accompanied by a variety of strange animal noises that seem to grow more pronounced as the day turns into night. While the natural melodies of the barrio's animal population provide the background music, the pulsing melodies of *Salsa* or Tropical Latin Dance music emanating from the stereos of businesses owners provides the music of the foreground.

For some observers, the playing of *Salsa* music in the marginalized urban districts of Lima can be seen as the people's way of providing for themselves a festive atmosphere in an otherwise miserable environment. While this may be true, more importantly, it is one of many social indicators defining class in Lima society. *Salsa* is the music of the marginalized classes. While Spanish and American Rock, Western European Classical, American Jazz, and Euro-American Dance music are the music of the upper classes.

Accompanying this vista is the foul smell of "animals and their excrements, accumulated trash, and litter that many of the barrio's residents refuse to clean up" (Rodgers 2004, 12). While this statement seems to be a harsh assessment of the environment of *Yerbateros*, it is nonetheless a disturbing reality explained to the author by a co-worker - who is a psychologist - in this manner: "when people are condemned to mere survival, they forget about the presentation of their community and worry only about cleaning their own personal living space. Or they do enough cleaning just to get by." Thus, the panorama of *Yerbateros* can best be described as disorganized; lacking a sense of togetherness and community.

Interestingly, the author observed that the barrio of *Yerbateros* changed as night fell. During the day the neighborhood is alive with the hustle and bustle of both males and females trying to make a *Sol* (Peru's currency) any way that they can. However, as the sun goes down, fewer and fewer females walk the streets to the point that when the neighborhood is covered in darkness one would think that *Yerbateros* is inhabited strictly by men. Both Kuasnosky and Szulik offer an illuminating perspective on this gendered issue from their work in marginalized districts of Latin America's urban centers.

In reality, members of the male sex are the ones who frequent the street. Meanwhile, those of the female sex (adults, adolescents, and children alike) remain locked in the interior of their homes. In other words, the street is predominantly

male territory. While females - for distinct reasons - decide to stay in the safety of their homes (Rodgers 2004, 12).

Although in general, only adult males inhabit the street at night, one can still find teenagers of the male sex practicing the sport that they love the most (soccer) with a tattered ball and makeshift goal posts. They practice until the early hours of the morning. But sadly, on the weekend, one is more likely to find these same youths escaping reality by drinking liters of beer outside of convenient stores that double as bars. These establishments are teen friendly and can easily be found on every corner in *El Agustino*. Thus, in *Yerbateros*, the lack of community has created a desperate void in the social identity of the barrio's male teenage population that has led them to fill it any way that they can. This is done through alcohol as we have just seen, but more importantly as we will come to understand, Lima's marginalized teens join youth gangs to counter larger social issues of Lima society.

The Symbolic Universe of Lima Gangs

Here we go in song and life aware, picking up bread and truth. Here we go killing egoism in order to revive the meaning of friendship. Here we go drowning the strong, throwing off the laziness, confronting everyone else. Here we go with all of our flags bound together so that none is left alone. Here we go to live life (EDUPAZ 1986, 12).

The social identity of adolescents in *Yerbateros* is composed of symbols that become the codes which unify and create a sense of belonging that is missing from the community in which they inhabit. In turn, the unity that is created allows these marginalized urban youths to survive by facilitating the formation of groups of friends, clubs, and street gangs based on the value of solidarity. Moreover, the value of solidarity is accepted as the most significant value that a group of youths must possess in order to confront the social exclusion that they face throughout their daily lives. This social exclusion manifests itself in a variety of forms. They include: living in absolute poverty, lack of proper insertion into the formal economy, lack of formal education, conflicts with the police and legal authorities, exposure to terminal illnesses, and living with the stigma of being second class citizens. Each one of these conditions reveals the fine thread that binds marginalized youths together in friendship, clubs, and the most threatening of all associations - urban youth street gangs.

The tendency for urban youth street gangs in *Yerbateros* or other marginalized barrios within Lima to experience life through a series of violent confrontations with distinct social actors is due to "the social vehicle of solidarity. It unites and expresses itself with togetherness inciting a strong, vivid, sentimental, communal feeling for a specific *territory* inside a given barrio" (Margulis 1996, 56-

57). The symbols of territory and barrio are codes that unite marginalized youths together by creating a social identity. They are now a *mancha* or a unified group in solidarity with each other that will defend their name, their barrio, and most of all their territory with everything that they have.

They commit themselves to being members of *Invasion Sur* or *Locura* (two of the deadliest urban youth street gangs inside the districts that the author worked in and visited) until the day that they die. For example, *Invasion Sur* is a street gang from the district of *El Agustino*, whose barrio is *Yerbateros*, and who defend the street *El 7 de Octubre* throughout the barrio. Their rival is *Locura*, from *La Victoria*, a district within five minutes driving distance from *El Agustino* (Note: The author apologizes for not presenting the territory that *Locura* defends. He was unable to uncover this information.). Now we will see how each of these gangs is always associated with a specific territory where its members dominate and rule.

We must understand that for urban youth street gang members the barrio is not merely geographical in nature. Rather, it is a “social system that contains distinct cohesive elements depending upon the barrio's situation and history” (Cabrera 2003, 61). According to Cabrera, due to these elements of cohesion, the barrio possesses a strong symbolic power that provides a gang member with his identity. It allows gang members to feel that they belong to something; to a barrio that is otherwise lacking in this concept. Moreover, this powerful symbol fills another psychological void. To belong to the world outside the barrio that for the most part, marginalized adolescents are excluded from.

How powerful is this symbol of the barrio? These typical comments by area gang members allow us to view just how powerful this symbol really is: If you're going to bring change let it be for the people of the barrio, for the *chibolos* of the barrio, everything for *Villa Maria*. Chula, 25. Leader of the street gang *Villa Maria*. Don't bring us news about other barrios; we only want to hear about ours. We're not interested in the rest. Turco, 19. Leader of the street gang *Justicia Cercado*. Sometimes we steal, but we never steal from the barrio. We defend it. Philosophy of the street gang *Basura de Palermo* (Cabrera 2003, 61). Thus, from these excerpts we can see that urban street gang members not only identify with the barrio but have a strong sense of belonging to it as well.

Another code that unites and provides marginalized urban street gang members with an identity is associating themselves with one of Lima's soccer clubs. They adopt their favorite club's colors as their gang's colors and support their club at soccer matches at all costs. For example, *Invasion Sur* supports the soccer club *Alianza*, whose colors are blue and white. While *Locura* supports *Universitario de Deportes* - widely known as *La U* - whose colors are red and cream. The support of local soccer clubs is another symbol that not only fills the psychological need of belonging similar to the symbol of the barrio, but it is also a source of pride that composes part of the gang members' self-esteem as they live and die (sometimes

literally) with the successes and failures of their respective teams. This concept is explained by Henriquez who states that “the profound identification with the winning team allows fans to develop a mechanism of transference that is known as the ecstasy of aggregation” (Henriquez 1997, 21). In other words, the success of the winning team is transferred over to the fan in this fashion: if my team wins, then I am also a winner. For marginalized gang members living in depressing social spaces, Henriquez's concept is essential for a happy existence in an otherwise miserable place. From the perspective of the gang member, if my team wins not only am I a winner, but so is my gang, my barrio, and my territory.

However, this intense fanaticism poses several problems. The most serious of which is gang warfare. For instance, before a match between *Alianza* and *La U*, fanatics of *La U* will meet outside of the north end of the stadium. Supporters of *Alianza* congregate at the south end. Logically then, both street gangs - *Invasion Sur* and *Locura* - move towards their respective club's fan sections before the match begins. However, not every member of each gang follows this order. Some will go and harass the enemy club's fans. When this happens, a gang fight will begin complete with knives, pipes, chains, etc. Some of these fights can be deadly. Leaving the combatants seriously injured, disfigured, or dead. These rumbles usually terminate around game time. At which point the gangs will enter the stadium and proceed to their respective ends of the stadium.

During the game, gang members seek to uphold the honor of their club by chanting and cheering, but they will also become physically violent with anyone disrespecting their club. After the game, the rival street gangs will meet in a designated area outside the stadium to decide who the `real' winner of the soccer match is in a battle royal for honor and barrio. Thus, the identification that street gangs have with Lima's soccer clubs fulfills the psychological need for affiliation and participation in the same manner as the identification that their respective barrios do for them.

Throughout this discussion we have seen that the identification with the barrio is a strong psychological symbol. However, we should not overlook the significance of territory in this discussion. In fact, this discussion will highlight the fact that every marginalized urban youth street gang is associated with a specific territory within the barrio where they reside. This is evidenced by the appearance of the territory in the gang's official title. It is always tied to the gang name, followed by the district name, which is subsequently followed by the name of the gang's barrio. For example, *Invasion Sur's* official title is: *Invasion Sur del 7 de Octubre, El Agustino, Yerbateros*. When we look closely at *Invasion Sur's* title, we see that Lima's gangs have internally developed a hierarchy for the symbols that give them a social identity. Based on the formation of official gang titles, it seems to the author that Lima's gangs primarily identify themselves socially with their territory more so than their barrio. Also, we can infer that the barrio is an honorable symbol worth

defending. However, gang members will only defend the territory that is specific to their gang within their barrio. Thus, for marginalized adolescent gang members in *Yerbateros* or otherwise, the unifying symbol is territory. It manifests itself in a strong, sentimental, communal feeling for the barrio's defense.

We have already discussed how the codes of barrio, soccer club, and territory act as the symbols that provide marginalized urban youth gang members with their social identity. But how can we explain the violence they are attributed for? What causes the gang fights, vandalism, and delinquency? For these answers we have to analyze the formation of gangs. As Cabrera suggests, we must do so from a psycho-social point of view. According to Genoves, "when studying antisocial behavior in adolescents, the researcher must associate their behavior as a reaction to societal factors, especially, when violent behavior is produced outside of the home" (Genoves 1998, 12). Particularly, marginalized urban youth street gang members are reacting to the social exclusion they face, such as: living in absolute poverty, receiving poor education, and being without alternative means to vent their frustrations constructively. Consequently, in underdeveloped areas that provide no hope for upward social mobility the street gang satisfies "diverse psycho-social needs that in turn become vehicles for intense brotherhood and affection. And for this reason they are difficult to dissolve" (Cabrera 2003, 59).

On the whole, members of urban street gangs feel that they are part of something. Whereas otherwise, they feel part of nothing since they are reduced to mere spectators of the world outside their barrio by an educational system that prepares them to survive on the periphery of the formal economy. Also, due to poor education or lack of it (which is referred to as scholastic desertion by Peruvian authorities) marginalized urban youths do not develop the necessary skills to make identifications with socially responsible organizations, such as an after school sports team or a volunteer organization. From another point of view, a disorganized social structure combined with the deterioration of popular education has transformed the responsibility of socializing Lima's marginalized urban youth from the school over to the street gang.

Unfortunately, this has created a situation where youths - especially teenagers - learn about the world from other teenagers. This is problematic since it does not foster a broad outlook on life based on preparedness for the future. Only a narrow one based on satisfying immediate wants and needs. Thus, the common drive to satisfy wants and needs converts the marginalized urban youth street gang into a cohesive and homogeneous generational organization that is difficult to break. Apart from satisfying wants and needs "all young people, especially adolescents, have a strong psychological desire to be recognized or obtain status in a specific endeavor" (Cabrera 2003, 60). Non-antisocial youths realize a level of status by excelling in school and in sports, having good fashion sense, working, and/or having the ability to consume. Conversely, antisocial adolescents -

particularly those immersed in the urban street gang life - have a difficult time realizing any sort of status due to social exclusion and disorganized communities. What happens?

Marginalized urban youth street gang members equate status with respect and admiration from the inhabitants of their community by inciting fear and terror through violent actions, such as: assaults, robbery, and vandalism. Unfortunately, the efforts of gang members to seek respect or status by way of violent activities impedes the development of their self esteem because their actions only re-enforces the stigma surrounding youth gangs. In the end, the stigma of gang affiliation causes the community to reject gang members. Since urban street gang members equate respect with violent actions, they misguidedly believe that by inciting more violence they will eventually win their neighbors respect. Consequently, in the marginalized districts where street gang activity proliferates, those youths who decide not to join a street gang are left vulnerable to attacks by street gang members who are constantly searching for respect. To be or not to be part of an urban street gang is like being at the devil's side or within his sights. Essentially, you're damned if you do and damned if you don't.

If you choose not to join a street gang you are in constant fear of being assaulted by no less than six hyper-masculine youths at any given time of night, without anyone to come to your aid. If you do join a street gang you acquire immediate protection for yourself. However, you risk jail time and lifelong psychological consequences apart from those you have already acquired from living in absolute poverty. Thus, the marginalized urban youth street gang becomes an organization that provides security and protection; however paradoxical that may seem.

The constant search for respect through violent means has other negative side effects as well. It leaves profound psychological scars, lesions, and fractures that are difficult and sometimes impossible to heal once a street gang member decides to leave the urban street gang life. Ultimately, "this leaves the ex-street-gang member at a disadvantage when confronting other social actors in the community" (Cabrera 2003, 60). In a society that excludes, ex-street-gang members (typically ranging in age between nineteen and twenty-five years) have not found or been provided with alternative employment and recreational activities that can influence the development of a positive self image. Unfortunately, they become unproductive members of society contributing to the underdevelopment of their communities.

How significant is this problem? Very significant, when taking into account that Peru is a nation composed of mostly young people. According to the National Institute of Statistics (INE), sixty percent of Peru's population is twenty-five years or younger. Using this statistic coupled with the fact that Peru's youth suffer from a thirteen percent youth unemployment rate by 1998 OECD standards, we can define that the majority of its youth - as a collective whole - are in search of

an identity and an opportunity to break into the formal economy. But, are young people from marginalized districts able to break into the formal economy? Strictly based on the author's experiences in and around *El Agustino* the answer is: no they are not successful. How do marginalized ex-street-gang members who have chosen to drop out of school and who find themselves unemployed survive economically?

The Life of Ex-Urban-Street-Gang Members in Marginalized Districts

Life really begins when you experience fatherhood (Santos 2002, 1).

Typically, most if not all gang members have an epiphany or a moment of clarity when they decide with all their strength to leave their gang and the street gang life forever. Usually, one or a combination of the following leads the urban street gang member to decide that he must abandon the world, the lifestyle, and the people that he has known for the better part of his adolescent life. These factors are as follows: a maturity that comes with age, fatherhood, family strategies to convince the urban street gang member to leave the gang, and/or a new circle of friends. According to Santos, "these factors constitute a fixed biography that is crucial to understanding why gang members decide to leave their gang for good" (Santos 2002, 283). Specifically, age and fatherhood are the most significant factors that influence a gang member's decision-making process. For instance, as an urban street gang member grows older the responsibilities of life become magnified by his immediate family. Immediately after his nineteenth birthday he is required to cover his own expenses, as well as contribute to the family economy. However, we must be clear that the advent of this particular ritual process of sorts in a gang member's life does not signify the passage from adolescence to adulthood in marginalized Lima society. Rather, it is a family strategy of survival devised to push the gang member into adulthood predicated by the extreme financial need of marginalized families to maintain several lanes of income open simultaneously.

Not only does the urban street gang member face criticism at home, but outside the home as well. Older gang members upon completing their nineteenth and twentieth birthdays are thrown into what Santos calls the discourse of age (Santos 2002) conducted by the older, wiser males living in the barrio. These older gentlemen respectfully criticize the street gang activity perpetrated by older street gang members as childish and disgraceful for someone of their age (especially towards gang members in their early twenties). The following explains this discourse.

I have already explained to Cirilo to stop acting like a child. I've told him over and over again: 'You are too old to keep doing the same childish things day in and day out.' I've asked him several times, 'Don't you feel ashamed for living the

life of a teenager when you are an adult? I seem to be getting through to him. Little by little he is breaking away from the gang, although he still gets into fights.' A neighbor from the barrio of El Planeta (Santos 2002, 284). Such discourse enables the urban street gang member to reflect over his life and the inordinate amount of time that he has dedicated to his gang. Through this exercise of reflection, the street gang member comes to the realization that his entire life - leading up to this point of epiphany - has been a complete waste of time. Suddenly the future is uncertain, panic sets in, and the urban street gang member decides to leave the gang in search of work to pay for the necessities of life.

In terms of fatherhood, it becomes an experience that changes an urban street gang member's outlook on life completely. Usually, gang members enter into serious emotional relationships with the opposite sex around age eighteen. From this point on they begin to imagine what the future may hold for them and their significant other. One of those possibilities almost always involves becoming a father and forming a family with their significant other in the near future.

Whether by accident or by choice, pregnancy seems to occur before marriage. When this happens, the urban street gang member begins to confront life with a serious mind. He knows he must leave his gang to find work to support his child, his eventual wife, and the home his family is going to need. If it so happens that his expectant child will be a boy child, this exercise becomes even more reflective for the gang member because he does not want his child to grow up and become a youth gang member like he was. The following excerpt illuminates further on the matter.

What is to become of me when I'm old? Who will I be when I'm an old man? Will I still be getting into fights when I'm in a wheelchair or will I have a good job? What will I tell my children when they ask me about my life? You know what? I will tell them that I was like this and like that. I will tell them not to be like me. When my son is born in a few days my life will change. I know it will. Excerpts taken from the diary of an urban street gang member, Cirilo, 19 years old (Santos 2002, 285).

Cirilo's case exemplifies the value that many older urban street gang members place on fatherhood. It is the most significant, defining moment of their very lives. However, the passport towards fatherhood by itself is not the only factor that incites a hundred-eighty degree turn in the life of an urban street gang member. But, it does put him on the path towards self discipline. Following this train of thought, urban street gang members who are expectant fathers begin to adopt specific roles, codes, or identities that automatically shed the irresponsible identities of soccer club, barrio, and territory that they developed when they were living the street gang lifestyle. Now they identify with the concepts of: protector, provider, the responsible father, and the laborer who works to support his children.

Interestingly, these identities are similar to the ones that urban street gang members develop while actively participating in their gang. That is they are all identities that are much larger than themselves. They are collective identities that define them as individuals. For instance, the identity of being the defender of the barrio can be psychologically linked with the identity of being the protector of the family and so forth. Thus, fatherhood gives the urban street gang member responsibility, purpose of being, and hope in a world where these ideas cease to exist.

As discussed earlier, the above factors of age and fatherhood are the two most significant factors that influence an urban street gang member's decision to leave his gang. However, one can not simply say, 'Alright guys, I'm leaving the gang for good, thanks for everything, adios.' Leaving the urban street gang life is a process of adhering to specific rites of separation or requirements that act like guidelines for dissolving the fraternal pact made by each street gang member upon initiation. There are two dimensions that we must examine to understand the rites of separation required by the marginalized urban youth street gangs of Lima-Peru. One is an intra-group dimension and the other is an inter-group dimension. The intra-group dimension is defined as the expectations and obligations that the street gang places on the gang member. Specifically, these expectations and obligations are tools which other street gang members use against the gang member wishing to leave the urban street gang life manifested in the form of peer pressure.

For example, the gang member wishing to leave the street gang will always inform the gang leader of his desire to leave. When this happens, the process of retention begins by the gang leader saying to his disheartened follower: 'Come on man, lets drink together, you're not going to forget about your home-boys are you?' Subsequently, other gang members will remind the subject that the gang is counting on his friendship. Also, the subject's friends within the gang exercise a subtle coercion over him. They do not threaten him with violence, but they warn him of the fact that if he decides to leave the gang from that point on he will not be protected by the gang against attacks from his enemies.

After these rules have been followed the gang member is free to leave the gang at any time. However, street gang members wishing to leave their respective gangs fear possible attacks by their enemies. And so, they are required to fulfill the inter-group requirements before they can truly be free of the urban street gang life forever. In order to fulfill the inter-group requirements the street gang member must *apaciguar* or seek appeasement from his enemies who belong to rival gangs. How does an urban street gang member fulfill this requirement? According to Santos, this is done "within the context of a *pollada* (a building fund party). The gang member wishing to leave his gang will send a friend to meet with his enemies to prepare the way" (Santos 2002, 299). This friend acts like an emissary proposing conversation between the gang member who seeks appeasement with his enemies.

The friend will then inform the enemies that the gang member *ya se planto* or has left his gang and wishes to make peace. At this point some of his enemies may accept this truce unconditionally. Others may ask for vengeance. If this happens, the enemies reserve the right to beat the gang member in exchange for the appeasement he seeks. After one or both of these acts have been committed, the enemies will shake the gang member's hand and say '*ya no pasa nada causa, no pasa nada, no pasa nada*' or nothing will happen. That is to say they have made peace.

As was stated earlier, these requirements are more like guidelines. While some of his enemies may feel that peace was established, it may very well be that for a few others peace was not established. In such cases, the ex-street-gang member is always cautious when leaving his home, especially at night. He never knows when he will be attacked. In some cases, this causes marginalized ex-street-gang members to be closed off from the world around them in another type of exclusion. It is one caused by the fear of being physically assaulted by former enemies. Also, it is important to mention that in the marginalized urban street gang world of Lima there exists an instance where the ex-street-gang member is forbidden from seeking appeasement. The following testimony from Triqui (a former gang member of *Los Halcones*) is instructive on this matter: (Note: The letter **M** refers to Martin Santos the interviewer, the letter **T** refers to Triqui the interviewee)

M: You look tense. Are you scared because you couldn't make the peace with *Palermo*?

T: Well I'm not with the *Halcones* anymore. I don't get into fights anymore because I've already made peace with *Villa Maria*. That's why I can hang out in *Villa Maria*. They even say 'what's up' to me.

M: What about *Palermo*?

T: No, I can't go there because I can't make peace with them.

M: So, with *Palermo* you can't make the peace, but with *Villa Maria* you can?

T: Yes, that's right.

M: How come you can't make peace with *Palermo* if you're not part of *Los Halcones* anymore?

T: It's because I always 'stepped up' to *Palermo* in the past. I've stuck knives in to their people - I've shit all over their people. I've shit all over *Villa Maria* as well, but not like I did with *Palermo* (Santos, 2002, p.300).

Triqui's case shows that a street gang member is able to make the peace with his enemies if and only if he has not *stuck knives* into his enemies. This can only mean two things. A gang member can not make peace with a rival gang if he has killed one of their members and/or if he has seriously injured one of their members with a deadly weapon. Thus, the process of leaving the marginalized

urban youth street gang world of Lima is multifaceted. It is punctuated by feelings of insecurity and danger for the ex-street-gang member.

Successfully negotiating peace with enemies is only half of the battle. What possibilities for employment does an ex-street-gang member have, who has little or no formal education and little or no work experience? For most, their only option is *cachueleando* or hustling. Since the majority of ex-street-gang members are what would be the equivalent of an elementary school or high school drop out by US standards, they feel as though they are incapable of performing intellectual work. That is why they do not even entertain the possibility of going back to school or searching for equivalency exams, etc. What is realistic in their minds is dedicating their labors to the art of hustling. It is more like freelancing, where they sell their labor over and over again to different sectors of the informal economy. Some gravitate towards garbage detail and others move into human mule type labor. This method of work is difficult to categorize. It is where males sell their bodies to labor intensive businesses to serve as mules carrying heavy loads of merchandise from one location to the other. Savvier hustlers are able to secure decent janitorial work and/or microbus operator positions. But still, these types of jobs are low paid back breaking forms of work that cause physical ailments. Most who work all or some of these kinds of jobs suffer from spinal cord injuries and lung damage if they are continued for an extended period of time.

According to Santos, “the work performed by ex-street-gang members presents three problems that clearly prevents them from reaching their goal of forming and maintaining their immediate families” (Santos 2002, 291). First, the type of work performed is highly unstable. Sometimes there is work and sometimes there is not. Second, the type of work performed is low wage labor. Sometimes they receive only ten Soles per week (in 2003 this was the equivalent of three to four US dollars). Third, the conditions under which ex-gang members perform their work are unsafe and unsanitary.

For these reasons, many ex-gang members decide to save their money so that they can open up a small business. Most dream of opening a convenience store before they are physically unable to work. However, their pay is so low that this often seems like an impossible task. Many give up their entrepreneurial dreams to waste their lives away on the corners where they grew up drinking beer to forget their pain. Consequently, their home lives unravel due to their alcoholism and many lose their wives and children in the process.

Those who have enough magic to save money to open a small business while taking care of their families are the lucky ones. They are able to see their future in front of them. Some are able to secure an apprenticeship in factories or mechanics garages and learn a trade. Here they are able to translate those experiences over to a small business of their own. Unfortunately, many fail at this endeavor. They fail at their apprenticeship because “the world of the apprentice

requires a discipline that ex-street-gang members are unprepared for” (Santos 2002, 291). They must adjust to specific hours of work and they must possess the ability to accept orders and accept constructive criticism from their boss. These qualities are not learned in the gang world. In fact, the author would say that they are in conflict with their personalities, which for the most part are based on confrontation and defiance towards authoritarian figures. For that reason many ex-gang members fail in their apprenticeship and in the world of work in general. More often than not this happens when the demands of their employment become larger than the demands of their immediate families. Thus, for many ex-street-gang members the world of work or productivity becomes a frustrating experience that leads to the ultimate destruction of the self because they are unprepared to meet its challenges.

Conclusion

Let us take our alienation into our own hands and ask:

“Why?” ‘Does it have to be this way?’ I do not think so (Crowhurst 1997, 1).

What does the future hold for the urban youth street gang members of marginalized districts in Lima-Peru? Gang members look towards the future with uncertainty and skepticism. However, upon further examination of their testimonies and throughout this discussion we can find a glimmer of hope. These adolescents, young people, sufferers of a society that excludes, are not standing at the edge of an ‘abyss’. Otherwise, they would not demonstrate such a strong desire to be successful later in life.

This attitude is evidenced by their willingness to form a family, work, save money, and open up a small business some day. So we can not say that these young people are ‘mentally ill and deprived of all hope’. However, their situation is tragic. The work that they are able to realize after leaving their respective gangs is brainless, monotonous, physically and emotionally debilitating. More importantly, it predisposes them to waste what little money they have earned in the diversions that the street offers them to forget their troubles. Those who are able to escape such an end - more often than not - fail to meet the challenges of the world of work. So, where can we find hope?

Hope lies in the capacity of ex-street-gang members to share their experiences with the next generation of would be street gang members so that they do not make the same mistakes. According to Santos, the last generational change in the membership of Lima’s marginalized urban street gangs took place in 1997. This change happens every seven to eight years as those who enter into the urban street gang life at age twelve become adults. Maturing and leaving their respective gangs at age nineteen and twenty. At the time of writing we are already one year into this change. While gang members come and go, the organizational elements of

marginalized urban youth street gangs will remain unless the social forces that promote gang activity change.

In order to prevent the life cycle of gangs from regenerating every seven to eight years Lima must address its problem of exclusion socially, economically, scholastically, mentally, and spiritually. There must be a concentrated effort to create a socially just society where those who are marginalized can be treated not as second class citizens, but as citizens that have the desire to be productive members of society. All that marginalized youths need is the opportunity to break into the system that excludes them. They have the capacity.

At present there even exists NGOs working in the marginalized districts of Lima that successfully teach ex-street-gang members the necessary philosophical tools to manage life positively and successfully. Unfortunately, they are few and poorly funded. If Lima society continues to address the phenomenon of marginalized urban youth street gang violence with development projects that negatively define urban youth street gang members as naturally deviant, treating only the symptoms not the root cause of their violence, then Lima will continue to create the marginalized urban children of today who in turn will become the youth street gang members of tomorrow.

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