Culture, youth and delinquency in the State of Mexico

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Introduction

Delinquency is a social phenomenon dependent on both the treatment it receives in the media and in the public policies designed for its prevention. In this sense, youths are not exempt from being involved in lamentable events influenced by both the constructed public perception of the crime and the criminal, and the economic adjustments produced by globalization and its direct consequences on poverty increment. They are young adults who become potentially vulnerable as result of the conditions of life and insecurity levels they live in.
We then refer to certain conditions of exclusion and social segregation of the young adults in general, and in particular of those who have committed a crime of infringed law, they are mostly young adults who come in particular from popular sectors, which become addressees of an obsessive treatment from the media, in whose stories the description of the young criminal is clarified by means of endless qualifiers and stigmatizations, with which a public opinion that justifies the violent social response towards young delinquents is constructed. (Rosenberg, 2004: 15-18)

However, the problem of criminality in contemporary societies is not only related with the imaginary construction of a public enemy; this image is confabulated with a structural violence edited by the media and the construction of a social scenario of terror, product of the insecurity identified in certain social groups and spaces, thus tagging their inhabitants.

In this sense, being a youth, belonging to a certain social group and living in a determined space is the same as, according to this imaginary, being dangerous, drug addict, pot smoker or violent. Therefore, when a crime occurs, the media show the image of a shabby youth and emphasize the description of certain ethnical or racial features: for instance: the beginning of a report published in the tabloid newspaper *El Metro* stresses: “two dangerous young individuals of cholo appearance stole a car from a young student”; separately, the news program *Hechos de la noche* affirms: “according to the witnesses, they described the assailant as a man with long hair and indigenous appearance...”. Consequently, we can observe that the media foment the wrong perception of the young delinquent, in such a way that being a youth and living in determinate neighborhoods, barrios or marginal sectors would be the same as being violent, tramp, drug addict, delinquent and potential assassin. What we observe is the construction and diffusion of a social imaginary which attributes youth the role of ‘internal enemy’, of a new society’s enemy: juvenile delinquent.

It is about, in a manner of speaking, a new enemy who emerges from the crises of the traditional mechanisms of social organization and participation, as well as the emergence of a society, product of a violence expressed in the social uncertainty, lack of opportunities for a job, lack of conditions for a worthy life and the lack of access to social security, nourishment, leisure and spaces of participation and recognition of a future with development alternatives.

We refer to youths who have been protagonists and witnesses of the appearance and increment of never-seen-before illnesses, suicides, addictions, and several ways of violence which show their vulnerability condition: youths
who have witnessed a scarce or null political will to put an end to this state of abandonment, tagging, and vulnerability.

In such a context, today’s youths live and practice violence every day; either at home, on the streets, at school, place of work, in sports, on television, etc. It is a usual context where domestic violence, abuse, child abuse, robberies, rapes, kidnaps, and vendettas between gangs are part of the quotidian life of the contemporary society.

As it can be seen, youths are witnesses of a violence increasingly manifested in everyday life in contemporary society; consequently, they can not be isolated from the impact they bring along with the statement of endless references shared by the infrahuman conditions they live in. To the latter one must add frivolity, pleasure, the superficial, individualism and competitiveness imposed as way of life. In such manner that today’s youths are educated in the context of a new pattern of socialization marked by violence and the media, not leaving aside the structural violence exercised by the State through punishment and exclusion, as a form or response to the manifestations of the violence itself, that is endorsed and supported by a series of cultural control devices directed to those youths whose social, economic and cultural conditions are usually a referent for the imaginary construction of this new enemy’s profile, therefore, of the social fear nowadays lived in the use of public spaces.

This social imaginary is to a good extent the product of that feeling of abandonment by the social institutions, as well as the lack of response of the security bodies before the threat of those considered as strange to and dangerous for our neighborhoods, and the expression of risk before family integrity. Thereby, the social imaginary of the new social enemy is largely fed upon the defenselessness everyday experienced by society, as product of the impunity and delinquency growth overlooked by authority, which tends to be distinguished more as an incapability of the police bodies to contain and lower the crime rates, as a lack of human values than as the result of the increment in social injustice, marginalization and the exclusion of certain social groups in general; particularly that of the youths.

Undoubtedly we hereby refer to an imaginary whose social perception only visualizes the problem of insecurity in an unitary way and it expresses it as a single enemy: the juvenile delinquent. Nevertheless, this vision is the one which refers us to need of articulating several issues, which are deeply bound between them in a complex lattice that shows social inequity and poverty of broad society’s sectors. We try to articulate all those elements whose heterogeneous features are displayed as a different indicator that allows us to visualize those amorphous
manner of latent violence whose sources are not objectively identifiable and tend to be useful for both the construction of an authoritarian discourse and the design of control and vigilance devices for certain society groups which tend to be constituted as the criminality’s support of other society sectors.

Consequently, we are hereby interested in reflecting on the social and cultural conditions that have become conditioning factors for the young adults, especially from the popular sectors and who are deprived from their liberty in the Centers of Prevention and Social Re-adaptation of the State of Mexico (CPSR) (Centros de Prevención y Readaptación Social), be the addressees of a violence, exclusion and authoritarianism which tend to obsessively set in their minds the fears, incomprehension and inquietudes which their state of extreme vulnerability in society provokes. It is about paying a great deal of attention and identifying those conditions which do not only tag them as public enemies, conversely, after these circumstances what remains is a non-deliberate control and poverty exclusion.

**Purposes**

The intention of attempting a reflection from the data is based on the interest in showing, denouncing and sensitizing the future sociologists in respect to the importance that acquires orienting our worries towards the analysis of vulnerable sectors of our society, who tend to be negatively tagged without considering those factors which influence in a direct way on their social, economic and cultural conditions. From here what we expose in these lines is the result of a research carried out in the 22 Centers of Prevention and Social Re-adaptation of the State of Mexico during the year 2000. Our universe of study is the young adult population, men and women, deprived from their liberty, whose age is normatively defined for them between 18 and 21 years of age. We try to demonstrate for this population in captivity conditions that they are subjects whose vulnerability conditions are oriented not only by their social condition, but by the orientation of a social imaginary which identifies them as social enemies.

In this sense, we started to learn the amount of young adults deprived from their liberty, as well as analyze the conditions of inside-walls life, the time of sentence given, and the sort of crime for which they have been deprived from their liberty. From these conditions we set as general objectives the ones presented following: a) learn, describe and analyze the composition of the penitentiary population and their confinement conditions; b) quantitatively examine the population characteristics by means of the analysis of the data obtained from
the inmates’ files from CPSR of the State of Mexico; c) qualitatively approach the obtained information in order to acknowledge and identify the inmates’ life conditions.

**Prison context**

Undoubtedly, one of the most difficult tasks faced when reflecting on the problems of a population consists in obtaining original information and in a direct manner, since this presupposes organizing, classifying and processing the obtained data. Nonetheless, the problem is not exactly to decompose information product of specialized treatment processes, it rather lies in giving these data a range of production of the knowledge of the complex reality where they work. Mainly because all of the information from the prison is the product of a measurement which has the function of expressing attributes or determinate properties oriented towards defining the actions, attitudes or behaviors of the inmates. Yet, the main problem would be then in conceptualizing the data, it is, in taking them from a strictly theoretical level to the empirical one and vice versa.

In this sense, the aspects of greater importance, attributable to the social nature of the State of Mexico, would be, firstly, in the possession of 22 Centers of Prevention and Social Re-adaptation (CPSR), 20 of which are the object of our study, and within them there was, by the year 2000, a population of six thousand two hundred and twenty-seven inmates, which equals 5.4 percent of the national total, placing the State in a fourth position; whereas in October 2005, the population was seventeen thousand two hundred and eighty-eight inmates. The other two CPSR are centers for underage offenders; one of them is the School of Rehabilitation for Juvenile Delinquents in the Municipality of Nezahualcóyotl; however, it is not yet in operation. The other is Quinta del Bosque, which currently holds four hundred and twenty-nine minors, out of which twenty-one are women. This center reached a population of seven hundred minors, considering that its full capacity is four hundred and twenty-nine.

**Young adults in figures**

Trying to construct a profile of the delinquent young adults is not an easy task, for in the background of every attempt of selection and grouping there is an excluding act, thus it is no more than the result of generalizable inductions, since each subject, each neighborhood, each city, has different heterogeneous features.
In any case, the criminal profile of the young adult is nothing more than a series of indicators with which one can reconstruct a certain pattern of distinctive features of a subject or a group of subjects.

*Population characteristics*

Let us start from a relevant datum, the total population of young adults between 18 and 21 years of age deprived from their liberty in the 20 CPSR in the State of Mexico is one thousand and twenty-three inmates, out of which nine hundred and eighty-nine are men and thirty-four are women. This population is distributed in a set of ages as follows: 21 percent corresponds to two hundred and fifteen youths aged 18; 19.9 percent (two hundred and four) is 19 years of age; 28.5 percent (two hundred and ninety-two) 20 years of age; and 30.5 percent (three hundred and twelve) 21 years of age. As for the schooling level: 45.7 percent has primary education completed; 27 percent, secondary school; and 0.68 high school and over; whereas 17.6 percent does not have any sort of studies, as it can be seen in table 1.

In table 2 we can see the level of exclusion and lack of opportunities for the development of better life conditions of these youths, orientating them towards school desertion.

In relation to the marital status of these young adults we found that 63.4 percent (six hundred and forty-nine) is single; 24.3 percent (two hundred and forty-nine) lives in free union; 3.7 percent (thirty-eight) is divorced; and 8.4 (eighty-six) is married.

A rather important aspect of this population is their occupation before entering the CPSR, in the mentioned data, as we can see, the percentage of youths with no occupation is distinguishable, corresponding a 10.63 percent (one hundred and six), followed by the rest of population with a high percentage of occupation in jobs with low remuneration and labor qualification, as we can observe in table 3.

*Procedural status*

Ninety-three percent of these youths, it is, nine hundred and forty-eight, were imprisoned because of crimes against common law; whereas, seven percent corresponding to seventy-five youths committed crimes against federal law. As for their juridical status, data indicate that the sentence for 28 percent of the
TABLE 1
STATE OF MEXICO’S CPRS. YOUNG INMATES DISTRIBUTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schooling level</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graduated</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under graduated</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed high school</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>3.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncompleted high school</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>5.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed elementary</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>22.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncompleted elementary</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>23.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed secondary</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>12.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncompleted secondary</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>14.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No studies</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>17.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1023</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


young inmates, (it is, two hundred and eighty-seven) was ratified; 24.1 percent (four hundred and eighty-nine) are sentenced; and 47.8 percent are being processed and waiting for their sentence, which means that approximately half of the young inmates are deprived from their liberty with no juridical defense, moreover, what is verified with the data is the use of preventive confinement, likewise it is observed that the proportion of youths without a sentence in respect to the percentage of youths with a sentence; as for a 48 percent of the population is waiting for a sentence. This means that five in 10 imprisoned youths are deprived from their liberty as processed.

**Type of crime**

Even if our purpose is methodologically framed in the population of imprisoned young adults, who largely make up the population of adults in these centers, the values of variables such as the type of crime make a description and characteristics of these youths easier for us, since they show us the reason why they are deprived from their liberty, it is, the crime according to the civil code classification. Hence, the crimes they have been convicted for, as it can be seen in table 4, were basically against patrimony, since theft in all of its modalities was the cause of
TABLE 2
STATE OF MEXICO’S CPRS. YOUNG INMATES DISTRIBUTION, ACCORDING TO SCHOOL DESERTION CAUSE.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Desertion cause</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Household abandonment</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accident</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residence change</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devote to work</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>26.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expelled</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>4.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of interest</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>18.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of economic</td>
<td>362</td>
<td>35.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>resources</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orphaned</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reclusion</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>4.79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: own elaboration from inmate’s personal files. DGPRS, 2000.

conviction for 61.2 percent (six hundred and twenty-six) of our objective population; whereas crimes against people integrity caused 13.9 percent (one hundred and forty-three) of the reclusions of young adults. These data are significant if we compare them to the amount of crimes against health and those of organized crime.

In relation to the years given, as it can be appreciated in table 5, the period from one to five years corresponds to 14.3 percent and from five to ten to 26 percent. Whereas from ten to twenty the percentage is 8.2 percent and from twenty to thirty 2.2 percent; finally, those who serve a sentence longer than thirty years the percentage is 1.6 percent; this generates several questions: What is the reason of confining the youths whose sentence does not exceed 5 years? What is the sense in keeping in prison youths whose crimes are not grave, since as shown by evidence, a high percentage corresponds to crimes against common law? Why do not look for the application of alternative sanction measures in order avoid the pollution of these youths when they are imprisoned?
### TABLE 3
YOUNG INMATES’ DISTRIBUTION BY PREVIOUS OCCUPATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Freq</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bricklayer</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>7.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craftsman</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bricklayer apprentice</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpenter apprentice</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taylor apprentice</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body shop repairer apprentice</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanic apprentice</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polisher</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoe cleaner</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>4.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpenter</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cycle-taxi driver</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bus driver assistant</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>2.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merchant</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>13.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House chores</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electrician</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maid</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerk</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>7.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal employee</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hairdresser</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>4.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photographer</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blacksmith</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body shop repairer</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gardener</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car washer</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1.36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### TABLE 3
YOUNG INMATE’S DISTRIBUTION BY PREVIOUS OCCUPATION
(CONTINUATION)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Freq</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Machetero</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car mechanic</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courier</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waiter</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soldier</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Porter</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worker</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>6.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Microbus driver</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>7.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baker</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Painter</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plumber</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public security police officer</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thrash collector</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home appliances repairer</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water deliverer</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gas deliverer</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signwriter</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No occupation</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>10.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wielder</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butcher</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tire repairer</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upholsterer</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taco seller</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vigilant</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paperboy</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoe maker</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>123</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Own elaboration based on inmates’ personal files. DGPRS, 2000.
Criminal profile

In this section we show an analysis of the data of the diagnostics carried out by the penitentiary’s technicians, by means of these diagnostics the judgments on dangerousness. The assembly of these technicians of discipline and control has an important role in the maintenance of a totalitarian institution such as a prison, called so by Goffman, which has been organized to protect community from those who intentionally constitute a danger for it, and it is not an immediate end the wellbeing of the inmates.

In this sense, what we see in table 6 is the psychological diagnosis of the inmates in CPSR, being distinguishable the diagnosis of emotional lability, with 41.5 percent (four hundred and twenty-five).

Nonetheless, the problem of classification, or better said, tagging, is that it does not have a coherent internal system, largely due to the humongous dimension of the bureaucratic work through which everything related to rehabilitation, classification, treatment and evaluation of the inmates is filtered. This makes such classification responds more to circumstances like social biography, role, or activity of the youth, what makes putting aside a series of social conditions in order to ponder personal variables which make the inmate be seen and interpreted in a certain manner.

Deep inside, this classification not only is the answer of the normalization professionals, but also the public response by means of which the norms and functions of normality are defined, including the imputation of a deviation that justifies the action of a punishment against everyone considered stranger, through the setting of a treatment sustained by a symbolic instrumental of legal acts. In this sense, both the classification and treatment are constituted as a sort of symbolical wrap of power, control and domination relations, as it is seen in table 7.

At first, let us observe that two of the important treatments are emotive rational therapy and behavioral cognitive psychotherapy. The former destined as treatment for 31.7 percent of the inmates who stole; 26.3 percent who committed homicide; 21.8 percent who committed violent robbery; and 20.2 percent of the rapists; whereas the latter corresponds to 33.3 percent of robbery; 28.3 percent homicide; 23.3 percent rape; and 15.2 percent violent robbery.

What is significant in this distribution is that in two categories of therapeutic enunciation seemingly different are nevertheless, subjectively linked under the logic of a treatment to individuals who did not commit the same crime. These
TABLE 4
YOUNG INMATES’ DISTRIBUTION BY COMMITTED CRIME

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crime</th>
<th>Frequencies</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Against health</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organized crime</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>3.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homicide</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>13.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homicide in a fight</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intentional homicide</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assault</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other crimes</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>3.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parricide</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illegal weapon possession</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>4.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burglary</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>2.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robbery</td>
<td>366</td>
<td>35.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violent robbery</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>17.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Automotive parts thievery</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child theft</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car theft</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robbery attempt</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>2.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kidnapping</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rape</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>6.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rape attempt</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparable rape</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group rape</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1023</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Own elaboration based on inmates’ personal files. DGPRS, 2000.
### TABLE 5
YOUNG INMATES’ DISTRIBUTION FOR SENTENCE TIME

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence’s years</th>
<th>Frequencies</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 to 2</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 to 4</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 to 6</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 to 8</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 to 10</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 to 12</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 to 14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 to 16</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 to 18</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 to 20</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 to 22</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 to 24</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 to 26</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 to 28</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 to 30</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 to 32</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33 to 34</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 to 36</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39 to 40</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No sentence</td>
<td>488</td>
<td>47.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1023</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Own elaboration based on inmates’ personal files. DGPRS, 2000.
measures of therapeutic classification are part of a device of power and control which progressively takes other mechanisms of selection and hierarchization, whose origin, in most of the cases, are nothing but specifications presupposed by the observation or description of the personality and the behavior of these youths, specifications that in reality are mechanical typification stated by the therapists, with no differences of reason supported in scientific studies.

Hence, the treatment from this perspective, is also the object of symbolic operations and a sort of screen upon which the State projects its delinquent conception. Consequently, the punishment expressed in the treatment also possesses a symbolic aspect, yet it does not lie in its application in order to have effect; on the contrary, the symbolic of its acts acquires meaning when they are confirmed in the ideal existence of a law. As a result, one can notice, as we have already mentioned, that the central problem of delinquency is to be found in the way it is considered; firstly, as a problem of health-illness; then, juridical, and lastly, social; nevertheless, tagging a subject does not provide any solution. Therefore, the central topic is to learn if the prisons, with the starting of operation of a treatment, are worth for something more than a simple deposit or storehouse of tagged or social deviated. What is more, from this confusing perspective of the social re-adaptation meaning and its different interpretations sheltered in medical, psychiatric and juridical criteria, one should wonder whether the subject is re-adaptable within an opposite context, i.e., unadapted.

Recidivism

Another aspect, highly important, correlated with the exclusion and stigmatization of the young adults is that which make the recidivists. They are mostly youths that have committed crimes against property. Among them, it is observed that on average they have been imprisoned twice. Hence, 35.68 percent (three hundred and sixty-five) of the young inmates are recidivists, whereas 64.32 percent (six hundred and fifty-eight) are cataloged as first-time delinquents, i.e., it is the first time they are imprisoned as a result of committing a crime.

A characteristic of these recidivist youths lies in the fact that, given their social conditions, they have become regular inmates in the prisons from early ages, since 77 percent of them are individuals who entered prison between 18 and 21 years of age. Out of this percentage, 44 percent entered between 13 and 16 years of age for the first time to a center for minor re-adaptation. They are mostly outcasts, for they belong to poor families, they are youths who have inexorably
### TABLE 6
STATE OF MEXICO’S CPSR.
YOUNG INMATES’ PSYCHOLOGIC DIAGNOSIS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diagnosis</th>
<th>Frequencies</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Antisocial behavior</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>22.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brain damage</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socio-cultural deprivation</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schizophrenia and psychotic disturbances</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyperactive</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Histrionic</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introversion</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional lability</td>
<td>425</td>
<td>41.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narcissistic</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compulsive obsessive</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggressive passive</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>6.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-esteem problems</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>3.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentally challenged</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No pathology</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adaptive disruption</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>3.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety disorders</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impulse control disorders</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>5.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mood disorders</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality disorders</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual disorders</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1023</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Own elaboration based on inmates’ personal files. DGPRS, 2000.
TABLE 7
STATE OF MEXICO’S CPSR.
YOUNG INMATES’ PSYCHOLOGIC TREATMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sort of treatment</th>
<th>Frequencies</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transactional analysis</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assertive training</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive-behavioral psychotherapy</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>11.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group psychotherapy</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational psychotherapy</td>
<td>401</td>
<td>39.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rational emotive therapy</td>
<td>459</td>
<td>44.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitization work</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,023</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


walked the way which has led them from the rehabiliting school to the tutelary center and from this to prison.

Most of these youths have spent their childhood and adolescence in different institutions of the State, they were educated in them; they are resented youths with no clear expectations for the future, since they were always expelled from the socialization’s primary groups, such as family or school, and frequently brutally abused by those who were in charge of their tutelage, or those who were given the right to punish. (Tarrio, 2002: 20)

Another important aspect lies in underlining that independently from the high recidivists percentage, this varies in relation to gender, however, the percentage of female inmates percentage is considerably lesser in comparison to that of men, the latter have on average three penitentiary convictions, whereas women only have one, since most of the women are first-time delinquents.

Drug addiction

Drugs, in spite of what one can think of them, and their harmful effects for those who take them and society as a whole, become a necessity for many of the inmates, both the habitual user and that who is alien to these substances. Hence, a great deal of these consumers, who before their conviction were already
addicts, continue their consumption in prison, because it does not become an 
obstacle to give them up, on the contrary, all the habitual users, once in prison, 
increase their consumption as part of a mechanism of adaptation and survival. 
Thus, it is not strange to observe that 53.87 percent of the total of the young adult 
inmates in SPSR have a certain type of drug addiction, as it can be seen in table 
8.

In this table we can observe that 46.1 percent of the inmates expresses not 
consuming any kind of drug; yet, mostly, young inmates consume cigarettes and 
coffee, which are considered legal drugs.

Considering these ideas as a whole one can question the feasibility of a 
therapeutic space far from the stigmatization and tagging of the youths secluded 
in prison to exist, mostly because therapy supposes a total environment, where 
the inmate’s life is structured around seclusion. What is more, how to think of a 
therapeutic environment of this kind when communication becomes a primary 
necessity and it is virtually broken by the sort of relation they establish, or even, 
when the inmate lacks all expectative to control their present, as for their future 
or plan their behaviors under certain necessities which are not in conditions to be 
satisfied. Conversely, the inmates are carried into situations characterized by a 
sort of fatalism that hinders any possible success. Therefore, lack of control on 
their own life becomes undoubtedly an obstacle for any attempt of re-adaptation.

In this manner, treatment for the so-called social re-adaptation turns out to be 
nonexistent in practice, so it is conditioned and subdued to security and vigilance. 
Therefore, once the individual enters and after having concluded the Calvary of 
the trial until the moment of delivering the verdict of guilty, the subject is virtually 
left alone, being into a situation of defenselessness from their rights as well as 
from their relatives. For instance, the obtained data show us that 17.4 percent 
(one hundred and seventy-eight) of the youths do not receive family visit. It is 
important to notice that this percentage corresponds to women, who tend to be 
literally abandoned. Well now, in spite family therapy is a treatment mechanism, 
besides the difficulties existing to visit any center, becomes a torment for the 
families who continuously attend family visits.

It is evident that under these conditions treatment cannot have any result, for 
the only perspective from which an inmate can be studied is their cell, the 
courtyard, the only place where the inmates interact, or the workrooms, if they 
achieve getting a job. It is an environment where affective relationships 
established, either voluntarily or forcefully, barely save them from suffering 
schizophrenia due to the isolation. (Rivera, 1999: 135)
Another important aspect related to the treatment is the separation of genders, which is closely linked to this new punishment configuration. Thus, sexual intercourse, as shown with numerous examples, are linked to sexual commerce—for the entrance of prostitute women—o even, by means of the frequent practices of masturbation and homosexuality.

### TABLE 8
STATE OF MEXICO’S CPSR.
YOUNG INMATES’ DISTRIBUTION BY DRUG USE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Drug</th>
<th>Frequencies</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>20.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cocaine</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inhalers</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marihuana</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>16.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poly drug addict</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>9.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychotropic</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No consumption</td>
<td>476</td>
<td>46.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1023</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


This constant sexual dissatisfaction acquires a dominant tone that besides propitiating the aforementioned aspects produces an extreme eroticism, which eventually leads to the excesses of masturbation individual or collective. These excesses, apart from the unleashed cultural and social problems, cause in the inmates certain alterations in their health condition that predispose them to acquire venereal diseases and HIV/AIDS. Many of these ailments are usually hard to diagnose since there are not programs that allow the performance of detailed examinations. The most common characteristics of these sort of inmates are loss of weight, some times fever, pale skin, trembling presence or ear buzzes, spermatorrhea, loss of appetite, in one word, all of the organic functions are disturbed (Carranza, 2001: 49-51); from here that, as we could observe with the obtained data, 92.3 percent (nine hundred and forty-eight) of the young inmates does not receive conjugal visit, a benefit only taken by 7.3 percent (seventy-five) of the young inmates. Out of this percentage, 21 percent corresponds to men and only 0.8 percent to women. Separately, those who do not receive conjugal visit correspond to 75 percent of men and 3.1 percent to women.
This abandonment condition is, undoubtedly, a detachment process that induces the inmates to an affective indifference before their behaviors and even before their close relatives due to long periods of detachment with their environment and the opposite gender. Therefore, therapeutic proposals are contradicitorily added to the socialization process attempted in prison, propitiating more maladjustment than adaptation. Hence, it is not unrealistic to affirm that current penitentiary institutions have become mere containers, where what is tried is to keep order and discipline on the base of conditions and regimes of life unbearable for any human being (Bergalli, 1991: 25).

In this sense, sexual abstinence can be understood as one more of the manifestations of the punishment in prison, because of the simple reason that the cure is not compatible with the retributive nature of the sentence, if we understand by cure that process tending to overcome illness (without the intention of comprehensively include all healing processes, in the physical, psychical and moral aspect). And they are not compatible since punishment can only be given to psychically healthy and imputable individuals.

Tattooing

Other data which curiously appear in the unit of information register used for the classification and treatment is that referring to tattoos, scars or features of some physical disability, as well as sexual preference, information that deep inside has a clear tendency to stress a stigma, a distinction between normality and abnormality. For instance, it can be observed that the number of young inmates with tattoos: four hundred and fifty-three constitutes 44.28 percent of the total, whereas those who do not have any tattoo are 55.72 percent. It is worth mentioning that 25.71 percent of the youths with tattoos, according to the resources, were tattooed between 14 and 18 years of age, and in the other 18.67 percent of this tattooed youths have decorated their skin while in prison.

Dangerousness

The other aspect that constitutes this complex and turbulent space of the suffering in the terms used for the classification and treatment is the concept of ‘social dangerousness’, which, such as that of ‘treatment and re-adaptation’, does not contain an explicit definition of what should be understood by those meanings. Well now, before proceeding and show that neither does the internal
rules nor the civil code or LEPPRL, let us say that this term was formulated under the name of redoubtableness and appeared in 1885 in the work of Raffaele Garofalo\(^1\), named Criminology. This very category or concept was also used during the XX century as synonym of social or institutional risk, or even, social dangerousness. The purpose of such a definition, according to Garofalo himself, consists in determining the graveness of the crime and the intensity, perseverance, tenacity and criminal impulse. It is then an instrument that tries to rummage in the souls and the intentions of the inmates (Morenilla, 1977: 66).

In this sense, dangerousness is understood by both the psychologists and criminologists from the centers of social re-adaptation as an attitude, action or deed which harms the others. In this statement what is underlined is the apparent or active permanent perversity of a subject, as well as potentially quantify the possible harm the subject can cause. Consequently, this dangerousness concept expresses, on the one side, a forecast for the future, and on the other, a probability judgment of certain behaviors imputable to an individual denoted under determinate attributes, distinctive or characteristic previously indicated as abnormal. In this sense, we can well understand the meaning of marginalization and exclusion felt by these young adults convicted in CPSR, since we find that only 2.1 percent (twenty-two) are considered as highly dangerous, whereas 56.9 percent (five hundred and eighty-three) mid-dangerous and 40.8 (four hundred and eighteen) are tagged as lowly dangerous.

It is convenient to wonder what makes sense in submitting a high percentage of inmates classified as of low risk to a punishment which retrains liberty or even to a treatment if only 2.1 percent of the population in study are cataloged as a high social risk. Another important aspect in reference to the population classified as highly dangerous lies in their schooling, which shows that 60.3 percent possesses primary school studies, 20 percent secondary school, 13.7 percent does not have any study at all and 6 percent has some high school studies.

In relation to the level of mid dangerousness, the crime because of which they were sentenced, we find that 22.8 percent is associated with theft, 14.8 percent with homicide, 13.8 with violent theft, 7.4 with crime against health, 5.7 percent with other crimes and 5.5 percent with rape. The remaining 30 percent is associated with diverse crimes. As a matter of fact, with these data was can

\(^1\) Garofalo was a jurist and sociologist, born in the XIX century; he paid special attention to demonstrate the existence of the natural crime, in order to do so he was supported on the construction of a delinquents’ classification, it consisted of three categories: a) delinquents without pity, particularly this sort of individuals are those who commit homicide, b) delinquents without probity, alluding thieves, and c) delinquents without probity nor pity, such as road raiders and those who commit violent robberies.
affirm that 87 percent of the inmates committed misdemeanors, i.e., less serious offenses which would deserve to be treated with alternative measures.

Consequently, as it can be seen in accordance with this classification, the supposedly most dangerous inmates serve sentences between 11 and 15 years; 60 percent does not have primary school studies and 22.8 percent is associated with robbery. As a result, it can be stated that there is not a significant relation with any variable; what is more, the classification levels lead us to identical results, thus creating a state of dangerousness directed to a population’s specific group due to the occasional perpetration of an action that is not a crime (social dangerousness), and in other, what is pursued is plain suspicion.

Facing the nature of the data previously mentioned, one wonders: When is one dangerous? Where does dangerousness start? What are dangerous acts actually? Which modalities of social conditions are actually constitutive of dangerousness? The answers to these questions are contained by borders of the point of view of the judger. They are then, a personal decision, of both the judge and normalization technicians, since law, as we have seen, does not provide any parameter.

This dangerousness, theoretically, is the result of the subjective appreciations product of psychological and medic-psychiatric studies, as well as those estimations product of the sort of crime, age, gender, drug addictions, schooling level, family precedence, occupation and those characteristics observable whose behavior is of evident maladjustment to the ordinary and open regimes. Once the diagnose is obtained, and that the subject has been channeled to a treatment, the factors that would allow valuing the state of dangerousness are four: a) participation in revolts, physical violence, threats and coactions to functionaries or inmates; b) unjustified negatives to fulfill orders, bad behavior and negatives to attend trials and procedures; c) refusal to fulfill disciplinary sanctions, and d) drug consumption and drawing tattoos. (GDPRS, 2001)

Undoubtedly, the previous judgments and criteria are questionable to determine the degree of such dangerousness from two perspectives. The first from the instrumental operation, which presupposes the use of psychometric tools; nonetheless, frequently they are not used and as a substitute observation appears. The second perspective is anchored to the very concept of dangerousness, which is a unique and natural concept, product of a structure always configured under the individualized fear of a personal situation, which has its background in the law that always must fix only one legal type where there is space for the fear of other non-criminal asocial behaviors of the subjects and a set of subjective and objective conditions.
As a consequence, these objective and subjective are linked, in the practice, to criteria establish by the law itself, which configure a classification depending on age, sort of crime, gender, unrest, and criminal profile of the subject, constituted by three levels; the first-time offender, the recidivist and habitual delinquent. This very classification, at the time, is the base upon which one starts to assign the inmates to the pavilions, sections or dormitories in each of the centers of social re-adaptation.

**Ideas to conclude**

As we have observed, the problem of the constitution of a taxonomy or profile of the young adults deprived from their liberty in the CPSR of the State of Mexico, is largely due to a problem of valuing enunciation whose criteria are oriented by an exclusion criterion, whose information is full of qualifications and stigmatization that foment and generate a sort of public opinion which makes marginal sectors, mainly young adults, directly responsible for the city’s insecurity, favoring an institutional violence environment that negatively formulates stereotypes and stigmas by means of which legal and illegal measures against these new juvenile delinquents are justified.

Therefore, the new delinquent’s profile in the large cities is without a question that of a resented youth marginalized from the social benefit who occasionally offends, it is a youth who surely drinks alcohol and takes drugs, who most of the times acts because of resentment rather than necessity, it is an occasional delinquent who acts in fear, nervousness and under the influence of drugs and alcohol, which makes him extremely violent and dangerous. Hence, the excessive use of force that has characterized the criminal actions in recent years, whose consequences have been casualties. We must add to these conditioning factors of juvenile delinquency the crisis of the socializing institutions, such as family, school, and the media, as well as the easy access to drugs and the lack of credibility of the government institutions.

**Conclusion**

Finally, as it has been seen, even if the problem of juvenile delinquency nowadays requires a profound debate on the structural causes of the criminal tendencies and the effect which the increment of punitive actions brings along, it is also
required the construction of a discourse that has as a principle to prevent poverty’s criminalization and in addition to it, erase that imaginary which makes young adults in extreme poverty be seen as potential delinquents, who deserve to be in captivity.

Then we firstly must recognize that our contemporary societies are in a real crossroads before the constant increment of delinquency and its multiple expressions, this makes us wonder, what is the way which we must take in order to solve the problem of growing delinquency? Why do some academic and professional sectors insist on looking for answers to delinquency in poverty’s criminalization? Why do some academic and professional sectors insist on underlining that the problem is only due to the family’s social disintegration? And so on, undoubtedly much more complex than considered, in such manner that at the beginning what would be important would be to contribute to and deepen into this debate; firstly, trying to find mechanisms that allow replacing this prejudiced image of the young delinquent; secondly, that the debate on the increment of delinquency is supported on real data, which enable us to pinpoint the problem’s structural causes and finally, recognize that what is discussed is not the subject nor an action; on the contrary, what is judged is our society’s moral pattern.

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