Article

Social Representations of Teachers and Police Officers about Youth and Violence[1]

Ana Lúcia Galinkin[2]
Angela Maria de Oliveira Almeida
Vânia Cristine Cavalcante Anchieta
Universidade de Brasília, Brasília-DF, Brazil

Abstract: This article aims to identify the social representations that teachers and police officers construct about violence, particularly that practiced by young people. The study participants were 15 high school teachers from two private schools and 16 police officers from four police stations, including both males and females. For the data collection, the focus groups technique was used with subsequent content analysis of the discourse corpus related to violence and its causes. The teachers and police officers indicated the modern family as a reason for the violence committed by young people because their role in the socialization of the children is being abandoned. They understand that the responsibility for the education of the young people is being transferred to them by the family.

Keywords: social representation, violence, youths, teachers, police

Representações Sociais de Professores e Policiais sobre Juventude e Violência

Resumo: Resumo: Este estudo teve por objetivo identificar as representações sociais que professores e policiais civis constroem sobre a violência, em particular, a praticada por jovens. Participaram do estudo 15 professores do ensino médio de duas escolas privadas e 16 policiais civis de ambos os sexos pertencentes a quatro delegacias. Para coleta de dados utilizou-se a técnica de grupos focais com posterior análise de conteúdo do corpus discursivo relativo à violência e suas causas. Professores e policiais civis apontam a família moderna como uma das responsáveis pela violência praticada pelos jovens por se desobrigar de seu papel socializador dos filhos. Entendem que a responsabilidade da educação dos jovens está sendo transferida da família para eles.

Palavras-chave: representação social, violência, jovens, professores, polícia

Representaciones Sociales de Profesores y Policiales sobre Juventud y Violencia

Resumen: El objetivo de este artículo fue identificar las representaciones sociales que profesores y policías construyen acerca da la violencia, en particular la violencia juvenil. Participaron del estudio 15 profesores de educación secundaria de dos escuelas particulares y 16 policías de cuatro jefaturas, de ambos sexos. Para recolectar los datos se utilizó la técnica de grupos focales con posterior análisis de contenido del corpus discurso sobre la violencia y sus causas. Profesores y policías identifican la familia moderna como una de las responsables por la violencia juvenil porque se eximen de su papel socializador de los hijos. Creen que la familia esté transfiriendo la responsabilidad por la educación del joven para ellos, profesores y policías.

Palabras clave: representación social, violencia, jóvenes, profesores, policía

By redefining violence, Michaud (1989) shows how the comprehension of this phenomenon currently transcends its physical manifestations including other forms of expression. For this author there is violence:

> When, in a situation of interaction, one or more actors act directly or indirectly, extremely or sparingly, causing damage to one or more persons, in varying degrees, either to their physical or moral integrity, to their possessions or to their symbolic and cultural participation (p. 11).

Furthermore, mistreatment, assaults and conflicts, which occur in the domestic environment and have been considered a private matter, are currently treated as legal matters in the public space. Added to the new manifestations and new meanings given to the damage caused to other people, is its greater visibility through the exposure of crimes, misdemeanors and violations of the laws and customs in the various communication media.

Violence in which youths participate, either as the authors or victims, has worried different sectors of society and has been an object of interest for researchers, educators, psychologists and other professionals who deal with this phenomenon and this age group. In this article, youth violence is presented for reflection from the perspective of two professional categories - high school teachers and police officers.

Youth and Violence

The generalization of violence is not restricted to certain social, racial, economic and geographic niches, with protected social groups not existing anymore (Abramovay, Castro, Pinheiro, Lima, & Martinelli, 2002). For the authors,

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[2] Correspondence address:
Ana Lúcia Galinkin. SMPW Quadra 12, Conjunto 03, Casa 08. Park Way. Brasília-DF, Brazil. CEP 71.741-203. E-mail: anagalinkin@uol.com.br

violent acts committed and suffered by young people were linked to the condition of social vulnerability in which they find themselves, i.e., the negative relationship between the availability of symbolic and material resources and access to social, economic and cultural opportunities.

Brazilian demographic data, published in the Map of the Violence (Waiselfisz, 2004, 2010), indicate youths as the group more exposed to the occurrences and risks of violent death. According to official statistics, in 2002 Brazil had a contingent of approximately 35.1 million young people, aged between 15 and 24 years, corresponding to 20.1% of the total population. While the global mortality rate in the country, which was 633 in 100,000 inhabitants in 1980, fell to 561 in 2002, the mortality rate referring to youths increased, rising from 128 to 137 in 100,000 inhabitants, in the same period. In 1980 external causes (homicides, accidents, suicides, unnatural causes) were responsible for 52.9% of deaths among youths aged 15 to 24 years. In 2002 this figure rose to 72%, with 39.9% of the deaths caused by homicide. The highest incidence of homicide is found among young males. In the Brazilian capital, external causes accounted for 71.4 of the deaths among young people, with 43.2 due to murder. In 2008 there was a slight increase in mortality of young people between 14 and 25 years due to external causes.

The fragility of the institutional controls, the deficiency of the legal systems, the disbelief of the population regarding the implementation and enforcement of the laws, as well as the distrust of the population toward the police, provide and increase criminality (Waiselfisz, 2004). In relation to youth violence, when it is observed that it is more practiced by and against young males, some authors point to the construction of masculinity, which Zaluar (2004, p. 196) describes as "those values and feelings of an *ethos* of virility that would be achieved through criminal activity".

Various other causes have been cited as responsible for the growth of youth participation in various forms of crimes and violations of the laws and regulations. Changes in the styles of sociability, early entry into and prolongation of adolescence, new family models, conflicts of codes of guidance, social exclusion, the use and trafficking of drugs, lack of social projects, lack of prospects for education and employment, and affirmation of identity are some examples of the causes attributed to youth violence.

The association between social exclusion and poverty, social discrimination and criminality, has been reinforced by statistics that show poor, black people as the most vulnerable to death from external causes, particularly murder. Recent studies, however, show that structural problems, such as economic and social inequality, are not sufficient to explain the growth in the number of youths in conflict with the law, particularly when observing the proportion of middle-class adolescents that are the perpetrators and victims of violent acts (Galinkin & Almeida, 2005; Santos, Almeida, Mota, & Medeiros, 2010).

The increasing violence perpetrated and suffered by youths with purchasing power that varies between the extremes of poverty and wealth, has motivated the development of studies on this troubling reality by professionals of various knowledge areas of the human sciences. In Brazil, a significant number of studies in public schools examine violence in the school spaces (Lucinda, Nascimento, & Candau, 1999). The public school has also become a stage for diverse incivilities and assaults. As regards the private schools, little has been said about such behavior within them.

In this scenario of social changes and new manifestations of violence, in which a growing youth participation can be observed, two social actors have dealt directly with the violent behavior of young people: teachers and police officers. The teachers, in their role as educators, seek to develop a sense of ethics, morality and citizenship in the students and consequently attempt to instill civility. However, they often find themselves dealing with violence due to the aggressive behavior of young people, causing physical and moral damage to their colleagues, staff and faculty inside and outside the school building (Ferrari & Araújo, 2005; Galinkin & Almeida, 2005; Lucinda et al., 1999).

The other professional category that is in daily contact with the most diverse forms of violations of the laws and rules are the police officers who, by virtue of their social function of preserving order, enforce the law and maintain the public wellbeing, operating in the opposite extreme, where the rules are abandoned, the laws disregarded and the use of violent means in social relationships prevails (Anchieta & Galinkin, 2005; Torres, Faria, Guimarães, & Martignoni, 2007).

The Social Representations Theory (SRT) was drafted by Moscovici (1961/1976) in order to answer the question "how does man constitute his reality" (p. 504), a question he considered essential to social psychology. As stated by Trindade, Santos and Almeida (2011), Moscovici proposes new concepts "to explain the processes required for the construction of knowledge, when the representation of an object by a subject is produced in a dialectical relationship which is so close between the two that the subject and object are fused and transformed" (p. 102-103). It is these new concepts that embody the SRT and explain how the SR "are formed and what they produce" (p. 103). In addition to the SR concept, the concepts of objectification and anchoring are highlighted in the SRT.

Jodelet (1984/1988), who undertook the task of organizing the SR definitions into an organic conceptual body, thus producing the formula:

> The SR concept denotes a form of specific knowledge, the knowledge of common sense, the contents of which reveal the operation of socially marked generative and functional processes. More broadly, it refers to a form of social thought(…). Social representations are forms of practical thinking, oriented toward communication, comprehension and mastery of the social, material and ideal environment (p. 361).

Moscovici (1961/1976), with the objectivation concept, mentions the process by which a "conceptual scheme" becomes real when duplicating an image in a material counterpart, a result that initially has a cognitive character: the stock of indications and signifiers that a person receives, issues and activates in the infra-communication cycle, can become highly abundant. (pp. 107-108). With the concept of anchoring, he refers to the process by which a particular social object is transformed by society "into an instrument that it can use, and this object is placed along a scale of preferences within the existing social relationships. We can say that the anchoring transforms science into a reference framework and a network of meanings…" (p. 170-171).

As Doise (1990) stated,

> The SRT can be considered a grand theory, grand in so much as its purpose is to propose basic concepts (…) which should attract the attention of researchers regarding a particular set of dynamics and thus lead to more detailed studies regarding the specific multiple processes (p. 172).

The grand theory underwent several developments. The important contributions of Abric, Doise and Jodelet are highlighted, with different ways to focus and investigate the SR, each having provided a particular contribution to the development of the SRT. Sá (1998) draws attention to the complementary nature that these contributions assume, saying that the grand social representations theory "unfolds in three complementary theoretical directions (...). It is not certain that these theories are mutually incompatible, since all originate from the same basic matrix and in no way disqualify each other" (p. 65). This study was constructed seeking this complementarity.

This study aimed to identify the social representations (SR) that teachers and police officers constructed regarding violence, particularly that practiced by young people. For this two surveys were performed in the Federal District, one with high school teachers in private schools and the other with police officers, seeking to identify the ideas, beliefs, explanations and "theories" which they elaborate about the phenomenon. We started from the assumption that private school teachers and police officers, from their different experiences, construct SR (Jodelet, 2001; Moscovici, 1986) regarding violence, particularly that practiced by youths, since this phenomenon is a current social problem that has mobilized different sectors of society and induced governmental and non-governmental actions in order to understand and contain its various manifestations.

Method

Participants

Participants were 15 teachers from two private high schools, three women and twelve men, with a mean age of 38 years, all with higher education. These were divided into two groups: Teachers Group 1 (TG1) and Teachers Group 2 (TG2). A total of 16 police officers also participated, ten men and six women, with a mean age of 35 years and all with higher education. These were divided into four groups: two groups of police officers stationed in general police stations (Police Group 1 - PG1, Police Group 2 - PG2), serving a diverse public and attending to more varied forms of complaints, crimes and transgressions of the laws; and two groups formed with police officers stationed in specialized police stations, one directed toward young offenders (PG3) and the other toward the protection of children and adolescents in situations of abuse (PG4). The number of participants considered ideal for the composition of a focus group, according Markova (2003), should be between four and twelve people. In this study, the smallest group was formed by four participants and the largest by ten.

Instrument

The focus group technique (six focus groups) was used in order to grasp concepts, values, beliefs and "theories" elaborated by the participants regarding the topics proposed by the researchers. This technique proved to facilitate the exposure of ideas and experiences, in a spontaneous way. The discussions were guided by a semi-structured script, including elements highlighted in the literature and extracted from previous studies (human development, adolescence, educational practices, violence and its causes).

Procedure

Data collection. The focus groups were conducted in the workplace of the participants (meeting room and office respectively for the teachers and police officers). In both groups, the discussion was conducted by two of the three authors. In the case of the teachers, two observers accompanied the performance of the groups. The average duration of all the groups was one hour and thirty minutes, with them recorded with the authorization of participants and transcribed for the analysis.

Data analysis. The material obtained was subjected to content analysis that, in the definition of Bardin (2009). "is a set of techniques for analyzing communications (…) marked by a great disparity of forms and adaptable to a very wide field of application: communications" (p. 33). A thematic classification of the meanings of the speech was conducted, categorizing the elements of the set by differentiation, being regrouped later by thematic categories. Speech extracts were selected which referred both to the explanatory causes of violence among youths, as well as the more or less articulated knowledge about the phenomenon. The recurrence of explanations that appeared in the set of statements was observed, and this recurrence interpreted as the social representations of the participants.

Ethical Considerations

The participants were informed about the research aims, the method used, the confidentiality and the possibility of halting their participation at any moment of the focus groups. All signed the Terms of Free Prior Informed Consent. A larger project, of which the studies reported here constitute part, was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Public Health of the University of Brasília (process No. 052/2001).

Results and Discussion

Initially, the results and discussion are presented regarding the SR of the violence. Systematized in the form of broad categories, the results are presented here separately, considering two groups of participants (teachers and police officers). Next, the similarities and differences between the groups are presented. Finally, the SR of youth are presented, which appear as a subtext of the SR of the violence among young people, common to the teachers and police officers.

Social Representations of Teachers and Police Officers about Juvenile Violence

What did the teachers say about violence committed by young people? The teachers recognized the severity of the violence among young people, however, they attributed more violent behavior to external groups. In a clear tendency to attribute violence to the external group (Joffe, 1994) they treat it as a distant reality, outside the school grounds, which does not apply to their students. In their reports, they describe a reality very different to that described in the studies in public schools and refer to two categories of violence, physical and verbal**.** Regarding the behavior of their students, they reported only cases of incivilities, such as verbal aggression, that occurs on the school grounds between students, students and teachers, and students and parents. They affirmed that violence "has not crossed our fence, our gate, our community is protected inside" (TG2); "[however] it will have to exist with the violence out there" (TG1).

In making this distinction between violence in here, referring to that practiced inside the school, which is only verbal, and violence out there, committed outside the boundaries of the school space, shows that in their explanations they create a rift between society out there and the school in here, protected by closed gates. The walls and gates, as well as being a physical barrier, present themselves in the statements as symbolic barriers that distinguish the school community or "our group", from the others that do not belong to the school, the external group. It is out there in society that young people are at risk of becoming perpetrators and victims of violence and need to be guided and protected, with this responsibility assigned exclusively to the family.

When they distinguish the two spaces of violence, they distance themselves from the problem, displacing it to the "others", the external group, which is seen as more violent.

This can be interpreted as a self-defense and enhancement mechanism of the internal group protecting it from the external threat, in this case, represented by both the violence itself and by the negative image that would be projected by the institution, if this occurred on school grounds. One of the functions of social representations is to protect the identity of the group, as Abric (1994) stresses. In these representations it can be observed that the teachers identify with the students, composing with them the internal group, when they claim that within the community here there is no violence, the others out there are violent. From the statements of the teachers it was possible to identify four categories referring to the causes of youth violence: (a) family, (b) bad influence of the groups of friends, (c) the violence as fashion, and (d) modernity.

Family causes. The teachers emphasized the importance of the family in the control of the violence practiced by young people. For them, the family is the institution that will provide the basic principles for the construction of the character of the youths and provide the support necessary for their formation as good people. The good behavior of the children primarily depends on the family environment and on the contact that the parents have with their children, giving them greater and more frequent assistance. However, according to the teachers, the modern family has not adequately fulfilled its function, as has become too permissive, distant from the problems of the children, and remiss in the transmission of principle values for the formation of the new generations. There is an excess of freedom and a lack of dialogue. The work demands of the parents and the increased participation of the mothers in the labor market, with little time to devote to the home, alienate the family members and limit the care of the children. They perceive that the parents do not accompany their children, as in the report "What is missing, really, is the parent sitting with their child for ten, fifteen minutes to talk, because they [the children] do not have direction" (TG2). They also state that the parents transfer the responsibility to care for the children to the school and/or the teacher. "The mother says: what ever you need you can telephone and solve this with my maid who is authorized to my allow my son to leave the school, do what ever she wants" (TG1) or the parents telephone the school, asking, "Is my child there studying? Is he doing extra study?" (TG2). From this evaluation of the family, the teachers demand a greater presence of the parents in the education of their children. "Today you see the following, the woman is away from home, she has to work. If I do not set a time to be with my children, even just an hour to sit and talk..." (TG2). They consider that the parents' experience of a period of coercion during their youth, leads them to have difficulty to assume the role of someone that imposes limits to the children. "In truth there isn't a frank dialogue. Often parents have to interdict, what can and what can not be done, and this is very difficult in today's generation that is 50 years old and lived through the time of the dictatorship. They have a huge fear of assuming their inherent authority" (TG1).

It appears, from these statements, in addition to the distancing of the parents, the absence of the mother in the home

and the valorization of the work and the career concur so that the children are not being well guided and are at the mercy of the negative influence of the same age groups, another cause of youth violence. The teachers understand that they are fulfilling this lack by listening to the complaints of the students, guiding them and being attentive to what happens to them, as exemplified by this statement: "The function of the educator is exclusively ours" (TG1).

Groups of friends. In the statements of the teachers the groups of youths appear in opposition to the family. Friends play an important role in the behavior of the adolescents and omission of the parents opens space for the ascendancy of the groups over their children. This, according to the teachers, is not the case with families who are always present and attentive, following the development of the youths. These are more traditional families living in some towns in the countryside and neighborhoods of the suburbs. "The parents spend more time with their children, they do not allow friends to interfere much" (TG1). The tendency of the group to occupy the space vacated by the family is perceived as something that is repeated in large urban centers. "The strength of the group is very large. What I see here I identify with what I perceive out there [at another school, in another state]" (TG2).

The family, as well as the group of friends, reveals the importance attached to the "traditional" idealized family, which effectively works as an anchor for the SR of the violence. Similarly to that observed with adolescents (Santos et al., 2010), the teachers also attribute the role of stemming the violence among the young people to the (traditional) family. The new family configurations (Dessen & Polonia, 2007; Reali & Tancredi, 2005) are represented by the teachers as a threat, and youth violence assimilated as the embodiment of that threat.

Fashion. This also appears as a contributing factor to violence due to the vulnerability of young people under development to external influences: "They are without reference, very impulsive, they follow very closely what the model of the time is" (TG2). The "model of the time" is indicated by the teachers as sports practices that they consider violent "it is the fashion of violence. This generation of kids doing *jiu-jitsu*, karate, capoeira, that fight" (TG1). Again, the presence of the family is demanded to guide, educate, "to give a reference" and to stop the young people following the "fashions" offered by other young people in the current society.

Modernity. Technology, symbolic of the present time and modernity, appears in the statements of the teachers as another factor of withdrawal of the people, contributing to the abandonment of the education of the youths. It is here that the modern life, an external cause, over which there is no control, contributes to the isolation and lack of communication between the people, in particular, between parents and children: "In the modern society you have a very interesting thing. We all sit in front of the computer, we access the internet, we have information from around the world, but we do not talk with each other..." (TG2).

This explanation is consistent with that postulated by Wieviorka (1997), for whom violence is a phenomena that has undergone considerable changes that "justify the idea of the arrival of a new paradigm of violence that characterizes the contemporary world" (p. 5). These changes occur in the manifestations of the phenomenon, which are more instrumental, as well as in the way of representing them. However, this phenomenon of modernity reveals itself as an idea anchored (Moscovici, 1961/1976) in the absence of dialogue between people, particularly between parents and children, being a recurring assertion when the teachers addressed the important role of the parents in the education of their children and in the control of violence. The teachers also emphasized the personal relationships (omission of the family and bad influence of friends) as the most important causes in the development of violent behavior among the young people.

What did the Police Officers Say about Violence Committed by Young People?

The police officers saw violence in a different way to the teachers. They translated it as the murders, robberies and rapes that they handle daily. They did not mention other forms of manifestation of the phenomenon. For them, crime is everywhere, being much worse than society imagines. This view of the police officers is due largely to the fact that crime and violence, in their various forms of physical and material manifestations, is the main object of their work. They therefore construct their social representations of violence in their quotidian and in their dealing with crime. It is interesting to note that such representation, associating violence and crime, is consistent with that sustained by young people, as observed by Santos et al. (2010). They identified the following as the main causes of crime: (a) structural causes, (b) family, and (c) the bad nature of some people.

Structural causes. In this case the state and the governments are blamed for the violence in general. Unemployment, unequal income distribution, lack of interest in education and lack of state control over crime would be some of the causes of increasing and widespread violence at this time. For these professionals: "Violence has roots, but the cause main is really the lack of interest of the state" (PG1). In their discourse they politicize the causes of violence pointing to macro social issues and anchor their representations in sociological explanations, reified knowledge that explains the causes of violence as a sociopolitical phenomenon. These structural causes do not appear in the discourse of the teachers.

Family causes. Regarding the role of the family, it was observed that the police officers gave explanations similar to those highlighted by the teachers. They attribute the deviant behavior of young people to the parents, who can not transmit values essential for the moral formation of the children, "because if you don't have education at home, its not worth having a diploma (...). If you have no family base or

you're parents did not teach what is moral, to respect the interests of others..." (PG1). The presence of the family is systematically placed as a necessary condition for the formation of moral values, even justifying the adoption of severe practices. "I think the family is everything (...), you invest in your children, in the education of your children, set limits, to some extent being harsh with them" (PG4). However, they added family breakdown as another factor of great importance in the behavior of the young people: "All violence is related to family breakdown..." (PG2). Parental separation was indicated as a cause of family breakdown: "When the couple is separating there is a fight. They use the children in the dispute. We are also used" (PG4). Particularly the police officers of police stations specializing in the child and adolescent refer also to domestic violence, in which violent acts tend to be perpetuated: "It starts with violence at home (...) he suffers violence, he practices violence" (PG4).

It was seen that the police officers share with the teachers the explanations of parental abandonment of the obligation to educate, guide and transmit core values to their children so that they become responsible and good citizens. These results corroborate those found by Dessen and Polonia (2007) and Reali and Tancredi (2005), as previously noted. However, they add the breakdown and family violence that were not mentioned by the teachers. They complain about the parents who can not control the children and take them to the police station to be reprimanded by the police officers, hoping that they will exercise the coercive role in educating the young people, which is the families own role.

Bad nature. The police officers also blame the subjects themselves for the crimes they perform. They "essentialize" crime, considering it as something inherent to the person, because for them, this is about people with a "bad nature" or "born a criminal": "There is the issue of born a criminal. People think it does not exist, but it does" (PG2). They also consider that the state does not adequately take care of the population; that the parents are omitting the transmission of values appropriate for their children to become responsible people; that dysfunctional families do not take care of their children and manipulate them in domestic disputes; that domestic violence leads to children and young people becoming violent, creating the conditions for increasing crime, and the police officers also contend that those who are born with a "bad nature" are responsible for their violent acts. A clear proximity can be seen here to the meanings made by scientific psychology, still in its infancy, when Stanley Hall (1904) associated adolescence to the storm and tempest. At the same time, and consequently, there is a clear departure from the more modern psychological ideas that deal with adolescence as a social construction (Ozella, 2003).

The Role of the Family in Juvenile Violence: Comparing Discourses

The social role of the family institution brings together the discourses of the two professionals. In their SR the teachers identified two categories of families who they oppose due to the way they care for their children. The modern family is situated on one side, identified with the upper middle class, living in the most expensive neighborhoods, with the parents being more concerned with work and devoting little time to the dialogue with their children. On the other side is the traditional middle class family, living in peripheral neighborhoods. The latter corresponds to a provincial, harmonious model of the family, with the parents being very present in the lives of the children, having more control over the influence that the external environment exerts on the formation and behavior of the children and young people, in particular in reference to the group of friends.

It is observed, in this case, the SR of the ideal family in which the parents have time available to follow the development of the children and are always present at difficult moments, with the mothers devoting more time to family than to work. "[In the traditional families] the parents spend more time with their children, then they do not allow the groups, the camaraderie, the friends to interfere much" (PG2). The ideal family seems to be reflected by the traditional family "[in the traditional families] we notice another great difference in family values, values provided by the family" (GPr2).

The modern family, according to the representations of the teachers, has a different dynamic, with the parents more concerned with professional life and activities outside the home and, consequently, paying little attention to the children. As observed in the reports of family causes, the omission of the parents in the children's education prejudices the formation of the character of children and the good behavior of youths. In the same way as the police officers said that parents take their children to the police station to be reprimanded by them, the teachers said it is up to them, teachers, to compensate for the absence of the parents, with a consequent displacement of the parental function, since the role of educating, that would be the role of the parents, is being attributed to the teachers. An association was also observed between the richest families and modernity and families of average economic means and traditionality, indicating that the purchasing power of parents could be another intervening factor in the behavior of youths.

Due to the omission of the parents, many of the students' problems are resolved in conversations with the teachers who are available, between classes, to listen to the complaints and difficulties of the young people. In the statements of the teachers, the parents are abandoning the task of educating their children and transferring this function to the school. "Many times I realize that the function of educating is exclusively ours" (TG2). According to them, this is an "outsourcing of education" since they are filling the void left by parents, and fulfilling their "disengagement" with the education of the children: "and he [the father] transfers the parenting to the school. There has been an outsourcing of the education of the children" (TG1).

The importance of the role of the school and the teacher, in the formation and protection of the young students in the school environment, is clear when they say that violence is something that is outside the school walls. Thus, they reinforce the idea that they are fulfilling their guiding role, within the school, and worry about the omission of the parents, out there.

The police officers, in their statements on the cause of youth violence, corroborate the teachers' explanations regarding the role of the family in the violent conduct of the children. They focus on the importance of family relationships to explain the growing violence among young people. The modern, permissive, family, without limits, that uses "psychology" to guide their children: "Violence has increased greatly because of permissiveness. Nowadays everything is allowed. Everything is easier. The child has no limits" (PG2). This permissiveness is attributed to the advent of "modern psychology which says you can not hit, can not correct" (PG1). The traditional family, which passes on essential values and establishes limits, is one that actually contributes to the good formation of the new generations, educating them. "The parents have to provide education, set limits, teaching what is good" (PG3).

Thus, the modern education, as well as being permissive, would not authorize the parents to use more coercive methods in the education of the children, opening space for the youth violence. The police officers also commented on the inability of the parents to educate and to contain unruly or violent behavior of their own children when bringing them to the police station to be reprimanded by the officers. "Even the problems inside their [the parents] home they want the police to resolve, because the mother does not take care of the child, because the son is a drug addict, the mother says: 'I can't control my son, the police have to deal with him'" (PG1). They appeal to the police officers who complain that they have to play the role of educators and psychologists: "We end up being psychologists, being parents, you have to reprimand, you have to give advice, mixing a lot of things" (PG3).

Again, the statements of the police officers approach those of the teachers when they perceive themselves as "substitutes" for the parents in the function of educating the young people. One social representation is shared by the two professionals who, in their discourses, explain the behavior of the young offender as a consequence of the changes that are occurring in the family institution.

It was observed that the social representations of the teachers and the police officers are anchored in reified knowledge of the Human Sciences about the family, considered the first socialization environment of the individuals. Dessen and Polonia (2007) comment that this institution provides the social models and meanings, being the first mediator between the individuals and society, however, there is a process of bidirectional influences in which family and society promote reciprocal and dynamic changes fundamental to the development of the person . They drew attention to the new configurations of families in conflict with old values, subsystems

that are part of a social system that encompasses them. Reali and Tancredi (2005) observed stereotypical views of families among elementary school teachers, not recognizing differences between them, disregarding factors related to the students and the school itself. These observations may also apply to the teachers and the police officers who took part in this study.

Social Representations of Teachers and Police Officers about Youth

In the statements of the teachers and police officers who participated in this study a representation of youth emerging as the subtext can be deduced. By stating that young people are impressionable, following the model of the time, requiring, therefore, care, supervision and control, teachers and police officers reproduce SR on youth, shared by the wider society and anchored in Developmental Psychology. Lima (2006) and Santos, Alessio and Silva (2009) comment that the SR of adolescents in the media show the young people as rebellious, impulsive, dependent, irresponsible and immature, which would explain the transgressive nature of their behavior.

Almeida (2005), analyzing the concept of adolescence in Psychology between the end of the nineteenth and mid-twentieth century shows how this stage of development was initially seen as an age problem, with the vigilance of the adults the most appropriate pedagogy for this period of development. Subsequently, adolescence is described as a phase of intense transition and transformations, oscillating between extremes of weakness and energy, degeneration and inspiration. It is therefore a phase of development that involves risks and hazards, requiring more attention, vigilance and control from the adults. This representation of adolescence as a phase that requires parental control over the children's behavior is reproduced in the discourse of the teachers and the police officers.

Almeida, Pacheco and Garcia (2006), observed, "how the educational practices of the adults have been the object of doubts and uncertainty, due to the social changes that have occurred in recent decades" (p. 143). In studies conducted by the authors, with mothers of adolescents, it was found that they worry about "teaching, transmitting and forming socially desirable moral values and principles in the adolescents, such as responsibility, honesty, limits, sense of family and respect for others" (p . 145), diverging from the assertions of the participants of the studies discussed here. Family and youths seem to be viewed by teachers and police officers through a more traditional lens.

In the representations of police officers and teachers regarding the youths, it was observed that they are not perceived as active players in the construction of their positive experiences, their behavior, their individuality and personality. The study participants also did not recognize, or at least did not mention, other educational institutions or influences beyond the family and school, such as the peer groups (they are mentioned by the teachers in a negative way), the mass media culture, churches,

and other adults with whom they the youths coexist. Regarding this issue, Velho (2002) comments that "All the social actors move in multiple worlds and domains, interacting with different individuals and situations" (p. 65). Setton (2005) complements this statement when considering that modern individuals

> Are required to simultaneously manage various logics of action that are related to diverse logics of the social system [and socialization], which is not total, not because the individual escapes from the social, but because their experience is inscribed in multiple non-congruent records (p. 334).

This multiplicity of domains and individuals in different situations with which young people are interacting do not appear in the explanations of the participants of this study.

The teachers and police officers also made a critique of modernity which is characterized by the adoption of new values and permissiveness in the education of the children, being viewed negatively when they say that limits and respect for authority are not taught anymore. Such "modern" behavior of the parents, being more tolerant and absent, from the perspective of the participants is detrimental for the proper formation of the youths to the extent that they are seen as "without reference" and requiring greater control and the imposition of limits.

The discourses of the teachers and police officers seem to reflect the moment in which the new and old coexist and appear as contradictory. In this moment young people coexist with "multiple worlds", with "multiple, often incongruous, logics" as stated by Velho (2002) and Setton (2005), increasing the need for negotiations in several spheres of existence. This is a reality in which uncertainties and redefinitions are present and negotiations often occupy the place of previous principles, rules and values that seem more solidly established (Giannotti, 2004). It is in this context that the SR of the teachers and police officers about the violence committed by young people meet. These social representations are constructed about a changing social reality that seems contradictory and ambiguous, creating uncertainties and insecurities.

Final Considerations

The influence can be seen, in the explanations of teachers and police officers, of their work and the reality with which they deal daily, reflecting in their explanations and "theories" about violence. The teachers have students of middle-class families, mostly children of professionals or federal public servants, as their public. The police officers primarily deal with the middle and poorest population and with delinquency and criminality. These experiences provide the elements that constitute their social representations of violence among young people. It was also observed that they will seek explanations in a reified knowledge of the Social Sciences and Developmental Psychology to construct their "theories" about youth violence. In their social representations the family would be the environment with the power to control the violence.

At the beginning of this article reference was made to the changes that the contemporary Western societies have undergone. The family is one of the institutions that have undergone major organizational transformations, showing different possible arrangements in its composition. Roudinesco (2003) comments that the changes that have occurred in family configurations have brought unrest and are perceived as threats.

This concern with the "disorganization" of the family is not new. Changes always bring unrest and insecurity, as happened in the cases of separation and later divorces in the recent past and with the greater inclusion of women in the labor market today. At the beginning of industrialization, when women accounted for approximately half the strength of factory work force, particularly in weaving, working outside the home was seen as a threat to the female honor. According to Rago (2004) the women working in the factory posed a threat to the family "making the family ties become looser and weakening the race, because the children grow up freer, without the constant vigilance of the mothers" (p. 585) and the women could even "stop being interested in marriage and motherhood" according to the discourse of the time (p. 585). More recently, women's work outside the home, in the public spaces, such as the liberal professions exercised by women, still cause concern, as observed in the discourses of the teachers and police officers who participated in the study reported here.

The teachers and police officers showed their apprehension about the recent transformations they perceive to be happening in the modern family, which is seen by them as permissive, having little time to educate and transmit values essential to the formation of the new generations. The parents are more concerned with work and are unable to impose limits on the behavior of the children. Both groups understand that the father no longer assumes his role of authority in the home, omitting to exercise the power of coercion that would, according to them, be inherent to his social role. A working mother is seen as abandoning her primary care functions, valuing her work more than her own family. The two groups of professionals made a clear critique of the education that families currently provide to new generations, a concern which is repeated anew in a reality undergoing transformation.

The results reported here were limited to identifying the social representations about youth violence of two professional categories, high school teachers and police officers. Other social actors, who deal with violence and youths, and further studies may add important information for comprehending the increasing violence practiced and suffered by young people in contemporary society, as well as preventive strategies adopted by young adults and youths to protect adolescents from violence.

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Ana Lúcia Galinkin is an Associate Professor of the Graduate Program in Social Psychology of Work and Organizations of the Universidade de Brasília.

Angela Maria de Oliveira Almeida is a senior research collaborator of the Graduate Program in Social Psychology of Work and Organizations and the Director of the International Study Centre on Representations and Social Psychology of the Universidade de Brasília.

Vânia Cristine Cavalcante Anchieta holds a PhD from the Graduate Program in Social Psychology of Work and Organizations of the Universidade de Brasília.