
VIOLENCE IN THE CITY OF SÃO PAULO IN THE XX CENTURY

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to demonstrate the gender profile using the necropsies and lesions reports in Sao Paulo city observed during the XX century. This study was done in the Instituto Médico Legal de São Paulo' file. To this we have studied samples of reports from 1911 to 1998. It has done a sample for each decade, and this sample has analyzed in historical series by external causes. The data has observed by year in decade sample. The all samples have totalized 3593 reports from alive and dead people, 67.54% to male and 32.36 % to female. The most of all external causes and all types of exams where to male, focusing to the male: 92.31% of drunk exams, 82.18% necropsies and 71.16% lesion reports. The female exams of aggression have increased mild until the 70 decade but in 80 decade the increased hard.

KEY WORDS: violence; lesions reports; necropsies reports; São Paulo

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INTRODUCTION

Cities grew out of proportion and nowadays they are fragmented in islands of prosperity and poverty. The physical, economical, social and cultural aspects of life in the urban setting influence violence and act synergically in which the result is greater than the isolated parts. Decade after decade the city of São Paulo has polarized stressing the segregation of individuals (OLIVEIRA, 1993). The megalopolis is not intrinsically bad, but it becomes a problem when the urban population growth rate surpasses the infra-structure capacity of the city, leading to unnecessary death and lesions leading to problems that increase differently for males and females (ORGANIZAÇÃO MUNDIAL DA SAÚDE, 1994; ALENCAR, 2001).

Our concern is to overcome with the end of the determinism that usually we face in research practice. This determinism comes from the cultural transformation that one faces in daily life and that is not avoidable.

We believe in the need of a deep exam of the main premises and values of our culture, in rejecting those conceptual models that have lasted longer than necessary.

“A deep change has occurred in the western cultural mentality and, therefore, an alteration is expected besides the economical and political readjustment, a reflex of the natural movement that emerges spontaneously in which the old is discharged and the new is introduced” (WHILHELM, 1968).

It can be said that in the 20th century São Paulo insecurity and fear have invaded the space of the home and that of the human relations; the sense of fear and insecurity have diffused themselves, generalized and fed by the astonishing mechanism that isolate people, weakening ties between man and community and fragmenting the human being. The rupture of the psychosocial balance provoked by the city produces also domestic disgraces. The present study shows the varied situations of people, man, woman, children that were involved in violence after fights, car accidents, domestic and labor accidents, and other kinds sort of aggression. These sad scenes of violence not rarely ended in the police department, producing the data for the present analysis.

Any tentative approach to this model is interwoven to it, but the conception of risk and the conscience of violence can be different in many aspects (SANTOS; MINAYO, 1999; SOUZA, 1997). The dynamics of the constant modification and the dialectical interaction of opposed resulting from contradiction are intrinsic to many facts and, therefore, are present in the data. In this sense, the knowl-

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edge and the dynamics of the proposed approach is intuition, based in the direct not intellectual experience, of the reality, created by an enlarged state of the conscious perception.

Presently, violence in São Paulo is a major public problem and its sequelae, not necessarily diseases, which are consequences of the urban ecological imbalance, crowd hospitals. At the same time, it is observed that individuals lose their identity and incorporate fear as a way of life. Other connected problems arise such as drug and alcohol, promiscuity and rejection of self-esteem, facts that are greatly advertised.

Women and their sacred “protective way of life”, along the century, are increasingly exposed to violence and are at present in the reports of corporal lesions and necropsies of the Forensic Institute.

In this study we propose to go beyond the concept of culture as synthetized by Descartes, “*Cogito, ergo sum*”, introducing the issue taking into consideration the world in terms of inter-relation of all phenomena.

According to Werner Heisenberg (1961) theories never provide a complete and definitive description of reality; they are always approximations of the real nature of things, and thus all word and all concept, no matter how clear they are, have a limited array of applications. It can be said that “The world presents itself as a complex tissue of events in which the connections of different kinds alternates, superimpose or combine themselves and, in this way, determine the overall contexture”.

Since the beginning of 20th century the notion of absolute space and time, the strictly causal nature of phenomena and the objective description of nature cannot be anymore taken as true. To society, these words can be characterized as organic, holistic, systemic or ecological or, perhaps could be named as systemic conception of life.

In all Latin America deaths, traumas and disabling due to violence are increasing in an alarming way and becoming a well characterized and debated problem. The city of São Paulo had, in the year 2000, 17,878,703 inhabitants. To control violence and to promote non-violence are ample questions in which one should identify the sociological matrixes (ORGANIZAÇÃO PANAMERICANA DE SAÚDE, 1996).

To know where violence is focused on and to study it within a real context is an optimistic effort towards its understanding.

The aim of the present study is to characterize the violence through the legal medicine reports and the necropsy reports in the city of São Paulo along the century.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

A retrospective study was conducted based on occurrences from 1911 to 1998 through samples of reports from the Forensic Institute of São Paulo, that took place in the city of São Paulo. A sample of reports for each decade was determined, a year at a time and the data were analyzed in historical series.

For the present study it was observed the reports of corpus delicti exam in living and dead individuals, being necropsy, body lesion, sexual intercourse exams the vast majority of the sample. Some exams, such as verification of alcohol consumption, exam for venereal contagion, pederasty and age certification were included in “others”.

Necropsy reports were for dead individuals and the remaining reports were for living individuals. The exams backing the reports were conducted by specialized doctors after the event at the Forensic Institute of the city of São Paulo (IML).

For morbidity analysis the reports from living individuals were grouped according to the type of violence: interpersonal aggression, traffic accident, accidents in general, self-inflicted lesions, legal intervention and sexual aggression.

Data are analyzed to identify the logic of the violence at each decade, quantitatively according to gender, type of exam and external cause resulting in lesion.

For each decade it was designed a sample of 400 reports totaling 9 decades or a century sample of 3600 reports. The sample was obtained by systematic raffle with interval calculated from the total number of exam in the decade, starting with the first exam in the first day of the decade.

For calculation of indicator it was used the total annual population of the city of São Paulo from the SEADE foundation.

RESULTS

A total of 3593 corpus delicti reports were collected. These reports, when distributed by year and inferred out of the sample interval give an ascending curve that can be observed together with the population of the city, which has a parallel increase until the 60s (FIGURE 1). In the 70s the curve for exam has a more marked increase than that of the population in the city suggesting an increase in the violence in these decades until the end of the century.

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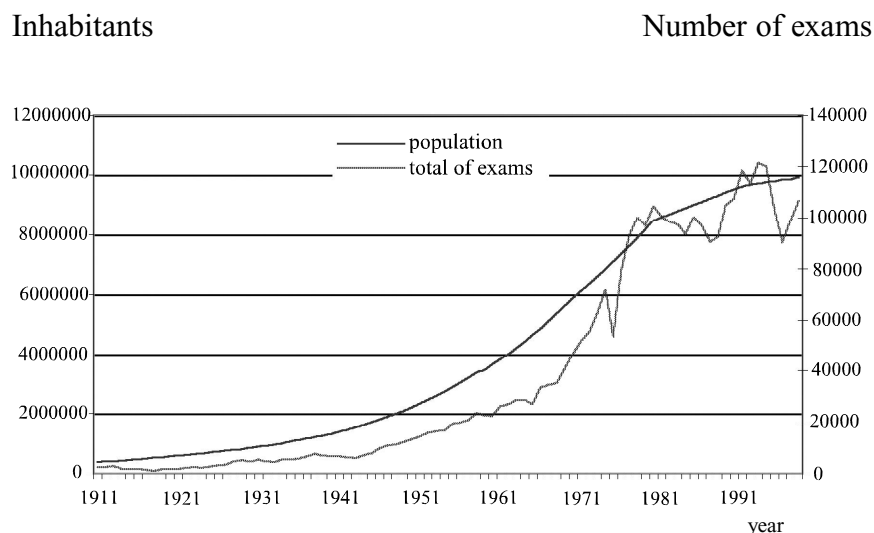


FIGURE 1 – Total of corpus delicti exams conducted at the IML and the projection of the population in the city of São Paulo, 1911-1998.

For this period 67.54% of exams for males and 32.36% for females were taken into account. According to the type of exam, 78.54% were reports for body lesion, 8.43% necropsies, 5.96% sexual intercourse and the remaining types sum up 7.07% of the sample.

Exams for corpus delicti reveal a preference for males: 92.31% of drunk test, 82.18% of necropsies and 71.16% for body lesions. Exams for sexual intercourse, that were used along the century to verify the integrity of the hymen, are, by its nature, reserved for females.

In TABLE 1 it can be seen that the exams for body lesions are the majority of exams performed in the decade and shows a tendency for percentual increase; necropsies show a decreasing percentual tendency in the century. For carnal conjunction there is a stable percentual around 10% in all exams performed from the beginning of the century until the 30s; there is a decrease from 1940 to 1970 and stabilization around 2% from 1970's on.

TABLE 1 – Percentage distribution of the corpus delicti exam according to decade and type of exam.

Decade	Body lesion	Necropsy	Sexual intercourse	Others	Total
10	73	11	10	6	100
20	70	16	10	5	100
30	78	12	9	1	100
40	82	11	7	0	100
50	80	13	6	1	100
60	84	10	6	0	100
70	90	8	2	0	100
80	88	10	3	0	100
90	89	9	2	0	100

The other exams, that in the 10s and 20s represented 6% and 5% respectively of the performed exams, include age estimation to people who had no age and parental registration, exams for venereal contamination and pederasty acts.

Out of the 3593 exams of corpus delicti, 3121 are exams for body lesions. Due to this number and the embarrassment and implications that these persons suffer with this sort of lesion, it is interesting to observe this group in detail. It was noted in the body lesion exams that the percentual distribution by sex (FIGURE 2) had a plateau around 23% until the 40s with some increase to 37% in the 70s and remaining over 34% until the end of the century. Women became more and more involved in violence along this period until the 70s and from that time on it is possible that an accommodation might have taken place in their life or an adjustment of the role of women in the city of São Paulo.

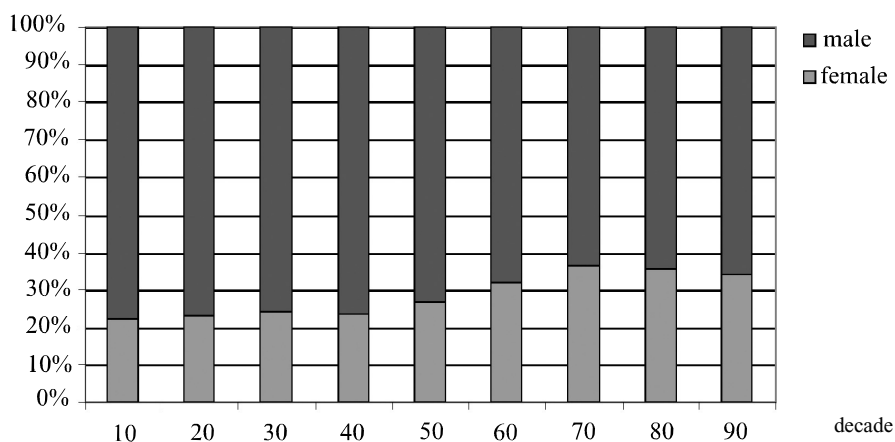


FIGURE 2 – Percentual composition of the gender in the exams of body lesion according to decade in the 20th century.

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In body lesion exams, aggression is the main cause for exam in all decades (TABLE 2), but from the 50s on car traffic accidents became quantitatively important and in the 70s they surpassed aggression. Accidents, in general, diminished proportionally along the 40s. The exam linked to sexual causes decreased proportionally along the century and the legal intervention appeared in the 90s as an important group. For self-inflicted lesions there is a peak in the 30s that decrease until becoming proportionally negligible in the 90s.

TABLE 2 – Percentage of causes for body lesion exam, by decade, IML / city of São Paulo.

Decade	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	1911-1998
Aggression	65.6	46.2	40.2	48.3	52.4	50.3	36.1	46.6	50.6	46.1
Traffic accident	0.3	18.0	10.5	7.8	16.5	34.8	54.3	41.8	30.7	37.4
Indeterminate intention	5.7	3.2	2.9	2.6	10.4	5.4	4.8	7.5	9.1	7.0
General accidents	15.4	18.7	30.0	31.9	12.5	3.0	2.6	1.8	2.0	4.3
Sexual	11.4	11.7	9.6	5.7	5.5	5.4	2.0	1.5	1.4	2.6
Legal intervention	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.3	6.2	1.8
Self-inflicted lesions	1.5	2.2	6.7	3.7	2.4	1.2	0.3	0.6	0.0	0.7
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

In what regard women it can be stressed (FIGURE 3 and 4) that aggression increased in terms of number of exams until the 70s with less intensity than for men, but in the 80s the participation of women was marked. The percentual in the 80s and 90s is 40% of all cases.

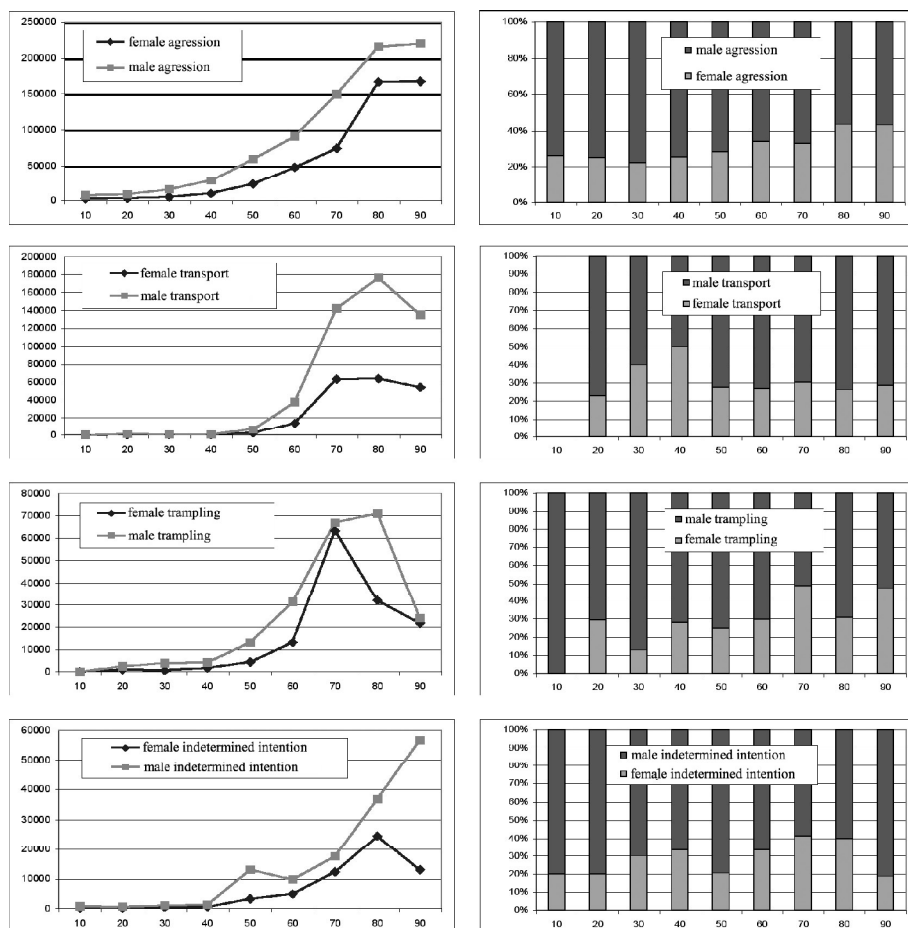


FIGURE 3 – Distribution of gender according to cause for the body lesion exam, number of exams and percentage.

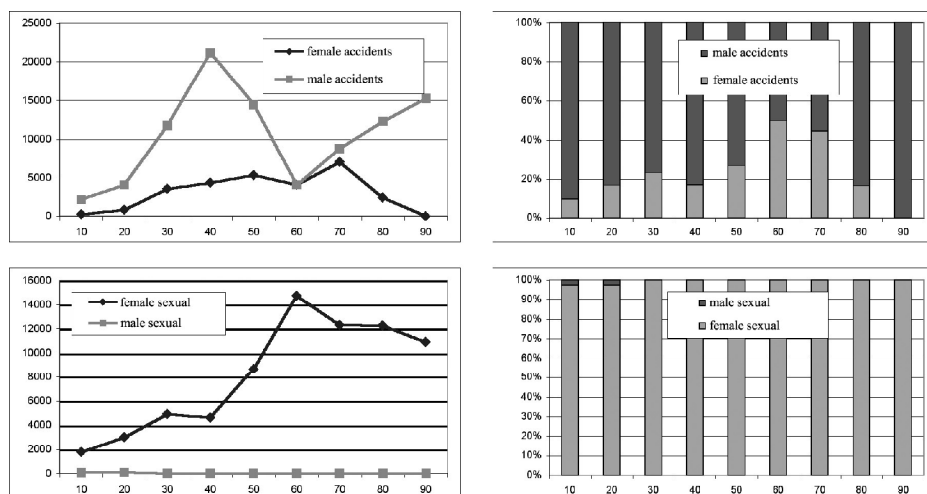


FIGURE 4 – Distribution of gender according to cause for body lesion exam, number of exam and percentage (accidents and sexual causes).

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For the traffic accidents it can be said that with the popularization of car in the 60s, when people had access to them and the city of São Paulo showed no infrastructure to incorporate this technology, the accidents increased suddenly. In the 60s and 70s there was real chaos in what regards traffic accidents as a whole. Data from the Forensic Institute reveal two distinct components, one regards people who were run over and the other the remaining traffic accidents.

In what regards people who were run over it is seen that women and men are equally affected in the 70s even though in the 80's the female component decreases while an adaptation to a lower level will be attained by men only in the 90s. It seems that the incorporation of new habits that preserved women were rapidly incorporated in the urban practice, whereas it is slower for men.

To other traffic accidents, (usually considering only people inside the vehicle and not outside such as running over), it is seen that the increase occurs after the 50s and is stabilized in the 90s. Women have an increasing percentual participation since the beginning of the century the 50s, when these accidents were mostly linked to public transportation. However, from the 60s on, with the boom of automobiles, the percentual participation drops to 30% and gets stabilized.

For the group of exams whose cause was omitted and, therefore, whose intention was not determined, there is an increase form men in all the studied period, whereas there is a reduction for women both in figures and in percentage in the 90s, representing less than 20% of the exams. Maybe these women had made the causes of their lesions less transparent making the origin of the violence that affects her clear.

From the beginning of the century the 50s the exams for accidents are linked mainly to work. The labor movements obtained a working legislation that, among other issues, established some regulation on the condition of these workers and, as these regulations were complied, these accidents showed a sudden decrease, mainly for males in the formal working market. From the economical recession of 60's and 70's the working market, under these regulations, shows a reduction of opportunities and the informal work increases (LARANGEIRA, 1999). In this period, the great migratory waves from the Northeast settled on the outskirts of the city of São Paulo where infrastructure is lacking, housing is clandestine and is improvised at large. For females the participation in the causes is around 20% the 50's, increasing in the 60's and decreasing becoming insignificant in the 90's. The same imbalance of condition is noted

among Italian, Portuguese and Spanish immigrants that, upon arriving in Brazil, participate more in the accidents than the local population or than other immigrants that arrived earlier.

The exams related to sexual violence are exclusively for women and increases along the century reaching a peak in the 60s and decreasing in absolute numbers in the next decades. This is in accordance with Castel (1997) in what regards the incorporation of the sexual revolution in the society behavior, being the year 1975 the cutting point in the model of sexual behavior previously adopted and for the incorporation, in practical terms, of the sexual liberation as proclaimed by the feminist movement in the 60s.

CONCLUSION

The possibility of the advantage of the historical cohort of violence is the temporality of violence and the contextualization integrated in the metropolization and in the technological evolution, what is denoted by the data on traffic accidents and run over accidents.

Data make clear that the interaction of women in the different cities from that of men, even in a situation of theoretical equity of possibilities, as seen in the run over accidents in the 80s and 90s.

It is denoted in this study that the violence does not have only one cause and that it can occur related to interpersonal issues and working condition, as observed in the beginning of the century, up to the violence generated by the legal intervention in the 90s. Certainly, the increase in violence surpass the populational increase in a scenario of marked poverty and misery that fustigates the vast majority of the polarized urban population from the 60's with the economical miracle.

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