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CONTENTS

The State, the community and society in social development	7
<i>Fernando Henrique Cardoso</i>	
Neo-liberal structural reforms in Latin America: the current situation	15
<i>Joseph Ramos</i>	
Indebtedness and fiscal stability: is history repeating itself?	41
<i>Guillermo E. Perry</i>	
Reforms in the oil industry: the available options	51
<i>Fernando Sánchez Albavera</i>	
Indigenous organizations: rising actors in Latin America	63
<i>Rodolfo Stavenhagen</i>	
Non-agricultural rural employment in Central America	77
<i>Jürgen Weller</i>	
Marginality and social integration in Uruguay	93
<i>Ruben Kaztman</i>	
Trade policy within the context of the World Trade Organization	121
<i>Diana Tussie</i>	
Trade and environment: green light or red light?	139
<i>Helga Hoffmann</i>	
Nominal anchors and macroeconomic coordination options in MERCOSUR	153
<i>Gonzalo Rodríguez Prada</i>	
Export promotion policies in Central America	173
<i>Larry Willmore</i>	
Recent ECLAC publications	188

Marginality and *social integration* in Uruguay

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Within Latin America, Uruguay stands out by its equalitarian income distribution, the solidity of its democratic institutions, and its level of social integration. Over the last decade, however, there have been signs of cracks in this desirable image which adversely affect the harmony of social relations. These cracks take the form of marginal behaviour: i.e., types of behaviour which are not governed by socially accepted patterns. In this study, the explanation for these types of behaviour has been sought in the divergences between cultural goals, the structures of opportunities for attaining those goals, and the shaping of individual capacities for taking advantage of them. A central premise of the approach adopted is that the factors determining marginal forms of behaviour build up their effects in a cyclical manner throughout the different stages of individual lives and from generation to generation. In view of this cyclical character, no decisions on the priorities to be followed in tackling situations of marginality can be fully effective unless an overall view is taken. Hence, the design of an integrated social policy that seeks to restore the links of marginal persons with society must, at the very least: i) assemble the fullest possible picture of situations of marginality in the course of a person's life; ii) identify, in each stage, the conditions that help to build up and consolidate marginality, and iii) identify points of intervention which, because of their cost-benefit ratios, are of crucial importance for breaking the links that make possible the individual accumulation and intergenerational reproduction of situations of marginality. The article highlights the differences between poverty and marginal poverty, not because it assumes that marginality is confined to the poor, but because it is in that sector that the forms of marginality of greatest individual and social cost are concentrated. It is suggested that the key element in this differentiation is social capital, the depletion of which is due mainly to the break-up of the family and to processes of segmentation such as housing segregation –the most extreme example of which is the shanty towns– and deterioration of the integrative function of the educational system.

I

Introduction

Ever-increasing concern is being expressed at the signs of social decomposition currently observed in the big cities of Latin America, the most prominent of which are the high crime rates and the increase in violence, drug trafficking, drug addiction and corruption. Among the causes mentioned for these problems are cultural factors (emphasis on individualism, self-fulfillment, excessively self-centered lifestyles and consumerism), social factors (the weakening of the most basic institutions, the family, the neighbourhood, the community and the Church; growing housing segregation and stratification of access to basic services), and economic factors (especially the impact on employment of the demands for greater competitiveness, which are both cause and effect of the growing openness of international trade).

The clearest consequence of the action of these factors is the depletion of social capital. Every member of a community has a stock of social capital whose amount is directly proportional both to his confidence that the other members of society will keep their behaviour in line with certain basic standards of harmonious coexistence and to the degree of legitimacy of his expectations that he will be able to mobilize the goodwill of others in a manner that is beneficial to him. The depletion of social capital means a decline in the quality of life which is reflected, *inter alia*, in the feeling of insecurity of the population with regard to crime and violence, as shown by the opinion surveys carried out in some urban centres of Latin America.

To outside observers, Uruguay appears to be a society with a very high degree of social integration, which combines a soundly-based social democracy with an equally firmly established political democracy. The level of integration is reflected in the functioning of the country's institutions, the absence of major social gaps, the smooth and equitable communi-

cation between persons of different social backgrounds, and the many ways in which social solidarity is expressed when needed. Despite these characteristics, however, signs are also emerging in the cities of Uruguay, and especially in Montevideo, of the same ills that beset other urban centres: a considerable increase in violent crime and a frightened public which presses the government to give more priority to the fight against crime. Both the public authorities and specialists in these issues feel that these problems are associated with processes of marginalization which affect the lower-class urban strata in particular. The present article seeks to explore the nature, causes and consequences of such processes.

From the point of view of researchers, academics and politicians who are particularly concerned with the cases of social decomposition in the region, perhaps the most attractive feature of the Uruguayan case is that the general situation of the country gives grounds for greater optimism than in other cases regarding the possibility of taking effective action to deal with the problem. This optimism is based on two aspects of the Uruguayan situation: first, the marginalization processes are at a relatively incipient stage and the kind of marginal subcultures that generate both their own reproduction and a structural resistance to their dissolution are not yet firmly established, and second, the proposals aimed at blocking the paths to marginality, checking the deterioration of social capital, and creating or strengthening institutions that build up such capital probably have a greater capacity for motivation and mobilization than in other parts of the region.

The importance of studying marginalization processes in a society which offers reasonable expectations of being able to check or reverse such processes should be weighed in the context of one of the main concerns of observers of Latin American conditions: the fact that there often seems to be a kind of loss of composure and desperation which inhibits the capacity to react to the problem: an attitude of "every man for himself" which seems to affect both the population in general and the economic and political elites. It is as if, in view

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of the apparent inevitability of the effects of the decomposing forces, the general response were to seek refuge in one's private life, holing up in one's house and restricting one's movements to "safe" areas, in the conviction that any effort to check or reverse those forces is doomed to failure. Although it cannot be claimed that such attitudes or forms of behaviour do not exist in Uruguay, comparison with the other countries of the region shows that Uruguayan society still has a solid stock of social capital which can be mobilized to avoid its own depletion. Furthermore, it may reasonably be presumed that the generation currently responsible for running the country still mentally associates the high level of social integration which has characterized Uruguayan society throughout the present century with the good quality of life that the population enjoyed in that period. These facts give grounds for hoping that a timely diagnosis of the characteristics of current marginality in Uruguay can give rise to initiatives along the right lines which could give useful pointers for dealing with similar problems in other Latin American societies. This article aims to make a contribution to such a diagnosis.

Because of the need to keep the scope of our analysis within certain limits, and because it is assumed that the forms of marginality which have the highest family and individual costs are concentrated in the lower-class urban strata, we have studied the conditions favouring marginality only in those strata. The working hypothesis of the study is that this phenomenon involves the growing vulnerability of those strata due to the combined action of three processes: i) a change in the patterns of entry into employment; ii) the weakening of family structures, and iii) growing social segmentation which translates into isolation from the rest of society. Concentration on the lower-class urban strata does not imply any denial of the importance of other forms of marginality or the significant contribution such forms make to social disintegration (consideration of the problem of corruption suggests that in many countries it is other strata of society which are

making the biggest contribution to the dissolution of society).

This article begins by analysing the change in the frequency and violence of crime, as a sign of cracks in the fabric of society. The relation between variations in crime rates and the sense of insecurity of the population is examined, and it is noted that a perverse mechanism may be at work whereby crime gives rise to insecurity and the latter, in turn, generates forms of conduct which weaken society.

We then review the special features of marginality in present-day Uruguay, distinguishing it both from poverty and from the forms of marginality which affected the region in past decades. It is noted that one of the driving forces behind the current marginality is the disparity between goals, the means of attaining them, and the capacity to make use of such means. Special emphasis is placed on the importance of the disparity between the production structure and the structure of the family, which weakens the capacity of families to provide the resources that the new generations need to enter the channels of social mobility of modern society.

The relationship between the family, marginality and delinquency is then studied, using data on the family background of minors sent to the Instituto Nacional del Menor (INAME) as "offenders" or for "socially unacceptable conduct". The conclusions of this analysis point to the importance of unstable or incomplete types of families, and two factors associated with such phenomena are therefore investigated: changes in adolescent sexuality, and the reluctance of young men from the urban lower classes to form new households.

It is then argued that the processes of housing segregation and segmentation of services, especially in the case of education, further strengthen the tendencies towards marginality. Finally, the conclusions of the study are presented and some general guidelines for action to block the paths towards marginality are set forth.

II

Uruguay in the Latin American context

Comparison of the indices of poverty and income concentration in Uruguay with those of the other countries of the region (especially those having similar levels of per capita income) reflects a society with a relatively high level of equity (table 1). These criteria of equity, rooted in the country's institutions, have served as the foundation for an effective social democracy which is reflected, among other things, in even-handed everyday relations and the absence of barriers to fluid communication between persons of different economic standing.

This social democracy serves in turn as the basis and driving force for a political democracy whose solidity makes Uruguay an outstanding example in the region. This is shown by the answers given to a series of questions posed to citizens in eight Latin American countries with the aim of determining the strength of democracy through the population's degree of support for its main institutions (table 2): Uruguayans obtained the highest marks, calculated as the total percentages of affirmative answers to questions about the functioning of democracy in those countries.

The resulting profile, which combines equity with democracy, is typical of a society with high levels of integration, which is how Uruguayan society appears within the overall Latin American context.

TABLE 1

Latin America: Indicators of living conditions, around 1992

Country	Per capita GDP (1980 dollars)	Households under the poverty line (%)	Gini coefficient
Argentina (1992)	3 757	13.5	0.408
Bolivia (1992)	685	46	0.478
Brazil (1990)	1 916	50	0.535
Chile (1994)	3 172	24	0.479
Colombia (1992)	1 474	38	0.454
Costa Rica (1992)	1 523	25	0.362
Guatemala (1990)	923	...	0.479
Honduras (1992)	662	66	0.461
Mexico (1992)	2 558	30	0.414
Panama (1991)	1 657	34	0.448
Paraguay (1992)	1 265	...	0.391
Peru (1986)	1 107	45	...
Uruguay (1992)	2 480	8	0.301
Venezuela (1992)	3 644	32	0.380

Source: ECLAC, 1995.

TABLE 2

Latin America (eight countries): Views on democracy, 1995
(Percentage giving affirmative answers)

	Argentina	Brazil	Chile	Mexico	Paraguay	Peru	Uruguay	Venezuela
1. Is democracy preferable to any other form of government?	82	48	54	57	58	58	86	64
2. Are you satisfied with the way democracy works in your country?	53	31	34	24	31	47	59	38
3. Does democracy make it possible to solve the country's problems?	59	51	51	52	39	71	63	53
4. Are elections in your country clean?	78	26	82	13	10	64	83	19
5. Do all groups and political parties have an equal chance to make known their views through the television?	42	27	48	31	56	45	57	40
6. Do senators and deputies care about what the common people think?	19	16	24	24	28	29	38	16
7. Can the way you vote make things different in the future?	75	53	56	53	62	75	77	52
Total	408	252	349	254	284	389	463	282

Source: Prepared by the author on the basis of Basáñez, Lagos and Beltrán, 1996.

III

Signs of cracks in an integrated social fabric: rising crime rates in Uruguay

1. Public insecurity¹

Quite apart from the statistics on delinquency, drug addiction and acts of violence, most residents of big Latin American cities are agreed that over the last two decades there have been important changes in the patterns of social coexistence. This is the view of the great majority of those interviewed in public opinion surveys, who state that they perceive a significant increase in antisocial forms of behaviour such as delinquency, violence, drug addiction and corruption (table 3). A similarly large majority express lack of confidence in the institutions which are supposed to control such conduct, such as the police and the judiciary (Basáñez, Lagos and Beltrán, 1996).

The relative equity of the Uruguayan social structure has not been enough to avoid these problems. Public opinion is strikingly unanimous in its perception that these problems have got worse in the last few years (table 3). Although, as we shall see later, the level of realism behind these opinions may be open to doubt, the high degree of public consensus reveals the existence of a social phenomenon whose importance cannot be denied, in so far as it models attitudes and determines behaviour. The surveys also indicate a low degree of approval of the institutions responsible for controlling delinquency. Out of all those interviewed, 41% have little or no confidence in the judiciary, and this level rises to

TABLE 3

Uruguay: Views on the evolution
of some social problems, 1995

Social problems	Percentage who believe that over the last five years these problems have:			
	Increased	Remained the same	Gone down	Total %
Drug trafficking	87	12	2	100
Delinquency	90	9	1	100
Drug addiction	92	7	1	100
Corruption	83	15	1	100

Source: Prepared by the author on the basis of Basáñez, Lagos and Beltrán, 1996.

51% in the case of the police.² Another source registers even higher levels of negative opinions on these institutions, with 53% of those interviewed expressing little or no confidence in the judiciary and 71% having a similar opinion of the police.³

This combination of views expressing a belief that criminal behaviour is on the increase and that the institutions responsible for its control do not inspire confidence can only result in a generalized feeling of insecurity. According to a survey carried out in June 1995, such a feeling affected 62% of those living in Montevideo and 34% of those living in the interior of the country.⁴

¹ There are of course many sources of insecurity in modern society, especially those connected with the weakening of traditional standards and uncertainty over employment and income. In this article, however, the term "public insecurity" will be used to refer only to the insecurity arising from crime and violence.

² Basáñez, Lagos and Beltrán, 1996. This survey shows the low level of confidence in the police and the system of justice in the eight Latin American countries in question. Uruguay is clearly the country where the system of justice enjoys the highest level of approval. In the rest of the countries, the proportion expressing "little or no confidence" in the judiciary is considerably higher, the lowest level of disapproval (59%) being registered in Chile and Brazil, with Peru registering the maximum (73%).

With regard to the police, the data reveal that in Chile 36% of those interviewed have "little or no confidence" in this institution, while in the remaining countries (except Uruguay) the proportion is over 58%. Despite the relatively higher level of favourable opinions in Uruguay, it is still disturbing to note that four out of every ten people in the case of the judiciary and rather more than half in the case of the police express little or no confidence in these institutions.

³ Measurements made by CIFRA/González, Raga y Asociados (*El País*, 1995).

⁴ Survey carried out by CIFRA/González, Raga y Asociados (*El País*, 1995). The question asked was: "If your family comes home late at night, do you feel secure or insecure?"

This also helps to explain why Uruguayans place measures to deal with delinquency high among the priorities that the government should tackle. According to opinion surveys, crime has been viewed as the main problem by Uruguayans since 1994. In a survey carried out in April 1996, the percentage of persons stating that delinquency occupied first place among the country's problems (32.4%) was double that of the persons who felt that the main problem was employment (16.2%).⁵

2. Changes in society due to the climate of terror caused by the rise in crime and violence

The increase in crime causes fear, and those who feel such fear naturally seek ways of protecting themselves. Although strategies differ, they have some common elements, such as greater sensitivity for identifying and avoiding dangerous places and situations, which in the case of those with sufficient economic resources may even mean moving from one neighbourhood to another; increasing fortification of dwellings; and greater vigilance and supervision of the movements of children and young people outside the home. The accumulation of these types of behaviour gradually shapes new lifestyles which leave their mark, little by little, on town planning, the economy and the social structure.

a) *Lifestyles and quality of life*

Although there are no studies specially designed to investigate these changes in Uruguay, there are indirect signs of changes in citizens' everyday behaviour due to fear of crime.⁶ Parents more frequently accompany their children to school or hire transport services to take them there. People avoid travelling at night or even in the daytime in certain streets and neighbourhoods, and they also avoid carrying much money or valuable articles. The climate of insecurity also furthers a tendency to spend leisure time at home, watching television or videotapes. As already ob-

TABLE 4

Uruguay: Firearms registrations, 1944-1995

Period	Number of registrations	Annual average	Percentages (1944-1972=100)
1944-1972	157 947	5 446	100.0
1973-1985	92 381	7 106	130.5
1986-1991	115 312	19 219	352.9
1992		20 017	367.6
1993		22 279	409.1
1994		23 893	438.7
1995		26 967	495.2

Source: Prepared by the author on the basis of information given in Klein (1994) and data from the Military Supply and Ordnance Service.

served in countries where the problem of public insecurity is much more serious, in the long run these situations discourage the spontaneous sociability that arises through informal meetings in public places such as cafés, squares, clubs, etc., and in particular it tends to reduce the opportunities for interaction among people of different social backgrounds.

Both because of the risks that it involves and the degree of fear that it reflects, an important indicator of the changes in lifestyles and in the quality of life is the decision to acquire a gun. Recent public opinion surveys covering urban Uruguay reveal that 40% of the population feel that it is best to have a gun in the house for the sake of the greater security it provides. Out of the total number of persons interviewed, 22% said they already had a gun in the house, while a further 12% were thinking of buying one.⁷ A recent study gives an idea of the way gun ownership has increased over time (table 4).⁸ The data very clearly show the big increase in gun registrations. Another sign that points in the same direction is the 50% increase in the membership of the Gun Club between the beginning of 1994 and the end of 1995.⁹

⁵ Survey carried out by Vox-Opinión y Mercado (*Búsqueda*, 1996a). The collective demand for greater security was echoed in the political system, which, with a level of consensus much higher than is usual in Uruguay, declared in 1995 that it was necessary to provide more effective means of guaranteeing public safety. In one of its first actions that same year, Parliament put forward a new Citizens' Security Act, which was adopted with the votes of the great majority of the legislators.

⁶ In a survey carried out by the *Washington Post* in the United States, 40% of those interviewed said that they had changed their lifestyles in recent years because of their fear of crime (see UNRISD, 1995, p. 76). No similar survey has yet been carried out in Uruguay.

⁷ According to the survey carried out by CIFRA/González, Raga y Asociados (*El País*, 1996a).

⁸ Klein, 1994, and also data from the Military Supply and Ordnance Service.

⁹ According to a report published by *Posdata* on 5 January 1996. Another sign of the perceived need for personal defence is the considerable increase in the demand for paralyzing gases. Their importation was prohibited until a March 1993 decision by the Supply and Ordnance Service authorized their sale to the public, which is further encouraged by the fact that the purchase of gas sprays and other means of defence such as electric stun guns does not involve any formalities and their use for self-defence is not against the law.

b) *Urbanism*

The changes in lifestyles due to the generalized feeling of insecurity are also changing the structure of the cities. Thus, for example, middle-class suburbs of Montevideo which until a few years ago were notable for their open gardens are now completely enclosed with railings or walls. The profile of the city has also been changed by the increase in the number of apartment buildings whose construction was partly stimulated by the number of families who moved to apartments in search of the security they did not feel in their houses. The fact that such moves often do not have the desired effect is shown by the growing number of apartment buildings with protective grilles on the balconies and security locks on the doors. The same reasons are behind the advertisements for condominiums: groups of houses whose residents share the security costs for protecting their common "frontier".

c) *The economy*

The climate of public insecurity is also having important effects in a number of areas of the economy, such as the spread of shopping malls and the expansion of security services and the sale of articles for personal defence.

i) *Shopping malls.* The fact that these shopping centres publicize the vigilance maintained on their premises and in their parking lots as an important feature of their services suggests that the provision of security may be a factor in the expansion of these types of commercial organizations.

ii) *Theft insurance.* According to data provided by the Surety Department of the State Insurance Bank, between 1985 and 1994 the number of policies issued and premiums collected in respect of household and commercial theft and fire insurance increased by 30% per year.

iii) *Security agencies.* As already noted, public opinion surveys register a low level of approval of the institutions responsible for law enforcement. The perception that the State agencies of this type are ineffective for coping with the crime wave explains why so many people settle for the hiring of private security agencies. In 1991 there were 96 registered agencies of this type, but this number rose to 147 in 1993 and 185 in May 1995.¹⁰ A report by the Uruguayan Chamber of Security Companies gives an idea of the economic and social projections of the sector: some 6,500 em-

ployees and fiscal contributions amounting to some US\$ 24 million per year.

iv) *Trade in security articles.* Firms offering security articles such as burglar alarms for cars, houses and other types of premises; electronic surveillance equipment; arms; articles for personal defence, and so forth, are doing a roaring trade.

In short, to judge by the growth rate of their activities, security services have rapidly become one of the sectors of the economy with the most buoyant performance and the biggest capacity to absorb technological innovations.

d) *The social structure*

All these changes have consequences for the level of integration of society which are reflected in the appearance of new rifts, disincentives for investment in social capital, and an increase in the social gaps between different economic and social strata.

i) *New social rifts.* People belonging to different economic and social strata have unequal access to goods and services for the defence of themselves and their families. Since security against crime and violence is a good which is becoming increasingly important in people's lives, the differences between households that can and those that cannot guarantee reasonable protection against criminal acts and adequate compensation for the resulting material damage give rise to an important new dimension in the stratification of modern urban societies: the level of satisfaction of the demand for security.

ii) *Interest in tackling the root causes of the problem.* It seems reasonable to assume that the easier the access to private security options, the less incentive there will be to take on an active commitment with actions designed to tackle the root causes of criminal behaviour, even though such actions may be the only ones that permit effective treatment of the problem in the long term. Thus, the privatization of security may be helping to reduce public sensibility to a basic social problem and reducing the will to act among those who have most power and influence because of their economic capacity and could bring the greatest benefits to society if they consistently fulfilled their civic responsibilities. It is therefore no surprise that poorer neighbourhoods, which cannot meet their security needs by private means, are those which most often generate mutual support initiatives for combatting crime and display a shared concern with the elimination of its causes.

iii) *Social segmentation.* The behaviour patterns which become established in a context of insecurity due to crime and violence are reflected in the social

¹⁰ According to official data from the National Register of Security Companies maintained by the National Intelligence Department.

structure, and especially in the relations between different economic and social strata. Fear favours the formation of criminal stereotypes which incorporate many of the features of poverty itself, which begins to be seen as the breeding-ground for "dangerous classes". This further strengthens the middle sectors' tendency to steer clear of the poor, avoiding their neighbourhoods, their places of leisure, the means of public transport they travel on, and the public services they use. Thus, public insecurity ends up by heightening social segmentation, which, as we will see later on in this article, is one of the phenomena that give rise to such insecurity.

In short, both crime and the responses to it are important parts of the causes and effects of the deterioration in the social capital of communities. Social capital is built up in systems of mutual relations based on confidence, which make possible the generation of collective undertakings that benefit the whole community. When social capital is lacking or depleted, this increases personal insecurity. Urban ghettos are an extreme example of the deterioration of social capital.

3. The evolution of crime

Let us now look at the facts that form the basis for this set of perceptions, forms of behaviour and legal and institutional initiatives concerning public security. There are some who claim that Uruguayan society is displaying a degree of fear of crime that is quite unnecessary and unjustified –possibly encouraged by the importance that the mass media give to shocking or violent news items– and that crime is given much greater prominence on the television and in the press than it actually has in people's everyday life. In order to clarify this point, we must look at the available information on the evolution of the number of victims and offences in recent years in that country.

If we look at the results of a June 1995 opinion survey, we learn that rather more than four out of every ten Uruguayans (42%) had first-hand experience of public insecurity, as victims of robbery or attempted robbery in their homes (31%) or outside them (21%). On the basis of these data, the analyst concludes that "The concern about public security, especially in Montevideo, is firmly based on the personal and family experiences of the population" (González, 1995).

The figures on some offences in Uruguay between 1980 and 1994 also appear to support this conclusion. The increase in crime in recent years is more evident in robbery and homicide than in theft (table 5). According to the Uruguayan Penal Code, the difference between theft and robbery is that the latter involves violence or the threat of violence, so that the official

TABLE 5

Uruguay: Evolution of selected offences,
by five-year periods from 1980 to 1995
(Annual averages)

Offences	1980-1984	1985-1989	1990-1994	1995
<i>Robbery</i>				
Montevideo	1 017	1 698	2 474	4 174
Interior	94	195	291	
Nationwide	1 101	1 893	2 765	
<i>Theft</i>				
Montevideo	12 862	27 120	26 170	
Interior	12 947	19 836	24 342	
Nationwide	25 809	46 956	50 512	
<i>Homicide</i>				
Montevideo	52	67	91	
Interior	87	90	111	
Nationwide	139	157	202	

Source: Prepared by the author on the basis of figures from the Ministry of the Interior of Uruguay. Figures for 1995: *El País*, 1996b.

crime figures reflect a marked increase in the incidence of violence. It should be borne in mind in this connection that the probability that offences will be officially reported to the police increases with the degree of violence involved, whereas the probability that minor thefts will be reported goes down as the population realize that the time spent in reporting the offence is not matched by a reasonable chance of recovering the losses suffered.¹¹

¹¹ Specialists in crime statistics have emphasized the under-registration of some offences due both to skews connected with the reporting of offences itself and to skews connected with the bodies responsible for combatting crime. For example, if there is a decline in public confidence in the efficiency of the police or the legal system, there will be a corresponding decline in the reporting of certain offences, especially those which are less serious. On the other hand, the increase in the number of insurance policies against robbery encourages the reporting of such offences, because such reporting is an obligatory requirement for obtaining compensation. Sexual offences may or may not be reported, depending on the severity of the sexual stigmas involved and the degree of understanding and sympathy for the victims displayed by the police, judges and public opinion. On the part of the bodies responsible for combatting crime, there is a strong bias towards the registration of offences committed by the poorer social segments, but there is a tendency towards the under-registration of offences which are typically committed by the middle and upper classes (fraud, dishonesty in general, influence-peddling, corruption, and acts of vandalism committed by young people from those classes). For a detailed analysis of the methodological problems involved in the study of delinquency, see Hirschi and Selvin, 1967.

IV

Criminal behaviour, poverty and marginality

There are no empirical studies in Uruguay which allow a connection to be detected between variations in different types of offences and changes in different aspects of the situation of the population. The simplest and most widely-held theory is that offences are committed by those who find it hard to obtain the desired objects by legitimate means. This idea focuses attention on the structure of opportunities to which the various segments of society have access in order to attain their culturally acceptable objectives. A first deduction drawn from this is that, in view of their greater difficulties in obtaining what they want by legitimate means, poor people will commit more crimes than the non-poor. If this is so, then the evolution of criminal offences should be related to the evolution of poverty. This does not seem to have been the case in recent Uruguayan history, however. Thus, for example, while the indexes of urban poverty displayed a downward trend between 1989 and 1994 –from 22.3% to 12.8% (INE, 1996)– this was not so in the case of the various indicators of delinquency. Thus, robberies increased from 1,968 to 3,189, while cases of theft went down from 49,045 to 47,967, yet homicides increased from 198 to 222.

A second deduction is that it is necessary, within the overall segment of the poor, to distinguish a marginal sector which has serious problems in integrating into society through the normal channels and hence tends to be linked with delinquency. Before analysing the available evidence in order to try to test the validity of such a link, we should clarify the concept of marginality used in this article and, in view of the history of that term in the region, mention the differences between the “old” and “new” forms of marginality.

1. Old and new marginality: general features

One way of bringing out the special features of the “new” marginality is to distinguish it from the marginality of the population groups who, from the 1950s onward and in most of the countries of the region, moved on a large scale from rural areas to the cities, where they settled under makeshift conditions on the

outskirts. Despite their situation of poverty, many such migrants saw this move as a rise in the social scale in at least two senses: first, because of the excitement of winning urban citizenship which, quite apart from its symbolic value, meant gaining real access to much more varied consumer goods than those available in rural areas and also to health and education services and housing and recreational infrastructure which were practically beyond their reach in the rural environment, and second, because these large-scale population transfers took place at a time of expanding domestic markets which, stimulated by import substitution, were at that time capable of absorbing labour and keeping open important avenues of social mobility.

The marginality of the 1990s seems to be marked by other characteristics, however. Firstly, it is defined more with respect to the labour market and the occupational structure than to the geographical location of the place of residence, although it must be acknowledged that the makeshift settlements on the outskirts of the cities continue to form its hard core. Secondly, the population of these settlements is now mainly of urban origin: that is to say, the memory of a poverty-stricken rural past is no longer a suitable framework for evaluating their present situation. This statement is corroborated by the results of a recent study on makeshift settlements in Montevideo (Cecilio, 1995): even as far back as 1984, 93.5% of the residents of these settlements had been born in urban areas, and three out of every four had been born in Montevideo itself. Moreover, while a strong element in the growth of the marginal settlements of the 1960s was the lure of the cities, the settlements of the 1990s seem rather to reflect processes of expulsion from the cities, for in 1995 nearly six out of every ten heads of household in makeshift settlements around Montevideo stated that their previous dwelling had been a house or apartment (Cecilio, 1995, p. 103).

Thirdly, it should be noted that whereas one of the features of the 1960s was the broadening of the avenues of social mobility, what stands out in the 1990s is their narrowing. The traditional channels of mobility are fading away rapidly, but alternative avenues are

opening up only slowly. This is one of the effects of the globalization of economies, their greater openness, and big changes in the production of goods and services in search of greater international competitiveness. In their quest for such competitiveness, firms cut their workforces, incorporate technology, and change their hiring criteria, thus raising problems of employment instability for larger and larger segments of the labour force. It should be noted that the lack of a working community that serves as a stable reference group means that the world of productive employment is deprived of that space which, over the centuries, was one of the main places where the identities of workers were formed.

As Uruguay has not experienced the heavy population growth, rapid large-scale migrations from rural areas, or the acute rural-urban differences and ethnic discrimination which have marked other countries of the region, the degree of integration of Uruguayan urban society was not greatly affected by the forms of incorporation of rural migrants which were a salient feature of the old form of marginality. This situation makes Uruguay a particularly suitable context for observing the new forms of marginality, whose features are neither superimposed nor obscured by the effects of forms of marginality with different causes and consequences.

2. Poverty and marginal poverty

As a social position, marginality is the result of the combined effect of three elements: cultural goals, access to the means of attaining those goals, and the personal capacities of the individuals occupying that position.¹²

The goals legitimated by the prevailing culture define the lifestyles that most of the population aspire to. In societies with rigid class distinctions, as also in highly structured, relatively isolated local communities, subcultures may be formed whose goals are different from those prevailing in society as a whole. This is not the case in Uruguay, however. On the one hand,

the equalitarian ideology of the country, the ethnic homogeneity of its population and the absence of "feudal" components in its history prevented the establishment of rigid class barriers. On the other hand, the rapid recent expansion of the mass media has finally dissolved the already feeble frontiers of local communities. It can therefore be said that there are no cultural barriers which can justify the existence of segments of the population cut off from the dominant lifestyles.

The availability of means of attaining cultural goals depends fundamentally on the economy's capacity to absorb labour in productive jobs, and this depends ultimately on a combination of style of development and growth rate. Within this general framework, however, the structure of opportunities available in each stage of people's life cycles is defined by the access to the institutions which, together, make possible a type of education and training in keeping with the requirements of the labour market, the main channel of social mobility being the educational system.

The marginal poor are distinguished from the rest of the poor by their smaller capacity to make use of the existing structure of opportunities, whether by organizing themselves to meet the population's demands for goods and services, using the various means of access to public services and credit, or making the fullest possible use of the possibilities offered by the educational system or the opportunities of the labour market.¹³ Their lifestyles reflect the absence of any project aimed at incorporation in society at large. Their attitudes and forms of behaviour likewise reflect a low level of self-esteem and a lack of expectations about the possibility of significantly improving their low levels of well-being through their own efforts.¹⁴

Each individual's capacities are the result of the combination of his various assets: his biological assets (freedom from disabilities; state of health); his knowledge (level and quality of education received, working experience); his social assets (contacts and ability to

¹² This concept grossly simplifies the wealth of meanings of the notion of marginality, of course. In the late 1960s there was an extensive debate on this subject from different points of view—including a critical assessment of capitalism from the Marxist standpoint—by Roger Vekemans, José Nun, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Aníbal Quijano, Gino Germani and others. For a good summary of this debate, in an issue completely devoted to the subject of marginality, see *Revista Latinoamericana de Sociología*, 1969, vol. V, No. 2.

¹³ Taking a similar approach, Irrazábal (1995) coordinated a study in Chile which distinguishes between the capable and the incapable poor by analysing indicators of the relative economic and social success of families sharing similar economic constraints. The capable poor were those who registered positive results for a number of indicators measuring the efforts made to succeed in the world.

¹⁴ Individual self-esteem is usually a consequence of the sign (positive or negative) and level of structuring of the messages that the individual receives from significant people around him in the course of his life in response to his actions.

mobilize the goodwill of others for his benefit); his material goods (fixed and movable capital); his cultural qualities (beliefs, work ethic, etc.), and his motivational assets (achievements, self-esteem). Each of these assets is formed and matures at specific ages

and has a different degree of importance at different moments in the individual's life cycle. Thus, the main assets of children and adolescents are their families, because it is through them that their other assets are fostered and consolidated.

V

Marginality and the family

1. The family and the formation of the children's capacities

The form and composition of families are important elements for predicting how children will succeed at school, for those who live with only one of their parents or whose parents have only a common-law union lag behind at school to a significantly greater extent than the rest of the children.¹⁵ A number of studies carried out in Uruguay reveal the effects of the family on other aspects of childhood and adolescence. Thus, for example, children born out of wedlock (illegitimate children) register a much higher rate of infant mortality than the rest, and those who do not live with both their biological parents show signs of greater damage in the various dimensions of psychomotor development (ECLAC, 1991; Universidad de la República, Facultad de Medicina, Departamento de Psicología Médica, 1996).

The formation and composition of the family have also proved to be a good means for predicting future criminal forms of behaviour. Thus, for example, it was found that over 70% of all the young people in juvenile detention centres in the United States come from households where one of the parents is absent (Dafoe Whitehead, 1993, p. 77).

¹⁵ This assertion is corroborated by the results of a number of studies. With regard to Uruguay, see Filgueira (1996) and also ECLAC (1987 and 1990b). In the United States, the Department of Health and Human Services carried out a very extensive study on the subject among over 60,000 children. J. Wilson summarizes its conclusions in the following words: "At all income levels except the highest (over US\$ 50,000 per year), for both sexes, and for whites, blacks and hispanics alike, children who lived with a mother who was divorced or had never been married registered markedly worse performances than those living in families where both parents were present. Compared with children who lived with both their biological parents, children from single-parent families were twice as likely to be expelled or suspended from school, to suffer from emotional problems or problems of conduct, and to have problems with their schoolmates. They were also much more likely to display antisocial forms of conduct" (Wilson, 1994).

2. Family background of the minors confined in the Instituto Nacional del Menor (INAME).

In order to investigate this relationship in Uruguay, data were studied from the Child Information System of INAME, whose archives provide a wealth of information for studying from the very beginning the most immediate determining factors underlying antisocial forms of conduct. The data referred to 2,133 children and adolescents of both sexes whose cause of entry (socially unacceptable conduct and offences against the law) could be interpreted as forms of behaviour which depart from accepted standards and bear witness to severely damaged links with society.¹⁶ The majority (81.5%) of these children and adolescents were confined in INAME or foster homes. The study covered the period 1990-1995.

There is ample evidence to show that complete, unbroken families have a greater capacity of socialization than those where one of the biological parents is absent. The study by Filgueira mentioned earlier confirms that this capacity is weakened by the absence of one of the biological parents, even when some other person takes their place. Thus, in our definition, marginality is mainly a problem of the capacities to make use of the structure of opportunities existing in a society, and if the assets that form such capacities in children and adolescents are provided mainly by the family, then it is reasonable to assume that children brought up in incomplete or broken homes will have a

¹⁶ The number of cases of minors sent to INAME for socially unacceptable conduct are broken down as follows: begging, vagrancy, running away from home, consumption of drugs, prostitution and vandalism; vagrancy and running away from home account for 84% of the total. The cases of minors sent to INAME for offences against the law comprise theft, robbery, wounding, homicide, drug trafficking, rape and attempted theft; about 70% of the cases correspond to theft and robbery.

greater propensity for marginality than those from families which are intact, especially in the case of the poorer sectors.¹⁷

Of the minors studied, only one out of every three (31.2%) was living in a complete family (with both biological parents) at the time of his entry into an institution (a similar result to that registered for juvenile detention centres in the United States). Of the children who were not living with both their biological parents at the time of their detention, 63.8% were living with their mother, 30.8% with a stepfather or stepmother, and the remaining 5.4% were not living with any of their parents.

Although this result might seem to indicate that minors who do not have a complete family are more likely to commit offences or engage in socially unacceptable forms of conduct, there is not enough proof to assert that there is a causal relation between these two variables. Both could be determined by a third variable, such as poverty. The information provided by the INAME registers does not permit a distinction to be made between the effects of the family structure and the effects of poverty, as it does not include data on the characteristics of the detainees' homes which allow them to be compared with those of poor households in general. Nor does the Permanent Household Survey allow the family profile of minors in poor households to be compared with that of the minors in INAME, since it does not distinguish the parents in terms of their biological relationship with the persons in the household who figure as children of the head of family.

In order to try to isolate the effect of the type of family from the effects of situations of poverty, insofar as they affect the marginality of minors, we reexamined the data from a study made by the ECLAC Montevideo Office on the family characteristics of a

sample of children in public schools. The situations of those children were then compared with those of the minors analysed in INAME (table 6). The results show that, independently of the seriousness of the economic shortcomings of the household, the family profile of the minors in INAME is totally different from that of the other children. Thus, among the latter, 67.3% of those in a situation of indigence, 79.4% of those who were poor but not indigent, and 83.9% of the non-poor lived with both their biological parents, in sharp contrast with the situation of the minors in INAME. The most important single characteristic of the latter is the absence of the father. Consequently, even though the average age of the minors in INAME was around 15 years (compared with 10 or 11 years in the case of the children studied in the public schools), it is reasonable to conclude that the INAME minors come from households with family characteristics that are significantly different from those of poor and indigent Uruguayan households as a whole. Instead, both this information and the opinions of persons well acquainted with the functioning of INAME point to a profile of households in a situation of marginal poverty, one of the most important features of which is the incomplete and unstable nature of the family.

Formally, the fact that the parents are not married when a child is born make that child illegitimate. This situation, which affects 45% of the minors studied in INAME, increases the risk that the father will be absent from the family group (table 7).¹⁸

The rapid rise in the qualifications demanded from young people for their incorporation into the modern sector of the economy further heightens the marginalizing effect of incomplete and unstable families, highlighting the disadvantage of not enjoying the support of a complete family, for lengthening the period of education and training means prolonging the material, emotional and intellectual support activities and the formation of work habits and discipline in which the family is irreplaceable. Children and young people from families which do not possess these assets, because they are unstable or incomplete, will be in a much weaker position than others to take advantage of the opportunities that exist.

¹⁷ The presence of the father is vital for providing or strengthening certain assets of children: i) as an identity-forging model, especially for boys; ii) as an agent for conserving and creating habits of discipline and transmitting experience of life; iii) as a means of material support, since the absence of the father's contribution considerably reduces the household's income, especially in view of the fact that women earn 20% to 50% less than men; and iv) as a source of social capital, inasmuch as the absence of the father means the loss of a line of contact with male networks of relations, both at work and in politics, and also because if the connection with the networks of relatives that the father could provide is broken, this significantly reduces the potential family links.

¹⁸ Charles Murray (1993) suggests that illegitimacy should be considered as one of the most important signs of marginality and social disintegration.

TABLE 6

**Uruguay: Family background of fourth-grade schoolchildren
as a whole and of minors detained in the National Minors' Institute (INAME)**

Family group	Schoolchildren ^a			Minors in INAME ^b
	Indigent	Non-indigent poor	Non-poor	Total
Mother only	7.1	5.2	6.5	43.9
Stepfather or stepmother	4.4	3.4	3.2	21.2
Both biological parents	67.3	79.4	83.9	31.2
Others	9.7	10.3	4.1	3.7

Source: For schoolchildren, Encuesta para un Diagnóstico de la Educación Básica en Uruguay, ECLAC Office in Montevideo, 1990. For minors in INAME, prepared by the author on the basis of data from the SIPI files of INAME, 1990-1995.

^a Fourth-grade pupils of public schools in Montevideo and Tacuarembó.

^b Minors detained in INAME for offences or socially unacceptable conduct.

TABLE 7

**Uruguay: Minors detained in the National Minors' Institute (INAME)
for offences or socially unacceptable conduct, by family
background and birth status, 1990-1995
(Percentages)**

Presence of parents in family group	Birth status					
	Of total number of minors studied			Of total number of minors in each category		
	Legitimate	Illegitimate	Total	Legitimate	Illegitimate	Total
Mother only	20.9	23.0	43.9	38.1	51.0	43.9
Mother and father	21.2	10.0	31.2	38.4	22.5	31.2
Stepfather or stepmother	10.0	11.2	21.2	18.3	24.8	21.2
Others	2.9	0.8	3.7	5.2	1.7	3.7
Total	55.0	45.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
			(2 133)	(1 172)	(961)	(2 133)

Source: Prepared by the author on the basis of the SIPI files of INAME.

3. Families where the father is absent

The family characteristics of the minors in INAME give very important pointers to some features of the new marginality and draw attention to the changes which have taken place in the family. If there is indeed a tendency in Uruguayan society towards greater instability and breakups of couples and an increase in the proportion of illegitimate births and children who do not live with both of their biological parents, then unless there are substantial improvements in the general economic and social situation of the lower urban strata we may expect a growing incidence of marginal behaviour.

If we review recent trends in the number of illegitimate births (table 8), we see that whereas in 1975

one out of every five children was born out of wedlock, in 1993 this proportion was one in every three. This process has speeded up in the last decade, since whereas in the period 1975-1984 illegitimacy grew by 14%, it increased by some 50% between 1984 and 1993. This acceleration was observed in all age groups.

If, as the background of the minors detained in INAME seems to suggest, illegitimacy is associated with family structures which favour the emergence of problems of conduct and offences against the law, then the social consequences of the considerable increase in the proportion of illegitimate births observed over the last decade in Uruguay are a matter for serious concern.

It would seem obvious, then, that in order to monitor the evolution of the problems connected with marginality we must follow up very closely the statis-

TABLE 8

Uruguay: Rates of illegitimate births

<i>1. In Montevideo, 1975, 1984 and 1993</i>		
Year	Rates of illegitimacy (%)	
1975	20.9	
1984	23.8	
1993	34.5	
 <i>2. Nationwide, 1961 and 1988</i>		
	Rates of illegitimacy (%)	
Age of mother	1961	1988
15-19	25.7	47.9
20-24	15.5	30.5
25-29	11.5	20.9
30-34	11.7	21.2

Source: Prepared by the author on the basis of data from the *Boletín de Estadísticas Vitales* of the National Statistical Institute (INE) and also, for Montevideo, on the basis of data from the Division of Statistics of the Ministry of Public Health.

tics on changes in the form and composition of families. Official sources of statistics, however, only show a very tiny part of the most important changes affecting families: the remainder—especially those connected with family units within households and reconstituted or reassembled families—are hidden from our analysis. Even so, the visible tip of this iceberg is sufficient to show that illegitimacy is increasing, as also is the proportion of common-law unions or cohabitation in the total number of households, especially young ones (table 9). As regards the question of female heads of family units, this is made more difficult to detect because of the tendency of many mothers in this situation to seek refuge in their households of origin.

In view of the situation reflected by the above-mentioned tendencies, those responsible for the formulation of social policy in Uruguay should try to find a quick answer to the following question: what are the conditions that favour this increase in the rates of illegitimate births, common-law unions and family units with absent parents? It is no easy matter, of course, to assess the relative weight of each of the many conditions that contribute to the increase in these phenomena, but there are at least a couple of factors that cannot be left out when seeking to explain the changes in the manner of forming families. These are the cultural changes relating to sexuality and the reluctance of young men to take on long-term responsibilities for the maintenance of a family.

TABLE 9

Montevideo and urban areas in the interior of Uruguay: Young people between 15 and 29 living in common-law unions, as a percentage of the total number of young couples, by number of years of schooling, 1984, 1989 and 1994 (Percentages)

Year	Years of schooling	Montevideo	Urban areas in the interior	Total urban areas
1984	Nine or less	17.9	16.1	17.0
	Ten or more	4.8	4.5	4.6
	Total	12.6	12.7	12.7
1989	Nine or less	22.6	23.5	23.0
	Ten or more	6.1	7.2	6.5
	Total	14.6	18.5	16.7
1994	Nine or less	30.8	30.0	30.4
	Ten or more	14.8	13.2	14.2
	Total	22.7	24.3	23.6

Source: Prepared by the author on the basis of data from the Permanent Household Survey of NE.

a) Changes in sexuality

We are witnessing a rapid loosening of the standards governing sexual behaviour. Among the reasons for this are the widespread dissemination of birth control techniques and the consequent increase in the possibility of separating reproduction from sexuality; the increased participation of women in the labour market and their consequently greater economic independence, and finally, the deterioration of primary institutions such as the family and the local community and the consequent weakening of their capacity to control and punish forms of behaviour.

This combination of factors has undoubtedly contributed to the marked lowering of the age of sexual initiation and the increase in adolescent pregnancies. This latter phenomenon might seem a little surprising, because the increasingly high educational standards of women and the growing availability of birth control information raised hopes that the opposite might be the case.

A great many early pregnancies (considered to be those occurring before the age of 20) represent important links in the chain of processes that lead to marginality. The rates of illegitimate births among these mothers are higher than in the other age groups and have been growing rapidly and steadily over the last thirty years in Uruguay (table 10). The increase in the general rate of illegitimacy is partly explained by a

TABLE 10

Uruguay: Evolution of rates of illegitimate births, by age of mother

Age of mother	1961	1966	1971	1976	1981	1985	1993
(1) Up to 19 years	26.5	23.4	30.3	31.1	41.7	45.4	63.2
(2) Total	18.1	19.1	21.7	22.6	25.3	26.5	34.5
Ratio (1)/(2)	1.44	1.23	1.40	1.38	1.65	1.71	1.83

Source: Prepared by the author on the basis of data from the vital statistics of the INE; for 1993, data from the Division of Statistics of the Ministry of Public Health of Uruguay for Montevideo, which are usually 10% below the nationwide rates.

parallel increase in the share of total births accounted for by adolescent mothers (see the last line of table 10).

The association between adolescent motherhood and marginality does not end with the illegitimacy of the children born in such circumstances, however. A recent study by the National Institute for the Family and Women gives the following results:

i) The partners of early mothers are more unstable than those of other mothers, and this is reflected in a higher percentage of common-law unions and divorced and separated women. These conclusions corroborate the findings of other studies carried out in Uruguay which are cited by the author of that study.¹⁹

ii) Most early mothers drop out of the educational system, thus not only reducing their possibilities of self-realization by limiting their employment opportunities and cutting themselves off from the important socialization environments provided by educational establishments but also inhibiting the development of one of the most important assets they can pass on to their children.

iii) The studies on adolescent mothers give a variety of reasons for this behaviour. The general impression is that in their social environment poor adolescents find a positive response to motherhood. It would appear that, unlike young men, these women suffer from a lack of alternative roles that represent a minimum of social recognition, and their only option for gaining some such recognition is motherhood. In this context of desperation about

their opportunities for self-realization, romantic fantasies and craving for affection may be seen as ways of giving their lives some meaning.

b) *Some causes of young men's reluctance to form new households*

The second important factor connected with the increase in illegitimacy and loose cohabitation among young people from the poor strata is the reluctance of the men to take on the main responsibility for the economic maintenance of a family.²⁰ This reluctance is in keeping both with the positive association between nuptial tendencies and real wages and with studies which show that the higher their income, the greater is the propensity of men to get married (Figueira, 1996). From the point of view of the possibilities of self-realization, this reduced propensity of young men to get married may have a rational economic basis which should be taken into account.

According to data from the Montevideo Permanent Household Survey for 1994, about one in every three (34.5%) young men between 20 and 30 years of age who worked more than 20 hours per week was in a position to maintain a minimal family (wife and young child) above the poverty line (table 11). This means that their labour generated income equal to two and a half times the poverty line for that year.

When these data are broken down by level of education, the following facts are observed. Among those who had only completed the basic educational

¹⁹ Uruguay, Ministerio de Educación y Cultura, Instituto Nacional de la Familia y la Mujer, 1995 (study directed by María Elena Launaga. The studies cited which corroborate these findings may be found in Instituto Nacional de Alimentación (INDA), 1989.

²⁰ This responsibility is particularly important for poor young men, who have shown themselves in public opinion surveys to be in much stronger agreement than other young people with the traditional image of the division of labour between the sexes, whereby men participate in the labour market and women are responsible for the domestic tasks.

TABLE 11

Montevideo: Capacity to maintain a family displayed by employed persons with incomes equal to or greater than 2.5 times the poverty line who are between 20 and 29 years of age and work more than 20 hours per week, 1994 (Percentages)

Number of years of schooling	Capacity to maintain a family			
	Not-capable	Capable	Total	
Up to 5 years	77.4	22.6	100	(53)
6 years	78.7	21.3	100	(300)
7 years	78.3	21.7	100	(115)
8 years	77.0	23.0	100	(243)
9 years	69.8	30.2	100	(334)
10 years	64.6	35.4	100	(582)
11 years	62.1	37.9	100	(322)
12 years	64.6	35.4	100	(82)
13 years	62.7	37.3	100	(102)
14 years	58.1	41.9	100	(148)
15 years	53.9	46.1	100	(154)
16 years	55.1	44.9	100	(127)
17 years or more	30.2	69.8	100	(116)
Total	65.5	34.5	100	(2 678)

Source: Prepared by the author on the basis of data from the Permanent Household Survey of Montevideo of the INE.

cycle (nine years' formal schooling), less than one in three (30.2%) reached the income level in question. The situation was not very different for those who had reached school leaving certificate level (35.2%). Only among the 5% of young people who had reached the level of 17 years' formal schooling was there a majority with incomes equal to at least two and a half times the poverty line. In other words, for most young employed men with less than 17 years' schooling, setting up a family meant sinking below the poverty line (unless they were able to obtain an extra income).²¹

²¹ The reluctance of young men of low educational level to set up a family in the current labour market conditions should be interpreted in the light of the importance assigned in the lower strata to the traditional division of labour between the sexes, whereby the man would be the only breadwinner in the household. Thus, when asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement "A woman's duty is to look after the children and the home, while a man's duty is to bring in money", the percentages of agreement were broken down as follows according to the educational level of those interviewed: Incomplete primary education, 63%; Up to third year of secondary cycle, 61%; Up to sixth year of secondary cycle, 22%; University studies, 9%. See *El Observador*, 1995.

These findings are corroborated by the relationship between the stages in a family's life cycle and the likelihood of sinking into poverty (table 12). The first line of the table shows the households with heads under the age of 30 which consist only of the couple and represent no more than 1.6% of the households in Montevideo. The first point to note is that the proportion of young childless couples in the total number of households is very low, indicating that the beginning of cohabitation is strongly associated with the birth of the first child. The second point is that there are practically no poor households in this segment.

The next category, however—households consisting of the couple and at least one child between 0 and 4 years—accounts for nearly 11% of all households. It may be noted that approximately 30% of these households are poor: more than twice the poverty index for Montevideo in that year (12.4%). As families progress to subsequent stages in their life cycles, there is an increasing probability that some of the children will bring income into the household and that other institutions will share the children's care and socialization with the parents. With more free time, there is also a greater probability that the spouse will supplement the income of the head of household. As a result of all this, there is a substantial reduction in the incidence of poverty. The data in the table show that the changes in the economic situation of the household with the different stages in the family life cycle are also observed in non-nuclear (extended and composite) households.

In order to analyse the incidence of poverty according to the level of education of the head of household, we studied only the stages in the family life cycles of nuclear households (table 13). Two groups were distinguished: heads of household who only managed to complete the basic cycle at the most, and those who progressed beyond the basic cycle.

Uncertainty about the capacity to generate income inhibits plans to form a family, and the absence of such plans militates against long-term commitments. Young men—especially those who only managed to complete the basic cycle of education—only need to look around them to realize that if they decide to start a new household they run a serious risk of remaining or becoming poor. Backed up by the experience of their immediate environment, this expectation naturally makes them reluctant to take on the commitment of forming a family. Thus, the structurally conditioned weakness lying at the origin of families from the lower strata adversely affects the likelihood that the new generations will enjoy the material, emotional and

TABLE 12

**Montevideo: Proportion of poor families,
according to stage of life cycle of family, 1994**

Stage of life cycle of family	Percentage of families in a state of poverty	Percentage of total number of families
Nuclear families		
No children, heads between 15 and 29	0.7	1.6
With children between 0 and 4	30.6	10.7
With children between 5 and 14	20.8	15.7
With children between 15 and 24	6.1	12.0
Others	4.1	13.8
With head aged 65 or more	4.3	8.9
Non-nuclear families		
No children of own, but including other minors	38.3	1.0
No children of own, no other minors	4.9	7.2
With own children between 0 and 4	35.7	1.6
With own children between 5 and 14	28.0	3.3
With own children over 15 and other minors between 0 and 4	31.0	2.3
With own children over 15 and other minors between 5 and 14	22.6	1.9
With own children over 15 and no other minors	7.7	4.1
Other non-nuclear families (single-person families)	2.5	15.7
Total	12.4	100.0 (9 447 families)

Source: Prepared by the author on the basis of data from the Household Survey of the INE.

TABLE 13

**Montevideo: Incidence of poverty in nuclear households, by stage in
life cycle of family and educational level of head of household, 1994
(Percentages)**

Stage in family life cycle	Educational level of head of household		
	Up to 9 yrs	10 years or more schooling	Total
With children between 0 and 4	51.4	8.9	30.6
With children between 5 and 14	31.4	5.5	20.8
With children between 15 and 24	9.7	1.0	6.1
With no children under 25 and with head aged under 65	6.1	0.6	4.3
With no children under 25 and with head aged over 65	5.1	—	4.1
Total households	17.2	3.1	12.4

Source: Prepared by the author on the basis of data from the Permanent Household Survey of Montevideo of the INE.

normative support that complete, intact families could give them.

But of course economic rationality is not the only reason why young men from the lower urban strata are reluctant to take on family responsibilities. Another reason is the loss of substance of the role of head of household associated with the weakening of his power in the family, his representational functions in the public sphere, his capacity to pass on skills that will be

useful to his children in the labour market, and, above all, the weakening of his function as the main or only breadwinner of the household.²²

²² In another study, the present author has tried to describe the loss of substance of the role of head of household, as seen by the young men of the lower urban strata (Kaztman, 1992).

VI

Social segmentation processes

Finally, we will highlight some processes of segmentation which contribute to the increase in marginality in Uruguayan society. The main source of marginality is the lack of relatively stable productive jobs which incorporate scientific and technical knowledge, provide various benefits of labour security, and generate sufficient income to maintain a medium-sized family at a socially acceptable level of dignity. This subject has been extensively dealt with in specialized Latin American publications under such terms as "structural heterogeneity", "marginality" and, more recently, "exclusion", and it forms the backdrop for the following analysis.²³

In this section, segmentation will be examined as a process involving the formation of social frontiers and reduction of the opportunities for interaction among people of different economic and social origins. Its main consequence is weakening of the degree of integration of society, and its main mechanism is segregation in the fields of housing and education.

1. Housing segregation

Makeshift settlements, taken together, may be viewed as one of the poles of a process of housing segregation. It has been estimated that the number of dwellings in makeshift settlements in Montevideo rose from 2,541 in 1984 to 4,835 in 1990 and 7,013 in 1994: i.e., it trebled in ten years and its growth rate speeded up from 1990 on (Cecilio, 1995). There were no significant changes between 1984 and 1994 in the age structure of the people living in these settlements (table 14). The proportion of children is much higher than in Uruguay as a whole: according to the 1985 census children under 10 represented 17.1% of the population of Montevideo, but one year earlier the corresponding figure for makeshift settlements was 33.5%.

²³ For an extensive analysis of these matters, see *Revista Latinoamericana de Sociología*, 1969. The concept of social exclusion has been used in various publications of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) as a means for analysing employment problems in the industrialized countries, but it is only recently that the problem of relative advantages has been tackled in order to understand the current Latin American situation (see Barros, De los Ríos and Torche, 1996).

As newspapers and magazines have been warning in recent months, some makeshift settlements in Montevideo are turning into ghettos.²⁴ As the sociologist Castagnola says in a recent article in the magazine *Tres*, "The Montevideo ghettos are very recently established neighbourhoods where shortcomings abound and poverty lives cheek by jowl with delinquency" (Castagnola, 1996, p. 68).

The ghettos are fertile ground for the progressive deterioration of the social capital of the poor. This social capital comprises patterns of harmonious coexistence, mutual confidence, and systems of mutual aid which mean that each family can respond to crisis situations with the aid of others. In the ghettos, however, the situation does not seem to permit this. Firstly, makeshift settlements are increasingly isolated from the outside world: the newspapers often report on cases where neither the police nor ambulances risk going into them. Secondly, the press also prints statements by people who cannot leave their houses and are afraid of leaving their children alone: something which reflects a breakdown in the most basic standards of coexistence in the ghetto.²⁵ Thirdly, those who can migrate to other areas—who are usually precisely those who have the greatest capacity to influence the decisions of the public authorities—do leave and thus further deplete the community's resources. The deterioration of social capital in the urban ghettos is therefore reflected in at least three dimensions: their growing isolation from the rest of society, the depletion of

²⁴ The study on "Makeshift settlements in Montevideo", carried out by the Datos consultancy firm for the Ministry of Housing, Territorial Planning and the Environment, tries to classify settlements by their level of integration into society as a whole, using as a criterion for this the level of primary school attendance of the children living in them. This criterion seems quite suitable, as in Uruguay failure of a child to go to school indicates a clear break with socially accepted patterns of behaviour. Using this criterion, the study found that in 35% of the settlements all the children attend school regularly, in 58% most but not all of the children do so, and the remaining 7% of the settlements are divided between those where only a minority of the children go to school and those where none of them do so.

²⁵ For some examples of these cases, see *El Observador* (1996), and articles on two young inhabitants of the Borro quarter in the weekly magazine *Búsqueda* (1996b and c).

TABLE 14

**Montevideo: Structure of population of
makeshift settlements, by sex and age group, 1984-1994**
(Percentages)

Age groups	Male		Female		Total	
	1984	1994	1984	1994	1984	1994
Up to 10 years	32	33.1	36	34.0	35	33.5
11 to 18	18	19.7	15	20.9	16	20.3
19 to 40	30	31.0	33	33.3	31	32.2
41 to 65	17	14.1	13	10.5	15	12.3
66 and over	3	2.1	3	1.3	3	1.7
Total	100	100.0	100	100.0	100	100.0

Source: Cecilio, 1995.

the remaining reserves of confidence among neighbours, and the continual departure of those who do have some say in public matters.

The increasingly uniform conditions of precarious existence among the households living in the same settlement; the feeble and often conflictive contact with people in the same situation; the absence in the immediate environment of any moral authorities who can reprimand forms of conduct that depart from those prescribed by the more general values of society; and the perception that legitimate ways of attaining the goals set by society are out of reach are all factors that contribute to a progressive weakening of the presence of rules and values. This normative vacuum may favour the emergence of leaders who propose a social order framed within a subculture of marginality and legitimize patterns of conduct which are different, and often opposed, to those of society as a whole. The ideas of such leaders involve both costs and benefits for the community of the ghetto. The biggest cost is that the functioning of the community must mould itself to the demands of criminal projects which convert it into a centre of distribution and sale of drugs (as in the slums of Rio de Janeiro), a hideout for criminals, a scrapyard for stolen cars, etc. The benefits are a more orderly form of coexistence, some degree of protection, and the possibility—by taking part in these activities—of obtaining incomes that would otherwise be very hard to get, especially for young people. The loyalties thus generated ensure complicity with the illegal activities engaged in by the new leaders.

As already noted, however, the spread of ghettos is merely an extreme example of a general process of housing segregation which is taking place in all the

cities and derives from the spread of a market-based mentality, one of the effects of which is the loss of everyday contact between people of different economic and social backgrounds. The degree of isolation becomes even greater when, in addition to housing segregation, there is segregation in recreational, health and educational services.

2. Segmentation in education

The pronouncements made at Presidential summit meetings in recent years would appear to indicate that those bearing the highest responsibility for public policies are now acknowledging that equity in the early years of life should form part of the core values of the models guiding development in Latin America and that concentrating educational resources on children from homes of low socio-cultural level is one of the most efficient ways of breaking the mechanisms responsible for the reproduction of poverty and social segmentation. Paradoxically, however, at the same time that these worthy principles are being enounced, many societies in the region are witnessing an unprecedented process of stratification of educational circuits.²⁶ It seems obvious that the educational system

²⁶ This is so much so that in some countries of the region the awareness that such circuits exist is causing many parents to go through periods of intense anxiety, trying to ensure that children of three or four years of age get into particular kindergartens (which even impose entrance examinations), because entry into such establishments will subsequently allow the children to continue in an educational circuit of schools and colleges with high-quality teaching staff and equipment, thereby in turn opening the doors of the best universities for them.

can hardly help to lift the social burden of poverty and inequality, and offset the growing segmentation in the field of employment, if it is segmented itself. This is undoubtedly one of the main current social problems in many Latin American countries.

In this respect, it should be borne in mind that except for the periods of compulsory military service—in countries where there is such an obligation and it really is universally applied—there are few institutions through which all citizens must pass and which give people of different social origins the opportunity of interacting with each other for a substantial length of time on bases other than employment contracts or trade in goods and services. The educational system is undoubtedly the main—and often the only—institutional environment which can act as a melting pot where poor children and adolescents have a chance to maintain daily relations and develop common codes and bonds of solidarity and affection, on terms of equality, with their peers from other strata. In this respect, the more the composition of the student body of each establishment resembles that of the national community as a whole, the greater the contribution that the period of school life will be able to make to the enrichment of the stock of social capital. In contrast, the greater the segmentation among educational establishments, the greater the probability that the members of a given social stratum will only come face to face with members of other social strata in the labour market, where such relations will already be confined within the hierarchical patterns governing the organization of the world of work.²⁷

If this is not so—that is to say, if the rich go to rich colleges, the middle class go to middle class colleges and the poor go to schools for the poor—there is not much that the educational system will be able to do to promote social integration and avoid marginality, no matter how much it tries to improve the educational opportunities of those who have least resources.²⁸ This is why it is important to emphasize not only the contribution to equity that the educational system can make through greater equality of opportunity, but also the contribution it can make to social integration by promoting interaction on an equal footing among those who are not equal.

²⁷ This does not appear to have been the case in Uruguay, where, through the universal application of the idea of general public schools, the educational system has played a very important role in the achievement of a level of social integration which even today continues to be a distinctive feature of the country in the regional context.

²⁸ This is particularly true of societies where the dominant values explicitly reject class barriers.

By facilitating such interaction, education can promote a more equitable distribution of social capital. A student's social capital consists of his legitimate expectations that others will help him in the future. The value of this capital depends on the number of people willing to provide such help, the resources that those people can mobilize, and the degree of obligation they feel towards him (Flap and Graaf, 1986). Daily interaction in the same educational establishment can produce such effects because:

i) it generates a feeling of belonging to the same community, with shared identities and common goals, as well as positive attitudes recognizing other persons as having rights too and feelings of moral obligation extending to fellow-students of different social, religious, ethnic or national origins. In terms of forming citizenship, the more representative of the national community the student body of each establishment is, the greater the importance of this experience;

ii) it allows students of a given origin to broaden and deepen their knowledge of the world by enriching it with the life experiences, cultural codes, habits and customs of students of other origins;

iii) it opens up possibilities for competing on merit in a context where it is supposed that there are no influences deriving from a student's economic and social situation. It is in fact a favourable context for building self-esteem;

iv) above all, it allows students with few resources to establish links of reciprocity and mutual obligations and relations of confidence and loyalty with other students from better-off homes. These contacts can be extremely useful for entering the labour market on favourable terms, because the more influential students—those with easier access to the attractive jobs—are directly acquainted with the merits of their less influential school-mates and have obligations to them which derive from their shared background. Believing that merit alone will help social mobility is a fallacy that is only fulfilled in very unusual situations. Social contacts, with everything they imply, have great significance at both the personal and the social level for achieving the full utilization of human capital. Furthermore, inasmuch as contacts generate reasonable optimism about the possibility of obtaining jobs in keeping with the educational level reached, this means that they will give people greater motivation to invest in the development of their human capital;

v) it gives students' parents, regardless of their economic situation, a chance to interact with other parents to solve common problems. In this respect, the

migration of the better-off students to private education means the loss of a substantial source of support for raising the level of public schools.

In view of the unequal capacity of parents from different economic and social strata to pay for their children's studies, an indicator of educational segmentation is the differentiation between free public education and paid private instruction.²⁹ In Uruguay, this differentiation has been gaining importance in recent years. The great majority of the present middle-class parents in Uruguay were educated in public schools, but a certain proportion of them send their children to private schools. Most probably, they had personal experience of the virtues of the integrating function of public schools, have made efforts to ensure that such schools maintain an acceptable level of quality, and have only decided to send their children to paid private schools because of the evident deterioration of the public school system.

Information prepared on the basis of the Permanent Household Survey (table 15) allows us to follow up the evolution of the relative weights of private and paying primary and secondary education in urban Uruguay, as well as their effects on the probability of personal interaction between students of different economic and social origin in educational establishments.³⁰

At the level of the urban areas of the whole country, paying education has only quite a low incidence: less than one in every five students in 1994.

There are substantial differences between Montevideo and the urban areas in the interior, however. Thus, in the capital the ratio is slightly more than one in every three students, but in the interior it is only about one in every sixteen.

In Montevideo, the proportion of students paying for their studies grew slowly but steadily between 1984 and 1994 at all levels of education. In urban areas

in the interior, in contrast, the very incipient privatization of education does not show a clear trend: it rose in 1989 but went down in 1994.

If we look at the data in the light of the income of the students' households, we see that in Montevideo in 1994 only one out of every four students from the upper stratum attended public schools at the level of primary education or the basic cycle of secondary education. A larger proportion did attend public schools at the level of the second cycle of secondary education ("Bachillerato"). In these strata, the privatization of education increased more rapidly in the period 1989-1994. Although it is still only incipient, there is a clear tendency in Montevideo towards segmentation of the educational system. In urban areas in the interior, in contrast, despite the increase in the proportion of private education, up to 1994 the great majority of the better-off students continued to attend public schools.

Table 15 also shows a transfer of students from the private basic secondary cycle to the public second cycle (bachillerato). However, this does not seem to increase the possibilities of personal interaction between adolescents of different economic and social origin. The proportion of students dropping out of school is larger in the lower strata, so that the greatest opportunities for personal interaction between students of different economic and social origin are in primary education and the basic cycle of secondary education. Indeed, as may be seen from table 16, less than half the poorer young people between 16 and 18—the age-group in which most of the students in the second cycle of secondary education are concentrated—attend any educational establishments.³¹

The tendency towards the privatization of education is a phenomenon that is affecting the vast majority of the countries of the region. The more marked segmentation by classes is, the harder it is to reverse it. In Uruguay, however, the relatively high ideological weight that public education seems to have in the minds of the generation that is now sending its children to school holds out hopes that the eventual success of the educational reforms now being proposed may check or even reverse the privatization process.

It is worth noting, on the one hand, that the privatization of education is merely a reflection of social

²⁹ Free private schools are not taken into account because, according to the data of the Permanent Household Survey, they only serve less than 3% of the total urban student body.

³⁰ The differentiation between free and paying education weakens the integrating function if it means a division in terms of the levels of household income. In order to study this point, we divided students into three groups according to the per capita income of their households: the 30% of households with the lowest incomes were termed the lower stratum, the next 40% were classified as the middle stratum, and the 30% with the highest incomes were termed the upper stratum. The aim of the exercise was to obtain a first approximation to the changes over time in the probability of personal interaction between students of different economic and social origin.

³¹ This table also shows that whereas the participation of poorer young people in the second cycle of secondary education went down slightly in the period under consideration, the opposite was true of young people from the upper income stratum.

TABLE 15

**Montevideo and urban areas of the interior of Uruguay:
Students attending private educational establishments, by level
of education and income bracket, 1984, 1989 and 1994
(Percentages)**

Income bracket \ Level of education	Primary			Basic secondary			Bachillerato ^a		
	1984	1989	1994	1984	1989	1994	1984	1989	1994
<i>Montevideo</i>									
Low	6.7	8.7	11.1	8.7	8.4	11.0	2.3	11.0	6.4
Middle	22.0	32.8	44.9	23.0	26.8	32.1	16.2	18.9	25.4
High	56.5	62.7	73.6	51.9	58.1	78.3	40.2	40.2	58.4
Total	20.2	22.6	29.0	24.8	26.2	29.3	22.3	24.3	29.7
<i>Urban areas of the interior</i>									
Low	2.1	3.2	2.6	1.5	1.9	1.9	–	1.6	–
Middle	7.3	12.2	11.1	5.1	7.7	7.4	2.0	4.2	2.5
High	18.3	24.6	26.6	13.0	18.8	18.1	1.1	5.9	8.6
Total	6.7	8.2	7.7	5.8	7.7	6.5	1.2	4.0	3.2

Source: Prepared by the author on the basis of the Permanent Household Surveys of the INE.

^a Higher secondary cycle.

TABLE 16

**Montevideo and urban areas of the interior of Uruguay:
Population between 16 and 18 years of age not attending
educational establishments, by income bracket, 1984, 1989 and 1994
(Percentages)**

Year \ Income bracket	Montevideo			Urban areas of the interior		
	Low	Middle	High	Low	Middle	High
1984	51.1	26.6	15.4	60.4	39.1	30.1
1989	51.6	28.3	14.4	56.8	44.0	27.6
1994	53.1	26.9	11.3	58.0	43.1	27.1

Source: Prepared by the author on the basis of the Permanent Household Surveys of the INE.

segmentation and the heterogeneity of the quality of the available educational opportunities, while on the other, any attempt to determine the exact magnitude of the problem must also analyse other forms of differentiation, both among private establishments and among public and free schools. The tendency towards housing segregation in Montevideo already gives grounds for presuming that the public sector may be reproducing this segmentation. Undoubtedly, mechanisms are at work in that sector which tend to concentrate the most experienced teachers, the fullest infrastructure and the best teaching aids in the establishments attended by students from the higher strata, while the most inexperienced staff, the most inadequate installations and the

most rudimentary teaching equipment are to be found in rural areas or the marginal settlements of the cities (ECLAC, 1990b, 1992 and 1994).

Since parents show a natural tendency to send their children to the schools which they consider to be best both because of the quality of the education provided and because they agree with the philosophy behind it, any attempt to mix children and adolescents from different social strata becomes a political problem. In these circumstances, educational action to promote social cohesion must maintain the delicate balance involved in, on the one hand, fulfilling the State's duty to strengthen the mechanisms of social integration and, on the other, respecting parents'

right to send their children to the establishments which will give them the best possible education. Restoring the prestige of public schools and making the services they have to offer more attractive is one of the solutions to this problem, although certainly not the only one. Whatever the solution finally adopted, it will undoubtedly call for extra investments in public education and decisions on the sectoral redistribution of

expenditure. In view of the fact that as the pace of the incorporation of technological change speeds up the hub of social integration will lie more and more in the educational system, the costs assumed in order to strengthen this integrating function must be contrasted with the considerable losses that society will suffer as a result of the growing stratification of educational circuits.

VII

Conclusions

1. Summary of the conceptual and methodological framework

There are many different dimensions of marginality, and the available knowledge is insufficient for proposing a global answer to the problem. The aim of the present article is to suggest some guidelines for blocking some major paths to future marginality. To this end, the immediate causes of marginality in urban poverty have been explored: that is to say, the conditions in which the behaviour of a segment of the poor begins to depart from socially acceptable patterns. An extreme sign of such a departure is criminal behaviour.

Like most social phenomena, marginality is due to a number of factors, whose effects mutually strengthen each other in a cyclical manner. The scheme used for explaining marginality has been centered on the imbalance between legitimate goals, the structures of opportunities, and the different capacities for making use of legitimate means for attaining such goals. Emphasis has been placed on the processes which are affecting the formation of these capacities in the lower urban strata.

Within the sequence of events leading to marginality, particular attention has been paid to the consequences of the tension between the structure of opportunities and the formation of skills and capacities, which affects poor adolescents and young people with particular force. On the one hand, the levels of qualifications demanded from young people in order to get a productive job are increasingly high, so that they are generally obliged to postpone their entry into the labour market and stay longer in educational institutions. On the other hand, there is a progressive weakening of the family which significantly reduces its capacity to keep on providing for a considerable period of time the mate-

rial, emotional, cultural, symbolic and social assets, the store of knowledge, and the habits of discipline which would help young people to extend and enrich their training through the existing channels. This disparity between the structure of production and that of the family is an important source of marginality. Furthermore, some changes in the structure of society, especially the tendencies towards the social isolation of the poor linked with housing segregation and the segmentation of services (particularly education) help to consolidate subcultural patterns of marginality.

2. Summary of the findings

Opinion surveys reveal that Uruguayans have the impression that crime is increasing. In a significant proportion of cases, they have this impression because they themselves, relatives or friends have been victims of some crime. The percentage of people who say that they have little or no confidence in the police and the judicial system is also significant. It is hardly surprising, then, that many Uruguayans display feelings of insecurity and behave in a manner induced by fear of crime and violence. Although the mass media may be over-magnifying the dimension of crime in the minds of the public, the information provided by crime statistics, the number of experiences of having been a victim registered in opinion surveys, and the relatively low level of confidence in the bodies responsible for controlling delinquency do justify an increased feeling of insecurity.

The increase in crime is not linked, at least in the period under consideration, with variations in the poverty index. In other words, the number of cases of theft and robbery have increased despite the reduction in the proportion of households whose income does not cover the cost of a basic shopping basket of consumption items.

A decline in poverty may be accompanied by a rise in aspirations, either because the general consumption standards of the society in question have risen, or because the exposure of the poor to those standards has increased. Both of these things may be taking place in Uruguay, since the effects of the growing globalization and penetration of the mass media into people's homes work in this direction.³² For many young people from the lower urban strata, exposure to the glittering world displayed by the publicity in those media increases their feelings of frustration, and delinquency may seem to be the only way of satisfying their desires.

Another possible explanation points to the fact that the increased demand for gaining access to the legitimate channels of social mobility has not been accompanied by increases in the formation of capacities for making use of those channels. The information presented in the present study indicates that it is this latter explanation which accounts most convincingly for marginal forms of behaviour among poor urban young people.

Among the data presented are those concerning the home background of the minors confined in INAME for delinquency or socially unacceptable conduct. Half of these minors were born out of wedlock, and only a quarter of them live in households where both their biological parents are present. The substantial increase in the rates of illegitimate births and common-law unions registered among young people (especially those of low educational level) over the last fifteen years gives grounds for supposing that changes in the forms of establishment and the stability of poor families must be among the most important sources of future marginality.

The growing tendency towards the formation of incomplete and unstable households in the lower urban strata implies a progressive weakening of the family and, hence, of its capacity to provide the assets that poor children and adolescents need to acquire in order to make use of the structure of opportunities that

exists in society. The difficulties in forming stable families appear to be due to a combination of cultural changes affecting sexuality and the reluctance of young men to take on the commitments involved in forming and maintaining a household. Thus, the data show, on the one hand, that there has been a lowering of the age of sexual initiation and an increase in the proportion of births accounted for by adolescent mothers, while on the other hand very high levels of educational achievements are required in order to obtain the income needed to enable a young man to maintain a minimal family.

Finally, the data presented on the increase in housing segregation and the segmentation of education highlight the progressive social isolation of the poor. The lack of suitable models and the growing disparity perceived between efforts and achievements give rise to a context favouring the development of a subculture of marginality.

3. Action guidelines

The mechanisms that lead people to depart from socially accepted patterns of conduct begin to operate in earliest childhood and are consolidated throughout the subsequent cycles in a person's life. In this sense, we may speak of "paths to marginality". All social integration policies seek to block those paths and create conditions favouring the restoration of people's links with society. For this purpose, the actions taken must be based on a diagnostic study which identifies the mechanisms operating at different times in people's lives, evaluates the relative impact of each of these mechanisms on the propensity to engage in marginal forms of conduct, and selects the most crucial points of intervention in the light of the costs and benefits of each action. Only a comprehensive view of the mechanisms at work will make possible the rational selection of the most effective and efficient options.³³

³² No information is available on the increased exposure of the poor to the messages of global society fomenting increased consumption. A rough indicator of this exposure would be the percentage of households with television sets. Household surveys began to collect this information too recently (1991) to permit significant comparisons, but a very rough sign of changes in general consumption patterns is provided by the combination of the increase in global consumption and the changes in the proportion of foodstuffs in that consumption. Thus, while consumption increased by 18% between 1982 and 1994, the proportion of foodstuffs in that consumption went down from 31% to 28%.

³³ The determining factors of marginality analysed in the article seem to operate relatively independently of political and economic factors. The fact that such conditioning factors have not been analysed here does not mean that their influence in the generation of

marginality has been ignored. Thus, for example, it cannot be denied that the return of democracy to Uruguay and the consequent restoration of citizens' rights have created a favourable setting for the action of social integration mechanisms, nor can we overlook the importance of the resources generated by the sustained economic growth of the country in the struggle against poverty and marginality and in society's capacity to create spaces that facilitate the action of integrative forces. It is just as clear, however, that problems of marginality and social integration are arising once again even in countries with a long and successful history of industrialization and with old-established and stable democratic regimes, which would seem to suggest the action of factors which are more complex than mere economic growth rates or the consolidation of democracy, and which are relatively independent of those variables.

Although the weakening of the primary institutions (the family and the community) would appear to be behind the signs of deterioration in the fabric of Uruguayan society, social policies do not focus their attention on problems relating to the formation and stability of the family. If the effectiveness and efficiency of such policies are to be improved, this oversight must be corrected.

An essential first step is to tackle the problem of the statistical invisibility of these matters. Published data on illegitimate births in Uruguay only extend to 1989. Furthermore, nothing is known about the proportion of children who do not live with both their biological parents, despite the evidence assembled in developed countries on the important effects of reconstituted families on the children. Nor are there statistics which make it possible to assess the proportion of family units which, for various reasons, have not managed to set up independent households. It is therefore essential to strengthen the availability of vital statistics and make some small changes in household survey and census questionnaires.

A second important field of action is to make the public aware that any institutional option specifically designed to make up for shortcomings in families will be more difficult, more costly and relatively less efficient than efforts to strengthen the family. It is also important to understand that the longer the training period needed to enable young people to meet the new demands of the labour market, the higher the cost of such options will be, since it seems clear that there is no substitute for the family as a source of the material, psychological and emotional support and the habits of discipline and other qualities demanded by the new patterns of social integration.

A third field of action is the prevention of adolescent pregnancies. The data presented in this article suggest that it is very difficult to avoid an accumulation of disadvantages throughout later life when the starting point is so unfavourable and that the time when a family is set up is one of the crucial points for action. In view of the growing proportion of adolescent pregnancies and their role in the corresponding increase in the rates of illegitimacy, it seems essential to create conditions that favour postponement of the age of first pregnancy. This points, among other things, to the need to take measures in the field of sex education, imparting knowledge that makes it possible to control reproduction and ensure that children will be born when they are really wanted, as well as giving a

fuller and more complete understanding of the responsibilities of motherhood and fatherhood.

It is also urgently necessary to reduce the close links that currently exist between the formation of a family and a situation of poverty, especially in the case of young people of low educational level. Setting up a family in a situation not marked by poverty should be a goal within the reach of more young people. Achieving such a goal depends on the creation of opportunities for productive employment, the easing of the demands posed for obtaining such employment, the type and coverage of benefits associated with father or motherhood (family allowances, maternity and paternity leave, etc.) and the possibility of using services that make work compatible with the raising of children. It also depends very particularly on housing policies, because the hope of obtaining a dwelling gives a sense of meaning and direction to a couple's efforts, since they know that possession of a dwelling is a form of protection against economically hard times and thus reduces the vulnerability of the family.

In addition to being within reach, however, the family must be seen as a desirable goal, and in order to secure this it is necessary above all to promote social recognition of its importance. Traditional societies celebrated marriage rituals that involved the entire local community and thus showed the importance they assigned to this institution. These rites have been weakened and in some cases have lost all meaning. The responsible authorities should take steps to give register office ceremonies a due sense of dignity.

The other primary institution which nourishes the social capital of persons and their families is the local community. The strengthening of community links should be an ever-present feature of the design of sectoral social policies. Among the various options for implementing such policies, preference should be given to those which promote dialogue, mutual dependence, stronger links of solidarity, and the execution of joint undertakings. This will serve to strengthen the systems of mutual aid and confidence. The closer-knit the social fabric of a community is, the greater will be its capacity to ensure fulfilment of standards of behaviour more effectively and efficiently than State bureaucracies and specialized control bodies. Decentralization policies help to strengthen local communities insofar as they increase the latter's opportunities to participate in the definition and application of programmes that directly affect the living conditions of the potential beneficiaries, thus increasing the capacity of persons

and groups to identify themselves with collective goals and improve their situation through joint efforts.

The processes of housing segregation and segmentation of services lead to the progressive isolation of the poor, thereby increasing the likelihood of marginal forms of behaviour which may turn into subcultures. Once such subcultures are established, there is a gradual loss of the codes of communication shared with "integrated" society, and prejudices and stereotypes build up in both social segments which widen gaps and gradually reduce the opportunities for forms of interaction that go beyond the labour market or the pur-

chase and sale of goods and services. In contrast, regular interaction on equal terms restores and strengthens the shared codes of communication. Integration policies should therefore give priority to the generation of such areas of interaction.

The foregoing considerations should be borne in mind in town planning, in policies on the location of dwellings, and in the concepts underlying the design of public services, especially education. The more the present tendency towards housing segregation and segmentation of services advances, the greater the social cost of combatting its effects will be.

(Original: Spanish)

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