

# **VICTIMS, VILLAINS OR ORGANIZED COMMUNITY?**

**Discrimination, social exclusion and empowerment in the media representation  
of urban poverty**

**– Case of barrio “El 70” in Venezuelan newspapers**

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Master's thesis

Sociology/Master's Programme in

Development and International Cooperation

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Spring 2012

Victims, villains or organized community? Discrimination, social exclusion and empowerment in the media representation of urban poverty – Case of barrio “El 70” in Venezuelan newspapers

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A Master’s Thesis in Sociology and the Master’s Programme in Development and International cooperation

Department of Social Sciences and Philosophy

University of Jyväskylä

200 pages + appendices 2 pages

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to study the media representation of urban poverty in a developing country context, focusing specifically on the connections between media representation and social exclusion. The theoretical-methodological basis of this work draws from critical cultural studies and sociological media research, specifically from the theoretical assumptions of critical discourse analysis about media representation. The premise is the constructionist view that the media does not directly reflect the reality of urban poverty, but constructs journalist reproductions of it from a particular perspective and in a certain social context. Media representation of the subordinated groups is related to the prevailing power relations and inequalities in society. The intention is to consider whether the discrimination and exclusion experienced by the urban poor is reproduced in media representations.

The theme is approached by exploring how one specific poor urban neighborhood, the barrio “El 70” in Caracas, Venezuela, is represented in Venezuelan newspapers. The data consists of 57 newspaper articles about the barrio “El 70” from the years 2007-2010, of which 42 are collected from one of the largest national newspapers, *El Universal*, and the rest are collected by a community representative of “El 70” from different national and regional newspapers. The data is first described and classified through the means of content analysis. The principal analysis is conducted with the tools of critical discourse analysis, particularly those defined by Norman Fairclough. The analysis consists of power-focused textual analysis of the articles completed by socio-cultural interpretation of the results in the context of the case community and in the wider context of Venezuelan society. The aim is to study not only what kinds of representations are constructed of the case community and whether these are discriminatory, but also the potential effects of these representations and the possibilities of challenging them.

The case community and its inhabitants are represented mostly through negative and stereotypical discourses that reduce them to their disadvantages, defined by insecurity, social exclusion and deficient living conditions. However, a strong positive discourse was also found related to organization and empowerment of the urban poor. Pieces of other counter-discourses challenging the negative representations were also identified. These varied representations reflect the prevailing power relations, but also the changes that have occurred in Venezuelan society during the last decade.

Keywords: media, representation, urban poverty, stereotypes, social exclusion, critical discourse analysis, Venezuela

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

“So, for us it is really quite inconvenient [...], and for that we convened this press conference, so that the press really get where the deaths were, that was not in the barrio “El 70”. And that we as an organized community need to clean the honor of our barrio. So that the institutions continue coming here and that the benefits continue coming to the barrio “El 70”, because this is affecting directly to everyone.”<sup>1</sup> (Community representative, Press conference in “El 70”. 6.10.2009.)

This thesis studies the media representation of urban poverty in a developing country context. Following the constructionist approach, the premise of this work is that the media does not directly reflect the ‘reality’ but constructs journalist reproductions of it, always from a particular perspective and in a certain social context. In this thesis the theme is approached by exploring how one specific poor urban neighborhood, the barrio<sup>2</sup> “El 70” in Caracas, Venezuela<sup>3</sup>, is represented in Venezuelan newspapers. The citation above quotes a speech given at a press conference organized by the community of “El 70” in October 2009, to correct the misleading news that the different media had published of a confrontation between police and alleged gang members of the neighboring barrios. This thesis is thus motivated by a concrete problem presented in the case barrio; whose inhabitants consider the media representation of their community to be distorted towards violence and insecurity. The negative media representation is thought to add to the historically negative reputation of the barrio, causing further discriminatory practices against the inhabitants and the community. This has led my research towards the consideration of the connections between media representation and social exclusion.

The media representation of developing countries has been under research for few decades and the Western media has been criticized for creating a negative and stereotypical image of developing countries and their population (Raunio 2006, 6, 8). However, the representation of poverty and the poor in the non-Western media has received less international academic attention. This thesis aims

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<sup>1</sup> Author’s translation. The original citation in Spanish: “Entonces, para nosotros de verdad es bastante incomodo que toda la prensa ha venido sacando, y por eso convocamos esta rueda de prensa, para que la prensa realmente saque donde fueron los muertos, que no fueron en El 70. Y que nosotros como comunidad organizada necesitamos limpiar el honor de nuestro barrio. Y que sigan viniendo las instituciones pa acá y que sigan viniendo los beneficios para el barrio El 70, conque esto está afectando directamente a todos.”

<sup>2</sup> Barrio is the term used in Venezuela of a poor urban neighborhood. This is explained more in detail in Chapter 2.2.

<sup>3</sup> The name of Venezuela was changed to Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (*República Bolivariana de Venezuela*) in the constitution of 1999. However, in this work the shorter name Venezuela is used.

to contribute to the research of the media representation in the developing countries and to shed light on the scarcely studied media representations of particularly poor urban neighborhoods. Approaching this theme from the point of view of a specific poor urban community allows a profound consideration of the relation between representation and its object community, which shall serve to provide rich qualitative information about a new theme.

The theoretical-methodological basis of this thesis is formed by the approaches of critical cultural studies and sociological media research, and more specifically by the theoretical assumptions of critical discourse analysis and the earlier research on media representation of poverty, crime, and violence. The data consists of 57 newspaper articles about or specifically mentioning the barrio “El 70” from years 2007–2010, of which 42 are collected from one of the largest national newspapers, *El Universal*. The rest of the data includes 15 newspaper articles collected by a community representative of “El 70” from other national and regional newspapers. The data is first described and classified through the means of content analysis according to the themes, sources of information, and participants represented in the articles. The principal analysis of the data is conducted with the tools of critical discourse analysis, particularly with those defined by Norman Fairclough (1997).

Critical discourse analysis strives to define the systematic connections and mutual interaction between a text and its contexts. How does a society shape the media that, for its part, may have a significant role in the diffusion of social and cultural change or in maintaining the prevailing order? Critical discourse analysis draws attention to the questions of power and, specifically, to how the data reflects, and potentially affects, the prevailing social power relations. (Fairclough 1997, 72–79.) This thesis thus aims to research not only what kinds of representations are constructed of the case community, but also the potential effects of these kinds of representations.

Representation is commonly understood as using language to convey something meaningful about the world to other people. Stuart Hall (1997c) defines representation specifically as production of meaning through language. According to the power-focused approach to representation, different individuals and groups intend to make their meanings prevail to produce the social reality according to their advantage (Karvonen 1998, 34). However, only the powerful groups of the society tend to have the means to represent their meanings as prevailing and true (Hall 1997c, 49). In this battle over meaning, the good of some often signifies the bad for others, and the already subordinated groups of the society tend to take the last place and become objects of negative representations and



further exclusion (see e.g. Hall 1997b; 1997c). This arouses a question about the inequality in media representations when the citizens do not have equal opportunities to have their voices and views heard in the public arena.

Fairclough (2003) has used critical discourse analysis specifically to analyze the neoliberal discourse in relation to the questions of inequality and injustice. This thesis considers whether and how the discrimination and exclusion experienced by the urban poor is maintained or reproduced in media representations. This is studied in the immediate context of the case community and in the wider socio-cultural context of Venezuelan society. In Venezuela this problem is also related to the neoliberal politics that led to increasing inequality and poverty, especially in the 1990s. In light of the socialist turn in the Venezuelan politics, it is worth considering whether the discriminatory representations are still based on the neoliberal discourse or if the change to more inclusive politics is reflected in the representations. Venezuela is currently extremely politically polarized into supporters and opponents of the current government, which both have access to media through their powerful representatives. It is thus also noteworthy to consider whether this political polarization is reflected in the media representations.

According to earlier research, the themes of poverty and crime and violence, which are both related to the representation of poor urban neighbourhoods, tend to be reported in a distorted and discriminatory manner in the mainstream media. Various studies have shown that media representations of poverty affect public opinion and have further implications on people's attitudes towards poor people and the social policies to support them (see e.g. Gilens 1996; Iyengar 1990; McKendrick et al. 2008). Poverty is a marginal issue in media throughout the world and also in Venezuela (e.g. Iyenger 1990; McKendrick et al. 2008; Tablante 2008). Poverty tends to be represented through the different problems the poor people face, concentrating on the symptoms of poverty and fading out the reasons and the collective responsibility for the problems. The poor themselves are offered a passive role and they rarely have their opinions heard in the media. (Fairclough 1997, 147–149; Tablante 2008, 296, 312.)

It is also recognized that media has a direct influence on people's sense of insecurity and their attitudes about crime issues (see e.g. Jewkes 2008, Korander 2000; Rey 2005; Sheley and Ashkins, 1981). The media tends to overstate crimes against persons, often emphasizing the exceptional conditions and details of the crime. Similar to the representation of poverty, in the representation of violence and crime the social context and causalities of the incidents are often not considered.

(Korander 1998; Rey 2005.) The distortion of criminality in the media may cause exaggerated fear of crimes that are least common and of certain groups that are considered problematic. This fear can lead to one-sided political responses to the problem, but also to stigmatization and social exclusion of these groups and to further fragmentation of city space (Jewkes 2008 33–34, Korander 2000, 181, 186).

My preconception is that media representation of the poor urban neighborhoods is above all negative; that the media does not produce a comprehensive image, but rather a distorted representation of the communities, where much more than violence and other calamities occur. I presume that the negative media representations may obscure all the other aspects of these communities and contribute to the loss of their positive determinants in the minds of the audience. In this way the media may contribute to stigmatizing the communities, adding more fuel to their social exclusion, which leads to further social problems. According to Fairclough (2003, 209–210), the intention of critical discourse analysis is to produce knowledge that may lead to emancipatory change by defining the obstacles and exposing unrealized possibilities for change in the way social life is organized. Thus also in this research the demonstration of the discriminatory representations may offer possibilities for their deconstruction by constructing a basis for the creation of opposing discursive strategies to change the prevailing discursive order and consequently improve the position of the marginalized groups.

This work will continue with a description of the complex process through which I decided on this particular research theme and approach. Following this, the importance of media in democratic societies is presented with the general sociocultural conditions that affect the media representations. Chapter 2 consists of a general review of the contemporary history of Venezuela until present, glancing also at the issues of urban poverty and violence and lastly presenting a description of the case community. In Chapter 3, the theoretical-methodological basis of this thesis is presented, including a review of the earlier research on media representation of poverty, and violence and insecurity. Chapter 4 starts with a description of the research problem, after which the basics of critical discourse analysis and the particular methodical tools used in the analysis are presented. Then the process of data collection and selection is explained, and the data is described through different classifications. Chapter 5 presents the results of the text analysis and Chapter 6 consists of socio-cultural considerations of these results. In Chapter 7, further conclusions are drawn from the most important results that are considered in the wider theoretical framework. Lastly in Chapter 8, I will evaluate the research and consider worthwhile themes and approaches for further research.

## 1.1 Complex process of theme selection

My research process started when I arrived in Caracas, Venezuela at the end of July 2007 to do an internship at the Embassy of Finland. One of my tasks was to review the local press, and soon I was filled with an impressive amount of information about the homicides in Caracas. The dangers of Caracas also seemed to be on everyone's lips, and quickly I became quite overwhelmed by the issue. According to homicide statistics, Venezuela is one of the most violent countries in the world (e.g. Briceño-León, 2009, 27–29). Violence and insecurity are also among the principal worries of the Venezuelans, and thus among the most essential issues of the public agenda (ibid.). However, although all the citizens share the fear and the feeling of insecurity, they do not share the same risk. Urban violence mostly affects the poor urban areas of the cities, and specifically their young male inhabitants (e.g. Briceño-León, 2005).

I understood that the widespread fear and insecurity people experienced and talked about was mainly constructed by the information obtained directly or indirectly from media. Thus I became interested in how the media represents the situation and the poor urban areas where the violence was reported, but even more keenly I wanted to know how the situation 'really' was in these areas. This led my interest towards conducting a case study of the situation of violence and insecurity in a particular poor urban community. Since the barrios of Caracas are generally not easily accessible nor safe to go to alone, the accessibility and contacts became the most important conditions for choosing a case community, determining also the selection of the barrio "El 70".

In November 2007, I got in touch with a Venezuelan sociologist, Irama La Rosa, who is conducting her doctoral thesis on the images of young people and artists regarding the city of Caracas. La Rosa coordinates different kinds of activities with the representatives of the barrio "El 70" and I was able to join her visits to the barrio. She also coordinates a group of social community service<sup>4</sup> in the School of Sociology of the Central University of Venezuela (UCV) and I was allowed to participate in the activities with the local sociology students. We worked, for example, as research assistants designing and conducting with La Rosa a survey about young people's perceptions and images of art, science, and the city in the El Valle parish of Caracas<sup>5</sup>. I participated in surveying the youth of

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<sup>4</sup> Community service has become an obligatory part of all the university degrees in Venezuela since the autumn 2005. The students have to work 120 hours divided at least for three months contributing to the development of the local communities. (La Asamblea Nacional de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela, 2005.)

<sup>5</sup> The objective of the survey was to guide the creation of programmes that correspond to the real necessities of the youth of the *El Valle* parish. In 2008 and 2009, in total 365 persons of 15–24 years from *El Valle* were interviewed; half

the barrio “El 70” in June 2008. Consequently, I chose “El 70” as my study case, as it corresponded to my criteria of having the violence and insecurity mentioned as problems, but also having a level of organization that would enable me to coordinate my visits and preliminary interviews.

Soon I learned that the barrio “El 70” is considered outside of the community as one of the most dangerous barrios of Caracas (La Rosa 2009b, 199; Centro para la Paz y los Derechos Humanos UCV 2003d). I made contact with one of the community representatives of “El 70” to visit the community and make preliminary interviews to focus my research problem. During 2008 and 2009 I visited “El 70” in various occasions. In addition to the community service involvement, I participated in different events organized in the community, such as a governmental event to distribute school supplies to the children organized in September 2008, a meeting of a community council in December 2008, and a press conference organized in the community in October 2009. According to the first interview of the community representative (18.9.2008), “El 70” was very violent and dangerous in the past, but the situation has improved significantly. Due to the lack of public security service and law enforcement, the community has organized a vigilante group against external and internal threats to maintain the security inside of the barrio, and the inhabitants seemed to consider their community as a safe place to live (ibid.). I became interested in the theme and focused my thesis on the community organization against insecurity in the barrios.

Towards the end of 2008 it became more evident that I was interested in a difficult research topic. I was told directly that if I ask the inhabitants about the security organization in the community, they will tell me nothing since it could risk the security inside of the community and I should not investigate any issue related to insecurity in “El 70” (Personal communication, community representative 15.12.2008). Even though my intention was not to reveal the particular tactics to maintain the security in “El 70”, or the persons involved in the activities, I understood the worry and decided to look for other options. After considering various alternative approaches, in the autumn of 2009 I finally decided on a theme that was defined as a problem by the community itself: the negative representation of “El 70” in the media.

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of them females and half males. About two thirds of the respondents were residents of barrios and the rest from residential areas. 22 of the respondents were from the barrio “El 70”. Some of the results of this survey are presented in the description of the case community. (La Rosa 2008b; 2009a.)

The circle had closed and I started to study the theme that first troubled me when arriving to Venezuela, that is, the media representation of the poor urban communities. At the local level this theme is important, since it arises from the case community and may benefit it by creating a basis for the deconstruction of the negative media representations. The theme is also secure for not causing a threat to anyone in the community or to myself as a researcher, thus erasing any doubts that could have been cast on the research ethics concerning the earlier theme. The objective of this thesis is not to clean up the reputation of the case community, since it is not possible to objectively prove whether the representations are true or false, or what is the 'reality'. In addition to media representations, the opinions and thoughts presented in the community are socially constructed from a certain point of view. Rather, the intention is to explore how the community is represented in newspapers and, more specifically, whether these representations are discriminatory.

## **1.2 Why media representations matter**

Through representations, the media is capable of affecting knowledge, beliefs, values, social relations, and social identities (see e.g. Hall 1997a; Karvonen 1998). The effects of media on the audience have been widely researched since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the results have been varied, depending especially on the definition of influence and the longitude of the study (Kunelius 1999, 113–130). In many researches it is, however, recognized that the media has substantial influence on public perceptions and that media representations are the foundation on which people construct meanings about political and social issues (see e.g. Gilens 1996; Gamson et al, 1992). It is also acknowledged that the patterns of change in public perceptions and in the media correspond (Gilens 1996, 529). Martin Gilens (1996, 530) points out that if the media is not the dominant influence on public perceptions, they must be shaped by personal experience or conversations with other people. Thereby, people's perceptions, especially of things that do not belong to their ordinary sphere of life are liable to form directly or indirectly through media representations. Thus also the perceptions about the barrio "El 70" may be formed through direct communication with the people living or working in the community, but when these contacts are not available, perceptions are formed or affected by the media representation of "El 70" and other similar communities.

Since the media has a significant influence on people's thoughts and practices, it is important to understand what kind of conditions and factors define and affect the production and contents of

media representations. Here I concentrate on some of the political, social, cultural, institutional, and economic factors that form the socio-cultural context of media representation (Fairclough 1997, 85). Mass media performs important functions in contemporary societies, or as Risto Kunelius (1999, 182) puts it “without mass media the modern society would not work”. Media has a prime role in circulating information, maintaining the functionality of the political system, producing societal solidarity and integration, as well as in guaranteeing the continuity of the value basis of a society. In addition, media has assumed some tasks from the traditional institutions, such as part of the education from family, and it also has a vital role in the market. (Ibid., 71, 166–182.)

The importance of media implies significant public responsibility and influence. This also carries with it significant risks: every function has its reverse that may turn the media towards a rather dysfunctional role. These functions are defined in the framework of a modern democracy. Venezuela has a long democratic tradition and its media is fairly modernized and should thus perform similar ideal functions in the society. It is, however, noteworthy that the Venezuelan media is currently fairly politicized reflecting the political polarization of the country itself.

In a democracy, media ideally provides the public with a reasonable idea of the different aspects that affect their daily lives therefore promoting active citizenship and participation (Gamson et al. 1992, 373). Journalism should maintain the functionality of the decision-making process by keeping both the decision-makers and the people informed of the opinions and actions of other people. However, media many times offer erroneous and incomplete information that may distort public understandings of reality. This distortion becomes dysfunctional when the societal decision-making depends on people’s understandings and opinions. Modern journalism is also characterized by its independence from state powers and it is expected to supervise the public decision-makers for the people. This independence should protect journalism from outside manipulation, implying certain neutrality to be maintained, especially in relation to powerful groups of a society. (Kunelius 1999, 19–20, 176–181.) However, the massive audience increases the influence of media, and thus also the interests of the state and other powerful actors to control it (Fairclough 1997, 57, 65). In Venezuela, media cannot be seen as independent from state powers nor from other powerful politic or economic groups that both use and try to affect media to promote and protect their own interests.

According to Kunelius (1999, 168), the production of societal solidarity and integration is often considered as the most important function of media. Media defines shared identities by creating common experiences between people, but also differences between ‘us’ and ‘them’ that may have

negative effects as well (ibid.169; Hall 1997b; Kivikuru 1999, 333–335). Media also has an important role in guaranteeing the continuity of the value basis of the society. Media production implies value choices and evaluation of people's behavior. The norms and values of the society affect the news value and the news criteria that define what is newsworthy. Consequently, the prevailing societal hierarchy is reflected and maintained in the news. However, the maintenance of values is done in different ways in the various media: by offering material for the public to reproduce their value system, or by imposing its own values, norms, and models to the public. (Kunelius 1999, 171–175.)

In their classical analysis on the criteria for news selection, Johan Galtung and Mari Ruge (1965, 68) propose several factors that are applied across a range of news organizations, countries, and cultures. Of these, the following factors are especially relevant here and can also be seen to apply to Venezuelan context, at least to the private commercial media: Large and intense events that affect a lot of people are likely to be reported. Attention is paid to the familiar and culturally similar, but also a culturally distant place may become news if it may have an impact on the audience. Unexpected and/or negative events in their consequences, as well as events that involve elite nations or people are likely to become news. Also events that can be represented in personal terms, due to the action of specific individuals, and not that of social structures, are more probably reported. (Ibid., 65–68.) Other factors that affect the selection of a news theme include its fit within the news medium, as well as the accessibility of news regarding logistical constraints and time pressures, caused by both the media company's economic interests and the social structures of the society in general. The news bureaus are, for example, normally concentrated in big cities thus giving the national news an urban over-representation. In addition, the powerful parties of a society make themselves easily available for the media. (Gans 1979, in Gilens 1996, 531–533.)

Mass media is closely connected to market forces that influence its structures of production, systems of distribution, and contents (Fairclough 1997; Kunelius 1999). Media's economic influence is high, since it is the most important channel for regulating the tastes, norms, and values of consumption. This creates the double market of the mass media where first the message is sold to the audience, and second the advertisers pay for the attention of this audience. (Kunelius 1999, 71–73.) It is not, however, only the numbers of the audience, but also the purchasing power and the lifestyles of the audience that interest the advertisers (Ibid., 73; Gamson et al 1992, 377). When media contents are required to produce intended audiences, the necessities and interests of the people in the border of the consumer society may become excluded from the public sphere

(Kunelius 1999, 83). The dependence of the newspapers on the market of advertisers may partly explain the opposition of many private newspapers of Venezuela to the socialist government that has been nationalizing the most important industries of the country. Without capitalist competition there is no need for the advertisement, and without advertisers the newspapers will flounder.

Commercialization of journalism has implied the decline of political journalism, with the preliminary purpose to reach the widest public possible (Fairclough 1997, 63; Kunelius 1999). The news as impartial and neutral fact stories have become the preliminary content of journalism. This has also affected the news criteria to prefer themes that normally are not easily politicized, such as crimes and accidents (Kunelius 1999, 61), as well as the ways in which the issues are treated: to increase the interest of the audience the stories are personalized, for example, by telling about individual tragedies (Fairclough 1997, 61). Venezuela has experienced a reverse process of re-politization of the media; in addition to government media, many private and commercialized media has politicized its content even at the cost of losing popularity. However, in the private media this seems to be combined with the requirements of commercialization.

When the main interest is profit, content production is seen as an expense to be reduced. News production thus has to be predictable and effective and the cost minimized, leading the media to prefer sources that have as complete information as possible. (Kunelius 1999, 81–82.) Journalists are thus dependent on those that produce the facts in the society, and the most trusted are the official or in other ways legitimized sources, such as government, police and other authorities, the trade unions, and the scientific experts. (Fairclough 1997, 69.) However, in Venezuela some of the opposition media may avoid using these official government sources, and prefer to lean on like-minded experts on the theme (cf. Dugaro & Lezama 2005). In the same way, the government media is not expected to cite the experts that represent the opposition.

Considering the news criteria, the criteria of accessibility, and the business of media production, it can be stated that in the commercial media the higher the societal status of people, the more likely they become news and have their voice heard in the media (see also Fairclough 1997, 62). However, in addition to positioning the elite under the loop of the audience, the media also represents the audience to itself. If the elite people are the most represented and if the ordinary people must deviate from the normal order to become news, as for example Kunelius (1999, 172) suggests, the question is: How distorted is the representation that journalism offers of the ordinary people it claims to stand for?



## **2. SHORT HISTORY OF VENEZUELA**

This chapter consists of a general review of the contemporary history of Venezuela until present emphasizing the aspects of democratic, economic, and social development of the country. In addition, the issues of urban poverty and violence in the Venezuelan context are touched upon. Lastly this chapter includes a description of the case community of the research.

### **2.1 From model democracy to Bolivarian revolution**

Venezuela was seen as a model democracy compared to other Latin American countries from late 1950s to late 1980s. After a coup against the military dictator Marcos Pérez Jiménez in 1958, Venezuela was governed by turns of two moderate multiclass parties created in the end of 1920s: Democratic Action (AD) and Committee of Independent Political Electoral Organization (COPEI). Venezuela seemed to be an exceptional case that avoided the wave of military coups of the other Latin American countries in the 1960s and 1970s; there was oil wealth, the leading centrist and multiclass parties were strong and disciplined, Venezuelan democratic regime was resilient, and there was broad policy consensus. Wider class conflict was avoided because with the oil revenue governments could afford clientelistic methods to assure the political support of the poor. There were also possibilities of class mobility, especially in the armed forces, which eased class tensions. (Ellner 2008, 1–2, 53, 56.)

The US government valued the post-1958 governments for their anti-communist policies. Venezuela participated in isolating Cuba, and hard line policies were also directed against the Communist Party of Venezuela (PCV), which provoked it to start an armed fight against the government in 1962. Nevertheless, the guerrilla movement of Venezuela was beaten during the same decade. The political unity was guaranteed by political pacts between the leading parties, the Catholic Church, the business organization FEDECAMARAS and the armed forces. These agreements guaranteed, for example, the property rights of the landowners in the countryside and the primary position of the private sector in the economy. These governments, however, committed similar abuses to those for which Pérez Jiménez was accused, such as human rights violations and corruption. They have been criticized for the repression of the political and labor activists who were

outside of the political system, as well as the leftist movements inside of the parties. The human rights violations were underreported in the media, that supported the ruling power, and they were not processed by the justice system. (Ellner 2008, 2–3, 49–54, 59.)

The AD and COPEI governments implemented economic policies that favored national development, such as import substitution, high tariffs on foreign capital, and the creation of state companies in areas not easily covered by private enterprises. The import substitution policies, however, did not manage to decrease the dependency on foreign technology and capital, and the corruption and clientelism weakened the state sector of the economy. Also, the tight relationship between the government and the economic elite restricted the implementation of leftist reforms. The vulnerability of the Venezuelan economy was exposed in the 1980s, when the decline in the international oil prices caused distrust in the economy because of increasing inflation and capital flight that forced the government to implement exchange controls. This, however, did not have any effect because of the rampant corruption of the system. The foreign debt increased considerably, therefore limiting the political options of the nation. The Venezuelan government was forced to renegotiate its foreign debt and was pressured from abroad to adapt macroeconomic policies. (Ellner 2008, 4, 55–56, 71–85.)

The neoliberal policies were not implemented at a wider scale before the 1990s. Venezuelans were particularly opposed to neoliberal politics since the oil wealth of the last decades had assured them a certain level of material wellbeing, which they were not ready to give up. Venezuelans actually voted against neoliberal presidential candidates in 1988 and 1993, but both of the selected anti-neoliberal candidates betrayed the people by unveiling their neoliberal programmes after assuming the presidency. The first was the president Carlos Andrés Pérez, who during his second rule implemented various methods of economic deregulation, to encourage the influx of multinational capital. Pérez also privatized key industries and the national social security system, as well as modified labor rights to be more flexible for a global economy. In Venezuela, the economic deregulation resulted in increased inflation and raised living costs for its citizens. The informal economy expanded and organized labor became weaker. (Ellner 2008, 85–92.)

The announcement of the neoliberal policies caused widespread disapproval of the government and led to social disturbances. In February 1989, an incident named *Caracazo*, began in Caracas with protests against the increase of the price of public transportation caused by the increase in fuel prices. This led to two days of mass sacking of the local stores by the enraged and frustrated

residents of the low-income neighborhoods, which spread instantaneously to other Venezuelan cities. The government answered these mass protests with several days of military repression. The army troops were sent into the slums of the cities resulting in thousands of deaths. As a consequence of *Caracazo*, poverty became the principal cause for political mobilization in Venezuela in the 1990s (Tablante 2006, 117). *Caracazo* started a wave of protests against the government, such as a general strike in May 1989. These social protests opened the way to the failed leftist military coups in February and October 1992, of which the current president Hugo Chávez led the first one. These attempted coups created wide support for the removal of the president Pérez and, after his impeachment for corruption, he left his office in 1993. (Ellner 2008, 96–97.)

In his presidential campaign in 1993, the forthcoming president, Rafael Caldera, presented himself as independent from any political party and spoke for anti-neoliberal politics. In the beginning of his rule his government implemented Centre-Left policies, setting regulations on the economy and halting some privatizations. However, neoliberal policies were applied again as a consequence of a serious bank crisis and the following collapse and nationalization of many private banks that were next sold to foreign capital. The government also failed to bring to justice any of the 322 bankers who fled the country after robbing the banks they led to bankruptcy. The real wages of the Venezuelans were decreasing annually and the inflation reached top rates. In 1996, the government adopted orthodox economic policies to reach an agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). This implied rapid expansion of the oil industry, contributing to declining oil prices, lifting regulations for foreign capital, and privatizing some key industries, including the deepening of the partial privatization of the oil industry. (Ellner 2008, 99–100.)

Following the government's turn to neoliberalism, the leftist factions of AD and COPEI and many of the traditionally leftist parties reversed their position and abandoned their defense of state interventionism. Neoliberalism, however, never managed to penetrate the popular classes. This contributed to the disillusionment with the traditional parties and the delegitimizing of the political system. This partly explains the widespread support of Chávez in the 1998 presidential elections, since he and his movement arose from outside of the existing political system. Chávez, with his Fifth Republic Movement party won the elections with 56 per cent of the vote, presenting the *Bolivarian Alternative Agenda* that defended state interventions in the economy and the negotiation of moratoriums on foreign debt, but especially the holding of the Constituent Assembly and related political reforms. (Ellner 2008, 98–108.)

### *The era of Chávez, with social reforms and political polarization*

The Constituent Assembly was the center of the first year of the Chávez rule, culminating in the ratification of a new Constitution in a referendum of December 1999. In the Constitution, the concept of participative democracy and radical democracy were put forward, demonstrating a faith in the political capability of the popular sectors of the society, contrary to the elitist assumptions of neoliberalism. The new constitution was criticized by the opposition for reversing the decentralization initiated in the 1990s and for concentrating more power to the government at the expense of the National Assembly. In the beginning of his rule, Chávez maintained a dialogue with the private business sector and did not implement any harsh policies against it. However, further prioritizing was halted and more funds were allocated to social programmes. The more radical phase of the Chávez era started in 2001, with the enactment of emergency legislation on a package of 49 special laws to reverse the neoliberal politics of the 1990s. The most important law was related to the oil industry, establishing the majority government ownership of all mixed companies. Another significant law was the Lands Law that subjected uncultivated land to government expropriation and implied significant agrarian reform. (Ellner 2008, 110–112.)

The political radicalization contributed to the political polarization of the country where also some of the more moderate leftist parties joined the opposition. The powerful economic groups felt highly threatened by the new laws that seemed to undermine the private property rights and their interests in privatization. This led to an opposition alliance between FEDECAMARAS and the Confederation of Workers of Venezuela (CTV), which was closely linked to the AD party of the opposition. They called several general strikes in the spring of 2002, leading to a violent confrontation in Caracas, where the *chavistas*<sup>6</sup> were accused of shooting demonstrators with the support of the government. This confrontation was used to justify a military coup against Chávez on April 11, 2002. Chávez was captured and a provisional government was established, led by the president of FEDECAMARAS, Pedro Carmona, who immediately abolished the emergency laws of 2001 and announced to hold elections only within one year. However, all the sections of the armed forces did not recognize Carmona's rule and they demanded the release of president Chávez. These demands were joined by thousands of Venezuelan poor supporting Chávez, who was released and back in power within 48 hours after the coup started. (Ellner 2008, 113–115, 117.)

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<sup>6</sup> The term *chavista* refers to the supporters of the president Hugo Chávez. Chavistas support *chavismo* that refers to the left-wing political ideology based on the ideas, programs and government style of Chávez.

In December 2002 the opposition alliance, supported by the directors of the state's petroleum company PDVSA, declared an infinite general strike to force Chávez out of power. The eight-week strike had devastating effects, especially regarding oil revenue. However, the opposition lacked strategy to announce specific demands, and Chávez maintained power and the oil revenue was recovered. In 2004, another strategy of the opposition failed when the attempt to remove Chávez by a recall election resulted in 59 per cent of the votes opposing the recall. The failure of the various attempts to throw Chávez out led to substantial political stability in the following years. The position of the *chavistas* was fortified by the opposition's decision to boycott the parliamentary elections of 2005, therefore giving the whole National Assembly to the *chavistas*. (Ellner 2008, 118–121.)

The fortification of the position of Chávez and the *chavista* National Assembly opened the way to apply the emergency legislation of 2001 to establish the new economic model of the '21<sup>st</sup> century socialism'. This implied the expansion of the social missions that were implemented, particularly in the fields of health and education, for the empowerment of the Venezuelan poor. Also, the creation of worker cooperatives and co-management to increase the worker's power in state companies were encouraged. Furthermore, workers were permitted to occupy various privately owned companies that were accused of being closed without paying the workers' benefits. In addition, the government expropriated various collapsed companies and turned them over to the workers. Moreover, significant land distribution measures were taken when idle parts of the large estates were turned over to the peasants to form agricultural cooperatives. The tax system was enforced to increase the revenue from the private sector, and in general, political linkages with business interests were rejected. (Ellner 2008, 121–126)

In 2006, Chávez was re-elected with 63 per cent of the vote, further legitimizing his power and leading to new radical measures to carry on the revolutionary process. These measures included nationalization of various companies that were privatized in the 1990s and were in the hands of foreign capital, particularly the US. In the oil sector, foreign investors had to accept the Venezuelan state's 60 per cent ownership of the companies and their workers were also transferred to PDVSA. The *chavista* coalition was merged into one party, the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV), which had over five million members in 2007, even though some of the *chavista* parties chose to stay out of the coalition party. In 2007, a referendum was held to ratify 69 reforms to the Constitution of 1999, to fortify the revolutionary process, but the proposition was rejected by 52 per cent of the voters. (Ellner 2008, 127, 129.) The proposed reforms included the unrestricted re-

election of the public officers, which was then posed to a new referendum and accepted in 2008, meaning that among other public officers, President Chávez can be re-elected for unlimited terms.

From the beginning of his rule, Chávez has had a conflicted relationship with the private media, and the media has had a protagonist role in Venezuelan politics. The political role of the media was particularly intense during the period of strong opposition between 2001 and 2004. The private media's support for the opposition became particularly clear through the decision of the media to remain silent during the coup of 2002, when no information of the process was transmitted to the people and, on the contrary, through the excessive reporting of the protests against the government during the general strike that started later the same year. (Cañizalez 2006.) The government has responded with hard discourse against the private media that is accused of serving the interests of the 'oligarchy'. Chávez also decided not to renew the radio broadcast license of the Radio Caracas Television (RCTV) in May 2007, which was considered to have supported the coup in 2002. RCTV was one of the most popular national TV channels and the denial of the licence led to widespread protests against the government, accused of censorship and restriction of the freedom of the press. The government has also in various occasions threatened different private newspapers and TV Channels with sanctions or closing.

With the objectives to promote plurality, informative equilibrium and civil participation, the Chávez government has been also supporting the establishment of alternative and community media (e.g. MINCI 2012). In Venezuela, the battle over meaning is fairly visible, since the question of 'who is telling the truth' has become an important aspect of political discussion and media is the main venue for it. A good example of this is the definition of the objective of the government owned newspaper *Ciudad Caracas* to "fight for the truth with the truth" and the naming of another government newspaper as 'Venezuela for real' (*Venezuela de verdad*). The socialist ideas of the 'bolivarian revolution' are impressed upon the people by public campaigns, and at the same time the 'old money elite' that used to govern before Chávez are trying to fight back with their views through some of the private media. Many times the discussion includes exaggerations of one's own achievements and of the faults of the adversary.

The combination of transformational policies and a discourse that empowers the lower class, explains the open resistance of Chávez from the business sector and the US government. The most influential enemies of Chávez are afraid of a demonstration effect, where Venezuela is an example to other Latin American countries, whose leftist movements Chávez has been also accused of

financing with Venezuelan oil money. A rise of leftist and center-leftist governments has indeed been witnessed in other Latin American countries, such as Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Ecuador, and Bolivia. This has been accompanied by the US government's increasingly hostile attitude towards Venezuela. (Ellner 2008, 4, 113.) However, it seems that in Latin America, the significance of the president Chávez has decreased in regional leadership after 2008 (Latinobarometro 2012).

The next time president Chávez's political popularity will be measured in the presidential election of October 2012. However, the recent health problems of Chávez, who has been operated on and treated for cancer in 2011 and 2012, imply that he may not be available for many re-elections, and that the *chavistas* should start to look for other options if they want to stay in power. This time the opposition has also managed to select a common candidate, Henrique Radonski Capriles, who is the leader of the opposition party *Primera Justicia*, and serves as the Governor of Miranda state until the end of 2012. Even though his political stance is moderate left, Radonski has been identified with powerful economic groups.

## **2.2 Poverty in Venezuela**

In the 1990s Venezuela faced a sharp increase in the level of poverty. According to the country's national statistics, the level of poor households in 1997 reached 55.6 percent of the population, and the rate of households in extreme poverty was 25.5 percent. In the beginning of the rule of president Chávez in 1999, these rates were 42.8 and 16.9 percent, respectively. With the exception of a temporary increase of poverty in 2002 and 2003 due to the economic recession caused by political instability, military coup and the extended general strike, the poverty levels have been declining since the 1990s. In 2011, 26.7 percent of Venezuelan households lived in poverty and 7.0 percent lived in extreme poverty. (INE 2012; see also Weisbrot & Sandoval 2008.) The Chávez government has significantly increased social spending, particularly on health, food security, and education (Weisbrot & Sandoval 2008.) In 2000, Venezuela embraced the Millennium Development Goals and according to the government, most of them have been achieved in record time by 2009 (MINCI 2010).

According to the Gross National Income (GNI) per capita, Venezuela is currently listed among the upper-middle-income countries of the world, however it still belongs to the recipients of the Official Development Assistance (World Bank 2012; OECD 2011). Venezuela is also listed among the

countries with high human development, and is above average for the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. However, Latin America still suffers from the highest inequality of income distribution in the world, and the unequal incomes decrease the actual Human Development Index. This is also true for Venezuela (UNDP 2011a, 28; b, 3–4). That said, the level of inequality in income distribution has been decreasing recently in many Latin American countries that have embraced leftist or center-leftist policies. In 2010 Venezuela was listed as having the lowest level of income inequality in Latin America (ECLAC 2010, 206; Montecino 2011). Nevertheless, it has been disputed whether the increasing equality in income is caused by well-designed policies or merely by a temporary economic boom (Montecino 2011).

### *Urban poverty and the barrios of Caracas*

Even though the rural areas generally suffer more of poverty than the urban areas (see e.g. IFAD 2012), Venezuelan poverty can mostly be seen as an urban problem since the country as a whole is highly urbanized, with approximately 90 percent of the population living in the cities (INE 2001). In addition, the problems of inequality are most visible in the big cities, such as the capital city of Caracas, where the vast low-income areas are spread on the hills of the city next to the middle or high-income residential zones.

Marginal zones, unplanned urban settlements, areas of informal occupation, and low-income urban communities (See for example Briceño-León, 2009, 26; Winton, 2004) are all names used by academics for the same kind of urban areas, just highlighting different aspects of them, whether it is the marginality and separation from the formal city, the lack of planning in housing, the informality and the colonizing or invasive nature, or the lack of wealth. In the common speech, but also in many academic texts, they are called ‘shantytowns’ or ‘slums’ in English, which translate to *favelas* in Brazilian Portuguese. In Latin American Spanish these are called *colonias* (colonies), *pueblos jóvenes* (young villages), *villas miserias* (misery towns) and *tugurios* (hovels), depending on the country. In Venezuela, the commonly used name, also in an academic context, is *barrio*. As a direct translation this means ‘neighborhood’, but it is used in Venezuela to refer to poor or working class neighborhoods (*barrio pobre*, *barrio popular*) and can be translated to slum or shantytown.

In this research the word *barrio* is used to refer to Venezuelan slums in a similar way that the word *favela* is used in research written in English to refer to Brazilian slums. However, I use also the word ‘community’ to refer to the case barrio “El 70” and its inhabitants. Barrios are defined as areas



of homes and infrastructures that are self-constructed by the population that lives in them. They begin as unplanned settlements but become more stable with time, as well as physically stronger and denser. (Sánchez, 2000.) These low-income areas typically have a high population density and complex urban structure, following the typography of the terrain or due to unplanned construction (Briceño-León, 2009, 26). Barrios are also identified as suffering from lack of infrastructure and inadequate basic services, few employment opportunities, and high levels of social and economic violence (Winton, 2004).

Approximately 50 percent of the Venezuelans live in urban barrios (Cilento 2004, 13) and in Caracas, the share of the slum dwellers is estimated to be more than 60 percent (Sanchez, 2000). The construction of barrios increased in Venezuela, and in Caracas particularly, in the 1960s and 1970s when people moved from the countryside to the cities. People also came from other Latin American countries, tempted by the Venezuelan oil wealth. (La Rosa 2008a.) Between 1950 and 1990 the population of the metropolitan area of Caracas increased 300 percent, whereas the population living in the barrios of Caracas rose 878 per cent, which indicates an enormous lack of housing and urban policies of the contemporary governments (Cilento 2004, 17). The physical and social conditions of the Venezuelan barrios and their inhabitants started to deteriorate from the late 1970s.

### *The excluded majority of slum dwellers*

The low-income residential areas, or barrios, are marked by their exclusion from the formal city. Social exclusion means the inability of society to keep all groups and individuals within its reach. It refers to the tendency of societies to push vulnerable and difficult groups and individuals away from the mainstream, push them to the least popular places and away from the common aspirations. (Power, 2001, 346.) Socially excluded are the people and groups that are not able to participate in the social activities of the majority, especially in the formal job market. (Crowther, 2007, 58, 359.) In Latin America, social exclusion is related to wider social, political, and economic changes, such as migration and rapid urbanization, institutional change, and modernization of the economic sector, that have left part of the society dependent on the informal mechanisms for survival. In addition to exclusion from job market and social services, judicial and police institutions have not been able to adapt accordingly and thus leave large segments of society without access to justice and economic and physical security. (Berkman, 2007, 4–6.)

The social exclusion of the barrios and their inhabitants is, however, a rather complex issue in the context of Caracas specifically. It is the majority of the inhabitants of the city that live in the barrios and are excluded from the formal city. Thus it is actually the life in the barrios that form the mainstream in Caracas, which is controversially pushed to the margins. There are also significant differences within the conditions of the inhabitants of the barrios, of whom many are included in the formal job market but because of high prices, cannot afford formal housing, whereas others suffer from the multiple problems of poverty and exclusion.

Regardless of their specific conditions, all the inhabitants of the barrios share the stigma of their residence. Anne Power (2001, 347) suggests that in addition to the physical and socio-economic characteristics, the bad reputation and history of the poor areas contribute to their exclusion by activating fear that causes rejection and isolation. The stigma is stronger in the so-called poverty clusters, which consist of various poor neighborhoods that tend to group together. In the clusters the disadvantages of poverty are more concentrated and more extensive, and the people's possibilities are limited in many ways. The long history and strong stigma also hinders change in these areas. (Ibid. 348–349.) In Caracas, the barrios are mostly part of larger poverty clusters and so is the case barrio of this research. The people that do not reside in the barrios seem to have mostly negative perceptions of the barrios of Caracas, whereas the residents of the barrios themselves seem to perceive them in a more positive manner (La Rosa, 2008b; 2009a).

In the 1990s, Yves Pedrazzini and Magaly Sánchez (1992) suggested that life in the barrios of Caracas is determined by a certain 'culture of urgency', which has emerged from the failure of formal society and economy to integrate the urban poor. The lack of formal economic possibilities led the slum dwellers to develop a series of informal, and sometimes illegal, survival strategies defined by urgency, of which crime and violence is the most extreme example (ibid., 31). In addition to leading to increasing poverty, social inequality, and exclusion in general, the neoliberal policies of the 1990s included methods of more direct exclusion of the urban poor of Venezuela. In Caracas, three new municipalities (*Chacao*, *Baruta* and *El Hatillo*) were created in the affluent areas of the city, which led to further deprivation of the majority of the barrios that were left out of the new municipalities, even though they would have acutely needed the resources divided between the affluent and poor zones. During the ten years following the year 1989, thirty new municipalities were created in Venezuela at the expense of the poorer areas. (Ellner 2008, 93.)

## *Politics of inclusion*

The informal livelihood and way of life still prevail in the barrios. However, contrary to the exclusionary neoliberal rules, the focus of social and economic programmes of the Chávez government is on the community level, with the intention to incorporate the barrios into the cultural, economic and political life of the nation. In 2002, the government started the delegation of authority to community organizations. The slum residents were encouraged to organize to conduct surveys of their communities, distribute land deeds to longtime residents, and develop public areas for recreational purposes. By mid-2005 one hundred thousand land deeds had been assigned and different commissions of the barrios had participated in the planning and implementing of public works in their communities. Barrios were also encouraged to form neighborhood councils or community councils (*consejos comunales*) to undertake social and infrastructural projects in the communities. In 2007, over 20 000 community councils had been formed. (Ellner 2008, 126–132.) However, in spite of the inclusive policies, barrios still suffer from various problems of exclusion and poverty, and not all of the barrios have achieved the level of organization required to plan and implement community development projects.

When the various social missions, such as those in health, education, housing, and food security, were launched in 2003 they quickly achieved considerable coverage and support of the poor sectors of the country. However, the missions began to debilitate and the number of beneficiaries started to fall in 2007. This has been seen as a consequence of the lack of institutional procedures and resources to respond to the rapid expansion, as well as a result of the creation of a parallel structure of administration that has allowed the politicization of the missions. (D'Elia & Quiroz 2010.) The achievements of the social programmes of the current government are still substantial in that they have started to transform the lives of the poorest sectors of society therefore contributing to their empowerment. Even though there have been cases of malpractice, there are also success stories. Through their own participation, the poor have learned administrative skills and they may have also developed a stronger sense of cooperation and solidarity. (Ellner 2008, 130–131.)

## 2.3 The situation of violence and insecurity

If Venezuela is notorious for something other than president Chávez, it is the serious situation of insecurity and violence of the country that has been reported by different media worldwide (e.g. Ulkolinja 2012; Romero 2010). Latin America has been listed as the second most violent region in the world, after Africa, and as the region with highest rates of homicides by firearms in the world (UNODC 2011, 9). Before 1990s, Venezuela was seen as an exceptional case in Latin America for its low rate of violence. However, the situation changed, especially after the incident of Caracazo in 1989, and the homicide rate has been growing sharply. Currently, Venezuela and its capital city, Caracas, belong both to the top five in the regional country and city comparisons of homicide rates. (Briceño-León, 2009, 27–29.)

According to the most recent estimate offered by the Venezuelan Observatory of Violence<sup>7</sup> (2011) at least 19,336 homicides were committed in Venezuela in 2011, that is 54 homicides per day, more than doubling the numbers presented ten years earlier. According to different national surveys the Venezuelans have perceived personal insecurity as the major problem affecting them (Briceño-León, 2009, 27). Although the great majority of the citizens share the worry, the urban violence in Venezuela, as everywhere, affects mostly the poor urban areas and especially their young male inhabitants who are the most prone to be the victims as well as the perpetrators of violence (see e.g. Briceño-León, 2005). Homicide is the principal cause of death for men aged 15 to 24 years old in Venezuela (Gabaldon, 2004).

### *Explanations for violence*

High levels of homicide are generally associated with low human and economic development and high levels of income inequality. In general, homicide rates in South America have been decreasing with the economic growth during the last 15 years. Venezuela is thus an exception with its increasing development and decreasing inequality yet still very high homicide rate. Even though drug trafficking is considered to have a significant role in the Venezuelan homicides, the increase has also been associated with other factors such as general conventional crimes. (UNODC 2011, 10, 54.)

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<sup>7</sup> Venezuelan Observatory of Violence (*Observatorio Venezolano de Violencia*) is an organization that combines the efforts of various Venezuelan universities to research the situation of insecurity in the country.

Social exclusion is a contributing factor to violence. As previously explained, social exclusion may lead to certain ‘culture of urgency’ where illegal survival strategies may be used (Pedrazzini & Sánchez 1992, 31). For the excluded young men, when the formal ways of paid work and economic dominance of family are closed, there may be a necessity to obtain the identity of ‘man of honor’ through criminal activities that bring money and by violence to gain respect and dominance (Zubillaga & Briceño-León, 2001). Social exclusion and violence thus interact creating an environment where a minority of the excluded uses violence, affecting the lives of the non-violent majority of the excluded (Berkman, 2007, 4–6).

One of the most common forms of urban violence in Venezuela is gang violence that is mostly motivated by the intention to take control of certain zones from other gangs, or by conflicts within one gang, for economic reasons but also for the sake of power and respect. This often leads to a circle of revenge and to a gang war that is settled only when somebody achieves the position of the ‘tsar of the barrio’. Another principal cause of violence is the resolution of *culebras*, which refers to revenge following the defamation of one man by other. To restore his honor and maintain the respected position, the defamed proves his masculinity and power by killing the insulter or someone close to him. The *culebra* may start, for example, with the taking of a girlfriend, a motorcycle, or a gun of the other or through robbing the community. This may also lead to a circle of revenge that may be extended to the families and friends of the involved persons. (Ortega 2004, 31–33.)

A Venezuelan sociologist, Roberto Briceño-León (2005), has constructed a sociological framework to explain violence in Latin America based on three social levels of factors explaining violence: the structural, macro-social factors originate violence as primary causes, referring to societal and cultural conditions that create the basis for violent behavior; meso-social factors foment violence, referring to material conditions of urban life as well as to particular sub-cultural expressions that may encourage and facilitate violence; and the micro-social factors facilitate violence, contributing to the above mentioned factors or their lethality, but producing violence themselves. (Briceño-León, 2005; 2009, 24.)

According to Briceño-León (2005; 2009), the most important macro-level factors in the Latin American context are: the inequality, especially when related to urban poverty; youth unemployment and inactivity; weakening of family and religion as mechanisms of social control; and the democratization of expectations when people have equal ambitions for consumption, but unequal capacities and resources to fulfill them. The meso-level factors include: urban segregation

when the physical characteristics of the low-income areas facilitate the territorial control by criminal gangs and impede the access of the police; the culture of masculinity that emphasizes the importance of acquiring respect among young men; the reorganization of the drug market in a way that the commissions of retail are paid in more drugs and not in money, which leads the dealers to constantly look for new markets causing armed battles over territories; and the impunity as a consequence of the dysfunction of the criminal justice system, caused mostly by the lack of resources and corruption. The micro-level factors include, for example, the excessive consumption of alcohol, easy access to fire arms, and the inability of some people to express verbally their inner feelings of rage or disgust (Briceño-León, 2005,1633–43; 2009, 24–27.)

As primary causes, the factors at the macro-level are the most relevant, but at the same time they are the most difficult to change. At the meso-level, the individual possibilities to influence the factors are bigger and it is easier to change these less structural factors. (Briceño-León 2005; 2009.) The sociological model of Briceño-León somewhat coincides with the ecological model of violence developed in the sphere of World Health Organization (Krug et. al. 2002), which divides the explanation into individual, relationship, community, and societal factors that contribute to violence.

However, in the sociological model the unemployment is situated in the macro factors whereas the ecological model locates it at the community level. I consider that the unemployment should not be situated among the macro factors as it is not a structural cause in the same way as the values and the inequality that affect all the other factors. I also consider that the democratization of expectations is one feature of the problem of inequality and not necessarily a separate macro factor. On the contrary, the masculinity culture, or *machismo*, in the sociological model, is situated at the meso-level, whereas in the ecological model it is located as a societal factor. Since cultural values, such as those of *machismo* determine other factors, such as the weakening of the family, I consider that it should have more attention cutting across all three levels of the sociological model.

### *The consequences of violence*

The most visible consequences of violence are lost lives, injuries, and sorrow. Violence also causes direct economic costs to governments, thus representing a considerable portion of the countries' Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in violent prone regions, as in Latin America. This portion of public resources could be used to support social and economic development by investing it in the

primordial fields of health and education. In addition to direct economic and social costs, violence lowers the labor force's productivity, hinders human and social capital accumulation, as well as reduces the savings and investment rates. (Buvinic et al., 2005; Krug et al., 2002, 3.)

The increasing violence and the knowledge of it, diffused typically by media, also causes fear in the populations at large. Fear may or may not be based on a real threat, but equally the feeling is real and strongly affects the wellbeing of individuals and the whole society. This fear has different consequences as people respond to it in various ways and use different coping mechanisms. The requirements for better public security service increases. People avoid places and times considered dangerous. Moreover, people pay for private security companies to secure their homes and close their home streets with fences and guards. However, the ones that are at greater risk, people who live in the barrios, cannot afford to pay for the security but they may organize themselves as neighborhood vigilantes that use informal justice. (See for example Briceño-León 2005, 1664; Winton 2004.)

Social exclusion is one of the main causes but also one of the most far-reaching consequences of violence. As the main perpetrators of violence are clearly defined to be poor young men, there is a risk that this group generally becomes target of discrimination. According to Rachel Pain (2003), youth in general tend to be criminalized and positioned by society and the state as a conflictive group; as feared, out of control, and in need of regulation. This criminalization obscures the fact that young men are more often fearful victims than the offenders, and that their existence is not limited to these features either. These stereotyping dualisms of victim/offender and feared/fearful are often maintained by the media and policy, but also by the academia. Criminalization causes further problems, such as secondary victimization, where the stigmatized groups are treated inadequately when reporting a crime to the police or passing through the criminal justice system as victims. It can cause also institutionalized victimization where public agencies are involved directly as perpetrators, as in police violence or harassment, or indirectly when failing to address the experiences of crime. (Ibid.)

According to Martha Ortega (2004), urban poverty and especially poor young men are stigmatized and criminalized in Venezuela. When the authorities, the media, and the citizens require the state to act more determinately against crime and violence, there is an assumption of insecurity that is caused by certain marginal inhabitants of the barrios against the good citizens. The response of the state is to increase control and repression in the barrios where the criminals supposedly come from.

These are normally reactive responses to crime peaks, thus attacking only the symptoms of the problems instead of using preventive methods. However, the police do not differentiate between the criminals and those who look like them when doing their arbitrary detentions based on the physical characteristic of the persons, their clothing, and where they come from. (Ibid., 62–69.) When a state cannot guarantee the security of its citizens, and especially when the violent situation proliferates or when the state agents are part of the problem, the state may face a crisis of legitimacy (Rosales, 2005).

### *Response of the Venezuelan state to the deteriorating security situation*

Because it is such a wide problem, urban violence is one of the main themes of the public debate, and an intensely disputed political issue with wide interest for the media in Venezuela. From the political point of view the theme is delicate: if there is no solution to the problem, there may not be more votes for the unsuccessful party in power. During the government of Chávez, some initiatives have been declared and also implemented to try to solve the problem with the overarching aim of not using repressive police force and emphasizing prevention through social reforms. However, according to homicide statistics the different political actions seem to have been inefficient. Also the Minister for Internal Affairs has changed ten times during the Chávez rule, which has been reflected in discontinuity of the policies, since policies change with each new Minister (see e.g. Briceño-León, 2009, 32).

The decentralizing policies of the 1990s facilitated the creation of municipal police forces throughout Venezuela (Ellner 2008, 107). Currently the police is fairly fragmented; there are more than one hundred different police forces in Venezuela, of which the great majority are municipal police forces and the rest are regional police forces and different national police units (See e.g. Briceño-León, 2007, 165). The Venezuelan police forces have a poor reputation with some exceptions in certain rich municipalities. There is a widespread lack of confidence in the efficiency of the police and the criminal justice system in general. The different police forces are indicated to have participated in illegal activities and violations of human rights from corruption and robberies to torture and homicides. (See e.g. Briceño-León 2009; PROVEA 2011.)

In 2006 the government started a wider process to improve the security situation of the country. The National Commission on Police Reform (*Comisión Nacional para la Reforma Policial*, CONAREPOL) was established to examine the situation and propose police reforms. The



commission consisted of representatives of central and local governments, members of parliament, academics, and civil society organizations. They conducted a national victim survey and consulted distinct sectors of the society, including the private sector, community leaders, as well as national and foreign experts. The report with recommendations for the reforms was published in 2007. It recommended various reforms to improve the efficiency of the police in guaranteeing civil security and to discipline the abuses and illegalities of the police themselves. The reforms included, among others, the creation of a national police trained in human rights and with the emphasis on crime prevention and cooperation with local communities (See e.g. Briceño-León, 2007, 32.)

Due to a political conflict within the government, the report was first ignored by the new Minister, but it was put on the table again in 2008 when the Bolivarian National Police (*Policía Nacional Bolivariana*) force was created and a council was established to implement the police reform. Also, an Experimental Security University (*Universidad Nacional Experimental de la Seguridad, UNES*) was founded in 2009 to provide the recommended police training. The outcomes of this reform are still to be seen.

## **2.4 Description of the case community barrio “El 70”<sup>8</sup>**

### **2.4.1 The physical and social conditions of the barrio**

The barrio “El 70” is located in the mountains of southern Caracas, in the parish of *El Valle*, one of the 22 parishes of the municipality of *Libertador*. “El 70” is one of 38 barrios located in *El Valle*. The community is situated in the slopes of the top of the mountain, at the altitude of approximately 1,200 meters. There are two routes to the barrio, both starting from the *Avenida Intercomunal de el Valle*, the principal avenue crossing the *El Valle* parish, and various other slum communities are passed in the way up to “El 70”. “El 70” has approximately 4 500 inhabitants distributed in the different sectors of the barrio (Centro para la Paz y los Derechos Humanos de UCV 2003e;

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<sup>8</sup> In the description of the barrio “El 70”, in addition to independent research, also documents written by the inhabitants of the barrio, an interview of a community representative and personal communications with the inhabitants are used. The “Letter of the Barrio” (Centro para la Paz y los Derechos Humanos de UCV2003) is written by the youth of the barrio as a product of a human rights project that was implemented in “El 70” in 2003. The “Diagnosis of the barrio El 70” has been compiled by the organized community of “El 70” (2008). The interview, conversations and the texts produced by the community are here used only to describe the situation of the barrio, and their discourses are not analysed in detail. However it is acknowledged that also this information is produced from certain point of view and for certain purposes, and cannot be seen merely as objective descriptions of the ‘reality’ in “El 70”.

Organized community of “El 70” 2008).

There were already some houses in “El 70” in the end of the 1950’s, but it was considered to form part of the community *Aguacaticos*, situated in the lower part of the mountain. More people moved to the area as part of the great migration from the countryside to the cities in the 1960s and also as a consequence of the demolition of houses and evictions of the residents of the lower parts of the mountains, out of the way of the massive urban development projects in the 1970s. (Centro para la Paz y los Derechos Humanos de UCV 2003e; La Rosa 2008a, 69.) The terrain where “El 70” was constructed belonged to the municipality and it was a zone of difficult access and little supervision by the authorities, which facilitated the land takeovers (La Rosa 2008a, 79). “El 70” was named by its inhabitants according to the year 1970, when the community expanded and was defined as a separate community from *Aguacaticos*. (Centro para la Paz y los Derechos Humanos de UCV 2003e.)

The majority of the inhabitants of “El 70” come from the east of Venezuela and from *Los Llanos*<sup>9</sup> of central and southwestern Venezuela, but many are also originally from Caracas. In addition, there are approximately 50 families of the ethnic group *Vayú*<sup>10</sup>. (La Rosa 2008a.) Some inhabitants have also moved in as a consequence of different natural disasters (Centro para la Paz y los Derechos Humanos de UCV 2003e). The various origins of the inhabitants can be perceived in the community as a range of different cultures and as a mixture of rural and urban ways of life (La Rosa 2008a).

The incoming people constructed their homes without any planning or support from the government and with whatever material they could reach. Common construction material was adobe, wood, and plastic, with roofs of zinc plates, if affordable. Already in the 1970s, the inhabitants organized themselves to cement some of the streets and stairs of the barrio. (Centro para la Paz y los Derechos Humanos de UCV 2003e.) In 2008, in the *Diagnosis of the barrio El 70* (Organized community of “El 70” 2008.), the infrastructure of the houses was defined as seriously deteriorated; the majority of the roofs, walls, and bathrooms were found in bad condition. Some houses were also defined as a situation of high risk. Parts of the principal street were collapsed, the majority of the stairs and the paths were deteriorated, being especially dangerous when raining. (Ibid.) The lack of infrastructure and basic services is suffered the most in the higher parts of the barrio (La Rosa 2008a).

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<sup>9</sup> *Los Llanos* is a vast region of tropical grassland plain covering much of central and southwestern Venezuela.

<sup>10</sup> *Vayus* or *Guajiros* refer to an indigenous people whose original residential territory is located in the northern border area between Venezuela and Colombia, in both sides of the border.

Electricity is the only basic service that is supplied on a regular basis; the houses have legal connections and electric meters. The services of water and gas exist, but are deficient. (Organized community of “El 70” 2008.) Water is supplied only every five days in the middle sectors and every eight days in the higher parts of the barrio (La Rosa 2008a). The waste management has stopped serving the higher part of the barrio and as a consequence, the garbage piles up and is dumped in inappropriate places, causing problems with hygiene and health. (Centro para la Paz y los Derechos Humanos de UCV 2003e; Organized community of “El 70” 2008.) As a result of the governmental mission *Barrio Adentro*, there are Cuban doctors working in the community half-day on weekdays. However, there is no proper doctor’s clinic in the barrio, and the doctors’ work is mostly limited to prevention, promotion, and diagnosis, since they do not have adequate medical and surgical equipment to treat the people. The most common illnesses in the community are diabetes, hypertension, asthma, and diarrheal infections. (Centro para la Paz y los Derechos Humanos de UCV 2003e; Organized community of “El 70” 2008; La Rosa 2008a.)

There is no public transport, but both of the routes going up to the barrio from the avenue are covered by their own jeep cooperatives that bring people back and forth for a cost of approximately 50 Euro cents. However, the jeep drivers offer their service free in the cases of emergency, for example, bringing women to the nearest hospital to give birth. Also, in the case of death, the drivers take the family members and neighbors back and forth to the cemetery without cost. (Centro para la Paz y los Derechos Humanos de UCV 2003e.)

In the sector *Las Terrazas* in the higher part of “El 70”, there is an elementary school that was constructed in 1962 and extended in 1980. First it served as a primary and secondary school, but in the late 1990s the extension was closed down due to poor infrastructural conditions. Currently, the school serves only the first to sixth grades. With the closure, the amount of pupils decreased from 800 to 560. More recently, the civil protection service has defined the entire school as uninhabitable. Although many projects have been announced, the school has not been repaired and the children continue to use this space for their schooling, as there are no other options. However, the amount of pupils has decreased further to 300, whose enrolment is also possible only by offering classes in two turns, in the morning and in the afternoon. The decreased enrolment has lowered the level of education in the barrio, and there are children that do not attend school at all, since all the parents do not have the resources to send their children to the schools outside of “El 70”. (Centro para la Paz y los Derechos Humanos de UCV 2003e; Organized community of “El 70” 2008)

In *Las Terrazas*, there is a cultural centre that has offered training for youth and adults, catechism lessons and activities for children. *Las Terrazas* has also a basketball court constructed by the community where even tournaments are organized between different communities. The court is used also for other recreational activities and it serves as the inhabitants' primary meeting point where all the entrances to the different sectors come together. According to the youth of the barrio the court is taken care of by the 'bad boys' (*Chicos malos*<sup>11</sup>). There is also another basketball court constructed by the Evangelical Church in the sector of *Mata é Mango*, but there are no other sport installations or children's parks in the community. To practice religion, the community has a Catholic chapel, an evangelical centre, and a spiritualist centre, which all organize different kind of activities. (Centro para la Paz y los Derechos Humanos de UCV 2003e; Organized community of "El 70" 2008.)

The principal source of employment of the inhabitants of "El 70" is the underground economy and construction. There are many improvised businesses in the barrio, including more than twenty stores, as well as various ice, ice cream and gas bottle vendors, vehicle repair shops, and liquor stores, among others. The average income of the inhabitants corresponds to the minimum salary established by the government<sup>12</sup>. There is also a large number of unemployed people, partly due to the lack of education. Moreover, the youth that graduate from high school often lack the economic resources to go to university, but they do not find work either because of the lack of experience. According to the inhabitants, the employers also discriminate against them because of the bad reputation of the barrio. (Centro para la Paz y los Derechos Humanos de UCV 2003e; Organized community of "El 70" 2008.)

#### **2.4.2 Community organization and participation**

"El 70" has fairly high level of organization. The foundation of the Technical Water Committee of "El 70" in 2005 and its successful project to install water pipes and widen the water system to cover all the barrio, has been seen as a starting point for the more recent and intensive community organization. The committee was founded as a result of a conflict in 2005 when the community did not receive water for one month due to technical problems in the distribution system. The

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<sup>11</sup> *Los chicos malos* (the bad boys) is a term that the youth of "El 70" use of the delinquents by since they consider the word *malandro* (thug) too ugly. (Centro para la Paz y los Derechos Humanos de UCV 2003e). The word *malandro* is commonly used in Venezuela to refer to a delinquent.

<sup>12</sup> In March 2012, the minimum wage in Venezuela was 1 223,89 bolivars per month that is approximately 200 euros per month.

inhabitants of “El 70” organized various protests, closing down the main avenue of *El Valle* whilst demanding a solution to the problem. Approximately 200 inhabitants, the majority of whom were women, participated in the demonstrations. The government recognized the problem, and the community was guided to found a committee to plan and implement a project to improve the situation. (La Rosa 2008a, 68, 70, 72.)

Even though the water service is still fairly deficient due to the excess demand, this project did significantly improve the quality of life in the barrio. Most importantly, the success of the community in getting the attention of the government, in planning the project, and in achieving the approval and support of the government for it, built the basis for further organization. Moreover it improved the self-esteem of the community and recovered their trust in their own capacities. This has also shown the ‘other face of the barrio’ that is based on honesty, in comparison to many other barrios, where the community organization is characterized by conflicts and battles for power. In addition, this process of organization and participation fostered the emerging leaderships of various community representatives, such as the main coordinator of the water project, Mr. Romel Acosta, as well as Ms. Migdalis González and Mr. Jose Abreu, who have been active in organizing many of the later activities. (La Rosa 2008a, 68, 78, 80.)

Some experiences of organization existed in the barrio before the founding of the Technical Water Committee. Examples of this are the committees for health and land related issues, and the interventions of some government missions in the areas of health (*Barrio Adentro*), culture (*Misión Cultura*) and high school education (*Misión Ribas*). However, the organization and participation of the inhabitants did not reach the level required to create other organizations, such as community councils. The first community council of “El 70”, *Las Terrazas*, was founded in 2006 only after the founding of the Technical Water Committee, which was turned into an autonomous part of the community council. (La Rosa 2008a, 73, 76.)

The community council *Las Terrazas* covers four sectors of the community, and in 2008 the *Vayús* and the sector *Baranda* had their own community councils, leaving only a few sectors of the barrio without formal organization. (Interview, community representative 18.9.2008.) The community councils consist of different working committees that focus on the solution of particular problems of the community. For example, the community council of *Las Terrazas* has sub-committees for health, land, water, food, housing, education, culture, sport and recreation, and children and youth, as well as units for financial administration and social auditing (Organized community of “El 70”

2008). Through the community councils, the organized community has been able to convene community assemblies and meetings with the government and organize various events, as well as administer the resources for different projects, applying responsible social audits (La Rosa 2008a, 79).

The participation of the inhabitants in the community organization seems to concentrate mostly around the different projects that are implemented but have meanwhile stalled. In addition, the main responsibility of the projects is normally assigned to or taken by a few active representatives of the community. However, even though major malpractices have not been revealed, this concentration of responsibility sometimes causes criticism, as well as disputes of power between different community members, especially related to the management of project finances. (La Rosa 2008a, 68, 79, 80.) This was also observable in a community council meeting, where one of the community representatives contested certain rumors of mistrust. (Meeting of the community council Las Terrazas 15.12.2008.)

The participation in the weekly routine meetings of the community councils have decreased with time, being around 20 people, and there are also inhabitants that are more apathetic and not willing to participate in the projects either (Personal communication, community representative 15.12.2008). Women are the most active participants in the community councils, attending the meetings and showing more interest in the problems of the community. Many adolescent and adult men have participated directly in the implementation of the infrastructural projects, where the work has been divided according to the traditional gender roles; women have the responsibility of cooking for the men that work in the construction. The adolescent females maintained more distance to the projects until the implementation of a community theatre, which gathered their participation as well. (La Rosa 2008a, 80–82.) According to the survey of the youth of *El Valle*, the great majority of the respondents from “El 70” shares a positive image of the people from “El 70”, and feels a sense of belonging within the barrio. However, only seven of the 22 respondents said they would participate in the community organization and only six of them would like to continue living in *El Valle*. The majority answered this way because they said to have more aspirations in the life. (La Rosa 2008b.)

In addition to the government interventions and the different churches, there are also other organizations from outside of “El 70” that implement their projects in cooperation with the community. In 2003 the Centre of Peace and Human Rights of the Central University of Venezuela

conducted a human rights project, supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Venezuela. The barrio “El 70” was selected as one of the case communities to create an observatory of human rights with the youth of the barrio. The project focused on police violence. (Centro para la Paz y los Derechos Humanos de UCV 2003a; 2003b.) Also, the civic organization *Red de la Calle* has been active in the community providing, for example, workshops of project planning to support the community councils. *Red de la Calle* has also been implementing a project that aims at supporting the deficient education and popularization of science by offering the children and the youth of “El 70” playful workshops of natural and social sciences. The Embassy of Finland in Caracas supported this pilot project in 2009–2011. In addition, a cultural organization formed by young artists, *Núcleo Endógeno Cultural Tiuna El Fuerte* has organized various concerts and other cultural events in the barrio. Also, a theatre group *La Compañía Metropolitana de Teatro* has organized community theatre in “El 70” since 2007.

#### **2.4.3 The security situation in ”El 70”**

The barrio “El 70” has been known as one of the most dangerous and impenetrable barrios of *El Valle* and Caracas (La Rosa 2009b, 199; Centro para la Paz y los Derechos Humanos UCV 2003d). This perception is partly confirmed by the results of the survey of young people from *El Valle*, according to which “El 70” is considered dangerous by the outsiders, but not by the youth from “El 70”. When asked what places they consider dangerous in *El Valle*, in total eight per cent of the respondents, 11 per cent of the youth from residential areas, and six per cent of the residents of barrios, named the barrio “El 70”. Only the barrio *San Andres* was mentioned more often by almost 10 per cent of all the respondents. However, none of the respondents from “El 70” considered their residence as a dangerous place, whereas most of the respondents from *San Andres* named their own barrio as dangerous. Nevertheless, six of the 22 respondents from “El 70” would change the insecurity if they could change something in their community, and five would also change the addictions. When asked about the solutions they propose for the problems, the insecurity and addictions, they were many times seen to not have any solution, but few of the respondents proposed repression as the way to resolve these problems. (La Rosa 2008b; 2009a.)

According to the information of the *El Valle* police station from the year 2000 (Centro para la Paz y la Integración de UCV, 2000), even though there were incidents, “El 70” was not the most dangerous barrio of the parish. Between January and August of 2000 one robbery, three incidents of injuries for violence, four cases of violence against women, and two homicides were registered in

“El 70”. There were many barrios with significantly higher rates of violence and crime, such as *San Andres* with 14 homicides. “El 70” was also mentioned as one of the communities that worried about the violence, especially against the women and children, and have tried to inform its inhabitants about the theme, also asking for the support of the educative and health institutions to increase the awareness of the problem. (ibid., 95–100, 106, 113.)

Also other factors indicate that in spite of the reputation, criminal violence is not the most elevated in “El 70” and for many of the inhabitants there are other kinds of insecurities that worry them more. One of the conditions for the selection of the case barrios for the human rights project in 2003 was that the levels of violence of the barrios should be low enough to facilitate the implementation of the project. Nevertheless, of the three barrios selected for the project, “El 70” was the only one that chose a theme related to the right to life and security, whereas the others chose to focus on the rights related to work and education. This was not, however, motivated by the insecurity caused by criminal violence, but by the repressive police. In the project, 208 inhabitants of “El 70” were surveyed to determine their perceptions of police violence. (Centro para la Paz y los Derechos Humanos UCV 2003a; 2003b; 2003c.) There is no formal police unit in “El 70”, but the different police forces occasionally go up to patrol and raid the barrio (Centro para la Paz y los Derechos Humanos de UCV 2003e; Interview, community representative 18.9.2008).

According to the research, 78 per cent of the surveyed inhabitants of “El 70” shared a negative opinion about the police corps, and only three per cent perceived them in a positive manner. Police incursions were reported to be abusive, invasive, and intermittent with an authoritarian and discretionary attitude of the police officers. The determination of the criminal incidents by the police was repeatedly observed to be imprecise and diffuse, decreasing the regular judicial processes and increasing the bribery. Almost 94 per cent of the respondents had been victims of police abuse, being most prevalent in 15–20 year old men. The most common form of abuse was verbal, but 26 per cent of the respondents had also been victims of physical and verbal abuse at the same time. The majority of the abuses were committed in the presence of witnesses; the most of them happened in public spaces, such as the basketball court or the jeep stop. However, more than 90 per cent of the respondents said they preferred to not report the incidents, mostly for mistrust and fear. (Centro para la Paz y los Derechos Humanos UCV 2003d; 2003e.)

When the community had requested the police to stop the abuse, the response was a total absence of the police, even in serious situations of danger; the police stopped attending the emergency calls of



the inhabitants of the barrio. According to the human rights project report, the answer of the police was: “Yes, we know that there are problems, we can hear the gunshots here. Crouch down.” During the implementation of the project in 2003 the police killed six young men in “El 70”. (Centro para la Paz y los Derechos Humanos UCV 2003d.)

The bad image of the police in the community is also confirmed by one of the community representatives:

We feel more insecure when the police or national guard come here, because they are repressive police forces. When they come here they think that everybody is a thug [*malandro*]. Every now and then they come [...] the boys (*muchachos*) [...] even the good [*sanos*] have to hide. Because [...] suddenly you stay there and did not run away for being good, anyway they grab you. (Interview, community representative 18.9.2008.)

For the police every young man from the barrio seems to be a criminal, it does not seem to matter if they are involved in criminal activities or not. Disapproval of the police was clearly also expressed in informal conversations with the inhabitants of “El 70” (2.10.2009)<sup>13</sup>. The inhabitants commented that they get nervous when the police come to the barrio and that they trust more in the ‘boys’ (*chamos*) than in the police. One of the inhabitants summarized the situation in one sentence: “the police are more thugs than the thugs themselves” (*la policía es más malandro que los malandros*), which was explained by referring to an incident where the police supposedly brought hooded alleged criminals up to the backwoods of the barrio and killed them, claiming afterward that there was a confrontation between police and the gangs.

According to the human rights project report from 2003, the security of the community was guaranteed more by the armed groups and gangs of the barrio than by the police. The police, and especially the Metropolitan Police force, were not considered as representatives of law and order, but more as rival gangs, a perception that was used to partly justify the presence of the gangs in the sector. (Centro para la Paz y los Derechos Humanos UCV 2003d.) Also according to the youth of the barrio (Centro para la Paz y los Derechos Humanos de UCV 2003e), the young members of the armed gangs maintained the security in the barrio, watching that there are no abuses inside of the community, and they are also assumed to help create and maintain respect between the inhabitants.

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<sup>13</sup> These conversations happened in the context of observing how the National Guard was emptying the local store of beer. The stores in the barrios are not given permits to sell alcohol and according to the inhabitants it is common that the police raid the stores and take the found alcohol with them. Doubts were presented on whether the officers would bring this alcohol to the police depots as evidence or take it for their own use.

However, one of the community representatives (Interview, community representative 18.9.2008) points out that after the establishment of the community councils in “El 70”, the maintenance of security in the barrio was not organized by gangs, but by the organized community. They have a network of community members that all have radiophones to communicate with each other about the arrival of the police or any unknown or suspicious persons to the barrio (ibid.) It was also explained that there are still young men walking around with guns, just in case any threat from outside appears (Personal communication, community representative 15.12.2008).

According to the community representative, “El 70” was very insecure and violent in the past, but the situation has changed significantly after the gang disputes were resolved and the community became more organized, starting in the early 2000’s. The insecurity is more related to getting in and out of the barrio, since other barrios have to be passed through and on the streets gunfights may occur. There is still some delinquency and drug abuse in “El 70”, but there is also control and respect inside the barrio, partly based on the repressive means of the community against the criminals that act in “El 70”, including violent punishment and threats. However, it was pointed out that security has, for the most part, been achieved by the work of the community councils that organize preventive cultural, sport, and educative activities to keep the youth away from drugs and crime. (Interview, community representative 18.9.2009). In spite of the increased security inside of the community, the tough reputation of the barrio lasts, and the representatives of the community consider that the media, for its part, maintains and reproduces the prejudices (e.g. Personal communication, community representative 2.10.2009).

It is presumed in the community that the violent media representation has led to, or maintained, certain practices of discrimination and exclusion. As a consequence, the community is trying to affect the media content by promoting positive events taking place in the community and by producing media texts themselves. The barrio “El 70” does not have any community media of their own, but the community representatives have been writing articles, for example, in the state-owned regional newspaper *Ciudad Caracas* (e.g. 2.10.2009; 21.1.2010). Also, the state-owned television channel *Ávila TV*<sup>14</sup> has covered many recreational and other events taking place in the barrio. In October 2009, the community organized a press conference to correct the news that the different

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<sup>14</sup> Ávila TV is a regional television channel created by the Venezuelan government and the Caracas metropolitan mayor in 2006 and it can be seen in the metropolitan area of Caracas. The channel focuses on music and culture attracting young adults.

media had published of a confrontation between police and the alleged gang members of the neighboring barrios. According to the inhabitants of “El 70”, the incident took place in the neighboring community, even though the media reported it to have happened in “El 70”. These reports, for example, hindered the organization of a planned registration event by the government to issue identification cards to the inhabitants. Only one of the national newspapers reporting the event, *Últimas Noticias*, was present in the press conference. (Personal communication, community representative 2.10.2009; Press conference in “El 70” 6.10.2009.)

Another example of the production of a distorted representation of the community is from November 2009 when a closing event of the first phase of the science project of *Red de La Calle* was organized in “El 70”. In the event, the Ambassador of Finland was present, which can be considered as a fairly uncommon event in the barrios. However, even though all the national and regional media were invited to the event, the only media present was the State own Avila TV. It seems like the media is not very interested in the positive news from the barrios.

### **3. MEDIA REPRESENTATION**

Questions of representation have been studied particularly in the sphere of cultural studies that focuses on the analysis of cultural meanings, signs, and texts. Research on representation is the core of this field. (Rossi 2010, 261.) The rise of cultural studies at the end of the 1970s has been seen to form part of the linguistic, interpretative, and discursive turn of the social sciences to emphasize communication as meaning production and interpretation (Välvirronen 1998, 13). In this research, the approaches of critical cultural studies and sociological media research are used as a theoretic-methodological basis in the analysis of the connections between media representations and social exclusion. In this chapter the concept and function of representation is presented.

#### **3.1. Discursive and critical approach to representation**

Representation is a functional concept interlinking meaning, language, and culture (Rossi 2010, 265). By using signs and symbols in language people represent their concepts, ideas, and feelings to others (Hall 1997c). There are three theoretical approaches to representation that differ in their perspective on how language is used to represent the world. According to the reflective approach, language reflects the fixed meanings that already exist in the ‘real world objects’, whereas the intentional theory states that language expresses only the personal and intentional meanings of the text producer. Finally, the constructionist approach is based on the idea that meaning is constructed in and through language, that things in themselves do not have meaning, rather people construct meanings socially by using the language. (Ibid., 24–25.)

The starting point for this thesis is that the newspaper articles and the representations they offer do not directly reflect the ‘reality’ of the barrio “El 70”, but they are journalist reproductions of this reality. However, I am not proposing that the representations are produced only according to journalists’ personal intentions, but that there are different factors that affect the journalist practice and text production. Following the constructionist approach, I suggest that representations always include selection processes and the reality is represented from a particular point of view and in a certain social context (e.g. Fairclough 1997; Törrönen 2010, 278). This study is based on the weak

social constructionist approach that does not question the existence of material reality, but the relation between the meanings and the objects of reality (Väliverronen 1998, 19). This is combined with critical discourse analysis, especially that of Norman Fairclough, who draws also on certain critical realist viewpoints to highlight the importance of context in representation (Fairclough et al. 2003).

The social constructionist theory is based on the idea that people are at the same time products and also producers and reproducers of their sociocultural surroundings (see e.g. Karvonen 1998, 32). According to Stuart Hall, (1997a, 1–2) the practice of representation produces culture that he defines as shared meanings between the members of a society or a group that enable them to interpret the world in roughly similar ways. People give meanings to other persons, objects, and events partly by the context in which people use them and partly by the way people represent them – what they say, think, and feel about them (ibid., 3). Furthermore, language itself is at the same time a product and a producer of social reality. Language does not reflect reality, but is only a tool to give meanings to and interpretations of reality, thus constructing reality. (Eskola & Suoranta 1998, 141; Kunelius 1999, 135.) Accordingly, things do not have one true and unchangeable meaning (Hall 1998, 9; Väliverronen 1998, 18).

The most common approaches used in the constructionist theory of representation are semiotics, which studies the signs and how they produce meaning and the discursive approach, which is more interested in the socio-cultural context and the effects and consequences of the use of language, called by Hall as the ‘politics of representation’ (Hall 1997a, 6). In this research the latter approach is applied, where particular discourses are connected to certain representations; discourse is the language that represents certain social practices from certain points of view (Fairclough 1997, 59, 77). Discourses are generally defined as certain ways of speaking or using language (see e.g. Fairclough 1997; Väliverronen 1998, 25). By defining discourse as use of language, discourse itself is understood as a form of social practice (Fairclough 1997, 75). This is based on the Foucaultian definition of discourses as “the ways of referring to or constructing knowledge about a particular topic of practice” (see e.g. Hall 1997a, 6). Fairclough also further defines discourses as positioned ways of representing social practices and material world (Fairclough 1997, 77; Fairclough et al. 2003, 8). In this research, both of these definitions are relevant. The former emphasizes more the process of constructing meaning and knowledge, whereas the latter highlights the context and intentionality of representation.

The discursive approach to meaning and representation is based on the assumption that “physical things and actions exist, but they only take on meaning and become objects of knowledge within discourse” (Hall 1997c, 45). In other words, people can think about the material world only by giving it meaning. Accordingly, even though some phenomena are said to be produced by representation, it does not deny their reality and material existence, but it emphasizes their socially and culturally structured nature. (Ibid., 45; Rossi 2010, 268; Väliaverronen 1998, 25.) Jokinen et al. (2004, 27) define discourse as fairly solid and regular systems of meaning relations that are constructed in the social practices, and at the same time construct the social reality.

### *Critical discourse analysis and representation*

Although discourse analysts note the importance of socio-cultural context and argue that representation has real effects on the social world, indeed, it is the core reasoning behind their work, they have been criticized for not paying enough attention to the broader social context and for not being able to show how the effects of representation are produced (Fairclough et al. 2003). Fairclough et al. (ibid.) suggest to complete the analysis of representation with a critical realist approach to analyze more concretely and completely the extra-discursive conditions, and to demonstrate how the effects of representation are produced. Critical discourse analysis developed by Fairclough intends to fill this gap between the text and the ‘reality’ by completing the text analysis with context analysis (ibid.). Fairclough highlights not only the extra-discursive conditions that affect the text production, but also how the discourse produces these conditions, such as power relations, ideologies, and institutional practices.

Instead of a mere method of linguistic text analysis, Fairclough (2003, 3, 202) considers critical discourse analysis particularly as a resource for critical social research. Fairclough has used critical discourse analysis to research language in the ‘new capitalism’ that is becoming an important research area in the field. With ‘new capitalism’ Fairclough refers to the contemporary transformations of capitalism and globalization, with their unrestrained emphasis on continuous growth, that tends to lead to decreasing democracy, and increasing inequality, insecurity, and environmental destruction. Neoliberalism is seen as the political project to achieve this restructuring for ‘new capitalism’. Fairclough suggests that the neoliberal political project is, to a substantial amount, led or driven by a neoliberal discourse. In this context, critical discourse analysis aims to produce knowledge to facilitate emancipatory change by defining the obstacles and revealing unrealized possibilities for change in the way social life is organized. According to Fairclough

beyond ‘new capitalism’, critical discourse analysis can and should be applied in other areas of social research, taking as a starting point a social problem that has a semiotic aspect, such as the assumption of the negative and discriminatory media representation of urban poverty. (Ibid., 4, 203, 209–210.)

### **3.2 Representation as a process of meaning production**

According to Stuart Hall (1997c) representation is the process by which the members of a culture use language to produce meaning of the concepts in their minds. Representation thus interlinks the concepts and the language, enabling people to refer to ‘real world’ or imaginary objects, people, and events (ibid., 17). Specifically, this means *re*-presentation in that the object of language is not present, but it is *re*-presented in the language, thus presented again or differently (Lehtonen 1997, 13; Väliverronen 1998, 19). Representation, however, has a double meaning when referring to being in the place of something or someone else. In addition to signs that represent something that is not present, also persons may represent other people or groups, but also different identities, causes, and ideologies. (See e.g. Rossi, 2010, 263–264.) Here representation is used as a framework for critical discourse analysis of media texts primarily in its language related definition, but also referring to the representatives of people or ideas, when considering who are the present subjects representing others in the media, and who are the others, *i.e.* the absent subjects to be represented (cf. Rossi 2010, 263–264).<sup>15</sup>

According to Hall (1997c, 17–19) the process of meaning construction takes place between two systems of representation; the system of concepts and images in the people’s minds and the language system. The system of concepts and images organizes and classifies concepts and creates relations between them. These concepts are mental representations of the objects inside and outside of people’s minds. People coming from the same culture tend to share similar conceptual systems and thus interpret the world in quite similar ways. However, to represent or exchange meanings and

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<sup>15</sup> The concept of image is sometimes used as a synonym for representation when image is defined as reproduction of ‘reality’ or as a mental picture of things that are not real nor present (see e.g. Gamson et al 1992, 374). Image is however often used to refer to the quality characteristics that a person, group, or organization associates with or aspires for itself, or are attached to it from outside (see e.g. Lehtonen 1998a). In the latter, the process of meaning production is given less attention, and thus I prefer to use the concept of representation to study not only what kind of meanings are attached to my case community, but also how these meanings are produced and what kind of effects this representation might have.

concepts with other people a shared language is needed. The conceptual system is translated into a common language by correlating the concepts with certain signs, such as written or spoken words, sounds, or visual images. A material sign, as such, does not mean anything and it can signify only when symbolizing a concept. Meaning thus depends on the relationship between a sign and a concept that is fixed by a code. Through representation, things, concepts, and signs are linked together. Corresponding signs and conceptual systems form cultural meaning systems where the shared cultural codes stabilize meaning in different languages and cultures. The correlation between conceptual and language systems is set by the codes in a way that seems natural and permanent. The codes that translate the concepts to language are, however, fixed by social and cultural conventions making translation an arbitrary process. It is thus always people who make things have meaning. (Ibid. 17–19, 21–27.)

*Meanings change according to context, usage, and historical circumstances*

According to Hall (1997c, 62), the producer-sender and the receiver-interpreter of the representation are both active participants in the process of meaning production. The model of encoding-decoding developed by Hall in 1970s has had substantial influence on media research (Välvirronen 1998). Hall (1997c, 62) uses the term encoding to refer to putting into meaning or to putting things into the code, whereas decoding refers to the taking of meaning or to the interpreting of meaning. Interpretation depends on the shared assumptions between the sender and the receiver about the case, the intentions and beliefs, and the social relations (Fairclough et al 2003, 5). Decoding is thus affected by the cultural context, social location, worldview, and prior experience of the interpreter. The messages may even be decoded interactively in conversation with other interpreters who may see different meanings (Gamson et al, 1992, 373–375, Välvirronen 1998, 19).

In addition to cultural and social conventions, all meanings are bound by the historical moment in which they are produced. Meanings can thus never be fixed and they change from one culture and historical period to other, opening the representation to constant production of new meanings. Language has also stored all the previous and hidden meanings, and there is always some sliding of meaning involved in the process of interpretation that may further distort what people want to say. (Hall 1997c.) People can thus never control the meanings of all the signs they use in their communication (Välvirronen 1998, 19). Consequently, the decoded meaning is never the same as the one that was encoded into the message (Hall 1997c, 32–33).



Related to the historical context, also the intertextual context of representation affects the production of meaning. This means that every text has traits of other earlier texts, for the both producer and interpreter (e.g. Fairclough et al. 2003, 9; Hall 1997b, 232; Väliverronen 1998, 34). Single representations have their meaning when read in the context of other representations. Meaning is thus accumulated or contested against others in different representations. When considering the representation of a certain theme, normally similar representations can be seen to repeat. (Hall 1997b, 232.) Hall (ibid.) uses the concept ‘regime of representation’ to refer to this set of representational practices through which certain theme is represented at some historical moment. The discursive approach to representation emphasizes the importance of the historical context of a particular regime of representation (Hall 1997a, 6; see also Fairclough 1997).

Although the production of meaning depends also on the interpreter, the possible interpretations are always restricted by the characters of the text (Fairclough 1997, 28). The discursive approach acknowledges the active interpreter, but the premise remains that things only take on meaning within discourse. Accordingly, the subject is not the author of the knowledge and meaning, rather the discourses construct and suggest certain subject-positions with which the interpreter must identify in order to take meaning and make sense of the message (Hall 1997c, 55–56).

### **3.3 Representation of otherness**

As explained earlier, in addition to common language, cultural meaning system depends on the shared conceptual system that organizes and classifies concepts and creates complex relations between them, according to the principles of similarity and difference, for example. (Hall 1997c, 17). In other words, culture depends on the classificatory system to give things meaning. This is how difference is constructive, but it can also contribute to exclusive practices based on ‘otherness’. Understanding the world through difference may produce hierarchies that are expressed, for example, in the prevailing order of dichotomies – such as man/woman, white/black, culture/nature. These dichotomies are part of the struggle over meaning and the hierarchical relations are not fixed or natural. (Rossi 2010, 271.) Hall (1997b, 225, 230) is especially concerned about the interpretation of difference in the broader context of cultural belongingness and difference, when it arouses feelings, attitudes, and emotions, including fear and anxiety, in the receiver.

Through classifications, representations also define identity; who people are and with whom they belong. This may lead to marking and maintaining an identity within a group and differences between groups. (Hall 1997a, 3.) Ullamaija Kivikuru (1998, 333–335) states that identity works as a tool to make ‘we/them’ differentiations and this dichotomy marginalizes groups of people based on divisions, such as nationality, class, ethnicity, and gender. Media may reproduce and maintain this exclusion by highlighting the difference or the exoticism of ‘the other’ to make clear how far they are from the values of the majority or ‘us’ (ibid.). Hall (1997b, 229–230) shares this idea, proposing that people who are significantly different from the majority, being ‘them’ and not ‘us’, are represented through opposed and polarized binary extremes, such as ‘good/bad’ and ‘civilized/primitive’, and the representation of one difference often attracts others.

While the media creates a common history and crosses borders, creating connections to faraway things, it also controls who has the access to certain communities and who is stigmatized as unsuitable (Kivikuru 1998, 333–335). By marking difference people symbolically become closer to each other and build up their culture, but in doing so they also stigmatize and exclude the things that are seen as abnormal (Hall 1997b, 237). Kivikuru (1998, 333–335) argues that when these power relations prevail in a society, there is no space for the marginal, and even if the voices of the excluded were heard more, the publicity alone would not bring the groups out of the margins.

#### *Stereotyping as a signifying practice to fix difference*

Representation of otherness and the marking of difference can be done through stereotyping that works as a signifying practice to fix difference (Hall 1997b). Stereotypes are generally defined as generalized and simplified conceptions of certain groups of people based on a few characteristics that are considered to be common to all the members of the group. Stereotypes are usually grounded on some attributes of the group that are common and visible to an outsider, and as such they may be considered truthful. However, these attributes are often explained incorrectly if considered from the point of view of the object group. Therefore the characteristics on which the stereotypes are based may be real, but the meanings given to them from outside are erroneous. (See e.g. Lehtonen 1998b, 308–309.) In the media, especially if the journalists do not know well the ‘reality’ of the topic they are reporting, prevailing stereotypes are easily adopted and then confirmed with the reports (see e.g. Tuula Tuisku 2005).

Stereotyping can be further understood through the distinction made by Richard Dyer (1977, in Hall 1997b, 257) between typing and stereotyping. According to Dyer, when people make sense of the world by classifications they position other people in different, typified orders according to the roles they perform, their membership in different groups, and their personality. These types are simplified characterizations focused on a few attributes and maintained almost without change. In stereotyping, these types are used to reduce everything about a person into those few accessible, memorable, and widely recognized attributes of the type, exaggerating and simplifying them and trying to fix them permanently. (Ibid., 257–258.) According to Hall (1997b), to mark absolute difference, stereotypes are often based on binary oppositions and in order to fix difference permanently naturalization is used as a representational strategy. The difference is associated with nature and made to seem natural, for if it was cultural it would be open to change. (Ibid., 243, 245, 262.)

In consequence, stereotyping separates the normal and acceptable from the abnormal and unacceptable, excluding everything that is different. According to Dyer (1977, 29, in Hall 1997b, 258), social types indicate the people that live by the rules of the society and stereotypes point to the ones that are to be excluded. Stereotyping therefore forms part of the maintenance of social and cultural order, by drawing the line between normal and deviant. It creates a symbolic community of ‘us’ and expels all of ‘them’ (ibid.). It is thus worth considering when typifying through representation becomes stereotyping and what kind of information and power those stereotypes produce (Rossi 2010, 272).

### **3.4. Politics of representations**

The discursive approach to representation is especially concerned with the effects and consequences, or ‘the politics’, of representation, investigating how the knowledge produced by particular discourse “connects with power, regulates conduct, constructs identities and subjectivities, as well as defines the way things are represented, thought about, practiced and studied” (Hall 1997a, 3–4, 6). Social reality can be seen as a field of competing and conflicting discourses, each of which gives the world a different meaning (Valtonen 1998, 97). In addition to defining identities and what is ‘normal’, who belongs and who is excluded, meanings help to set the rules, norms, and conventions to order and govern social life. This explains the struggles over

meanings and the relation of power to meaning production, when one wishes to fix his meaning to govern and regulate the behaviors and ideas of others. (Hall 1997a, 9–10.) In short, representation is a political act; there is a continuous struggle over what is important, what issues can be made visible, what questions can be discussed, how and by whom (Rossi 2010).

According to Fairclough (1997, 66), truth can be accessed only through its representations, and all representations include certain viewpoints, values, and intentions. The same issue can be approached through different conceptual constructions. Since representations are selected among other possible constructions, they always bring forth only some characters of the absent reality, which direct the receivers to understand the reality and their own functions in a certain way (Törrönen 2010, 281). With the use of certain discourse people can thus be made to think in a certain way, making them also prone to act accordingly. In this way, language is connected to the production of societal reality. (Karvonen, 1998, 38–39.) Representation thus implies continuous choices that are political when representing the events and issues from someone’s particular point of view (Karvonen, 1998, 38–39).

The power-focused discourse analysis uses the Gramscian concept of hegemony to refer to a position of power, defined as influence on thought and practice, that one group holds over others. Hegemony refers to power through achieving consent, rather than through coercion, and it is always struggled over and never permanent. (Gramsci, 2001; see also Hall 1997c, 48; Fairclough 1997, 92.) When knowledge is linked to power it assumes the authority of truth and has the power to make itself true. (Hall 1997c, 49.) According to Erkki Karvonen (1998, 34), meanings of different circumstances of social reality vary depending on the status of the people. Different individuals and groups thus strive for better circumstances for themselves and to maintain or improve their status by intending to make their own meanings prevail. Since the good of some may signify the bad for others, this generates a battle of how and according to whose advantage the social reality should be produced. (Ibid., see also Pietilä 1998, 409–411.)

The question of struggle over meaning can be approached through the concept of ideology that refers to ‘meaning in the service of power’ (Thompson 1990, in Fairclough 1997, 25). Fairclough (2003, 9) defines ideologies as “representations of aspects of the world which can be shown to contribute to establishing, maintaining and changing social relations of power, domination and exploitation”. The ideologies and the related assumptions that are taken for granted are formed according to prevailing power relations between the different social groups (Fairclough 1997, 75).

Ideologies work most effectively when they have become part of common sense, neutral, natural, and unchallenged (Valtonen 1998, 103). To consider the effects of texts on power relations, Fairclough (2003, 9.) states that text analysis must be framed in social analysis. It is possible to define whether a claim or assumption is ideological only by considering the causal effects it has; whether the ideological assumption is adopted and consequently contributes to maintaining or changing the power relations (ibid.)

When considering the politics of representation, the discursive approach gets closer to the intentional approach of representation since the process is seen to be affected by the objectives of the producers of meanings. However, in the constructionist approach, as has been stated already, the sender is not the only producer of meaning, as the interpreter also has an active role. This so-called negotiation of meaning between the sender and receiver, however, further politicizes the process. (See e.g. Rossi 2010, 270.) Critical analysis strives to define the politics of the text, the intentional and productive aspect of language, and the ideological axioms; how language leads its users towards certain solutions. (Valtonen 1998, 113.)

#### *Media as a battle ground for the politics of representation*

When considering media and power, the question is how the power relations of a given society affect the media, but also how the media, for its part, affects the power relations that are involved for example, in the relations of class, gender, and ethnicity or between certain social groups (Fairclough 1997, 23). Media is a crucial venue for the battle between different social groups to define the reality from their point of view and for one view to achieve hegemony in the society (Karvonen, 1998, 36). Critical social and cultural theories consider mass media as a form of social and cultural power that maintains the prevailing ideology and power relations. Controlled by the economic and political elites, media reproduces the prevailing model of society maintaining the existing social inequalities. (See e.g. Gamson, et al. 1992, 374; Karvonen 1998, 32–33; Kunelius 1999, 186; Pietilä 1998, 408–409.) This process seems so natural that the social construction is invisible; media representations appear as transparent descriptions of reality and seem not to include any political assumption (Gamson, et al. 1992, 382).

There are different views on how ideology ends up in media texts. According to Gamson, et al. (1992, 382) journalists do not need to get different views in balance when making their stories in the context of the prevailing order, and in this process they may, mostly unconsciously, deliver

subtle messages of what is normal. Fairclough (1997, 120) for one, considers that the production of media representations is more intentional, arguing that by interpreting and explaining the events of the ‘real world’ reporters try to make people see the world in a certain way and act accordingly (see also Karvonen, 1998, 38–39). The former idea defines the journalist as a passive or even lazy and unconscious puppet of the ideology, whereas the latter emphasizes the active and intentional participation of the journalist in reproducing the prevailing order. Pietilä (1998, 409) bridges these two ideas when proposing that ideology is not based on the control power or editorial politics, but it is built into the general methods and routines that have taken shape within the development of the media, for example into the use of official, powerful, or specialist sources leaving other groups out.

I consider that all of these views may apply; the journalist may serve the prevailing ideology in various ways, unintentionally or not, and their work is always more or less affected by the journalist conventions that they may or may not actively acknowledge. However, even if the power elite had the priority in the production of media representations, other groups can always try to question them (Pietilä 1998, 409–411). There are different discursive strategies to deconstruct the hegemonic discourses that are presented more in detail later in this research (see e.g. Jokinen et al. 2004; Hall 1997b). In addition, media texts can be read in an opposing way and there are many possibilities to offer competing constructions of reality beyond the media representations (Gamson et al, 1992, 373, 375, 383). In some cases, media may also take a stand to oppose the hegemonic point of view (ibid.; Fairclough 1997, 64).

### **3.5 Reporting poverty, crime and violence – earlier research**

Research on the media representations of urban slum communities is fairly scant. However, research is done on the media representation of poverty and violence and crime that are connected to the representation of slums. In this chapter some of this earlier research is presented.

#### **3.5.1 Media representation of poverty**

“The same place is reserved for the poor in the media agenda as in the society: they stay in the margin, excluded from the scoop, the majority of them without image, criminals, of African descent, suffering, people without knowledge, without sympathy, without a “hook” for good news.”<sup>16</sup> (Dr.

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<sup>16</sup> Author’s translation. Original citation in Spanish: “En la agenda mediática a los pobres se les reserva el mismo lugar

Karla Sponar, Director of the Regional Program of Media and Democracy in Latin America, Konrad Adenauer Foundation, in Kitzberger & Pérez 2008.)

According to various studies on the media representation of poverty, poverty tends to be a marginal issue in mainstream media (see e.g. Iyenger 1990; McKendrick et al. 2008; Tablante 2008). This is partly explained by the universal or culturally bound news criteria (see e.g. Galtung & Ruge, 1965; Kunelius 1999) that defines newsworthiness according to the topic's potential impact on and proximity to the audience, and the expected supremacy of the countries and people reported. Poor places and people with low status are thus often reported in media only in the context of exceptional, negative events. In Latin America, less than one percent of the content in the dominant press is found to cover issues of poverty (Kitzberger & Pérez 2008, 10). Poverty is a minor theme also in the Venezuelan mainstream press, even though according to some research poverty is more documented in Venezuela than in other Latin American countries, covering from three to ten percent of the content, depending on the newspaper (Tablante 2008, 233).

Various studies have shown that media representations of poverty are often distorted, affecting the public opinion and attitudes towards poor people and the social politics to support them (see e.g. Gilens 1996; Iyengar 1990; McKendrick et al. 2008). Martin Gilens (1996) conducted a content analysis on how the newspapers portray poverty and race in the USA, comparing the results with the statistics and the public perceptions of poverty. According to the analysis, the amount of media representations of the poor as African Americans more than doubled their real proportion of the poor population, and they were also represented as belonging in the most unsympathetic group of poor. (Ibid., 516–517.) This result is in line with the suggestion of Hall (1997b, 229–230) that the representation of one difference often attracts others. Gilens' research also demonstrates the mutual influence between media representations and public understandings of poverty, concluding that distorted media representations are likely to result in public misperceptions that reinforce the existing biases and stereotypes. (Ibid., 516–517.)

Fairclough (1997, 147) points out that the poor are not normally represented in the media as social actors, but more as passive objects. However, even though they appear as passive objects, the poor

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que en la sociedad: quedan al margen, excluidos de las primicias, en su mayoría sin imagen, criminales, afrodescendientes, sufrientes, gente sin conocimiento, sin simpatía, sin “gancho” para dar una buena noticia.” (Dra. Karla Sponar, Directora del Programa regional, Medios de Comunicación y Democracia en Latinoamérica, Fundación Konrad Adenauer, in Kitzberger & Pérez 2008)

may not be represented as dispossessed through subordination, but simply as poor according to their living conditions, fading out the reasons, and thus responsibility, for the poverty (Ibid., 149). This seems to be the case, at least in the UK, where reports on poverty tend to represent the government as active and the poor people as passive victims. Poor are differentiated from the mainstream society, they lack initiative, they are unproductive and a burden to 'us'. (McKendrick et al. 2008.) Similarly, television in the USA represents poverty rather in terms of personal experience than as a collective outcome. The responsibility for poverty is assigned to the individual and not to the society, which may lead to attitudes against the public assistance of the poor that are to blame for their own situation. (Iyengar 1990.)

### *Representation of poverty in the Venezuelan media*

In Venezuela, poverty was acknowledged in media significantly only after becoming the principal cause of political mobilization through the social outbreak called *Caracazo* in February 1989. Thus the mediatization of poverty was simultaneous with the politicization of the issue. (Tablante 2006, 117, 122.) Before 1989, housing was the principal theme covered when representing poverty, but after the *Caracazo*, the themes of health, and nutrition, specifically child malnutrition, received equal attention (Pereira, Alaysa & Ruiz, Elisa 2005, in Tablante 2006, 135). Ten years later the principal theme of poverty was again housing, however that was represented as directly connected to the problems of health, as well as violence and insecurity (Calonge 1999, 292). More recently, poverty has been debated between two main themes: the deprivation of housing or other basic necessities, and crime (Tablante 2008).

In the Venezuelan newspapers, poverty is mainly an urban problem (Kitzberger & Pérez 2008, 55; Tablante Unpublished 2008, 241). Since the notes of the national newspapers are concentrated in Caracas and its suburbs, poverty is defined mainly through the urban areas characterized by physical exclusion, structural improvisation, and social instability, of which criminal violence is the most visible expression. Criminal incidents are reported to happen mostly in the poor urban areas, and criminality is represented as the main symptom of the degradation of the poor. (Tablante 2008, 241, 291.) A similar tendency is found in the representation of poverty in the Venezuelan movies that picture, almost exclusively, the slum communities of the hills of Gran Caracas and the different expressions of criminal violence as the context and scene for poverty in the movies (Altman, 2008).



Political polarization of Venezuela is manifested in the ways of representing poverty in media. In Venezuela, according to an analysis of the sources of information used in the articles about poverty in the newspaper *Últimas Noticias* (Calonge 2009), poverty is represented less from the perspective of personal experience and more from an external, analytical perspective that may be political or academic. The poor people themselves are used less as sources than the external parties, being authorities, government sources or experts, and other public figures. The external perspective is polarized, having two opposite representations of the poor, seeing them as either political actors or objects of political manipulation living in poverty and attended by the actual government, or as citizens or objects of study for which the state should ensure the opportunities and tools to be free and independent individuals. When viewed through their personal experience, poor people are, however, represented as conscious of their volatile situation that can change from one day to the next, but also as active citizens that protest and reclaim their rights. (Ibid, 297–298.)

According to the comparative content analysis of Maryorie Dugaro and Lia Lezama (2005) of the representation of poverty in public and private TV channels' news programmes, two opposing versions of poverty are created, confirming the existence of two parallel media realities in Venezuela. In the public channel, poverty is described as a series of needs that are satisfied by the State, whereas the private channel represents poverty as a series of shortages neglected by the government. The public channel does not present the problems as such, but tends to present only the implementation of the public solutions for the problems. On the contrary, the private channel presents only the problems and never the achievements of the government in attending them. One of the greatest differences is that in the public channel, violence and insecurity is absent as a theme connected to poverty, whereas in the private channel this theme occupies 40 percent of the news on poverty. In the public channel the most common themes were health and nutrition and in the private channel it is security and housing. The sources of information had a rather even share in the public channel where the reporter, authorities, anchor, and personal testimonies of the poor were almost equally heard. In the private channel, reporters were the principal voice, followed by the testimonies of the poor and the anchor, whereas the authorities were almost absent. (Ibid. 220–226, 231.)

According to an investigation of the representation of poverty in Latin American press (Kitzberger & Pérez 2008<sup>17</sup>), in the Venezuelan private press poverty is described in rather harsh language,

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<sup>17</sup> This research is published by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation (*Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V.*) (KAS) that is a German political party foundation associated with the centre-right Christian Democratic Union (Germany) (CDU). The political commitment of the publisher may have affected the investigation. Attitudes against the new Latin American

sometimes even representing the poor as a disrespectful threat to urban sociability and security. Poverty may also be represented as a threat to democracy itself when the poor are seen to be politicized by the government that aims to organize and integrate them into the State structure. However, the representation of the government's social missions is twofold: on the one hand they are seen as a tool to politicize and organize the poor to support government politics. But on the other hand, the positive evaluations made by international organizations, such as the World Bank or the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), of the progress achieved through the missions are also covered. The 'socialism of the 21<sup>st</sup> century' appears in the private press as capable of reducing the poverty rate by direct income transfers, but at the same time discourages investments, provokes inflation and maintains the unequal distribution of incomes because of increased bureaucracy and corruption. (Ibid. 55–56, 59.)

Carlos Tablante (2008) concludes that the Venezuelan press represents poverty mostly as a series of socio-economic vulnerabilities triggered by a natural catastrophe or a violent act, suffered by certain excluded communities. Poverty is represented as the inherent deprivation of life conditions, the gravity of which is revealed only by exceptional adverse events. The poor are thus reduced to their disadvantages, implying their dependence on the institutions and authorities that are represented as inefficient, collapsed, or discretionary. (Ibid. 231, 289, 314.) In addition, there is no differentiation between varying levels of poverty (O'Sullivan et al. 2005, 20).

According to Tablante (2008), by focusing only on the symptoms of poverty, the Venezuelan newspapers trivialize the issue, thus contributing to the stigmatization of poverty, and forgetting the cultural, economic, institutional, and social connections to the problem. (Ibid. 296, 312.) This, however, partly contradicts the suggestion of Calonge (2009) presented above that poverty is represented less from the perspective of personal experience and more from an external, analytical perspective. Calogne's suggestion implies more profound consideration of the context of poverty that leads to assigning the responsibility not so much to the poor themselves, but more to the greater society (cf. Shanto Iyengar 1990 above). However, when poverty is treated more from the analytic outsider perspective giving less attention to poor people's own experience, it can be also argued that the voice and the point of view of the poor themselves is not heard (cf. Calonge 2009, 297).

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leftist governments are evident in the report.

### 3.5.2 Media representation of crime, violence and insecurity

Civil security is one of the most important issues in the public agenda and politics. Even if security has different dimensions, such as civil coexistence and community, media tends to highlight the criminal perspective of the issue (see e.g. Rey 2005, 19). Crimes and violence are the most interesting issues to the audience. With less likelihood of becoming politicized, the content of violence and crime is the easiest material to cross over cultural borders, thus availing the media companies to gain the widest audience possible. (Kunelius 1999, 61, 99, 130.) It is widely recognized that media has a direct influence on people's sense of insecurity and opinions about crime, increasing the fears of the public and affecting the attitudes about criminals and crime policy (see e.g. Jewkes 2008, Korander 2000; Rey 2005; Sheley and Ashkins, 1981). According to a research of Sheley and Ashkins (1981, 502–504) on the crime news and public images of crime in the USA, public opinion seems to be closer to the media than to police reports, and closer to newspapers than TV. Even though newspapers are closer to police information than TV, the distribution and proportions of different crimes represented in the newspapers are also significantly distorted (ibid.).

The relation between crime and media is studied specifically in the sphere of cultural criminology that concentrates on the issues of image, meaning, and representation in the research of crime and crime control. In the 1990s, following the general linguistic turn in the social sciences, criminologists started to pay more attention to mass media constructions of crime and crime control. (Ferrell 1999, 395.) Cultural criminology emerges from sociological criminology, constructionist sociology and critical traditions of sociology, criminology, and cultural studies, focusing for example on the mediated construction of crime, deviance, and marginality, and further on the role of the media in criminalizing the deprived and marginalized groups of the society (ibid. 397–399; Webber 2007, 139–140).

#### *The distortions of crime and violence in media and in public opinion*

By their negative and exceptional nature, and possible impact on the audience, crime and violence are always newsworthy. News criteria also affect the selection of crimes to be published, favoring, for example, the most shocking crimes that can be represented in personal terms (cf. Galtung & Ruge 1965, 65–68). Accordingly, some crimes are exaggerated and others are under-represented. Crimes against persons, especially random and violent attacks, receive much more attention than

those against property or which are conducted by governments and powerful organizations. Newspapers tend to report all the homicides, while the rapes, assaults, and domestic abuse receive less attention. (See e.g. Jewkes 2008; Korander 2000; Sheley and Ashkins 1981). In countries with low rates of homicide, the media seems to offer detailed descriptions of the cases, whereas in countries with high homicide rates, basic incidents are not anymore of great public interest and the attention is given only to the most horrifying cases (Rey 2005,13–14).

Criminality tends to be represented in media as a case-specific and fragmented problem. Different crimes are covered by short news focused on the perpetrator and the victim. The exceptional condition of a crime may be emphasized by highlighting the suffering, the criminal strategies, the condition of the victim, and the temporal extension of the crime. There is a lack of an integral vision of the theme; since there is no analysis or discussion of the causes and consequences of the problem, societal background and causalities remain blurred. (Korander 1998, 185–186; Rey 2005, 13, 30, 34.) The number and quality of the sources of crime news is defined by the dependency of the journalists on the police sources that have an exaggerated influence on the published information (see e.g. Rey 2005, 20, 27; Sheley and Ashkins 1981, 493). Problems have also been detected in the processes of verification and contrast of information, as well as in memorizing and reconstructing the events and the realities of the victims. The construction of crime news is affected by the need of fast reporting of a process that is normally slow. As a consequence, there is a haste to publish stories full of confusions and evidence for investigation. (Rey 2005, 20, 27.)

Crime, and especially homicide, is mostly perceived through the indirect mediated version of criminality, which is usually more credible to the section of the public that is furthest from the actual experience of the problem (Niemi 1998, cited in Korander 2000, 183). As a consequence of the distorted and superficial representations of the gravity and the structure of crime, the public perception of crime is distorted, causing a general fear of crimes that are least common and often the fear is bigger than the real risk (Jewkes 2008, Korander 2000, 181). According to Timo Korander (2000, 183), when fear is based on images, there are more possibilities to exaggerate the threats of crime, as well as to underestimate control. If the notion of increasing criminality is joined with the lack of confidence in the police and its abilities to prevent crime, fear and insecurity further increases (*ibid.*). This may lead to a distorted political definition of the problem, causing the wrong response when the visible symptoms or rare crime types are attacked with the enforced control and punishment. This comes at the expense of tackling the underlying reasons of the insecurity or the more common acts of violence (*Ibid.*, 181, 186). Tensions may also increase between the

government and media that diffuse information on the growing insecurity, failing policies, and the public demands (Rey 2005, 7).

In Latin America, the press maintains a constant forum of security that has become one of the key themes of the political agenda and public debate. However, the great volume of crime news also creates a climate of insecurity, alertness, and concern. The hard line politics, announcements of police repression, discussion of laws to detain the crime, and the declarations of the efficiency or limitations of the adopted methods are common content of the news. (Rey 2005, 36.) According to Gérman Rey (ibid., 66–67), Latin American crime news creates various representations of the insecurity that are characterized by: the fear of other that is close, but aggressive and abnormal; the image of the fenced society and growing chaos; the hard line action of the authorities; and the lack of protection by the preventive authorities. Rey points out that the representation of crime in the press tends to move to the sphere of politics, especially in Venezuela where crime is converted into an opportunity to criticize the current government. (Ibid., 34–35.) Also Pedro Aguillón (2010) argues that in Venezuela the representation of criminal violence depends on the ideological focus of the newspaper that has its own interests of informing, but also of generating public opinion.

#### *Exaggerated threat and discrimination*

The distorted representation and fear of crime may also further cause social exclusion, inequality, and fragmentation of the city space (Korander 2000, 186 ). Although the rarest crimes are the most newsworthy for gaining the public's interest, media also often highlights everyday crime, antisocial behavior, and declining morality especially among certain groups, such as young people or other populations that are considered problematic (Jewkes 2008, 33). According to Jewkes (ibid., 33–34), media representation of the deviance of these so called problem groups is seen to cause excessive feelings of insecurity in the public. This further contributes to and highlights the separation between 'we', the decent and law-abiding common citizens, and 'them', the criminals, the dangerous classes that must be identified, controlled, and restrained (ibid.; see also Castagnola 2007; Rey 2005).

Gérman Rey (2005, 22), suggests that crime and criminals are stereotyped, and certain sectors of society, the already excluded and vulnerable population groups, are discriminated against in the Latin American media. The life in the poor neighborhoods, the immigrants, the unemployed and poor young men, as well as the marginal groups, such as homeless people and drug addicts are put on stage and criminalized (ibid.). Also Castagnola (2007) proposes that the media stigmatizes the

criminals, pointing out that in the Argentinean press, criminals are mostly defined as being criminal for life without the possibility to change their lives. They are also identified as persons with low economic, social, and cultural resources, with an almost naturalized tendency to re-offend (ibid.). The stereotyped views have their consequences in policymaking, and the distorted identification of the problem groups may complicate the efficient response to the criminality (Jewkes 2008, 34; Rey 2005, 32–33).

In addition to certain groups, crime news may stigmatize whole geographic areas. For example, the inhabitants of big cities never come to know all parts of the city and the notions of the unknown areas are based on indirect information. As some areas may be represented in media only through the crimes committed there, the general notion of them is determined by their dangerousness, causing fear and affecting the transition in the city. The streets remain empty, since no one dares to walk them. (Rey 2005, 26; see also Korander 2000, 182.) According to Rey (2005, 29) the discriminating and restricted view of certain neighborhoods may also cause protests in its inhabitants, as has happened in the barrio “El 70”, the case community of this research (cf. also Penglase 2007, 322).

Ben Penglase (2007) researched the reporting in the Brazilian press of two specific violent incidents and the emergence of a new discourse of crime that affects the inhabitants of Rio de Janeiro. According to Penglase, newspaper reporting constituted a neo-racist discourse of social difference and exclusion based on criminality defined by residence. Consequently, entire slums of the city came to be seen as dangerous, not just the youth living there, justifying the further segregation of social space and the increasing control over poor. New markers of social stigma were defined geographically according to the spatial division of the city into slums and regular neighborhoods, proposing that the inhabitants of slums are real or potential criminals. Under this discourse, crime is not feared just because it exists, but because it is diffused to new places: the social and urban boundaries are considered impermeable and their transgression is seen as dangerous and threatening. Gunfire inside a slum community becomes worrying only when there are stray bullets that reach the ‘normal neighborhoods’, thus violating the traditional boundaries. This threat calls for prevention by police repression of slum residents. (Ibid. 305–307, 315, 322).

## **4. RESEARCH PROBLEM, METHODS OF ANALYSIS AND DESCRIPTION OF DATA**

In this chapter starts with a description of the defined research problem, after which the basics of critical discourse analysis and the particular methodical tools used in the analysis are presented. Then the process of data collection and selection is explained in detail. Lastly the data is described through classifications of the themes of the articles, the sources of information used and the participants represented in the articles.

### **4.1 Description of the research problem**

This thesis explores the media representation of urban poverty in a developing country context. The aim is to study what kinds of representations are constructed of the poor urban communities and what are their potential effects. The more specific objective is to study the connections between media representation and social exclusion. The intention is to respond to the questions of whether and how media representation discriminates against the urban poor, therefore reproducing their social exclusion and subordination, and how these negative representations could possibly be challenged. This wider research problem is approached through the critical discourse analysis of newspaper articles about one specific slum community, the barrio “El 70”, in the context of Venezuelan society. This research is motivated by a concrete problem presented in this case barrio, whose inhabitants consider that the media representation of their community add to its historically negative reputation, causing further discrimination against the inhabitants. Three complementary research questions are defined to guide the analysis:

- 1) Through what kind of themes, sources of information, and participants is the barrio “El 70” represented in newspaper articles?
- 2) Do the newspaper articles construct discriminatory representations against the barrio “El 70” and its inhabitants, and how? What are the dominant discourses and how do they define the barrio “El 70” and its inhabitants? What identities are offered to the inhabitants and what kinds of relations are

produced between participants? Who have their voices heard in these discourses?

3) What are the potential consequences of these representations and how could the negative discourses be challenged?

The empirical data of my thesis consists of 57 newspaper articles about the community or that mention the barrio “El 70”. The data is first classified by way of content analysis to describe the variety of the themes under which the community is represented, as well as the diversity of the participants that are represented and the sources that are used in the articles. The main method used, however, is critical discourse analysis that is applied to explore the possible contribution of the articles to the social exclusion. The theoretic-methodological basis for the text analysis is formed by the approaches of critical cultural studies and sociological media research, and more specifically by the theoretical assumptions of critical discourse analysis and the earlier research on media representation of poverty, crime, and violence. Critical discourse analysis draws the attention of analysis to the questions of social power relations and, more specifically, to how the data reflects and may affect the power relations that prevail in Venezuelan society.

In addition, the sociological approach to representation requires the use of social theories and social analysis to recognize the structures and processes of the society that are crucial for the analysis enabling the considerations of the potential effects of the representation (Fairclough 2003, 9; Törrönen 2010, 283). To interpret the results in their socio-cultural context, sociological considerations of urban social exclusion and slum violence and insecurity, particularly in the context of Venezuelan society, are also used as a framework. Critical discourse analysis has been used specifically to research neoliberal discourse that tends to increase inequality and injustice, which serves as one possible point of view to be considered in the interpretation of the results of also this research in the context of Venezuelan society.

Research on media representations of urban slum communities specifically is fairly scant. However, the research that is conducted on the media representation of poverty and violence and crime indicate that both themes are usually represented in a discriminatory manner. This justifies the power-focused approach of my research to consider the connections between media representations of urban poverty and social exclusion. Moreover, the starting point of this research, which is the community’s assumption of discriminatory media representations as well as its negative reputation as one of the most dangerous barrios of Caracas, sustains this approach (La Rosa 2009b, 199;



Centro para la Paz y los Derechos Humanos UCV 2003d). When the starting point of discourse analysis is a situation that is defined as a problem, the focus of study is typically on the practices that maintain this problem and thus on the questions and problems of power. (cf. Jokinen et al. 2004, 79.) Instead of aiming to find out the truth of whether the community is dangerous or not, this research intends to demonstrate the possible discriminatory practices in the media representations that reproduce social exclusion. This may offer possibilities to their deconstruction, by creating a basis for opposing discursive strategies to be applied against the negative representations.

As this research is focused on newspaper representations of one case barrio its results are not, and are not intended to be, directly generalizable to the representation of urban poverty in the all Venezuelan newspapers and media. Considering the research problem, generalization is not an issue, since the intention is to explain the phenomenon and make it understandable, not to prove its existence or extension outside of the case (cf. Alasuutari, 1999, 237). However, earlier research on media representations of poverty and crime and violence may support the consideration of the results at a more general level.

## **4.2 Conducting the analysis**

In this thesis, the newspaper articles that are about or mention the barrio “El 70” are analyzed to particularly define whether the community and its inhabitants are represented in a discriminatory manner. Means of critical discourse analysis are used as the principal method of analysis. This chapter presents the basics of critical discourse analysis as well as the specific methodical tools that are used in the analysis.

Before employing the methods of the more specific critical discourse analysis, content analysis is used in this research to describe and classify the data according to relevant factors, such as themes, sources, and participants of the articles. In the content analysis, the focus is on the explicit meanings of the data. Combining quantitative and qualitative methods of text analysis is becoming more common (see e.g. Väliverronen 1998). To explore the representation of certain themes in media in general Fairclough (1997, 27, 139) also recommends the application of content analysis complemented by more detailed text and context analysis. In this research, the content analysis serves to create a general overview of the representation of “El 70” and its inhabitants, possibly

giving some hints as to the plurality of the representations. This is needed, since there are no previous studies on the media representation of the community. Only after this it is reasonable to move to the in-depth analysis of discourse.

Since there is no one true and fixed meaning of things, but meanings change with context, usage, and historical circumstances, analysis of representation is always interpretative, and debate between possible meanings and interpretations, though not between who is right or wrong nor what the truth is (Hall 1997a, 9). Thus, the analysis can only define what kinds of possible meanings are opened and closed, and what kinds of interpretations are induced (Eskola & Suoranta, 1998, 141; Pietilä 1998, 411). Hall (1997b, 228) however, points out that although meaning cannot be ultimately fixed, the representational practice does indeed try to fix one of the potential meanings as the ‘true meaning’. Therefore, the analysis should also strive to find out what is the meaning that the sender tries to put forward (ibid). However, critical discourse analysis is not limited only in trying to understand what is meant or intended to mean, but it is also concerned with the relationship between representations and the material and social world (Fairclough et al. 2003, 7–8). Fairclough (1997, 66–67) states that although disputing the absolute truth is futile, the question of truth cannot be left entirely without consideration. Partiality, completeness, and interest of representations may be compared and conclusions can be made about the relative truthfulness of representations. Regardless, judgments of truthfulness are always subjective and are made from certain positions and viewpoints. (Ibid.)

Even though the objective of this research is not to determine the truth or who is correct, I must acknowledge the presence of judgments of truthfulness when I am interpreting and analyzing the data. This is especially important since I have previous information and personal direct experiences of the case community. Although this previous knowledge cannot necessarily be considered as more truthful than the media texts, it may affect my position towards the media. In addition, this research departs from the supposition presented by the inhabitants of the barrio “El 70” that the media representation of the community is distorted and causes exclusion. The research data does not permit conducting further analysis on the effects of the media on the community or on the society in general, since it would require more information on how these media texts are consumed and interpreted (Fairclough 1997, 99). Nevertheless, my analysis aims at finding out if the representation of the community of “El 70” and its inhabitants is discriminatory, possibly maintaining or reproducing their exclusion and subordination. This also requires consideration of how the Venezuelan socio-cultural and political context is reflected, and whose interests are

forefront in the media texts.

#### **4.2.1 Towards the analysis of media texts – basics of Critical Discourse Analysis**

Discourse analysis is used as a general framework to refer to almost any kind of research that is concerned with meaning, representation, and culture (see e.g. Hall 1997a). It is thus not a consistent research method, but more of a theoretical-methodical framework consisting of principles about language, its usage and role in society that lead to certain questions and methodical choices (see e.g. Fairclough 1992 and 1995 in Valtonen 1998, 96). Social scientific discourse analysis divides into the interpretative social psychological approach, which focuses on the interaction, the perspective of the interpreter, and the plurality of discourses; and into the sociologically focused critical discourse analysis that emphasizes the importance of context and the relation between the use of language and power especially, as well as the potential consequences of discourse (Valtonen 1998, 97, 99; Jokinen et al. 2004, 10). These two approaches are not opposite or exclusionary, but they emphasize the two dimensions of the discursive reality: social reality can be structured in countless ways, but some ways of structuring may become established and dominating, turning the focus onto power relations (Jokinen et al. 2004, 11).

Studying media texts in their context refers to situating them as part of the process of communication and meaning construction (Välvirronen 1998, 33). Context refers to the preconditions of text production, and discourse is a form of social action that has taken place in certain time and place. Discourses are thus connected to culture and history, and their interpretation should consider the current societal atmosphere. (Valtonen 1998, 107.)

Critical discourse analysis offers tools to transcend the line between micro and macro level analysis by combining the detailed text analysis with social and cultural research (Fairclough 1997, 28; Valtonen, 1998, 95). According to Fairclough (1997, 76), language is at the same time a social product and a social force. Thus, in the analysis of a ‘communicative event’, in addition to the analysis of the ‘texts’ where the representations materialize, attention should also be given to ‘discourse practices’, through which the texts are produced, as well as to ‘socio-cultural practices’ that form the situational, institutional, and societal contexts for the discourse practices. Critical discourse analysis strives to define the systematic connections and mutual interactions between these three sides of communicative event: between the text and its contexts. How society shapes the media that for its part may have a significant role in the diffusion of social and cultural change, or in

maintaining the prevailing order? (Fairclough 1997, 28, 72, 76, 79.)

The ‘discourse practices’ refer to the methods and routines of the journalist text production, as well as to the societal distribution of media texts and the ways in which the text is received and interpreted. In this way, discourse practices intermediate between the media text and the socio-cultural practices: socio-cultural practices modify the texts by changing the ways of producing and receiving them. (Fairclough 1997, 28, 79, 81.) My research data does not lend itself to conduct further analysis of the particular discourse practices through which the data is produced, distributed, and interpreted. In the socio-cultural level of analysis, the results of the text analysis are interpreted in light of the Venezuelan socio-cultural and political situation. The socio-cultural analysis may, however, provide hints of the particular discourse practices that intermediate between the data and its socio-cultural context.

#### **4.2.2 Identification of hegemonic discourses**

To define the strong discourses that have achieved a hegemonic position, the analysis starts with the identification of the discourses that seem to dominate the data (Jokinen et al. 2004, 76). To recognize different discourses, the interest must be in the texts, for example in the culturally shared meanings that are put forward, not in their individual writers. Discourses are consistent ensembles of certain words and forms and they offer certain positions to the participants of the texts. (Ian Parker 1992, 6–17, in Jokinen et al. 2004, 60–63.) The data is searched for similarities or parts of the same discourses. The similarity of the content of these pieces can, however, only be recognized through the process of context related interpretation, and the analysis proceeds from pieces to entireties, from meanings to discourses. (Jokinen & Juhila 1991a, 67–72, in Jokinen et al. 2004, 80.) Thus in addition to the pieces of discourses, attention is on the historically constructed social and cultural meanings. (Valtonen 1998, 113.) It is worth noting here, that the same discourses may appear in different kinds of social practices, and my intention is not to explore the differences between newspapers or themes of the articles, but the common meanings and discourses that can be found amongst all of them (cf. Jokinen et al. 2004, 81).

In the power-focused analysis of discourse, the intention is to determine the positions of the different discourses in competition to define social reality. (Valtonen 1998, 113.) Hegemonic discourse has become part of the legitimizing ‘common sense’ that sustains relations of domination

(Fairclough 2003, 207). Hegemonic discourses are supported in the texts by ideologies that are indirect propositions that appear as axiomatic assumptions, creating a common ground between the reporter, third parties, and the audience.<sup>18</sup> (Fairclough 1997, 25, 26, 64.) Instead of plurality of discourses, the focus is thus on the factors that constrain the heterogeneity, on the cultural truisms that have become natural and unquestionable at the expense of alternative constructions of social reality. (Jokinen et al. 2004, 76–77.) A discourse may be hegemonic if its pieces are repeated often and in various contexts in the data (Jokinen & Juhila 1991a, 69, in Jokinen et al. 2004, 81), but also the more axiomatic and without alternative the discourse seems to be the stronger it is, even though it would not dominate the data in numbers (Jokinen et al. 2004, 81).

#### **4.2.3 Internal power relations – level of linguistic analysis**

According to Jokinen et al. (2004, 86), the analysis of the internal power relations of the discourses concentrates on what is said and done in the discourse, what kind of subject positions people can take or are offered to take, and how the relations are between the actors of the discourse. This corresponds to what Fairclough has defined as the ‘level of linguistic analysis’ that is based on the idea that the texts at the same time represent the world, and construct identities<sup>19</sup> and relations. According to Fairclough (1997, 14, 80), media texts can be analyzed by looking for answers to three questions:

1. How is the world or particular social practices (the events, relations, etc.) represented and recontextualized, possibly carrying certain ideology?
2. What identities are set up for those involved in the text (to the reporter, the audience, and the other participants referred to or interviewed)?
3. What relations are constructed between the above mentioned participants?

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<sup>18</sup> When analysing ideology, it must be kept apart from the persuasive aspects of the texts that have clear rhetorical ways of trying to persuade the audience to see things in a certain way (Fairclough 1997, 64).

<sup>19</sup> Jokinen et al. prefers using the concept of subject position for identity, whereas Fairclough uses almost exclusively the concept of identity, though does not define it explicitly. According to Jokinen et al. (2004, 38–39), identity is a wider concept that refers to the rights, obligations, and characteristics that actors assume to themselves and to others, and what the other actors assume of them. Identities change with discourses. Subject position, on the other hand, is suitable to be analyzed in terms of the restrictions of action in certain positions. (Ibid.) In continuation, when citing or referring to other texts, the concepts of identity and subject position are used according to the original source. In my own considerations, I mostly use the concept of identity, and the subject position only when referring to restricted actions.

To Fairclough (1997, 29) these three aspects are produced in a text by the different functions of language. The ideational function of language produces representations of the world by constructing knowledge and belief systems, and the interpersonal function constructs social identities and relations (ibid., 29, 76.) Even though Fairclough (ibid., 29) refers separately to representation, identities, and relations, he considers that these three are interwoven and it is not always possible to separate them in the analysis. The ideational and interpersonal functions are present in the text at the same time. Through these different aspects, the text analysis is connected to the questions of knowledge, beliefs, ideology, identity, social relations, and power. (ibid.) The internal and external power relations are interrelated. The internal power relations of a discourse define which kind of knowledge and truth, social relations and subject positions, or identities are legitimized and further how the relations between different discourses are shaped (Jokinen et al. 2004, 88).

#### *Representation of world – what is done and said in the discourse*

To Fairclough (1997, 30, 136) the practical textual analysis of representation is to find out what kind of selections have been made in the text production: what is included and what is left out, what is expressed directly and indirectly, what aspects are primary and what are secondary, and what kind of process types and categorizations have been used. These different selections have their specific motives and they are related to ideologies and power relations (ibid., 137); certain things could be present in the text, but, for some reason, are left out. Texts are also combinations of explicit meanings that are set in hierarchical order, and implicit meanings that refer to the assumptions that are implied in the text without direct reference. It is especially these implicit assumptions that are connected to ideologies, since they position the reader, who is assumed to share certain suppositions of ‘common sense’ of the world view upon which the text is based. (Ibid., 139–142.)

In the texts, representations materialize in the clauses or in their combination and sequencing. The analysis of clauses should consider how the clause consists of different elements that express the processes (usually realized in verbs), participants (nouns and nominal groups, etc.) and circumstances (e.g. adverbs). What kinds of selections have been made of all the possible elements and for what motives? The selection of certain words, linguistic forms, and grammatical alternatives determine what meaning is chosen. Different words define the category in which the issue is located revealing, together with the grammatical choice, the discourse that is used in the representation. (Fairclough 1997, 137, 143.)

In the vocabulary of a text, attention should be given to the juxtapositions that are used by the reporter to represent the reality and the experiences of it. These can be open or hidden juxtapositions, tensions, contrasts, comparisons, or metaphors that may be based on gradations or binaries. (Törrönen 2010, 287–288.) Metaphors combine two conceptual systems so that the more concrete system is used as a source system to understand the other more abstract one (Kövecses 2002 and Lakoff & Johnson 1980, in Törrönen 2010, 288). Metaphoric discourses thus give meaning to things which are normally not related, and different metaphors match with different aspirations and goals, supporting different ideologies (Fairclough 1997, 125). The juxtapositions also often construct difference between ‘us’ and ‘them’ and they may reveal stereotypical representations that, in addition to binary oppositions, can be constructed through other practices, such as naturalization and reduction (Hall 1997b, 243, 245, 262.) Stereotypes may also be constructed in the implicit assumptions, which the reader is persuaded and positioned to assume. Especially the words that represent different social groups or classes may be connected to ideologically charged categorizations. (Fairclough 1997, 42, 162–163.)

According to grammatical selection, different process types and related participant types can be specified. The processes can be, for example, *actions* that include both the *actor* and those *affected* by the process; *events* that have only one participant, the *actor* or the *affected*; or *states* which are processes that refer to ‘being’ or ‘having’. When analyzing the participants and actors of the texts, it is important to define what kind of participants the different social groups are that are represented and in what kind of processes, as well as who are more probable to be represented as actors. The grammatical choices may be ideologically significant also if the agency and responsibility is continuously dissipated, for example through nominalisation, where process is changed into a nominal entity or by replacing an active sentence by a passive. In this way the actor, or the responsible agent, is faded out of the events. (Fairclough 1997, 40–42, 144–149.)

In the analysis of the combination and sequencing of clauses, attention is on what is primarily or secondarily positioned in the text structure. When considering the news text structure, the knowledge value of the headlines, second heads, and lead paragraphs are defined as primary. Knowledge value also depends on the relations between the clauses and the sentences: the main clauses, for example, are primary to the subordinate clauses, especially when the former precedes the latter. Also significant is how the different actors and other elements are situated inside a phrase, since the emphasis is usually on the beginning of the phrase. These relations are not objective, but they are to lead the reader to certain interpretations. (Fairclough 1997, 157, 160–161.)

Here I am interested in the representation of barrio “El 70” and its inhabitants: How is barrio “El 70” and its inhabitants defined? What kind of vocabulary and classifications are selected? Are the inhabitants represented as actors or passive objects, and in what kind of processes? What actors and elements are emphasized and prioritized in the texts?

### *Construction of Identities and relations in the discourse*

Representations bring absent subjects forward and also express the identities and roles of the different participants in the communication (Törrönen 2010, 280). Media discourse can be considered as an interaction between three categories of participants: the reporters, the audience, and the other participants in the communication, such as the interviewees. The question of how the different other participants are represented in the texts was already directed above, thus here the question of identities is related only to the direct participants of the communication, in this case the reporter and the interviewees. The attention is on how these participants’ identities and relations, which are constructed by the media and reflect the power relations of the society, appear in the text. (Fairclough 1997, 165, 167.)

The identities and relations are interrelated and define each other. In analysis the following questions can be asked about the data: How are the roles of the different participants defined? What kind of rights and duties do they have? Who has the power to speak? (Jokinen et al. 2004, 86.)

Which groups are constructed as clearly separate, which of them resemble each other and which ones are opposites of each other? Have some significant groups been left out of communication? (Fairclough 1997, 165–166.) Here the assumption is that power and resources are divided differently between the different actors of communication (Jokinen et al. 2004, 86). Usually the groups and persons that get to the fore most frequently are the ones that already possess economic, political, or cultural power (Fairclough 1997, 58).

The identities and relations are multifold and changing, since one participant may have different tasks in the text at the same time: they may, for example, express their opinions, use their expertise, or tell about their personal experiences. Fairclough (1997, 69) states that the ordinary people are normally not used as sources that present their opinions, but as an example of how an event is experienced and reacted to, as well as to entertain the audience. It is therefore interesting to see for what kind of information the inhabitants of “El 70” are used as sources. In the relations constructed between the participants of communication, the interest is especially in how the voices of the



different participants are organized in the texts, which voices frame others, and how these voices are set in hierarchical order. (Ibid., 167, 183, 192.)

My interest here is especially in the following questions: Who are let to define the barrio “El 70” and its inhabitants? What identities are offered to the inhabitants of “El 70” that are cited in the articles? What are their relations to the other participants of the communication? Although the focus is not on the individuals that participate in the communication, but on the groups they represent, it is also important to understand who represents the others, how, and why, because the representatives who get their voices heard do not necessarily represent the identities of all the individuals of the group (Rossi 2010, 265). In my case, this is considered in relation to the representatives that speak on behalf of the inhabitants of “El 70”.

The analysis of the participants in communication can be continued with the intertextual analysis of how the different ‘voices’ are represented in the discourse. In the news, especially, many different voices are interwoven into one text, but they are rarely treated in a neutral and equal manner (Fairclough 1997, 105). Here the explicit reference to other texts, the manifest intertextuality, is considered. The analysis of ‘discourse representation’ defined by Fairclough (ibid., 100) is applied to discover how the discourses of the other participants are represented in the articles. The intention is to find out how the different voices are valued and whether all the voices are taken seriously (ibid., 108; Jokinen et al. 2004, 86). Discourse representation cannot be analyzed simply according to whose voice is represented or how much space the different voices get, since the hierarchy is often a discreet construction. Some voices are highlighted and others are marginalized in the texts in subtle ways. According to Fairclough (1997, 106), more importance is given to the discourses that are taken as part of the reporter’s own discourse. Thus it is important to consider if the difference between the reporter’s representing discourse and the other participants represented discourse is strictly maintained or not. The line between the two can be maintained by using direct citations with original phrasing, and the indirect citations, on the contrary, fade the line away and mix the two discourses. (Ibid., 106–111.)

### *The legitimation process of discourses*

At the level of texts, the purpose is, however, not only to investigate the discourses as such, but also how they are materialized in the texts (Jokinen et al. 2004, 28). Related to the identification of hegemonic discourses and the analysis of their internal power relations is the definition of how the

hegemonic discourses are produced and reproduced in the data, *i.e.* how the processes are where the axioms are constructed. In the analysis of the process of legitimation of certain discourses the elements that produce truth and question the alternative truths are searched from within the texts. (Ibid., 89; Valtonen 1998, 105.) Here the discourses are seen as if they have strategic aims, although the intention of the individual behind the discourse is not the focus. The places in the text where simplification has displaced the complexity and controversy of the issues should be pointed out. This simplification can be made to seem convincing by hiding the social construction of certain information or practice through different strategies of naturalization, making them seem like natural truisms, for example by direct references to nature or through different factualization strategies. (Jokinen et al. 2004, 90–91; cf. naturalization to fix the difference and create stereotypes in Hall 1997b, 243, 245, 262).

In the news, credibility and truthfulness are produced by various means: by objectifying the information that seems to be produced by an external reporter, by referring to a reporter's own presence and observations at the scene, as well as by citing expert information or numeric facts (Jokinen et al. 2004, 158–178; Valtonen 1998, 111). The same facts may, however, change their meanings in different discourses, and thus also have different consequences. Moreover, in different discourses about the same phenomena, different experts may be used as sources of information. (Valtonen 1998, 110, 113; see also Jokinen et al. 2004, 155.) Other factualization strategies include presenting no alternatives as there was no other reasonable solution, and appealing to social norms as commonly shared majorities' understanding (Jokinen et al. 2004, 163, 172). Certain versions of events may be constructed as the 'only truth' according to certain political points of view and different cultural axioms may be justified by appealing to traditions and culture (Valtonen 1998, 113). Also important to consider is how pieces of other discourses are used to support the hegemonic discourses. (Jokinen et al. 2004, 95; Valtonen 1998, 105.) In the analysis it is also worth noting how the texts are constructed in relation to possible well-known counter arguments, that is, how possible criticisms are taken into account in advance (Jokinen et al. 2004, 33).

In my analysis, the question of *how* the hegemonic discourse is produced in the text is dealt together with the analysis of the internal power relations of the discourse. The ways in which the meanings are produced are demonstrated by indicating them with data citations.

#### **4.2.4 Analyzing power and ideological consequences at the socio-cultural level**

Socio-cultural analysis can be done at different levels of abstraction, considering the immediate context of the communicative event, the surrounding institutional practices, or the overall social and cultural context, which is the main focus in this research. The socio-cultural practices consist of economic, political, and cultural aspects. The political aspect refers to the questions of power and ideology, and the cultural aspect is concerned with values and identities. At the socio-cultural level, the focus is on the questions about power relations that affect the emergence and establishment of certain discourses, their possible ideological effects, and how they construct social identities and cultural values. (Fairclough 1997, 85, 104.)

Here the focus is first on how the prevailing power relations of Venezuelan society are reflected in the hegemonic discourses. At the socio-cultural level, the interpretation requires that the researcher uses his or her own knowledge of the cultural traditions and costumes, stereotypes, and general social atmosphere (e.g. Jokinen et al. 2004, 32). In this research I try to interpret the Venezuelan society as comprehensively as possible grounding in the earlier research, but also in my own experiences, understandings, and conversations with people about the different aspects of Venezuelan society and my case community, during the four years I lived in the country.

It is important to consider how the data reflects the societal context of Venezuela where there is still a large gap between the rich and poor, who both have certain attitudes against the other, about how they think and live their lives. Also important is to study how, and to what extent, the extremely polarized political situation of the country is reflected in the data. According to Fairclough (1997, 83), media texts are sensitive indicators of social change. Unstable and changeable socio-cultural practices cause multifaceted and creative discourse practices that end up producing multiform and contradictory media texts (ibid.). It is thus worth considering whether the data reflects the political and social changes that Venezuela experienced during the last decade. As media may also stimulate social changes in the society (ibid.), it is important to consider what kind of change is encouraged and what is not. Considering the pronounced role of the media in the political battle of Venezuela, it is important to understand whose ideology is put forward and whose hegemonic position is fostered in the media texts. The context of Venezuela is fairly particular, since there are two different and opposite social power groups or hegemonies: the government-minded political elite that has also gained significant economic power, and the old money elite of the private entrepreneurs which are opposed to the government.

What kind of effect might the hegemonic discourses have? Ideology in the media is produced through certain ways of representing the world, and the social identities and relations in it (Fairclough 1997, 23). Different versions of truth have different consequences. The potential ideological consequences do not necessarily appear in the data, but are more a result of a speculative reasoning that is based on the data. The focus is on what kind of events and practices certain discourse may justify. (Jokinen et al. 2004, 97.) Some factors that may construct ideology in the texts were considered already at the level of text analysis, such as how the information is classified, structured, and valued. In addition, Fairclough (1997, 26) recommends always asking whether there is a connection between the media and the powerful social classes and groups, and whether the text works ideologically and how, through the following questions: What is the societal origin of the presented alternative, where does it come from, and who presents it? What could motivate such a selection? What kinds of consequences follow from this selection and how does it affect the intentions of each interested party?

Under consideration is, for example, whether the text is to legitimize subordination, or to create an interpretation without alternatives to maintain the ideology and slow down the process of change (Valtonen 1998, 105). Different subject positions may, for example, give some rights and take away others according to how the identities organize people's agency (Jokinen et al. 2004, 99–100). It is important to consider the potential ideological consequences and criticize the discourses that legitimize different relations of subordination, and also defend the interpretations and practices that debilitate them. However, the consequences can be various and not always negative. The practices and discourses are not positive or negative as such, and the quality of their consequences depends on the entirety inside of which they are constructed. (Ibid., 97, 101.)

### *Challenging the hegemonic discourses*

The concentration of the analysis only on the hegemonic discourses may, at worst, contribute to the naturalization of the situation. To prevent this it is useful to also consider the question of transformation to battle the ideological discourses. This is especially important if the hegemonic discourses may have negative effects that maintain subordination. The hegemony of a discourse can be threatened because there are no final and absolute interpretations of reality. Since the hegemonic discourses are maintained through certain social practices, inside of those practices they can also be transformed. Possibilities of debilitating hegemonic discourses can be found in their inter-discursive nature, meaning that they have elements of other discourses. These elements, as such, do not have

ideological meaning, and they can be combined in innovative ways to deconstruct the old hierarchy. Another way of transformation is to look for and identify contradictions inside and between the discourses. The hegemonic discourses can be challenged also by more speculative considerations of the researcher. (Jokinen et al. 2004, 101–102, 105; see also Hall 1997b, 270–272.)

Hall (1997b) suggests different counter-strategies to challenge, contest, and change the dominant representations. Trans-coding is a strategy that re-appropriates an existing meaning for new meanings. One of the trans-coding strategies is to reverse the stereotypes, to value positively the characteristics that would normally be negative stereotypes. This may not, however, escape the contradictions of the binary structure of stereotyping. Another trans-coding strategy is to substitute a range of positive images for the dominating negative imagery, therefore having the advantage of balancing the imagery. This strategy highlights the acceptance and positive valuing of difference, thus inverting the binary opposition by favouring the subordinated and identifying positively what has been degraded. This strategy expands the range of representation challenging the reductive stereotypes. However, the negative meanings may not be displaced through this expansion and the binaries may continue to frame the meaning. (Ibid., 270–274.)

When considering the possibilities of challenging the hegemonic discourses, the weaker and subordinate discourses of the data, and how they could be strengthened come under consideration (Jokinen et al. 2004, 105.). Thus this part of analysis also gives information about the plurality of the discourses, helping to understand the whole spectrum of different discourses used to refer to the barrio “El 70” and its inhabitants.

### **4.3. Data collection and selection**

The empirical data of my research consists of newspaper articles that are about, or mention, the case community of barrio “El 70”. The majority of the data was collected from the Internet versions of a Venezuelan national newspaper, *El Universal*, but I also use a collection of articles from various local and national newspapers collected by a community representative of barrio “El 70”. In this chapter I present the sources of the media data and the process of data collection and selection.

### 4.3.1. Description of the newspaper sources

*El Universal* was used as the primary data source, since it is the only national newspaper in Venezuela that has all the paper in electronic form on the Internet for free. It has also a search engine that searches all the electronic news archives of the newspaper by search words. *El Universal* is the second largest daily newspaper in the country, having the average circulation of 100 000 copies from Monday to Saturday and 350 000 copies on Sundays. It is also the oldest private newspaper in Venezuela, founded in 1909. *El Universal* website (El Universal 2009) claims that the average readers are educated men and women, 25 years and older, belonging mainly to the lowest and middle class social strata. However, *El Universal* is commonly considered as an 'elite newspaper' whose readers belong to middle or upper class, and is a point of reference for the big national capitals. The editorial line is defined as politically conservative Centre-Right in the opposition to the government of president Chávez (see e.g. Tablante 2006, 124; Tablante, 2008, 235).

The news data from *El Universal* consists of 42 news articles that are about, or mention, the barrio "El 70". To have more balanced and diverse data, my intention was to also use as a source the largest national newspaper, *Últimas Noticias*, since it is directed to the lowest social strata and includes more news on deprived urban communities. I subscribed to the electronic version of the newspaper, but it was out of order: only the articles of the year 2010 could be accessed and the search engine did not work, thus it would have required too much time to search the papers one by one and page by page. The spectrum of the media data was however diversified with the news collection of one of the community representatives, of which 15 articles were selected for the analysis. These articles have been collected from different national and regional newspapers, *Últimas Noticias* being the main source, with six articles. Other newspaper sources of the collection are *El Nacional*, the third largest national daily newspaper, with three articles; *El Universal* with two articles; regional daily paper *Diario La Voz* with two articles; free regional daily newspaper *Ciudad Caracas* with one article; and the weekly cultural newspaper *Todos Adentro* with one article.

When considering the general style and design of the biggest newspapers, *El Universal* is seen as the most sober and conservative in its use of language, structure, and layout. As a comparison, the styles of *Últimas Noticias* and *El Nacional* are closer to 'yellow' or tabloid journalism. (Tablante 2006, 124; 2008, 87–88.) Members of the Venezuelan Communist Party founded *Últimas Noticias*

in 1941, even though currently its stand is considered as moderate left. It has an average daily distribution of 210 000 copies and 380 000 copies on Sundays. It uses simple, everyday language and is considered to be the ‘people's newspaper’. An average reader of *Últimas Noticias* is a 25–44 year old man or woman who belongs to the lowest social stratum. (*Últimas Noticias* 2011; Tablante 2006, 124–125.) It is noteworthy that *Últimas Noticias* belongs to a media conglomerate *Cadena Capriles* that is owned by the family of Henrique Radonski Capriles. Radonski is the leader of the opposition party *Primera Justicia*, and also serves as the Governor of Miranda State until the end of 2012. Most importantly, Radonski is the opposition candidate against Chávez for the 2012 Venezuelan presidential election.

*El Nacional* was founded in 1943 and it has a circulation of 100 000 copies from Monday to Saturday and 240 000 on Sundays. An average reader is a 33–45 year old educated professional man or woman. (Daily Group of America 2011.) The political stand of *El Nacional* has traditionally been Centre-Left and the paper supported the election of Hugo Chávez as a president in 1998. However, the paper has moved towards Centre and to the opposition, and *El Nacional* currently uses particularly strong expressions against the government. There is no information available about *Diario La Voz* on its web page, but according to a reporter of the paper, the political tendency of the paper is “intermediate, always trying to do a balance between both sides [...]”, and the social strata of the readers is low and middle class (private email, 24.5.2011). No information was found about the circulation. *Diario La Voz* is, however, produced in Guarenas, a city belonging to Gran Caracas and it covers news mostly from the areas of Gran Caracas that belong to the states of Miranda and Vargas.

The newspapers *Ciudad Caracas* and *Todos Adentro* are both free and produced by different central or regional government institutions. Both papers are Leftist-Socialist openly supporting the government of president Chávez. *Ciudad Caracas* was founded by the Caracas Mayor's office in 2009 and it has a daily distribution of 120 000 copies in the metropolitan area of Gran Caracas. *Ciudad Caracas* is distributed every morning in the places with a major circulation of people, such as the metro stations. *Ciudad Caracas* covers general issues, but is more inclined to social issues, people's participation, and local community news. *Todos Adentro* is produced by the Ministry of People's Power for Culture, it is distributed on Saturdays with *Últimas Noticias* and it concentrates on Venezuelan culture and socio-cultural activities.

As the majority of my data is collected from one national newspaper, the results of my analysis will not be generalizable to all the Venezuelan newspaper media. However, although the news data of the community representative is not systematic and extensive, it offers a good overview of the different newspapers that have written about “El 70”. As the majority of the community representative’s articles have “El 70” as the main focus of the report and are either half or full page articles, they offer a substantial amount of text to balance the data. The intention of this research is not to compare the representations offered by the different newspapers, but to identify and define the discourses that may be common to all of them. In the current political situation of Venezuela, it would be also interesting to compare the representations of the newspapers with different political positions. This would, however, lead the focus of analysis more towards politics and deciphering how the government-minded or opposition newspapers represent the community. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the majority of the newspapers that are used as sources are in more or less opposition to the current government, but their editorial lines vary from Left to Right.

#### **4.3.2 Data from *El Universal***

As my intention was to find all the news about my case community, the barrio “El 70”, from the electronic version of *El Universal*, I used the name of the community in its different written forms as my search word. The search words used in my searches were: “barrio El 70”, barrio “El 70”, “barrio El Setenta” and barrio “El Setenta”. In the end I also made a check search with “El 70” and “El Setenta” but no new articles were found. I also started to make searches with the names of the different sectors of the barrio, but since many slum neighborhoods have similar names for their sectors, it would have taken a long time to differentiate them all. I did, however, check the news with the name of the most known sector “Las Terrazas”, but no new results were found since the name of the sector was always mentioned with the name of the whole neighborhood, “El 70”. Thus, I assume that the names of the other sectors would not have resulted in more articles either.

With a preliminary search of the articles on the barrio “El 70”, conducted on 4 September 2009, 12 articles were found starting from the year 2000. I conducted my primary and more complete search on 5 September 2010, resulting in 30 more articles, but nine of the articles found in the earlier search were not found again. On 11 March 2011 I conducted still another search to complete the articles of the year 2010, resulting in four more articles. Of the 46 articles found in total, only one was from the year 2000 and three from 2004, the rest of the articles started from the year 2007. Since, the scarcity of entries and the gaps without articles between the years 2000 to 2004 and 2004



to 2007 may be due to a lack of electronic registration of the articles during these years, I decided not to include the four articles from 2000 and 2004 in my research data. I consider that without these separate articles the data is more coherent and easier to interpret in the light of the socio-cultural context of the time.

Thus in total 42 articles were found about or mentioning the barrio “El 70” from the years 2007–2010: five from 2007, seven from 2008, 13 from 2009 and 17 from 2010. Because the number of entries is significantly larger in the years 2009 and 2010, and with my primary search I was not able to find all the news found with the earlier search, I assume the search engine of *El Universal* prefers the latest news at the expense of earlier articles. This is also confirmed when comparing the two research data sets, since the community representative’s collection includes two articles from *El Universal* about the “El 70” (18.7.2008 and 7.9.2008) that were not found with any of my searches. In spite of this deficiency of the search engine, the news from the years 2007 and 2008 are included in the research data, but it must be kept in mind that there may be some skew in the yearly number of articles. Because of this, any far-reaching yearly comparisons will not be made. The electronic news articles of *El Universal* always indicate the sector of the newspaper in which they were published, but it is not possible to see if they were noted also on the front page, since one cannot revise the facsimile editions of the old papers.

As I conducted the searches by the name of the community, the results include all the articles that mention the name, even if the events described in the report did not take place in the barrio “El 70” or if the community was not the main focus of the news. Some articles mention the barrio “El 70” only as a side issue, for example as the domicile of some of the actors of the news. The majority of these side issue references, however, highlight certain qualities of the community and they are thus included in the analysis.

#### **4.3.3 News collection from the community representative**

As complementary data to balance the online sources, I used the news collection of a community representative of the barrio “El 70”. The collection consists of 21 articles about “El 70”, of which 15 were selected to analyze. The selected articles are from the years 2008–2010. The yearly distribution of the news from the collection is the following: three articles from 2008, seven from 2009, and five from 2010. One of the articles of the collection from *Últimas Noticias*, is a newspaper clip that does not include the date of publication, but the article is easily dated between

28.9.–2.10.2009 according to the happenings that are referred to in the news. This data is not collected systematically, even though the community representative is normally aware of all the events in the community and if and when there were journalists present, thus he knows when to search for news about the community. In addition to balancing the sources, I consider this data important because it represents the block of articles that has been read by the community representative, hence forming the objects of his critics against the press. Through the community representative these articles can also be considered to have affected the whole community's understanding of the representation of their neighborhood in the media.

In addition to the 15 articles selected for the analysis, the collection includes three articles that do not mention the name of the community barrio "El 70". One of these (Últimas Noticias, 3.10.2009) is related to a confrontation between the local gangs and the police and has a photo from "El 70", with many police officers. It is the same photo used in an earlier report about the same incident, where the barrio "El 70" was mentioned. Two other articles are about the community organization and the work of the community councils of the *El Valle* parish where barrio "El 70" is located (Ciudad Caracas, 10.2.2010; La Voz del Valle, March 2009). However, since the name of the community is not mentioned in these three articles, they are left out of the research data. One of the articles collected by the community representative is also included in the research data collected from the Internet version of *El Universal* (24.9.2009), and it is thus left out of the data as well.

In addition, two of the articles of *Ciudad Caracas* (2.10.2009 and 21.1.2010) are written by one of the community representatives José Gregorio Abreu about the housing and socio-productive projects conducted in "El 70", and they are not included in the analysis of the general media representation of "El 70", since they represent the discourse of the community about itself, not that of the media. Even though the discourse of the community about itself is represented also in many of the other articles, they are always selected by the reporter to be included in the article, and valued in different manners. The articles written directly by the community representative would not give any information about these kinds of media practices and their causes and consequences that are the main interest of this research. These articles do, however, serve as good examples of the intentions of the ruling government to make the people's voices heard and to bring them to the public sphere by producing and supporting the alternative media.

## 4.4 Description of the themes, sources, and participants

In this chapter I will classify the data with the methods of content analysis so as to define the themes under which barrio “El 70” and its inhabitants are represented, as well as to have a look to the sources of information used and the participants represented in the articles. Also the magnitude of the focus on the barrio “El 70” and the sizes of the articles are considered. This kind of descriptive analysis that focuses on the explicit meanings of the texts creates an overview of the variety and the scope of the representations of the community, therefore forming the basis for more detailed critical discourse analysis that aims at defining also the implicit meanings.

### 4.4.1 Thematic classification of the data

The total number of the articles for primary analysis is 57. To facilitate the management and further analysis of the data, I first conducted a thematic classification of the reports. Every article is classified under one theme according to the principal topic of the articles. This helps present an overview of the data and also functions as a background analysis indicating the most common contexts in which the case community is presented in the newspapers. The principal topic or theme can usually be detected from the issues addressed in the headlines, second heads, and the lead chapter of the article, as those have the most important knowledge value in the texts (see e.g. Fairclough 1997, 57, 60). The articles were classified under five themes: *violence and insecurity*, *culture*<sup>20</sup>, *deficient living conditions*, *organization and development* and *politics*<sup>21</sup>. The contents of the different theme categories are each shortly described below.

#### *Violence and insecurity*

The data includes 21 articles that focus on the theme of *violence and insecurity*. Most of these articles are crime news and reports, but also a few reportages and one opinion column with the more subjective voices of the writers included. These articles represent “El 70” mostly in relation to certain episodes that happened in the community. Three of them, however, report the general situation of insecurity at national, city, or parish level: In 2007, *El Universal* published two reports and one opinion column in 2010 that bring out “El 70” as an example of a violent and insecure slum

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<sup>20</sup> I am aware of the multiple meanings of the term *culture*. As a theme category of this classification *culture*, however, refers to articles that report different cultural and recreational activities.

<sup>21</sup> As a theme category, politics refer to articles that have an explicitly political theme, such as elections or interviews of politicians. In this classification the implicit political meanings are not considered.

community (22.4.2007; 2.5.2007;15.3.2010).

In 2008, *El Universal* (21.5.2008 and 8.6.2008) reported an incident where the inhabitants lynched a criminal in the community. An armed confrontation between police and gangs in September 2009, where ten alleged gang members were killed by police, was covered by *Últimas Noticias* (24.9.2009), *El Nacional* (24.9.2009) and *El Universal* (24.9.2009 and 25.9.2009). They all mention the barrio “El 70” with two other communities as the main scene of the episode. Consequently, *Diario La Voz* published two reportages (29.9.2009a and 29.9.2009b) that refer to the battle, but concentrate particularly on the gang situation in the barrio “El 70”. *Últimas Noticias* (28.9.–2.10.2009) mentions “El 70” in news about a public threat made by some gang members against the police for killing the gang leader. There are also five articles published in *El Universal* (9.10.2009; 25.11.2009; 26.11.2009; 4.12.2009a; 4.12.2009b) about a series of police operations where the police killed several suspected police killers and other alleged criminals. According to these reports, three supposed criminals were killed in the community and one alleged gang member that operated in “El 70” was killed nearby. In 2010, “El 70” is mentioned in still another reportage of *El Universal* (29.5.2010) about the situation of rivalries between the gangs in the zone.

In addition, there are three more articles published in *El Universal* that relate the barrio “El 70” to the situation of insecurity and violence. In a short note, (17.8.2010) a community representative of “El 70” is interviewed to consider the situation of insecurity. A short news article (28.4.2007) about a witness of a six fold homicide being shot when leaving the court house mentions “El 70” as the domicile of the victim. Finally, news (15.10.2008) of a Jeep driver that was kidnapped and killed mentions “El 70” as the place where the victim was last known to head to with his Jeep.

### *Culture*

There are 14 cultural reports in the data. The majority of these are shorter news pieces or wider reports on the different cultural activities that already took place or will take place in the barrio. Half of these are about the community theatre, ‘Theatrical Cable Car’ (*Teleferico Teatral*) that was organized in the community in 2007, 2008, and 2010. *El Universal* covered the events in three articles (21.5.2007; 18.7.2008; 9.10.2010). Among other happenings of the Universal Children's day of 2007, *El Universal* (17.7.2007) also mentioned the ‘Musical Cable Car’ (*Teleferico Musical*) that the same organizers arranged in the community. The “Theatrical Cable Car” organized in 2008 was also covered by *El Nacional* (18.7.2008) with an advance report of the upcoming event. In addition

to *El Universal*, the acts of the ‘Theatrical Cable Car’ in 2010 were covered by *Últimas Noticias* (8.10.2010; 17.10.2010) and *Ciudad Caracas* (8.10.2010) with shorter and larger advance reports.

In 2008, *El Universal* (31.8.2008) reported the visit to “El 70” by a group of clown doctors that normally visit the hospitals to brighten the days of the young patients. In 2010, *El Universal* (19.4.2010) published an article about a movie called *Barrio Sin Ley (Slum Without Law)* that was being filmed between the ‘buddies of El 70’ and shot in “El 70” and surrounding communities. Later same year, *El Universal* (23.8.2010) published an article resuming the different cultural activities that have been organized in the community in the past years and their positive effect on the community. In addition to the cultural activities in “El 70”, the community is brought up in other cultural contexts. In 2010 *El Universal* (24.4.2010) published a report on aesthetics that presents “El 70” as one of the slum communities of Caracas that are located in the high hills having great views over the city. There is also a short notice (*El Universal* 2.8.2008) of the performance of a youth orchestra that has integrated children from “El 70”, among other communities. In 2009 (*El Universal* 20.6.2009) “El 70” was mentioned in an interview of a Venezuelan movie director as a place where she visited to learn about the harsh reality of Caracas.

### *Deficient living conditions*

Ten articles of the data go under the theme of *deficient living conditions* and they are all from *El Universal*. For the most part these are news pieces about different emergency situations in the barrio. Four of these are published in 2009 and 2010 (18.3.2010; 6.5.2010; 26.10.2009; 11.1.2010) reporting on the insufficient basic services: the lack of waste management in the community, and the effects of water and electricity rationing in “El 70” among other slum communities. These articles can be considered to deliver the complaints of the inhabitants. Five other articles are about the emergencies caused by heavy rains. In 2008, in a notice (30.3.2008) about another slum community, “El 70” is shortly mentioned as the other head of the road that was affected by a landslide. In 2009 (15.9.2009), “El 70” is mentioned with other locations in Caracas as a place where a person was killed when hit by a container that was dragged by the water. In 2010, two articles (30.11.2010a; 30.11.2010b) mention “El 70” among other slum communities, where the landslides collapsed the walls of some houses and one article (1.12.2010) focuses on “El 70” where 75 families were affected by the destruction of roads, retaining walls, and houses. In 2009, an article (29.4.2009) about the deficient housing situation of the slums mention “El 70” as one of the communities with various incomplete rehabilitation projects by the government, and also where the

latest project had been announced.

### *Organization and development*

Data includes eight articles that are about community *organization and development*. These are mostly reports about the different community development projects of the barrio. In 2008 and 2009, two reports (El Universal 7.9.2008; Últimas Noticias 11.10.2009) were published about the general community organization in “El 70”, presenting different projects and activities taking place in the community. There are two articles about the infrastructural development: a project to repair the roads and build a retaining wall in the community was reported by *Últimas Noticias* (28.10.2009) in 2009, and *El Universal* (31.1.2010) cited a community representative in an article about the increasing subscriptions of cable TV in the slums in 2010. In addition, *Todos Adentro* (30.1.2010) published in 2010 a report about a development cooperation project of an NGO to support the education and popularize science through playful workshops offered to the children and youth of “El 70”. In 2010, three reports (El Universal 9.3.2010 and 3.6.2010; El Nacional 12.7.2010) were published on the already realized and/or planned government supported community projects to rehabilitate or substitute the shanties for houses in “El 70”.

### *Politics*

In the data, there are four articles under the theme of *politics* that are also all published in *El Universal*. Two of these articles are direct interviews with local politicians and one is based on the interviews of politicians. The first, from 2008, (12.11.2008) is an interview of a candidate for Metropolitan Mayor, where he mentions “El 70” with another community as examples of violent and insecure places in Caracas. In an interview (8.1.2009) with a former Metropolitan Mayor, “El 70” is mentioned as a place where he was attending community theatre. An article from 2010 (1.8.2010) reports the visit to “El 70” of two opposition candidates for the National Assembly and their comments on the important themes of national politics. In addition to the political interviews, there is a report from 2009 (16.2.2009) related to the referendum on the unlimited re-election of Venezuelan public officers. The article is about the election day and the voters in the slums, and “El 70” is referred to among other communities.

#### 4.4.1.1 Thematic comparison of the two data sets

When considering the two data as one, 37 per cent of the 57 articles are classified under the theme *violence and insecurity*, followed by *culture* (24,5 %), *deficient living conditions* (17,5 %), *organization and development* (14 %) and *politics* (7 %) (see FIGURE 1 below).

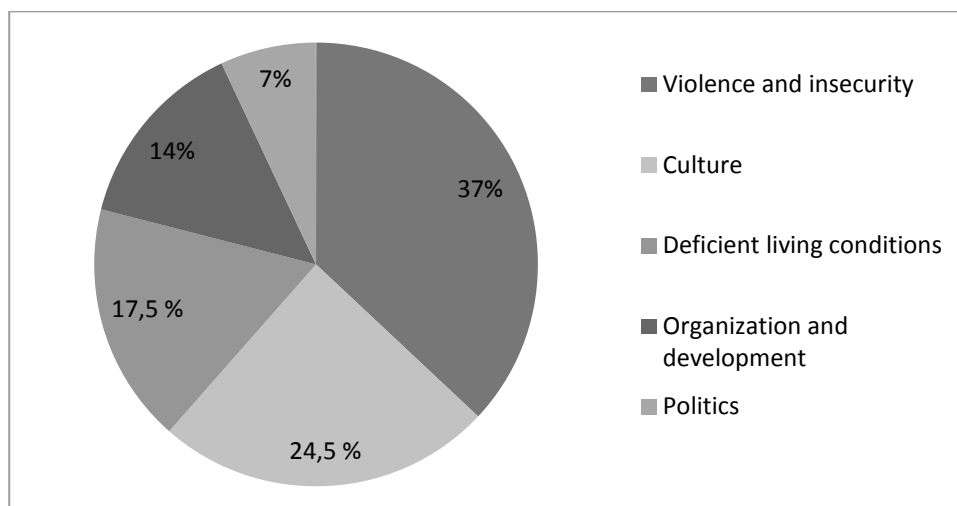


FIGURE 1: Share of the different themes in the data

The data from the two sources is also compared to see how the merged data is formed and whether the merging somehow skews the data. See below the TABLE 1 for the thematic classification of the data from the two sources.

TABLE 1. Thematic classification of the news from *El Universal* and the news collection

Theme	El Universal	News collection	TOTAL	%
Violence and insecurity	16	5	21	37
Culture	9	5	14	24,5
Deficient living conditions	10		10	17,5
Organization and development	3	5	8	14
Politics	4		4	7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>100</b>

The data of *El Universal* includes articles from all the five themes; 38 percent of the reports go under *violence and insecurity*, being the most common theme, followed by *deficient living conditions* (24 %), *culture* (21 %), *politics* (10 %) and *organization and development* (7 %). The 15

articles of the news collection of the community representative are divided equally between the themes of *violence and insecurity*, *culture*, and *organization and development*, having five articles each. It is worth noticing that the articles published in the government newspapers cover only the themes of culture and organization and development. (See TABLE 2 below for the thematic classification by newspapers of the news collection articles.) The biggest difference between the two data is in the categories of *deficient living conditions* and *politics* that are not covered at all in the news collection. However, when the merged data is compared with the data of *El Universal*, there is not much difference in the share of the main themes, even though in the merged data *culture* becomes the second most common theme, and the *organization and development* slightly surpasses *politics*, which becomes the least common theme.

TABLE 2: Thematic classification by newspapers of the news collection articles

Theme	Últimas Noticias	El Nacional	El Universal	La Voz	Ciudad Caracas	Todos adentro	TOTAL
Violence and insecurity	2	1		2			5
Culture	2	1	1		1		5
Organization/development	2	1	1			1	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>15</b>

If the *violence and insecurity* and *deficient living conditions* are classified as negative themes, *culture* and *organization and development* as positive themes, and *politics* being neutral, in the merged data more than half of the articles are negative. When considering the two data separately, almost two thirds of the articles of *El Universal* go under negative themes, whereas two thirds of the news collection articles share a positive theme. In the complete news collection of the community representative, there are even more articles with a positive theme, since four out of the six articles that were left out of the analysis would go under the theme of organization and development. Therefore, considering the themes, the representation of “El 70” in the community representative’s news collection seems to be mostly positive, even though the negative media representation is seen as a problem in the community. According to the thematic analysis of the merged data, the representation of the community in the newspapers seems to be even more negative than thought of by the community.



The dominance in the data of the articles about *violence and insecurity* seem to correspond to the results of the earlier research on Venezuelan media representation of poverty (Dugaro & Lezama 2005, 220–226; Tablante 2008). However, the share of the other themes is significantly different compared to the earlier research, which suggests that in addition to crime, poverty is represented mostly under the theme of deprivation of housing or other basic necessities (Tablante 2008). It seems like *culture*, as a theme of poverty, is quite unique, as is also the theme of *organization and development*, if it is not somehow included in the deprivation of housing or other basic necessities in the earlier research. This may imply that barrio “El 70” is represented in an exceptional and even more positive way compared to the general representation of poverty. However, even though this preliminary thematic analysis may indicate the general contexts in which barrio “El 70” and its inhabitants are represented, the main topic does not always reveal the perspective to the community and what kind of meanings are associated with it in the article. Therefore a more detailed analysis is needed.

#### 4.4.1.2 Crosscutting themes

In addition to the main themes of the articles that are defined by the principal topic, other issues that are thematized in the articles are considered. These are issues that are brought up explicitly in relation to the main topic, for example to give a more profound description of and to contextualize the events that are reported. Thus plain mention of a word related to another issue is not considered as another theme, but the issue must have a certain role in the events described in the article. The attention of analysis was especially on the already defined main themes, and whether they are repeated throughout the articles. As one can observe in TABLE 3 below, all of the main themes are thematized also under some of the other main themes. However, in the analysis other issues were also localized in various articles, or in some of them. *Poverty* is thematized in four and *exclusion* in three articles. In addition, other issues are brought up each in one article, such as *war of Iraq* in an article about *violence and insecurity*, *orphanage* in *cultural* articles, *corruption*, *informal economy*, *health* and *nutrition* in *political* articles.

*Violence and insecurity* is the only issue that is brought up under all the other themes, being mentioned in total in 36 out of the 57 articles. The occurrence of *violence and insecurity* is especially high in the *political* articles, of which three out of four thematize it. Also in the articles about *organization and development* and in *cultural* articles, *violence and insecurity* is thematized in four out of eight and in six out of 14 articles respectively.

TABLE 3: Crosscutting themes in the articles.

Theme	Violence and insecurity	Culture	Deficient living conditions	Organization and development	Politics	Poverty	Exclusion	Others
Violence and insecurity	21		2	1		1	1	1
Culture	6	14	1		2	3	1	1
Deficient living conditions	2		10	2	4			
Organization and development	4	2	1	8	3		1	1
Politics	3	1			4			3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>
% of the 57 articles	63	30	25	19	23	7	5	12

Another common issue throughout the articles is *politics* that is present as direct references to political discussion or political institutions, or as an explicit criticism towards government politics. The issue of *politics* is thematized in four articles about *deficient living conditions*, in three articles about *organization and development* and in two *cultural* articles. Considering the low occurrence of *politics* as a main theme, with only four articles, it is significant that it is brought up in nine other articles of the data and under all the other themes, except *violence and insecurity*. This may indicate that politics is considered in the newspapers as a relevant issue in relation to a variety of themes, but not to the problems of violence and insecurity, suggesting that the theme is not as politicized as the earlier research on the Venezuelan media would suggest (cf. Rey 2005, 34–35). However, here only the direct references to the politics are considered, which does not rule out the possibility of implicit politicization of the issue. In addition, the articles about *politics* also have a relatively high occurrence of other issues, of which *violence and insecurity* is the most common, followed by the themes of *culture*, *corruption*, *informal economy*, *health* and *nutrition*.

The articles about *violence and insecurity* have the lowest occurrence of other issues, relatively and in absolute numbers. Only in two articles about *violence and insecurity*, were *deficient living conditions* brought up, and the issues of *organization and development*, *poverty* and *exclusion*, but also *war of Iraq*, were each thematized in one article. This, on its part, confirms the results of the earlier research on the media representation of crime and violence that the issue is usually represented as separate incidents not related to their wider socio-cultural context (Korander 1998,

185–186; Rey 2005, 13, 30, 34). On the contrary, the articles about *organization and development* have a considerable occurrence of other issues, and the most common theme is again *violence and insecurity*, followed by *politics* and *culture*. Also, the *cultural* articles have a high occurrence of other themes presented, *violence and insecurity* being the most common followed by *poverty* and *politics*.

The analysis of the crosscutting themes confirms the presumption presented above that even though the main theme of the article could be classified as positive or negative, there may be other elements in the article that affect its point of view. Significant here is that the issues of *violence and insecurity* penetrate through all of the themes, being thematized in 63 per cent of the articles, whereas all the other themes are thematized in less than 30 per cent of the articles. This confirms that *violence and insecurity* is the most common issue related to barrio “El 70” in the data. However, I have analyzed here the articles in their entirety. As the majority of the articles do not focus only or mainly on barrio “El 70” or its inhabitants (see the analysis of the attention given to “El 70” below), the other issues are not necessarily thematized in relation to them. The analysis of crosscutting themes does not give information on what issues are brought up in the same articles, or what issues might be brought up implicitly, which will be analyzed more in detail in the critical discourse analysis.

#### **4.4.2 Attention given to “El 70” and the size of the articles**

To have a better idea of how the barrio “El 70” is covered by the newspapers and what is the magnitude of the media attention to it, the news were coded also according to the extent of the attention given to the barrio “El 70” in the article and according to the size of the article. To start, of the 57 articles, 17 mention “El 70” in the headline, which is the most important part of a newspaper report for its high information value (see e.g. Fairclough 1997, 157). Ten of the headlines that refer to “El 70” go under the theme of *culture*, five under *organization and development*, three concern *deficient living conditions* and only one is about *violence and insecurity*. If these headline references are considered in relation to the positive and negative themes, it is notable that the great majority, 15 out of 19, have a positive thematic context.

In addition to headline references, the data was classified in four categories according to the attention given to the community in the article (see TABLE 4):

1. *Main focus*: “El 70” is the main focus of the news or the main scene for the events, even though others may be mentioned as well
2. *Shared focus*: “El 70” is with other communities the main focus of the news or scene for the events
3. *Mention*: “El 70” is mentioned with many other communities in relation to the main theme
4. *Side issue*: “El 70” is mentioned as a side issue, it is not the focus of the news

TABLE 4: Data by the theme and the extent of the attention

Theme	El Universal				Total	News collection		Total
	Main focus	Shared focus	Mention	Minor point		Main focus	Shared focus	
Violence and insecurity	2	6	5	3	16	2	3	5
Culture	4	3		2	9	5		5
Organization and development	2		1		3	5		5
Deficient living conditions	3	2	4	1	10			
Politics		1	1	2	4			
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>15</b>

In the news collection, the great majority (12 of 15) of the articles have “El 70” as the main focus of the articles, whereas in *El Universal* there are slightly more articles that have “El 70” as a shared focus (12 of 42) than the ones that have it as the main focus (11 of 42) or only mention the community (11 of 42).

Altogether, there are 23 articles that have “El 70” as their main focus, of which nine are about *culture*, seven about *organization and development*, four under *violence and insecurity*, and three under *deficient living conditions*. Here again it is worth mentioning that the majority of the articles, 16 out of 23, whose main focus is “El 70” fall under positive themes. However, when considering the articles that have the main or shared focus on “El 70”, in total 38 articles, there are 13 articles about *violence and insecurity*, 12 articles about *culture*, seven about *organization and development*, five about *deficient living conditions* and one about *politics*. Thus, even though “El 70” would not be referred to in the headlines of many reports on *violence and insecurity* or be their main focus, it is still a dominant theme when all the articles that give substantial attention to “El 70” are taken into account. However, when considering the totality here also the positive themes have a slight majority.

The article sizes are counted only for the reports that have their main or shared focus on “El 70” (TABLE 5 below). There is no reason to consider the size of the articles that only mention the community, because their size would not indicate the magnitude of the media attention to “El 70”. Since the majority of the articles are in the electronic form and the facsimile editions of the newspaper could not be accessed, it was not possible to observe directly the page coverage of all the articles. Thus the sizes of the articles are based on their word count. For the electronic articles this was done with the word counter of the text processor, and for the articles of the news collection the words were counted manually. Many articles also have box stories that usually give either a more detailed information on the events and their participants or wider background information on the topic in general. These box stories are included when considering the sizes of the articles. The shortest article has 61 words and the largest has 1366 words. As a result, four size categories were created based on the comparison of the number of words and the page coverage of the articles of the news collection: short note (60–299 words), quarter-page (300–599 words), half-page (600–899 words) and full-page (900–1366 words). These categories are, however, only suggestive since, for example, the number and size of photos may affect the page coverage significantly.

TABLE 5: Articles with main or shared focus on “El 70” by the theme and the size of the article

Theme	El Universal				Total	News collection				Total
	Full page	Half page	Quarter page	Short note		Full page	Half page	Quarter page	Short note	
Violence and insecurity		5	1	2	8	3	1	1		5
Culture		3	3	1	7	1	2	1	1	5
Organization and development		1		1	2	1	2	1	1	5
Deficient living conditions		1	1	3	5					
Politics	1				1					
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>15</b>

In the news collection there are five full-page articles that have their main or shared focus on “El 70”, three of them are about *violence and insecurity*. *El Universal* has only one full-page article that goes under the theme of *politics*. It can also be noted that the *deficient living conditions* is not covered as widely as the amount of articles would suggest, since only half of them mention “El 70” or has it as a minor point, and the majority of the articles with more attention are short notes.

Therefore, considering the attention given to the community and the size of the news by themes in the two data, the lack of *deficient living conditions* in the news collection does not cause any major skew in the merged data. Also, the balancing effect of the data by the articles of the news collection is justified, since all of the articles have their main or shared focus on “El 70”, and the majority of these, 10 out of 15, are also full- or half-page articles. Even though the articles are less in number, they have a substantial amount of information referring to the community. From here forward the articles of the two sources are merged to consider and analyze them as one data set.

#### **4.4.3 Sources of information in the articles**

When considering the sources of information in the media texts, the intention is to find out who can participate in the communication, that is, which social actors have the possibility to express themselves in the media. Here a quantitative content analysis of the sources was employed listing the different sources used and counting the numbers of occurrences in the articles. However, this is only to show in how many articles certain sources are used, not how many times they are cited in total nor how the citations are valued inside the articles. The answers to the latter question are discussed more in detail within the discourse analysis of identities and relations, and the discourse representation, where more attention is also given to what is said and how.

First, I paid attention to whether the writer of the articles was named, either before or after the article. In the great majority, in 44 out of 57 articles, the writer was, indeed, named. The articles with no name are all short notes or quarter page articles throughout the themes. However, there is a concentration of nameless articles particularly under the theme *deficient living conditions* of which four out of six articles do not mention the writer. These are all short notes about the emergencies caused by rain or the lack of waste management. The rest of the nameless articles are news pieces about the incidents or events that have taken place in the community or of the upcoming events, but there is also one short note about the general situation of insecurity in the barrios that has no writer named.

In all of the more significant reports the writers are named. Considering the situation of violence and insecurity in the city, it is worth noting that the writers are not afraid of publishing the reports on that theme with their names. In the case of the data from *El Universal*, it could also be detected that mostly specific reporters write the news that covers “El 70”. For example, the same reporter writes six out of the 16 articles in *El Universal* about violence and insecurity. The reporters are not

even restricted by the theme, since there is, for example, one reporter of *El Universal* that has written eight reports divided under the themes of *culture, organization and development* and *deficient living conditions*. Although the data from the other newspapers is not wide enough to make this kind of conclusions, this may explain the crosscutting themes that can be found in the articles. The writers may thus be concentrating more on a certain geographic area from different angles than on a specific theme, or they may be in charge of multiple themes in the newspapers.

When considering the sources of information used inside the articles it is worth noting that even though the inhabitants of “El 70” are the most used source of information in the articles, almost half of the articles, 26 out of 57, do not cite or refer to information given by them. This is especially pronounced in the articles about *violence and insecurity*, of which 13 out of 21 do not use the inhabitants as sources of information, and in the *politics* reports, of which three out of four do not refer to information given by them. The inhabitants are most cited in the articles about the positive themes of *organization and development*, in 7 of 8 articles, and *culture*, in 9 of 14 articles, but also under the theme *deficient living conditions*, in 6 of 10 articles. See FIGURE 2 below about the usage of the inhabitants as sources of information.

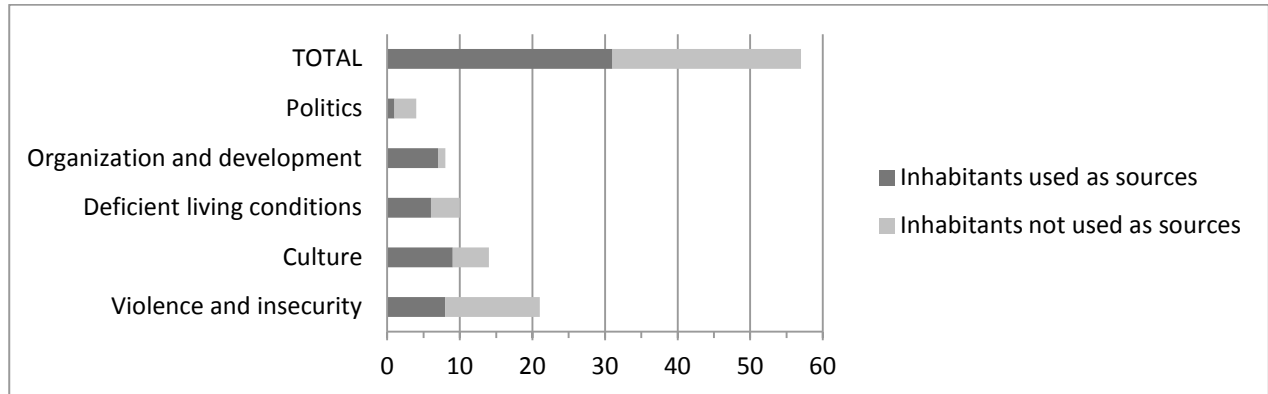


FIGURE 2: The inhabitants of “El 70” as sources in the articles under different themes

When counting the sources of information used in the articles, it has been considered that there are also phrases that can be based only on something that has been said, even though they are not presented as verbal citations, but as actions or thoughts (cf. Fairclough 1997, 106). However, of the articles that use the inhabitants as sources, just one has used only indirect references to information given by the inhabitants as a group without verbal citations. In the articles, the residence of the sources, as well as of other participants, is often clearly announced by referring, for example, to a ‘neighbor of “El 70”’, ‘a mother from “El 70”’ or as a group to the ‘inhabitants of “El 70”’, or the

residence of the source can be derived from the wider context of the article if it focuses mainly on the community.

Other source groups used in the articles include ‘inhabitants of other barrios’ that are cited in 18 articles, ‘police sources’ are used in 16 articles and ‘other authorities’ in 9, and ‘outsiders working in “El 70”’ are used in 15 articles. Moreover, ‘gang members’ and representatives of ‘local government’ are used as sources in two articles, and ‘experts’ and ‘politicians’ in three articles both. There are other sources that are all used in one article, including ‘unofficial sources’, ‘NGOs’ and ‘citizens’. (See FIGURE 3 below.)

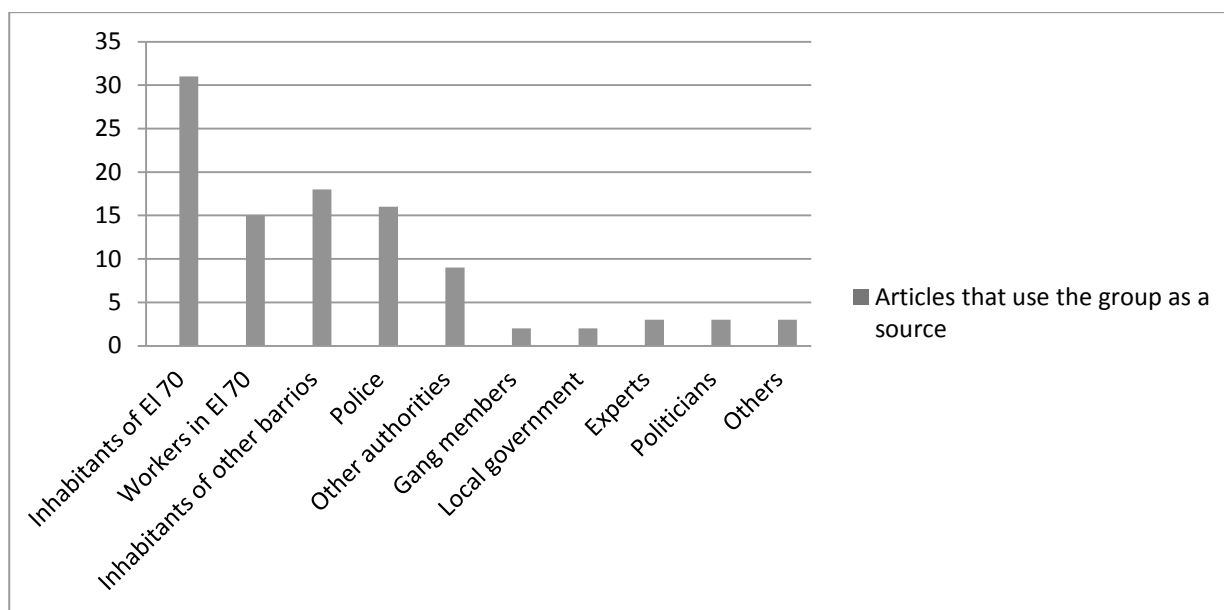


FIGURE 3: Number of articles that use the different groups as a source

Eleven of the 15 articles that cite ‘outsiders that are working in “El 70”’ are *cultural* reports. All the ‘police sources’ are cited under the theme *violence and insecurity*, in 16 of the 21 articles under the theme. Also, 11 of the 18 articles that cite the ‘inhabitants of other barrios’, and six of the nine articles that cite ‘other authorities’, are about *violence and insecurity*. The high number of the inhabitants of other slum neighborhoods is explained by the high amount of articles, especially under the themes of *violence and insecurity* and *deficient living conditions*, where “El 70” shares the focus of the article with other slum communities. As the police are the most used source in the articles about *violence and insecurity*, this may imply that the most of these articles have a so-called ‘official point of view’ on the incidents. This may imply to some impartiality, especially when considering the reports about the battles between gangs and police. However, to balance this, many



of the articles cite the inhabitants of “El 70” and of other barrios. There are only four articles where no external sources of information are used, three of these are short news pieces about upcoming cultural activities and one is a short note concerning the deficient condition of a road.

Having a closer look at who the inhabitants of “El 70” are that have been used as a source of information, it can be seen that in all of the data the most cited person is the ‘community representative’ José Abreu, as he has been cited in 16 out of the 31 articles that use the inhabitants as sources. His citations are concentrated especially under the positive themes of *culture* in six articles and *organization and development* in seven articles. In 11 articles the inhabitants as a group is referred to as a source, but there are also 35 individual inhabitants, other than the community representative, that are cited in the 31 articles. Thus, in many of these articles various inhabitants as well as the inhabitants as a group are used as a source. In some cases the same individual can be cited in various articles, but they are counted as separate individuals since the interest here is in the certain group of inhabitants that the individual represents, not the individual *per se*. The other individual inhabitants are considered separately from the community representative because of the high occurrence of his citations that would skew the numbers of individual sources in relation to gender, age, and the themes of the articles.

Most individual inhabitants from “El 70” are cited under the themes of *violence and insecurity* with 14 individual sources, and *culture* with 10 individual sources. Of the cited individuals, more than one half, or 18, are women and 11 are men, six are children or youth, out of which only one is a girl. There are more women inhabitants than men cited under every theme, except politics where no female sources from “El 70” are used. Children and youth are cited only under the themes of *violence and insecurity* and *organization and development*, and the only girl is cited under the latter. As the data is in Spanish, the gender of the sources was easy to detect despite the names of the persons not being mentioned, since some of the subjects inflect according to gender and if not, the articles before the subjects indicate the gender: e.g. female neighbor is *vecina*, male neighbor is *vecino*, similarly inhabitant is *la* or *el habitante*. The sources were classified as children or youth if there was a direct reference to the age of the person in numbers or in other expressions.

Of the cited individual inhabitants, other than the community representative, 21 are cited with their names and 14 are anonymous individuals. Women are cited with their names under all of the themes except *violence and insecurity*, under which only one of the six female sources are named. Men are more often anonymous sources; they are cited by name in only 6 out of the 11 citations. Similarly,

all of the children cited under the theme of *violence and insecurity* are anonymous, but under *organization and development* their names are mentioned. (See FIGURE 4 below.) It is noteworthy that in the eight articles about *violence and insecurity* where the inhabitants of “El 70” are used as sources, a total of 14 individuals are cited in addition to one citation of the community representative. Of these, one woman and one man are cited with their names, and the remaining 12 are anonymous citations. Two articles explain the high number of citations under the theme *violence and insecurity*. These focus completely on the situation of insecurity in “El 70” (La Voz, 29.9.2009 a and b) and cite 10 individuals collectively. Using many individual sources from “El 70” may be due to the reporter’s intention to appeal to the personal tragedies of the inhabitants to make the story more interesting and also to prove the veracity of the situation presented by their testimonies. The anonymity of the sources, especially in the reports on *violence and insecurity*, serves to protect the sources that comment on sensitive issues.

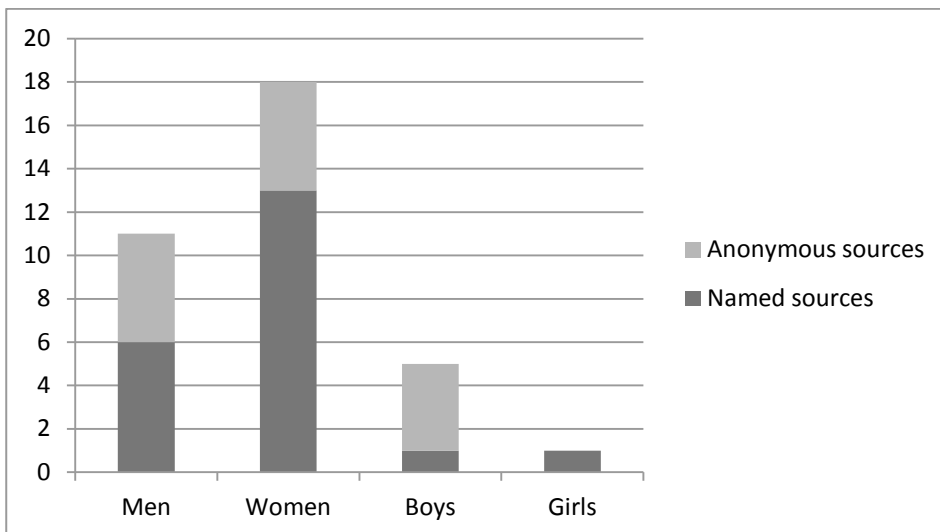


FIGURE 4: Individual sources according to gender and age groups and anonymity

The content analysis of the sources of information used in the newspaper articles helps to reveal from whose point of view the articles are written. It is therefore noteworthy that almost half of the articles do not cite or refer to information given by the inhabitants of “El 70”. However, it seems that the inhabitants of “El 70” are used more as sources in these articles than poor people are generally, since the earlier research of the sources used in Venezuelan newspaper reports on poverty suggest that the poor people themselves are less used as sources than the external parties, such as authorities, government sources or experts, and other public figures (Calonge 2009, 297–298). Also notable is the predominance of citations of the community representative, as well as of female

inhabitants. However, the content analysis does not tell what is said nor how the information of each source is valued in the texts. Also a more detailed analysis of the different positions and social roles of the individual sources is needed to understand who the inhabitants are that have their voices heard in the data. These questions are seen more in detail with the analysis of the identities and relations of the participants in the communication.

#### **4.4.4 Participants in the articles**

Here the intention is to list the participant groups that are mentioned in the articles and through quantitative analysis define how many articles mention or represent the different participant groups. The analysis of the positions offered to the different participant groups in the texts will be done in the more detailed analysis of discourse. The sources of data form part of the participants of the articles, but there are also others that do not have an active role in the communication, but are referred to in the text as participants or objects of the events reported. In addition to the sources of information, which were already described above, the following participant groups are mentioned: ‘organizations working in “El 70”’, ‘citizens and caraqueños<sup>22</sup>’, ‘victims of violence’, ‘arrested suspects’, ‘central government’, ‘social missions’ and ‘media’ as well as others that have each been mentioned in one article including ‘God’, ‘indigents’, ‘audience’, ‘evangelic church’, and ‘Embassy of Finland’.

Of all the participants, the ‘inhabitants of “El 70”’ are the most common, represented in 48 of the 57 articles analyzed. Widely represented are also the ‘inhabitants of other barrios’ mentioned in 25 articles and ‘outsiders working in “El 70”’ in 22 articles. The references to police can be divided into regular ‘police’ and to ‘corrupted police’ who were mentioned in 16 and 5 articles, respectively. ‘Other authorities’ are represented in 19 articles, ‘criminals or gangs’ in 16 and ‘citizens and caraqueños’ in 15 articles. Also, the victims of violence are divided in three groups that are ‘police victims’, ‘criminal victims’ and simply ‘victims’, mentioned in 7, 13 and 12 times respectively. The ‘central government’ and ‘local government’ were mentioned in 14 and 11 articles, respectively. Also ‘organizations working in “el 70”’ are mentioned in 14 articles and ‘media’ in six articles. ‘Arrested suspects’ are mentioned in five articles and the ‘social missions’, ‘experts’ and ‘politicians’ in four articles each. (See the FIGURE 5 below.)

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<sup>22</sup> People that are from or live in Caracas.

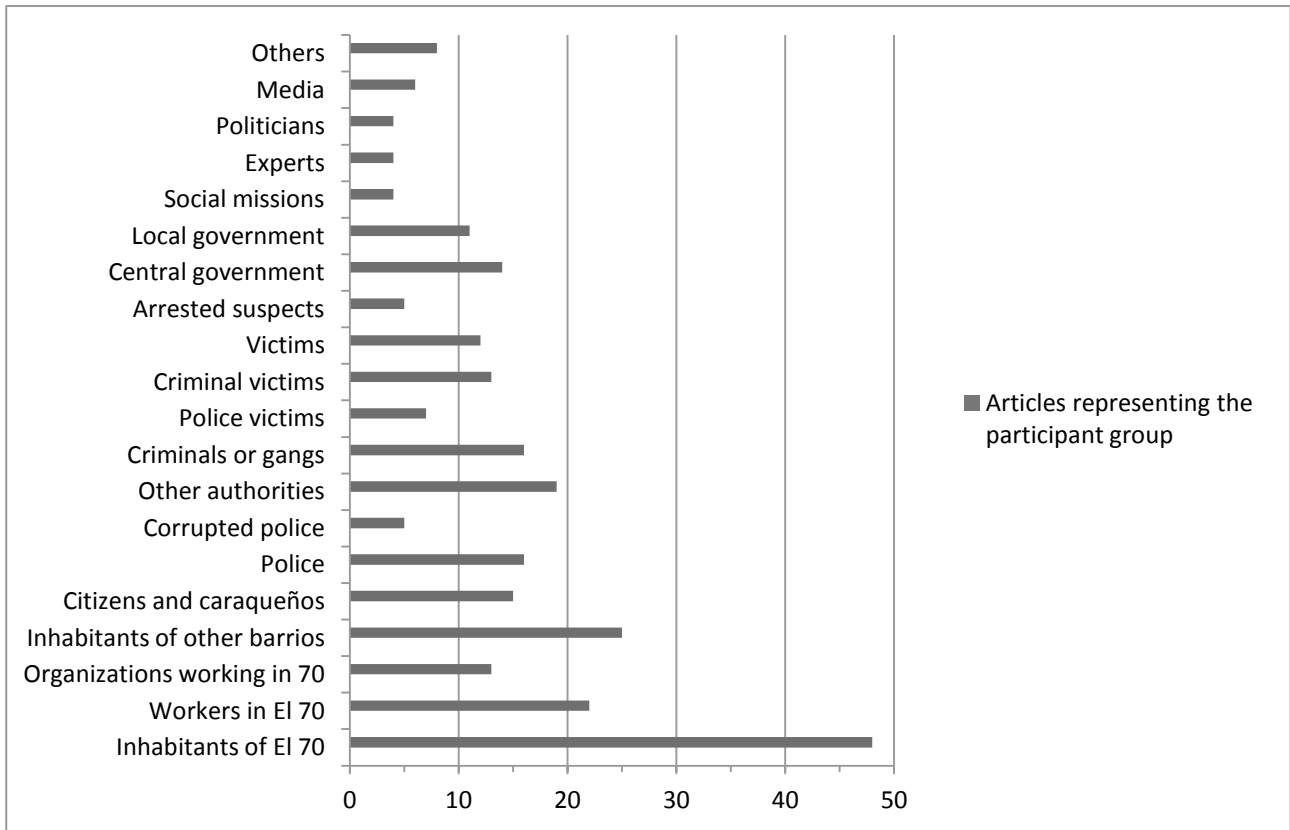


FIGURE 5: Numbers of articles representing the different participant groups in the articles

To have a better picture of the representation of the inhabitants of “El 70”, they were further classified first according to gender and age of the mentioned individuals, and second according to the different social roles with which they were attributed. In addition, the focus was on the different social groups of “El 70” that are mentioned in the articles. In addition to the community representative that is mentioned in 16 articles, 70 other individual inhabitants are mentioned throughout the data. Of these, 33 are men, 22 are women and 15 are children or youth, of which 12 are boys and three are girls (see FIGURE 6 below).

If the individual participants are compared to the individual sources, it can be seen that only half of the participants have their voices heard in the articles. However, the majority of female participants, 18 out of 22, are used as sources of information. The biggest difference is between the male participants and male sources; only 11 out of 33 male participants are cited in the articles. The lack of citation related to number of male participants in the reports can be explained by the high amount of articles on *violence and insecurity*, where the majority of them are either criminals or victims of violence, and only four men are used as sources. Also, of the 15 children participants, of which nine are in the articles about *violence and insecurity*, only six are cited, which implicates that an

individual child may be mentioned to increase the drama and to appeal to the audience, but they are not, however, considered as valuable sources of information. (See FIGURE 7 below.)

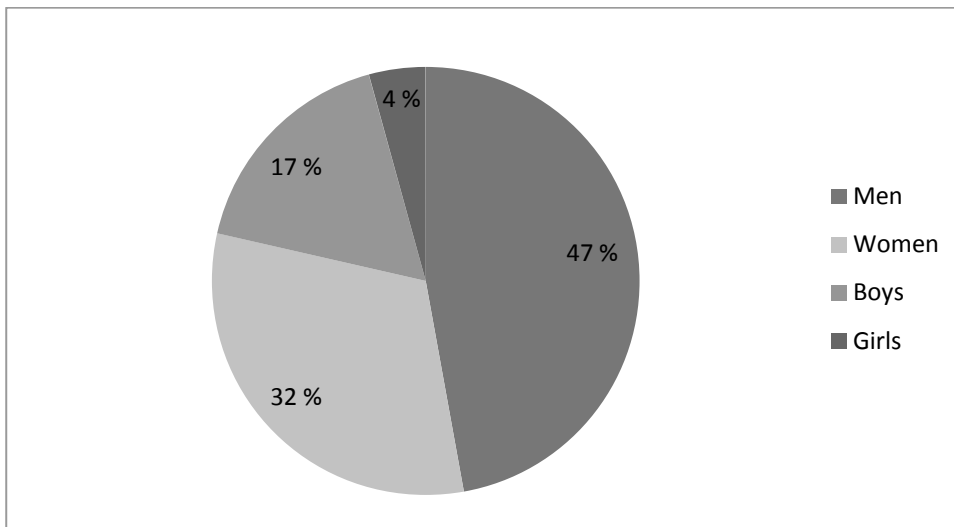


FIGURE 6: The individual participants from “El 70” according to gender and age groups.

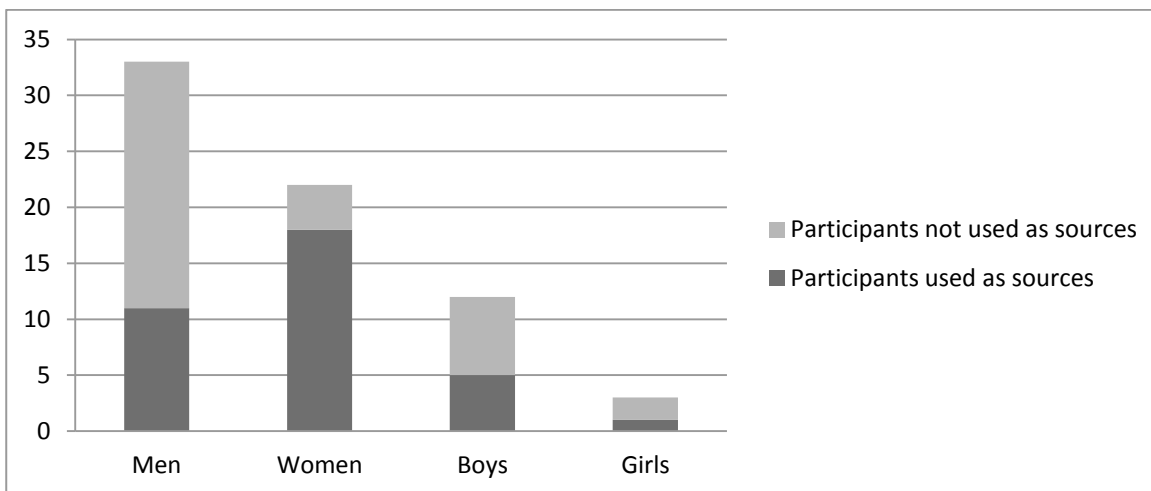


FIGURE 7: Individual participants and sources from “El 70” according to gender and age groups

‘Criminals in “El 70”’ are mentioned in 15 articles, of which 8 referred to gangs that are from or operate in “El 70”. Here it is worth noting that in the articles it is not always possible to differentiate between the criminals and gangs that reside in “El 70” and the ones that only operate in the community. Here, however, both are included in the counting. Victims of violence from “El 70” are altogether mentioned in 16 articles: ‘police victims’ are mentioned in one article, ‘criminal victims’ in ten articles, and ‘innocent victims’ in five articles, of which three refer to female and one to male victims, and two to victims of violence in general. The inhabitants are referred to as individual

‘workers inside the community’ in four articles and as a group of ‘workers outside of the community’ in two articles. In four articles the inhabitants are referred to as ‘affected by a catastrophe’, in seven they are referred to as ‘audience’, in six as ‘house lenders’ and in five as ‘beneficiaries’ of a certain project.

The ‘inhabitants as a group’ are mentioned in 32 out of 57 articles, and this includes, for example, references to neighbors, inhabitants, and the community. The ‘community council of “El 70”’ was mentioned in 16 articles and the ‘families’ of “El 70” are mentioned in 12 articles. Also, ‘children and/or youth’ as a group are mentioned in 13 articles. Other groups mentioned are the ‘parents’, ‘guajiros or wayuus’, ‘motorizados<sup>23</sup>’ and ‘cooperatives’, which are each mentioned in two articles. (See FIGURE 8 below.)

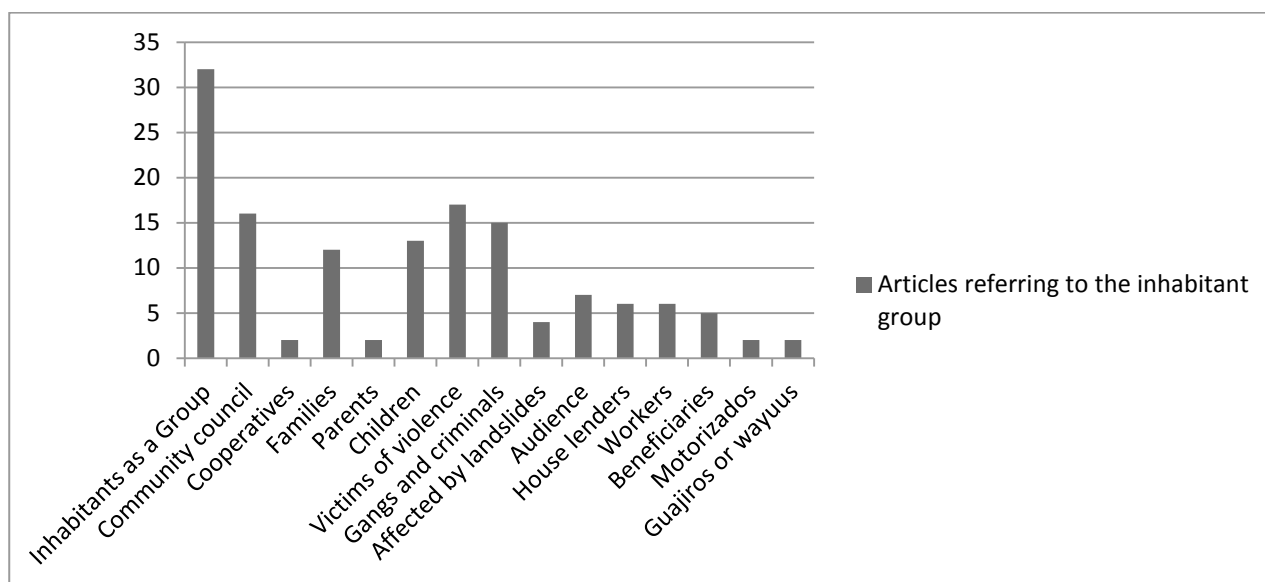


FIGURE 8: Number of articles representing the different groups of inhabitants.

Considering the starting point of this research, it is worth noting that in 17 out of 57 articles ‘victims of violence’ from “El 70” are mentioned, and in 15 articles ‘gangs or criminals’ from or operating in “El 70” are mentioned. The ‘criminals and gangs’ are mentioned under the theme of *violence and insecurity*, with the exception of one political article that also mentions the gangs of “El 70”. In addition, it is notable that ‘victims of violence’ from “El 70” are also mentioned in two *cultural* reports, whereas, for example, the ‘affected by a catastrophe’ are not mentioned in other

<sup>23</sup> *Motorizados* refers to the motorcycle messengers or drivers of motorcycle taxi [mototaxi], or to the motorcyclists in general. The word also has a negative implication, since many *motorizados* are often considered to be a threat in traffic for their risky and selfish driving style, and also in many cases of robberies there are *motorizados* involved.

articles than in those about *deficient living conditions*. This again shows how *violence and insecurity* is a crosscutting theme in the data.

#### 4.4.5 Photos of “El 70” and its inhabitants

The photos are important in the communication, since through them the readers can see the events before they are told in the texts (Fairclough 1997, 16). In this chapter I will describe the photos of “El 70” and its inhabitants that were found in the articles. Since the articles also include photos that do not represent “El 70”, here only the ones that are clearly of “El 70” or its inhabitants are included in the description. The objects of the photos were recognized directly to represent the community or they were defined by the photo captions. The photo captions are not analyzed here, but they are included in the discourse analysis.

The data includes in total 36 photos, and one drawing that portrays “El 70” or its inhabitants. In addition, there is one video that is a trailer of a fictional movie that has been shot in “El 70” and its neighbor communities, and some of its actors are from “El 70”, but it does not represent “El 70” as such. The majority of these photos are in the *cultural* articles that have in total 18 photos. There are also 13 photos in the articles about *organization and development* and five photos under the theme *violence and insecurity*. The articles about *deficient living conditions* and *politics* have no photos from “El 70” or of its inhabitants. Only some of these photos are included in the more detailed discourse analysis, if their content is seen to give added value to the particular discourses.

##### *Police and panoramas*

Under the theme of *violence and insecurity* there are five photos from “El 70” divided between four articles, of which one was published on the front-page. In the article of *El Universal* (25.11.2009) there was also a photo probably from “EL 70”, since it is the main scene of the happenings, but it did not load on the web page. Two of these photos picture police officers in “El 70”. One is a photo of two armed police officers going up a narrow slum stairway, and there is a text in a wall saying “Barrio 70” that one of the officers is looking at while passing by (*El Universal* 8.6.2008). The other is a front-page photo (*Últimas Noticias* 24.9.2009) from “El 70” with an armed police squad, their motorcycles, and a group of journalists. The other three photos under *violence and insecurity* do not have any indications of violence. There are two panoramas from the highest part of “El 70”, one pictures a steep uphill road surrounded by shanties with two parked cars and people walking

(Diario La Voz 29.9.2009a) and the other is an image of shanties and the sky full cables and kites (Diario La Voz 29.9.2009b). The third photo portrays two children playing with their bikes in the basketball field with their faces blurred, and there is a Jeep in the background with some people (Diario La Voz 29.9.2009a). It can be concluded that “El 70” is rarely portrayed in the reports about *violence and insecurity*, and when it is, the photos do not picture the violence as such, even though the photos of the police imply their presence in the barrio for reasons of insecurity. However, for the low number of photos it is not reasonable to make further conclusions of their contents.

### *Scenes of the spectacles*

In the cultural articles, there are 18 photos from “El 70” divided between eight articles, and two of the photos were published on the front-page (El Nacional 18.7.2008; Últimas Noticias 8.10.2010). In addition, one of the electronic articles includes a movie trailer. All of the photos are related to the ‘Theatrical Cable Car’ organized in the community for various occasions, with the exception of one photo that pictures the visit of clown doctors, where one of them interviews a little girl with a microphone (El Universal 31.8.2008). The photos of the ‘Theatrical Cable Car’ mostly picture the different scenes of the play with the living statues, clowns, jugglers, different role characters, and the audience (El Universal 21.5.2007, 18.7.2008; El Nacional 18.7.2008; Últimas Noticias 8.10.2010, 17.10.2010; Ciudad Caracas 8.10.2010). However, one of the front-page photos (Últimas Noticias 8.10.2010) does not picture the scenes, but portrays thirteen motorcyclists up the community road along with some children and men, under the title “Theatre on Wheels” (*Teatro sobre ruedas*). The movie trailer (El Universal 19.4.2010) lasts 1 minute and 27 seconds, and all of the short scenes have violent content including the use of firearms, knives, and unarmed physical coercion.

The photos of the cultural articles can be seen as typical photos of cultural events, where the spectacles and the audience are pictured. However, as these spectacles took place on the streets, plazas, and other places of a slum community, the scenario seems quite different from the traditional staging. The violent content of the movie trailer is also somewhat expected, considering that poverty is traditionally represented through violence in Venezuelan movies (Altman, 2008).



### *Portraying the beneficiaries*

Under the theme of *organization and development*, there are 13 photos from “El 70” divided between six articles, and one of the articles also includes a drawing. Two of these photos portray the community representative, José Abreu, (El Universal 7.9.2008; El Nacional 12.7.2010) and one photo portrays the Libertador Mayor speaking for a group of people that are supposedly from “El 70” (Últimas Noticias 28.10.2009). There is one photo related to the housing projects that pictures a shanty at the front and few newly constructed houses at the back with people standing outside (El Universal 9.3.2010). The article of *Últimas Noticias* (11.10.2009) about community organization in general, includes three photos of the different projects: one portrays three girls and one boy with a cultural worker in a puppet workshop, another portrays two men baking bread, and the last one pictures three women, that seem to be *vayus* for their dresses, walking away on the street with the shanties and other people in the background. There is also a box story with comments of four people that live or work in “El 70” with their close-up photos. The article of *Todos Adentro* (30.1.2010) about an NGO project has two photos about the children participating in the project: one portrays children in the basketball court queuing to observe through a telescope, and the other pictures children playing with a planet game. There is also a drawing of an alien in a starship looking down on Earth to “El 70”.

The photos of the different projects in action and the portraits of their beneficiaries can be seen as a typical way of illustrating the articles about *organization and development*. However, in the articles related to housing and infrastructural projects, there is only one photo about the projects themselves and the rest portray the community representative or the Mayor. This is probably due to the fact that these articles are normally advance reports of the projects that will be implemented, but are not yet implemented.

## 5. REPRESENTATION OF “EL 70” IN NEWSPAPERS

In this chapter, the results of the critical discourse analysis of the newspaper articles of the barrio “El 70” and its inhabitants are presented. Since one article may represent the community in various ways and the discourses are meaning systems that cut across different social practices, the representations were analyzed by searching common factors throughout the different articles and thematic categories. As the articles in their entirety were considered already in the content analysis, only the parts of the data that concern “El 70” and its inhabitants were analyzed with the more detailed textual analysis. Thus the 23 articles that have their main focus on “El 70” were analyzed in their entirety, and of the other articles only selected parts were considered.

To identify the dominant discourses of the data I looked for pieces of the same discourses throughout the articles. The similarities were searched for especially in relation to the representations and identities constructed of the barrio and its inhabitants and their relations to other participants of the texts. The attention was particularly on the explicit and implicit axiomatic assumptions that seem like expressions of ‘common sense’ and that may work ideologically, maintaining hegemonic discourses and relations of domination (cf. Fairclough 1997, 25, 26, 64; 2003, 207). A discourse was also considered dominant if its pieces were found to repeat throughout the data (cf. Jokinen et al. 2004, 81).

Two clearly dominant discourses were identified about the barrio “El 70” in the data. The discourse of *gang violence and fear* with the discourse of *exclusion and anarchy* are the most dominant discourses found throughout the different thematic categories of the articles. Also, the discourse of *organization and empowerment* can be seen as a dominating discourse, even though it is limited under the themes of *culture*, and *organization and development*. In addition to the dominant discourses, few subordinate discourses were found in the data. These discourses were detected only in limited amounts of articles, and they either support or contrast the dominant discourses, yet constructing another kind of representation of the community of “El 70”. Under the theme of *violence and insecurity*, a discourse of *search and destroy* was identified that is related but also contrasting with the discourses of *gang violence and fear* and *exclusion and anarchy*. A discourse of *insoluble misery* was found to support the discourse of *gang violence and fear*, and as an aside for

the discourse of *exclusion and anarchy*. Under the different dominant discourses “El 70” is also repeatedly used as a *political pawn* for different purposes of the reporters or interviewees. In addition, pieces of certain counter discourses to the negative representations were found.

After their identification, the internal power relations of these discourses were analyzed. The results of this analysis are reported in continuation, concentrating first on how the community is represented in the data: what kind of place is “El 70”, how are the inhabitants referred to and identified, and what are the relations between the different participants represented in the articles? Also under consideration is whose voices are heard in the particular discourses and why, and what are the relations between the different voices and how are they valued. The analysis of how the hegemonic or dominant discourse is produced in the text is reported together with the analysis of the representation of the community. The ways in which the meanings are produced are defined by indicating the different strategies with data citations. If the main topic and theme of the article cannot be identified from the particular citation, the headlines of the articles are cited to point out the textual context of the citation. I have translated the citations from Spanish to English, trying to follow the original structure of the clauses and phrases and maintain the connotations of the words as close to the original Spanish expressions as possible. The analysis is, however, based on the original texts in Spanish.

The different aspects of the analysis are interrelated and thus the answers for the different questions can be found many times in the same citations. For example, the sources of information and the cited persons or groups are indicated in the citations already when considering the representation of the community. These citations are not repeated in the report when conclusions about the use of the different voices are presented.

## **5.1 Gang violence and fear**

All of the articles about *violence and insecurity* represent the “barrio El 70” as an insecure place. This is done by explicit references or implicitly by the context in which the community is brought up, for example, in the context of the violent incidents that have happened in “El 70”. However, references to the insecurity of “El 70” are also made under all the other thematic categories.

### 5.1.1 One of the most violent and dangerous slums of the capital

On many occasions “El 70” is represented as one of the most violent slums of Caracas or Venezuela. The dangerousness of “El 70” is presented like an axiomatic assumption, but without any proof. This is done explicitly and often in the beginning of the articles, especially in many reports that are not principally about *violence and insecurity*, but about *organization and development, politics, and culture*:

Jose Abreu “Chio” forms part of the community council Las Terrazas of the barrio El 70, in El Valle. This place has been catalogued as one of the most dangerous barrios of the Metropolitan Area. [lead paragraph] (El Universal 7.9.2008.)

Not the violence or the difficulties coerce the ones who vote in the barrios [second head]. Yesterday, for the first time in four months Taísa Ravelo went back to the sector Los Aguacaticos, very close to the barrio El 70, considered one of the most dangerous [barrios] in the El Valle parish [lead paragraph]. (El Universal 16.2.2009.)

“El 70” is “catalogued” or “considered” as dangerous, but there is no information by whom it is done. The passive form works as a strategy of factualization that creates objectivity and generalizes the information of dangerousness to legitimize it (cf. Jokinen et al. 2004, 158–178; Valtonen 1998, 111). Similarly, the information may be factualized by presenting it as an unconditional statement, as in the quote below:

Theatre open doors in El 70 of El Valle [headline] [...] that pass by eight points of the barrio El 70 of El Valle, the highest [barrio] of the capital, as its inhabitants presume, but also one of the most violent [barrios] of Caracas. (Últimas Noticias 17.10.2010.)

The violence of “El 70” is presented as an unquestionable circumstantial factor that is legitimized by presenting that being *the highest* barrio is only a presumption of the inhabitants, whereas the violence has no conditions (cf. Jokinen et al. 2004, 163, 172). Representation of “El 70” as one of the most dangerous places is also constructed more implicitly by bringing “El 70” up as an example of the dangerous barrios, and the situation of insecurity in general:

“We shall overcome the resignation and put an end to the insecurity” [headline]. “[...] People think it is impossible to end with the insecurity, in the barrio El 70 or in La Lucha [...]” [interview of Antonio Ledezma, candidate for Metropolitan Mayor]. (El Universal 12.11.2008.)

[...]The necessity of the bailiffs to protect themselves is understandable, but it would be important [...] to assure that the notifications get to the ones that live in these so called zones of high dangerousness [...] like the barrio “El 70” [...]. (El Universal 15.3.2010.)

Considering that there are hundreds of other slum communities in Caracas, most of which at least at some level share the problem of insecurity, it is noteworthy that “El 70” has been selected repeatedly as an example of the worst cases in different contexts. This seems more done as an arbitrary choice, probably based on the bad reputation of the barrio, since no expert information or statistics are cited to present evidence of the dangerousness of the barrio “El 70”. “El 70” is brought up among the violent communities, and strong claims are made about the situation without evidence to confirm the information, as in the case below:

In Venezuela almost as many people as in Iraq has been assassinated [headline]. The war dead are only 17 % more than the fallen for violence in the country in 2007 [second head]. The pools of blood are no more a motive of astonishment for the residents of the slums of Petare, or Los Frailes de Catia, and neither for the ones of the barrio El 70 in El Valle [lead paragraph]. (El Universal 22.4.2007.)

Here the quantifying, or presenting of numeric information, creates credibility by factualizing the seriousness of the situation (cf. Jokinen et al. 2004, 158–178; Valtonen 1998, 111). However, the expert information – citations of the police and criminologists, as well as the morgue reports and the different statistics – that is referred to throughout this particular article offer homicide rates only at the country and capital level and there are no numbers about the actual slums mentioned. The style of the text is also dramatic and sensational, so as to call attention and appeal to the sensibility of the audience. The detailed description of the elements of violence makes the situation concrete, causing anxiety and fear in the readers, which fosters a negative perspective of the community (cf. Fairclough 1997, 13). According to Fairclough (ibid., 97), using the war metaphor works in the same way, as war is normally considered as the worst calamity of the humanity and referring to it appeals to the common tragic experience among the audience. A stereotypical representation of “El 70” is thus created by simplifying and exaggerating it as a place where blood and death are constant (cf. Hall 1997b, 258).

Even though not defined as the most dangerous or violent, the insecurity of “El 70” is also brought up in other articles that many times highlight it with different details:

Due to the height, the coldness is as inclement as the delinquency. (El Universal 8.6.2008.)

Here the reporter compares “delinquency” to the harsh “coldness” of the high hill. The reference to height emphasizes the difference between the formal city and the informal slum hills, and the comparison to coldness naturalizes the delinquency as an inescapable problem, something that could not be prevented or solved. This creates a stereotyped representation of the community as

deviant from the formal city and inevitably delinquent (cf. Hall 1997b, 258). By referring to the coldness, the reporter also uses the strategy of factualizing that refers to the reporter's own presence in the scene; by describing tangible and vivid details about his concrete feelings and observations in the scene, the reporter can factualize strong claims. The strategies of naturalization and factualization of the information serve to legitimize the discourse (cf. Jokinen et al. 2004, 90–91, 158.)

### *Nest of gangs and criminals*

The articles about *violence and insecurity* repeatedly indicate that gangs and criminals operate in “El 70”. This is usually also presented as official information confirmed and legitimized by the police authority:

A police register specifies that there are 13 bloodthirsty groups in the parish [second head]. He [a police officer] informed that two individuals known as 'Gerson' and 'Richard' assumed the lead of the gang of El 70 and have power over the criminal groups of Los Sin Techo and Primero de Mayo [...]” (Últimas Noticias 28.9.–2.10.2009)

Shot down two scourges in confrontations with the PM and the Cicpc [headline]. [...] according to the PM he was member of the gangs “El Munro” and “Corona”. [...] Both of the criminal groups are indicated to spread terror in the barrio El 70 [...] (El Universal 9.10.2009)

The existence of gangs is factualized by invoking the police authority. The use of the passive form “indicated” in the second citation, however, hides the actor who indicates the operation of the gangs in “El 70”. At the same time, the existence of gangs is made to seem like general information provided by an objective reporter. The reference to the “power” of the new leaders of the gang of “El 70” over other gangs implies the dominant position of the gang in the zone. The references to “bloodthirsty” and “terror” emphasize the violence of these gangs and also appeal to the readers sensibility, possibly causing feelings of fear that again support the negative perception of the barrio (cf. Fairclough 1997, 13). The reporter also presents the existence of dangerous gangs in “El 70” as an unquestionable truth, without citing any authorities:

Little dare the police to enter El 70. The zone is a refuge of some of the most dangerous gangs of the south of the city [photo caption]. (El Universal 8.6.2008)

Here the gangs of “El 70” are represented as so dangerous that even the police are afraid to go to the area. Even though the police are not cited, they are used as an indirect source of information again to legitimize the information (cf. Jokinen et al. 2004, 158–178; Valtonen 1998, 111). In addition to

being a nest of criminals or the target of their actions, “El 70” is also represented as a battlefield between criminals and gangs:

Barrio El 70 of El Cementerio suffers from the fight between the criminals [headline]. (El Universal 8.6.2008.)

In El Valle there are seven “war zones” [Headline]. [...] 100 delinquents [...] [that] according to the sources of scientific police are distributed in 11 gangs that fight for the control of the sectors for the drug sales. These places, clear battlefields, are seven: barrio San Andrés, Bruzual, Zamora, Las Malvinas, El Setenta, Negrón street, and El Loro street. All are communicated with each other by one road. It is there where they come together for the armed attacks. [...] El Valle is the third zone of Caracas in the numbers of homicides. (El Universal 2.5.2007.)

Here again, the military discourse – references to “fight”, “war zones”, “battlefields” and “armed attacks” – serves to appeal to the audience, but especially to justify repressive intervention as a solution. The war discourse easily marginalizes other possible points of view of the situation (Fairclough 1997, 97), and as the barrios are seen as militarized by the gangs, also military means to resolve the situation are implicitly justified (cf. Penglase 2007). In the second citation, the information is also quantified and confirmed by the police, and in the end of the article, the numbers of police officers, the different police forces, and the helicopter that are used in the operations are mentioned.

### **5.1.2 The inhabitants as victims and perpetrators**

The most important participants defined under this discourse are the gangs of “El 70” and the other inhabitants, but also the gangs of the other barrios, as well as other outsiders that are not involved in the criminal activities.

#### *Terrorized victims who try to cope with everyday violence*

Under this discourse the inhabitants are mostly represented as being afraid of, but also accustomed to the barrio’s everyday violence, having to adjust their lives to protect themselves. In the *cultural* reports, the experience of everyday violence is brought up explicitly and implicitly:

Poverty and insecurity are the words that have danced for years among the mouths of the community. They are listened in the motorcycles, boom in the jeeps and are repeated from door to door among the humble houses. [...] In El 70 many have confronted and the community has seen the spilling of blood that was left by the massacres, lynching, rapes, kidnappings and drug trafficking. [...] The arrival of the theatre however is a space of truce in the barrio. In the end there is no curtain, but applause yes. (Últimas Noticias 17.10.2010)

She [a women that lend her home to theatre] reflects that [...] the experience [theatre] has helped them to have some truce. (El Nacional 18.7.2008)

Here again the reporter's presence in the scene is proved by the physical details of the community to create credibility and legitimize the information (cf. Jokinen et al. 2004, 158–178; Valtonen 1998, 111). Insecurity forms part of the everyday conversations of the inhabitants and it is felt everywhere. People have witnessed immeasurable amounts of different kinds of violent acts. Using metaphoric language and giving cruel details of the violence, again, contributes to the creation of a negative perspective to the barrio (cf. Fairclough 1997, 13). Also, the mention of the “curtain” in the last clause can be understood to refer to the sheets that are laid over the dead bodies implying that at the end of the day of theatre there were no victims of violence, unlike the usual day. The usage of the military expression “truce” to define the effect of the theatre in the community also implies that it is only a temporary cease-fire in the continuous situation of violence. The inhabitants are also defined as indifferent when witnessing the usual acts of violence:

The pools of blood are no more a motive of astonishment for the residents of the slums of Petare, or Los Frailes de Catia, and neither for the ones of the barrio El 70 in El Valle. For them they become part of the everyday scenery, since every day in some point of each of those slums one inhabitant breathes his last breath due to the intentions of the underworld. [First paragraph.] (El Universal 22.4.2007.)

The violence is assumed to be so common that it no longer astonishes the inhabitants who are represented explicitly as the daily lethal victims of the criminals, but also as having reached a state of extreme apathy. In addition to being familiar with violence, the inhabitants are also represented to still be afraid, adjusting their lives and employing different protection methods to avoid the insecurity and to cope with it:

“[...] People think it is impossible to end the insecurity, in the barrio El 70 or in La Lucha, they are used to living with the clatter of the submachine guns, invest in grilles [...]” [interview of Antonio Ledezma, candidate for Metropolitan Mayor]. (El Universal 12.11.2008.)

“I don't like that they play on the street, but I cannot have them all day at home like caged animals, for that I am always nervous when they get out, because although this is almost always calm, one knows that when a shot is heard comes the exchanging of bullets and if you are not attentive to get them in quickly something can happen to them” [a mother from “El 70”]. (La Voz. 29.9.2009a)

The sound of the gunfire seems to be listened to on day-to-day basis. The inhabitants have submitted to the insecurity and given up. Inhabitants install bars in their doors and windows to keep the criminals away, and stay at home. Even though they are represented as preventive actors, the



actions are a passive method of protection that do not affect or prevent the occurrences of violent situations. The anxiety of the inhabitants is also presented in a way in which the parents are worried about their children. The home seems to be the only safe place for the inhabitants and their children, but consequently it is at the same time regarded as a prison. By using the passive forms “one knows” and “if you are not” the cited mother generalizes the situation to all of the inhabitants and parents who know how the dynamics of violence work and how it should be reacted to for protection. In the controversial act of lynching the inhabitants act directly against the criminal, but the incident is also represented as more of a reaction that brings a short relief, but does not change the long term, complex situation of insecurity:

The neighbors assure that since then [the lynching] crimes have not been reported in the zone, although the feeling of insecurity does not cease. They fear that in any moment the “protégés” of the deceased antisocial come back. (El Universal 8.6.2008.)

In the same report other different preventive actions of the inhabitants are described more in detail:

The believers say that they have to walk crouched and in silence to shelter from the bullets. [...] In the barrio the locals to get healthy and save to “La Baranda” [...] are used to wake up at dawn and depart accompanied. However the delinquents assault them and dispossess their lunch boxes [...]. Once they aboard the units they still do not liberate from the anxiety. In the curves, where the cars brake to avoid the waterfalls of sewage water they are threatened by other antisocials [...]. (El Universal 8.6.2008.)

The reportage has a dramatic and sensationalist style. Detailed descriptions are used to highlight the different situations of insecurity and fear that the inhabitants encounter daily. Here again the information is legitimized by referring to the reporter’s own observations in the scene, such as the “curves” and the “waterfalls of sewage water” (cf. Jokinen et al. 2004, 158–178; Valtonen 1998, 111). These references to the lacking physical conditions of the barrio once again further emphasizes the difference between the informal and formal city. The inhabitants are represented as actors, but again in passive acts of protection. They are possible victims of assaults who must submit to the threat and adjust their lives to protect themselves from the insecurity. Their coping mechanisms also appear more as Band-Aid solutions in the middle of the continuous threat. Also, the reference to “the believers” implies that the inhabitants are at the mercy of God, that they cannot really affect their destiny by the way they walk or talk. The situation of insecurity is constructed as inevitable and people are even represented as having no other way to protect themselves than moving away from the zone:

She lived there during 30 years, but the fear that she felt the night when her home got in the line of fire between two gangs, almost taking her two years old daughter, was stronger than the roots [lead

paragraph]. (El Universal 16.2.2009.)

Here again the readers' sensibility is appealed to by describing the threat to a child. Moving away is again presented as the only solution in a report on a confrontation between the police and gangs, where, once more, cruel details are brought up about the insecurity and violence experienced by the inhabitants of the zone:

“You had to move to not be assassinated” [headline of a box story]. [...] For not moving away they [two police officers living in “El 70”] were ambushed and riddled. [...] The director of MP [Metropolitan Police] confided that other neighbors did leave El 70, Los Sin Techo and 1er de Mayo because their daughters were raped by the delinquents that subdued them with firearms while abusing them, even before the eyes of other family members. The officer remembered that on Tuesday night a young woman revealed to him that she was raped by a man that obliged her son to witness the brutal act, with a pistol pointing at his head. (Últimas Noticias 24.9.2009)

The effect of the brutal rape is strengthened by repeating the act in the report, first as a general situation and then as a particular case. Here, the police or the journalist may have generalized one case of rape to be something usual in the communities, and a general reason for people to move away. By the description of the brutality of the violent acts of the delinquents the police also justify their use of violence against the criminals. The inhabitants are represented as powerless victims of violence, having no other solution to the insecurity than to move away. The detail of family members watching the cruelties even further emphasizes the impossibility to affect the situation. This way, again, a stereotyped representation is constructed of “El 70” where the situation of violence is seen as inevitable and exaggerated (cf. Hall 1997b, 258). By presenting no alternatives, the information implicitly legitimizes one solution: repressive violence (cf. Jokinen et al. 2004, 163, 172).

### *Children turn into criminals and gang members*

As it is suggested that various criminals and gangs operate in the barrio, it implies that some of the inhabitants themselves are criminals and gang members. Moreover, a suggestion of how the criminals and gang members grow up in the barrio is presented:

“They stop being kids to become watchmen” [strap line]. When the kites are not toys for children [headline]. [...] “it can pass from a healthy play into a real war between gangs if someone breaks the kite of the other”. [...] (Diario La Voz 29.9.2009b.)

Here a causal explanation is given to the situation, a children's play can turn from a normal competition into a gang rivalry. Thus it is represented to be only a fine line between the innocent

and the criminal youth. In the same article, this is all explained by implying that the violence and rivalry are part of the “culture of the barrio”, to which the children are socialized:

[...] sometimes behind this apparently healthy folk competition is hiding a climate of violence, rivalry and ambition for power, in which many boys and adolescents start to form as part of the culture of the barrio, as the neighbors of the zone explained. [...] the young that grow up with the idea that “the bad is the best and no one messes with him, for this they always want to stand out so that the others fear and respect them, well that way they dominate and feel invincible, this way begins the war for power in the slum, from the smallest to the most grown-ups”. [...] “Starting from this moment they begin to connect with the world of delinquency changing favors with the delinquent gangs [...]” (Diario La Voz 29.9.2009b.)

This citation represents “El 70” as a seedbed of crime and violence implying that the youth grow up in a bad environment that distorts their morality and turns them into criminals. This is the only explanation given to the gang situation of the barrio in the data. The reference to the “culture of the barrio” implies that the reasons for the gang problem are to be found inside of the barrio, it is an endogenous problem, having no connection to the surrounding society. Here also, the culture of the barrio is reduced to violence and rivalry, offering again a stereotypical representation of the life in the barrio (cf. Hall 1997b). In the citation above, the inhabitants are cited directly and indirectly, but there are also two citations whose origins are not told, but that are supposedly of the inhabitants as well. For once, here, the inhabitants present their more evolved opinions of the situation concerning their youth. Under this discourse, it is also made clear that even if some of the criminals were eliminated there are always others that will replace them:

[...] other antisocials who take their first steps in their respective delinquent careers. They pretend to substitute “Padrino” who left a perverse legacy and inheritance in the sector El 70 of El Cementerio. (El Universal 8.6.2008.)

This way the ‘production line of new criminals’ seems unstoppable. Furthermore the young age of the gang members is highlighted, for example, in the report about the seven war zones, where “Junior” is taken as the epitome of the young criminals that also spread to “El 70”:

[...] “Junior” can be confused with any young man until seeing his eyes and discover that his innocence has evaporated with terror. [...] Like “Junior” there are other 100 delinquents in El Valle and in Coche, all capable to rob and kill with the same facility. They [...] are distributed in 11 gangs that fight for the control of the sectors for the drug sales. These places, clear battlefields, are seven: barrio San Andrés, Bruzual, Zamora, Las Malvinas, El Setenta, Negrón street, and El Loro street. (El Universal 2.5.2007.)

The cruelty and coldness of these young gang members is emphasized by referring to the “facility to rob and kill”, as well as by using metaphoric language about “Junior”, suggesting that it can be seen

from his eyes that something has essentially changed in the young boy. This kind of dehumanizing language may again justify the use of repressive police action against the youth of the barrios.

### *Gangs are organized combat forces*

In the citations of the police, gangs are represented as fairly organized combat troops rather than bands of criminal youth:

[...] 100 delinquents [...] are distributed in [...] 11 gangs that fight for the control of the sectors for the drug sales. These places, clear battlefields, are seven [...] (El Universal 2.5.2007.)

In March, already with friendship and respect of years, the groups that sell drugs in the barrio 1er de Mayo, Sin Ley, La Fila, Los Sin Techo (parte alta) and el Setenta got together. All of them, approximately 35 men – including leaders, gunmen and watchmen [gariteros] – fight against the four that stand up for the lower part of Los Sin Techo and who are the ones that protect the supposed officer. (El Universal 29.5.2010.)

The gangs seem to be organized internally so that they have different positions for their members. This also refers to the internal hierarchy of the gangs where first are the “leaders”, followed by the “gunmen” and finally by the “watchmen”. In addition to internal organization, the gangs are able to ally with other gangs if they have the same objectives. This kind of representation of the gangs may again justify the use of police force against them, since referring, for example, to young excluded men with problems would represent them as too sympathetic to be attacked. In the citations of the inhabitants and the gang members themselves, the gangs are also represented as having substantial power and a highly organized system of security inside of the barrio:

Nobody can rob in the community [...] [strap line] “Down there commands the Government, but up here we command” [headline] [...] Law of the barrio [subhead] they [the inhabitants] assured that the delinquents give them more security than the police forces. [...] Better known as “Los Garitas” [the watchmen], they are a group that remain in some strategic points of the slums and communicate with the gangs to inform them about anyone that is suspicious [...] some even assured that there are young boys that wait in the roofs and to mislead they fly kites. (Diario La Voz 29.9.2009a.)

The gangs are represented to have a dominant position in the barrio. The delinquents are the guarantee of security and their organization spreads through the community, involving even the children. The reference to the “law of the barrio” also implies an organized system of norms and rules that prevail there. However, even though they are referred to maintain security, the inhabitants also refer to the cruelty of the same criminals:

”[...] a thug [malandro], a young man that is able to assassinate ruthlessly or sell drugs to other human beings to destroy their lives”, added a woman that assured to have all her life in the barrio and know

many of the men and woman that belong to these groups. (Diario La Voz 29.9.2009a.)

Here the low morals of the delinquents are condemned. The information is factualized and legitimized by citing an inhabitant of the barrio and especially by mentioning that she has lived all of her life in the barrio, creating credibility to her testimony. This is also the only bit of the data that refers to female gang members. This is noteworthy, since it implies that there is one group of participants that is virtually lacking in all of the articles. Except for this short mention, the gang members are defined as young men.

### **5.1.3 Complex network of relations**

As it has been shown above, the different participants of the discourse are defined mostly through their relations to the other participants, such as the gangs' relations to other gangs and the 'normal' inhabitants' relations to gangs. The relations between the different participants are considered further below.

#### *Gangs against and with the other gangs*

The relations between the different gangs seem twofold. The gangs are mostly defined to be fighting each other for drug sale territories, but they are also represented as able to organize across the gang lines to defeat another gang for revenge. The fights between criminals are thus not represented only as territorial issues, but also acts of revenge resulting from actions of individual criminals, as, for example, in the citation below:

Barrio El 70 of El Cementerio suffers from the fight between the criminals [headline]. [...] In the barrio it is told that "El Padrino" abandoned his tent after assassinating a delinquent who turned out to be a companion of "Mamadeo", the leader of the most sinister antisocials of the south of the city. (El Universal 8.6.2008.)

Here the criminal is afraid of revenge for the accidental murder of a gang leader. This implies that his murder could be avenged by the other members of the gang. Revenge is also the issue when the gangs get together to fight against other gangs:

[...] the groups that sell drugs [...] got together [...] fight against the four that stand up for the lower part of Los Sin Techo and who are the ones that protect the supposed officer. (El Universal 29.5.2010.)

This is an example where the individual criminal actions may lead to fights between entire gangs. The allied gangs will fight against the other gang that is protecting a supposedly corrupted police officer that was involved in the homicides of the members of the joined gangs.

### *Interdependence between the inhabitants and the gangs*

The relationship between the inhabitants and the gangs seems very complex under this discourse. As seen already above, the inhabitants are mostly represented as being afraid of experiencing gang violence. In addition, the gangs seem to have power over the inhabitants even in situations that do not seem to pose a direct threat to their physical integrity:

The look of fear [...] appears on the faces of some neighbors when asked to talk about the insecurity in the barrio. "I cannot talk much about that with you, here you are always observed by some eyes that are not precisely of God" [...] (Diario La Voz 29.9.2009a)

This also defines the relations between the inhabitants and the outsiders with the implication that the inhabitants are afraid of gang repression if they talk about the security issues to outsiders. This implies inhabitants' reticent attitude towards the outsiders. Here also the reporter is present, asking to talk about the insecurity and observing the "faces of fear", thus the information is yet again legitimized by referring to the reporter's presence on the scene (cf. Jokinen et al. 2004, 158). However, in addition to imposing a threat to the inhabitants, the gangs are also their guarantee of security, and considering the lack of police protection, the inhabitants need to "obey the norms imposed by the gangs":

Inhabitants of "El 70" are obliged to obey the norms imposed by the gangs of the sector, created allegedly to guarantee the "security" in the community [second head] "When you arrive to the sector Las Barandas, open the windows, change the lights two times and brake a little so that they see you. [...] "everyone that lives here knows that he needs to do it [...]", responded one of [...] "Los Garitas" [the Watchmen]. (Diario La Voz 29.9.2009a)

The detailed security norms are known and respected by the inhabitants. However, by using the word "allegedly" the provision of security is doubted to be the real reason for the gangs imposing their norms in the community. In addition to following the rules of the gangs, the inhabitants are represented as having to comply and exchange favors with the gangs for their own security. The nature of these favors is sometimes represented as fairly questionable:

The inhabitants of the barrio El 70 assured that [...] the presence of the guajiros [indigenous people] has increased [...] many of them are looking to feel safe in the capital, and so they presumably give their daughters, "14 and 17 years old girls" to the heads of the gangs. (Diario La Voz 29.9.2009b.)

Here a brutal example is given of the difficult situation between the inhabitants and gangs. However, as the ages of the girls are defined as “14 and 17 years” old, it seems like there are certain girls of that age, not girls in general, that would be referred to as ‘from 14 to 17 years old’. This implies that a cruel detail may again be generalized as a common proceeding in the barrio and, more specifically among the indigenous people that are stereotyped as being careless and cruel parents ready to sacrifice their daughters for their own safety. For preferring their own security, the inhabitants are also represented as being in a difficult position between crime and justice:

[...] even though for some of them [the inhabitants] it does not seem to be the most correct, they assured that the delinquents give them more security than the police forces. [...] “[...] they do it only in exchange for people not denouncing them and so the police do not go up, because there are many heavy houses here (houses where big quantities of drugs are stored) and that would not be convenient for them.” [Citation of a young male from “El 70”] [...] the inhabitants [...] have to cope with the gangs [...] whose members are involved with various crimes, as homicides and the drug sale and distribution in the capital. (Diario La Voz 29.9.2009a.)

It is implied that the criminals take advantage of the inhabitants that have to protect the criminals for their own security, even though they would not want to. The complexity of the situation also becomes clear in the report of a shooting of an inhabitant of “El 70”, who witnessed a six-fold homicide and was himself shot when leaving the courthouse:

The victim [...] is one of the key witnesses in the trial of a six-fold homicide [...] was presented by the prosecutor [...] under an accusation of complicity in homicide, for not denouncing the attack against six persons. (El Universal 28.4.2007.)

Although it is not explained in the article whether the homicides are from “El 70” or not, this report represents the inhabitants of “El 70” as exposed to danger through these kinds of situations, where they are stuck in the middle of the criminals and the police. The complex relation of compliance between the gangs and the inhabitants is also explicitly represented as the “principal problem” of the barrio and as an unstoppable force that has no solution:

The solution for the principal problem that corrodes these sectors, which at first sight is no more than support or gratitude, in some cases unconscious, to the vandal groups; is a utopia for the inhabitants [...] (Diario La Voz 29.9.2009a.)

Here the reporter summarizes and confirms the situation that has been presented by the testimonies of the inhabitants. Representing the problem as principal, unconditionally inevitable and unsolvable, and offering no alternatives, works to legitimize the point of view (cf. Jokinen et al. 2004, 163, 172). This also creates yet another stereotyped representation of the barrio, as well as of its inhabitants that have no choice but to submit to the situation.

### *Outsiders threatened by the gangs*

Under this discourse the gangs of “El 70” are represented as posing a threat also to the ones that do not reside in the community nor belong to the rival gangs either. In addition to the inhabitants of “El 70”, the gangs also observe outsiders:

“We watch over who enters and exits the barrio” [headline of a box story] (Diario La Voz 29.9.2009a)

The theatre open doors in El 70 of El Valle [headline] [...] Some eyes watch with attention every step taken by the public that crosses the cement where innumerable bodies have fallen because of the endless detonating of the bullets. Persons that observe the walls where the sweat of fear has been felt [the second last paragraph]. (Últimas Noticias 17.10.2010)

The last citation implies that the public either knows about all the horrors that have happened in the places they pass by and observe, or has no idea. In both cases however, the violence can be seen to pose a threat to the audience that is either alert or not aware of it. The threat is highlighted by the metaphoric references to the “innumerable bodies” and “sweat of fear” that are related to the concrete places of the barrio. However, outsiders are represented explicitly as victims of robberies by the gangs:

No one can rob in the community, but the ones that “they catch outside or that come lost around here” [strap line] (Diario La Voz 29.9.2009a)

But in addition to these scenes for confrontations, there are also zones for the assaults. The surroundings of Centro Comercial El Valle and the avenue Intercomunal – are the preferred places to attack and get hold of everything that the unsuspecting passer-by has with him. (El Universal 2.5.2007.)

Here the outsiders are represented as being lost and/or unsuspecting, and the gangs take advantage of their innocence.

#### **5.1.4 Testimonies of the victims of fear**

As can be observed in the citations presented above in the discourse of *gang violence and fear*, in addition to the reporters themselves, the inhabitants of “El 70” and the police are the most important participants in the communication about “El 70”. The gang members and the politicians have a much smaller part in defining the community and outsiders are not heard at all. Under this discourse, the influence of the police on the published information is not, however, as exaggerated as the earlier research about crime news would suggest (see e.g. Rey 2005, 20, 27; Sheley and



Ashkins 1981, 493). This is partly due to the great number of articles under themes other than *violence and insecurity*, where mostly the reporters themselves assume the insecurity of “El 70”. In addition, in the crime reports the inhabitants are often cited with the police.

The reporters are the ones who indicate the state of matters, presenting the insecurity of the community mostly in unconditional terms. In some cases, even though the inhabitants are the most probable sources of information, direct or indirect citations are not used; rather the reporters take and modify their discourse as part of their own. This implies that importance is given to the voice of the inhabitants (cf. Fairclough 1997, 106–111). It is the reporter, however, who has the right to offer more evolved interpretations of the situation, summarizing and concluding the information given by the sources. The reporters’ descriptions of the incidents and the situation of the community are slanted with cruel details to get the attention of the readers, but at the same time the dramatic and sensational language hides the wider problem (cf. Tablente 2008, 106). The reporter also often seems to generalize the information about one particular incident to everyday life in “El 70”, as in the citations presented above with the police information about the raping incident and with the reference to the *Guajiros* that give their daughters to the gang leaders.

The police and the politicians are used as legitimate experts of the situation of insecurity. The police discourse is also sometimes merged with the reporter’s discourse, but more often the source is expressed explicitly, since the police are used as legitimizing experts. With detailed and ‘factual’ information about the numbers and nature of the gang activities, the police citations also implicitly justify their repressive actions against the gangs. The politicians are given the role of experts of the general social situation and by picking “El 70” as an example of the violence in the barrios, they confirm the assumptions of its insecurity.

Even though merging it with the reporter’s discourse often emphasizes their discourse, the inhabitants’ role in the communication is, for the most part, to tell their personal experiences. The inhabitants are the most used source of information in the articles, but they are rarely given the opportunity to present their more evolved opinions about the situation of the community. They are mostly female witnesses of violence and insecurity who, with an auto-victimizing tone, give their testimonies and tell how they react to or try to cope with the violent situations. The male inhabitants are cited more as experts of the situation of insecurity in the barrio, even though they do not present their more evolved opinions either. Few young male inhabitants and gang members or ‘watchmen’ from “El 70” are cited to confirm the existence of rivalries, and to describe the rules of the gangs

and the dynamics of the situation. This also draws a thin line between the young males and the gangs. No adolescent women or younger children are cited under this discourse.

The role given to the inhabitants in communication agrees with the statement of Fairclough (1997, 69) that the ordinary people are normally not permitted to present their opinions, but only their experiences and reactions. The inhabitants' citations are thus used to represent the incidents in personal terms to increase the news value (cf. Galtung & Ruge, 1965, 65–68) and to entertain the audience (Fairclough 1997, 69). The personal touch whets the readers' appetite and the 'real life' testimonies also create veracity.

The cited 'normal' inhabitants are almost exclusively women, whereas all the cited gang members and the police officers are men. The citing of male gang members and police officers can be seen to reflect the 'reality', where the gangs and the police forces are male-dominated. In the case of gangs, with the exception of one reference to female gang members, all the criminals or gang members that are referred to, but not cited, are men. The police officers that are not cited are normally referred to as a group, leaving their gender unclear. As it was already noted, the male inhabitants as well as the police and gang members, are used more as experts of the situation in the barrio, whereas women tell their personal experiences of the insecurity. It can be concluded that the inhabitants under this discourse are identified mostly as female victims of fear or as organized, yet cruel male criminals.

## **5.2 Exclusion and anarchy**

In addition to representing the barrio "El 70" as an insecure place, it is also represented, throughout the themes, as an excluded community. This exclusion is especially brought up as an abandonment of the community by the public authorities, be they police or other legal servants, or other public services, such as the rescue services, waste management, or different government programmes that do not deliver their promises. There are also several direct references to "El 70" as an excluded community.

### 5.2.1 An excluded community abandoned by the authorities

In many of the articles about violence and insecurity, the barrio “El 70” is represented, explicitly or implicitly, as an anarchic place abandoned by the police and other legal authorities. This perspective is most pronouncedly present in the reports on the lynching incident, where the lack of police is pointed out as the principal cause of the episode:

The death of “El Padrino” [“The Godfather”] is the last scale of a history of official abandonment [second head] (El Universal 8.6.2008.)

Here the reporter’s stand is made clear: the act of lynching is assumed to be a consequence and the culmination of the “abandonment” of the community by the public authorities. This is presented as an unconditional fact, with no alternative explanations, therefore legitimizing the assumption (Jokinen et al. 2004, 163, 172). In a box story of the report, an ex-police director is cited to explain the phenomenon in general, and “El 70” is represented indirectly as an anarchic place that could end up in “chaos”:

Result of the anarchy [headline of the box story]. The ex-director [...] considers that the phenomenon like the one occurred in the El Valle parish demonstrate a state of anarchy and misgovernment that in short time could lead to a total chaos in the slums of Caracas [...]. “[...] It is the consequence of a state of rage that overwhelms them because the State does not resolve their problems. [...] (El Universal 8.6.2008.)

Here the reporter’s stand presented earlier is factualized and legitimized by expert citation pointing directly at the government as the responsible party for the problem (cf. Jokinen et al. 2004, 158–178; Valtonen 1998, 111). The expert is a former police director implying that he has years of experience with the issue. This serves to validate his expertise and the information he gives. However, the police director may have already been dismissed before retirement for political or other reasons, which would give him a personal reason to criticize the government. In another context, inhabitants themselves also highlight the lawless nature of “El 70”:

[...] bottles of beer mined the corners of the barrios in an election day when little was obeyed the dry law [prohibition of alcohol] “That is obeyed in the Avenue, but here it has no life. We are celebrating”, shouted a tottering subject in El 70.” (El Universal 16.2.2009.)

Here “the Avenue” refers to the *Avenida Intercomunal de El Valle* which passes through the *El Valle* parish at the bottom of the mountain, whose slopes are covered with the different barrios. The barrio is represented as lawless, which is highlighted through the inhabitants’ comparison of “El 70” with the formal city. The difference between informal and formal city, or the deviant and normal, is

made clear and “El 70” is represented stereotypically as an anarchic community (cf. Hall 1997b). The barrio “El 70” is again compared with the formal city and brought up as an example of a community abandoned by the authorities below:

A model of injustice [headline]. [...] The necessity of the bailiffs to protect themselves is understandable, but it would be important [...] to assure that the notifications get to the ones that live in these so called zones of high dangerousness, since it is unjust to consolidate the existent asymmetries between the ones that live in the zones like the barrio “El 70” and who live in La Floresta, to name sectors of Caracas that are diametrically opposite, but equally habited by citizens with the right to access to justice. (El Universal 15.3.2010.)

Here the discourses of *gang violence and fear*, and *exclusion and anarchy* are bound together supporting each other; “El 70” is too dangerous for the authorities to go to. “El 70” is pigeonholed as excluded and dangerous through a binary opposition that contrasts it with an upper class neighborhood of Caracas (cf. Hall 1997b). This is confirmed explicitly by referring to “asymmetries” and “diametrically opposite” sectors. However, the writer also proposes that the inhabitants of dangerous places, such as “El 70”, should have equal access to justice compared with the inhabitants of the ‘normal’ zones, thus disapproving the exclusion of the deviant other. The barrio “El 70” is represented explicitly as excluded in contrast with the formal city again in the reports on the emergencies caused by heavy raining:

The rise towards Los Aguagaticos and the barrio El Setenta, where on Saturday one person died as a consequence of the heavy raining [...], was uniformly light brown. This is a territory that always has been forgotten by the authorities, one could think. But in a place as centric as the Avenue La Páez did not even matter that one of the pools were formed just in front of the fire station [...]. (El Universal 15.9.2009.)

After mentioning the death of a person in “El 70”, the reference to a traditionally excluded community, “forgotten by the authorities”, diminishes the importance of the mortal accident. The implication is that in an excluded community this is expected to happen, whereas the inundation of the central avenue is valued more significantly. The use of the conjunction “but” even further highlights this impression suggesting that it is tragic, however normal, that people get killed for the rains in the barrios, “but” more alarming is that the formal city suffers from flooding, and even more so since it happens in front of the authorities who should do something about the situation. The reporter, however, fades out his own responsibility of what is said with the expression “one could think”, implying that it is not necessarily the reporter himself, but some other general thought pattern. This way the reporter washes his hands of the comment, taking into account in advance the possible critics and counter arguments to this view (cf. Jokinen et al. 2004, 33). At the same time, the passive expression suggests that this is indeed, a generalized way of thinking. This way the

discourse of exclusion is factualized and legitimized by appealing to the majority's commonly shared understanding (cf. Jokinen et al. 2004, 163, 172). The axiomatic exclusion is also justified by referring to a historical fact, by using the unconditional word "always" (cf. Valtonen 1998, 113). This creates a simplified and stereotypical representation of "El 70" as a permanently excluded community.

### *Delivering the complains of the inhabitants*

In addition to the explicit references to exclusion and comparisons with the formal city, there are plenty of articles that refer to the lack of particular services, especially under the theme of *deficient living conditions*, but also under *organization and development*. The intention of these articles seems to be to publish and in doing so, deliver the complaints of the inhabitants:

Since three years the waste management has not gone up to the high part of El 70 [headline]. This absence has provoked formation of gigantic fronts of garbage [second head]. [...] the trucks stopped going up alleging the insecurity. (El Universal 18.3.2010.)

[...] road that at some point was the principal route to arrive to the barrio El Setenta, but that was affected by a landslide three years ago and no authority has taken charge to repair it. (El Universal 30.3.2008)

Here the absence of authority or services is pointed out directly. The information is factualized by referring to the specific number of years of the lacking service (Jokinen et al. 2004, 158–178; Valtonen 1998, 111). This is to appeal to the readers, but especially to the authorities who are criticized. In the reports about the announcements of the rationing of water and electricity "El 70" is also mentioned, among other barrios, as a place that is already suffering from the lack of these services:

The rationing is old news [headline]. In the popular sectors they have become accustomed to living with the shortage of water [second head]. "[...] barrio San Andrés, San Luisito, high part of Bruzual, El 70, Las Malvinas... it's hard in all this zone. [...] more than announcing rationing they should have invested on time to the supply system" [inhabitant of another barrio]. (El Universal 26.10.2009.)

Announcement of the rationing of electricity displeased in the communities [headline]. [...] now the programmed cuts are added up to those suffered daily [...] in the nearby barrios (El 70, Los Cardones, Las Marías) the electricity cuts all the time for general or punctual (in the posts) failures. (El Universal 11.1.2010.)

Here the situation of the barrios is brought up to criticize the government that has not been able to provide decent water and electricity services to the barrios, which will now suffer an even worse shortage of these services because of rationing. The motivation to this approach of the newspapers

may be political, to point out that the government is worsening an already difficult situation of people they were supposed to be empowering. The criticizing citation of a slum dweller even further strengthens the idea, that the slum communities do not support the actions of the government. Even when the community of “El 70” is cooperating with the government, the proceedings are criticized:

“If we look up an institution it is difficult to have their answer. There should be less bureaucracy for the community councils. [...]”, he affirms [community representative José Abreu]. (El Universal 7.9.2008.)

This citation of the community representative implies that the community is not afraid to directly criticize the government, whose support they are looking for. Here also instructions are given to the government whose bureaucracy seems too heavy to work with. In addition, it is expressed that in spite of the promises, the government may not deliver:

In the barrio El 70 (El Valle), for example, simply nothing was done despite the announcements, and the resources ended in another sector [...] (El Universal 29.4.2009.)

This citation refers to the government announcement to rehabilitate the barrios, including “El 70”, as part of the social mission ‘13th of April’ aimed at empowering people through the creation of socialist communes and rehabilitation of the poor communities. “El 70” is represented as an object of the arbitrary and uncertain actions of the government that creates high hopes in the community, but ultimately is not able to fulfill the promises. In the same article, doubts are cast on the announcement of a new project in “El 70” through references to the great amount of works required and to earlier unfulfilled promises:

The list of what needs to be done is very long: substituting and rehabilitating 130 homes, installing piping (they did it already in two sectors thanks to the [community’s] Technical Water Committees) repairing the streets...But above all the community aspires that the basic school [...] is repaired, a work that was in the hands of Pdvsa [the state own petroleum company] first and of the Ministry for Environment after, but that still has not been carried out. (El Universal 29.4.2009.)

There are plenty of deficiencies in the community that should be improved by the government project. The reference to the different institutes that already should have taken care of the repairing of the school, but did not, creates a notion of failing public institutions. There is contrast created between the efficient and productive community, that itself has managed to carry out some of the work, and the inefficient and incapable government institutions. Although this information is presented as part of the reporter’s own discourse, the information is most probably derived from the representatives of the community who have informed the reporter about their needs.

### 5.2.2 Frustrated inhabitants vs. absent authorities

The participants of the discourse of *exclusion and anarchy* are the inhabitants and the authorities that are identified, for the most part, through their relation to each other. The inhabitants are mostly represented as good and active people tired of and frustrated with the lack of authority and support, but they include also some ‘rotten apples’ that cause anxiety to the ‘normal’ inhabitants. The authorities are represented as responsible for the exclusion, for being absent, or for inefficiency.

#### *Frustrated but active inhabitants*

Throughout the discourse of *exclusion and anarchy*, the inhabitants are represented as actively requiring the assistance from the authorities and denouncing the lack of services from them:

Neighbors of El 70 ask that containers are placed [headline]. (El Universal 6.5.2010.)

[...] member of the Community Council Terrazas, explains that they have tried everything and sent infinite letters to the Libertador Mayor’s office, but the only answer they have got is that to arrive up there is very insecure. [...] He explains to agree with carrying out awareness campaigns so that the people don’t throw garbage to the mountain, but first it is necessary to restore the waste management service. He says that one cannot appeal to the civic conscience of everybody when the services collapse. (El Universal 18.3.2010.)

The inhabitants have requested the replacing of the service, but nothing is done. Here the inhabitants are represented as having potential to organize themselves and are ready to do their part if the authorities would first do their duties. The inhabitants are also portrayed as affected by the exclusion and having to adjust their lives and do extra effort because of the lacking services:

Containers that were in the barrio El 70 were moved a year ago, but never replaced, which has caused that the neighbors walk almost 500 meters down slope to take their trash bags. (El Universal 6.5.2010.)

Here the concrete consequence of exclusion is factualized and highlighted with the numeric expression of the “500 meters” that the inhabitants need to walk down to take away their garbage (cf. Jokinen et al. 2004, 158–178; Valtonen 1998, 111). This implies that they must walk still another 500 meters back uphill to get home, which requires quite an effort, which may appeal to many of the inhabitants of the formal city that have garbage chutes or dumpsters right by their front doors. In addition to the lack of waste management that may cause serious health problems in the community, the inhabitants are represented as left alone in the cases where their physical integrity is under a more direct threat:

Neighbors of El Valle lynched and burned a scourge of the barrio [headline]. The locals accused him of assassinating and raping a humble woman [second head]. [...] The case was denounced to the authorities, but the scourge remained in the sector. [...] a group found him and beat him to death. (El Universal 21.5.2008.)

Here the active role of the inhabitants in the lynching is highlighted in the headline, which could have been expressed in passive form to fade out their responsibility (cf. Fairclough 1997, 40–41, 147–149.). However, in continuation reasons for the act are presented to justify the lynching, and the lack of police presence is pointed out as the principal cause of the episode. The inhabitants have no help from the police even when they denounce severe cases such as rape and murder. As a consequence, the inhabitants must take the law into their own hands and try to resolve the problem of insecurity with a brutal act of public rage. Even though help is requested, the inhabitants are represented as left alone in life-threatening situations, by authorities other than the police as well:

Families that were affected in the barrio “El 70” denounced that even though they were asking from the beginning of the afternoon for the presence of the firemen and the officers of civil protection, it was already five a clock and still they had not arrived. (El Universal 30.11.2010b.)

The inhabitants were escaping and losing their homes to landslides, but no help from the authorities was offered. Also in the reports about the confrontation between police and gangs the inhabitants of “El 70” are cited to describe the lack of response from the higher authorities:

“We got tired of calling to the Prosecuting authority and the Ombudsman's Office, but they never arrived [...]”, indicated Ms. Gladys Rodríguez when leaving from the barrio El 70 [...] (El Universal 24.9.2009.)

Here the intention to get in contact with the prosecutor and the ombudsman imply that the inhabitants considered that the police were violating human rights in the barrio. The inhabitants are represented as being aware of their rights and the proceedings to denounce their violation. Thus they first felt threatened by the police, the authority that should be protecting them, and then second they were let down by the only authority that could protect them against the police themselves.

### *Angry rebels and good Christians*

The adjustment of lives transforms into an act of revenge and mob justice in the reports about the lynching incident, where the inhabitants are represented at the same time as victims and perpetrators in order to resolve their problem:



The neighbors of the barrio El 70 [...] lynched and subsequently set fire to one of the scourges that maintained them in constant anxiety. (El Universal 21.5.2008.)

When returning and trying to retake his [“El Padrino”] dominions he was trapped by his victims and they dragged him by the streets and stairs. (El Universal 8.6.2008.)

Here again the responsibility of the inhabitants for the lynching is made clear, but the act is justified by representing the inhabitants as “victims” of the lynched criminal that “maintained them in constant anxiety”. The reporter describes the incident, but the information is probably derived from the inhabitants or from police sources. Also the brutal acts of the killed criminal are highlighted to justify the lynching:

Today a mass of remembrance is held for his last victim, Irma Inés Reyes, 35 years old, who was strangled and raped at her home. During the burial the neighbors decided to end with their martyrdom. (El Universal 8.6.2008.)

Here the inhabitants are represented as actors that consciously decide to lynch the criminal, however the lynching is not referred directly but through a metaphorical phrase to “end with their martyrdom”. This fades out the nature of the actions of the inhabitants and highlights their roles as victims. Mentioning the victim’s home as the place where she was brutally killed even further justifies the revenge, since a private home can be seen as a place where one should be the most safe. The references to “mass”, “burial” and “martyrdom” also allude to the Christianity of the inhabitants, as highlighted below as well:

Some inhabitants of the barrio El 70 of the El Valle parish, before entering la Casa de Alimentación [government premises for free food distribution], cross themselves, because by the doors of the ramshackle shanty an act of savagery was committed. There was lynched “El Padrino” [The Godfather]. [Lead paragraph] (El Universal 8.6.2008)

Even though the lynching is referred as a “savage act”, by using passive forms such as “was committed” and “was lynched” the inhabitants’ active responsibility of the lynching is faded out. The inhabitants are represented as sensitive about the issue, making the sign of cross at the scene of lynching, which also implies their religiousness; they ask for God’s forgiveness for their acts. In a Catholic country, references to the Christianity and religious nature of the inhabitants humanize them and neutralize their savage act that would be confessed and then forgiven. The inhabitants are thus represented stereotypically through a binary opposition; they are at the same time savage people and good Christians. According to Hall (1997b, 229, 263), people that are considered different, rather ‘them’ than ‘us’, are often exposed to this kind of binary form of representation, where they may be referred to as holding both of the extreme characteristics, even at the same time.

This way they are trapped in the binary structure of a stereotype that is split between two extreme opposites (ibid.).

The inhabitants are, however, represented as not obeying laws even if it is not a question of protecting their physical integrity:

“That [prohibition of alcohol] is obeyed in the Avenue, but here it has no life. We are celebrating”, shouted a tottering subject in El 70.” (El Universal 16.2.2009.)

Here the inhabitants of “El 70” are represented as arrogant and careless of the laws that are imposed outside, but that do not seem to apply to inside the community. The inhabitants are aware of the existing laws, but they do not need to obey them, since there are no guardians of the law present to maintain order and impose fines. In addition, the word “tottering” refers to drunkenness and “shouting” implies recklessness and bad manners. The rebellious attitude presented by the inhabitant is thus confirmed by the reporter’s observation of his drunkenness and bad behaviour. This also confirms the suggestion of Hall (1997b, 229–230) that in stereotypical representations one difference often attracts others. This representation of the inhabitants is in sharp contrast with the humble Christians presented above. The existence of not-so-humble people among the residents of “El 70” also becomes clear in the lynching reports, since the lynched criminal himself was from the community. The citation below suggests that there are also other residents that cause anxiety to the ‘normal’ inhabitants:

Other settlers of barrio El 70 asked for operations to be realized and the re-opening of the police units that are taken over by delinquents and indigents. (El Universal 24.9.2009.)

In addition to implying the difference between the ‘normal’ and ‘deviant’ inhabitants, the situation of exclusion is highlighted through an extreme binary opposition where the police units that should be commanded by the authorities are taken over by “delinquents” and homeless people, or “indigents”. What is also worth noting here is that the homeless people are compared to criminals and contrasted with the police, even though homelessness is not equal to involvement in illegal activities.

### *Absent and disrespected authorities*

The authorities are represented under this discourse as being responsible for the exclusion of the barrio “El 70” and its inhabitants and thus for the problems caused by it. The authorities have

abandoned the community; they “never arrived” or “have not replaced the services”. These are also seen as collapsed services as in the case of waste management or closed police units. They are, however, also seen as incapable in their work even when they are doing it, as in the lynching case:

The Metropolitan Police has not been able to precise in how many crimes the delinquent participated. (El Universal 8.6.2008.)

The reference to the inability of the police to inform the number of crimes committed by the lynched person implies that the police have not attended the case at any point, or they are just too disorganized and incapable to get the required information together. Also when the police finally arrive at the community they arrive late:

The Metropolitan Police sent commissions, but on arrival they noticed that the antisocial had already been dismembered. (El Universal 8.6.2008.)

At midnight the officers of the scientific police arrived to start the inquiries. The offended was found with no identity papers and presented burns in diverse body parts. (El Universal 21.5.2008.)

Finding the lynched person without identity papers implies that the inhabitants had taken his papers to purposely hinder the work of the police who would not be able to identify the offended. This further implies that the police are distrusted and disrespected by the inhabitants. This is expressed also more explicitly in the citation below:

The officers of the Metropolitan Police had to ask for reinforcements to get into the sector and to recover the body. [...] At first the inflamed neighbors did not permit the entry of the police but after various hours they calmed down. They told to be tired of so many assaults and crimes. (El Universal 21.5.2008.)

Here the inhabitants are represented as powerful enough as to not let the police enter the community, but at the same time the police are represented as incapable of restoring and maintaining the public order. Similarly, when doing their inquiries about the case the police could not find out which of the inhabitants participated in the lynching:

The detectives of Cicpc tried to realize investigations and asked who killed “El Padrino” and the neighbors took refuge in the classic work of Lope de Vega. They told “All the people, Sir” [“Fuenteovejuna, señor”]. (El Universal 8.6.2008.)

The reference to “trying to investigate” further implies the failure of the inquiries. The inhabitants are presented as being liable to each other, but not to the police who are implicitly represented as an object of pulling by the inhabitants.

### 5.2.3 Victims of exclusion denounce the silent authorities

Under the discourse of *exclusion and anarchy* the most important participants in the communication about “El 70” are the inhabitants, as well as the reporters themselves. In spite of being one of the most important participants of the discourse, the authorities are not cited under this discourse.

The inhabitants are mostly cited for their testimonies as the affected by the emergencies or as bystanders witnessing the incidents, but in some cases they are also allowed to present their more profound ideas and opinions. The inhabitants are directly requesting services and also denouncing the lack of them. This confirms the suggestion of Calonge (2009, 297) that when poor people are viewed through their personal experience, they are represented as conscious of their volatile situation, but also as active citizens that protest and reclaim their rights. Often the inhabitants are clearly the source of information of the descriptions of the situations even though they are made to look like objective observations of the reporter. This way the inhabitants’ discourse is merged with the reporter’s discourse, highlighting the importance of the voice of the people (cf. Fairclough 1997, 106–111).

In this discourse the reporters with rarely used experts seem to confirm with their critics the need of public services and authority in the barrio. They also have the right to explain the wider context of these situations. Even though the authorities’ actions are described in many cases, they are not cited under this discourse. An ex-police officer is used as an expert commentator, but as he is not in the service anymore he cannot be seen as a representative of the authorities. Although the authorities are not cited, they are probably the source of information at least when the reporters describe their actions. This way in addition to the inhabitants, the authorities are also legitimized as sources, even though they are criticized. The reporters take a clear stand against the authorities by defending the inhabitants’ cause. For example, in the case of lynching not once are the inhabitants required to be punished for their actions, and it is not considered a problem that the actual people that committed the lynching were not identified. Also in these reports the sources are protected: no one from “El 70” is cited by name and the perpetrators of the lynching are always referred to as an unidentifiable group. Similarly, in the opinion column about the access to justice, the writer criticizes the authorities that choose not to go to the community for their own protection, whereas the inhabitants live their daily lives in the middle of the danger.

Under this discourse the inhabitants are cited mostly as a group of inhabitants, but also the community representative, Jose Abreu, is cited as denouncing the authorities in the name of the whole community. Some female inhabitants are cited giving their testimonies as victims of the incidents of emergency and for lacking authority. The only cited male inhabitant, apart from the community representative, is the supposedly drunken man that defiantly describes the ignorance of law in the barrio. The children and youth are not cited at all. The small number of the cited individual inhabitants does not allow making further conclusions according to the gender or age of the cited persons under this discourse. With the exception of few references to deviant persons or groups, the inhabitants that are represented but not cited in this discourse are referred to as a group of excluded people, without reference to gender or age.

It can be concluded that the inhabitants are identified under the discourse of *exclusion and anarchy* mostly as frustrated, but active victims of exclusion who denounce the authorities, but also as rebels, outlaws, and villains that cause anxiety to the ‘normal’ inhabitants. The latter agrees with the suggestion of the earlier research that the Venezuelan private press represents the poor sometimes as disrespectful threat to urban sociability and security (Kitzberger & Pérez 2008). Under the discourses of *gang violence and fear* and *exclusion and anarchy* this is highlighted particularly by referring to the delinquents often as *antisocials*.

### **5.3 Organization and empowerment**

Throughout the themes of *culture*, and *organization and development*, “El 70” is represented as an organized community where a positive change is possible as a result of empowerment. As a sharp contrast to the discourse of *gang violence and fear* where the community is defined as helpless and subordinated by the gangs, under the discourse of *organization and empowerment*, the community is represented as capable of improving their living conditions and affecting positively the situation of insecurity. Also in contrast to the discourse of *exclusion and anarchy*, the community actually gets support from the government, even though this is still sometimes seen to be insufficient or as a relationship of dependency. The discourse of *organization and empowerment* can be considered a strong counter-discourse to the dominant negative discourses.

### 5.3.1 Model of organization and positive change

Under the discourse of *organization and empowerment*, “El 70” is again represented as an example, but this time as a rare positive example of a community that has achieved something that the other barrios have not:

It is true, that the community councils, with the Mission Culture have achieved something that is not common on the streets of any barrio of Caracas. (El Universal 23.8.2010.)

With the expression “it is true”, the reporter confirms the achievements of “El 70” by implying that he has witnessed them. This is a strong and unconditional statement that legitimizes the information (cf. Jokinen et al. 2004, 90–91). The exceptionality of the achievements are highlighted by referring to “something that is not common” in “any barrio” thus comparing “El 70” with other less successful barrios. It is interesting that under this discourse, instead of contrasting the barrio to the formal city, difference is constructed between “El 70” and other barrios emphasizing the success of “El 70”. The exceptional nature of the organization of “El 70” compared to other communities is highlighted also below:

In El 70 45 homes were constructed in the last five months [headline]. In community council they assure to have employed a formula to avoid delays [second head]. [...] In the barrio El 70 (El Valle) exists a successful experience of rehabilitation and construction of housing directed by the community council Las Terrazas, an example of how the joint work of the community and government should be. Meanwhile in so many other places there are more than enough complaints about the community councils that never received the money or where the individualism prevailed or the funds got lost [...] (El Universal 9.3.2010.)

Here the efficiency of the works in “El 70” is highlighted and factualized with the numeric information about the results and the time taken to achieve them (cf. Jokinen et al. 2004, 158–178; Valtonen 1998, 111). This is confirmed by referring directly to “a successful experience”. The majority of the information is offered without citations and it is made to seem like reporter’s objective evaluation of the situation, even though the information is probably derived from the representative of the community that is cited later the article. The community council is represented as a successful achiever and is also praised for its innovation in employing a new “formula to avoid delays”. This also highlights the rarity of the achievement with the implication that normally there are delays, but in this case they were avoided. The references to an “example of how the joint work should be” and the “other places with complaints”, compares “El 70” again with other barrios. By referring to their malpractice, “El 70” is implicitly represented as their opposite that has received the funds and used them well and where solidarity prevails instead of “individualism”. However, at

the same time this constructs a stereotypical representation of the other barrios that are reduced to their failures and individualism. The difference compared to other barrios is highlighted also below:

In the majority of communities the great concern is to execute infrastructural work [...]. “In the barrio El 70 we also require many infrastructural works, but we have given much more importance to the development of social programmes of direct attention to the people, with the objective of crime prevention [...]”, said Abreu. (Últimas Noticias 11.10.2009.)

Here the community is represented as considerate: the community is capable of setting its own priorities, and the social wellbeing and security are considered to be more important than the infrastructural development, contrary to other barrios. “El 70” is represented as a successful example by also referring to the diffusion of their experience:

The idea of a theatrical piece with the stations like in a cable car went back for the fourth year to the barrio El 70 [...] This time the community La Vega wanted to join the experience and also there will be functions. (El Universal 9.10.2010.)

“El 70” is represented as a good example to be followed by other communities. “For the fourth year” also implies the continuity and consistency of the organization in “El 70”. Here it is worth noting that even though the theatre is coordinated by an outside organization, the arrangements require a lot of organization and collaboration inside of the community as well.

The positive change achieved through organization in “El 70” is expressed explicitly throughout this discourse:

Culture changed the life of the inhabitants of the barrio El 70 [headline] (El Universal 23.8.2010.)

But the neighborhood union has achieved that the nine sectors where more than a thousand families live are also known as a territory where the culture gains ground from the violence. “The weapons we have to move them away from guns and violence are theatre and culture. [...]”, said Abreu who has lived in El 70 for 38 years. (El Universal 7.9.2008.)

“Culture changed the life” is a strong expression implying a comprehensive positive change in the lives of the inhabitants. This is especially important since the notion is situated in the headline of the article. In the second citation, the reference to the barrio “known as a territory where the culture gains ground from violence” suggests that this development is generally known; the passive form is used to appeal to the shared understanding of the ‘majority’, thus legitimizing the information (cf. Jokinen et al. 2004, 163, 172). This is further confirmed with the testimony of the community representative, whose references to theatre and culture as weapons against violence implies an active approach, but also highlights the difference of their methods compared to the approach of the

police that uses real weapons to tackle the violence. This also implies that the community thinks that violence cannot be fought and defeated with more violence. The community is seen to suffer from violence, but the emphasis is on the positive change achieved in the situation. In addition to the improved security situation, examples of positive change are also brought up as a result of other projects:

His [community representative José Abreu] satisfaction: “To be able to witness a big change. See how my neighbors passed from living in a house with a dirt floor and a falling roof to live in one with a floor, doors, bathroom, everything. I could see how they changed their way of living”. The lesson: “If we keep organized and working this barrio will move forward. (El Nacional 12.7.2010.)

Here the community representative highlights the magnitude of the change by describing the housing conditions before and after the project. The comprehensiveness of the change is mentioned directly by referring to the change in “the way of living”. A positive perspective for the future is expressed, where the development of the barrio is seen to continue if they “keep organized”, which also legitimizes the method of development that was employed to achieve the changes until this point. The positive prospects are also expressed as concrete plans for further development:

Abreu says that [...] an additional million bolivars have been approved to them and with that money another project will be undertaken [...]. (El Universal 9.3.2010.)

In the plans of the community council [...] is the second phase of the housing project. (El Nacional 12.7.2010.)

The community consistently plans their own development, and the approving of the projects implies their capability to plan realizable projects. The perspective for future reaches further than the upcoming planned projects, as for example in the report on the NGO project of popularization of science:

This project of informal education [...], designed for the new generations of the communities that have been excluded for years, has as its aim to motivate learning [...] recognizing the science in the daily life and give incentives to critical spirit to ask why the things happen and how they can innovate to improve their quality of life. (Todos Adentro 30.1.2010.)

The focus is on educating the children and the youth of “El 70” to be a new, not excluded generation that will have the capability to think critically and innovatively to develop their community. Also for this project “El 70” is a pilot community where the project has been first implemented, with the plans to take the project to other barrios.



### *Alternative scene for recreational activities*

Under the discourse of *organization and empowerment*, “El 70” is also represented as an alternative, inventive, and experimental scene for recreational activities, such as community theatre:

And as a difference to other staging, the play [...] had the particularity of creating eight theatre scenes inside the homes of a group of neighbors of the sector. (El Universal 21.5.2007.)

Comedy climbs the hills of El 70 [headline]. The Metropolitan Company of Theatre offers a spectacle on the roof planes [second head]. [...] the basketball field of the sector La Terraza, in the barrio El 70 of El Valle, transforms into a stage of theatre. [...] The rest of the stations are created on the alleys and family homes in nine sectors of the barrio. (El Nacional 18.7.2008.)

In addition to explicit references, the “climbing of the hills” refers to a different scene that is located up in the barrio and not down in the formal city as per usual. In the same way, the references to “roof planes”, “the basketball field”, and the “homes” of the inhabitants imply the exceptional nature of the scene, but also reminds the audience of the lack of public spaces in the barrio where innovation is required to organize this kind of event. The difference to the conventional way of doing things is, however, expressed as an intentional deconstruction of the prevailing way of thinking:

[...] the play aims at breaking the archetype of seeing drama only in the theatre. (Ciudad Caracas 8.10.2010.)

[...] work of popularization of science that breaks with the idea of concentrating it only in the classrooms. Other fact that is highlighted is the settlement of 110 families of the ethnic group wayúu in the barrio El 70. [...] purposely to integrate them into the community through these types of days and to reinforce their cultural importance in the zone. (Todos Adentro 30.1.2010.)

This innovative way of doing things is not represented only as an obligatory adjustment to the physical restrictions of the barrio nor motivated from the idea of bringing the activities to the people that cannot visit the formal scenes. They are represented as motivated primarily by the intention to challenge the conventional ideas of doing theatre and science altogether. To confirm this, the proper way of organizing the activities are emphasized:

As in any theatrical staging, the producers planned a general rehearsal [...]. (Últimas Noticias 17.10.2010.)

[...] they bring to this slum a fairly sophisticated telescope [...]. (Todos Adentro 30.1.2010.)

The activities are portrayed as carried out in a professional manner, showing that even if the activities are organized in the informal city and alternative space, they are done so with quality and

with no less than would be offered in a formal setting.

### **5.3.2 Organized experts and grateful beneficiaries**

Under this discourse the most important participants are the inhabitants. However, also the government institutions, other organizations that support the community, as well as non-resident visitors are represented, especially through the relationships they have with the community.

#### *Organized and collaborative*

The inhabitants are represented most explicitly as an organized community, which is many times expressed under this discourse by referring to the community councils, as in the citation below:

The organization imposes itself in El 70 [headline]. The different community councils [...] have organized themselves to carry out a series of preventive programmes against crime, based on the integration and community coexistence. (Últimas Noticias 11.10.2009.)

Here the headline implies that “the organization” has taken control in the community, as if it was an independent power from its practitioners. However, in continuation the community councils are represented as responsible for actively imposing the organization in the community, and as capable of carrying out a series of programmes. The citation implies that the community has, or expects, problems with crime and there is at least some lack of integration and coexistence. These are, however, not represented as permanent or insoluble problems, but ones that can be resolved with the community organization. It is also expressed explicitly that the organization of the community has been the only way to achieve the support of the government and get results:

José Abreu [...] assures that the organization of the community is a key to achieve the governmental support [second head]. In 6 months they achieved the construction of 23 homes and rehabilitated another 24. Easy to say, but it was not. The neighbors of the barrio El 70 [...] saw more than 2 years passing by before their project started to convert into reality. “Seeing all our shortages and seeing that no help arrived made us to realize that we needed to do something. If we were not organized, how were we going to obtain efficient help?”, says Abreu. (El Nacional 12.7.2010.)

Here the successful organization and its concrete results are put against the past when the community was not organized and there was no support from outside. This is constructed as a coming-of-age story of the community, where the inhabitants at first had a lot of shortages and after not getting any help they needed to organize themselves to introduce a proper project to the government. There were some problems along the way and two years passed by, but the community

never resigned, and finally their project was implemented. The history of misery turned into a success story of empowerment and a lesson was learned: the community needs to be organized to “obtain efficient help”. The organization of the inhabitants is again brought up in the reports about some specific activities that have taken place in “El 70”.

According to the theatre company, the security is guaranteed during the route by the members of the community themselves [box story]. (Últimas Noticias 17.10.2010.)

Omar Vegas, an actor of the group *Expresarte*, is impressed by how the people of the community watch over the security during the 2 hours of the trajectory by the 10 stations. José Abreu, community producer, reiterates that the security is a code achieved by the labor of the community councils. (El Nacional 18.7.2008.)

Here the possible insecurity of “El 70” is again assumed, but it is represented as being controllable by the community itself. The numeric references to the duration of the tour and width of the zone to be secured highlight and factualize the effort of the community (cf. Jokinen et al. 2004, 158–178; Valtonen 1998, 111). As two hours is a relatively short time and the effort was still described to be impressive, it is implied that there is a lot to do to maintain security. These citations are in sharp contrast to the discourse of *gang violence and fear*, where it is assumed that the organized gang members take care of the security of the barrio (Diario La Voz 29.9.2009a.), and not the ‘regular’ members of the community or, more specifically, the community councils. It is curious that according to the report on the human rights project (Centro para la Paz y los Derechos Humanos UCV 2003d) the security in “El 70” was maintained by the gangs in 2003 at least, but according to the interview of the community representative in 2008 (18.9.2008), it is the organized community that takes care of the security situation of the barrio. The differences between the discourses cannot, however, be explained by a change achieved through organization between 2003 and 2008, since the opposite media representations of the maintenance of security are published between 2008 and 2010. Whatever the truth, it is significant which representation is selected under the different discourses.

Under the discourse of *organization and empowerment* also some groups that are almost non-existent in other discourses are represented as organized:

Enyerber Abreu: “The youth of our community has organized a series of concerts of different musical genres, events that have achieved the union of the neighbors from different sectors”. (Últimas Noticias 11.10.2009.)

Here the youth are represented as active organizers of cultural activities that have even achieved significant results. This represents the youth in a very different light compared to the discourses of

*gang violence and fear* and *search and destroy*, which refer to them as almost only alleged gang members. Another group that is non-existent in other discourses, the *motorizados* (motorcyclists), are here referred to as part of the organized community:

[...] about twenty motorcycles take the public by the thin paths up to the highest point [...] The *motorizados* [motorcyclists] [...] escort the spectators. Up, another group of the community is in charge of guiding them by the steep paths. (Últimas Noticias 17.10.2010.)

However, in the box story it is also mentioned that the *motorizados* that served as transport in the play charged 200 bolivars (about 35 Euros) per trip, implying that they are not actually collaborative, but participate only for monetary reasons. This kind of representation reproduces the generally bad reputation of the *motorizados*. This bad reputation also explains why the community representative was upset that the front-page photo had thirteen men with their motorcycles in “El 70” with the headline: “Theatre on Wheels” (Últimas Noticias 8.10.2010). In his opinion the photo did not create a positive representation of the community theatre or the barrio.

The inhabitants of the community are represented as collaborative, especially in the reports about the community theatre:

The members of the community lend their homes for the functions [second head]. (El Universal 9.10.2010.)

In view of the question of why “El 70” offers an ideal scene for the proposal, José Abreu, of the community council [...] responds that the people of his barrio are special: “Here live 4500 families, but we are united and collaborative”. (El Universal 18.7.2008.)

Many of the cultural articles refer to the inhabitants that lend their homes for the theatre, representing them implicitly as collaborative and receptive. Here the community representative also explicitly confirms the collaboration and cohesion of the inhabitants. The reference to the special nature of the community members represents them as exceptional, implying that in other barrios people are not like them. The inhabitants are also represented as active participants in the different projects:

People look for solutions to their problems [photo caption]. (Últimas Noticias 11.10.2009.)

[...] a dozen neighbors that have gotten enthusiastic about acting. [...] (El Nacional 18.7.2008.)

[...] Zulay Romero confessed to be enchanted by the work that is imparted from this scientific-creative space due to the conviction with which the community has assumed the project during these two years. (Todos Adentro 30.1.2010.)

In this case, the inhabitants are represented as actively resolving their own problems, participating with enthusiasm in different activities, and also assuming responsibility in the projects initially implemented by outsiders. This portrays genuinely participative development, where the inhabitants are the real owners of the projects.

### *Knowledgeable experts and capable innovators*

Under this discourse, in addition to being well organized, the inhabitants are presented as being experts in what they do:

[...] the three community councils that collaborate with the staging are already experts in handling the audience. Various jeeps [rústicos] and about 20 motorcycles transport the spectators by the intricate tracks, meanwhile the community leaders tell the history of their barrio. (El Universal 9.10.2010.)

The inhabitants of the barrio EL 70 [...] tell that the name is due to the changes that came in the decade of 70's, among them the asphaltting of the streets. The history of the place is part of the theatrical staging [...] [lead paragraph]. (Últimas Noticias 8.10.2010.)

The years of experience have developed the organization and specialization in the community, and the different actors and resources of the community are pressed into service. The inhabitants are represented as being knowledgeable of the history of their community, and in addition to diversion, the cultural events are used to raise awareness about the historical development of the barrio. The inhabitants are also implied as capable to implement their own development and control their own future:

Community council La Terraza administered the support and was in charge of the work [strap line]. (El Nacional 12.7.2010.)

[...] a cooperative out of the community that did not fulfill the expectations of the neighbors. "For this motive we created a cooperative with the people from the barrio itself to take charge of the work" [...] [community leader]. (El Nacional 12.7.2010.)

The shanties increased 20 % in the last 8 years. "We came to an agreement with the community. We will not permit that they keep putting up houses; the community itself has to be the guarantor of fulfilling this. We all have to be ordered", comments "Chío" [community representative]. (El Universal 7.9.2008.)

The inhabitants do not settle for any less than they should have. They are capable of organizing themselves and to work better for their own development than outsiders. The community is also conscious of the wider context of their problems, such as over-population. That is, however, not seen as an unstoppable force, but one that can be stopped by the ordered community itself by not

permitting new constructions. The magnitude of the problem to be controlled is highlighted and factualized by the numeric expressions of the population growth (cf. Jokinen et al. 2004, 158–178; Valtonen 1998, 111). If considering that already in their definition, barrios are informal residential areas constructed without control (Sánchez, 2000) this citation can be seen to imply a huge organizational effort and control over the zone, which further implies that the barrio is getting closer to the formal city. The inhabitants are also represented as perseverant and target-oriented in spite of the many obstacles that they have encountered along the way:

The most important thing here is that we have not surrendered, we are constant with what we want, for that we have achieved what we have”, tells Abreu. (El Universal 23.8.2010.)

That was the beginning of the big fight looking for resources. “We had many inconveniences. The project that we presented was lost and we had to introduce it again. We were obliged to do constant monitoring to see how the process went”. But it worked. “For insisting and fighting so much we achieved them to lay down the resources for us” [community representative]. (El Nacional 12.7.2010.)

Here it is also implied that the simple organization of the community is not enough, rather it requires a lot of perseverance to finally get government support. At the same time, the organization of the state support is represented as inefficient; it has to be controlled by the beneficiaries to assure that the process goes on. The citation below also confirms the attitude of perseverance, according to which hard work and dedication leads to results:

Movie filmed in barrio El 70 wants to get to the big screen [headline]. *Barrio Sin Ley* [Barrio Without Law] is a movie filmed “between buddies” of barrio El 70 (El Valle) [...] [lead chapter]. [...] He [the movie director from El 70] says that for many years he had considered the possibility of making his own movie, but he started to think about the obstacles and stayed paralyzed. Until one good day that he decided [...] He wrote the script and made the casting of this film, he produced it, he is editing it, he financed it and even had to work as a cameraman and as a substitute actor. Now Abreu will do what he can to get his ópera prima [first work] to the big screen. (El Universal 19.4.2010.)

It is implied that in spite of the obstacles, everything is possible if people just decide to take the reins, even though it requires a lot of personal effort. This is, however, an individualistic view of development, contrary to the collaboration and solidarity represented above. In addition, the theme of the movie reproduces the prevailing way of representing poverty through the expression of criminal violence in the Venezuelan movies (Altman, 2008). Here also willingness to break the lines between the informal and formal spaces is expressed. A distance is created between the movie filmed in the barrio and the “big screen” of the movie theatres: it is shown as something unusual for this kind of film to get to the theatres. However, it is not considered impossible, but a challenge and there is no contentment in anything less.

### *Grateful beneficiaries*

In addition to being organized, hardworking, and capable, the inhabitants are also represented as passive direct or indirect beneficiaries of different projects:

[...] 46 families were benefitted. Indirectly, thanks for the amount of employment that the work generated, 70 families were favored. (El Nacional 12.7.2010.)

“We were worried that the people would not come, but it was quite the contrary [...]. Now they want to do it once a month”, tells Eulelia Castellanos, Cuban representative of the Mission Culture. (El Universal 23.8.2010)

The projects are portrayed as planned in a way that produces as much benefits to the inhabitants as possible. New concepts are also piloted without knowing in advance whether they will appeal to the inhabitants or not. However, the inhabitants are represented as receptive to the new ideas and wishing for their continuation, as in the case of the karaoke night above. Also, the individual beneficiaries are represented as being grateful for the improvements or experiences brought by the projects. Most of the represented individual beneficiaries are women, as in the examples below:

Alida tells that before her son did not even get out from the shanty because it was really difficult in the wheelchair, but now he passes the time playing outside. (El Universal 9.3.2010.)

The constructor says that in two weeks it will be ready, and she cannot yet believe that she will live in a house of concrete blocks after living 43 years in a shanty [...] (El Universal 9.3.2010.)

The specific examples of the improvements of the living conditions of the most vulnerable people, in this case a physically impaired child and a woman that has lived in deficient conditions for 43 years, are used to appeal to the readers (cf. Gilens 1996, 522). By referring to the time before when the son did not even go out and his current playing outside, or by describing the concrete improvements in the deficient living conditions, the importance of the change of life is highlighted by concrete comparisons between the past misery and the new wellbeing brought by the projects. The expression “cannot yet believe” however implies two things: that the beneficiary considers the change as something incredible and almost too good to be true, or that she is actually more critical and does not believe that all this will happen before she really lives in her new home. The past also is referred to in the citation below to highlight the impact of the activity on the beneficiaries:

[...] Máxima López, watch the spectacle from her shanty of wood and zinc [...]: “I know what theatre is thanks to them (the organizers)”. (El Universal 18.7.2008.)

This implies that the inhabitants have not had possibilities to enjoy cultural activities before they were brought to the barrio. The reference to the deficient physical conditions can be seen to further imply that even though the inhabitants are poor they deserve to enjoy culture. Also here the discourse of misery is used to highlight the positive change. In addition to women, children are also represented as beneficiaries of the activities:

El Sistema Orquestal Endógeno Infantil [Children's Endogenous Orchestral System] present today [...] on the boulevard Sabana Grande. [...] was created to open a space of musical inclusion for the boys and girls of El Valle [...]. After three years it has achieved to integrate the communities of La Pastora, Camino de los Españoles, 23 de enero and Barrio El 70. (El Universal 2.8.2008.)

"[...] We did not want that the children are all day in front of television watching soap operas and we wanted to move them away from the violence that is seen on the streets. Now they see theatre, dance and arts", explains [representative of a community council]. (El Universal 23.8.2010.)

"The boys and girls are disciplined. [...] We really feel happy for the faces of joy that we observe in our youth every time they leave the toy library, motivated for acquiring different knowledge of the mother science every day", he pointed [community representative José Abreu]. [...] there is understanding and reciprocity during the classes. "Their will to know motivates me to continue" [female voluntary worker in the project]. (Todos Adentro 30.1.2010.)

Children are integrated in cultural activities, not only as spectators, but also as participants even in an event organized on one of the most important boulevards of the city, again breaking the line between the informal and formal city. Also here the change of the children's lives is highlighted by comparing the current situation with the past: before children stayed home watching TV or witnessed violence on the street, but now they are spectators of cultural activities. Children are also represented as active and disciplined participants in the projects, enjoying the possibility to learn, which further benefits the whole community that witnesses their children's wellbeing. In some cases, the gratitude of the beneficiaries turns into solidarity and willingness to pass on the benefits:

[...] thanks to a credit that he obtained from the community council he has installed at his home a community bakery where he offers his neighbors warm bread at every hour and in solidary prices. (Últimas Noticias 11.10.2009.)

"[...] By coming here I have discovered that after finishing high school I will study sociology, because I admire all that these people do for us" [a 14 year old girl participating in the activities of the science project]. (Todos Adentro 30.1.2010.)

The beneficiaries show further solidarity by offering accessible services for all the inhabitants who then become indirect beneficiaries of the project. Through the different projects, the inhabitants are also shown as to gaining tools for their personal development and increased prospects for future. Their gratitude may even lead them to a career where this experience can be forwarded.



### 5.3.3 Collaboration with outsiders and dependency on the erratic government

Under this discourse, the community is represented as being open to outsiders, which is, for example, expressed in the different advance reports of the community theatre that give direct instructions on how everybody wishing to attend the event can go to the barrio:

The “Bus of History” leaves at 10 am from the main building of Uneartes with the destiny to the community. Free entrance. [...] will take various groups of 20 persons to enjoy the staging in the homes of the barrio. (Últimas Noticias 17.10.2010.)

However, in all of the advance notes, directions of how to get to “El 70” are not given, or they were so indefinable that outsiders would never find their way there. This may imply that in the end all the reporters do not think that anyone outside the community would want to go there. The openness and receptiveness of the community is also expressed in different citations of both the inhabitants themselves and the outsiders:

“We went house by house and what most surprised me was the receptivity of the people. Nobody opposed the public’s entrance in the living room and the bedrooms of their homes. [...]”, he pointed [community representative José Abreu]. (El Universal 21.5.2007.)

“I thought of so many things when they came to my home, but then I became affectionate towards the actors. For me it is a pride to have them here and I put my home at the disposal of the ones that want to come to see the play”, related González [...]. (El Universal 21.5.2007.)

Of the filming, García [an outsider professional actor] revives above all the union that existed between the technicians, actors and the environs: “Everybody from the barrio collaborated, they lent us homes, they gave us food”. (El Universal 19.4.2010.)

The inhabitants are represented as surprisingly receptive to new ideas and especially to unknown people who they let enter their homes. The inhabitants may be doubtful at first but then they warm up to the idea of having strangers around. Also the outsiders noticed and are grateful for the receptiveness and collaboration of the inhabitants. There is also a relationship of cooperation with the outside organizations that implement projects in “El 70”. However, in some cases these are represented as if they were implemented more from above and not so much in collaboration with the community:

Open air theatre, street theatre, theatre that walks. Theatre of a company that decided to simulate cable car stations in various homes of the community and integrate in the context [...]. (Últimas Noticias 17.10.2010.)

For four years the Metropolitan Theatre Company has been invading the barrios with art [strap line]. (Últimas Noticias 17.10.2010.)

Here it is implied that the theatre company is the real owner of the project who makes the decisions and integrates into the community, as if the community would not have any role in the play. The military expression “invade” even further fortifies this impression, implying not only that the project was not implemented in cooperation, but also that it was almost forced onto the community.

The relationship of the community with government institutions that support the different projects is represented as much more complicated. For the most part the cooperation is represented to be fluent and “El 70” is portrayed as a serious project partner with the government institutions:

[...] for the project [...] some adjustments have been realized due to the changes of topography, and according to the intervention of the organized community of the sector, other details will be modified, increased or incorporated, all depends on what is decided. (El Universal 3.6.2010.)

Through the Socialist Voluntary programme [Cayapas Socialistas] improvements have been realized in the popular sectors [strap line]. Libertador Mayor has invested 576 000 BsF this year [second head]. [...] money that is administrated by the people. [...] To inspect the work executed by the inhabitants [...] the Libertador Mayor Jorge Rodríguez visited the sector [...] “In this programme of attention it is the neighbors themselves that decide and execute the minor work that help them to improve their quality of life”, pointed the Mayor. (Últimas Noticias 28.10.2009.)

Here the community is represented as an active project partner, whose requirements are taken seriously; the community has its own say in its development. It is also implied that the regional government has only given the resources, and the community can freely administrate the money and decide and execute their own development. Here, by referring to the visit of the mayor, the respect for the community is also highlighted; it is represented as so important that even the mayor himself comes to the barrio. However, sometimes the community is represented more as a passive receiver and not as a project partner:

Government promises to deliver more than 150 homes to the community of El Valle [headline]. [...] “This project was approved by the president of the Republic, Hugo Chávez Frías, as well as the resources to carry it out”, she added [Head of Government of the Capital District]. (El Universal 3.6.2010.)

In this instance, it is the government that delivers the houses, implying that the project is not in the hands of the community. Also the reference to a promise makes the process seem fairly arbitrary and uncertain. However, the promise is guaranteed by the Head of Government of the Capital District, who invokes further the greater authority of the president who approved the project himself. This implies again that “El 70” is given great importance, but at the same time the project is represented almost as a personal gift to the community, which is at the mercy of the favorable attitudes of the authorities. In addition, some deceptions are also brought up, where the resources

are not received despite promises:

“ [...] The new project [the second phase of the housing project] is already approved. Only the resources are lacking”, pointed José Abreu. (El Nacional 12.7.2010.)

The community council invented a plan to create a club for the attention to boys, girls and youth, that was approved by the National Office Against Drugs, but the resources did not arrive. (El Nacional 12.7.2010.)

[...] [“El 70”] today is a prioritized sector of El Valle to be visited by the Mission 13th of April [...]. Together with the community council they have presented 9 projects, of which only one has been granted with budget. (El Universal 7.9.2008.)

Here, the problems with receiving promised resources are brought up, implying that the community would be ready to deliver and implement the projects if only the government would do their part. These citations create an impression that the government institutions are open and supportive to the ideas of the community, but they are just not organized enough, or there is a lack of resources to fulfill all of the promises and process all of the proposals. This is comparable to the unrealized potential of the inhabitants that is restricted by the lack of support from the deficient authorities implied in the discourse of *exclusion and anarchy*. Under this discourse however, the community has not lost their trust in the government, even if the promises have not always been fulfilled:

“The Mission 13<sup>th</sup> of April did not work, but I believe that now yes, since we had a meeting with the mayor himself” [community representative]. (El Universal 29.4.2009.)

In this case, the confidence and respect towards the authority is expressed by implying that the project has been given more importance and credibility since the mayor himself came to meet the community.

#### **5.3.4. Testimonies of beneficiaries and reflections of a dedicated leader**

In the discourse of *organization and empowerment*, the most important participants in the communication are the inhabitants and the reporters, but also non-resident visitors and workers, as well as representatives of the regional government are cited. By far the most used individual source of information is the community representative, José Abreu, who is cited in about half of the articles directly or indirectly.

Non-resident visitors, workers, and participants of the different projects are cited to tell about their experiences, but also to give their opinions about the community and the projects. The

representatives of the regional government are cited as an authority that confirms the government promises and the leading role of the community in the projects. The reporters themselves use their own voice to confirm the achievements of the community and to describe the events organized in the community, many times referring to their own presence in the barrio. In many cases the reporters' discourse can be seen to draw from the discourses of the other participants, especially the representative or other inhabitants of the community, even though they are not cited. This legitimizes the inhabitants as sources of information and highlights the importance of their voice (cf. Fairclough 1997, 106–111). Under this discourse the reporters do not use exaggerated or scandalous style writing that would notably distort the information.

The community representative is principally cited to talk on behalf of the whole community. He gives testimonies of how the projects have been developed and implemented, but he is also cited as an expert of community organization presenting his evaluations of the different processes, as well as providing more profound reflections of the nature of the community. The other inhabitants are cited only to give testimonies about their experiences mostly as beneficiaries, but also as participants of the projects. Most of the cited beneficiaries are women, of which the majority is passive receivers of support or spectators of activities. Also some men participants and beneficiaries are cited, and one adolescent male is cited as one of the coordinators of cultural projects. Even though children are represented as a major group of beneficiaries, only one girl is cited to tell her experiences. In addition to the cited persons, the inhabitants are mostly represented as a group of inhabitants or referred to as the community council thus not allowing any further considerations of gender or age. As a conclusion, the inhabitants are identified mostly as passive female and child beneficiaries and active male participants, especially when the most cited male representative of the community is included in the consideration.

#### *Development as one man's burden*

The dominance of the citations of the community representative, José Abreu, in this discourse requires more consideration. Even though there are many references to the participation of the organized community, the great amount of the citations of the community representative makes the organization and capability of the community sometimes seem more like a one-man show. For example, this is expressed in the citations below:

José Abreu, integrant of community council, says to be very conscious of the failures that have existed in other housing projects, and for that he decided to use a new system different from the traditional one. “Every neighbor was tried to get involved in the project [...]” (El Universal 9.3.2010.)

Here it is the community representative, who is “conscious of the failures” and “decided to use a new system”, implying that he has all the decision-making power and responsibility for development in “El 70”. The other neighbors are here represented as objects of the project that “was tried to get involved”. Also, the citation below creates an impression that the community representative has coordinated the projects by himself:

Everything has not come up roses, and Abreu has gained even some enemies. [...] He is a little bit tired, but satisfied, and believes that the balance has been positive. (El Universal 9.3.2010.)

Here the community representative is represented as having gained enemies during the implementation of the project, as well as being tired but satisfied, which all imply his big personal efforts and self-sacrifice for the community. The dedication and the important role of the community representative are expressed more explicitly in a direct citation from him:

“The social work is not forced, it’s something that comes from the heart. You dedicate to it 24 hours. If there is sick person, if a car damaged, if anything happens in the barrio, the people think about you” [community representative]. (El Nacional 12.7.2010.)

Here the community representative identifies himself as a ‘dedicated social worker’ that is on constant alert if his neighbors need him. These citations imply that the development of the community may not be possible without a dedicated leader that presses the other inhabitants to organize themselves and take responsibility of their own lives. This partly reflects the earlier research on “El 70” that proposes that the responsibility of the projects is normally assigned to, or taken by, a few active representatives of the community (La Rosa 2008, 68, 79, 80). However, the media representation of the organization in “El 70” implies that it is only one person that takes care of all the projects. This can be due to the availability of the community representative to the media; he may be the main contact between the community and the media offering summarized and readymade information of the projects, which also eases the work of the reporters that do not need to interview other inhabitants to report the events.

## 5.4 Search and destroy – Police repression

The discourse of *search and destroy* can be found only under the theme of *violence and insecurity* and thus it is not as dominant as the three discourses presented above. However, it creates quite a different representation of “El 70” in comparison to the other discourses. This discourse is parallel to the discourses of *gang violence and fear* and *exclusion and anarchy*, with the difference that “El 70” is now the object of the police that is no longer absent, but uses force against the alleged gangs in the barrio. This discourse also, for its part, fortifies the representation of the barrio “El 70” as dangerous, since it is again seen as a battleground, although the fight is between the police and the gangs.

### 5.4.1 “El 70” is invaded by the repressive police

In about half of the articles about violence and insecurity “El 70” is represented as a place where the police operate and confront the gangs. The emphasis of this discourse, however, is in the armed confrontations between the police and the alleged gang members in “El 70”:

Ten dead from the shoot-out in El Valle and El Cementerio [headline]. Fernández [police director] described the route that the MP and Policaracas agents ran behind the trace of the ones that wounded the uniformed [police]: Los Sin Techo, 1er de Mayo, El Triángulo, La Sin Ley, Las Marías, Los Mangos and the barrio El 70. (El Nacional 24.9.2009.)

In the afternoon of last Tuesday the Metropolitan Police penetrated in the barrio Primero de Mayo of El Cementerio. It was informed that a confrontation was produced, which led them through various sectors and culminated in the barrio El 70 of the El Valle parish. (El Universal 25.9.2009.)

Here the barrio “El 70” is represented as the place where the chase of the alleged criminals by the police culminated with killing of the suspects. Even though the police are not cited, the information is clearly derived from police sources. “El 70” is also represented as an object of the more routine-like police operations following the confrontation:

Officers of Scientific Police escorted by agents of Metropolitan Police got back to the slums El 70, Primero de Mayo, la Montaña and Los Sin Techos to follow the unprecedented police operation [...] (El Universal 24.9.2009.)

During the raid that included slums of El Cementerio and El Valle, six persons were detained. (El Universal 24.9.2009.)

The references to the backup of the other police force by the scientific police, as well as to the raid that covered various slums, imply extensive operations. Even though those killed were supposedly

not from “El 70”, these citations imply that “El 70” was included in the following police raid. “El 70” is also represented more explicitly as being under direct police inspection:

As the inspector Estupiñan revealed, everything indicates that of the group liquidated last week there still remains about 12 men that are identified and searched. He informed that two individuals known as 'Gerson' and 'Richard' assumed the lead of the gang of El 70 [...] (Últimas Noticias 28.9.–2.10.2009.)

Here the “liquidation of the group” refers to the previous killing by police of the ten alleged gang members in “El 70”. This citation implies that a leader, or leaders, of a gang from “El 70” would have been included in the liquidation, since new leaders took their position. “El 70” is represented as a nest of criminals that is militarized by the police, as in the excerpt below:

With helicopters and operations looking for the assassins of Disip [headline]. The Metropolitan Police, the Disip and the Cicpc occupied the high part of the barrio El 70 [photo caption]. Three suspects shot down in barrio El 70 [...] [second head]. To confront the balance that counts one police assassinated every 36 hours so far this month, the authority planned the police taking of the barrio [...] to trap the homicides of an inspector of Disip; arrived at the sector La Cancha of Barrio El 70 to try to arrest the assassins [...].(El Universal 25.11.2009.)

When considering all the citations above together, the references to “identifying”, “searching”, “looking for with helicopters” and “operations”, and “ran behind the trace” of the objects that are then “liquidated” or “shot down”, imply that “El 70” is an object of police operations that follow the principals of ‘search and destroy’. Representation of the police operations as a systematic war against the suspected criminals is supported also by referring to the “occupation” and “planned police taking of the barrio”. Even though the war discourse could serve to justify the police repression in the barrio, here it refers more to the systematic and wide military actions of the police, not of the suspected criminals. This makes the police operations on the one hand seem like professional and planned action, but on the other, as an excessive use of force when, for example, the assassination of one police officer is paid back by killing several alleged homicides. Reference to “confronting the balance” also implies that the police’s intention is to balance the battle by killing at least an equal number of suspects to the number of police officers that have been killed in total. However, “trapping” and “trying to arrest” the objects at the same time refer to the preliminary intentions of the police to not actually kill the suspects.

#### 5.4.2 Unreliable police, uncertain victims, and skeptical inhabitants

The most important participants of this discourse are the police and the alleged criminal victims, whereas the ‘regular’ inhabitants of “El 70” are given only a minor part. Only a few of the victims of police violence are from “El 70”, the rest are alleged criminals from neighboring communities, who were supposedly killed in “El 70”. An unusual participant of this discourse is the media itself, mentioned as not having been allowed to enter to the scene of the confrontations. If the media was really shut out from the scene, and if it is a common procedure of the police, it partly explains the doubtful attitude of the reports to the police activities under this discourse.

##### *Suspicious and repressive police*

Under this discourse the different police forces conduct their operations in the barrio and they are also passive victims of criminal violence, but more than else, they are represented as active killers of alleged criminals. In contrast to the discourse of *gang violence and fear*, where police are seen as an expert and authorized source of factual information, the discourse of *search and destroy* explicitly and implicitly casts doubt on the righteousness of the police actions:

[...] the unprecedented police operation that in the afternoon of last Tuesday left a balance of ten alleged slum scourges dead [first paragraph]. (El Universal 24.9.2009.)

In the last two weeks, 10 presumed delinquents have been shot down by the commissions of Cicpc and the Disip, charged with being involved in the deaths of the police officers. In the barrio El 70 in the El Valle parish four subjects fell shot down [...] (El Universal 4.12.2009b.)

The reference to the “unprecedented police operation” implies the unusual nature of the operation, with a very high death toll. Most importantly, the references to “alleged” slum scourges and “presumed” delinquents represent the victims as possibly innocent, pointing to the arbitrariness of the police action. However, the uncertainty is not limited only to the victims’ guilt, but doubt is also casted on the motives and the process of the whole police operation:

They [the inhabitants of the neighbor communities] assure that not all the victims were members of the gang [second head] [...] ten persons died in an alleged confrontation with the Metropolitan Police (PM) [lead paragraph]. (Últimas Noticias 24.9.2009.)

A duel was simulated [subhead]. (El Universal 24.9.2009.)

In El 70 [subhead]. The darkness prevented the technicians of Cicpc to realize their inspection and forensic drafting on Tuesday night, but they conducted this labor yesterday morning in the barrio El 70, in El Valle, where the confrontation allegedly took place. The media was prevented to get to the



place where the wounded fell. (El Nacional 24.9.2009)

Referring to an “alleged confrontation” questions the whole existence of altercation, implying that the police may have just caught and killed the victims. This is expressed even more explicitly in the second citation that refers to the simulation, or staging, of the confrontation that motivated the police actions. In the third citation, also under suspicion is whether the scene of the confrontation was really “El 70”, and the doubt is further heightened by the reference to the shutting out of the media from the scene. In another article, in addition to the justification and magnitude of the police actions, the proceedings and efficiency of the police are also under suspicion:

In the place were shot down three delinquents who could not be identified at the moment. Two subjects [...] managed to escape, although the slum was patrolled from above by two helicopters [...] More than hundred police participated in the proceeding. (El Universal 25.11.2009.)

The controversial reference to “three delinquents who could not be identified” shows the arbitrary and incoherent police action by which people are first defined as delinquents and killed, and only then identified. Not being able to identify the victims also confirms that the victims were not the suspects that the police was looking for. Thus, in spite of the use of excessive police force, the operation did not succeed in capturing or killing the original targets.

### *Savage or innocent victims of police violence*

In few articles the victims of police violence are represented as undoubted killers of the police officers, serving to justify the excess of the legitimate use of force by the authority:

To confront the balance that counts one police assassinated every 36 hours so far this month, the authority planned the police taking of the barrio [...] to trap the homicides of an inspector [...] [police] arrived at the sector La Cancha of Barrio El 70 to try to arrest the assassins [...] The investigators were alerted by the so called “watchmen” that advised the other antisocials who took charge to confront the authority. (El Universal 25.11.2009.)

Here especially the reference to assassins implies that they have not killed the police officers in self-defense or to escape, for example, but these have been premeditated and planned acts. The resistance to the police is also represented as organized action, and the criminals are represented as the ones who started the confrontation. Here the portrayal of the criminals is thus similar to that in the discourse of *gang violence and fear*. However, under this discourse, in most of the cases the victims are represented as presumed criminals, casting doubt on their part in the homicides of the police officers:

These three deaths add up to six the [number of] presumed delinquents dead for the homicide of an officer of Disip. Last Tuesday three other men were finished off in the sector Puente Montañó of barrio El 70 [...]. In the confrontations no police has resulted injured. (El Universal 26.11.2009.)

In the last 15 days eight presumed delinquents have lost their lives within the framework of the inquiries related to the death of the inspector [...] and the sub-inspector [...] Four persons were finished off in the barrio El 70 of the El Valle parish [...] (El Universal 4.12.2009a.)

The reference to the killing of six and eight presumed police killers against one or two killed police officers implies excessive and arbitrary use of force by the police. Referring to the nonexistence of police victims further highlights the unequal positions of the two parties. The “finishing off” of the victims also refers to the brutality of the killing that is highlighted even more below:

The slaughter of El Valle started as a confrontation of gangs. (El Universal 25.9.2009.)

In addition to the brutality of the act, the use of the expressions “slaughter” (*matanza*) and “finishing off” (*ultimar*) again emphasizes the unequal position between the victims and the killers, comparing the victims to animals. The alleged criminals are again compared to animals when referring to their capture as “rounding up” (*acorralar*) and “trapping” (*atrapar*):

There were gunshots and the young men withdrew towards 1er de Mayo and El 70 until they were rounded up in La Montaña. (Últimas Noticias 24.9.2009.)

[...] planned the police occupation [...] to trap the homicides of an inspector of Disip (El Universal 25.11.2009.)

Comparison to animals is controversial; even though it may be a nod to the defenselessness of the victims, it also dehumanizes them as savage beasts, justifying their deaths. In both cases, however, the alleged criminal victims are stereotyped by naturalizing them (cf. Hall 1997b); they are represented as part of the nature that the police are dominating. Through naturalization the difference of the alleged criminals is made to seem unchangeable and the information is legitimized (cf. Hall 1997b; Jokinen et al. 2004, 90–91). The victims of police violence are thus represented through a polarized view: at the same time as organized and premeditating coldblooded assassins, and as defenseless and possibly innocent victims. The binary opposition represents them stereotypically as permanently different from ‘normal’ (cf. Hall 1997b, 229).

### *Fearful or skeptical bystanders*

In addition to representing the inhabitants of “El 70” in some cases as alleged criminals and victims

of police, they are given only a minor part in this discourse. The inhabitants are represented in some articles as being afraid and trying to avoid getting in the middle of the confrontations:

The neighbours of the sector La Baranda of the barrio El 70 in El Valle and some zones of El Cementerio did not leave their homes yesterday, afraid of the event of the day before [...] (Últimas Noticias 24.9.2009.)

In El 70, few people got out to observe the police labor or to comment on the incident that shook this community. One neighbor said that she preferred to not take her son to school for the fear that a similar situation would present. For the same reason, other inhabitants did not go to their work and preferred to stay at home. (El Nacional 24.9.2009.)

As in the discourse of *gang violence and fear*, under this discourse the inhabitants stay home to protect themselves. However, this time the fear is related to the presence of the police in the barrio. Again their actions are passive protection methods and they are powerless to affect the occurrence of confrontations. The inhabitant's absence from school and work can also be seen as a serious consequence of the insecurity that may lead to further problems. Nonetheless, through their citations the inhabitants of "El 70" are also represented as being doubtful about the police actions:

"[...] the reporters today either are let to pass to La Montaña", indicated Ms. Gladys Rodríguez when leaving from the barrio El 70 [...]. [...] "We want that the injured police are shown so that you see that everything was a farce", annotated Mr. Nestor Bello. (El Universal 24.9.2009.)

At this point the inhabitants confirm the doubt already presented by the reporter. The refusal of entrance of the media to the scene is represented as suspicious, and the references to "simulation" and "farce" refer to the falsity of the official explanation of the incident that is seen as a fabrication and a sham. The requirement of showing the injured police is a strong claim, testifying that the inhabitants are not afraid of talking against the police. Even though the word farce (*farsa*) refers to deception, it is worth noting that the original meaning of the word is related to theatre, and especially to an absurd comedy. This way the comment may also compromise the inhabitants by suggesting that they see this kind of police action as something at which to laugh. However, the defying tone of the comment suggests that the inhabitants are hardened, but also bored and angry with the arbitrary police operations. The intention would be to ridicule the police work, not the serious consequences of it.

### **5.4.3 Testimonies of fear and doubtful comments**

Under the discourse of search and destroy, the most important participants in the communication about "El 70" are the reporters themselves, but the police and the inhabitants are also cited.

The police are, in some cases, cited to explain and describe their operations in the barrio. However, the reporters mostly describe the operations in their own words, even though it is clear that the information has been received from police sources. The merging of the police discourse with the reporter's own discourse highlights the importance of the police sources and confirms the results of the earlier research, according to which, the reporters of crime news are dependent on the police that have an exaggerated influence on the published information (see e.g. Rey 2005, 20, 27; Sheley and Ashkins 1981, 493). Even so, here the reporters do not just confirm and legitimize the police discourse, but on the contrary, the possibly unjust proceedings and excessive use of force are implicitly questioned. This doubtful attitude against the police is mainly presented in the reporters' own discourse, for example, by referring to alleged or presumed criminal victims or confrontations, thus conditioning the police information. However, the reporters do not present any direct accusation against the police. These are expressed only in the citations of the inhabitants of the barrios.

In the reports about the alleged confrontation between the police and the gangs that resulted in ten presumed gang members being killed, two inhabitants of "El 70" are cited to confirm the doubts about the police work. This means that the reporters may have taken the discourse of the inhabitants as their own. This is even more evident when considering the wider context of these reports, where the most common sources of information, in addition to police, are the inhabitants of the neighbor communities from where the alleged criminal victims came. They assure, in various citations, that the operation was set up in cooperation with a gang of ex-police officers, and that not all of the victims were gang members or criminals. The police citations do not respond directly to these accusations, but they refer to the crimes with which at least some of the killed people were charged. However, as these citations are not about the community of "El 70" they are not considered more in detail here.

Under this discourse the reporters appear as critical journalists that in most of the cases do not take the police's expert information as granted. In many articles various sources, especially the inhabitants of the different communities, are used side by side with the police discourse to create impartiality. However, young men that are the most probable victims of the police violence are not cited. The few citations of the inhabitants of "El 70" are mostly witness testimonies of the consequences of and their reaction to the confrontation, but they are also let to express their opinion of the whole process. The inhabitants' doubtful discourse is also valued fairly high, as it is shared by

the reporters. Even though the low number of the cited inhabitants does not allow any far reaching conclusions, it can be noted that it is again a cited mother that is represented as fearful. Even though a woman inhabitant is also casting doubt on the police actions, it is a man who is left the role to defy the authority and require evidence of the motives of the operation.

## 5.5 Insoluble misery

The discourse of *insoluble misery* is a discourse desperation that is many times used to support the discourse of *gang violence and fear*. It is also used as an aside to the discourse of *exclusion and anarchy*. This discourse is found in some articles throughout the themes, especially through details that point out the deficient conditions and miserable situation of the barrio. The problems of the community are represented as insoluble, and the inhabitants are victims of unavoidable calamities and inactive services.

### 5.5.1 A permanently excluded and miserable community

The exclusion of the community is represented as a permanent condition caused by a major force that cannot be affected:

It seems like there is no way that the units of waste management arrive till the highest point of the barrio El 70 [...] Already more than three years ago [...] the trucks stopped going up alleging the insecurity. (El Universal 18.3.2010.)

The expression “it seems like there is no way” highlights the unchangeable nature of the lacking service, but also of the insecurity. A strong assumption is presented without alternatives, factualizing and legitimizing the information (cf. Jokinen et al. 2004, 163, 172). Since the community is permanently insecure, the trucks will never go there. In this way the deviance of “El 70” is explicitly fixed, creating a stereotypical representation of a community that is permanently stuck in its misery (cf. Hall 1997b). The same stereotype is also constructed in the reports about the emergencies caused by heavy rains, where the helpless community is at the mercy of nature and exposed to its calamities:

In 24 hours of raining, 75 families from the barrio El 70 of the El Valle parish lost paths, retaining walls, road system and some homes that the Executive constructed half way, with community credits that still have not been paid. (El Universal 1.12.2010.)

[...] collapse of land and of a retaining wall that sustained the only walkway in the community, constructed in the beginning of the year with the help of the community councils. (El Universal 1.12.2010.)

At this point the destroyed homes constructed by the government, and the collapse of the walkway, constructed with the help of the community councils, imply that it is in the end worthless to organize or do any improvements in the barrio, since they are just flushed away by a major and unstoppable force. The community is in the hands of nature and there is no way to prevent the calamities. The reference to the only walkway highlights the poverty and low resources of the community. However, the government is also criticized by reference to the credits that have not been paid, making the situation of the community seem even more hopeless and vulnerable. This is related to the discourse of *exclusion and anarchy*, however here the community cannot even be helped through inclusive measures, since the place where it is located is the problem. The stereotyped representation is thus fortified and legitimized by fixing it in nature, therefore naturalizing the situation (cf. Hall 1997b; Jokinen et al. 2004, 90–91). “El 70” is again condemned as a location, but in a more degrading manner in the interview of a famous Venezuelan movie director who visited the barrio to learn the ‘reality’ of Caracas for her movie about the street children:

She also visited the barrio *El Setenta* (close to the General Cemetery of the South), the banks of El Guaire river and even La Bonanza. For that she utters sonorously: “I know the intestines of Caracas”. (El Universal 21.6.2009.)

The degraded condition of “El 70” is implied throughout the citation. First, the situating of the barrio as close to the biggest cemetery of Caracas, a place known to be neglected and insecure, points out the unpleasant location. In reality “El 70” is located far up in the mountain and the cemetery can only be seen as distant scenery at the bottom. Moreover, the entrances into the barrio are on the other side of the mountain, so there is virtually no connection with the cemetery. In addition, “El 70” is compared to the banks of *El Guaire*, a polluted and dirty river passing through Caracas, whose banks are settled by homeless people. Even worse, “El 70” is also compared with *La Bonanza*, a huge garbage dump in the outskirts of Caracas. In this way “El 70” is situated in the same category and thus identified with some of the most detestable places around Caracas. In the end, it is referred to metaphorically as “the intestines of Caracas” to complete the clichéd deviant and repulsive representation of the community. The metaphorical description of the poor conditions of the barrio is also present when reporting the community theatre activities:

In this barrio the anarchy of cement overflows between the paths, goes down the stairs and gets up as walls. There is no space for vertigo in its steep streets, where the spaces are brief, for both the ones that go on wheels and that go by foot. The kilometers of mountain do not correspond to the population density, numbered in hundreds of thousands. [lead paragraph] (Últimas Noticias 17.10.2010.)

Here the reporter legitimizes the discourse by referring to his own presence and observations in the barrio (cf. Jokinen et al. 2004, 158–178; Valtonen 1998, 111), and the detailed and metaphorically colored description of the conditions are to arouse the interest of the readers. “Anarchy of cement” and “no space for vertigo” refer to the unorganized and tight constructions with the most affordable material, whereas the “kilometers of mountain” implies the distance between the barrio and the formal city. The overpopulation is highlighted by suggesting that there are “hundreds of thousands” inhabitants in the zone. Considering that “El 70” has around 4500 inhabitants, this seems highly exaggerated.

### 5.5.2 Resigned victims without possibilities

Under the discourse of *insoluble misery* the inhabitants are represented as helpless victims of disasters and poor people without possibilities, as well as apathetic and resigned people in the face of different calamities.

In the sectors 4 and 5 of the barrio El 70 some 70 families were affected by a landslide and collapse of the walls of some houses, as informed Johana Vallalobos, neighbour. “This seemed like a river, a lot of water went down. The people had to get out running from their homes because they were afraid of getting blocked”, she affirmed. (El Universal 30.11.2010b.)

[...] the barrio El Setenta, where on Saturday one person died as a consequence of the heavy raining (he was hit by a container dragged by the current when trying to put his vehicle in a safe place) [...]. (El Universal 15.9.2009.)

[...] Carrasquel observed the mire that fell at the back of her home. Its 20 inhabitants took shelter in the homes of the neighbors. She rejects her transfer to refuges because she considers it as a “very traumatic experience”. [...] The obstruction of the walkway took them to use the red roof of the home of Carrasquel as a path to transport some belongings. “The State put up part of my home. I had to invest my money and ask for a credit from the community council (Bs 60 mil) [approx. 10 mil Euros] to finish it. How to pay a credit if I lost my home”, said Carrasquel. (El Universal 1.12.2010.)

Especially when the catastrophe is a natural disaster such as a landslide, the helplessness of the inhabitants is highlighted, as they face an unstoppable and major force. The barrio is described as having transformed into a forceful “river of mire” that can take people, as well as normally immovable objects, such as walls and containers with it. The incidents are described with lively details and through the testimonies of the inhabitants themselves, which personifies, but also

increase the truthfulness of the description. The inhabitants are represented as having to escape and leave their homes under the threat of getting trapped. The reference of to the use of a roof as a walkway emphasizes the chaotic nature of the situation. The reference to 20 inhabitants in one house also highlights the already deficient and overpopulated living conditions of the barrio, which will not ease when they take shelter in the home of the neighbors, who are, however, represented as solidary for letting the refugees in. The rejection of the traumatic refugees implies that the inhabitants do not have any real alternatives, since the support offered to the victims by the government is not decent. The inhabitants are also represented as hopeless by referring to losing a home for which a credit was taken, implying even further problems for the future. Again, the hopeless and precarious situation of the inhabitants in general is demonstrated; even though their lives were improved, it is all in the hands of a major force whether it will last.

The deficient physical conditions of the barrio are also referred to in order to highlight the lack of possibilities for the inhabitants:

To arrive to all of the eight stations the public had to run through pronounced slopes, cement or metal stairs and also dirt tracks, all that the owners of these houses have to walk daily. (El Universal 21.5.2007.)

The physical description of the barrio is used to appeal to the readers' feeling of pity towards the inhabitants. The difference between the visiting public and the inhabitants is emphasized; the inhabitants are represented as having no choice but to daily walk the hard route, which the public can voluntary take during the theatre staging. Through this binary opposition, a stereotypical representation is constructed of the inhabitants as having no options or possibilities. The lack of possibilities is also highlighted below:

The majority of the spectators never before had seen artistic plays [sub-heading]. (El Universal 18.7.2008.)

“Here live children of scant resources that do not have means to go to theatre. Some do not even know the Plaza Bolivar. [...]”, affirmed Jose Abreu, neighbor of the barrio and member of the cultural committee [...]. (El Universal 31.2.2008.)

Even though there is a positive change present with bringing of culture to the barrio, the emphasis is on the underprivileged nature of the inhabitants. This is highlighted and factualized with numeric expressions like “majority”, and the unconditional expression “never before” (cf. Jokinen et al. 2004, 158–178; Valtonen 1998, 111). The community representative also affirms the lack of possibilities. The reference “to not even know Plaza Bolivar” goes even further from the lack of



opportunities to experience culture: how could they go to theatre, if they have not even been able to visit the historically most important place of the capital and the whole nation, even though they live in the same city?

The inhabitants are also represented as being apathetic and resigned in the face of the different calamities they confront:

She [a women that lent her home to theatre] reflects [...]. “[...] it helps us to integrate because the people here are very apathetic”, she says. (El Nacional 18.7.2008)

Even though a positive effect of the cultural activity is present in the form of integration, it is implied that the inhabitants are primarily disunited, which is confirmed by defining them as apathetic. This suggestion is more credible, since it is brought as an opinion of an inhabitant who can be seen as an expert of the conditions of her own barrio, and not as speculation of the reporter. In addition to being apathetic, the inhabitants are also represented as resigned, for example, in the face of violence:

“[...] among the citizens exists a serious syndrome that is the resignation. People think it is impossible to end with the insecurity, in the barrio El 70 [...] they [...] invest in grilles, which is part of the syndrome. (El Universal 12.11.2008.)

By using the metaphoric expression “syndrome” (*síndrome*) the situation of the inhabitants is naturalized by comparing it to a medical condition, an illness that is generalized to all of the inhabitants. Their coping mechanisms are also referred to as a symptom of the disease. This contributes to the stereotyped representation of the inhabitants as resigned and hopeless. (Cf. Hall 1997b.) Also the report about the visit of the ‘Clown Doctors’ to “El 70” refers to the general malaise of the community through a medical metaphor:

And even if they were not in a hospital, we can say that they cured more than one [inhabitant] with their happy spirit. [...] So, for one day, El 70 was only venue of laughter and happiness. (El Universal 31.2.2008.)

Here the inhabitants are again compared to ill or sick people that are cured. In addition to naturalizing their condition, this represents them stereotypically as objects of intervention from outside (cf. Hall 1997b). However, this is seen only as a temporary solution, since it lasts just one day while the outsiders are in the community, after which the community gets back to their normality, which is implied to be the opposite of happiness.

Under the discourse of *insoluble misery*, the most important participants in the communication about “El 70” are again the reporters themselves, but the inhabitants and a few public figures are also cited. In this discourse, the reporters mostly use their own voice to describe the different conditions of the barrio. They are confirmed to be miserable through referring to reporter’s own presence and metaphoric descriptions, as well as using unconditional statements. Some female inhabitants are cited giving their testimony as victims of disasters, and few inhabitants are also cited as experts, giving their more sophisticated opinions about the situation of the barrio and its inhabitants. The voices of the politicians and other public figures tell about their mostly prejudiced impressions of “El 70”, not about their personal experiences in the barrio.

## **5.6 Political pawn of the reporter or the interviewee**

“El 70” is also represented as a *political pawn*, when the cited outsiders or the reporters refer to the barrio for political purposes. This kind of representation can be found in the political articles, but also in some articles under the themes of *culture*, and *organization and development*. This is not so much a consistent discourse about “El 70”, but a repeated way of using it as an example of successful or failed politics under the other discourses. In some reports “El 70” is also represented as an object of political activities or manipulation.

In one report “El 70” is a destination of two opposition politicians that are candidates in the elections for the National Assembly or Parliament. During the visit the candidates comment on various important themes of national politics, criticizing the government, and suggesting improvements related to the issues of insecurity, legal system, health, and food security. The inhabitants of “El 70” are used as an example to point out an alleged case of corruption where at least 130 tons of food imported by a state-own food supply network, PDVAL (Producción y Distribución Venezolana de Alimentos), was found in containers in a state of decomposition<sup>24</sup>:

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<sup>24</sup> The official explication of this case refers to poor organization; PDVAL, that is to distribute basic goods nationwide in regulated prices, imported more food products that it could distribute. By the opposition this has been seen as a case of corruption where the directors of PDVAL made money with the intentionally excessive importation of the subsidized food products. Some of the directors have been detained and imputed for the case, but also the investigation of the case has been accused of being too slow and inefficient.

[...] “two containers of the food that the government let spoil would have served to feed the families of this community during more than three months”. (El Universal 1.8.2010.)

The case is made more concrete and its dimensions are highlighted by referring to a certain community that could have been fed for months with only a small part of the spoiled food. With the numeric references, the information is also legitimized (cf. Jokinen et al. 2004, 158–178; Valtonen 1998, 111). The intention is to catch the attention of, and appeal to, the voters with low resources that use the food distribution services of the government. In this way, the inhabitants of “El 70” are implicitly represented as political actors, which by voting can affect their future. Another opposition politician, a candidate for Metropolitan Mayor, uses “El 70” as an example of an insecure and resigned community when explaining his priorities should he win the election:

The Metropolitan Corporation of Security that contemplates a credible police, respectable, that is able to reduce the crime peak. In that I am going to put all my effort [...] People think it is impossible to end with the insecurity, in the barrio El 70 or in La Lucha [...] but it must be said that it is possible to defeat the insecurity. (El Universal 12.11.2008)

The politician appeals to the greatest worry of the Venezuelans, that is, the insecurity related to criminal violence (cf. Briceño-León, 2009, 27). The citation implies that the currently existing police, governed by the *chavistas*, is neither credible nor respectable, and it is not capable of reducing crime. He wants to send a message especially to the barrios, such as “El 70”, but also to the formal city where the fear is shared, that he will change the situation if the people vote for him. In addition to being used by the opposition politicians to point out the malpractice and inefficiency of the government, “El 70” is also used by the *chavistas* as an example of what can be done if they continue to govern:

“This is a done project, homes with happy families; this will be a fast process and for it we need also the support for the new National Assembly [parliament], that will give continuity for these works”, emphasized Faría [Head of Government of the Capital District]. (El Universal 3.6.2010.)

This citation can be seen as part of the electoral campaign of the *chavistas* for the upcoming parliamentary election. Here a condition is implicitly set for the development of the community that could even be seen as slight pressure against the people living in the areas with low resources: ‘If you keep on supporting us, your situation will be quickly improved, however, if you vote for the opposition there may not be continuity for the community development’. This represents the inhabitants more as objects of political manipulation, but also again as political actors that by their vote can affect their own lives. This is a very good example of the political play in Venezuela where nothing seems to be done just because the people need it, but everything is political. This applies to

both the *chavistas* and the opposition in power, in central or regional governments. “El 70” is also mentioned in an interview of the ex-Metropolitan Mayor to belie the claims that he left his office one month before his term ended:

That is a lie [...] I never stopped being on the street inaugurating staircases, works. [...] Day before the elections I was in the barrio El 70 in theatre. (El Universal 8.1.2009)

Attending theatre in “El 70” is used as a proof that the mayor was working. This, at the same time, implies that the *chavistas* especially have presence in the barrio. This is also shown in the reports where the representatives of the regional *chavista* governments visit the community as the benefactors that have given the resources to the community, and also in the representation of all the projects that are supported by the government, even though politics would not be brought up explicitly. In addition, “El 70” is represented as a venue of politically motivated activities other than visits of politicians:

The ideology and theatre go up to the barrio “El 70” in cable car [headline]. [...] With them the art goes up to the hill, but takes as a companion the ideology. And even though the details account the contrary [...] the author of the project defends the idea of superimposing the aesthetic proposal before the political climate [...] (El Universal 18.7.2008.)

The project Theatrical Cable Car [...] went up to El 70 in El Valle to show episodes of the life itself and throw some sparks to the politics. Its director [...] who confess to be *chavista*, say that the art is above all. [Front page] [...] political comedy, where as expected, the Right is the butt of all the jokes [...] we depend on the Metropolitan mayor’s office [...] In the crossroads to enter to one of the stations there are no options: the open door is the one at the left. (El Nacional 18.7.2008.)

Even though “art is above all”, it is implied that the cultural activities are not offered only for diversion, but it is made clear who provides them. The opportunity is taken to promulgate the political views. However, the reporter also, for political purposes, picks up some of the themes of the staging and generalizes them to all the activity that supposedly exposes the ideological intentions of the *chavistas*.

In the data, the inhabitants of “El 70” do not express their political opinions, even though the outsiders represent them as political actors. They are just shown as project partners and beneficiaries of the government projects, or as denouncing the lack of authority and services. The only comment related to politics refers to the general politization of the country:

But José Abreu, in the barrio El 70, El Valle, thinks on the other hand that the multiplication of the users of cable TV is due to the politization of the country: “The open signal is Government or opposition. The rest is soap operas”. (El Universal 31.1.2010)

This comment implies that the inhabitants of barrios, “El 70” among others, are bored with the constant political debate, but also with the Latin American soap operas that are shown on the national TV all day long. Here the community representative is cited as an expert who knows the reasoning and the attitudes towards politics of the inhabitants of his community. This can, however, be seen more as a requirement for better quality television than as a political comment, since no political stand is taken.

## **5.7 Not so insecure and miserable – pieces of counter discourses**

In addition to the discourse of *organization and empowerment*, pieces of other counter discourses to the negative representations can be found in the data, representing “El 70” as not as insecure and miserable as typically portrayed. The counter discourse representing “El 70” as not that insecure can be found in the articles about culture, but also in those about insecurity and violence, where the counter discourse is, however, many times turned upside down. In the discourse of *organization and empowerment* “El 70” is represented as not that insecure, for example, by referring to positive change:

[...] also known as a territory where the culture gains ground from the violence. (El Universal 7.9.2008.)

“Here in the 80s one could not live, people were stabbed to death, but that has changed a lot”, tells Abreu [...]. He is convinced that it has been the cultural and sport activities that have transformed the attitudes of the rest of the inhabitants of the barrio. (El Universal 23.8.2010.)

Here the current situation is compared with the more violent past, suggesting that the security of the barrio has improved significantly. It is admitted that there is still some insecurity, but the situation has changed a lot. The magnitude of the change is highlighted by comparing the history when people could not live in the barrio, since they would be stabbed to death, with the barrio of today where, in addition to being able to live, the inhabitants can participate in different recreational activities. In addition to the insecure past, the situation of “El 70” is compared with the worse situation in other places, and the inhabitants also seem to be surprised by the incidents of violence:

“I have four children and even if up here everybody knows each other and there is not that much violence, I get scared when they leave. [...]”, says José Gregorio Abreu, inhabitant of the barrio El 70 of El Valle. (El Universal 17.8.2010.)

“Here never had occurred something like that, and we hope will not happen again.” (El Universal 24.9.2009)

Here the community representative suggests that “El 70” is quite secure, comparing it to other places that are not. The second citation also suggests that the violent incidents in “El 70” are unique and exceptional events that have never happened before, which contradicts the representation of the inhabitants as being used to the everyday violence in the discourse of *gang violence and fear*. However, the security of the barrio is represented to have also its faults:

[...] there are children playing on the street with their bicycles [...] while others [...] flying, under the sun and the breeze, their multi-colored kites. For many this scene may transmit tranquility, [...] that for the inhabitants of the sector is nothing but “the peace of the sepulchers”, a phrase [...] used to define the feeling of peace provided by the Government of the general Marcos Pérez Jiménez. [...] “Although this, almost always, is calm, one knows that when hearing a shot, after comes the exchange of bullets [plomamentazón] [...]” [...] “here the security is such that even the jeeps work all night, unless there is commotion and almost always they are advised if something happens in the barrio so that they do not get up” [...]. (Diario La Voz 29.9.2009a.)

Even though the reference to the times of the dictator implies that the peace in “El 70” is imposed in the community through fear of repression, the barrio is still represented to be so calm that the children can play safely on the streets and transport service can function all night long. Violent incidents may occur, but they are rare, since the barrio is referred to as being normally calm and secure. Although conditions are set and doubts are cast on the security of the barrio, the citations above are in sharp contrast to those in the discourse of *gang violence and fear* and *search and destroy*, where the barrio is represented as a battleground.

#### *Active deconstruction of the prejudices by the outsiders*

The counter discourse that represents the barrio as not so insecure is not only a discourse of the inhabitants or the reporter, but also of the outside workers of the different projects or missions who actually consider the security as more unconditional than the inhabitants themselves.

“I am from Coche and grew up listening that El 70 was the most dangerous barrio of El Valle. The first time I got up [...] and I noticed that the place is suitable for setting up the spectacle”, points Da Gama [theatre director] (El Nacional. 18.7.2008.)

Here the prejudice of the barrio as “the most dangerous” is admitted and directly deconstructed by suggesting that instead of being dangerous, it is actually a good place to organize cultural activities. The reference to growing up listening to the prejudiced assumptions about “El 70” also implies that it is not just her prejudice, but other people have repeated this prejudiced discourse all of her life.

The prejudice of danger is deconstructed also by the non-resident representatives of the Mission Culture that had to stay in the barrio after the top hour for security, 5 pm, because of an unexpected technical fault during a rap festival:

“I did not want us to be caught by the night, I knew the fame of the barrio, but that day we closed at 9 pm and I realized that it is a different place, tranquil”, says Castellanos. (El Universal 23.8.2010.)

The outside workers confirm with their own experience with “El 70” that it is not such a dangerous place, but actually quite the contrary, different from the fame. There are also outside workers that seem to have already abandoned these prejudices:

It’s two a clock in the morning in the barrio El 70 [...] and an endless line, 300 boys and girls waited eagerly their turn to see the stars through a telescope. [...] The reason why they bring to this slum a fairly sophisticated telescope, a fact that breaks with the resistance of the people to visit other communities alleging reasons of insecurity. (Todos Adentro 30.1.2010.)

Even at 2 am, events can be organized in “El 70”, and with children. They would not deliberately expose children to any danger, thus implying the security of the barrio. In the same way, bringing a sophisticated telescope implies that there is no risk of somebody stealing it. This implication is also used to actively break with, or deconstruct, the prejudices of the people about the barrio. If “El 70” would be as insecure and chaotic as it is generally seen, and as other discourses also imply, it would not be possible to organize this kind of event, and less so during the night time. In addition to the outsiders that work in the projects in “El 70”, the prejudice of danger also is deconstructed by the non-resident visitors that do not work there:

Alejandra de Guevara, resident of El Valle, also dared for the first time in her life to visit the barrio that she has seen for years from the window of her home. In the beginning of the tour Guevara confessed being a little afraid; however, over the minutes she felt more comfortable. Later and without any kind of distrust she toasted for peace with a glass of sangria in the sixth station of the cable car. (El Universal 21.5.2007.)

Here the interviewee’s prejudice of “El 70” as dangerous is exposed, but this stereotypical view is deconstructed right away by showing, through her experience, that there is nothing to worry about when visiting the barrio. In the same report the meanings of different kinds of particularities of the barrio are reversed from negative to positive:

“Never in my life had I seen something similar. The streets here seem like labyrinths, but above all the view over the city attracted my attention”, pointed De Guevara, meanwhile she walked towards the highest point of the slum with her husband and granddaughter. (El Universal 21.5.2007.)

Through trans-coding, the stereotype is reversed, by representing the rambling physical appearance of the barrio as an exotic labyrinth and the location on the top of the hill as an asset for its attractive view (cf. Hall 1997b, 270–274). The reference to the interviewee’s granddaughter even further confirms and legitimizes this counter discourse by appealing to the shared understanding that no one would risk the integrity of their grandchildren by bringing them to a dangerous place. The spectacular view over the city is also highlighted in another article:

Also barrio looks at the city [headline]. [...] there exists at least one aspect of life in the popular sectors of Caracas that could work in a way of clumsy compensation for so many shortages: in the capital the best views of the city are precisely there. [...] From the highest point of El 70 (El Valle), José Abreu says, not without certain boastfulness, “Look this view of 360 degrees. I have been in all the places, tell me: Where in Caracas you can obtain something like that?”. And it is really surprising [...] If one seeks this barrio on a map, one can see that it is almost the center equidistant, and if Caracas would have a heart, it would be around here. (El Universal 24.4.2010.)

“El 70” is taken as an example, among other barrios, of the communities that are located on the high hills. It is suggested that the best view over Caracas can be found in “El 70”. Bringing out the geographical location of “El 70” in the center of the city also contrasts with the idea of the excluded slums in the periphery of the formal city. The reference to “heart” also humanizes the barrio, appealing to the readers’ feelings of sympathy. In a box story related to this article, a city planner cited as an expert, suggests that the view should be considered as a condition for well-being and a civil right, thus highlighting the importance of this particular asset of the barrios.



## 6. SOCIO-CULTURAL ORIGINS AND THE EFFECTS OF REPRESENTATIONS

In this chapter the discourses that were found in the data are brought to a more general level, defining the connections and mutual interaction between the text and its socio-cultural context. How has the society shaped the media and whether the media, on its part, maintain the prevailing order or diffuse social change (cf. Fairclough 1997)? I reflect on the socio-cultural origins of the discourses and think about the possible consequences these discourses may have. Also under inspection are the causes, consequences, and possible solutions proposed explicitly or implicitly in the discourses for the different problems of the community. If the problems are represented as insoluble, what kind of implications may this have? Does the prevailing social order, in a sense, need the problem? Do those who benefit most from the problem have an interest in not solving it? (cf. Fairclough 2003, 210.) In addition, the relationship between the different discourses is considered and, in the end, some ways of deconstructing the negative representations are suggested.

The most dominant discourses of the barrio “El 70” represent the community in a discriminatory manner through negative stereotypes. The discourse of *gang violence and fear* represents “El 70” as a permanently insecure place, and as one of the most violent barrios of the city. “El 70” is a nest of criminals and gangs who grow up, operate, and battle each other in the barrio. The inhabitants are represented as female victims of fear who are subordinated to the power imposed by the gangs, or as organized and cruel male criminals and gang members. The victimized inhabitants and the gangs are also interdependent, since the gangs maintain the security inside of the barrio, and the inhabitants must protect the gangs for their own security. Through the discourse of *exclusion and anarchy*, “El 70” is represented stereotypically as an excluded and lawless community, abandoned by the authorities. The difference between the barrio and the formal city is highlighted. The inhabitants are represented as victims of different calamities and frustrated, but good people, or as disrespectful rebels and villains. The inhabitants have potential, but no possibilities for progress since they are left alone with their problems. In this discourse a clear stance is taken defending the inhabitants’ rights and accusing the authorities for their exclusion.

The discourse of *organization and empowerment* can be seen as a counter-discourse to the other

dominant discourses, creating an opposing representation of “El 70” as an organized community where a positive change is possible as a result of empowerment supported by the government. Different infrastructural and recreational projects are implemented in “El 70” as an alternative scene to events that are normally only organized in the formal city. In this way, the difference between the barrios and the formal city is partly deconstructed. “El 70” is an exceptional example of success compared to other barrios that have not achieved the same level of organization. The inhabitants are represented specifically through the citations of one of the community representatives as organized and collaborative experts, but also as mostly female beneficiaries of the different projects. The community is receptive towards outsiders and a serious project partner respected by the government, however dependent on government resources.

The subordinate discourse of *search and destroy* represents “El 70” as invaded by the repressive and arbitrary police forces, and as an insecure battleground between the police and gangs. Doubt is cast on the justifications and magnitude of the police practice. The inhabitants are represented as fearful of the violent incidents, or doubtful of the police, but they are also seen as criminal or innocent victims of police violence. The other subordinate discourse of *insoluble misery* highlights the deficient conditions and miserable situation of “El 70”, stereotyping the barrio as repulsive and deviant. The problems of the community are represented as insoluble and being grounded in the location of the barrio, thus naturalizing them. The inhabitants are victims of unavoidable calamities, such as natural disasters and perpetual insecurity. They are apathetic and resigned, having no possibilities for change.

The usage of “El 70” as a *political pawn* of the reporter or the interviewee, under the different discourses, represents the barrio as an example of successful or failed politics, or as an object of political activities. The inhabitants are represented implicitly as objects of manipulation or as political actors, however not representing their own political opinions. “El 70” is portrayed as under the influence of mostly *chavista* politics. The subordinate counter discourses represent “El 70” as *not so miserable and insecure*. Positive change achieved in “El 70” is highlighted, comparing it with the past and with other barrios. Representing the positive experiences of the visitors also actively deconstructs the prejudices against “El 70”.

## 6.1 Geographic stigma of danger and crime

The discourse of *gang violence and fear* can be seen as a hegemonic discourse maintained by the ideological assumption of the barrios as permanently violent and insecure, which exposes them to further exclusion and practices of subordination, especially by the police.

In the discourse of *gang violence and fear*, the causes for the insecurity are barely analyzed or discussed and the violence is represented as a problem that has no solution. The only explanation offered to the problem, by referring to the “culture of the barrio”, is also problematic. Although this refers to wider cultural causes behind the situation of violence, the problematic culture is represented as endogenous of the barrio, having no relationship to the greater society outside the barrio. This contradicts the proposition of Pedrazzini and Sánchez (1992) that argue that life in the barrios of Caracas is determined by certain ‘culture of urgency’, which has emerged from the failure of formal society and economy to integrate the urban poor, forcing them to use informal and even illegal survival strategies, of which the crime and violence is the most extreme example. Representing violence and insecurity as an internal problem of the barrios, instead of seeing it as a problem related to the failure of the society in general, the media also suggests that there is no solution to the problem to be found at the society level.

This finding confirms the results of earlier research, according to which, there is a lack of an integral vision of the criminality in the media, which leads to ignoring the societal background and causalities of the problem (e.g. Korander 1998, 185–186; Rey 2005, 13, 30, 34). Furthermore, even though robberies are mentioned a few times, the reporting concentrates on the violent crimes and gang violence in particular, possibly creating a distorted representation of the crimes that happen in the community. This also agrees with the earlier research that states that homicides are especially exaggerated, while, for example, domestic abuse is absent in the media (e.g. Jewkes 2008; Korander 2000; Sheley and Ashkins 1981). The concentration on gang violence also highlights the crimes committed by the young men from the barrios, which may cause excessive fear and discrimination of this group. This may also affect policymaking and complicate the efficient response to the criminality (cf. Jewkes 2008, 33–34; Rey 2005, 32–33).

Presenting no solution also stigmatizes the gang members as permanent criminals without possibilities to change their lives (cf. Castagnola 2007). This for its part justifies the only solution

that is offered implicitly: the repressive police force that is required to fight the incorrigible gang combat forces that have invaded the barrio. The use of force is also justified by creating the idea that the women inhabitants and innocent outsiders especially feel the consequences of violence. If it would only be the cold blooded gang members killing each other, the problem would not need an intervention. This way the stereotypical representation of the inhabitants through a binary opposition of victims that need protection or perpetrators that need to be eliminated may serve as another reason for police repression.

However, this discourse may not justify only the police repression of the gangs of the barrio, but also that of the whole community. The dangerous nature of “El 70” is brought up as an unconditional and self-evident assumption that, instead of facts, seems to be based on the violent reputation of, and the prejudices against, the barrio. This kind of representation implies that not only the gangs that operate in the barrio are considered dangerous, but also the place itself is inherently dangerous. Also the reference to the “culture of the barrio” as the cause of the situation suggests that anyone that grows up in the barrio can potentially go wrong. This can be seen as a geographic stigma, implying that the inhabitants of this community are real or potential criminals by fault of where they live (cf. Penglase 2007). This agrees with the suggestions of earlier research that in the media life in the poor neighborhoods, and especially poor young men, are put on stage and criminalized (Rey 2005, 22; see also Ortega 2004, 62–69). This may further justify segregation of social space and increasing control over the poor. The possible threat to outsiders also calls for prevention by police repression of slum residents (cf. Penglase 2007, 315, 322; Ortega 2004, 62–69).

Even though the insecurity and the incidents reported are not politicized in the articles, the exaggerated use of the discourse of *gang violence and fear* may have also political purposes, particularly because this discourse is present only in the articles of private newspapers. Just as Rey (2005, 7) proposes in his research, in Venezuela tensions have increased between the Venezuelan government and the media that diffuses information on the growing insecurity, failing policies, and public demands. The government accuses the private newspapers of intentionally highlighting the violence in the country to downplay government policies towards the problem, and to increase the public’s discontent with the government. A good example of this juxtaposition is when the government prohibited the newspapers to publish photos of violence after *El Nacional* published a front-page photo of corpses piled up in the morgue of *Bello Monte* in Caracas, where the victims of lethal violence are brought. The photo was related to an article about criminality in the country,

titled “There are 15 million illegal guns in the country nowadays” (El Nacional 2010). The prohibition was condemned by the opposition as censorship by a government trying to cover up the level of violence in the country, whereas the government assured that it was to protect the readers, as well as the dignity of the victims and their bereaved (e.g. Agencia Venezolana de Noticias 2010).

Who benefits from the criminalization of the urban poor? This kind of representation could serve the more affluent groups of Venezuela whose interests are threatened by the growing political influence of the poor. The representation of the urban poor as potential criminals implies that they should not be taken into account, or listened to, when making political decisions. At the same time, the representation of the other half of the slum dwellers as subordinated victims make them seem powerless, but also affected by the criminals’ interests, which denies their potential for being serious political actors. The police repression of the barrios on the other hand would keep the poor and the violence outside of the formal city, thus not threatening the lives of the more affluent groups.

This is, however, in sharp contrast to the current government’s efforts to include the urban poor in the social and political life of Venezuela. The government has also started a police reform to reorganize and clean the police forces of the corruption and human rights violations, and to create a community police that would be closer to the people. The new security policies have not been successful thus far, since the violence rate has continued to increase, but it at least seems that the call for police repression of the poor has not influenced the government policies. Nevertheless, the discourse of *gang violence and fear* may have other effects out of the sphere of policing, causing discrimination of the slum dwellers by other groups than the public sector. One example of this is the discrimination by the employers of the job applicants from “El 70” because of the bad reputation of the barrio (Centro para la Paz y los Derechos Humanos de UCV2003e). This also implies the existence of a geographic stigma that is extended to the inhabitants, which the media seems to maintain, reproduce, and diffuse.

## **6.2 Solvable or permanent exclusion**

Contrary to the discourse of *gang violence and fear*, in the discourse of *exclusion and anarchy*, the cause of the exclusion of the barrio is brought up clearly throughout the articles by pointing out the

responsibility of the government and the authorities. This challenges the suggestion that the poor are not represented so much as dispossessed through subordination, but as simply poor as an inherent condition (cf. Fairclough 1997, 149). Even though it reproduces the exclusion of the barrios, this discourse represents the slum dwellers as partly having potential to make things better, if only they would have the support of the authorities. This also contrasts with the results of the earlier research, according to which, the poor are not normally represented as social actors and the State is not seen as responsible for their condition (see e.g. Fairclough 1997, 147; McKendrick et al. 2008; Tablante 2008). However, also under this discourse the activity of the inhabitants is suppressed and restricted by their dependence. This can also be seen as a hegemonic discourse that is maintained by the ideological assumption of barrios as excluded communities that are subordinated by absent authorities.

Pointing out the main culprit for the exclusion suggests that the ones responsible for the problems should implement the solutions, which do exist. This kind of representation can thus work to pressure the government to act to resolve these problems and end the exclusion. However, as the discourse of *exclusion and anarchy* is present exclusively in the articles of the private newspapers, the motives for the stand taken by the reporters can be questioned. Some factors of the problems may be emphasized for political reasons, to fortify the criticism towards the government that has not been able to improve the situation of the poor, who are its most important political supporters. This discourse agrees with the implications of the earlier research on the Venezuelan private media, according to which it represents poverty as a series of shortages neglected by the government, representing only the problems and never the achievements of the government to attend to them (Maryorie Dugaro & Lia Lezama 2005, 220–226).

Accusing only the State and the authorities for the exclusion of the barrios also fades out other reasons and the responsibility of the whole society for the exclusion of the poor. Here again the discrimination of the job applicants from “El 70” by the employers can be brought up as an example of actors other than the government that actively exclude the community. The media itself does its part in the exclusion, for example, by reproducing the geographic stigma of the barrio. Under this discourse, through explicit and axiomatic assumptions and comparisons with the formal city, the barrio is represented also as permanently excluded. Even though the authorities are pinpointed for the responsibility of the situation, this kind of representation may also justify the continued exclusion of the barrios, since it is seen as a normal and traditional situation.

The inhabitants are also trapped in a stereotype that represents them through binary extremes as well-meaning but dependent victims, or as savage outlaws. This dual representation can be seen to correspond to the traditional division of the poor in the USA of the ‘deserving poor’ who are trying to make it on their own, and the ‘undeserving poor’ who are lazy, shiftless, or drunk and prefer living off the generosity of others (Katz 1989, in Gilens 1996, 523). If the ‘undeserving poor’ of the discourse of *exclusion and anarchy* are added with the criminal inhabitants represented under the discourse of *gang violence and fear*, the representation of the inhabitants as ‘undeserving poor’ seem to dominate the data.

The apparent dominance of the ‘undeserving poor’ may have political consequences by diminishing the support of the more affluent classes to the anti-poverty programmes of the government, but also reducing the will to decrease the inequality in general (cf. Gilens 1996, 537). This again may serve the interests of the more affluent classes of keeping the poor excluded from the political life of the country by highlighting their deviance thus diminishing their political importance. However, as the government of Chávez has been favoring the poor at the expense of middle and high classes during his entire rule (cf. Ellner 2008), the public opinion of the more affluent classes may not have much influence in the government’s poverty politics. Nevertheless, this kind of view may increase the discrimination and decrease the support for the poor by the sectors other than the state.

The representation of the community as permanently excluded is also close to the discourse of *insoluble misery* that is many times used together with the discourse of *exclusion and anarchy*, being subordinate to it, however. The most significant difference between these two discourses is that in *insoluble misery* the problems do not have a solution and instead of being potentially capable to change their lives or being frustrated, the inhabitants are represented as hopeless, resigned, and apathetic. The discourse of *insoluble misery* also corresponds to the earlier research, according to which the poor are represented as passive objects reduced to their disadvantages, with references to their deficient living conditions and state of misery instead of their active exclusion by the authorities (see e.g. Fairclough 1997, 147, 149; McKendrick et al. 2008; Tablante 2008).

Under discourse of *insoluble misery*, the barrio is also represented through the different calamities it faces, confirming the suggestion of the earlier research that the Venezuelan press represents poverty as inherent deprivation of life conditions, whose gravity is revealed only by exceptional adverse events. By concentrating on the symptoms of poverty without discussing the wider socio-cultural

context, this discourse contributes to the stigmatization of the urban poor (cf. Tablante 2008, 289, 296, 312). Using the discourse of *insoluble misery* as an aside to the more dominant discourse of *exclusion and anarchy*, it may downplay the suggested potential of the inhabitants for change. This is especially the case when it is used to support the discourse of *gang violence and fear*, as the problems of the community are made to seem even more permanent and insoluble, which may further make finding a solution difficult.

### **6.3 Further empowerment and deconstruction of negative stereotypes**

The discourse of *organization and empowerment* is contrary to the other dominant discourses about “El 70”. By representing the inhabitants as organized and capable people, this discourse also contradicts earlier research on the media representation of poverty that suggest the poor are represented only through their disadvantages and as passive objects (see e.g. Fairclough 1997, 147; McKendrick et al. 2008; Tablante 2008). This discourse is completely opposite to the discourse of *insoluble misery*, though it is sometimes used with this discourse to highlight the positive changes by comparing the achievements to past underdevelopment. Also, even though “El 70” is still represented as being dependent on government or other outside support, as in the discourse of *exclusion and anarchy*, under this discourse the community does indeed have the support and is represented as an active project partner and beneficiary of the projects yielding positive results.

Exceptionally, both the problems to be resolved and the implementation of the solutions for them are represented (cf. Dugaro & Lezama 2005). The projects supported by the government are not shown as a tool to politicize the poor to support the government, as could be expected according to earlier research, but the focus is on the achievements of these projects (cf. Kitzberger & Pérez 2008, 55–56, 59).

This discourse can be seen to reflect the actual empowerment of the poor in Venezuela after 1999, supported by the current government. However, as the data does not include articles from the time before Chávez or from the beginning of his rule, but start from 2007 when his government had been in power eight years already, it is not possible to make conclusions as to whether this kind of representation has evolved only after improvements were achieved during the current government or if it already existed before. From the political point of view this discourse is significant since it is present in both the government owned and private newspapers. The representation of the



government's success in the inclusion of the poor does not serve the interests of the opposition or those of the more affluent classes, who would benefit from keeping the poor in the margins. The private newspapers do not, however, represent this success as completely unconditional, but also present some disappointments of the community regarding the unfulfilled promises of the government. In addition, in the private newspapers the projects are sometimes implied to have political conditions and they often combine this discourse with elements from the discourses of *gang violence and fear*, *exclusion and anarchy*, and *insoluble misery*.

The discourse of *organization and empowerment* is a counter-discourse that breaks with the negative stereotypes of "El 70" and its inhabitants constructed under other discourses. In addition to representing the inhabitants as active participants and beneficiaries, instead of excluded and passive victims or outlaws, this discourse represents the whole community as an exceptional example of organization, empowerment, and positive change. Under this discourse, the barrio many times crosses the line between the informal and formal city, thus deconstructing the traditional line of exclusion. This kind of representation may further help to increase the empowerment of the community, especially through the deconstruction of its negative stereotypes, therefore affecting people's attitudes and prejudices. This can also lead to a decrease in discrimination, which would further ease the cooperation between the barrio and the different formal sectors of the society, opening more possibilities, for example, for partnerships and employment.

However, even though the whole community is represented as organized and participating, the responsibility of the development seems to be put on the shoulders of one of the community representatives. This further implies that the sustainability and continuity of the process may not be guaranteed. This reflects the problems that have been detected in the community organization (cf. La Rosa 2008), but beyond that it can also be seen to reflect the faith of the people in strong and authoritarian leaders, which can be detected in Venezuelan society and politics on a wider scale.

#### **6.4 Defending the community against the repressive police**

The discourse of *search and destroy* tends to delegitimize police violence in the barrios. Thus under this discourse, the traditional division between illegitimate criminal violence and legitimate police violence is not maintained. In addition to contrasting with the implications of the discourse of *gang*

*violence and fear*, this goes against the results of the earlier research, where the media is seen to justify police repression of poor communities (cf. e.g. Penglase 2007). However, even though the police practice is condemned, this discourse still represents the inhabitants as subordinated by the police.

Under this discourse the views of the slum dwellers seem to be believed, sympathized with, and supported more than the views of the police. However, there may be also political motives behind this stance. During the time that these reports were published, all of the police forces represented – the Metropolitan Police (PM), the National Directorate of Intelligence and Prevention Services (DISIP) and the Scientific, Penal, and Criminal Investigation Corps (CICPC) – were governed by *chavistas*<sup>25</sup>, whereas all the articles representing killings by police were published in the private newspapers that are, more or less, in political opposition to the current government. It is thus convenient for the opposition to criticize the malpractice of the police forces that are under the command of their adversary.

Nevertheless, whatever the motives of the reporters, this discourse reflects the reputation of the Venezuelan police forces, of which the PM and the DISIP are especially known for their corruption and human rights violations. Furthermore, this seems to also reflect the way in which the insecurity is experienced in the barrio “El 70”, where the insecurity seems to be caused more by the repressive police than by criminals, and the police are considered to be abusive and corrupted. The discourse of *search and destroy* thus seem to very much speak for the poor and against the police repression, at least partly fulfilling the traditional task of the media to supervise and criticize the decision-makers and stand for the people. Even though the government probably considers this kind of discourse to be politically motivated, it may have had its effects in politics, considering the decision of the government to implement the potentially far-reaching police reform and, for example, to dissolve the PM based on its malpractice and corruption.

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<sup>25</sup> Traditionally PM (*Policía Metropolitana*) has been under the command of the regional government of the federal district. From the year 2000 PM was governed by *chavista* Metropolitan Mayors until the year 2008, when a candidate of opposition, Antonio Ledezma, was elected as a new Mayor, and the central government took over the command of the PM. In 2011 PM was closed down and migrated to the new Bolivarian National Police (*Policía Nacional Bolivariana*, PNB), also governed by the central government. DISIP (*Dirección Nacional de los Servicios de Inteligencia y Prevención*) has always been under the command of the central government. In December 2009, the name of DISIP was changed into Bolivarian Intelligence Service, (*Servicio Bolivariano de Inteligencia*, SEBIN). CICPC (*Cuerpo de Investigaciones Científicas, Penales y Criminalísticas*, CICPC) is also a centrally governed national police force responsible for criminal investigations and forensic services.

## 6.5 From political pawn to power player

The usage of “El 70” as a *political pawn* by the reporters or interviewees under the different discourses partly confirms the results of the earlier research (Calogne 2009, 298), that through the external perspective the Venezuelan poor are represented as either political actors or objects of political manipulation, attended by the actual government, or as citizens or objects of study for whom the state should ensure the opportunities. Even though in the discourse of *organization and empowerment* politics are normally not brought up explicitly, the community is represented as a beneficiary of government projects, thus accepting and supporting the poverty politics and cooperating with the government. This implies that the inhabitants are political actors, but also possibly objects of the government’s political manipulation. In the discourse of *exclusion and anarchy*, the inhabitants are represented as potentially active people who should be supported by the state, which is currently absent and deficient. Thus the inhabitants are used as political pawns to increase criticism towards the government.

The usage of the barrios as political pawns reflects again the empowerment of the poor and their inclusion into the political life of Venezuela. Similar to the discourse of *organization and empowerment*, with this data it is not possible to conclude whether this representation has evolved only since the rule of the current government. Primarily, the representation of the inhabitants as political actors increases their empowerment, since they are given substantial power by their votes and this may also encourage them to participate more. Even though the inhabitants are seen as more passive when they are represented as objects of political manipulation, this does imply their important role in politics. The growing importance of the poor, however, exposes them to manipulation, when the politicians that want their vote may try to mislead them. To avoid manipulation, the political empowerment should be joined with an education that would capacitate the poor in critical thinking. Nevertheless, because they have been the focus of the politics ever since president Chávez came into power, the poor communities may actually be more experienced than one would think in how to deal with the manipulation, and how to make use of their role as a political pawn.

## **6.6 Passive female victims and active male perpetrators**

When considering all of the discourses together, with the exception of the discourse of organization and empowerment, the inhabitants of “El 70” can be seen through a stereotyped binary opposition, as either victims or perpetrators. They are victims of violence and fear, of different kind of accidents and exclusion, and of betrayal and repression. They are coldblooded criminals and murderers, savage villains, and disrespectful rebels. It is noteworthy that if the gender of the particular inhabitants is expressed, with the exception of the victims of police violence and the alleged criminal that was lynched, the victims of these discourses are almost exclusively women. As a contrast, the outlaws are always represented to be men, with the exception of one mention of female gang members. Similarly, even though in a positive context, in the discourse of organization and empowerment, the inhabitants are mostly represented as active male participants, or as grateful women and children beneficiaries.

The representation of the outlaws as men probably reflects the ‘reality’ where, for example, the gangs are male-dominated and most of the criminals are men. However, the representation of female victims seems exaggerated, as if they were the only victims of fear, accidents, and exclusion in the barrio, when, for example, the young men are the most probable victims of violence (see e.g. Gabaldon, 2004). The lack of male victims can thus be seen as a significant flaw in the impartiality of the articles. Similarly, it seems inaccurate that the great majority of the beneficiaries of the different projects are women and children, as if the houses where men live would not be repaired, or if to say they would not participate in events organized in the barrio.

This disproportional representation is explained by the distorted use of the female and male inhabitants as sources of information. The majority, 18 out of 22, of the female inhabitants that are represented in the articles are cited, whereas only 11 out of 33 men are cited. Even though this is partly due to the existence of lethal victims among the represented male inhabitants, it does not explain it all. As men are the most common victims of violence it would even be fairly logical to interview them about the experiences of threat and fear. The predominance of female victims and beneficiaries is thus also a consequence of the selections made by the reporters. The use of female sources to represent the inhabitants may imply that the reporters consider women to be easier and safer to approach than men. However, as the principal caretakers of the families they can also be considered to tell more dramatic stories that include children, who with their mothers, are the most

sentimental figures to strike the right chords in the readers. The readers may also be more sympathetic towards female than male beneficiaries of the development projects (cf. Gilens 1996, 522). However, it must be also considered that women actually do have more important role and are more present at home than men, which makes woman the most likely to be interviewed for the simple fact that they are more available, whereas the men may, for example, be working outside of the barrio.

When the content of the citations of female and male participants is compared it can also be concluded that the male inhabitants are used more as experts of the situation and the organization in the barrio, whereas women tell their personal experiences of and reactions to the different calamities or projects that benefit them. Whatever the reasons for the selections of the reporter, this distorted representation of women and men reproduces the patriarchal ideology according to which women and children fit better into the role of a sentimental victim or passive beneficiary, whereas men are the sources of facts, active participants and users of violence. Through this lens the women of the barrio will continue to be stereotyped as passive and subordinate. This is in conflict with the earlier research on the community according to which women are the most active participants in the community organization (La Rosa 2008). The representation of men is twofold, even though also stereotypical, since he is represented as capable of good and bad. However, both as an active participant and perpetrator, he may gain some respect for being in a powerful position. At the same time, these men are also feared and their opposition to the women victims may justify repressive police actions.

## **6.7 Possibilities for challenging the negative discourses**

Every time José Abreu reads some news about criminal incidents related to his barrio El 70 [...] he regrets. [...] this neighborhood leader says that the majority of its inhabitants have made a big effort to clean the name of the popular sector. (El Universal 23.8.2010.)

This citation reflects and summarizes the starting point of this research: The violent history of the barrio “El 70” is implied to be the reason for its bad reputation that is actively tried to be improved by the inhabitants. The media reports of violent incidents related to “El 70” are seen as steps backward. The community does not deny that crimes are still committed, but the media reporting is seen to focus on this negative issue instead of the many positive things that are happening in the

barrio. In addition, the community suggests that the media sometimes groundlessly involves the barrio in some criminal incidents where it actually has no part. However, it must be noted that the active cleaning of name of the barrio implies that the inhabitants may also choose their discourse to disproportionately highlight the positive issues and to fade out the issues related to violence and insecurity. In this chapter suggestions are given for how the counter-discourses that were identified in the data and other ways of deconstructing the negative stereotypes could be used to achieve a more balanced representation of the barrio.

The strongest counter-discourse to the dominant negative discourses is that of *organization and empowerment*. However, this discourse can be found only under the themes of *organization and development*, and *culture*, as well as in few articles about *deficient living conditions*, thus covering less than half of the articles and being less dominant than the discourses of *gang violence and fear* and *exclusion and anarchy*. The various positive meanings of the discourse of *organization and empowerment* could, however, be actively used to substitute them for the dominating negative meanings to balance the representation (cf. Hall 1997b, 270–274.). If this discourse was strengthened, an assumption of an organized and capable community could be found throughout the different themes, rather than the axioms of violence and exclusion. The inhabitants would be seen more as a part of ‘us’ and not as the deviant ‘other’. Representing the barrio as a seedbed of collaboration and innovation rather than criminality would deconstruct the geographical stigma. This way the basis for discrimination could be deconstructed and replaced with a foundation for equal treatment of the inhabitants.

This is, however, a battle from outside, since the discourse of *organization and empowerment* is not found in the articles that are dominated by negative discourses. The weaker counter-discourses of the barrio as *not so insecure and miserable* offer possibility for change from the inside, for example, by inverting the negative representations. The situation of insecurity may be compared with the more violent past to emphasize the positive change or the characteristics of poverty, such as the physical conditions of the living environment, may be seen as not only deteriorated, but as an interesting and alternative social scene. (Cf. Hall 1997b, 270–274.) Furthermore, the discourse of *search and destroy* can be seen to work as one kind of a counter-discourse, even though it represents “El 70” as insecure and it does not necessarily deconstruct the stereotypes about the barrio. By questioning the proceedings of the police and condemning the repressive use of force it does, however, help to deconstruct the repressive solution offered in the discourse of *gang violence and fear*.

In addition to the different discursive counter strategies, the overall implication of the reports about the different recreational events and community development projects in “El 70” is that the barrio is not in a state of total anarchy neither is it a constant battlefield, as the negative discourses suggest. If it was either of these, community events could not have been organized and celebrated at all. Similarly, the reports of the visits of different representatives of government, politicians, or public figures imply that “El 70” is not that dangerous: there is no war or continuous shooting, but in fact, outsiders can visit there. However, with the exception of the visit of the former mayor, who was a theatre spectator, the articles about these visits are focused on the negative aspects of the community, even though they are not based on the personal experiences of the visitors in “El 70”, but on the presuppositions of the general state of the barrios. Nevertheless, the citations of the outsider workers or theatre spectators suggest that reporting the outsiders’ visits offers a viable possibility to change the representation and the fame of the barrio, if the visitors comment their experiences in the barrio and not just their general prejudices.

To replace the negative representations with positive ones or to turn the negative representations against themselves however require access to the material production of those representations. As there are some forums, such as the state-owned newspapers and the community media, where the inhabitants are offered possibilities to express their own discourse, it could be useful to take into account the considerations of these counter-discourses and the possibilities to break with existing prejudices. However, the state supported media has a fairly limited audience, and does not necessarily reach the people whose prejudices against the barrios are particularly strong.

Unfortunately, also, the possibilities to deconstruct the stereotypes are not always used well, of which a good example is the movie that was made in the barrio. Even though the director assures (El Universal 19.4.2010) that the movie is not just another movie about the violence in the barrios, but more of a denouncement against violence, the violent content and theme that refers to lawlessness actually just reproduces the violent stereotype of the barrio, as well as the prevailing way of representing poverty through violence in Venezuelan movies (cf. Altman, 2008). These kinds of possibilities for the inhabitants themselves to change the prevailing prejudices about their barrio, and consequently decrease their discrimination should be better used. This could be, for example, promoted by specific courses of media education offered to the interested inhabitants who, even though they are willing to participate in the different community media, do not seem to be familiar with the media that are the most prone to publish reports about the poor communities (cf. La Rosa 2008b).

In the cases where the barrio is not represented directly by the inhabitants but rather outside reporters, using the counter-discourses could be justified even by appealing to the general news value and criteria. The different counter-discourses could be used to highlight the exceptional nature of the barrio in the same way as the discourse of *organization and empowerment* has done already. For example, the experiences of the outsider visitors could be represented as a novelty and something exceptional, and thus newsworthy, set against the prevailing worn-out representation of the barrios as insecure, excluded, and miserable. In any case, much effort will be needed since a historically rooted reputation changes slowly and, of course, there will be negative events to report on in the future as well, as in any part of the world. What would be most needed is a widening of the journalist perspective so that instead of publishing in haste superficial descriptions of the symptoms, they would take time to consider the wider socio-cultural surroundings of the issues. However, this seems impossible in the news world, which is based on competition of who gets the stories first printed. Furthermore, different political interests may lead to the conscious maintenance of the negative representations.



## 7. CONCLUSIONS

The results of the analysis of newspaper representations of the barrio “El 70” confirm the suggestions of the earlier research, according to which the poor and poverty, as well as crime and violence in general are represented in the media mostly through discriminatory representations. The dominant negative discourses of *gang violence and fear* and *exclusion and anarchy*, fortified by the discourse of *insoluble misery*, focus on the symptoms of poverty, such as the expressions of violence and crime, the deficient living conditions, or the different calamities the poor communities face. The community is represented through negative stereotypes by reducing them to their disadvantages, naturalizing their situation and problems, or representing them through a binary opposition between the deviant barrio and the formal city (cf. Hall 1997b). Following the propositions of Hall (ibid.) and Kivikuru (1998), I conclude that the difference of the barrio is marked in the media, creating a symbolical group of ‘us’, including the formal city and society, whereas the urban poor are seen as abnormal ‘them’, who are stigmatized as unsuitable and excluded by denying their access to formal society. However, “El 70” is also represented through a fairly strong positive discourse of *organization and empowerment* that disagrees with the negative discourses and with the earlier research.

Regarding the equality of the different voices heard in the media representation, it is remarkable that according to the content analysis almost half of the articles about or mentioning the case community do not cite the inhabitants or refer to information given by them. The discourse analysis also revealed that when the inhabitants are cited they are mostly used to describe their experiences and reactions, whereas the different authorities are used more as experts who present their opinions and analysis of the situation. This agrees with the earlier research about the identities and roles offered to different groups of society that are used as sources in the media (e.g. Fairclough 1997). This implies that the sources of information that best know their own situation are not always utilized, and when they are, their information is not valued as high as the opinions of the outsiders who belong to the more powerful groups of the society. By assigning the poor this kind of inferior role, their subordinate position is reproduced and maintained. It is worth noting, however, that the inhabitants are most cited and able to present their more evolved opinions in the discourse of *organization and empowerment*.

Through the references to or citations of the inhabitants, they are represented mostly as victims of different calamities or as gang members or other villains, but also as beneficiaries of or participants in the different development projects. Considering the identities of the different inhabitants it is notable that their representation follows the principles of the patriarchal ideology; the women and children of the barrio are given a more passive role as victims or beneficiaries, whereas the men are identified as active participants or perpetrators of violence. This dichotomy reproduces the subordination of women and children under the male dominance, which is particularly pronounced in the context of the macho culture that still prevails in Latin America and, specifically, Venezuela. This kind of representation does not reflect the important role that the women have in community organization and development, and it may contribute to work against the intentions to achieve gender equality, which actually is pronounced as an important goal of the current government<sup>26</sup>. At the same time, the representation of the male inhabitants as mostly villains exposes them to discrimination based on their gender as well. Thus the urban poor can be considered as objects of multiple forms of discrimination based on their condition of poverty and their residence, but also their gender.

Since the stereotypes of the dominant negative discourses are directed against the subordinate and already excluded groups, they are related to the inequalities of power in society, where normally only the powerful groups have the means to represent their meanings as true (cf. Hall 1997c, 49). Considering the questions of hegemony in media representation, the case of Venezuela is fairly particular. In Venezuela there currently exist two opposing hegemonies, that of the Chávez government and that of the so-called 'old money' elite, which forms the core of the political opposition to Chávez. Thus the battle over meaning is most visible between these two hegemonies, and not so much between the powerful and the subordinated classes of the society. The situation is even more particular, since the government claims to stand for the traditionally excluded poor, which are therefore somewhat included in the government hegemony, against the money elite that was favored for decades by the earlier governments. The government has also been supporting the access of the poor to a means to represent their meanings in the form of alternative and community media. The competition between these two hegemonic groups to produce social reality according to their advantage has led to the existence of two opposite social realities in Venezuela. These realities

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<sup>26</sup> The government of Venezuela established the *Ministry of People's Power for Women and Gender Equality* in 2009 to promote the participation of the women, to guarantee the gender rights and equality, and to eliminate the discrimination against women. Also various social programmes are launched to target women's needs specifically.

are put forward particularly through media used for political purposes (cf. Dugaro & Lezama 2005).

The criminalization of the urban poor or their representation as permanently excluded, powerless, and passive victims serves the interests of the more affluent classes of Venezuelan society. The poor are excluded from the social and political life of the society and thus the position of power of the affluent classes is secured. Classifying the urban poor mostly in the category of ‘undeserving poor’, also contributes to downplay society’s interests to support the poor and their development, leading to further discrimination and exclusion. This seems to agree with the neoliberal tendency to concentrate power within the capitalist elite and decrease the social support to the unprivileged sectors of the society. Therefore the discriminative representations can still be seen as based on the neoliberal discourse that prevailed in the 1990s. The elite need the problems of poverty to keep the poor disorganized and powerless to assure their own hegemonic position. In addition to leading to different kind of discriminatory practices against the poor, the stigmatizing representations may have also serious consequences when they implicitly support, for example, the use of repressive police force against the barrios. Regarding the direct relation between social exclusion and violence, further exclusion of the barrios could also lead to devastating consequences.

However, through the inclusive policies of the current government, the Venezuelan poor are not anymore fully excluded and powerless, rather, significant social and political inclusion and empowerment of the poor has been achieved. This is reflected in the representation of “El 70” through the discourse of *organization and empowerment* that is present in the newspapers throughout the political lines. Even though the representation of the positive achievements of the government would not necessarily serve the interests of the opposition, to maintain their credibility the opposition media cannot merely ignore them. Furthermore, now that the lower classes have become more organized and important political actors in Venezuela, the opposition needs their votes and downplaying the poor in the media would not help to achieve their political support. Nevertheless, this may also imply that the private media is not that politicized and partial as is assumed, or that they support some of the poverty reduction activities of the government, even though they would not agree with the rest of its policies.

Thus, even though the negative discourses dominate, the representation is in the end twofold; in addition to identifying them with violence, insecurity, exclusion, and misery the poor are also represented as collaborative, organized and capable to implement their own development, particularly when it has the support of formal society. The traditional lines of exclusion are

deconstructed and the barrios are brought closer to the formal city and society. This kind of representation offers possibilities to support further empowerment of the poor. Even though the positive discourse and the different counter-discourses are not dominant, they create a basis for a new kind of representation of poverty; they can be used to either reverse the negative meanings or strengthen the positive ones to balance the representation (cf. Hall 1997b). This way, the negative stereotypes could be at least partly deconstructed to weaken the basis for discrimination. This could diminish the exclusion by representing the poor more as part of 'us' and not so much as a deviant 'other', creating a foundation for the equal treatment of the poor.

Even though strong and contrasting discourses were identified in the data, the articles are normally not covered uniformly by one dominant discourse at a time. Particularly the discourse of *organization and empowerment* is often accompanied by the negative discourses of *gang violence and fear*, *exclusion and anarchy* or *insoluble misery*. When this is considered in the context of the social and political changes that have taken place in the Venezuelan society during the last decade, it can be argued, leaning on the proposition of Fairclough (1997, 83), that the multiform and contradictory media texts reflect the unstable and changeable socio-cultural practices of the Venezuelan society. The empowerment of the poor has not erased the problems of poverty, exclusion, and insecurity, but it has fostered the development and created possibilities for change. This empowerment breaks with the perception of the poor as only dangerous, passive and/or excluded, but these deeply rooted negative stereotypes still prevail and are brought up along with the new representations.

The representation of the poor as partially organized and empowered is in contrast with the earlier research. It also breaks with the theoretical assumptions of hegemony and representation of 'otherness', which suggest that the subordinated groups of the society are represented merely through negative stereotypes that reproduce their exclusion (see e.g. Hall 1997b; 1997c). The exceptional representation cannot be explained by the pro-poor discourse of the government, since only two of the articles that represent this positive discourse are from government newspapers. This implies that the representation of the subordinated groups of the society, at least in the Venezuelan private press, may not be as uniformly negative as would be expected. In the Venezuelan context I would argue that this is because of the real empowerment of the poor that is either appreciated or cannot be ignored by the private media. However, the case of the barrio "El 70" may also be an exception for having a level of organization and development that may not have been achieved in many other barrios. This is also supported by the results of the content analysis, which suggest that

the representation of “El 70” may be more positive than the general representation of poverty in the Venezuelan media, when compared to the earlier research.

Even though the results of this research are mostly limited to the Venezuelan context, the discussion about the dominantly negative media representation of the poor and poverty can be brought to a wider level. The poor of developing countries can be seen as objects of a certain double discrimination by the media. The media of the developed world tend to represent the developing countries from a negative perspective. In addition to presidential elections or other highly important events related to the elite of the developing world, only the exceptionally negative incidents, such as war, violent riots, natural disasters, and catastrophic accidents tend to pass the news criteria for having certain shock value. As it is normally the poor who suffer most of these disasters, they are put on the stage. However, they are not protagonists, but victims of different disasters. Thus it is actually the same poor that are represented in the national and the international media, where they are again reduced to their disadvantages and represented through negative stereotypes. A good example of this is the representation of the situation of violence and insecurity of Venezuela in the international media that concentrates on the suffering of the Venezuelan urban poor (e.g. Ulkolinja 2012; Romero 2010).

At the global level, this kind of representation of poverty may reproduce the exclusion of developing countries as they are seen as permanently disastrous, without possibilities for change, and thus cannot be considered as important actors in the global negotiations of money and power. Hence, this kind of representation of the developing world may also have political reasons in the global world order where the powerful parties benefit from maintaining the prevailing dichotomy. Also at the global level, a symbolic group of ‘us’ is created across the borders of the hegemonic developed world, excluding ‘them’, the developing countries, which do not live up to the expectations of the global economy.

## 8. DISCUSSION

The theoretical-methodological tools used in this research proved to be appropriate to solve the research problem. This research has shown that relating the text analysis of the media representations of poverty within the wider context of the society where they are produced helps to understand and explain the meanings that are put forward in the media. Furthermore, the power related discourse analysis has offered a means to look further to the reasons that may have motivated the different representations. By approaching the questions of discrimination in the media representation of poverty through the analysis of the newspaper articles about one particular poor urban community, this research has allowed a more profound contextual consideration of the data than would be possible with only a wider approach. In addition to the general socio-cultural context of the Venezuelan society, the data has been analyzed in the immediate context of the particular community.

As my data is collected mostly from one of the private newspapers, *El Universal*, the results cannot be generalized to all the Venezuelan newspapers or the media in general. However, various articles of other newspapers were also included in the analysis, which proved that similar discourses are found across the newspapers and the positive discourses across the government and private newspapers. Also, as this research is focused on the newspaper representation of one case barrio, its results are not intended to be generalized to the media representation of wider urban poverty. Nevertheless, as the earlier research indicates that the media representation of poverty is mostly discriminatory in and outside of Venezuela, this allows some level of generalization, particularly regarding negative representations. The exceptional representation of “El 70” in a partly positive manner creates further challenges to the generalization of the results. However, the origins of this positive representation were shown through socio-cultural analysis, which allows concluding that this kind of representation is probably not restricted only to the case community, but also to other barrios that have reached the same kind of organization and empowerment and may be represented in a similar manner.

I have intended to increase the validity of this research in different ways. I have explained the situation that led me to select the particular barrio as my case community and how I decided on this

particular theme of the research. I have clarified the different choices made when searching for and selecting the data. The data is described in detail through different kinds of quantitative classifications, which have also supported the qualitative discourse analysis. The methods of critical discourse analysis used in the research are described in detail. I identified the discourses about the case community by looking at the data for repeating and axiomatic meanings. In addition, the logics that were used to define the discourses are proved with many citations of the articles that are also listed in the annex so that the original texts can be looked for and revised.

I have had different challenges conducting this research, of which the most time consuming was the analysis of the data and the reporting of the results between two foreign languages. The original data is in Spanish, which in itself required plenty of time to find out the different nuances that are put forward in the texts. I translated the citations of the data in English to make the report more readable. The translation was a fairly slow process, since for the discourse analysis it was important to maintain the meanings and the connotations of the words and expressions as close as possible to the original text. In the translations, I favored the maintenance of the meaning and original structure at the expense of the fluency of the English translation. This sometimes required the use of three different dictionaries for the translation of one word, when some expressions were not translatable directly, but also some thinking in Finnish was required in between. Doing detailed discourse analysis in a foreign language and in the context of foreign culture also poses a risk that some cultural connotations and nuances are lost in the process. I do, however, consider that the translation of the citations in English have also helped me to catch these nuances, since the texts had to be considered very much in detail, word by word. Also, my four years' experience of Venezuelan Spanish and the culture in general has eased the process of interpretation.

The data proved to be very rich for the socio-cultural interpretations. However, the complex and conflictive situation of Venezuelan society created many challenges for the interpretations. The existence of two hegemonic and competing social realities in the country has complicated the location of the text in its social context, since there is not only one hegemonic truth to compare the results with. At the same time, this implies the high importance of the media in constructing these realities, which makes the analysis of the Venezuelan media texts even more relevant. However, the data of this research did not allow for conclusions about the differences between the representations produced by the two hegemonies, since the data includes only two articles from the government newspapers that most clearly represent the government hegemony.

If these two articles of the government newspapers would have been left out of the data, I could have limited this research formally in the analysis of the representation of the case community in the private newspapers. However, as the aim of the research was to analyze the representation of the community in the newspapers in general, defining the common discourses across the different newspapers, and not according to the editorial lines or the ownership of the different newspapers, this was not seen as necessary. Concentrating the research only on the private newspapers would have affected the research problem and led the research from the beginning towards the politics in Venezuela. Now the possible political interests behind the different discourses were revealed through the analysis that was also open to other kind of interpretations. In the end, this research can be considered to represent the view of the private newspapers, since the two articles from the government newspapers do not skew the data significantly, even though both of them represent the positive discourse.

What is my own position as a researcher in all this? The research problem and the earlier research created a clear expectation for finding negative and discriminatory discourses about the case community, which in the end proved to dominate the data. However, the results show that this has not affected the objectivity of the research since positive counter-discourses were also identified. Regarding my researcher position in the context of the politically polarized Venezuelan society, I consider that my status as a foreigner is an advantage. I am an outsider who does not need to conceptualize or express any political stand or choose any side in Venezuela, which increases the objectivity of the research. For the local researchers, their more personal and profound experience of the situation could easily hinder objective thinking and create pressure to emphasize certain results and explanations.

Analyzing the discourses of the inhabitants of “El 70” about themselves and their barrio, and comparing this with the dominant media discourses, could complement this research. This would be useful to specifically define possible alternative discourses, and the ways in which the negative discourses could be debilitated. It would also finally give a voice to the poor themselves. It would also be relevant to widen the data to include other barrios of Caracas and Venezuela to see, for example, whether other communities are represented partly through positive representations. This could be done through a content analysis of the newspaper articles, which would allow the analysis of a larger amount of data. This content analysis could be planned based on the results of the more detailed discourse analysis of this research. The results of this research also show that there may be strong political interests behind the different representations of the barrios. Further research would



be needed to compare how newspapers with different political positions represent the barrios. This would also allow the comparison between private and governmental newspapers, and the consideration of whether and how the two hegemonies are reflected in the data. Here it must be noted, however, that the editorial lines of the private newspapers differ significantly from Right to Left and it cannot be claimed that all of them endorse the ideologies of the old money elite, even though they would be critical of or in opposition to the government.

In the analysis of the representations produced by the government newspapers it would be specifically important to consider whether the government, whose politics prefer the poorest classes of the society, represent the poor as active and capable citizens or just as beneficiaries of the government projects. Are the independent voices of the poor heard in the government media? Are the poor allowed to express themselves freely or is criticism of the government not permitted? When the government claims to speak for the subordinated classes, does it really strive to improve the status of the poor or just to maintain its own hegemonic position? Whose meanings are put forward; is it the discourse of the poor or the political discourse of the government that is tried to make prevailing to govern the society?

These questions are tied to the considerations of whether the Venezuelan poor can really freely pursue the development they themselves desire or whether they are forced by the government in the structures that lead them to the way the government desires. The Venezuelan poor have had their voices heard in the forums of participant democracy, and also in the numerous national elections where the popular masses have expressed their political will. To gain the support of the government, the poor however need to use the politicized channels of the socialist government and the government uses the high participation of the masses in its social programmes to show its wide political support. As its support comes particularly from the lower classes of the society, to maintain its position as a legitimate representative of the poor, the government needs to show the results of its socialist policies that benefit the poor. However, the government may also benefit from some of the poverty problems to remain at a certain level of discontent so that the socialist government is still seen as useful to the poor.

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#### Interviews and personal communications:

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Community representative of "El 70". 15.12.2008. Personal communication.

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Inhabitants of "El 70". 2.10.2009. Personal communication

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#### Participant observation:

15.12.2008. Meeting of the community council Las Terrazas of "El 70". Participant observation

6.10.2009. Press conference in "El 70". Participant observation. Recorded.

## APPENDICES

### Research data

The articles about “El 70” in the electronic version of *El Universal* 2007–2010:

22.4.2007	En Venezuela han asesinado a casi tanta gente como en Irak
28.4.2007	Balean a testigo de homicidios a la puerta de tribunales tuyeros
2.5.2007	En el Valle hay siete “zonas de guerra”
21.5.2007	El 70 recibió al teleférico teatral
14.7.2007	La ciudad entera celebrará la fecha de los más pequeños
30.3.2008	Calle del sector las Brisas tiene tres años derrumbada
21.5.2008	Vecinos de El Valle lincharon y quemaron a un azote de barrio
8.6.2008	Barrio El 70 de El Cementerio sufre la lucha entre hampones
2.8.2008	Sistema orquestal endógeno tocará en Sabana Grande
31.8.2008	Doctor Yaso sembró risas en el barrio El 70 de El valle
15.10.2008	Plagiaron a chofer y lo dejaron morir en parte de atrás de su jeep
12.11.2008	“Venceremos la resignación y acabaremos con la inseguridad”
8.1.2009	“Yo pude haberme equivocado mucho, pero no soy un ladrón”
16.2.2009	Cerro arriba prefirieron cumplir temprano
29.4.2009	Los barrios aún aguardan por una rehabilitación integral
21.6.2009	La Caracas de...Elia Schneider
15.9.2009	Lodo, barro y miedo quedaron en la capital tras el fin de semana
24.9.2009	“Buscaban a mi hijo y los masacraron”
25.9.2009	La matanza de El Valle comenzó como enfrentamiento de bandas
9.10.2009	Abatidos dos azotes en enfrentamientos con la PM y el Cicpc
26.10.2009	El racionamiento es noticia vieja
25.11.2009	Con helicópteros y operativo buscan a asesinos de Disip
26.11.2009	Abatidos en el Tuy presuntos homicidas de subinspector de la Disip
4.12.2009a	Abatido en Catia el octavo homicida de dos funcionarios
4.12.2009b	Abatido en un tiroteo presunto homicida de un policía en Coche
11.1.2010	Anuncio de racionamiento eléctrico cayó muy mal en las comunidades
31.1.2010	El cable se multiplica en sectores populares
9.3.2010	En El 70 se hicieron 45 viviendas en los últimos cinco meses
15.3.2010	Un modelo de injusticia
18.3.2010	Desde hace tres años el aseo urbano no sube hasta la parte alta de El 70
19.4.2010	Película rodada en barrio el 70 quiere llegar a la pantalla grande
24.4.2010	También el barrio mira la ciudad
6.5.2010	Vecinos de El 70 piden que coloquen contenedores
29.5.2010	Rivalidad en dos barrios mantiene a vecinos en vilo
3.6.2010	Gobierno promete entregar más de 150 viviendas a comunidad de El Valle
1.8.2010	Stalin Gonzalez: Si la AN fuera plural abordaría tema de la impunidad
17.8.2010	Le pido a Díos que no pase nada
23.8.2010	La cultura cambió la vida de los habitantes del barrio El 70
9.10.2010	Barrio El 70 y La Vega serán escenarios de obras de teatro
30.11.2010a	Emergencias en Caracas
30.11.2010b	Emergencia en El Valle
1.12.2010	En el barrio El 70 los damnificados viven en casas de algunos vecinos

The articles about “El 70” in the news collection of the community representative:

*Ciudad Caracas:*

2.10.2009<sup>27</sup> Panadería comunal en el barrio El 70 de El Valle  
21.1.2010<sup>28</sup> El 70 de El Valle sustituyó ranchos por viviendas  
10.2.2010<sup>29</sup> Organización activada en El Valle  
8.10.2010 Teleférico teatral subirá mañana al barrio El 70

*El Nacional:*

18.7.2008 La comedia trepa los cerros del barrio El 70  
24.9.2009 “Mi hijo no era un santo, pero allí mataron malandros y también inocentes”  
12.7.2010 23 casas para el barrio El 70

*El Universal:*

18.7.2008 La ideología y el teatro subirán al barrio “El 70” en teleférico  
7.9.2008 “Si buscamos una institución cuesta que den respuesta”  
24.9.2009<sup>30</sup> “Buscaban a mi hijo y los masacraron”

*La Voz:*

29.9.2009a “Allá bajo manda el Gobierno, pero aquí arriba mandamos nosotros”  
29.9.2009b Cuando los papagayos no son juegos de niños

*La Voz del Valle:*

March 2009<sup>31</sup> Consejos comunales se reúnen para solucionar problemas del colectivo

*Todos adentro:*

30.1.2010 Estrellas ¿dónde están?

*Últimas Noticias:*

24.9.2009 Diez muertos fue el saldo de tiroteo en El Valle  
28.9.–2.10.2009 Bandas de El Valle amenazan a la PM  
3.10.2009<sup>32</sup> En Santa Rosalía mandan 100 azotes  
11.10.2009 La organización se impone en El 70  
28.10.2009 Ejecutan obras en barriadas  
8.10.2010 El barrio El 70 se convirtió en teatro  
17.10.2010 El teatro abre puertas en El 70 de El Valle

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<sup>27</sup> Written by the community leader. Not included in the analysis.

<sup>28</sup> Written by the community leader. Not included in the analysis.

<sup>29</sup> The barrio “El 70” is not mentioned in the article. Not included in the analysis.

<sup>30</sup> The article is found also in the data of El Universal. Not included in the analysis.

<sup>31</sup> The barrio “El 70” is not mentioned in the article. Not included in the analysis.

<sup>32</sup> The “barrio El 70” is not mentioned in the article. Not included in the analysis.