

Metaphors, metonymies and empathy in focal groups talk about urban violence in Brazil: a dynamic discourse approach

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Abstract: Responses to urban violence in Brazil are investigated through metaphors and metonymies used in focus group discussions. Perceptions of violence are understood in terms of the complex dynamics of social life as people try to cope with the uncertainties brought about by the escalating of acts of violence in their cities. Data come from the talk of participants in two focus groups in the Brazilian cities of Fortaleza and Belo Horizonte. Attention is paid to *SOCIAL LANDSCAPE* and *CONTAINER* metaphors through which people express ideas and feelings regarding their personal experiences as victims of violence and show empathy towards their assailants. Among other findings, the analyses allowed us to verify the presence of the *INSIDE-OUTSIDE* metonymy, in which *INSIDE* comes to stand for safety, and *OUTSIDE* for threat and risk, and the *SOCIAL LANDSCAPE* metaphor in both groups, as participants expressed feelings of security/insecurity.

Keywords: Metaphor. Discourse. Systematic metaphor. Systematic metonymy. Urban violence.

Resumo: Respostas à violência urbana no Brasil são investigadas através de metáforas e metonímias utilizadas em discussões em grupos focais. Percepções sobre violência são entendidas em termos das dinâmicas complexas da vida social, à medida que as pessoas tentam lidar com as incertezas que surgem com a escalada dos atos de violência em suas cidades. Os dados emergem da fala de participantes de dois grupos focais nas cidades brasileiras de Fortaleza e Belo Horizonte. É dada atenção as metáforas *SOCIAL LANDSCAPE* e *CONTAINER* por meio das quais as pessoas expressam ideias e sentimentos, considerando suas experiências pessoais como

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vítimas de violência e mostram empatia com relação a seus agressores. Entre outros achados, as análises permitem-nos verificar a presença da metonímia *INSIDE-OUTSIDE*, em que *INSIDE* representa segurança, *OUTSIDE*, ameaça e risco, e a metáfora *SOCIAL LANDSCAPE*, em ambos os grupos, como os participantes expressam sentimentos de segurança/insegurança.

Palavras-chave: Metáfora. Discurso. Metáforas sistemáticas. Metonímias sistemáticas. Violência urbana.

Resumen: Respuestas a la violencia urbana em Brasil son investigadas a través de metáforas y metonímias utilizadas em discusiones em grupos focales. Percepciones sobre la violnecia son entendidas em términos de las dinámicas complexas de la vida social, a la medida en que las personas intentan lidiar con las incertidumbres que surgen con la escalada de los actos violentos en sus ciudades. Los datos emergen del habla de los participantes de dos grupos focales en las ciudades brasilenas de Fortaleza y Belo Horizonte. Enfocamos las metáforas *PAISAGE SOCIAL* y *CONTAINER* por medio de las cuales las personas expresan ideas y sentimeientos, considerando sus experiencias personales como vícttimas de la violencia y demuestran empa'tia con relacion a sus agresores. Entre otros hallazgos, los análisis nos permiten verificar la presencia de la metonimia *DENTRO-FUERA*, en que *DENTRO* representa seguridad, *FUERA*, amenaza y riesgo, y la metáfora *PAISAGE SOCIAL*, en ambos los grupos, como los participan es expresan sentimientos de seguridad/inseguridad.

Palabras-clave: Metáfora. Discurso. Metáforas sistemáticas. Metonímias sistemáticas. Violencia urbana.

Introduction

This paper focuses on metaphors and metonymies used by people when talking about their experiences of violence in urban areas of Brazil. It starts from the assumption that metaphor and metonymy play an important role in constructing and reflecting people's emotions and understandings, and can therefore provide insights into how direct and indirect⁵ experiences of violence are incorporated into everyday living. A discourse dynamics approach is adopted in identifying and analyzing

⁵ The expression "indirect victims of violence" here refers to individuals who although may not have been victims of violence acts directly performed on them are, in one way or another, involved with other persons who suffered directly from violence such as relatives, spouses, children, friends etc.

metaphors and metonymies used and negotiated in discourse activity (CAMERON et al., 2009; CAMERON; MASLEN, 2010). We search for sets of related verbal metaphors used over the course of a discourse event, called systematic metaphors (CAMERON et al., 2009) and introduce the parallel notion of ‘systematic metonymy’. We show how certain systematic metaphors and metonymies emerge from the verbal interaction as framing key ideas, attitudes and values around the topic of urban violence.

Perceptions of violence are understood in terms of complex dynamics of social life as people living in urban Brazil try to cope with the uncertainties brought about by widespread acts of violence, including muggings, kidnapping and theft. In this regard, we are interested both in analyzing how research participants use metaphors and metonymies to express how violence changed their lives and how they show empathy,⁶ or resist such feelings, toward perpetrators of violence. Special attention is paid to systematic metaphors which link to the conceptualization of society as *LANDSCAPE* and *CONTAINER*. As Cameron’s findings from UK data showed:

In the *LANDSCAPE* metaphor, society is seen as composed of groups co-located in a landscape: physical positioning represents social positioning and events, and the distance between groups stands for the degree of connection between them. Social groups and their geographical places are talked of as “*CONTAINERS*”, with prepositions “*in*”, “*over*”, “*into*”, “*out of*” etc, contributing to these metaphorical conceptualizations. (CAMERON, 2010b, p. 606)

⁶ Empathy is understood as the attitude of “trying to imagine a view of the world one does not share, and in fact may find it quite hard to share” (HELPER; WEINSTEIN, 2004, p. 581).

The analysis centres on data gathered from a focus group in Fortaleza, Ceara, Brazil,⁷ complemented by data gathered from a focus group in Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais, Brazil.⁸ Our choice of cities was partly motivated by the fact that urban violence is rampant in both places, which occupy the 7th and 44th positions in the ranking of the world's most violent 50 cities.⁹

The data analyses contribute to deepening understanding of how people respond to living in a situation with high levels of urban violence, their beliefs and feelings regarding acts of violence and perpetrators of violence. We hope that, in the long run, findings may contribute to improving social policies for managing the phenomenon of urban violence.

The next sections will contextualize the research which gave rise to this paper (Section 2), present some information on the theoretical assumptions which support the research (Section 3) and set out procedures for data collection, transcription and analysis (Section 4).

Research background and questions

This paper results from a project entitled *Living with Uncertainty: Metaphor and the dynamics of empathy in discourse*, (PI, Professor

⁷ Partial results, exploring different data from these corpora, have been published (e.g., FELTES; PELOSI; FERREIRA, 2012; CAMERON; PELOSI; FELTES, 2014; PELOSI; FELTES; CAMERON, 2014).

⁸ Project "Metaphor and urban violence in Minas Gerais, Brazil", grant visiting professor CAPES-FULBRIGHT 2013 for a research stay at University of California, Santa Cruz; project "Metaphor, cognition and culture: a study on the conceptualization of urban violence in Belo Horizonte", grant PROBIC/ PIBIC FAPEMIG in 2012.

⁹ This ranking was publicized by the Citizen's Council for Public Security and Penal Justice, a Mexican governmental organization. <http://www.tolucanoticias.com/2014/01/conoce-las-50-ciudades-mas-violentas.html> (Date of retrieval 11/09/2014).

Lynne Cameron).¹⁰ The project developed a model of empathy in situations affected by violence and conflict. In the UK, studies examined the effects of terrorism on people's everyday lives, their feelings and emotions, and how this impacts on the ways they show or resist empathy towards perpetrators of such acts. A sub-project *Metaphor, Empathy and the Threat of Urban Violence in Brazil*, was carried out as part of an international partnership between the Open University, Milton Keynes, United Kingdom, the Federal University of Ceara, Brazil, and The University of Caxias do Sul, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. This sub-project was also linked to the *Interdisciplinary project on social cognitive representations in the conceptualization of violence in urban Brazilian centres*, both coordinated by the paper's first author, and was concerned with understanding how people live with the increased risks posed by the escalation of violence in urban Brazil. We investigated conceptualizations of violence and feelings of (in)security brought about by violence.

The research questions which guided our research are as follows: How do people talk about the impact on their everyday lives of urban violence? How do they use metaphor and metonymies to express their feelings of the situations they have to contend with? Do they show or

¹⁰ The idea to research on the language used to talk about violence sprang from a broader call entitled *Global Uncertainties: Security for all in a changing world* released in 2008 by the UK Economics and Social Research Council (ESRC) to bring together researchers from a variety of disciplines including social sciences, linguistics, psychology, anthropology, neuroscience, computer science, to contribute to a better understanding of the risks posed by the increasing number of violence acts taking place in several parts of the world.

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resist empathy towards perpetrators of violence in their discourse? They will be addressed in section 4 of this paper.

Metaphor and metonymy as dynamic discursive-cognitive phenomena

We believe that metaphor is a means through which emotions, attitudes, beliefs and values can be constructed dynamically during talk and interaction. Therefore, rather than working with 'conceptual metaphors' as fixed bi-dimensional mappings between cognitive domains (LAKOFF; JOHNSON, 1980), we work with systematic verbal metaphors¹² which emerge from discourse activity and are both discursive and cognitive, influenced by factors including the discourse context, linguistic constraints, cultural and bodily factors. The discourse dynamic view of metaphor sees dialogic activity as an unfolding complex dynamic system. A complex system is composed of many agents or elements which interact dynamically by means of many different relations and connections. Complex systems are not linear or closed, self-contained systems. They are constantly changing, adapting and evolving by means of dynamic interactions between external and internal agents to the system. Such instability, peculiar to any complex system, will allow for change which may lead to the emergence of new phenomena. Under such a view, a systematic verbal metaphor, as a set

¹² Different from conceptual metaphors which are understood as fixed conceptual mappings which license metaphoric linguistic expressions in a top-down manner (i.e. from cognition to discourse), systematic metaphors emerge from the analysis of connected metaphor-vehicles (or, verbal metaphors) across a discourse event. Systematic metaphors as well as systematic metonymies are written in *SMALL ITALIC CAPITALS*.

of related verbal metaphors used over the course of a discourse event, emerges as a provisional and situated phenomenon, a temporary stabilisation in the discourse event¹³ (CAMERON; MASLEN, 2010; GIBBS; CAMERON, 2008). Systematic metaphors belong to a specific discourse event. They may or may not appear in another discourse event which takes place on a different occasion. When they do appear in a different discourse event, this may signal the emergence of a metaphorical mapping at a socio-cultural level (CAMERON; DEIGNAN, 2006), and the spreading of verbal metaphors may be of interest (e.g. as promoted through the media).

A metonymy is said to occur in the discourse when a cognitive entity is connected to another due to an association by contiguity. In many cases, metonymies and metaphors connect in a continuum (GOOSSENS, 2003), so that the vehicle of a metaphor is motivated by a previous metonymical process and vice-versa. Place or location metonymies, when an event is associated to the place in which it occurs, are frequent in the data. Cameron (2010) reported metaphors with a place-metonymic sense, as when a social group who live in a given physical location or certain town areas come to be connected to these places, and people adjust their views of the places to the social groups and vice-versa. Another example is the *INSIDE-OUT* connection we discuss in this paper. Metonymically, when someone refers to the fact that he/she is forced to stay inside a building because of the fear of becoming a victim of violence, the outside is metonymically connected

¹³ A discourse event is understood as the occasion and time period during which interlocutors engage in conversation about a given theme. In the present research, for example, the theme was violence practiced in urban Brazilian centres.

with violence, and the inside with security¹⁴. Thus, any demarcation between metaphors and metonymies in the present work will be a result of the analytical purposes which guide the discussion.

Methodology: Participants and data collection

Data was collected from a structured focus group discussion on urban violence and the impact that the predominance of violence has caused in people's everyday lives. Participants were 6 university students (2 women and 4 men), aged between 17 and 43 years, studying undergraduate and postgraduate courses at a private college in Fortaleza, Ceara, a large fast-growing coastal city located in the northeast of Brazil. Although the focus of the study is to analyze metaphors and metonymies present in the talk of these participants, some comparisons will be made with data collected from participants of another focal group in Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais, Brazil, composed of 13 participants (10 women and 3 men) with ages varying from 18 to 40 years. They were all undergraduate students at UFMG (Federal University of Minas Gerais). The focus groups are here identified as follows: Group A (group from Fortaleza-Ceará) and Group B (group from Belo Horizonte-Minas Gerais). Participants in both groups belonged to the Brazilian middle social economic class. Since only one social economic class is included, the two groups of participants could

¹⁴ The *INSIDE-OUTSIDE* metonymy found in the data were signalled by expressions such as "...For me it is the fear of being out in the streets...of being far from the windows and the gates of my apartment", or, "... when you stop at the traffic light, you are afraid of having your car windows open, right? ..., you don't open your car window because ..., because you are afraid" used by some of the participants to report on how they felt insecure when out in the streets.

not be compared as regards this variable.

The transcribed data amounting to 20789 words was subjected to metaphor-led discourse analysis (CAMERON et al. 2009; CAMERON; MASLEN, 2010). Atlas.ti, a multimedia qualitative analysis software, was used to facilitate the coding and analysis of metaphors and metonymies. Once uploaded in Atlas.ti, all transcriptions were completely read and possible key themes, or discourse topics, were noted. The overall reading of the documents and identification of key discourse topics allowed for an understanding of the discourse event structure. The next step was to break the whole discourse event into segments (lines), as entonational units, and describe what was happening in each (CAMERON, 2010). A thematic analysis was then performed. As a first step, key discourse topics were identified and labelled. Next, sections of talk related to each of the key discourse topics were coded. Metaphor vehicles were identified and grouped into specific families. Identification of metaphor vehicles followed an adapted version of the MIP (Metaphor Identification Procedure) (PRAGGLEJAZ, 2007), which considers metaphorical any different or incongruous contextual use of a term which differs from its more basic, more concrete meaning. In line with Cameron (2010), Cameron and Deignan (2006), Cameron, Low and Marslen (2010), we considered not only words but phrases or clauses as potential metaphor vehicles. This was necessary since an "individual word is not always a unit of talking-and-thinking but that units might be words or phrases of varying lengths, often formulaic to some degree." (CAMERON, 2010, p. 593). We adopted a top-down as well as a bottom-up procedure in proposing a number of metaphors and metonymies in the discourse of the Brazilian participants and then linking to themes across the discourse

event, in order to identify the trajectories of possible metaphors and metonymies.

Individual verbal metaphors and metonymies (i.e. metaphor vehicles and metonymy vehicles) were collected together into family groups (for example: *SEEING* metaphors/metonymies; *BALANCE* metaphors/metonymies) to find systematic patterns. Systematic metaphors and metonymies used to frame key topics were identified as 'framing metaphors/metonymies'. Evidence of empathy or lack of it was also collected and analyzed.¹⁵

The next section reports analyses and results obtained from the collected data. Analyses and results are presented as follows: Excerpts from the participants' talk in Brazilian Portuguese, the language they were produced, are included in numbered lines. English translations, which are kept as close to the original lines in Portuguese as possible, are provided. The translation appears in brackets in one sole block and occupies one numbered line. In the text, citations of the talk lines under analysis, so that readers in general can follow the analyses and comments, are followed by the corresponding line in English. These appear in brackets.

¹⁵ For space limitations and to avoid repetition, details of procedures are not included here. However, a detailed step by step description of the procedure utilized in Metaphor-Led Discourse Analysis is published in Cameron et al. (2009). The procedure utilized in this research followed the steps presented in the papers *Metaphorizing violence in the UK and Brazil: A discourse dynamics analysis* (2014) and *Urban violence in Brazil and the role of the media: Communicative effects of systematic metaphors in discourse* (2014). These works are listed in the reference section in the end of this paper.

Analyses and results

From the total of 1125 lines of transcribed talk fed into Atlas.ti from Groups A and B and analysed in this paper, 204 lines were systematically highlighted and extracted from the discourse dynamics in order to, by sampling, emphasize discourse topics which emerge in the interaction between the participants and by the moderator's interventions. These were not previously analyzed in other publications and provide more direct answers to the research questions raised in section 1.

Group A

The presence of the *INSIDE-OUTSIDE* metonymy, by means of which *SECURITY-INSECURITY* can be typically correlated, appears in Group A, following an intervention by the moderator. In Antonio's talk, shown below in extract 1, to keep safe is to remain in prison (l. 58-59), "viver (...) em cárcere privado" ["to live under house arrest"]. In order to feel safe, the population need to *RETREAT INTO THEIR HOUSES*, as if heeding a "toque de recolher" (l. 62) ["curfew"]. In such a discursive perspective, a "rua" [the "street"] (l. 69), metonymically represents the, *URBAN* what is *OUTSIDE* represents exposure to the potential violence which is present there; and a "casa [the "house"] (l. 70), the place where, supposedly, urban violence is absent.

Moderator:

51. Se as pessoas estão agindo de uma maneira mais sensata,
se existem pessoas fazendo isso.

52. [If people are acting in a reasonable way, if they are doing
that.]

Antonio:

53. Se você pergunta isso em relação
54. ...a como as pessoas reagem diante dos problemas
55. ...acredito que sim
56. ...se nos considerarmos
57. por exemplo
58. viver como a gente falou anteriormente
59. em cárcere privado
60. se trancar numa nação de atitudes sensatas
61. ...ou alguém que não saia fora de casa <X...X>
62. a gente tem toque de recolher
63. ..né
64. ...A gente assim,
65. não tem um sino que soa
66. e a policia fica fazendo
67. <X...X> casa
68. ..mas tem um toque de recolher até determinada hora
69. ..a gente pode ficar na rua
70. ..depois volta pra casa
71. ..Então
72. ..sim sim a sensatez está
73. ..em como se reage nessa coisa de se privar de se trancar
talvez sim

[If you ask me about how people react to their problems, I'd say yes, if we consider that we live in a prison, for example, as it was said before, to lock yourself in a nation of reasonable attitudes or someone who goes out <X...X>, we have a curfew, right? I mean, we don't have a bell that the police ring <X...X>, but we have a curfew, until a certain time, we stay out in the streets, then we go back home. So, yes, the reasonableness is how we react, locking ourselves, maybe yes.]¹⁶

¹⁶ At the end of each corpus fragment analyzed, we include a colloquial English translation of the talk produced by the focus groups participants. These have the sole purpose of giving English language readers a close notion of what was said by the Brazilian Portuguese speakers during their verbal interactions. Since the analyses are focused on the content of the talk produced in the Portuguese language, we do not give these translations any special graphic highlight.

Following up in the discussion, Susan (l. 101-130) presents a wider view point on *AGENTS OF VIOLENCE*. For her, *URBAN VIOLENCE* also happens on the road, in circumstances where any person can become an *AGENT OF VIOLENCE*. “(...) no trânsito/quando você está dirigindo/quando você entra no carro/(...) você pode ser a pessoa mais tranquila do mundo/(...) você se transforma/você é capaz de passar por cima de qualquer um”; [“(...) in the traffic when you are driving/when you get into the car (...) you can be the calmest person in the world/(...) you are transformed/you can run anybody over”] (l. 104-111).

Susan, thus, highlights in her talk a type of violence (l. 123): traffic violence, in which the *CAR* is metaphorically transformed in a *WEAPON* or *INSTRUMENT* to carry out violent acts. The pronoun “você” [“you”] (l. 105-111) indicates that anyone can be potentially in this situation. The idea that people can use a car as an instrument of violence gives support to the understanding of everyday life by means of the *SOCIAL LANDSCAPE* metaphor, in the sense that given certain scenarios, one can assume both the *AGENT OF VIOLENCE* position or the *VICTIM OF VIOLENCE* position (“dependendo do lado da violência que você esteja”, l. 112) [“depending on which side of violence you are on”]. In these hypothetical scenarios, the metaphor *UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING* is contrasted with *BECOMING BLIND* (“(...) é aquele que acaba cometendo a violência/você está completamente cego”, l. 116-117) [“(...) the one that ends up committing violence/you are completely blind”]. This way, people in general can potentially lose sensitivity and be violent in the traffic “atropelando” (l. 121) [“running people over”], “cortando carros” (l. 121) [“cutting off other drivers”], in a way that puts other people’s lives at risk.

Susan:

101. Eu acho que depende da posição que você está
102. ..Porque a violência urbana não é apenas
103. alguém vir e te assaltar
104. ..digamos no trânsito
105. quando você está dirigindo
106. ..quando você entra no carro
107. você senta ali
108. você pode ser a pessoa mais tranquila do mundo
109. você entra ali
110. você se transforma
111. você é capaz de passar por cima de qualquer um..,
112. dependendo do lado da violência que você esteja
113. ..se você é aquele que sofre a violência,
114. você vai fazer de tudo pra agir com sensatez
115. ..mas se fosse
116. é aquele que acaba cometendo a violência
117. ..você está completamente cego
118. pela sua vontade de conseguir aquilo dali
119. ...Ou roubando uma pulseira ou um relógio
120. ..ou atropelando
121. ..cortando carros
122. ..ou tentando passar na frente de alguém na fila
123. ..isso é um tipo de violência

Further on in the talk, Susan introduces into the discussion one type of violence of which “qualquer um” [“anyone”] can potentially be an agent, confronting this type of violence to the violence attributed to “ladrões que vem pra te assaltar” (l. 125) [“thieves that come to rob you”]. In this case, the expression “comes to rob you” indicates a *SOURCE-TRAJECTORY-TARGET* movement, marked by the intentionality of

an agent in perpetrating the action and causing harm, having his anticipated victim as *TARGET*. However, in the situation reported by Susan, traffic violence, there is not an intentionality of hurting someone, but, *ABSENCE OF SENSITIVITY IS BLINDNESS AS* can cause as many victims or harm as intentional violence.

124. ..A gente tá muito acostumado a pensar na violência

125. como a questão do ladrão que vem pra te assaltar

126. ..mas tem esse outro lado também

127. Eu acho que depende

128. você é quem

129. Quem está sendo agredido

130. ou quem está cometendo

[I think it depends on the position you are in. Because urban violence is not only when someone comes to rob you, let's say in the traffic, for example, when you're driving, when you get into the car, you sit there, you may be the calmest person in the world, you are there, then you change, you are able to run over anyone, depending on the side of violence you are in, if you are the one who's suffering violence, you'll do whatever is possible to act reasonably, but if you're the one who's doing violence, you're completely blind by the desire of getting that thing. Robbing a bracelet, a watch or running over someone, cutting off other drivers irresponsibly, jumping the queue, these are kinds of violence. We are very much used to thinking of violence as the issue (li. question) of the thief that comes to rob you, but there's also this other side too. I think (lit. find) it depends on who you are. Who is being attacked or who's attacking.]

Susan's next lines reveal the *SOCIAL LANDSCAPE* metaphor once again. Her view point is that *SOCIETY IS A SPACE* and *GOVERNMENT IS INSIDE THIS SPACE*. By stating that the “governo é um reflexo da sociedade/a que aquele governo está inserido/Se a sociedade é violenta em vários aspectos (...)/ O governo (...) lá dentro eles vão ter algum tipo de violência” (l. 193-203) [“government is a reflex of society/the one in which that government is inserted/If the society is violent in various aspects (...)/the government (...) in there they are going to have some kind of violence”], Susan expresses with precision this conception of

inclusive space which is affected by violence, hitting right “lá dentro” (l. 202) [“inside”], government itself (l. 198-203). In this sense, violence hits even those who should provide security.

Susan:

185. Eu acredito que o governo faria e faz

186. ..ate porque tem que estar inserido

187. dentro de um plano que ele vai mostrar para alguém..,

188. ..se o governo

189. ..faz

190. agora a gente não sabe em primeiro lugar é a questão

191. ..de até quanto ele faz

192. ..porque também eu acredito

193. assim governo é um reflexo daquela sociedade

194. a que aquele governo está inserido

195. ..Se a sociedade é violenta em vários aspectos

196. ..por mais que aquelas pessoas que foram eleitas para dar uma segurança

197. ..não vão conseguir fazer muita coisa

198. ..O governo

199. ele não vem de um outro planeta pra tentar ajudar

200. ..então se aquelas pessoas que estão eleitas_

201. que vieram daquela sociedade violenta

202. La dentro eles vão

203. ..ter algum tipo de violência

204. ..por mais que eles tenham planejamentos

205. ..planos cursos etc

206. ..que seja pra melhorar a situação de vida,

207. fazer tem que fazer dentro de uma proposta de eleição

[I think the government would do and it does, because it must be in (lit. inserted) a plan which it is going to show someone, well if the government does something, we don't know, in first place, the question is until how much it can do with, because, I also think the government is a reflex of that society. If the society is violent in several aspects, even though some people were elected to provide safety, they won't be able to do much. The

government. They do not come from another planet trying to help, so, if these people are elected, people who come from a violent society, there they will have some type of violence, even if they have plans, courses etc. to improve welfare, if it has to be done, it has to be shown in an election campaign.]

What happens next is that Antonio takes the turn and complements Susan's point of view, extending the metaphor *VIOLENCE IS A DISEASE* (“é como você estar doente”, l. 212) [“it is like when you are sick”]. In the discourse dynamics, Antonio takes the speech turn following the same topic established by Susan and makes comments about the government measures. Therefore, he builds an analogy between the treatment of violence by government measures and the treatment of a disease. In this analogy, the violence which the country has to face is seen, metaphorically, as a sick body. According to Gibbs and Cameron (2007, p. 2): “The key to this idea is the recognition that metaphor performance is shaped by discourse processes that operate in a continual dynamic interaction between individual cognition and the social and physical environment”.

Antonio suggests that in order to finish with the disease either *YOU TAKE MEDICINE TO CURE THE SYMPTOMS*, or *YOU TAKE MEDICINE TO CURE THE DISEASE*, Antonio states that the governing authorities in general choose the first option. Here there is a comparison which suggests the metaphor *POLITICIANS ARE DOCTORS* (“você vai ao médico que receite algo para você ficar bom/daquilo que você está sofrendo”, l. 215-216) [“you go to the doctor who prescribes something for you to be fine/that from which you are suffering”]. Violence understood as *A DISEASE* is related to the metonymy *INSIDE-OUTSIDE* to the extent that, by comparison, the *POLITICIANS-DOCTORS* do not take measures that can keep the *VIOLENCE-DISEASE* in the security limits represented by the *INSIDE*. So, by

comparison “então, você deixa a doença chegar/bater na sua porta” (l. 218-219) [you let the disease arrive/knock on your door]. Antonio, in his talk, uses “você” [“you”] to designate different entities. “Você” [“You”] refers both to people from the social body, (e.g. l. 212, 214, 215, 216, 217a), and to the governing authorities (e.g. l. 213, 217b). As *MEDICINE* that the *POLITICIANS-DOCTORS* could prescribe in order to cure the *VIOLENCE-DISEASE*, Antonio mentions “educação” (l. 224) [“education”], “saúde pública” (l. 225) [“public health”], “saneamento” (l. 226) [“sanitation”].

Antonio:

209. Eu acho que existem dois tipos de atitudes
210. ..que os nossos governantes tomam
211. ..e acho que eles preferem muito mais uma do que a outra
212. ..existem é como você ta doente
213. ..você muitas vezes prefere remediar
214. ..você esta doente
215. você vai no médico que receite algo pra você ficar bom
216. daquilo que você já esta sofrendo
217. Quando você (a) sabe que você pode ficar doente mas você(b) não se previne
218. ..então você deixa a doença chegar
219. ..bater na sua porta
220. Então assim o governo faz assim
221. ..eu vou tomar uma atitude de remediar aquela situação
222. ..me fugiu a palavra mas é mais ou menos isso
223. eu prefiro fazer assim do que atitudes preventivas
224. ..que é educação
225. ..saúde publica
226. ..saneamento etc etc

Next, there is a discursive move towards empathy, when Antonio refers to those in the social body who do not have access to *GOVERNMENT MEASURES - MEDICINE* (l. 228-232)

227. que a gente vê

228. que essas pessoas que promovem a violência_

229. tem muito mais incidência...

230. nos grupos que tem menos oportunidade

231. essas pessoas acabam sendo um produto da falta de atitudes preventivas

[I think there are two kinds of attitudes that our politicians take and I think they prefer one more than the other, it is like when you get sick, you prefer to find a remedy. When you're sick, you see a doctor who prescribes something for you to stop suffering. When you know you may get sick, but you don't prevent yourself from that, then sickness arrives, it knocks on your door. So, the government does the following: I'm going to take some actions to avoid a certain situation, I can't remember the word now, but it's something like that, I prefer to take some preventive actions, which are education, public health, sanitation etc etc, and we see that these people who commit violence are usually the ones who had fewer opportunities, these people end up being a result of the lack of preventive actions.]

In the course of the discussion, Cesar takes the turn (l. 239-251) and manifests his disagreement with the idea of solving “o problema da violência” (l. 242) [“the violence problem”] by means of purchasing more “viaturas” (l. 243) [“police vans”], in other words, more resources for the city surveillance. He reiterates Antonio’s point of view about the necessity of investing in “uma clínica para dependentes” (l. 248) [“a drug rehabilitation center”], “um bom hospital” (l. 249) [“a good hospital”], “uma boa escola” (l. 250) [“a good school”], for example. He, thus, reinforces the idea that preventive measures are necessary, and that such measures are relative to the population dignified life conditions. This point of view is about treating the drug addiction problem, one of the causes of violent acts, as well as offering proper education. Celso’s discourse is not just about more hospitals or more

schools, so it is not a matter of numbers (...), but rather, of a “good hospital” and a “good school”. Thus, he highlights quality in this talk. The metonymic relation *CONSEQUENCE [VIOLENCE] – CAUSE [BAD QUALITY OF LIFE]* reappears in his talk, once again, pointing to an empathic attitude towards agents of violence by the understanding that there is a cause that can be the *TARGET OF PREVENTIVE MEASURES* by the political authorities.

Cesar:

239. O governo no estado do Ceará

240. ..com nosso governador

241. ..ele quer resolver o problema da violência comprando viaturas

242. ..e a gente sabe que não se resolve problema da violência

243. comprando viatura

244. ..fazendo concurso público para soldado

245. ..em qualquer esfera

246. ..tanto civil como militar

247. ..a questão é muito maior que isso

248. ...por exemplo nós não temos uma clínica para dependentes

249. ..nós não temos um bom hospital

250. ..nós não temos uma boa escola

251. ..e o governo do estado comprando viaturas distribuindo pra o estado

[The government in the state of Ceará, with our governor, he wants to solve the problem of violence by buying police vans and we know that the problem of violence is not solved by buying vans, promoting public exams for soldiers in any area, civil or military, the matter (lit. question) is much bigger than that, for example, we don't have a hospital for drug addicts, we don't have good hospitals, we don't have good schools, and the government are buying police vans, scattering them out in the state.]

Further along, as he takes his turn back, Antonio makes a discursive movement towards empathy. He expresses an empathic attitude to the extent that he understands that the agents of violence (“aqueles que causaram a violência/criaram essa situação de violência”, l. 383-384) [“those who have caused violence/created this situation of violence”], have had their human rights threatened (cf. l. 385). Antonio understands that “todos pertencemos a esse grande grupo de pessoas humanas/que são semelhantes (l. 392-393) [“we all belong to this large group of human beings/that are alike]. In order to make himself understood as regards causes of violence, Antonio elaborates, by means of a comparison, the metaphor *PREVENTIVE MEASURES ARE CARING FOR A PLANT* (“Eu volto para as medidas preventivas”, l. 396; “É como uma plantinha/que você vai cuidando, l. 401-402) [“I go back to preventive measures”; “It is like a little plant/that you go caring for”]. Metaphorically, *PREVENTIVE MEASURES ARE CARING FOR A PLANT*, in which *PLANT* would refer to people or society with rights to “saúde” (l. 398), [“healthcare”], “alimentação e educação” (l. 399) [“food and education”]. All these *MEASURES* are metaphorically understood as helping the plant to bloom, helping the plant to produce fruit, and giving the right nutrients. In other words, metonymically, by the *CAUSE-CONSEQUENCE* relation, to assure *HUMAN RIGHTS – PREVENTIVE MEASURES – CARING FOR THE PLANT* is to avoid the escalation of violence or that *THE HUMAN BEING – SOCIETY – LITTLE PLANT* may develop adequately. However, by having to survive under inhuman conditions, less privileged people end up perpetrating violent acts. It is important to observe that this point of view seems to express a high level of empathy in relation to *AGENTS OF VIOLENCE* themselves, since these would, primarily, be victims of a (kind of) violence against human rights.

Antonio:

380. Direitos? é tem que traçar os grupos em defesa dos direitos humanos
381. ..Eles sempre reagem
382. ..diante das situações
383. ..é que aqueles que causaram a violência
384. ..criaram essa situação de violência
385. ..estão com seu direito humano ameaçado
386. ..Está certo?
387. ..Está
388. Não posso dizer que eles estão errados
389. ..em defender o direito a alimentação
390. ..a saúde
391. afinal de contas
392. todos pertencemos a esse grande grupo de pessoas humanas
393. que são semelhantes né
394. ..Contudo..,
395. ..os direitos humanos não estão aí
396. eu volto pras atitudes preventivas
397. ..eles não estão lá no inicio
398. ..você tem direito a saúde
399. ..você tem direito a alimentação, a educação
400. ..você tem direitos
401. ..É como uma plantinha
402. que você vai cuidando
403. se você não cuidar no começo
404. .ela não vai
405. ..florir...
406. ela não vai florescer
407. ..ela não vai se desenvolver
408. ..etc

409. ou então se você não der o adubo certo

410. ..a frutífera não vai dar fruto

411. ..Ela pode ate ficar frondosa

412. ...mas o fruto que ela deveria produzir

413. ela não vai produzir

414. ...entende?

[Rights, you have to set groups to defend human rights? They always react before certain situations and the ones who cause violence created these situations of violence, so their human rights are threatened. Right? Ok. I can't say they're wrong to defend the right for food, for health, after all we all belong to this large group of human beings who are very similar to each other, isn't it? However, human rights are not available, then I go back to the preventive measures, they are not present in the very beginning, you have the right for healthcare, for food and education, you have rights. It's like a little plant that you have to take care of, 'cause if you don't since the beginning, it won't bloom and grow etc. or if you don't give it the right fertilizer, it won't grow fruit. It may even bloom, but the fruit it was supposed to give won't come out you know?]

In the follow up, there is a discursive move towards empathy, when Antonio refers to that segment of the social body that does not have access to *GOVERNMENT MEASURES – MEDICINE* (l. 228-231).

Group B

As stated, one of aims of this paper was to draw comparisons between data emerging from the focal group participants talk in Fortaleza-Ceará (Group A) and the focal group participants data in Belo Horizonte-Minas Gerais (Group B). In this section we try to do that, as we compare stretches of the talk of the two groups, trying to highlight some similarities as regards metaphors, metonymies and empathic moves present in their talk as they speak about their changed routines, feelings of vulnerability and empathic feelings as they have to live with uncertainties brought about the prevailing state of violence in urban Brazilian centers.

Pedro, in Group A, (l. 21-32), develops two moves in the discursive dynamics. In the first movement a *CONTAINER* metaphor (Johnson, 1987) is used to refer to the *CITY*, which represents here, metonymically, the *URBAN*. At the same time “coisas” (l. 21) [“things”] and “coisa” (l. 22) [“thing”] reinforce the *CONTAINER* metaphor.

Pedro:

21. essas coisas,

22. é uma coisa mais extensa,

23. que abrange tudo o que está..

24. contido na cidade,

[these things, it is something more pervasive, that encompasses everything that is contained in the city,]

In the second move, pursuing the dynamic construction of the idea of urban violence, it is possible to identify the *INSIDE-OUTSIDE* metonymy (l. 29), that situates violence *OUTSIDE* (“andando na rua”) [“walking on the street”], in the context of the *SOCIAL LANDSCAPE* metaphor (Cameron, 2010). Behaviors, attitudes and social values (l. 30, “jogar um papel no chão”) [“throw a piece of paper on the street”] come to be viewed as *VIOLENCE* (l. 31. “Um conceito bem mais amplo”), [“A much wider concept”], as well as more typical acts such as (l. 31) “um cara apontar uma arma pra você” [“a guy pointing a gun at your face”]. In this sequence (l. 26-31), “uma/a pessoa” (l. 26, l. 30) [“a/the person”], “um cara” (l. 31) [“a guy”] indicate that anyone can be an agent of violence in a wider sense, the same way that “você” (l. 28, . 31) [“you”] indicates that Pedro is trying to engage his interlocutors in this scenario, where anybody can be the target/patient of violent acts.

Pedro:

26. mesmo a violência de uma pessoa,

27. por exemplo,
28. ser mal educada com você,
29. você está andando na rua ou ..
30. a pessoa jogar um papel no chão.
31. É um conceito bem mais amplo do que simplesmente um cara apontar uma arma pra você.

[even the violence of one person, for example, to behave badly towards you, you are waking on the street, or the person throws a piece of paper on the street, it's a much wider concept than simply a guy pointing a gun at your face.]

Luana, in her turn (l. 40-48), motivated by the moderator, reports on her experience. She has already been a mugging victim (l. 42). Again, the metonymy *INSIDE-OUTSIDE* emerges but, in this case, violence happens *OUTSIDE* (l. 43 “no trajeto do ônibus até minha casa”) [“on the way from the bus to my house”], but, it is also perpetrated inside the bus. *INSIDE* would metonymically imply *SECURITY*; but, in this case, urban violence takes place not only on the streets, but inside public transport (l. 45) or in any establishment located on the street. Although she speaks of a personal experience (l. 42, “eu”) [“I”], Luana projects the experience to “todo mundo” (l. 46) [“everybody”, lit. “all the world”], again, like Pedro, signaling the pervasive insecurity to which all the urban population may be subject.

Luana:

40. o que vem na minha cabeça no primeiro momento é assalto,
41. porque assim,
42. eu já fui vítima de assalto
43. ..no trajeto do ônibus até minha casa,
44. já aconteceu várias vezes,
45. assaltar o ônibus,
46. rouba todo mundo

47. ...porém

[what comes into my mind in the first moment is mugging, because I have already been a victim on the way from the bus to my house, it has happened several times, to break into the bus, to rob everybody... but]

In the sequence, Luana, still reporting on her personal experience (l. 49-59), takes two modes in the discourse dynamics. In the first, she relates an experience involving her family (l. 51-54), connected to the murder of her cousin who was four years old (l. 54, correcting the referred relationship in l. 53). And, in the second move, she expresses her understanding – *UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING* – according to the vehicle “see” (l. 56), about violence being an indiscriminated everyday event (l. 56, “*tá muito presente*”) [“it is very present”], including the victimization of children, something that, despite the pervasiveness of violence, it is not to be expected “(depois de um ano) todo mundo é chocado com isso” (l. 61, 62) [“(after a year) everybody is shocked with this”]. Luana’s talk expresses everybody’s belief, despite contrary expectations (l. 57 “*A gente acha que só acontece/l. 58 com a pessoal do lado*”) [“We think that it only happens/with the people next door”], are potential victims of violence. In this regard, the expression “*com o pessoal do lado*” (l. 58) [“with the people next door”] metonymically expresses any other person. In a general sense, Luana’s talk moves from her personal experience, her family’s experience to the one that any of the city’s inhabitants, in any place or situation, may have with acts of violence. In making these moves from self to others, Luana signals to an empathic attitude with others suffering violence, when what happened with her cousin is summed up with “*acontece com a gente também, né*” (l. 60) [“happens with us, doesn’t it?”]. The expression “*a gente*” (literally, “the people”, or “we/us”) is an empathy marker.

Luana:

49. depois de um ano pra cá..
50. quando se fala em violência,
51. eu lembro muito da minha família,
52. que foi vítima de violência.
53. Mataram um sobrinho meu, de quatro
54. ..um primo meu de quatro anos.
55. Então assim,
56. agora eu vejo que tá muito presente
57. ..A gente acha que só acontece com
58. ..com o peçoal do lado,
59. mas não,
60. acontece com a gente também, né
61. ..mas, já tem um ano e
62. ..todo mundo até hoje,
63. todo mundo é chocado com isso

[from last year till now, when the subject is violence I remember my family a lot who have been victims of violence. They killed a nephew of mine, a four-year-old, a cousin of mine who was four. So now, I see that it is very present. We think that it only happens with the people next door but no, it happens with us as well, doesn't it..but, it's past a year and..everybody up to now, everybody is shocked.]

In the discourse dynamics, Gabriela's talk performs a movement that begins outside personal or private experience (l. 66-67), "a gente"/eu; "contra a gente"/contra mim) ["myself"; "against myself"] with acts of violence, and moves toward a perception (l. 66, "eu vejo") ["I see"] directed to the other. In this sense, her turn (l. 65-89), as a whole, reveals an empathic attitude as regards the other's reality.

Gabriela:

65. Quando a gente pensa em violência, também,
66. a gente pensa na violência que foi praticada contra a gente
67. ..Eu vejo um pouquinho diferente,

68. eu sou de um grupo

69. ..não sei porquê,

70. um grupo seletivo que não passou por violência durante a infância,

71. durante a adolescência

[When we think about violence, too, we think about violence that has been practiced against us. I see it slightly different, I am from a group I don't know why, a select group that has not suffered violence during childhood, during adolescence]

From our view point, Gabriela recaptures the *SOCIAL LANDSCAPE* metaphor, since she refers to a violence of *LIFE CONDITIONS*, because she considers violence to see “uma pessoa pegando lixo no meu lixo” [“a person grabbing stuff from my garbage”]. As she refers to a type of violence at the “porta da minha casa” (l. 72) [“my house door”]. Gabriela takes us back to the *INSIDE-OUTSIDE* metonymy, in the violence ‘out there but, close to me’. By stating “eu fico ofendida” (l. 76) [“that offends me”], “para mim é inconcebível” (l. 84) [“for me it is unconceivable”], thus leaving an empathy mark in her discourse.

However, she goes further since it is not only about seeing somebody picking up stuff in ‘your garbage’. That is a metonymy in the context of her discourse since she mentions it as a case of permissiveness of a social global system (l. 78-79). This is again a metonymic expression because ‘a whole system allows this to happen’ is a reference to government, to the people regarded as responsible to ensure dignified living conditions in society. In this sense *UNDIGNIFIED CONDITIONS ARE VIOLENCE*. In the sequence, Gabriela states that “if people knock at the door and ask for [anything to eat to survive]” (l. 82-83). Here there is the metonymy *INSIDE-OUTSIDE*, where the violence *outside* comes into people’s houses. In her whole speech, the first person is

stressed in “[pra] mim” (l. 71, 73 84) [“to me”]; “eu” (l. 71, 75, 76, 80) [“I”]; and “minha”/ “meu” (l. 72, 77) [“my”], set her point of view as a personal aggression because she “sees” (and understands) that this kind of violence affects her directly through empathy. At the same time, words such as “a gente” (l. 81) [“us”], “da gente” (l. 82) [“from us”], “contra a gente” (l. 87 e 88) [“against us”] carry the idea of the first person and also bring the idea of togetherness with everyone that has been through a similar experience.

Gabriela:

71. então pra mim é uma violência eu ver uma pessoa pegando lixo no meu lixo,

72. catando lixo na porta da minha casa,

73. não uma violência contra mim,

74. contra ele próprio

75. ..então, eu fico

76. ..eu fico ofendida não porque ta lá,

77. abrindo meu lixo, mas

78. ..como que um negócio inteiro,

79. um sistema inteiro deixa aquilo acontecer

80...Porque eu dar um café, um pão, uma água, uma comida,

81. isso a gente cansa de fazer, né,

82. o pessoal bate na porta da gente e pede

83. ..agora, o cara ter que sobreviver desse tipo de coisa,

84. pra mim é inconcebível, né

[so for me it's violence to see a person picking up stuff from my garbage, picking up trash at my house door, not violence against me, against the a particular person..so, I get.. I get offended not because he's there, opening my trash, but... how does a whole deal, a whole system let that happen. Because me giving some coffee, some bread, some water, some food, we do that all the time, right, people knock at our door and ask..now, the guy has to survive on this kind of thing, for me it's inconceivable, isn't it]

At the end of her turn, Gabriela expresses her conception of violence that transcends typical violent acts, as did Pedro (e.g. muggings, kidnappings, verbal assault, traffic fights), which prototypically and, therefore, metonymically, are referred to as *VIOLENCE* and reach the sphere of *CONDITIONS FOR SURVIVAL* or *HUMAN CONDITIONS*. Under this perspective, there would be an interesting discourse component. Conceptualizing *VIOLENCE* as a *major topic* in the focus group is an object of evaluation: if a concept is metaphorically a *CONTAINER* and inside it are acts of a certain nature, then, this *CONTAINER* might be broadened so that it would contain other acts that are harmful to the human being in a more global manner.

Gabriela:

86. então também vai muito além

87. ..da pessoa te roubar no trânsito, te xingar

88. ..não é contra a gente muitas vezes

89. ..muito menos contra a gente do que contra os outros.

[so it also goes way beyond.. the person mugs you in traffic, curses you.. many times it's not against us... even less against us than against others.]

From the data analyzed in Group A and Group B, we were able to verify the presence of the *INSIDE-OUTSIDE* systematic metonymy and of the *SOCIAL LANDSCAPE* systematic metaphor. Although present only one single time in the presented data, the productivity of the *VIOLENCE IS A DISEASE* metaphor must also be highlighted, since from such a metaphor other not less important metaphors are derived (e.g. *PREVENTIVE MEASURES ARE MEDICINE* and *GOVERNMENTS ARE DOCTORS*). The metaphor *ZEAL FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IS CARING FOR A PLANT* which emerges just once in Group A must also be noted since it is relevant to the extent that it reinforces the concept of *CARE* as a means of fighting against violence.

The reason for highlighting these extended metaphors, is the relationship that it establishes between empathic attitudes and agents of violence. At the same time empathic attitudes are observed in the corpora by the use of pronouns such as “you”, “the people” (“a gente”, in Portuguese), that as we have highlighted in the analyses, signal positions that victims of violence or potential victims identify themselves with as they try to empathize and mentally enter the world of individuals or groups who perpetrate acts of violence.

Concluding remarks

It is argued that the metaphors and metonymies identified in the data of the two focal groups provide insights into people’s emotions and conceptualisations around urban violence in Brazil as well as to the attitudes of empathy some demonstrate towards their assailants.

Their talk as a whole indicates the sad effects that the escalating levels of violence have imposed on their everyday lives. Due to violence, people have to change their routines and impose restrictions on their lives. In this regard it is worth mentioning how the *INSIDE-OUTSIDE* metonymy is systematically present and indicate a respective general sense of security/insecurity as individuals tend to feel more secure in the interior of their houses and exposed when out there in the streets.

The conceptualization of the city as *LANDSCAPE* and *CONTAINER* was also identified in both groups’ data, as they by the use of pronouns and expressions such as “you”, “the people”, “they” “people next door”, “those”, “we are all human beings of the same kind” indicate that although specific spaces are occupied by different groups in the city, they

are able to mentally enter the other person's world and demonstrate empathic attitudes towards them.

In conclusion it can be said that as a whole, the analyses of the data also give evidence of the complex and adaptive dynamicity of people's responses to violence as they despite having to impose limits on their lives, learn how to cope with the uncertainties imposed by the high levels of urban violence they have to contend with, at the same time as they claim for regaining their rights to a normal peaceful life as citizens and point to the governmental authorities the ones in possession of the *MEDICINE* which needs to be applied in order to cure the suffering brought about by widespread levels of violence.

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