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GUARDS, SECURITY AND TRAFFIC EDUCATION

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Abstract: The study sought to analyze what guards think about the education and safety of the most vulnerable non-motorized (NMV) in urban traffic. We focused attention on statements about different aspects of their professional practice and proposals to work around their problems. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 36 traffic guards working on Ilha do Governador/RJ. Data were predominantly interpreted under a qualitative approach with the aid of statistical analysis through the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test. The results suggest that, in general, the interviewees' concern with NMV safety and with traffic education is independent of their professional experience and, on the contrary, is decisively influenced by education. We found that Traffic Guard training is oriented towards technical dimensions and has limitations with regard to responsibility for the social and human dimensions of their work. Guards do not clearly perceive their importance in promoting education and traffic safety, in a democratic and humanizing perspective, opposing what the Professional Training Course of the Traffic Guard of that city proclaims. From the results, suggestions are presented that refer to the reorientation of the professional training of this guard, the first condition for his appreciation, which will certainly be reflected in the better quality of his work in meeting the real needs of all users of the transit system, broadly and unrestricted. **Keywords:** guard, non-motorized safety, traffic education.

INTRODUCTION

Faced with the crisis of values that we have experienced in recent decades when competition, individualism and intolerance replace solidarity, several scholars (DAVIS, 1994; CLARCK, 1995; JOVCHELOVITCH, 1995; VASCONCELLOS, 1998; ZEGEER, 1998) point to the fact that the street

has become a space of disputes, not very democratic for a significant portion of the population, such as children, the elderly, pregnant women, the physically and mentally handicapped, as pedestrians or cyclists, that is, the vulnerable non-motorized (NMV).

In a living circle, traffic actors break rules, blame and disrespect each other and do not assume their responsibilities (BRAGA, 1995). A scenario is configured in the streets of our city in which people do not assume their crimes, they reverse their roles, changing from aggressors to victims and from protected to vulnerable. When changing roles, they easily change attitudes marked by disrespect and the annulment of the other.

In the midst of modernity, the use of sophisticated and modern technological equipment in favor of traffic safety, we see the need for greater attention to the human dimension. This picture is largely due to the fact that the traffic legislation in Brazil disregards the situation of disadvantage of the most vulnerable in urban traffic (GODIM, 2001). Traffic wardens, representatives on the streets of public power and subordinate bodies responsible for legislation and inspection of urban traffic, do not satisfactorily guarantee safety, assistance and accident prevention to their users (BRAGA, 1995). The search for solutions to complex urban problems permeates the rethinking of the professional practice of traffic safety agents, in the sense of democratization and humanization of the road space. Objectively analyzing the statistics referring to the most diverse problems related to urban traffic in Rio, there is no denying that, in fact, the problem related to accidents deserves special attention.

The numbers of dead and injured, especially among the most vulnerable, are staggering and change little over decades. Comparable to catastrophes of great proportions that soon make the news, traffic accidents in this city, on

the contrary, are not publicized, in proportion to their significance. In this context, it is regrettable to see the high number of deaths from pedestrians being run over, which has repeatedly reached numbers close to half of the total number of victims. The picture is also due to the fact that the city of Rio de Janeiro was not built for pedestrians, but for cars, which makes us rethink the urban and road planning of our cities. People use the car as a weapon and the majority, perplexed, experience a feeling of impotence, subjected to the dangers of historically violent traffic. On the other hand, pedestrians do not comply with traffic rules, circumventing safety regulations. Peculiar characteristics, such as age and health status that interfere with the decision-making capacity, are not always understood with due clarity by the uneducated population for traffic, including by security agents, among which the traffic guard (VASCONCELLOS, 2001).

Society still seems not to have incorporated awareness of the real dimension of the problem of urban traffic and this alienation can justify, reinforce and be decisively reflected in the practice of traffic agents. Not a few of these professionals are attributed negative stigmas that refer to ideas of unreliability and corruption. In view of the above, it is essential to rethink the role of these professionals and this permeates the reflection on their preparation in facing the daily life of urban traffic.

METHODOLOGY

This work was carried out on Ilha do Governador, a neighborhood in Rio de Janeiro, together with the Municipal Traffic Guard operating in this location. Initially, we contacted the Social Communication Office of the Municipal Guard of Rio de Janeiro (ASCOM), seeking information about the corporation, which was provided to us through

a training manual, the ``Apostila Única do Curso de Formação da Guarda Municipal`` – Professional Module (Annex 1). We base ourselves on the basic ideas contained in this booklet referring to the practices of these professionals, such as the ethical-moral posture and the correct application of legislation, to create a parallel between theory and professional practice of traffic guards.

In a second moment, we requested and obtained official permission from the ASCOM coordinators to carry out interviews with the Municipal Guard (GM), with the authorization to follow them closely in street operations, during the period of six months. We were informed that of the 41 effective and exclusive guards on Ilha do Governador, 36 were willing to participate in the research. From the spontaneous acceptance by these professionals, data collection took place from January to June 2004. The semi-structured interviews were supported by a semi-open questionnaire, since it is an effective instrument in qualitative research by facilitating spontaneity, of the interviewees' freedom of expression in exposing their points of view (LUDKE & ANDRÉ, 1996). This questionnaire was composed of several questions that aimed to identify: 1) length of experience in the profession; 2) respondent's education; 3) perceptions of the guards interviewed about the professional practice of their colleagues regarding responsibility for the safety of non-motorized people; 4) perceptions of the interviewed guards about the professional practice of their colleagues regarding responsibility for traffic education; 5) evaluation of GM training courses and comments on its role in traffic safety and education and 6) what most motivated the interviewee to be a guard and the most important/rewarding actions he performs as a guard in daily traffic (Figure 1).

During this process, we opted for a mixed

approach with a qualitative predominance that:

“it works with the universe of meanings, beliefs and privileges values and attitudes, which corresponds to a deeper space of relationships, processes and phenomena that cannot be reproduced to the operationalization of variables” (MINAYO, 1994, p.21)

In questions 3 and 4 of the questionnaire, the Linear Bipolar Scale of Semantic Differential was used, consisting of a 10-cm straight line segment to record scores from 0 to 100 assigned by respondents to their colleagues.

Descriptive statistical analyzes of the responses recorded on the scale were performed using the non-parametric Mann - Whitney test (SPIEGEL, 1993; FONSECA and MARTINS, 1996) with the aid of the SPSS 8.0 For Windows 1997 statistical software. Whitney through the operation of four equations (Appendix 2) allowed to statistically analyze the differences between the averages of the ranges adopted. The following ranges were adopted: less than 1 year, from 1 to 5 years and from 6 to 14 years, for experience, and high school and beyond high school, for schooling, making it possible to verify the H_0 hypothesis. H_0 reveals that the difference between the means of the bands are not significant at a significance level of 95% (95% confidence margin). In this test, the margin of error 5% ($\alpha = 0.05$) and the normal distribution (z) obeying the interval $-1.96 \leq z \leq 1.96$, allows establishing the bipolarity: accept or reject H_0 . Accepting H_0 means that the result is not affected by the variable (time of experience and schooling) and rejecting H_0 means that the result is affected by the variable (time of experience and schooling). In Tables 1 to 4, the answers to questions 1 and 2 were paired with the answers to questions 3 and 4 (1 x 3; 2 x 3; 1 x 4 and 2 x 4) in order to show the influence of professional experience

and guard's schooling in the interviewees' assessments of their peers' professional practice with regard to traffic safety and education. Tables 1, 2, 3, 4 with index a and b are complementary for a better understanding of the questions presented. In response to questions 3, 4, 5 and 6 of the questionnaire, respondents expressed themselves freely in writing or verbally.

RESULTS

The answers to question 3 of the questionnaire, from a quantitative point of view, reveal that the average score attributed by respondents to their peers regarding responsibility for the safety of non-motorized vehicles was 55.3%. We divided this result into two stages: the first taking into consideration, the time of experience of the interviewee, divided into 3 ranges: less than 1 year, from 1 to 5 years and from 6 to 14 years (Tables 1a and 1b) and the second, taking into consideration, the respondent's education, divided into two ranges: 2nd grade and beyond 2nd grade (Tables 2a and 2b). Statistical analyzes reveal that the interviewee's experience time does not influence their answers, while the interviewee's education significantly influences their answers.

The answers to question 4 of the questionnaire, from the quantitative point of view, reveal that the average of the grades attributed by the interviewees to their peers regarding responsibility for traffic education was 47.2%. We divided this result into two stages: the first taking into consideration, the interviewee's experience, divided into 3 ranges: less than 1 year, from 1 to 5 years and from 6 to 14 years (Tables 3a and 3b) and the second, taking into consideration, the respondent's education, divided into two ranges: 2nd grade and beyond 2nd grade (Tables 4a and 4b). Statistical analyzes reveal that the interviewee's experience time does not influence their

Level of education of respondents	Number of respondents	Average of the grades given by the interviewees	Median	Variation	Standard deviation
High school	29	48,7	50,0	170,3	13,0
Beyond high school	7	82,6	85,0	26,8	5,2
Total average of the grades given by the 36 respondents = 55,3 %					

Table 2a – perceptions of the guards interviewed about the professional practice of their colleagues regarding responsibility for the safety of non-motorized people according to their education

Groups	Elements of the Mann-Whitney U test					
	α	U	μ_u	σ_u^2	Z	Decision
High school Beyond High school	0,05	414,0	101,5	625,9	12,49	reject Ho
The respondent's education influences their responses regarding safety.						

Table 2b – Comparison between schooling ranges

Time of experience	Number of respondents	Average of the grades given by the interviewees	Median	Variation	Standard deviation
Less than 1 year	9	43,9	44,0	304,6	17,4
From 1 to 5 years	7	58,9	50,0	627,0	25,0
From 6 to 14 years	20	44,6	44,5	367,8	19,2
Total average of the grades given by the 36 respondents = 47,2 %					

Table 3a – Perceptions of the guards interviewed about the professional practice of their colleagues regarding responsibility for education according to the time of professional experience

Groups	Elements of the Mann-Whitney U test					
	α	U	μ_u	σ_u^2	Z	Decision
Less than 1 year X From 1 to 5 years	0,05	45,0	31,5	89,2	1,43	accept Ho
Less than 1 year X From 6 to 14 years old	0,05	92,5	90,0	450,0	0,12	accept Ho
From 1 to 5 years X From 6 to 14 years old	0,05	49,5	70,0	326,7	1,13	accept Ho
The interviewee's experience time does not influence their answers regarding education.						

Table 3b – Comparison between professional experience time ranges

Level of education of the respondent	Number of respondents	Average of the grades given by the interviewees	Median	Variation	Standard deviation
High School	29	39,0	40,0	144,4	12,0
Beyond High School	7	81,2	81,0	49,6	7,0
Total average of the grades given by the 36 respondents = 47,2 %					

Table 4a –Perceptions of the guards interviewed about the professional practice of their colleagues regarding responsibility for education as a function of schooling

Groups	Elements of the Mann-Whitney U test					
	α	U	μ_u	σ_u^2	Z	Decision
High School X Beyond High School	0,05	408,0	101,5	625,9	12,25	reject Ho
The respondent's education influences their answers regarding education.						

Table 4b – Comparison between schooling ranges

Quality	Number of respondents	Percentage
Good	3	8,33 %
Regular	7	19,44 %
Bad	10	27,77 %
In blank	16	44,44 %
Of the 36 interviewees, 3 rated it as good, 7 as regular, 10 as poor and 16 did not comment.		

Table 5 – Evaluation of the quality of the Traffic Guard Training Course by the interviewees

Motivation	Number of respondents
exercise authority	24
fulfill mission (duty)	22
follow vocation (fate)	19
The most cited motivation was exercising authority, secondly fulfilling a mission and thirdly following a vocation.	

Table 6 – Motivations to be a guard most cited by respondents

Most important or rewarding actions	Number of respondents
promote traffic flow	30
use the authority based on the CTB (Brazilian Traffic Code)	26
help with traffic safety	20
The most cited action was to promote traffic flow, second was using authority and third was assisting safety.	

Table 7 – The 3 most important or rewarding actions as a guard in daily traffic cited by respondents

answers, while the interviewee's education significantly influences their answers.

In response to question 5 of the questionnaire, the evaluation by the interviewees of the quality of the Traffic Guard Training Course was classified as good, fair, bad (Table 5).

In response to question 6 of the questionnaire, respondents spoke about what most motivated them to be a guard (Table 6) and said about the 3 most important or rewarding actions they perform as guards in daily traffic (Table 7).

In order to allow a relationship between the quantitative and qualitative answers of the interviewees to the questionnaire, we have attached the most expressive statements of the interviewees extracted from the answers to questions 3, related to the NMV safety theme, 4, related to the education theme, 5, related to the evaluation of the quality of the GM Training Course and 6, related to the motivations for being a guard and the 3 most important or rewarding actions performed by the guard (Annex 3).

DISCUSSION

In this study, we sought to get to know closely the daily work of the traffic warden. For this purpose, for six months we accompanied 36 out of a total of 41 guards stationed on Ilha do Governador in their street operations and collected written and spoken information from them, through interviews and questionnaires. From this dynamic, elements emerged that indicated the interviewees' view of being a traffic policeman, their satisfactions and dissatisfactions, and their proposals for solutions to traffic problems. To summarize the set of difficulties faced in obtaining the necessary information for this study, we remember an interviewee when he said: "It was worth meeting you. It's just that I find it difficult to take half of the truth and

reality out of the suspicious crowd from the fully controlled guard, exploited on salary and unprepared to face the streets. This needs to change from the outside. We count on your strength." It must also be noted that the booklet for the Municipal Guard Training Course contains emblematic statements that prohibit its guards from granting an interview without ASCOM authorization. "It is therefore essential that everyone speak the same language, as any slip of information can arouse distrust and undermine the corporation's image [...] the GM is constantly being observed by the population, colleagues and superiors". These statements may explain the quantitative results recorded in Table 5, in which 16 of the 36 interviewees did not comment to evaluate the GM training course. This omission may mean the interviewee's fear of being judged. Faced with such a scenario, it seems possible to have the idea of the difficulty of carrying out any research work with this corporation. Much of this fact owes to the strategy we devised of asking the interviewee to speak about his colleague, because this way speaking of the other he would better speak of himself.

The interviewees' responses gave us clues that the action in favor of NMV safety and traffic education "is left on paper because in practice it is very difficult and there is no support for it" or that "it can happen, but the task is serve everyone indiscriminately". The reality is that educational or safety actions usually take place through "individual and voluntary attitudes". Thus, guards assume that they are "supportive as much as possible, but without taking risks". They still state that "although it is in the law, everything is very nice, the theory is one and the practice another. It doesn't give a vote, so it doesn't work".

When we approached about education, the interviewees said that "a guard is not a teacher and education in traffic is not his

thing and he doesn't even get payed for it" and that "swimmers swim, singer sings, teachers educate, guards supervise. We have to assert our authority, make beans with rice and show production. Time is for that, otherwise the bug catches". As for the proposals and suggestions, some said that "the affective side with the community completely changes the scenario because the population accepts and collaborates with the guard [...] and our work flows and we feel more motivated. The corporation must value and encourage this, as we do not always have the freedom and conditions for this type of work [...] we would even do it, but we are afraid of trampling on some more radical superiors".

GM's imminently conservative and authoritarian bent is limited to acts of reinforcing punishments to ensure the supposed education most believe they are accomplishing by focusing on "traffic order". We often identify signs that guard training is influenced by militarism, which implies a police-like practice that goes against the grain of meeting society's demands for a more democratic and humane traffic. This influence was also reflected in the speeches when they said about their motivation to be a guard and the most important actions on the streets. Recurrently, they used terms that refer to the idea of vocation, mission, discipline and authority that certainly permeates the texts that make up the Traffic Guard training booklet. Evidently, it is not possible to develop serious educational work without breaking with the mistaken conceptual simplism and with the use of force, of authoritarianism that substitutes enlightening authority. In this regard, we come across statements such as "the guard can only use the law because punishment in itself educates", "educating is romantic and beautiful in theory. For the uneducated, transgressive element, there is no time to lose. It's the law, period."

Through the Mann-Whitney U test, we were able to statistically validate the idea that the respondents' education is a determining factor in their ability to understand responsibility for NMV safety and traffic education. The results provided elements to affirm that professional excellence is directly proportional to the interviewees' level of education. The guards selected for the GM must have completed high school as a level of education. However, respondents who had schooling beyond high school showed greater clarity of understanding regarding the issues raised in this work. In addition, the most educated guards showed a critical ability to define the real problems faced by the GM as a lack of preparation for their role as an educator and security agent.

Regarding the GM Training Course, the interviewees gave hints that the courses are imminently technical and emphasize compliance with the law and the application of fines as a way of ensuring supposed safety and education. In their speeches, interviewees make us believe that the guards are poorly prepared and this is aggravated by the fact that they are poorly payed and face terrible working conditions. This implies rethinking the quality of GM training courses and the process of selecting its contingent.

Several statements by interviewees narrowed the gap between theory and practice when we found that in the course booklet it is urgent to defend that it is up to the guard to guarantee the security of NMV and education, which the interviewees said they considered as simple rhetoric and difficult or even impossible to achieve. In this regard, we quote the maxim extracted from this booklet that we could use as a reflection on the mistaken thinking that guides the corporation when it refers to the social role of the guard: "the exemplary actions that the GM develops are, in their majority, more remarkable in the life

of the population of the than the intervention of the educator by trade: the teacher”.

CONCLUSION

We verified that, in the horizon of the interviewees, attributes related to technical competence for the promotion of road flow and concern with conduct, with image, with the appreciation of authority and discipline are in order of prevalence. Measures related to NMV safety and traffic education, when present, are in the background. The problems faced by the guards emphasized by the interviewees in general were limited to complaints and outbursts related to the relationship with the corporation, salary and working conditions. Although these denouncements are relevant, the almost unanimous tendency for the solution of the questions seemed to be guided in the direction of timid proposals, as a rule, located at the individual level. In general terms, these measures seem to have reduced perspectives, as they manifest a narrow understanding of the nature of the traffic

problem and its professionals.

Schooling, as indicated by the results of the statistical analysis, constitutes a determining factor in the awareness that guards have about the universe of their work. It is on this point that we base ourselves to reinforce our idea that the improvement of GM's work involves reformulating the criteria for selecting professionals, as well as the professionals responsible for their training. This is in line with what is proclaimed in GM's booklet, which emphatically affirms its commitment to the social role of guaranteeing traffic education and the broad and unrestricted safety of urban traffic users.

We are certain that the professional and personal appreciation of guards, translated into better wages and working conditions, is fair and legitimate and paves the way for a more democratic and human scenario in the coexistence of space on the streets of our city. Thus, this corporation will be able to fulfill its role of educating society for traffic safety in the broad and unrestricted sense.

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ANNEX 1 - HANDOUT OF THE MUNICIPAL GUARD TRAINING COURSE



Official GM training manual consisting of 323 pages containing history and concepts about traffic, legislation, CTB, operational techniques, among other contents.

ANNEX 2 - EQUATIONS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MANN-WHITNEY U TEST

Equation 1 and description of its terms: U , N_1 , N_2 and R_1 :

$$U = N_1 \times N_2 + \frac{N_1 \times (N_1 + 1)}{2} - R_1$$

U = sampling distribution, N_1 and N_2 = sample sizes and R_1 = sum of sample positions.

Equation 2 and description of its terms: μ_u , N_1 and N_2 :

$$\mu_u = \frac{N_1 \times N_2}{2}$$

μ_u = distribution mean, N_1 and N_2 = sample sizes.

Equation 3 and description of its terms: σ_v^2 , N_1 and N_2 :

$$\sigma_u^2 = \frac{N_1 \times N_2 \times (N_1 + N_2 + 1)}{12}$$

σ_v^2 = distribution variance, N_1 and N_2 = sample sizes.

Equation 4 and description of its terms: U , μ_u and σ_v^2 :

$$Z = \frac{U - \mu_u}{\sigma_u^2}$$

z = normal distribution, U = sampling distribution, μ_u = distribution mean and σ_v^2 = distribution variance.

Regarding question 3 related to NMV security:

- “ Regarding the responsibility for the safety of non-motorized people, I cannot answer for others because unfortunately it is not satisfactory. It is on paper because in practice it is very difficult. There is no support for this.”
- “ This can happen, but the task is to serve everyone indiscriminately. There are too many daring pedestrians and cyclists [...] and the guard cannot assume or be blamed for this.”
- “ I don’t see that, that kind of responsibility, except in individual and voluntary attitudes.”
- “ Yes, because we also have elderly people in our families and, therefore, we are sympathetic to their problems, as far as possible, but without running the risk of compromising.”
- “ There are cyclists and pedestrians with too much confidence in themselves and guards who can do little [...] we are not the world’s paddle.”
- “ Although it is in the Law, everything is very beautiful, the theory is one and the practice another [...] there is no vote, so it does not work.”

Regarding question 4 related to the theme of education:

- “ Guard is not a teacher and traffic education are not his thing. [...] we are satisfied with our good examples and only.”
- “ 90 %, it is a task for teacher and family. For the guard, it remains to use the Law. Punishment itself educates.”
- “ It is not up to the guard to prioritize this mission that belongs to the school system and government programs, despite what the course handouts say.”
- “ Swimmer swims, singer sings, teacher educates. Guard inspects. We have to assert our authority, make beans with rice and show production, the time is for that. If not, the situation gets complicated.”

Regarding question 5 related to the evaluation of the quality of the GM training course:

- “The course is technically good, but we are left in a vacuum to face traffic safety situations and this traffic education is even worse. We work on improvisation and even so it costs us dearly. Can you get us.”
- “ Completely technical training. Little talk. They understand nothing about education [...] they are concerned with other things, image, posture, rules of conduct. And everything is just a facade.”
- “ The courses are not being approved by the majority. They are norms, laws, statistics. They have little to do with pedestrian education and safety. In Brazil this is secondary.”
- “ Nothing but the instructors’ rote and jokes. It looks like a pre-university course. Every time they apologize and repeat that they are not teachers. So what are you doing there?”
- “ Brainwashing, disinterested group and on the street, we will also be disinterested with people who need help.”
- “What impressed the crowd was the lesson that ‘One must be careful with attitudes and words to preserve the image’ and the guard who improvises is warned. That’s why he does purely the essential and the superfluous. In the guard, who speaks little, makes little mistakes.”
- “General spur on the crowd who can’t even interrupt for questions. [...] on the street we have to limit ourselves to technical determinations [...] without freedom to act in improvised situations and act with rigidity in the application of fines. “
- “ The students don’t understand and only memorize and repeat the slogans and the militia’s command orders. Complaining is worse. They are mocking, mocking and do not accept mockery.”
- “ What stood out the most was that they always repeated the same motto in all classes: ‘speak little and everyone must speak the same language’ [...] the problem is the bad guys who talk too much and make things dirty.”

Regarding question 6 related to the motivations for being a guard and the 3 most important and rewarding actions at work:

- “ It gives status and pride [...]. It’s a vocation. It is a disciplinary mission. We impose morale on the application of the CTB to improve traffic flow.”
- “ It is pure vocation. I like to exercise authority through order and discipline.”
- “ Moralize the application of the law contained in the CTB so that we have safer and freer traffic.”
- “ First of all, dedication to the mission of helping others against aggressors and the great dangers present in street traffic. It is a vocation due to the dynamics of service and the status of the profession.”
- “ Just the pleasure of fulfilling a duty, which is enough and makes you proud. Commitment to the mission to be accomplished and to be useful. It’s my destiny. I always wanted to be a policeman. To be dutiful [...] a heroic mission.”
- “ Greater authority in traffic with a noble mission greater than vocation[...] in authority for the collective good in safety and flow [...].”
- “ We are very poorly payed and we face a heavy bar on the streets. Nothing fairer than simplifying our life. Educating is already too much and our mission is to use the Law and that is already an educational action. We guarantee road safety and for that we are well prepared.”
- “ The affective side with the community completely changes the scenario because the population accepts and collaborates with the guard [...] and our work flows and we feel more motivated. The corporation must value and encourage this, as we do not always have the freedom and conditions for this type of work [...] we would even do it, but we are afraid of running over some more radical superiors.”

Annex 3 - Statements by interviewees regarding questions 3, 4, 5 and 6.