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Street violence in Brazil has been on the rise in recent years, with young people representing the vast majority of perpetrators and victims. Streets and neighborhoods across disadvantaged areas in Maceió – widely recognized as Brazil’s most violent city – have become flashpoints for power struggles involving informal norms and standards of behavior. Within this context an important question emerges: What are the main processes responsible for bringing youths to engage in street violence – taking into account personal and familial developments, the city’s environment, and social pressures as well as other ties that motivate or force youths to become members of criminal groups?

This book consists of an ethnographical study based on participant observation and in-depth qualitative interviews with twenty-four male youths who had intense experiences with street violence. The data were mainly collected during seven months of fieldwork in Maceió in 2013. In January 2016, a second visit to Maceió took place to collect pictures of the neighborhoods where the interviewed youths came from, as well as of the prisons and internment units where young offenders are housed.

The aim of the research is to analyze the significance of violence among individuals and criminal groups and, furthermore, to assess the impact of this violence on the social order that governs the streets of Maceió. In addition, the role that drug trafficking has in this context is examined in order to better understand why this activity has become so attractive to youths and how drug-related street violence is used as an instrument of punishment to establish social control in local communities.

ISBN 978-86113-290-5 Max-Planck-Institut)
ISBN 978-3-428-18556-6 (Duncker & Humblot)



K 192



Cléssio Moura de Souza Youth and Violence in Brazil

An Ethnographical Study on
Youth Street Violence Related to
Drugs and Social Order in Maceió

Schriftenreihe des Max-Planck-Instituts
für ausländisches und internationales
Strafrecht

Kriminologische Forschungsberichte
Herausgegeben von Hans-Jörg Albrecht
und Günther Kaiser

Band K 192

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