

THE JECH GALLERY

Protest and resentment

Does social inequality have a pathogenic effect? A large and growing body of empirical literature has investigated the income inequality hypothesis,¹⁻³ and although a consensus has not been reached about the relative importance of income versus income inequality as a social determinant of health, the literature on this topic has reinforced the notion that poor health—one of the most personal of personal troubles—is influenced by larger public issues.

In the case of Argentina, which experienced a profound economic and political crisis beginning in 2001, social inequality may be expected to have an important effect on population health. Not only has income inequality increased in Argentina by more than seven Gini points in the last decade,⁴ but also a new-found resentment of that inequality is noticeable.

These images were taken in downtown Buenos Aires, in a banking district of a major pedestrian avenue. They show a scene familiar to porteños: heavily reinforced bank doors (some with dents and damage from recent protests), graffiti tags of ladrones (thieves), asesinos (assassins) and calls for the International Monetary Fund to leave the country (FMI being the Spanish acronym for the International Monetary Fund).

This scene is one of the many signs of social protest visible in the city and represents an aftermath of the economic crisis. The emotion of resentment, which is so forcefully displayed in this graffiti, is at the crux of the social mechanism linking social inequality to poor health.

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Figure 1 Protest outside of the Bank of Boston.



Figure 3 Protest graffiti. One panel reads "Cavallo preso"; a call to imprison Domingo Cavallo, Argentina's former minister of finance.



Figure 2 Rejection of IMF-imposed policy.

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