MAKING RIGHTS REAL FOR CHILDREN: LEARNING FROM SOUTH AMERICA

Leverhulme seminar series, Scotland

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YOUNG PEOPLE’S PERCEPTIONS OF URBAN VIOLENCE IN BRAZIL AND MEXICO

November 14, 2017
The International Center for Research and Policy on Childhood at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro (CIESPI at PUC-Rio), is dedicated to engaging in research studies on, and social projects for, children, young people and their families and communities. Its purpose is to support the development and implementation of policies and practices for children and young people that contribute to their full development and the promotion and defense of their rights. CIESPI is particularly concerned with children growing up in contexts of vulnerability including poverty.
1- The context: youth in Latin America (handouts/basic facts)
2 - Framing urban violence in Latin America
3 - Carioca and tapatio youth: perceptions of violence in Brazil and Mexico
4 – Final remarks
1- The context: Latin America

BASIC FACTS:

- Vast region with 8.62% of the world's population:
  - LAC: 26 countries; SA: 12
  - Over 600 million people (UNDP, 2017);
  - 26% of the population is ≤ 15 years

- Huge diversity: climate, politics, culture, though all but Brazil Spanish speaking

- High income inequality with huge implications for children's well-being
1- The context: youth in Latin America

- Vulnerability of young people to violence, particularly male, black youth from the poorer classes
- Stereotypes of dangerousness; criminalization of youth & poverty
- Images of violence associated to youth x victims of violence
- Most extreme levels of violence facing youth: highest mortality rates= Mexico, El Salvador and Brazil
### The context: youth in Latin America

#### Mortality rate (15 - 19)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Rate (per 100,000)</th>
<th>Ranking</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>México</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>95.6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Salvador</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>55.8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brasil</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>54.9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>49.3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panamá</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>39.7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>EE.UU.</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canadá</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>27</td>
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2 - Framing urban violence in Latin America

- Violence: political and structural in the region
- Interplay of historical and systemic dynamics of oppression (Galtung, John, 1991)
- Interconnection to poverty. But also gender inequality, racism and coloniality are important constitutive elements of oppression
- “Cultures of violence”
- “Citizens of fear” (Rotker, Susana, 2002)
2 - Framing urban violence in Latin America

- Sense of fear generated by the stereotypical face of urban violence evolving into hatred

- Drug trafficking and organized crime as appeals and ‘options’ to youth in impoverished urban areas

- Public safety, zero tolerance and the imposition of order (police)
What youth from the favelas (Brazil) or barrios (AL) have to say about the violence in their daily lives?

Percepciones de jóvenes sobre la violencia en su vida cotidiana: Rio de Janeiro, Brasil y Guadalajara, México

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Danielle Strickland (Universidad Pedagógica Nacional, Guadalajara (UPN), México)
Methodology

- Selection of youth in 2 low-income neighborhoods where access was possible
- Interviews and field observation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Interviews</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Work form</th>
<th>Work informal</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fonseca (2014)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18-26</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cerro del 4 (2016)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15-26</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
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Brazil

- Increase of drug related violence/cocaine (1980s)

- Unidades de Polícia Pacificadora (UPP)

- Migration of organized crime to new areas
Mexico

- Production and consumption of marijuana and opium (end of 19th century)
- Central position in international drug trafficking (20th century)
- Police corruption
- Lack of opportunities for youth increases attraction to drug gangs

- War against drug trade (Presidente Calderón 2006)
- Fragmentation of *carteles*
- Increasing low-income youth involvement in drug gangs
Analysis:

Four topics emerging from interviews:
1. Community violence, past and present
2. Sense of (un)safety
3. Causes of community violence
4. Moving forward in a context of violence
1. Community violence, past and present

- Violence preventing them from attending school or work, whether due to gang fights, shootings or police raids

   Once it happened when I had an exam. I had to tell [my professor] everything, and I was ashamed, you know. I had to tell him that I couldn’t leave my house (Fonseca, female, 21 F).

   When I was younger, if I left the Cerro and spent my money I knew [gang A] might not let me back in [the neighborhood]...sometimes I wasn’t able to buy lunch. ‘If I buy this, I’m not going to have enough to [get past the gang].’ Sometimes I wouldn’t go to school because of this (O., male, 15, El Cerro).
1. Community violence, past and present

- Violence has always been present, but there have been recent changes.
- Territoriality of violence in the barrios. The arrival of new dealers to the favelas causing change in community relationships (for example, those who recently arrived did not have the same level of respect for the neighborhood as those who were born and raised there.

‘The business has changed. The old dealers were mostly from the community, and today, since they’re outsiders, they end up causing more violence, you know. Some have respect, others don’t care. Those who have it were from there, those who don’t showed up wanting to rule everything, disrespecting the people who’ve lived there for years, you know?’ (T., female, 19, Fonseca).
2. Sense of (un)safety

➢ Guadalajara: Normalization of violence. Majority claimed they felt safe. However, women claimed not to spend time outside of their homes in the neighborhood or arrive after dark, to avoid feeling unsafe.

➢ Rio: All participants declared they felt unsafe. Perception of increased violence.
3. Causes of community violence

Perception of FEAR - daily dynamics of:

- Drug traffickers: appropriation of public spaces
- Corrupt police/ lack of honest police officers
4. Moving forward in a context of violence

- Despite the violence, most of them believe they can fulfill their dreams

- Importance of family

  *I think more about my family, and if I get into drugs my family is going to be disappointed in me. I’m the only one of my 12 sisters and brothers to finish middle school...and I’m carrying this leadership, you could say, why not go ahead and finish high school? and get a good job and support my family’*

  *(O., male, 16, El Cerro)*
4. Moving forward in a context of violence

Measures to prevent the youth to get involved with drug gangs

FONSECA: Opportunities to youth – education, jobs

CERRO: Raise awareness in the neighborhood and with families
Support from family and solidarity in the community
Final remarks

- Factors and situations that drive violence, including gangs, drug trafficking, poverty, the lack of public services and opportunities

- Perceptions of fear and hopelessness present in both contexts
  ‘Not to get involved’ (not active, not visible in the community - Impotence in the face of violence

- Those who are involved... (active participation) → gain visibility as gang members
Final remarks

Hope for change; resistance and strategies to protect themselves

‘Sometimes I like it here, sometimes I don’t. I like it because it’s where I was born, I have to recognize that, like, it’s the place where I grew up, where I have people I can count. And he adds.... But if I could, I would change a lot here’ (G., male, 18, Fonseca).
Thank you!
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