

MAKING RIGHTS REAL FOR CHILDREN: LEARNING FROM SOUTH AMERICA

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

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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.

Youth: perceptions of violence in Brazil and Mexico



- 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

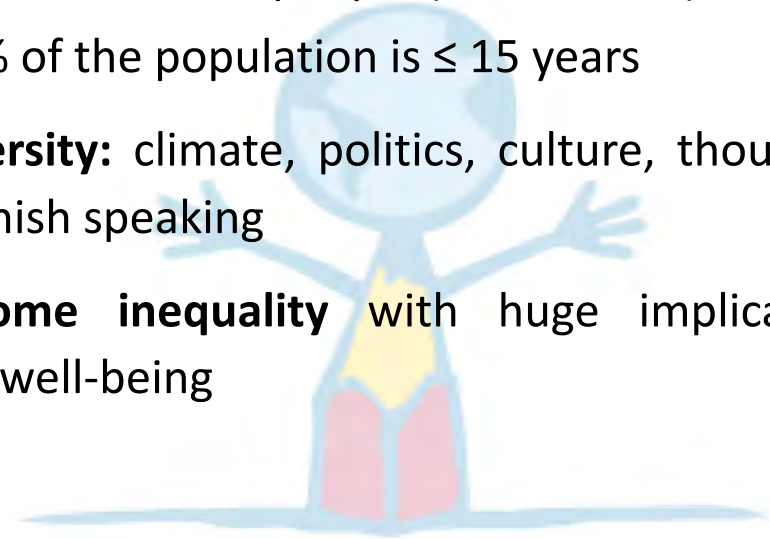


1- The context: Latin America



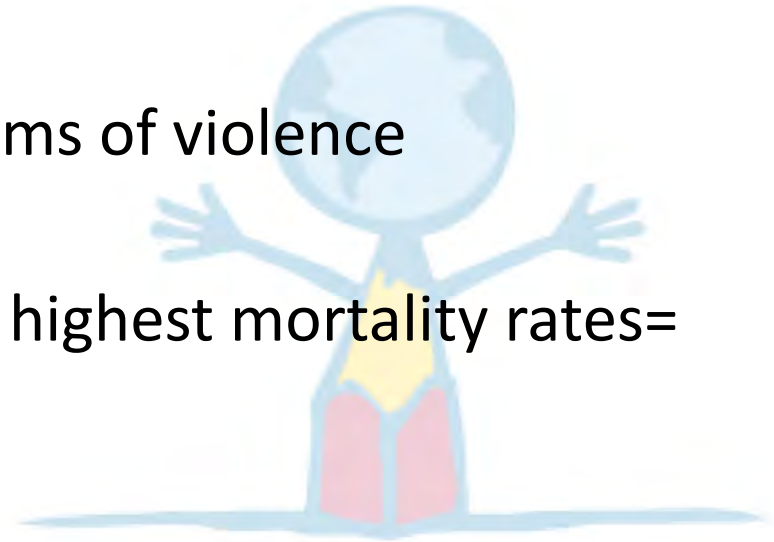
BASIC FACTS:

- **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

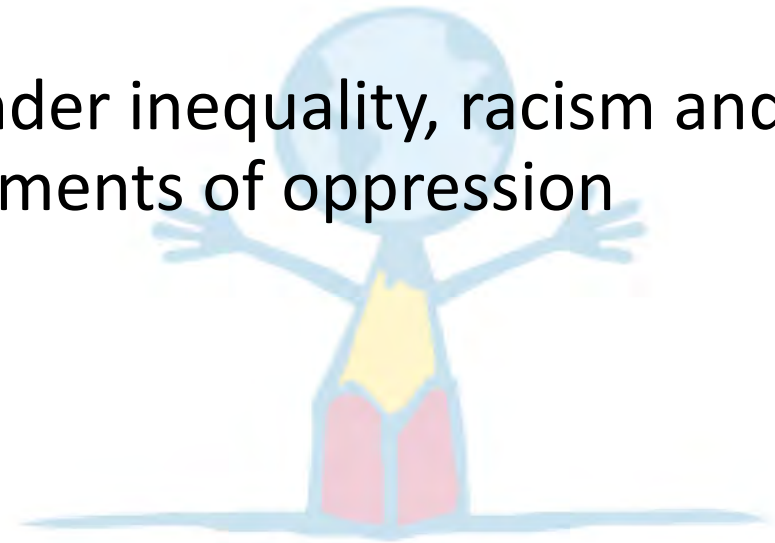
Mortality rate (15 - 19)

Country	Year	Rate (per 100,000)	Ranking
México	2012	95.6	1
El Salvador	2012	55.8	2
Brasil	2013	54.9	3
Colombia	2011	49.3	4
Panamá	2012	39.7	5
Argentina	2012	9.7	12
EE.UU.	2010	8.3	14
Chile	2012	6.1	18
Canadá	2011	2.1	27

Waiselfisz, J. *Mapa da Violencia 2015*, comparing figures from The World Health Organization in 85 countries.

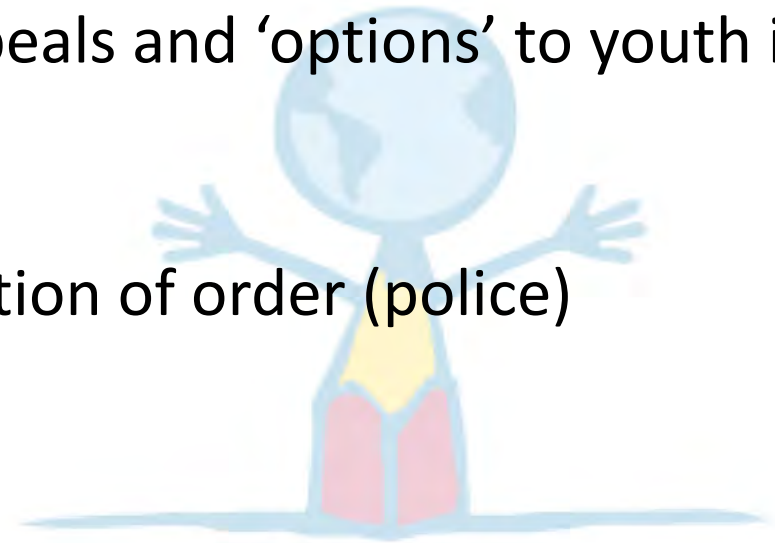
2 - Framing urban violence in Latin America

- 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)



3 - *Carioca and tapatio youth: perceptions of violence in Brazil and Mexico*

What youth from the favelas (Brazil) or barrios (AL) have to say about the violence in their daily lives?

- Youth from the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro and Guadalajara: la favela Vila Ipiranga en 'Fonseca', Niteroi, RJ and la colonia Francisco I. Madero, 'Cerro del 4', Tlaquepaque, Jalisco)



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



Irene Rizzini y Natalia Limongi (Universidad Católica de Rio de Janeiro (PUC-Rio), Brasil)

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

	Interviews	Age	M	F	Study	Work formal	Work informal
Fonseca (2014)	14	18-26	2	12	8	3	1
Cerro del 4 (2016)	10	15-26	6	4	5	1	8

Brazil

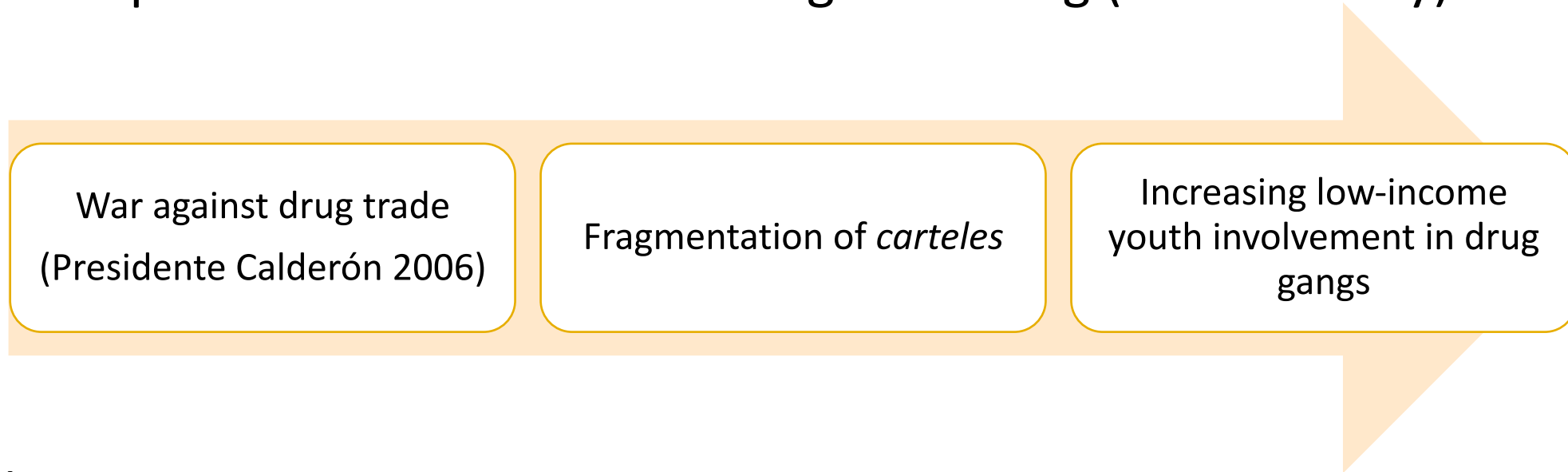
- Increase of drug related violence/cocaine (1980s)



- 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

Analysis

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 *barrrios*. 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

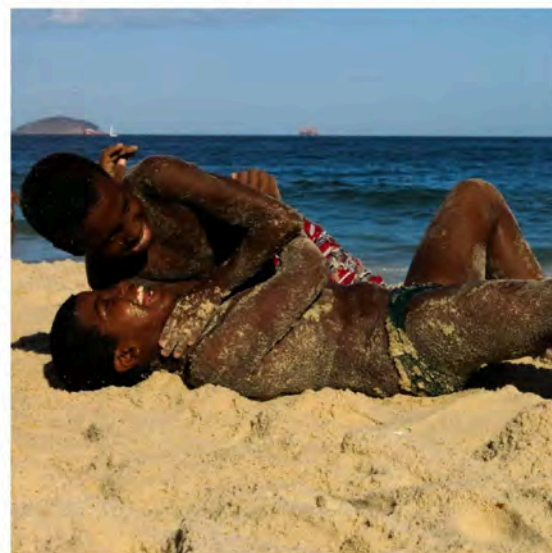
Final remarks

- 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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