

Mori Grant Report

Title: Impacts of drug-related violence upon youth- Case study:
Cuernavaca town, Morelos, Mexico.

Adviser: Michio Umegaki, PhD

Student Name: Hernandez Gonzalez Luisa Isabel
81224165
1st year student
Human Security and Communication Program

Background:

In 2006, the Federal Mexican Government started a direct confrontation with the drug trafficking gangs. Instead of reducing the violence, the policy increased and spread the confrontations and executions. Approximately 45,515 murders related with the organized crime have occurred and 230,000 people have changed their place of residence. Morelos, a State located in the center of Mexico, has been torn apart by explosions of drug related violence, and its status has changed from a place where the drugs used to pass through to a place for destination and consumption. Thus, the present research focuses on the disruption of daily life due to the exposure to drug related violence among young people between 14 and 17 years old living in this community.

Contents:

Mexico is facing an alarming wave of drug related violence. The research focuses on the disruption of daily life due to the exposure to this violence among young people. Paying attention to aspects of violence that criminal statistics leave aside, it tries to understand how the daily routine of youth has been disrupted, how they cope with the violence and how their social relations have been affected. Considering young people as active members of the community, the research aims to provide recommendations on how they, along with some local organizations, can rebuild their social relations and reduce their vulnerability.

Objective:

- The present research focuses on the disruption of daily life due to the exposure to drug related violence among young people.
 - To pay attention to aspects of violence that criminal statistics, mainly based on murder rates, leave aside.

- To understand how youth perceive this violence and how their daily routine has been disrupted.
- To understand how they manage to cope with the violence they are facing.

Research Activities:

The research mainly relies on in-depth interviews and field work observations.

Site: Community of Tejalpa, Jiutepec, Morelos, México.

Date: 03 Aug 2012 – 13 Sep 2012

I have interviewed 30 students between 14-17 years old in 3 different places: Technical middle school N.22 and N.41 (the only ones in the community) and a community center named “New Life Center“.

Research Findings:

Signs of disruption

- Some people have move out of the community because of fear. But also people from the surrounding areas affected by confrontations for territory control have move in.
- Due to the extortion from the drug dealers or the fear to face it, some business have closed or at least they have change their opening and closing time.
- The atmosphere of the community changes considerably at night, people says that after 10 is a completely different place so normally they avoid to go out if it is not extremely necessary.
- Now is pretty normal to see cars from the police or the army going around completely armed.
- The absence rates are high and some kids have quit school.
- They have a more aggressive behavior and they tend to ignore any authority.
- The school start an activity call parents patrols that keep an eye around the schools when kids enter school and when go out to make sure there is no people selling drugs and the kids go back home and don't stay hanging around.

Finding 1: Feel Fear

- Some of them have had an extremely direct contact with drug related violence because relatives or close friends have been killed, “levantados“ or extorted.
- They have also experienced abuses from the police and the military.

Finding 2: Drugs became part of their daily life

- Is evident that drug related violence has become part of their reality, is part of their daily conversation and even their language has changed using terms related with the activities of the drug dealers.
- When you ask them what is violence they make a direct relation with drug related violence and their immediate examples are: the confrontations of the drug dealers (shootings), kidnappings, “levantones“, extortions, etc.
- Drug consumption has become a common activity. Now is really easy to buy drugs, before you had to look for them, but now you can get them even in the main streets at any time of the day.
- Drug dealers have become a role model and a source of income and social recognition.

Finding 3: They changed their daily activities

- Their parents don't let them go out like before, especially at night.
- They stopped going to places like football yards or parks where they used to spend their free time. They know they can get into trouble since are places where either the drug dealers or the police go around pretty often.
- They pay more attention to who they hang around with because you can not trust people any more and you can end up killed or in jail just because you are with the wrong people.
- They have changed their way to dress up not to attract attention.
- The role of this youth gangs has changed. Before they were a way to use free time and not necessarily linked with illicit activities. Now drug dealers are taking advantage of the youth gangs and the kids are enrolling not just as a way to find a sense of belonging but as attempt to survive the new risks they are facing.

Finding 4: There are two types of kids

- 1) The ones that have changed their routine because they are afraid
- 2) The ones that are not afraid and try to continue with their normal life
 - They try to ignore the presence of violence (don't watch the news or read their news papers, so they don't get scared)
 - They said there is no point to be afraid because they have to die at some point or God is the one who decides when you will die.
 - “Violence is just in our minds, I have to die from something“
 - They feel safe in their neighborhood because they have been living there their whole life

Young people should be considered not just as victims, but as active members of the community. It is really important to understand their efforts to sustain their lives as before, in order to provide useful recommendations on how they, along with some local organizations, can rebuild their social relations and reduce their vulnerability to violence.