

Urban crime and violence in Latin America

Lessons from research in Colombia, Guatemala and Ecuador

Caroline Moser

Senior Fellow
Brookings Institution

Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars March 21st 2007

Structure of the presentation

1. Contextual background: Why is urban violence important?
2. The contribution of participatory research to understanding violence
3. Impact of violence and insecurity on the lives of the poor
4. Conclusions: Future Challenges
5. *Research sources for presentation*

1. Contextual background: Why is urban violence important?

1. *Global issues: Violence as an obstacle to development*

- ❑ Globalization and ‘politicization of crime’: increasing linkages between political and criminal violence
- ❑ Blurring of boundaries between *conflict and violence*; ‘urbanization of warfare’; increased attacks on civilians
- ❑ Weakening state and rise of alternative forms of private security

2. *The increasing scale of urban violence in Latin American cities*

- ❑ Varies both between and within countries
- ❑ More commonly associated with city growth rate than city size

3. *Implications for urban populations*

- ❑ Linkages to inequality and exclusion, as much as poverty
- ❑ ***Tolerance*** levels differ contextually and according to types of violence
- ❑ Recognition that violence involves the exercise of ***power***
- ❑ Uncertainty generated by violence expressed in ***fear and insecurity***

2. The contribution of participatory research to understanding urban violence

- ❑ **Participatory methodology:** Acknowledge the ‘**voices**’ of the poor as much as the ‘wisdom’ of professionals (*Robert Chambers*)
 - ❑ ‘Legitimacy’ enhanced through poverty research
- ❑ **Participatory Urban Appraisal (PUA) Violence Methodology**
 - ❑ Draws on Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)
- ❑ **Foundations:** in Freire’s participatory research, applied anthropology, farming systems
 - ❑ Critical principles of PRA/PUA:
 - ❑ Learn rapidly, flexibly and iteratively
 - ❑ Reverse learning - ‘they do it’; shift in power
 - ❑ From verbal to visual
 - ❑ From individual to group
 - ❑ To reach policy makers; Important to quantify the ‘qualitative’ focus groups

Empirical evidence base from urban violence PUAs

❑ 1. Research:

- ❑ **Jamaica:** country's 4 main urban centers (1997)
- ❑ **Colombia and Guatemala:** 18 Cities/ towns across the country(1999)
 - ❑ *Sample size: Colombia 1414; Guatemala 1860 (approx.)*
- ❑ **Guayaquil, Ecuador:** Longitudinal study of asset accumulation and poverty reduction (1978-2005)

❑ 2. Violence frameworks and guidelines include:

- ❑ Violence reduction guidelines for Central America (*DFID and Asdi*)
- ❑ Violence and urban poverty (*World Bank LAC FIPSE*)
- ❑ Gender-based violence (*World Bank Gender Unit*)

❑ 3. Local peace projects in Colombia:

- ❑ Local initiatives for peace project (*Corona Foundation*); Seedcorn Fund (*Asdi*)
- ❑ Technical assistance to 22 Colombian women's organizations to build consensus to work collaboratively on peace (2002-2006) (*Asdi*)

Development of an integrated framework for violence reduction

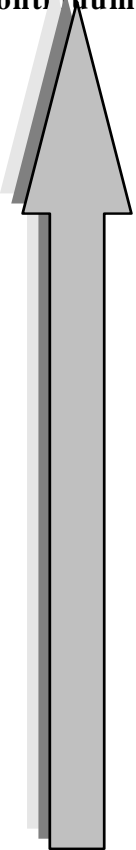
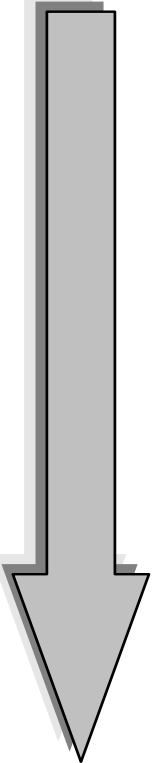
- ❑ What types of urban violence affect local women, men and children?
- ❑ **Research in Guatemala and Colombia shows:**
 - Importance of recognizing the multifaceted complexity and scale of daily violence
 - Interrelationships between different categories of violence
 - **In Colombia:** 9 urban communities identified 25 types of violence on average
 - **One community** identified 60 types
- ❑ **Categorization of violence**
- ❑ **Methodology:** Quantification of listings to develop categorizations of violence

Types of Violence in Nine Urban Colombian Communities

(1999) (in percentages)

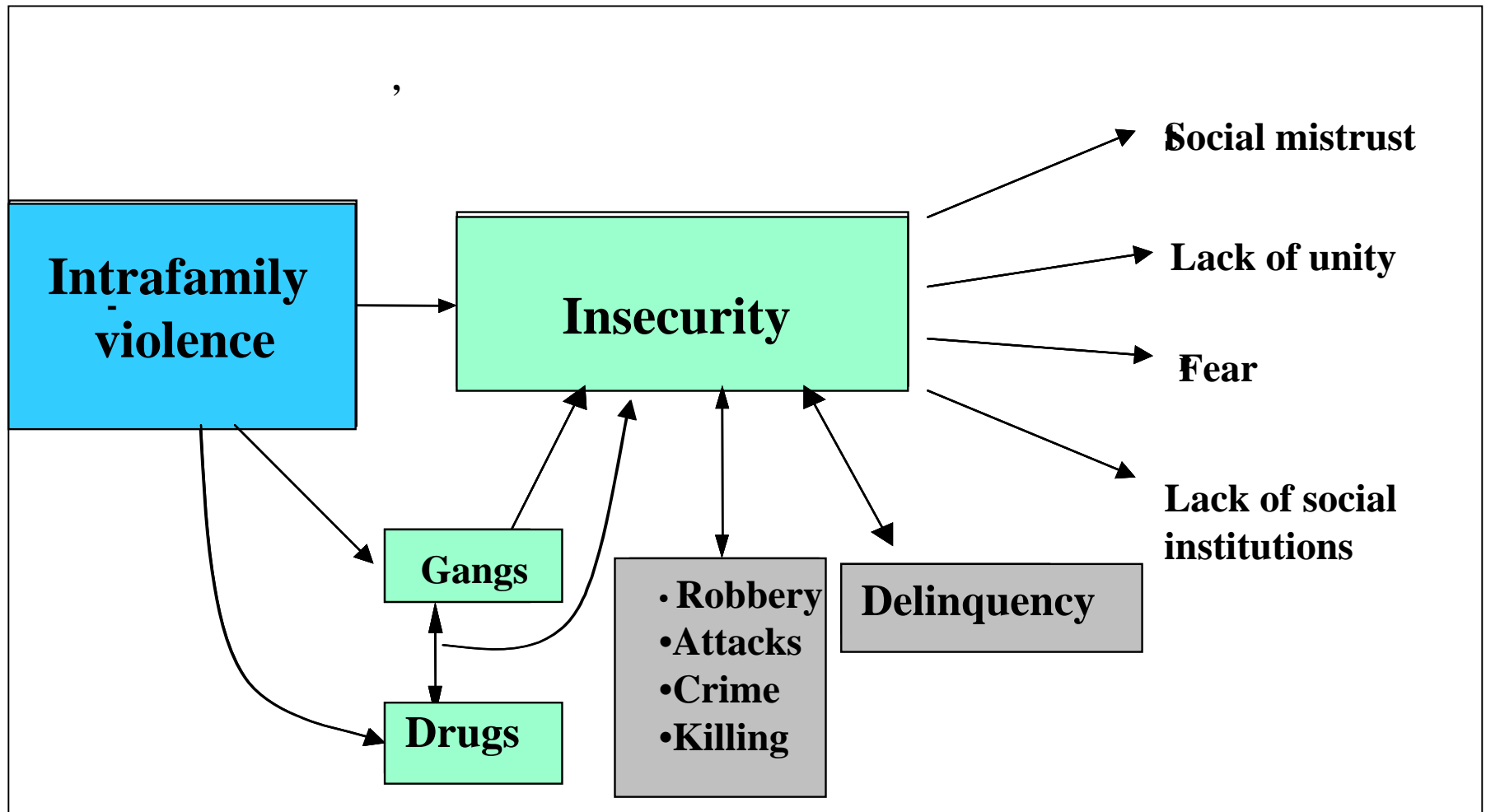
Economic	54
Drug	14
Insecurity	13
Robbery	15
Other	12
Social	32
Inside the home	10
Outside the home	18
Outside and inside	4
Political	14
Police abuses	4
War	3
Paramilitaries	2
Assassinations	2
Other	3
Total	100

Roadmap of Types of Violence in Central America

Primary direction of violence continuum 	Category of violence	Type of violence	Secondary direction of violence continuum 
	Political / institutional	Institutional violence of the state and other 'informal' institutions	
	Institutional / economic	Organized crime	
	Economic / social	Gangs (Maras)	
	Economic	Delinquency / robbery	
	Economic/ social	Street children (boys and girls)	
	Social	Domestic violence between adults	
	Social	Child abuse : boys and girls	
	Social	Inter-generational conflict between parent and children (both young and adults)	
	Social	Gratuitous/routine daily violence	

Relationship between Intra-family Violence and Insecurity

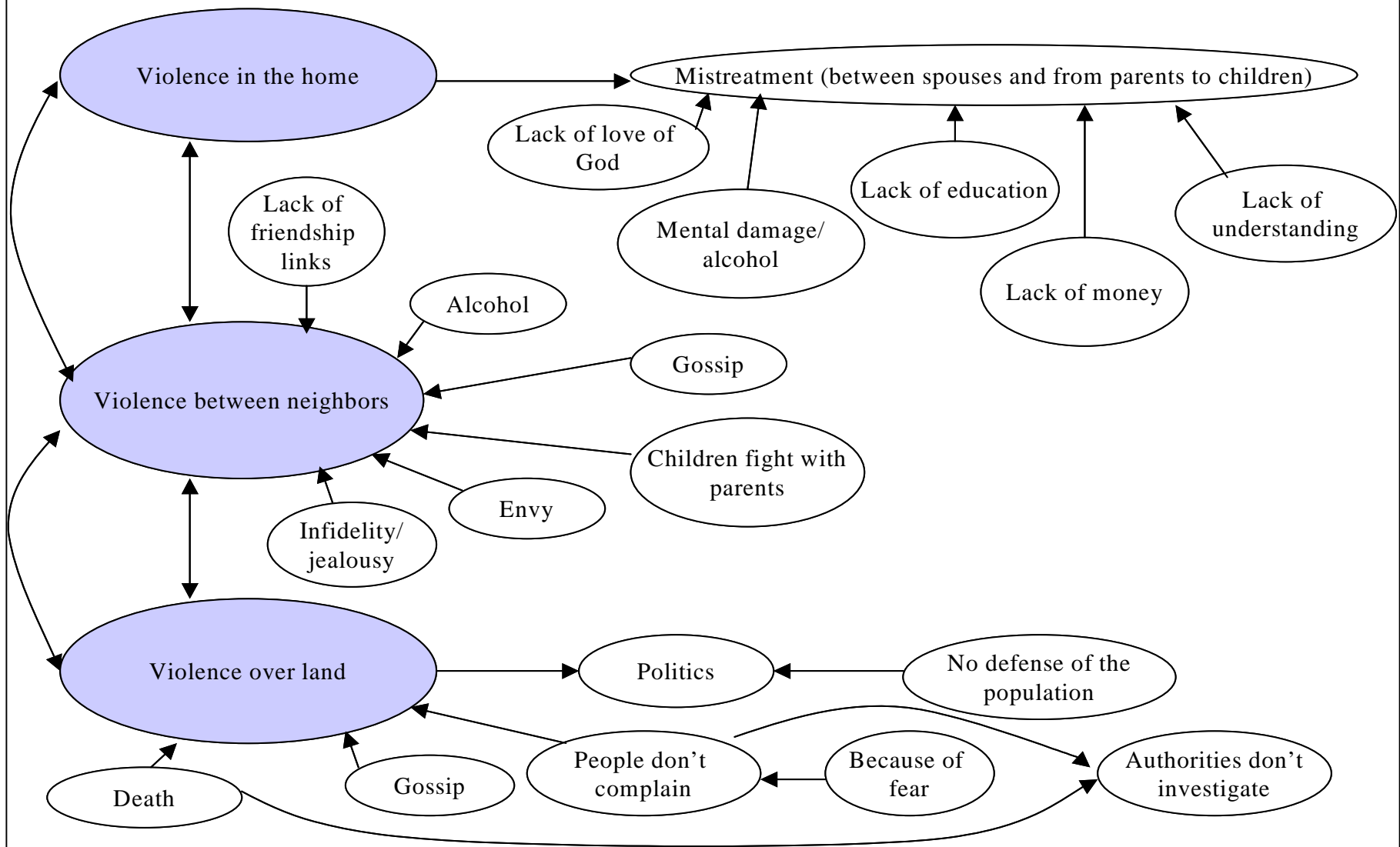
Bucaramanga, Colombia



2. Causal factors underlying urban violence

- ❑ **Multidimensional, endemic, context specific nature and interrelated nature of violence**
 - ❑ Requires an holistic approach
- ❑ ***Structural issues of power and powerlessness***
 - ❑ Inequality, exclusion, poverty and unemployment
 - ❑ Linkages to greed and corruption
 - ❑ Crisis of governance, 'failing' states and non-state forms of governance
- ❑ ***Individual issues of identity and agency***
 - ❑ Social actors face alternative ways of formulating objectives
 - ❑ Identity associated with gender, ethnicity, age and religion
- ❑ ***Interrelationships between different types of violence***
 - ❑ Causing as well as sustaining violence

Figure 1. Causal Impact Diagram of Interrelationships among Intra-Family Violence, Violence between Neighbors, and Violence over Land in Colombia Chiquita, Aguazul, Prepared by a Mixed Sex Group of Adults



3. Impact of violence and insecurity on the lives of the poor

❑ *Direct economic costs*

- ❑ Measured as associated losses due to death / disability

❑ *Indirect spatial costs*

- ❑ Reorganization of space because of increased crime and violence
- ❑ Lack of confidence in state's capacity to effectively police
 - ❑ Rich: socio-spatial 'fear-management' strategies living in 'fortified enclaves with electrified fences, CCTV cameras
 - ❑ Poor: dogs; window grills, high walls

❑ *Costs of erosion of capabilities and capital assets of the poor*

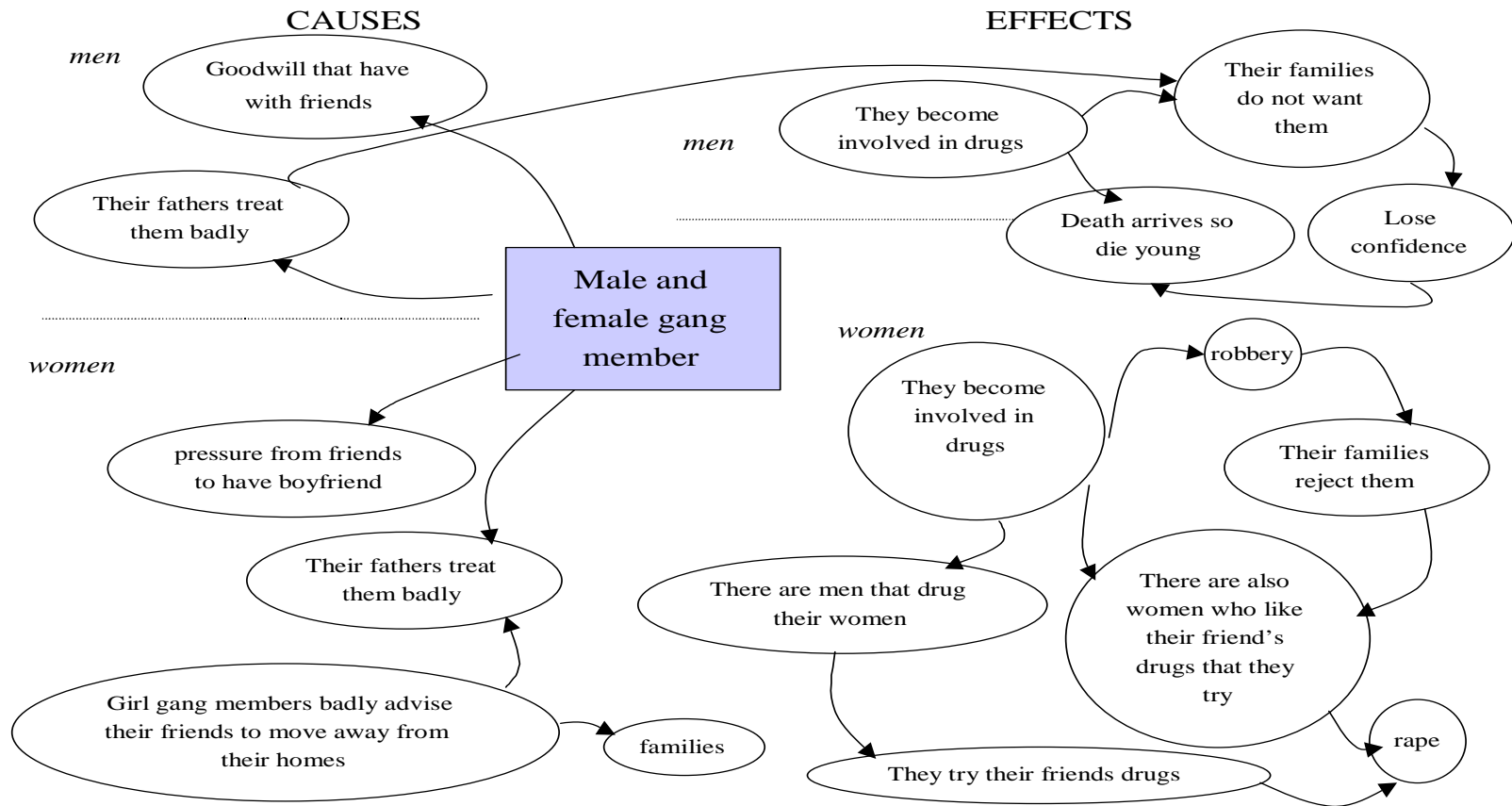
- ❑ Physical
- ❑ Financial
- ❑ Human
- ❑ Social

**Dibujo de violencia sexual contra los menores en el hogar, realizado por una niña de 13 años
de El Carmen, Santa Lucía Cotzumalguapa**



MÍME DA MIEDO QUE CUANDO DUEYMA ME PUADAN
VIOLA R ESTES ES EL MIEDO QUE TENGO YO

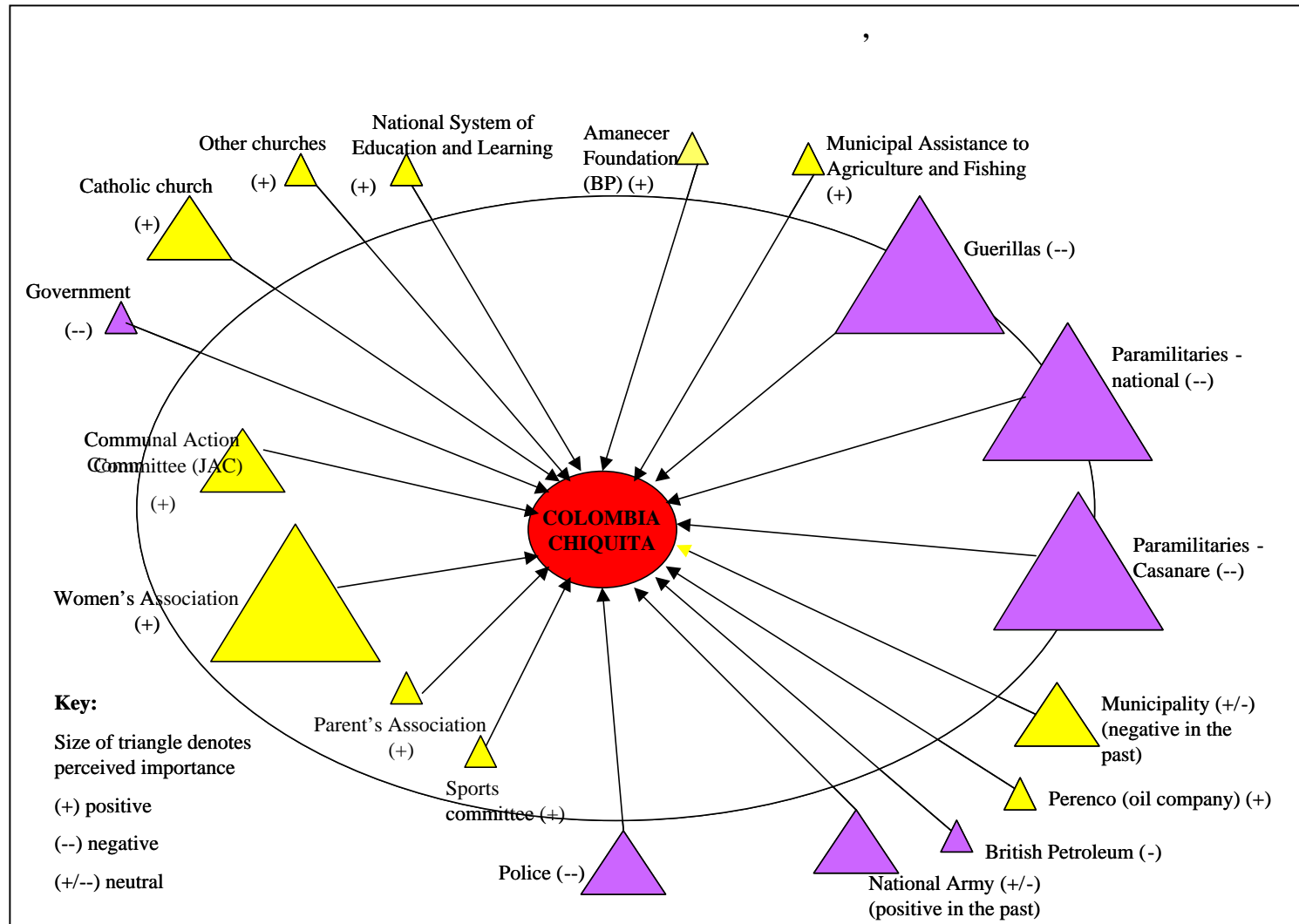
Causes and Effects of Being a Male and Female Gang Member in El Merced, Guatemala City,



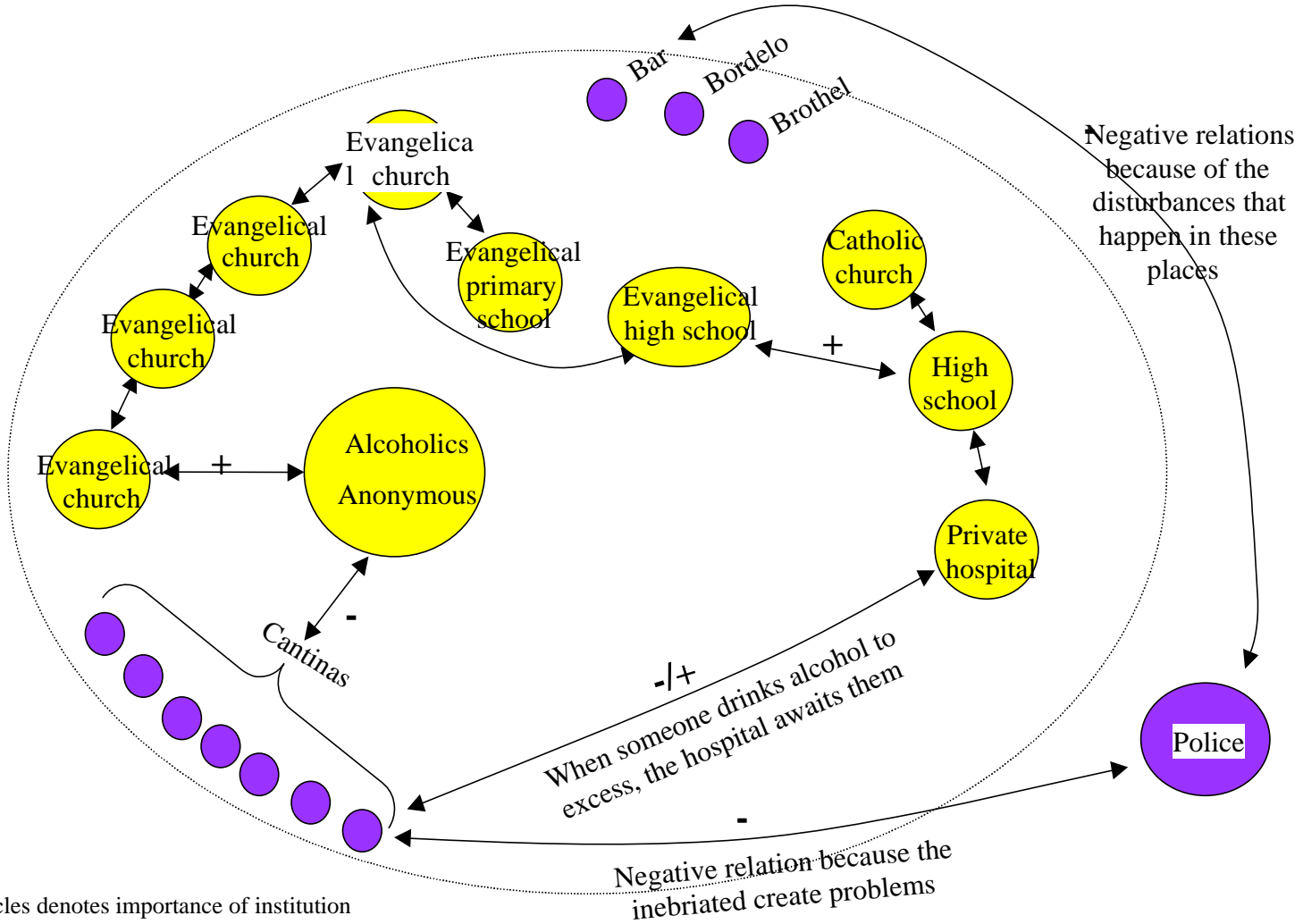
Impact of violence on social capital

- ❑ **Productive social capital:** generates benefits and development for the entire community as a public good.
- ❑ **Perverse social capital:** generates benefit for those within the relevant organization but damages the community, and is not a public good (*Rubio 1997*)
- ❑ **Institutional mapping results from the Colombian PUA show**
 - ❑ 1 in 5 membership institutions generated perverse social capital:
 - ❑ Gangs, paramilitary, or militia: *social capital reconstituted rather than eroded*
 - ❑ Women and childcare groups were the most trusted membership organizations (88%).
 - ❑ Violence-related membership organizations were least trusted (82%), followed by state institutions, such as the police and judicial system.

Perceptions of Local Organizations in Yopal, Colombia



Institutional Mapping of Limoncito, San Marcos



Guayaquil Intergenerational Study:

The impacts of changing aspirations between parents and kids

- **Work preferences have changed**

- Increased education has raised job expectations
- Kids are no longer prepared to do informal sector work like parents
 - Tailors, builders or washerwomen

- **Consumer durables**

- Kids have far higher expectations than parents in terms of durables

- **Financial capital**

- Kids have lower financial capital even than parents in 1978

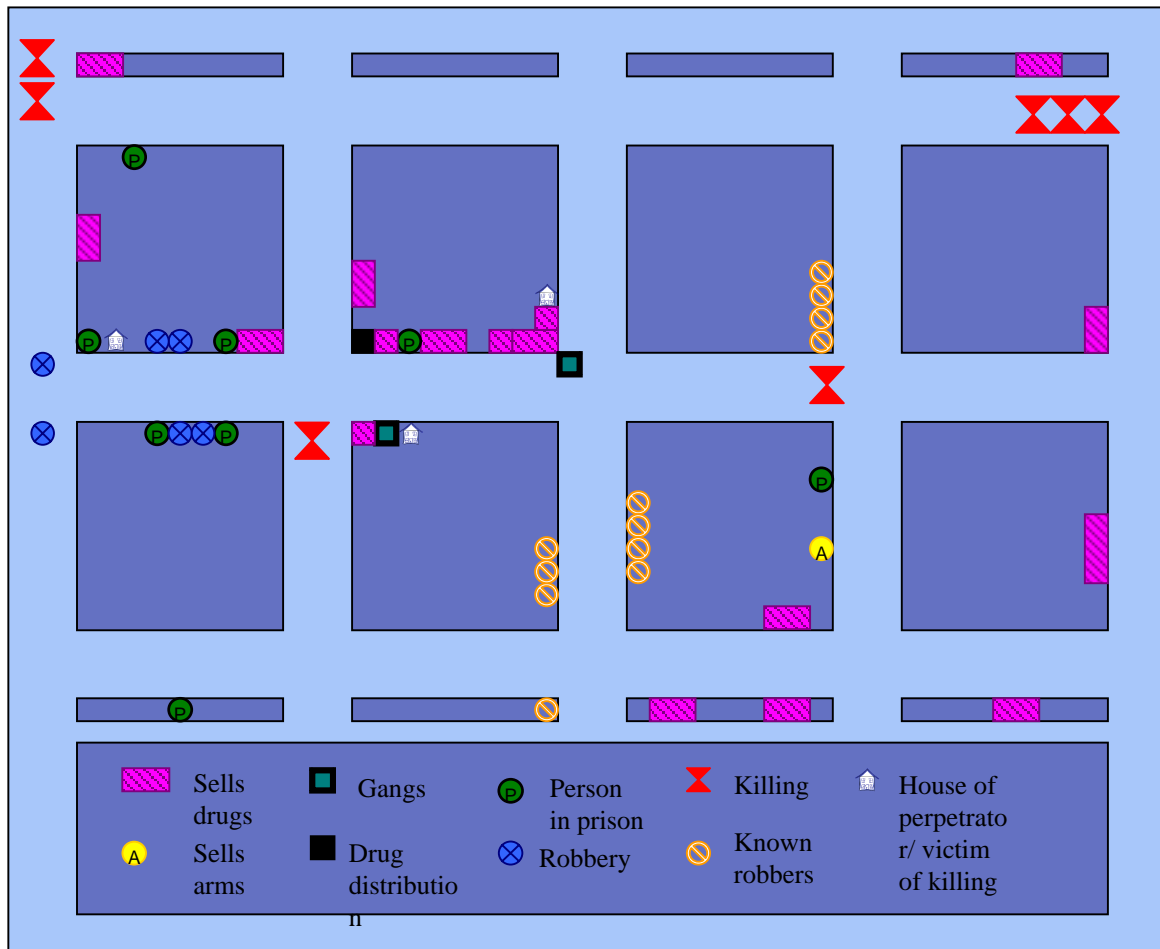
- **Kids meet needs by:**

- Borrowing credit (86% had credit)
- Formation of gangs and selling drugs,
- House robbery and street and public transport attacks

- ***Outcome: greater insecurity, fear and violence***

Map of dangerous locations, events and people during December 2004-March 2005

Focus group of three local women



- In this two block area of the same street, comprising some 100 households there were:
- 6 gang or drug-related killings
 - 15 known robbers
 - Armed young men robbing women as getting off the bus
 - 3 young men currently in prison
 - One of the biggest drug distribution leaders
 - 15 known small shops sell drugs – mainly cocaine paste
 - Teenage boys cycling around selling drugs at a dollar a go
 - Police cars cruising past on daily basis

4 IDB Citizen Security Projects:

Components and budget allocations

Component	Colombia		Jamaica		El Salvador		Honduras	
	\$	%	\$	%	\$	%	\$	%
Institutional strengthening	27.9	29	5.2	26	8.4	24	6.8	31
Community & other actions to prevent juvenile violence and delinquency	19.7	20	7.6	38	13.8	39	11.4	51
Social awareness and communication	8.8	9	.6	3	4.1	11	.5	2
Community policing and criminal justice	28.5	30	2.8	14	3.3	9	.9	4
TOTAL	95.6	100	20	100	35.4	100	22.2	100

4. Conclusions : Future Challenges

- ❑ Are there blue-print solutions?
- ❑ **Appalling and almost universal distrust in state's capacity**
 - ❑ To control or prevent crime
 - ❑ Structural problems with policing and judiciary systems
- ❑ **Rapid expansion in 'non-state forms of social governance**
 - ❑ Extra-judicial forms of justice-social cleansing, lynching
 - ❑ Privatization of security conducting public policing
- ❑ **Importance of consulting local communities in designing solutions**
 - ❑ Are **gangs** or agents in own rights: social movements?
 - ❑ Crime prevention not simply a policing function; require a partnership approach
 - ❑ Shift from sector level interventions towards *more integrated approaches* – recognition of plurality of actors and complexity
- ❑ **Addressing fear: isolates poor in house and rich in segregated spaces**

Research sources for presentation

1. Primary research:

- C. Moser and J. Holland (1997) 'Urban Poverty and Violence in Jamaica' *World Bank Latin American and Caribbean Studies: Viewpoints*, Washington DC, World Bank
- C. Moser and C. McIlwaine (2004) *Encounters with Violence in Latin America: Urban poor perceptions from Colombia and Guatemala*, London and New York, Routledge
- Moser, C. and A. Felton (2007) 'Intergenerational Asset Accumulation and Poverty Reduction in Guayaquil, Ecuador, 1978-2004' in Moser, C. (ed.) *Reducing Global Poverty: The Case for Asset Accumulation*, Washington DC, Brookings Institution

2. Violence frameworks and guidelines include:

- C. Moser and C. McIlwaine (2006) 'Latin American Urban Violence as a Development Concern: Towards a Framework for Violence Reduction', *World Development*, Vol. 34, No 1, pp 89-112
- C. Moser and A. Winton (2002) *Violence in the Central American Region: Towards an Integrated Framework for Violence Reduction*, ODI Working Paper 17, London, ODI
- C. Moser, A. Winton and A. Moser (2005) 'Violence, Fear and Insecurity among the Urban Poor in Latin America' in M. Fay (ed.) *The Urban Poor in Latin America*, Washington DC, World Bank
- C. Moser and C. McIlwaine (2000) 'Perceptions of Urban Violence: Participatory Appraisal Techniques', *Urban Peace Program Series, Latin America and Caribbean Region Sustainable Development*

3. Local peace projects in Colombia:

- C. Moser, A. Acosta and M.E. Vásquez (2006) *Mujeres y Paz: Construcción de Consensos, Guía para procesos participativos e incluyentes*, Bogota, Social Policy International