

Foreword

Introduction to Vol. 6, No. 2 of the Latin-American Review of Social Sciences, Childhood and Youth

"Research Panorama in Youth in Ibero-America, XXI Century"

The Latin American Journal of Social Sciences, Childhood and Youth, the "Youth and new political practices in Latin America" "Clacso" Work Group and the Youths, Cultures and Powers Research Group of the Doctoral Program in Social Sciences, Childhood and Youth dedicates this monographic issue to the topic entitled Contemporary Research Trends about Youths in Latin America, that was initially considered to be extended to Ibero-America. Concomitantly, in Europe, Young: Nordic Journal of Youth Research prepares an issue devoted to define a state-of-the-art of its main interest object in Latin America.

The call to research centers and to various knowledge-producing academic entities has become very popular and has had a wide acceptance. We have received more than thirty top-quality articles, from which almost half of them have been selected to be published in this issue of the journal. We think that in the next number of the journal, we will publish other articles that especially important and which are currently under reviewing and correction.

There is no doubt that youth, as a study object, has become a topic of great political and ideological relevance in Latin America, from early the XX century. We should not forget that youth studies, as an autonomous knowledge area, and that youth policies, as a specific intervention area, became institutionalized just in 1985 with the celebration of the International year of Youth. It is also important to highlight that in the last decade research on the topic has been

particularly active and innovating in the field of social sciences. An example of that is the creation and permanence of various academic journals in Mexico, Colombia, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil, among other countries.

Nevertheless, although there has been an attempt to gather and synthesize the amount of research that has been yielded, it is evident that there is a lack of a comprehensive collective look and of an interpretative reading of the trends that are recently appearing from the dynamics that take place in some significant scenarios.

We count, obviously, on the yearly reports about World Youth from the United Nations, the studies conducted at the Research Centers, contracted either by national or local administrations, with the aim to design youth policies; the publications of the Youth institute in Spain – Injuve-; the reports entitled *“Youth, population and development in Latin America and the Caribbean”* (2000) and *“Youth in Ibero-America: trends and urgencies”* (2004), published by Cepal-Celade; a state-of-the-art about research on youth in Latin America (Pérez Islas, 2006) which highlights the tradition of the states-of-the-art in Mexico, Uruguay, Chile and Colombia; the efforts in sector topics such as education, employment and health (Unesco, Cinterfor, OPS, BID, GTZ); the integrated effort in the Youth Portal for Latin America and the Caribbean (www.joveneslac.org), where various calls to consolidate states-of-the-arts have been formulated; the amount of research produced from the times of the student movement in 1968 by the Mexican Institute of Youth, that was systematically collected in *“Youths: a knowledge assessment. The research on youth in Mexico, 1986-1999”* (2000); and, also in Mexico, the *National Youth Survey 2000*, which treats among many other topics: values, attitudes, perceptions, beliefs and practices. In Colombia it is worthwhile to mention *“... a state-of-the-art (2003), with national coverage [...]”,* with nine great groups of topics (visions on the future, family, body, education, socio-labor insertion, coexistence and conflict, juvenile cultures versus production and cultural consumption, social and political participation and public policies), which guided the search by all the research teams. Each group of topics, at the same time, covers other topics with a wide range of related subtopics. Additional to these topics, two analytical transversal axes were designed: the notions of *subject* (detached in vulnerability and risk, social danger, identity search, social change, juvenile cultures and others), and *diversity* (which implied social class, urban-rural, gender, sexual orientation,

ethnic-racial, and disability), from which the construction of youth from the various researches was examined, in order to understand what representations about the young subject were being produced" (Pérez Islas, 2006).

However, emptiness is still immense: Brazil is a great unknown, Central America and the Caribbean are marginal, and the groups of topics that worry youths the most in their daily lives are frequently absent: communication and the interaction with TIC's, the various forms of violence, migrations, the construction of subjectivities and the options of citizen life.

A look at the set of articles received and, specially, at those selected for publication in the journal, allows us to see some interesting trends. We have a very wide range of topics and approaches. Of course, the great sector matters are also present: education, health, employment, public policies. On the other hand, other topics that could be of interest also emerge in the scenario: aboriginal and rural youth, sexual life and homosexuality, cultural consumption, student identity, diverse forms of violence (in boyfriendship and in politics, in the intimate and private environments), stigmatization in the media, labor market uncertainty, foundational youth ways and myths, citizen participation and young administration.

Without doubt, new theoretical approaches are being built as a result from the juvenile condition that emerges in the new century and which should be taken into account by means of new conceptual tools. It is also important the richness of approaches resulting from research and, consequently, the emerging multiple options to analyze the phenomena that at the accelerated rhythm of daily life appear with a certain opacity, even though they look to be known.

In the first section, devoted to theory and metatheory, the reader will find four papers. To start with, there is the reflection by Brazilians Zuleika Köhler Gonzales and Neuza María de Fátima Guareschi. Based on psychological practices, they make a balance about the discursivity that has been produced about youth its social consequences on the "ways to be young". Secondly, Pablo Vommaro and Melina Vásquez review youth protagonism in the social movements of the 90s in Argentina, taking the case of Unemployed Workers, autonomous in their way of participating, in the middle of the apathy resulting from the institutional policy. They build a clear perspective about a generation that politically socializes itself in the middle of disenchantment. Thirdly, Juan Manuel

Castellanos Obregón and William Fernando Torres Silva make a wide bibliographical review in order to propose a comprehensive look about the armed juvenile subject in Colombia and the readings made on his compromise with violence and the internal conflict. Finally, Patricia Botero Gómez, Juliana Torres Hincapié and Sara Victoria Alvarado present a state-of-the-art of the “citizen participation-youth policies” categories, betting on the construction of a dialogic relation among youths as citizens as well as political actors.

In the second section, nine papers resulting from research have been included. If they are grouped in three big study objects, we can consider that the first refers to papers dealing with socio-cultural topics and approaches, such as consumption, migration, gender violence and affective relationships, and cultural conceptions on AIDS. The second study object refers mainly to young students, although the topics differ in their content and approach, such as identities, intergenerational relations, social imaginaries about university students. The third one aims at approaching youth policies, referring both to work and to scientific formation.

In the first group (with a culturological approach) we find, first of all, an article resulting from the doctoral dissertation by Emilia Bermúdez, where she analyzes in detail the cultural consumptions of youths in the “malls” in Maracaibo (Venezuela) and the construction of identity representations in those glocal territories. Then, there is the paper written by Maritza Urteaga Castro Pozo, devoted to youth Mexican natives migrating to urban zones, thus suffering, through cultural displacement, from multiple forms of exclusion. She highlights, through ethnographic literature about Mexican native peoples, the invisibilization of young natives and the increasing interest by researchers in their emergence in the cities. Next, the paper by Verónica Vásquez García and Roberto Castro deals with the analysis of the various types of violence in boyfriendship among adolescents at Universidad Autónoma Chapingo (Mexico). This is a pioneering work which invites to think about the facts, from a gender approach based upon a rich testimonial evidence. Finally, there is an exploratory transversal study by Aldo Favio Lozano González, Teresa Margarita Torres López and Carolina Aranda Beltrán who deal with HIV/SIDA in students at the University of Guadalajara (Mexico) from a cultural perspective. Elements such as fatalism, stigmas and moral designations with reference to sexual practices are abundant.

In the second group (where youths-students are the protagonists), we find, in first place, the paper based upon the doctoral dissertation by Victoria Eugenia Pinilla and her tutor Germán Muñoz González. The study aims at understanding, through a hermeneutic approach, the generational youth-adult relations among university youths in the city of Manizales, Colombia, and, in these relations, to understand the meaning that “the public” has in various settings of the private, in the constant tension of their behaviors, their norms and values. Then there is the paper by Nicolás Malinowski about the identity of young students in the course of their university and academic life in Mexico, thus constructing a life project centered around knowledge, but in connection with a wider environment. Finally, Napoleón Murcia Peña studies, among students and faculty staff at the University of Caldas, Colombia, the imaginaries that make up youth university life, with a great emphasis on marginalization.

In the third group there is a reference to youth policies by means, first, of the paper written by Aura Cecilia Pedraza Avella about juvenile labor market in Colombia, which shows the precariousness conditions existing between the economically active population and the poor political responses. Héctor Mauricio Rojas Betancur deals with public policies aiming at the scientific formation of Colombian children and youths, the backwardness in the field of social development and the problems related to the defective design of programs in the corresponding educational institutions.

Following the aforementioned issues, there are sections three and four, where we should highlight the XXXIV Symposium in History and Anthropology, International Edition: Land and Water: history protagonists”, that will be held in Hermosillo, Sonora, on February 24, 25, 26 and 27, 2009. This event is sponsored by the University of Sonora through its Department of History and Anthropology, with the collaboration of El Colegio de Sonora, the Research Center in Nutrition and Development, the Colegio de Bachilleres of the Province of Sonora, the Municipal Institute of Culture and Art, the Inah Sonora Center and the History Sonora Society. In the Third Section, electronically published at the URL of the journal, there are all the details concerning registration and topics of such an important call.

The Fourth Section replicates the question “¿How could each of us contribute to the construction of a sustainable future?”, as stated by Amparo Vilches and Daniel Gil Pérez from Spain. This is a proposal

concerning a collective agenda so that all of us contribute to the urgent conservation of natural resources by incorporating, into our daily lives, actions aiming at achieving this goal. We hope that our readers will accept this guide as a means for their own survival and that of the planet and they will read it in the virtual section. Besides, we hope that they will diffuse it widely according to their possibilities.

We also hope that this material will contribute to the visibilization and strengthening of research in the fields dealt with, and to the transformation of our own realities for the positive impact on the wellbeing of the great Latin American community.

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