

**Family practices and child participation:  
an exploratory study from the point  
of view of children and adults In  
Latin America and the Caribbean**



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PROMUNDO

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## Is another childhood possible?

Democracy begins at birth. Citizenship starts during the early months and years in a human being's life. It may seem common sense, but it is important to point out that it is during the interaction and exchange between children, their fathers, mothers, those responsible for them and/or carers that the first impressions of the world are formed. During these moments and processes, we learn different styles and ways of interacting with the world and with others, we learn how to express our wishes and also to listen and negotiate with others – and these are the foundations of citizenship. But is there “citizenship” in today's families in Latin America and the Caribbean? Do fathers, mothers and other carers really interact with their children in ways that promote the practice of true citizenship?

We started this exploratory study on the assumption that the participation of the children – which we defined as a “combination of practices that aim to encourage, stimulate and allow children to express their views on the subjects that relate to them” – is an important precursor to learning how to feel and how to define oneself as a citizen. We listened to fathers, mothers, carers and children in urban and rural areas, of low income and middle classes in six countries in Central America, the Caribbean and South America, to try to understand how and if they experience “child participation”.

Unfortunately the results were not very optimistic. The children reported and the fathers, mothers and carers affirmed that, in general, the use of physical punishment prevails as a disciplinary measure and is seen by many parents as a “necessary evil” and experienced by the children as a violation of their rights. In spite of appearing in all the contexts studied, physical punishment emerg-

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es noticeably in rural areas, and in some cases, it seems to go along with the acceptance of the use of violence among couples (particularly of men against women).

We also heard criticism from the children about the lack of dialogue with their fathers, mothers and carers, and of the little amount of time they share with them – particularly where adults would dedicate time to entering and understanding the children's world. Children also reported pain, stress and lack of understanding in separations and family disruptions that occur frequently in all social classes, in all the countries researched. It is worthwhile pointing out that the separations and disruptions are not necessarily problematical in themselves – the problem lies in not explaining the reasons for the separation to the children, and entering into a dialogue to allow them to better understand and express their feelings regarding the situation they are experiencing.

With regard to domestic chores, we found that in the low income families in all six countries, both in rural and urban areas, the children are involved in these chores, from a tender age, with little possibility of choosing or negotiating how or which chores they wish to take part in. In several contexts, the overload of domestic work carried out by children was remarkable. The children also reported that not carrying out these chores, was a common reason for them to be subjected to physical punishment by their parents/carers.

In all the countries, the children said it is at school and with their friends that they find room for greater autonomy and relationships based on dialogue. Some children complained about bullying, about authoritarian teachers, about the lack of safe places to meet their friends and about violent or gossiping friends. However, generally speaking, the children find room for greater participation and autonomy with their peers at school or in leisure centres.

After all, what do the children want? They want more affection. They want to be heard. They want safe environments to meet their friends. They want time to play with their parents and moments in which their parents step into their innocent universes. It is important to emphasize that they are not necessarily talking about “more” time with their parents, but about more moments when parents are totally devoted to them.

If generally speaking the picture was discouraging, we also found grounds for optimism, particularly in the voices of the children and parents who want changes and are working towards them. Generally speaking, parents seem to want other alternatives to physical punishment and want a better future for their children.

In general, we noticed that families with more democratic and participatory practices in relationships between adults and children are the families with a higher equity of gender – meaning families where men and women participate in a more equal way in their domestic and working lives. On the other hand, more participatory families in family relationships demonstrate they have had greater access to other participatory environments or had, as a rule, more opportunities to practice their own citizenship. It may seem obvious, but it is worth pointing out that in order to create and to offer citizenship to children, it is necessary to offer the same to the parents.

Considering the small number of children who had the opportunity of an effective participation – either in their families or at school, the result was encouraging: children assume an assertive posture towards life, which differs a lot from a submissive and resigned attitude. In other words, children who are given the opportunity to participate, right from an early age, learn and show respect to others and face the world with greater self-esteem.

In the face of all this, is another kind of childhood possible? Are other childhoods possible? They are. But to achieve them, we need room for citizenship for the parents and carers themselves, as they are quite often overburdened with contexts of social unevenness. The differences that affect our region are experienced daily by the children. These differences affect directly and daily the quality of their lives, parental practices and recreate interactions based on stress, violence and lack of communication.

The children are complaining. They want to be heard. They want to be part of a fairer world. Are we capable of listening? Are we able to take action? They are waiting for us.

*Gary Barker*  
Promundo



# 1.

## Introduction

Co-ordinated by Promundo and with technical and financial support from Save the Children Sweden (SCS) and the Bernard Van Leer Foundation, the main purpose of this study was to identify the family practices that promote the participation of children, based on dialogue and understanding between adults and children, as well as those which inhibit or hinder such participation.

The family practices in this study were defined as a set of parents' behaviours and attitudes which transmit to their children ways of being and behaving in the world. This definition considers that family practices have complex compositions, i.e., what is transmitted and learnt in this exchange between the children and their parents/carers contain numerous nuances that create a historically determined culture of interaction between the children and the adults. Parents and carers, when educating children, not only transmit the rules of living together but also help in building up the children's role in society.

In this investigation, we have associated the concept of child participation to the definition of family practices. We understand child participation as a set of practices that aim to encourage, stimulate and allow children to express their opinions about matters that affect them – and that these opinions be taken into consideration. In effect, this means that adults should listen to children and, moreover, consider their input. We believe that getting the children involved in dialogues and interactions allows them to learn constructive ways to influence the world surrounding them and that this participation should be authentic and significant.

Thus, this investigation was based on the principle that the notion of child participation within families and communities is intrinsically associated to the

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social role that is expected from the youngsters in each context. This role can be determined by either the idea that children are only incomplete adults and, as such, have no right to be heard nor to vote in the society decisions, or, on the contrary, consider and recognise children as important actors in the construction of a democratic and participatory society, which takes into consideration the needs and wishes of all its citizens without discrimination of creed, gender, race, class, nationality or age.

With the purpose of understanding this complexity, Promundo reunited partners of other five countries from Latin America and the Caribbean, with vast experience in the approach and analysis of childhood in their respective countries and has triggered the research process reported in this publication. The partners were:

Jamaica: Parenting Partners Caribbean

Mexico: Ririki Intervención Social

Nicaragua: Sociocultural Analysis Centre of the Universidad Centroamericana

Peru: Instituto de Formacion para Educadores e Jovenes, Ninos y Adolescentes Trabajadores de America Latina y el Caribe

Venezuela: Universidad Simon Bolivar

The basis of the study was to hear the voices of the children and articulate them with the different family practices dominant in each studied context. To listen to the children to make it possible for them to express the practices that they consider most appropriate and as expressed by the Venezuelan children when requested to send messages to their parents about disciplinary practices in their families.

8-year old boy: “Not to smack them and, if they misbehave, just talk to them.”

9-year old girl: “Not to smack them, be gentle, because if they are smacked, when they grow up they will beat their children and will also be full of hate.”

(Children of the urban low income setting in Venezuela.)

Based on the above, this publication is organised in two sections. The first one contains the theoretic limit used, where we present a history of the main studies regarding the subject throughout history, discussing its limitations. Then, the general characteristics of family practices in the sociocultural context

of Latin America and the Caribbean presented along with children's legal rights from the point of view of protection and promotion in the researched countries. At the end of this section, the methodology used to carry out this investigation is described.

The second section presents the results of the investigation. The presentation of the results is divided in two: Part I – Comparative Analysis and Part II – Summary of researches per country. The first presents the main results of the comparative study. The results were grouped in (1) Family practices, family interaction and physical punishment; (2) Family practices, domestic chores and child labour; (3) Family practices and formal education; and (4) Family practices and interaction between children. The final section presents some general conclusions and recommendations. Part II contains the summaries of the studies carried out in each country. The summaries are divided in four parts: the main characteristics of the methodology used, the general configurations of families, the main findings and the revised bibliography in each country taking part of this study.



## 2. Theoretical framework

In this section, we will review some researches in several areas which aimed to understand the different ways of educating children, the impact and consequences of this upbringing in the development of infants. Thus, the theoretical body of this study presents the concepts of parental practices, parental styles and their typologies. And last, it presents a reflection on the limitations of generalising typologies of parental styles, which leads us to justify the option of family practices as lenses for the reading and understanding of the family dynamics with regards to the promotion of child participation within the family.

### **2.1. Theoretical background on the adult-child relationship in families**

In spite of the growing interest of researchers in various areas in matters related to the best way of upbringing children, as well as in studying the several consequences resulting from certain family practices, the existing literature on the subject is not vast, focusing mainly on the so-called parental styles. It is important to point out that throughout the revised bibliography, parental styles, family practices, parental practices and educational parental practices were terms used to describe the relationship between parents and their children.

According to Darling & Steinberg (1993), educational practices refer to the strategies used by parents to reach specific goals in different domains (academ-

ic, social, affective). They confirm that the socialising behaviours of discipline and support and the interactive behaviour between parents and children vary according to a given context and/or situation. With regards to parental style, the authors define this as a global standard of characteristics of the interaction of parents with children in several situations which create an emotional atmosphere, i.e. an setting where the behaviour of the parents is expressed, which include the parental practices and other aspects of the interaction parent-child that have a defined objective, such as: tone of voice, body language, carelessness, mood swings.

The first works in this field suggested typologies of parental styles upbringing, of which the Baumrind theoretical model (1966) is a landmark in the studies that are being carried out on the relationship between parents and children. The author proposes a concept of parental style that integrates both emotional and behavioural aspects, based on the parental control exercised on the children.

Baumrind (1966) proposed a parents<sup>1</sup> classifying model as:

1. Authoritative, i.e., those who try to direct the activities of their children in a rational and oriented way, stimulating dialogue, reasoning with the infant on what made him/her act in such way – requesting his/her reasons for objecting when the child refuses to agree, exerting firm control on the diverging points while placing their grown-up perspective but without restricting the child, acknowledging that he/she has his/her own interests and particular ways. However, these parents do not base their decisions in consensus or on the child's wishes.
2. Authoritarians, i.e., those who model, control and evaluate the child's behaviour according to established and usually absolute behaviour rules, considering obedience as a virtue and being in favour of punishing measures to deal with those aspects of the child which clash with what the parents believe to be correct.
3. Permissive, i.e., those who try to behave in a receptive and non-punitive way towards the child's wishes and actions, presenting themselves to the child as resources for the fulfilment of their wishes and not as models, and neither as agents responsible for moulding or directing their behaviour.

---

1 Refers to parents, carers and/or persons responsible for the upbringing of children.

Subsequently, Maccoby & Martin (apud Weber et al., 2004) introduced two dimensions – requirement and responsiveness – to the study of parental styles which allowed them to reorganise the typology proposed by Baumrind (1966). Responsive parents are those who correctly perceive the child's signs and react in a sensitive way to their needs (Bee, 1996). These parents get involved in the education of their children, responding to the needs that the child has for attention, encouragement, support, dialogue and entertaining. Demanding parents supervise and monitor the behaviour of their children, demanding obedience to rules and limits and the fulfilment of duties.

Within this vision, authoritative parents are demanding and responsive, i.e., there is reciprocity where the children should respond to the parents' requirements, but these also accept the responsibility of responding, as much as possible, to the points of view and reasonable demands of their children. Authoritative parents establish rules for the behaviour of their children which are consistently emphasized. They monitor their conduct, correcting negative attitudes and rewarding positive attitudes. Discipline is imposed in an inductive manner and communication between parents and children is clear and open, based on mutual respect. These are parents that have high expectations with regards to the behaviour of their children in relation to responsibility and maturity. Besides, they are affectionate when interacting with their children, responsive to their needs and frequently, ask for their opinion when they find it appropriate, encouraging decisions and providing opportunities for the development of their skills.

Authoritarian parents are demanding and non-responsive, i.e., their demands would not be balanced with accepting their children's needs, and expect the children to repress their requests and demands. Authoritarian parents are strict and autocratic. They impose high levels of demand, establishing strict rules, regardless of any participation of the child. They tend to emphasize obedience through respecting authority and order and they frequently, use punishment as a means of controlling behaviour. They also, give no importance to dialogue and autonomy, reacting with rejection and low responsiveness to the child's questioning and ideas (Ceconello et al., 2003).

Maccoby & Martin (apud Weber et al., 2004) also separated Baumrind's permissive style in two categories: indulgent parents, who are responsive and non-demanding, and negligent parents, who are neither demanding nor responsive but inclined to be guided by the arising inconveniences, which makes them respond to the child's immediate requests with the only purpose of solving them.

The indulgent style thus results from the combination of little control and high responsiveness. Indulgent parents, opposed to authoritarians, do not impose rules or limits to the child, establishing few demands of responsibility and maturity. They are excessively tolerant and receptive with their children, allowing the child to monitor his/her own behaviour and tending to satisfy any demands from the child.

The neglectful style, on the other hand, results from the combination of control with responsiveness in low levels. Negligent parents are neither affective nor demanding. They do not get very involved with the task of socialising the child, and do not monitor his/her behaviour. They tend to keep their children at bay, responding only to their basic needs. Whereas indulgent parents are involved with their children, negligent parents are frequently focused on their own interests. (Cecconello et al. 2003).

In the 90s, a theory related to the impacts of the different parental styles on children's development emerges. Bee (1996), affirms that certain effects in a child's development can be identified according to the parental style in which he/she is socialized, and are described as follows:

**Responsive parents:** Parents who use this style have children that learn to speak a little earlier, have higher IQs and a faster cognitive development; probably demonstrate confident affection, are more obedient to adults' requests and are socially more competent.

**Authoritative or competent parents:** Demonstrate more consistent positive results, in cases where the parents show high levels of both control and affection, establishing clear limits, but also responding to the child's individual needs. Children brought up in these families usually have higher self-esteem, are more independent and can also present a more altruistic behaviour.

**Authoritarian parents:** Children growing up in authoritarian families – with high levels of demand and control but relatively low levels of affection or responsiveness – don't do so well at school, are usually less clever with their peers than children from other kinds of families and have low self-esteem. Some of these children seem subdued; others can express high levels of aggressiveness or display signs of being out of control.

**Permissive parents:** Children with indulgent or permissive parents also display some negative results. They don't do very well at school, they are usually more aggressive - particularly if the parents are specifically permissive with regards to aggressiveness – and more immature in their behaviour with schoolmates. They are less likely to take over responsibilities and are less independent.

Indulgent parents: The more consistent negative results are associated to this pattern. The psychological unavailability of parents is one of the characteristics frequently found in children evaluated as “insecure/avoiding” based on an analysis by the Attachment Theory (Bowlby apud Bee, 1996). The mother may be depressed or overwhelmed by other life concerns and simply has not established a deep emotional relationship with the child.

From this brief panorama on the impacts of parental styles upon child development, several studies highlight the positive influence of the authoritative style on the psychological development of children and adolescents. This style would be related to social competence, assertiveness and independent behaviour of children (Baumrind, 1966). In adolescents, it would be associated to better levels of psychological adaptation, social competence, self-esteem, academic performance, self-confidence and low levels of behaviour, anxiety and depression problems. On the other hand, the authoritarian, indulgent and negligent styles seem to be related to a higher incidence of negative results in development, such as behaviour problems, drugs abuse, school failure and low self-esteem. (Cecconello, 2003).

The authoritative parental style would furthermore be more strongly related to a series of aspects of the development seen as positive when compared to the other styles, such as psychosocial maturity, school performance and several indicators of behavioural adequacy. Generally, it is suggested that the requirement dimension would be associated to the adjustment of the child's behaviour, with consequent reduction of misguiding behaviour, whereas the dimension of responsiveness would favour the development of positive self-opinion, self-confidence and psychological wellbeing. However, many other issues related to the influence of the parental style in the development of adolescents need to be further investigated, such as the possible differential effects of the educational practices of fathers and mothers on the development and also the possible variations that may exist in different cultural groups (Costa, 2000).

## **2.2. The limits of generalisation: different types of parental styles**

It can be said that, in general, the studies on parental practices and styles are divided in two large groups:

1. Studies that try to explain the differences between the parents' educational practices;
2. Studies that analyse the consequences of the different educating ways of parents upon the development of their children.

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These studies were carried out with the purpose of isolating factors that influence the educational styles and practices. There are a series of outstanding studies that attempted to explain the parents' practices according to family structures (such as the number of children, order of birth and gender) and with other characteristics such as separations, widowhood, family reconciliation. Apart from these, also important are other studies that aim to explain the parental styles according to the social class of origin.

The researches carried out with emphasis in the diverse cultural and social-economic contexts indicate the danger of generalising the conclusions of these studies to the different societies configured in the world – and even within one same society. This is due to the fact that there are several intermediate variables that influence not only the way in which the parents relate to their children but also the consequences of the socializing practices used by them. These intermediate variables refer to the sociocultural context, the family context, the parents' life history and the child itself.

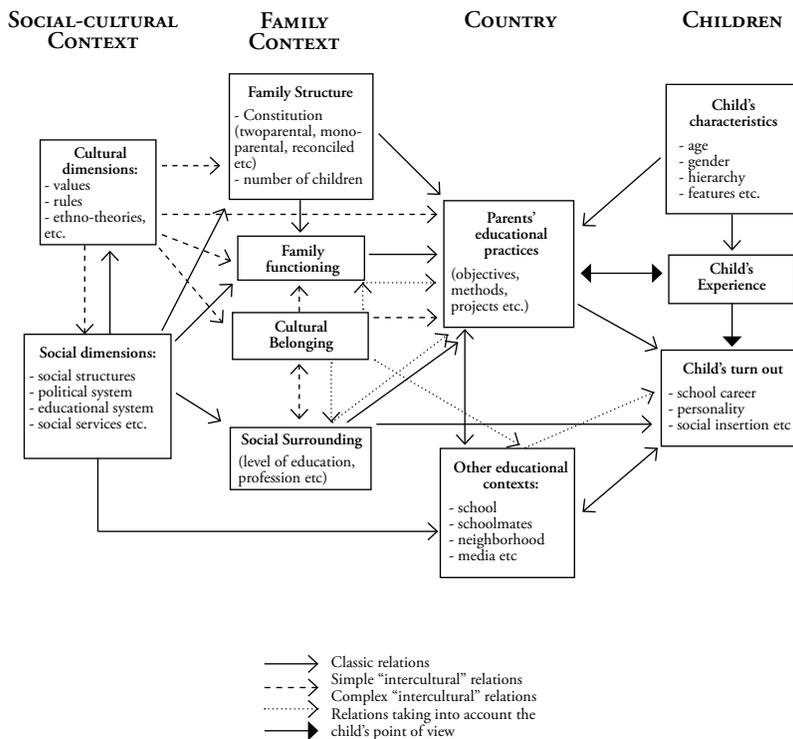
Emphasizing the concern with the generalisation of certain typologies of parental styles universalizing its effects on the child development, Montandon (2005) says:

*“Very quickly (...) it was clear that working on global correlations between social surroundings and family upbringing practices resulted in interpretations that do not take into consideration inter-individual variations and nuances of attitudes and practices within the social surroundings. The rare studies that carefully examine these points nowadays, i.e. that carry out studies of cases in families, indicate the complexity of the problem: the multiplicity of factors that should be taken into account, apart from belonging to a social surrounding such as a family history, the type of family functioning, the integration of the family within the community etc.”* (Montandon, 2005, p. 489).

While revising the different studies carried out on the factors that influence the parental styles and practices, the author highlights the importance of taking into account not only the social surroundings to which the family belongs, but also the family type, the culture and the life cycle of this family. This can be determined by several events such as unemployment, illness, accidents, birth of a child with special needs, which originate changes and restructuring in the personal relations within this family, and thus having an impact on parental styles.

Figure 1 shows some socio-cultural determinants in family upbringing, which indicate how complex the study of this theme can be. Therefore, one should be alert to the risks and limits of discussing the behaviour of children as being exclusively resulting of their relationship with parents and/or main carers.

Figure 1  
Some social-cultural determinants of family upbringing



(Source: Montandon (2005), p. 491.)

Besides the social class, the cultural context and the family life cycle as factors that have an influence on parental styles and practices, Montandon (2005) points out a very relevant component which has a direct influence in the socializing practices used by parents: the representations they have about which is the best upbringing to offer their children. These representations are directly related to their views about childhood which, in turn, is inserted in a specific social, cultural and economic context.

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Considering the concerns pointed out by Montandon (2005), regarding the risks and limits of generalizing the studies on parental styles for socially and culturally distinct contexts, we have evaluated that to carry out an analysis on how parents relate to their children from European and North American theoretical frameworks, putting into practice a particular framing in a specific parental style and not on another, would weaken the understanding of the complexity related to the interaction between parents (or carers) and their children.

Within the different contexts of the six countries studied in Latin America and the Caribbean, the family dynamics presented themselves very distinctively according to circumstances, situations and lived moments. The speeches of the children and parents in all the countries led us to understand that these families do not fit into one parental style only, but show elements of different styles in the parent-child relationship. Therefore, we estimated that the study of the parental practices would lead us to a better understanding as to how the families are organized in relation to educating their children, especially referring to the creation of spaces for the child participation.

### 3.

## Context of the Study

### **3.1 General characteristics of family practices in the sociocultural context in Latin America and the Caribbean<sup>2</sup>**

Generally, it can be said that the process of colonisation had a strong influence in the family household relations in all Latin America and the Caribbean, and consequently in the family practices and the parental styles prevailing in the areas. Marked by an extremely violent process of cultural assimilation on the native people, the colonisation separated even more the social classes existing in the XV century. The slave-based societies prevailed in the beginning of the colonisation, but throughout the years suffered the influence of the ideals pertinent to the industrial revolution and the French revolution.

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<sup>2</sup> For further explanation of the theme, please consult:

MCCAA, R. (1997) *Child Marriage and Complex Families (cemithualtin) among the Ancient Aztec (Nahua)*. Colonial History Workshop, University of Minnesota. [www.hist.umn.edu/~rmccaa/NAHUAEN3/nacolhst](http://www.hist.umn.edu/~rmccaa/NAHUAEN3/nacolhst).

PELLICER, L. F. (2005) *Entre el Honor y la Pasión. Familia, matrimonio y sistema de valores en Venezuela durante la crisis del orden hispánico (1778-1820)*, Fondo Editorial de Humanidades, Universidad Central de Venezuela, Caracas.

EVANS, H. (1989) *Perspectives on the socialization of the working class Jamaican Child*, Social and Economic Studies, Volume 38, n° 3, 177-203.

DEL PRIORI, M. (2000). *História das crianças no Brasil*. São Paulo: Contexto, Brasil.

MAJLUF, A. y Ojeda, G. (2006) *Relación entre tradicionalismo y prácticas de crianza*, Revista Psicológica Herediana, I (1): 28-38.

The current people from Latin America and the Caribbean, strongly branded by crossbreeding, initially derived from millenary Indian cultural features associated to the European people and to the conversion to Christianity, which aimed essentially at “civilizing the savages”. This cultural assimilation process imposed an unprecedented situation of symbolic violence within the native nations, but at the same time, made it unacceptable to maintain the natives in captivity.

The banning of slave work for those converted to Christianity linked to the massacre of the native nations, initiated the period that introduces the slave work of the African people. Then, predominantly in some countries, a second group of mixed race takes place and, associated to the European and Indian component, adds to the legacy brought by the African people. These people were brought like animals, but possessed strong cultural identities and, when crossed, they produced the strong mixed race features of the Americas.

Thus, the children and the family configurations gradually changed and adapted to the colonial enterprise. Distinctive differences, i.e., those marked by the colour of the skin, profession, gender and social class, defined the distinct meaning of childhood during the entire colonisation process. While the children of the upper classes were entitled to nannies, schooling and cultural life, the children of the slaves were perceived as property of their masters, who were entitled to trade them freely.

The republican goals of the XIX century determined the proclamation of independence from the colonial power in the entire region and brought with it the influence of the French illuminism. This fact, while inspiring the abolitionist activities, installed a sense of childhood thought of as wild, meaningless, unprotected, frail and ignorant. The entire construction of a republican nation was based on the possibility of raising and moulding the children so that, with the education acquired from the nuclear families and schools, they would become the citizens (and workers) needed for the development of a nation that was democratic and free of ecclesiastical control or influence.

In the first half of the XX century families maintained the traditional character (patriarch, nuclear, natural and sacred), necessary to maintain the republican order. However, the industrialization process, the fast urban development, the sexual revolution, the increase of qualified female labour force and the post-war human rights movements – intensified by the bubbly sixties in the XX century – introduced radical changes to the traditional family patterns and consequently in the ideological construction of childhood. Science

and its assumptions become the main referential point for the understanding of childhood, of families, of gender and labour relations and the role of social protection.

Reflecting about the socio-cultural contexts previously described, it can be declared that the family practices started their development assuming that certain subjects have more rights than others and that those less capable can even be physically punished. As a historical landmark, in Latin America and the Caribbean there is a number of extremely hierarchical and meritocratic societies that considered the male, adult, white (Caucasian) and belonging to the dominant classes as normal standard. In on one hand the democratization process which took place at the end of the XX Century all over the continent has been generating a more egalitarian legal guarantee of rights; the authoritarianism and the inequality are still present in social relations. This authoritarianism logic is impregnated in the ways of coexistence of bosses with their employees, of men with women, of youths with the elderly and very frequently of all these groups with children.

If we add to all this the context of extreme poverty in which a considerable number of this population in these areas live in and the economic fragility of the middle class in times of productive restructuring, we will have limit-situations, reproducing extremely authoritarian family practices. As an example, we can mention the dilemma of the mother who, in order to stop her son from being killed in an armed confrontation between police officers and drug dealers in an urban setting very frequent in Brazil, beats him up to force him to stay indoors. This is told to us by a Brazilian child:

*“The nickname of the boy who died was ‘Caveirinha’ (Little Skull), he was seven years old and was from the State of Paraíba (in the Northeast of Brazil). On the day of the funeral my mother told me that was the reason why she wouldn’t let me go to the streets. On children’s day the police couldn’t care less”. (Brazilian child, urban low income setting).*

These are the everyday events that continue to reinforce in the families and of course, in the children, basics of power, class and authoritarianism considered “normal”, this leads us to a question: “what degree of child participation do we imagine possible in contexts where participation in general is a privilege for few?”

### **3.2. Legal framework for the protection and promotion of children in the countries researched.**

The legal framework of all the countries participating in the research was strongly influenced by the Children's Rights Convention (CRC) that was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 20 November, 1989 and confirmed at different occasions by 192 member countries. The CRC inaugurates a new way of viewing children and adolescents, giving them a distinguished and priority treatment for being developing human beings. This is how the full protection doctrine appears. Children and teenagers are no longer objects with rights and become subjects with rights, with unrestricted and privileged access to Justice. Protection is no longer sole obligation of the family and the State and the society are equally responsible for the protection of the rights of children and teenagers.

The right to child participation is explicitly defined in Articles 12, 13, 14, 15 e 17 of the CRC that deals respectively with the right of the child to freely express his/her opinions; freedom of expression; freedom of thinking, of conscience and belief; to freedom of association and peaceful meetings and to have access to information and data from various national and international sources, especially those aiming at the promotion of their social, spiritual and moral well being and physical and mental health.

Within the protection laws for childhood in each country researched, the following can be pointed out<sup>3</sup>:

**BRAZIL:** Created on 13 July, 1990, the Child and Adolescent Statute (CTS) was instituted as Federal Law number. 8.069 (in compliance with article 227 of the Federal Constitution). The Constitutional Amendment number 20 - of 15 December 1998 – confirms the minimal age of 14 years to work, according to the Convention 138 of the International Organization of Labour.

**NICARÁGUA:** In 1998, the Child and Adolescent Code was approved and in 2001, the Law for Promotion and Full Development of Youth came into force.

**MÉXICO:** In 1999, article 4<sup>th</sup> of the Mexican Constitution is created to include the rights of Childhood and in April 2000, the Law for Protection of the Rights of Boys and Girls is approved.

**VENEZUELA:** In October 1999 the Organic Law for Child and Adolescent Protection was published, coming into force in April 2000. The approval of this law was obtained after a vast consultation and social mobilisation with the

participation of universities, political parties, private institutions, government organisms, the church, the media and young people, through the children's parliaments.

PERU: In 1993, the New Children and Teenagers' Code came into force, and in 2000 it was revised to extend the existing protection in the former legislation to comply with the CRC.

JAMAICA: After an extensive public consultation carried out throughout several years with government organisms and the civil society, the Law for Child Protection and Care was approved in March 2004. This law aims to preserve the rights already guaranteed by the previous legislation, correct anomalies, and incorporate the elements required to serve the requirements of the CRC.



## 4.

# Methodology

### **4.1. Understanding the family practices in Latin America and the Caribbean: Methodological paths**

Considering the complexity of the object of this investigation, the choice was to carry out a qualitative type multicentre exploratory study. The aim was to develop a research proposal that would enable the hearing of speeches, especially those made by children, to create a set of recommendations that would subsidise the understanding of the relation between family practices and the participation of children. The overall purpose of the study was to identify the conceptions of family practices that promote or not the participation of children within the family range.

The specific objectives were:

- (1) To identify existing family practices through a survey and reflection on different attitudes, values and behaviour of fathers, mothers and carers
- (2) To identify the factors associated with the promotion or not of the participation of children in the family range from the speeches of parents, mothers, carers and the children themselves.

The main question of the study was defined as: what are the factors associated to the conceptions of the family practices that promote the participation of children in the contexts researched? And the answer to this question, the following fields of action and basis of analysis were defined:

The main objective of considering the territorial diversities and the class differences existing in each country, the collection of data would be carried out in the different contexts

Fields of action of the adult-child relationship	Basis of Analysis
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child labour and domestic chores.</li> <li>• Formal education.</li> <li>• Family conflicts/disruptions.</li> <li>• Discipline/punishment.</li> <li>• Family interaction.</li> <li>• Interaction between the children.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children's age/capacity of involvement.</li> <li>• Gender.</li> <li>• Family practice differences between the carers (what they think and what the other adults do).</li> <li>• Implied beliefs in speeches that can explicit the logic of behaviours and attitudes of fathers, mothers, carers and children).</li> </ul>

With the purpose of considering the territorial diversities and the class differences existing in each country, the collection of data would be carried out in three different settings: rural low income, urban low income and urban middle class. Two distinctive types of public were targeted in the study: (1) fathers, mothers and the carers with children between zero and twelve years of age and (2) children between seven and twelve years old. For each public, unique data collection methodologies were created.

For the children, group activities were chosen with the purpose of understanding their perspective about the way with which their parents or the carer raise them, and the different participation spaces within their families. Each country chose the methods for their welcome and how to lead the consultation with the children. Children's stories and songs performed by popular singers from each country were used to make it easier for the children to participate and they were able to express themselves verbally and through drawings.

Individual interviews were also carried out with two children from each group, a boy and a girl. These children were chosen from an analysis of the databank that they brought along to the meetings and that indicated the possibility of these children's parents were more participatory than those of the other children.

The activities with the children preceded the focal groups and the interviews carried out with the adults, so that the opinion expressed by the children could format the questions to be used with the parents and carers. The research protocol and the instruments used for the data collection were developed by

Promundo and adapted in each country. In summary, this protocol proposed the following activities:

- (1) Literature review on the subject in each country.
- (2) Selection of the communities and logistic preparation for the field research.
- (3) Consultation carried out with children aged 7 to 12 years old.
- (4) Interviews with children.

Age	Rural setting	Urban Context Middle class	Urban Context Low income class
7 to 9 years	1 group	1 group	1 group
10 to 12 years	1 group	1 group	1 group

- (5) Carrying out of focal groups with fathers, mothers and carers;

Age of children	Rural setting	Urban Context Middle class	Urban Context Low income class
0 to 6 years	1 group	1 group	1 group
7 to 12 years	1 group	1 group	1 group
0 to 6 / 7 to 12 / 0 to 12 years (optional)	1 group	1 group	1 group

(6) Realization of individual interviews with parents, mothers and carers who showed themselves as being more and less participatory after the focal group took place. (see definition in the chart below).

Interviewed	Rural setting	Urban Context Middle class	Urban Context Low income class
Fathers, mothers and carers	2 more involved	2 more involved	2 more involved
	1 less involved	1 less involved	1 less involved

Those fathers, mothers and carers who in their reports showed that they consider their children as subject of rights, were defined as more involved. When talking to their children, they present points of negotiation and consulting their opinions, taking them into consideration when making important de-

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cisions. These parents also use conversation to solve conflicts instead of violence or physical punishment and they choose non violent methods of discipline, which stimulate reflection in the children.

The fathers, mothers and carers defined as less participatory were those who see their children as objects to be shaped and controlled. They rarely or never use methods of negotiation or dialogue and they use physical punishment to resolve disagreements, choosing very severe punishment methods, in particular the use of blunt objects.

As co-ordinator of the research, Promundo was also responsible for making sure that all the ethical procedures established by the code of conduct of Save the Children Sweden were followed during the study.

The method of analysis was based on the fields of action of the relationship adult-child which guided the preparation of the study methodology. The areas of the analysis previously presented were used to identify the factors associated with the promotion or not of the participation of children in the family setting. The analysis provided the mapping of the several existing family practices in the studied contexts, and also described the characteristics and possible factors that allow some families to be more democratic and open to the participation of the children.

## 5.

# Part I: Comparative Analysis

### 5.1. Results

This section presents the main results of the investigation, which were comparatively analysed between the six countries researched. The family practices are related with the following fields of action: family interaction and physical punishment, domestic chores and child labour, formal education and finally, with interaction between the children. The comparative analysis between the countries provided a wider understanding of the reality of families in the context of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Among the families of adults studied, the women confirmed the highest number of informants of the study, standing for 80% of the participants in Brazil, 60% in Jamaica, 80% in Mexico, 79% in Nicaragua, 70% in Peru and 85% in Venezuela. Regarding ethnicity, the crossbred/coloured predominated (49% in Brazil, 73% in Nicaragua, 77% in Peru) over the black and white races, and the predominant religion was the Catholicism (70% of interviews in Brazil, 77% in Mexico, 58% in Nicaragua and 82% in Peru) followed by the evangelical or protestant.

Children and adults reported living in families with a history of disruption and marital reconstruction, post-divorce or separation. Episodes of marital disruption appeared not only in the one parent families but also in those families of nuclear and extended configuration, where stepmothers and stepfathers were described as members of the family.

There was a similarity of family configuration between all the countries (as shown in Table 1), especially in the groups arising from the low income “set-

Table 1 – Display of family configurations by context and country studied

Country Context	Brazil	Jamaica	México	Nicaragua	Peru	Venezuela
<b>Urban low income class</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Extended families as reference;</li> <li>- Stories of marital disruptions and reconciliations;</li> <li>- Headed by women;</li> <li>- Loss of relatives in violent conflicts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Families headed by women;</li> <li>- Family members living abroad;</li> <li>- Difficulties to graphically represent the extended family.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Combination of nuclear and extended families headed by men;</li> <li>- Family members living abroad (migration).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Numerous and extended families as reference;</li> <li>- Families headed by women;</li> <li>- Family members living abroad. (Migration).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Stories of marital disruptions and reconciliations;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Numerous and extended families as reference;</li> <li>- Active participation of grandmothers;</li> <li>- Stories of marital disruptions and reconciliations;</li> <li>- violence in the community</li> </ul>
<b>Urban medium class</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Nuclear family;</li> <li>- Single mothers;</li> <li>- Stories of marital disruptions and reconciliations;</li> <li>- Participation of fathers and stepfathers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Family members living abroad;</li> <li>- Extended families as reference;</li> <li>- Stories of marital disruptions and reconciliations;</li> <li>- Active participation of fathers and stepfathers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Nuclear families headed by men and women.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Protection space for the children, specially the boys.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Nuclear family;</li> <li>- High level of education of parents.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Nuclear family;</li> <li>- Stories of marital disruptions and reconciliations;</li> </ul>
<b>Rural setting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Nuclear family;</li> <li>- Stories of marital disruptions and reconciliations;</li> <li>- Active participation of fathers and stepfathers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Numerous and extended families as reference;</li> <li>- Stories of marital disruptions and reconciliations;</li> <li>- Families headed by women.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Numerous family;</li> <li>- Combination of nuclear and extended families headed by men.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Numerous and extended family</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Numerous and extended family.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Numerous and extended families;</li> <li>- Exchange of children between parents;</li> <li>- Stories of marital disruptions and reconciliations.</li> </ul>

tings". These featured extended families in their majority headed by women, and organised in a way that enabled them to face situations associated with unemployment, low salaries and violence within the family setting and the neighbourhood. In these configurations, not only the figure of the grandmother, but also a network of family members, distant relatives and neighbours appeared to help in raising the children. When describing their families, the children did try to represent them in the traditional manner, with the mother, father and sibling figures well defined. However, when describing their daily life, the children reported the complicated settings which are necessary to reproduce the social life in their communities.

### 5.1.1. Family practices, family interaction and physical punishment

Family interaction refers to the experience the children and adults go through in the daily patterns of relationships in their families, especially regarding the display of affection in families (positive and negative), the rules and strategies and the resources to resolve disciplinary conflicts. There was an analysis carried out to find out if families established differences in the upbringing of their children based on traditional gender roles.

Regarding the disciplinary rules, special attention was given to the use of physical and humiliating punishment<sup>3</sup>. According to the CRC, article 19<sup>4</sup>, every child must be protected in every way from physical and mental violence. In this sense, the analysis of the data collected in the research aimed to understand the situations where physical and humiliating punishment occurred, as well as the possibilities of developing alternative family practices, i.e., resulting from more authoritative practices<sup>5</sup>.

Generally speaking, the study showed that the family interaction concerned the social space of the family, which was diversely mentioned as looking after

<sup>4</sup> Understood here as a way of violence applied by an adult with the intention of discipline to correct or change an unwanted behaviour. It's the use of force causing physical or emotional pain to the child or adolescent involved.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.ohchr.org/spanish/law/crc.htm>.

<sup>6</sup> As previously mentioned, models that aim to incentivate the dialogue when making family decisions, including those that the children dislike. See: BAUMRIND, D. (1966). Effects of authoritative control on child behavior. *Child Development*, 37, 887-907, & DARLING, N.; STEINBERG, L. (1993). Parenting style as context: An integrative model. *Psychological Bulletin*, 113, 487-496.

(view of the parents) and to be looked after (view of the children). According to the children, parents are responsible for the upbringing of their children and this includes feeding, giving love and affection and supervising their actions. Also for the parents, the word “responsibility” was the most used to define their role in the family.

However, the responsibility of the father and mother in the upbringing of their children was described following a gender distribution of work, where it is the man’s responsibility to support all the family and discipline the children with authority and the woman’s duty is the daily care of the home the upbringing of the children. Women were pointed out as having a maternal “nature”, capable of showing affection and perceiving the needs of the children. The absence of the male figure in the families managed by women was seen as an overburden, because in those families the women also have to establish limits, as if this was a typically male activity.

The data found in the study corroborates other researches<sup>6</sup> that have demonstrated that, with regard to the upbringing of children in low income communities, there is a strong hierarchy between parents and children, and the upbringing is understood as a unilateral practice of authority. The respect for grown-ups, particularly parents, is a fundamental value, based on obedience, but mainly characterized by non-challenging the parents’s authority. It is important to emphasize that the domestic organisation based on the traditional division of roles, where the man is the financial provider and the woman the carer for the home, the children and the husband, appears much more as an ideal to be pursued than the true reality. As it was possible to verify in the study, the number of families led by women is increasingly higher. However, even though the woman appears as a central figure, recent studies in urban low income environments show that, in these families, the traditional values and patriarchal standards still prevail, reasserting the male authority.

It is worth emphasizing that the mothers that had the opportunity of expanding their experience as women either by questioning the traditional standards of gender or by taking on a more balanced position and posture in the family or at work, also display a more participatory role in the upbringing of their children. They regard the children as complete beings, with skills and abili-

<sup>6</sup> BEM, L.A.; WAGNER, A. (2006 ) **Reflexões sobre a construção da parentalidade e o uso de estratégias educativas em famílias de baixo nível socioeconômico.** *Psicologia em Estudo*, Maringá, v. 11, n.1, p.63-71, jan/abr..

ties; the disciplinary strategies include dialogue, negotiation and listening to the child's opinion when making decisions which involve them directly and that are suitable for their age.

The positive displays of affection reported by adults and children registered were hugs and kisses, receiving gifts and performing domestic chores. The groups of children from seven to nine years of age and the parents of children within this same age bracket in the urban setting reported greater physical proximity when displaying affection.

*"My father has a sponge and he keeps rubbing it on my foot and it tickles and I laugh"* (Brazilian child, urban low income setting).

*"Hugging, kissing and praising when they deserve it"* (Mexican mother, rural setting).

An interesting fact is that many of the displays of affection, according to the children's perception, were related to the fact that they were well behaved. There were very few reports on spontaneous displays of affection or as part of a playful interaction between parents and children. Urban middle class adults and children reported more availability not only for a dialogue based relationship but also for spontaneous displays of affection.

The view of maternity and paternity in the middle classes in all countries was also more positive than those shown in the rural setting and urban low income setting. The middle class parents have another view that relates these duties to personal accomplishment and pleasure, meaning that it is a choice made consciously and not "naturally". Financial security and the possibility of having a greater access to the social net of education, health, leisure and housing, among others, seems to give these families the security to carry out their duties as father, mother, grandmother etc. On the other hand, the overburden of work and the economic instability seem to directly harm the family relations. Related factors such as alcoholism, domestic violence and unemployment, among others, cause parents, especially those of the urban low income setting, to refer to paternity/maternity as a "load". The overburden experienced by adults of the urban low income setting leads to the adoption of overprotective family measures and extreme control over the children.

*"For a family, I believe the main reason for fighting is the shortage of money. If there is no money, there is nothing"* (Brazilian father, rural setting)

*“Money, when things are going wrong and I am very irritable, any contradiction from my wife makes me feel upset and I notice that the same happens when money is short (...) and when there is no understanding of certain things related to the family, that is also upsetting. We solve the problems by talking and soon we are back to the same situation, but once in a while, it’s necessary to talk”*  
(Mexican father, urban low income setting)

Many of the reports from children and adults described situations of community violence, in which these population groups are included. As a result, families, in many cases led by women, establish strict family interaction rules to stop their children from disobeying them and thus not exposing themselves to the dangers related to the lack of public security in the low income setting neighbourhoods of the large urban centres researched. These strict rules generate

#### **The experience in Mexico:**

In México there is a series of ways of denominating children: chamaco(a), ba’du (zapoteco), escuincle(la), paal (maya), chiquitín(a), chilpayate, ña lulu (mixteco), chavo(a), chiquillo(a) y batís (ñañú). And, within these, are the children that live in the city, those that study, those that work, live with their parents and those that live in the streets.

All this diversity contributes to the existence of several views about childhood, which end up conditioning the lives of the children, as they fulfil pre-established expectations, often ambiguous, for the younger ones. Within the more recurrent social representations in the country, we can point out:

- 1.The children as family property;
- 2.The children as the future;
- 3.The girls and the boy as victims or victimized;
- 4.Childhood as incompetent or needy;
- 5.Childhood as fiction

(See: Pérez, M., Martínez M., Duran M (2004). Representaciones Sociales sobre las infancias drogodependientes. VII Seminário de la RIOD y XXII World Congrell of Therapeutic Communities Palma de Mayorca, Spain.

tension in the domestic household which in turn creates an enormous difficulty in adopting more democratic and participatory family measures.

As shown in table 2 which follows, the middle class in all countries presented a milder use of physical punishment as a disciplinary strategy, but they all reported to using these measures to a certain degree as "a necessary evil". The Brazilian middle class point out that stress is a strong factor to lead parents to physically punish their children.

Parents and children in all countries researched find the use of physical coercion an acceptable practice especially when the other resources, such as talking and temporary punishments are not working. Even stating that physical and humiliating punishment doesn't have the expected result and isn't the most effective method (few mention it as being a successful strategy) many parents believe (explicitly or implicitly) that children learn with threats and fear. It was mentioned in a few of the reports given by adults that they were brought up with the use of physical and humiliating punishment as children. In these reports, parents relate to what they suffered and admit they are repeating the family methods thinking that this way they are keeping to traditions. Among the parents in the Brazilian middle class, there were different opinions about the effects of physical punishment on the children's mental health; some believe there are traumatic effects and others don't.

Some effects of the cultural changes regarding children's rights in the last 15 years in all the countries researched could already be noticed. In the parent's report, there was a contradiction between the "politically correct" speech on the non-violent ways of discipline and the real use of physical punishment. Dialogue and communication are considered as another method of discipline, but only a few parents put them into practice. It is worth emphasizing that the dialogue was systematically demanded by the children throughout the research, as the best way of educating them.

The table below<sup>7</sup> summarizes some of the answers of Jamaican parents in all the researched contexts and illustrates this contradiction, i.e., at the same time that they agree that children should be heard, they believe that they can't answer back or question their parents and that they deserve a spanking.

<sup>7</sup> Besides the options "totally agree", "partially agree" and "do not agree", there was also the option "I don't know". Thus, some percentages do not add to 100%.

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	Totally agree (%)		Partially agree (%)		Do not agree (%)	
Items / Gender	Nr of Mothers (M) = 25 and Nr of Fathers (F) = 16					
	M	F	M	F	M	F
Children should not answer back to adults.	36	50	48	44	8	6
It's a waste of time to listen to children.	-	-	8	-	84	94
Parents have a lot to learn from children.	92	94	4	6	-	-
There are times when children deserve a spanking.	40	63	52	31	4	6
When parents make decisions, they should take the children's feelings into consideration.	80	75	16	25	4	-
Children should not question their parents' decisions.	24	44	48	25	24	31

Source: Field report/Jamaica/2007.

The contradictions reported previously also appear in the reports for Mexico (17,5% totally agreed and 40% partially agreed with the use of physical punishment; 35% totally agreed and 51% partially agreed with the fact that when parents make decisions, they must consider the children's feelings) and for Nicaragua (53,9% agreed and 39,3% partially agreed with applying physical punishment; 85,4 agreed and 67% partially agreed with the fact that, when parents make decisions, they must consider the children's feelings). These similar standards of answers suggest there is a doubt in the practice of paternity/maternity widely shared by parents of different contexts.

In the children's reports, there were fewer contradictions, as they spoke in a much more open and detailed way about the punishments they are subjected to and how much they hate them. In the children's reports, there was an understanding that it was the parents' role to inflict punishment, but they never agreed with the physical and psychological aggressions they suffered. Among the physical and humiliating punishments accounted by the children, the following were outstanding:

- Call them names (swear)
- Humiliate them in front of other people
- Punch them
- Hit them with their hands
- Pull their ears
- Hit them with objects such as belts, whips, pieces of wood and metal, brushes, electric wires, cactus, shoes
- Starve them
- Slap them in the face
- Make them kneel on corn
- Make them “smell the walls” (face turned to the wall)
- Force them to do more housework (domestic chores such as making the bed, washing up, cleaning the kitchen, cleaning the house etc.)

*Boy 1: They hit me with a leather strap, hose and a clothes hanger.*

*Girl 3: They hit me with cables.*

*Girl 4: They put rice grains and metal sheets for me to kneel.*

*Girl 8: They tie me up to my brother; they fasten us very tight by our tummies (Venezuelan children, urban low income setting)*

*“I don’t like my father very much because he loves to beat me.”*

*Does he beat you a lot?*

*Very much. I was the favourite to be beaten by him.*

*But why?*

*I was, but not anymore. I don’t know why, he liked to hit me. If I took a long time to do something, he threw his slipper at me. I could even be about fifteen steps away from him and he threw the slipper at my back.”*

*(Conversation with Brazilian child, rural setting)*

The use of physical punishment was predominant and much more intense in the rural setting in all the countries researched with the exception of Jamaica, that showed high rates of this disciplinary strategy in all contexts

Some reports of violence against women appear to be related to the presence of violence against children, reinforcing the idea that physical aggression against certain social subjects is legitimized. Children also reported that there is a difference in inflicting physical punishments between boys and girls: boys receive more harsh punishments because they are considered stronger; as for the girls, considered more fragile, they receive milder punishments.

*“Girls are beaten slowly and boys really get it.*

*Is there a difference?*

*Yes because boys are stronger and girls cry for nothing and boys don’t.”* (Conversation with Brazilian child, urban low income setting)

This difference explains the process of socialization conducted by the rules of gender in force, that establish which behaviours and attitudes are suitable or expected for boys and girls. Men are generally socialized right from a tender age to refrain their emotions and to live up to social expectations in a pro-active manner, with anger and even physical violence being some of socially accepted in order for them to express their feelings<sup>8</sup>. Thus, right from childhood, boys already receive a different education from girls in order to assure that they effectively “become” the men that their society values and for that they can’t show weakness and/or sensitivity. As for girls, because they are considered fragile and sensitive, they need more care and special attention (more affectionate) so that they can correctly perform their role as future mothers and wives.

Violent environments, either from the structural or gender relations point of view, appear to favour violent attitudes against children

*“(…) she used to get food and sell it to buy cachaça (a type of sugar cane brandy) and I told my father. And when my mother was drunk, she used to beat us, because we don’t like to wake up early, so she would beat us hard. She used to get the water for coffee and throw it in our faces.”* (Brazilian child, urban low income setting)

However, some families included in these contexts reported very positive and non-violent styles of raising their children, as well as a certain number of middle class children reported punishments that caused them to reflect about their attitudes:

*Boy: “Well, they send me to my room so that I can think about what I did, and to write about it and give it to them and sometimes, when my sister is involved, they also tell her to go to her room and think about it.”* (Venezuelan boy, urban middle class)

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<sup>8</sup> PROMUNDO. (2002) Working with young men series. Rio de Janeiro. 314p.

An example of alternative patterns was given by the Jamaican mother of urban low income setting that when asked about her strategies to raise her children answered:

*“My children are my best friends. We have a good relationship, especially with my daughter. I sew a little and she is so interested in the sewing machine, in knowing what I am doing, in learning how to cut the material. I play the guitar and I have one at home; the boys are interested in other things. I play an active role in my church and they are always with me and are involved with the youths.”*

These alternative strategies of family practices have two important factors: (1) the time dedicated to the children. Time not necessarily measured in the sense of quantity, but qualified by moments of dedication to the child’s universe. And (2) listening: spaces where a dialogue interested in the children’s universe was established and not a one sided monologue of parents to children. In the family practices that combine time and listening, the levels of stress reported are much low. When asked what they would like to require from their parents and carers, many children asked to be listened to and pointed out the frustrations resulting from feeling ignored. The activities that children mentioned as being the ones that pleased them the most were: playing, going shopping, watching television and talking.

*“We are their children and they are our parents, so they must listen to us and when they speak we must listen too.”* (Brazilian child, urban low income setting)

*“He is very sociable, tells me everything that happens to him or if he has any problems, he calls me as if I was a friend and confides in me. In other words, he prefers to talk to me before talking to other people. This is so important.”* (Venezuelan mother, urban low income setting)

In all countries and all contexts, the importance given to time and to the quality of listening was the same. This fact seems to emphasize that, in spite of the singularity of each country, of urban and rural environments and the differences in the social classes, the time devoted to children in playful activities establishes the possibility of creating authoritative family practices which are sensitive to children’s feelings and opinions, and at the same time allow the negotiation of boundaries that will protect the children’s physical and psychological integrity.

In these circumstances of economical stress and family restructuring, there have been several reports of incidents involving violence occurring among adults in times of separation and formation of new couples. It should be said that these subjects are not considered relevant to be discussed with the children, who are frequently told lies regarding the extramarital relations of adults. Children end up facing the situation as best as they can, as demonstrated by the following conversation:

*Girl: "When my father is drunk, I take his money."*

*Moderator: "When he is drunk you take his money?"*

*Girl: "Of course, so that he won't give the money to my stepmother and gives it to my mother. To my mother, he only gives 400 for the market and that is nothing"*  
(Venezuelan girl, rural setting)

Apart from situations of intra-family violence, some countries presented significant levels of community violence, influencing the family practices and the everyday life of children. In particular, families living in urban low income settings are exposed to structural violence, which makes them even more vulnerable. Drug dealing in Rio de Janeiro, the crooks in Caracas, the gangs in Kingston and the juvenile gangs in Lima are a few of the contemporary phenomena to which some of the population groups have been exposed. Families, frequently frightened, can only count on the support of relatives, a few community services (usually precarious) and informal support networks— or community based supports<sup>9</sup> - for the upbringing of children. Besides the absence of public policies of education, employment, health and leisure, the low income class has also to deal with the lack of public safety. And this absence of security demands that each community build up their own local alternatives to mediate their domestic and collective conflicts.

Finally, we can say that there are, among the children, strategies to **face intra-family and community violence**. The aggressiveness of the Brazilian boy, the tears of the Jamaican girl, the act of mocking parents of the Venezuelan

<sup>9</sup> Since 1998 the expression "Community based support" is used to define "family and community resources that promote education, besides offering physical and emotional security to children and youngsters. These resources can be formal, such as day care schools, recreational opportunities and health programs, and informal, as the nuclear and extended families and affinity bonds, available in the community itself" (Promundo, CIESPI. – Rio de Janeiro, 2006).

Table 2: Demonstration of family practices, family interaction and physical punishment by context and country studied

Country Context	Brazil	Jamaica	Mexico	Nicaragua	Peru	Venezuela
Urban Low income setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Demonstration of affection with gifts and love;</li> <li>- Discipline with physical and humiliating punishment;</li> <li>- Accepted physical punishment by parents and children.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Demonstration of affection with praises;</li> <li>- Discipline with physical and humiliating punishment.</li> <li>- Lack of dialogue.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Presence of intense physical and humiliating punishment;</li> <li>- Little communication between parents and children;</li> <li>- Little time for the children.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Abuse of power and domination from adults;</li> <li>- Presence of intense physical and psychological punishment;</li> <li>- Little communication between parents and children;</li> <li>- Little time for the children.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Presence of physical punishment perceived as a necessary pain</li> <li>- Children with no space to participate;</li> <li>- Authoritarian and chauvinist family setting.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Little time for the children;</li> <li>- Presence of moderate physical punishment.</li> </ul>
Urban Middle class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Discipline with physical punishment;</li> <li>- Accepted physical punishment;</li> <li>- Parents' double standards when using the dialogue as main form of discipline.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Demonstration of affection with money and gifts;</li> <li>- Discipline with physical and humiliating punishment;</li> <li>- Lack of dialogue.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Presence of mild physical and/or temporary punishments;</li> <li>- Physical contact as demonstration of affection;</li> <li>- Space for dialogue and support in moments of grief.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- More democratic family relationship;</li> <li>- Father participation;</li> <li>- Presence of verbal reprimands and temporary punishments; a</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Presence of verbal reprimands and temporary punishments;</li> <li>- Dialogue hampered due to the use of internet and electronic games;</li> <li>- Girls receive more differentiated affection from boys.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Little time for the children;</li> <li>- Presence of verbal reprimands and temporary punishments.</li> </ul>
Rural setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Demonstration of affection with gifts and food;</li> <li>- Girls receive more affection than boys;</li> <li>- Children show affection performing their chores;</li> <li>- Physical and humiliating punishment accepted by parents and children.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Demonstration of affection with love and care;</li> <li>- Work and domestic chores as physical punishment;</li> <li>- Lack of dialogue.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Presence of intense physical and humiliating punishment;</li> <li>- Little physical contact to demonstrate affection;</li> <li>- Little communication between parents and children;</li> <li>- Little time for the children.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Presence of intense physical and psychological punishment;</li> <li>- Little communication between parents and children;</li> <li>- Little time for the children;</li> <li>- Authoritarianism;</li> <li>- Alcohol abuse related to domestic violence.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Physical and humiliating punishment with threats of withdrawing the children from school;</li> <li>- Children cannot express their opinion in stressful situations;</li> <li>- More demonstrations of affection with girls than with boys.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Little time for the children;</li> <li>- Presence of intense physical punishment.</li> </ul>

children, the change of name of the Nicaraguan child are only a few examples that are still to be further researched and understood. Children, however, have proved in this study that they are **active agents of their experiences**; in particular regarding the subject of physical punishment, and for this reason, they must continue to be encouraged to express their thoughts and feelings in the search for solutions to change a sociocultural tradition that is so unpleasant to them.

*“It is my opinion that parents must be patient with their children and not smack them straight away, and talking is better than smacking, this can be a way of teaching them the best instead of teaching them the path to cruelty (Mexican child, rural setting)*

### 5.1.2. Family practices, domestic chores and child labour

The subjects of the research regarding the connection between the family practices and the item labour were subdivided in two different activities:

1. Domestic chores: cleaning the house and doing the laundry, feeding and caring of siblings
2. Child labour: activities developed away from home to be paid wages or subsistence.

This subdivision is aimed at understanding and differentiating the cooperation tasks from the families' social reproduction, i.e., the performing of domestic chores that contribute to the development of the children's survival capacities and responsibilities, from the activities that are carried out to economically help the families.

In general, in all countries researched, child labour away from home was positively valued by adults only in the rural setting. This fact reflects an important change in the Latin and the Caribbean cultures with regard to child labour. It is known that great effort has been carried out by international organizations such as the International Labour Organization (ILO) and UNICEF, together with governmental bodies and with the civil society of the countries in the region with the purpose of validating the legislation for protection of children and adolescents' rights prepared by each State.

Adults, when positioning themselves against child labour, highlighted two harmful consequences of it:

- (1) Premature adulthood and lack of control over the routine of children that work. The act of working, a typical activity of adulthood, exposes them to risks they are not mature enough to take. In children's eyes, however, this assumed autonomy achieved through the power of consumption that adults have, even if minimal, is what justifies their desire or need to work.

*"No... one shouldn't let their children work... parents let go of them... then they start to lose control... they start to do wrong things with the money... become addicted to drugs... friends... electronic game houses... basic cocaine paste"* (Peruvian father, urban low income class setting)

*"It's all right to have your own money and not have to ask your mother."* (Mexican child, urban low income setting)

- (2) The importance of school – and not of work – for social mobility. Many were the voices that strengthened school and not work as the place for the formation of children. This discovery made clear the expectation of parents about their children having a more qualified and better paid professional life than theirs.

*"While we are small we must only concentrate on studying, because they (adults) work so that we can study and when we are grown up then we can work."* (Nicaraguan child, rural setting)

*"It all depends, I believe that work educates, I believe that children are exploited with the working conditions in a town like ours, but I believe that work is a value... the problem is that, in our country children work because they need to and for this reason they do jobs that exclude them from many things that they should enjoy, such as leisure, studies and other things for their age."* (Mexican mother, urban low income setting)

However, at the same time that child labour was condemned, the reports in most countries pointed out to a not very democratic distribution of domestic chores. The children reported little autonomy to choose which activities they would like to perform and complained of having very little space to protest about the type or amount of chores, which in many cases, meant substituting the entire work done by adults in the houses. These accounts unveiled the delicate and complex matter of what is the limit between the formative domestic

**The experience of Peru:**

- The portion of study held in Peru had the unique opportunity to carry out its field research with two groups of Parents of Working Children and Adolescents (NATs). One of the groups lives in peripheral settlements (districts of Ventanilla and Puente Piedra in Lima) and the other works at the supply market of Lima (Lince, middle class district).
- The study results highlighted the emphasis given by these parents to the education of their children. They stated that they prefer that the children perform their activities outside their homes during holidays and when the timing does not interfere with school. They also pointed out the need to not divide the work by gender when distributing the domestic chores.
- Outstanding, also, was a couple from Puente Piedra who, overcoming material needs, is managing to offer to their children an example of communitarian commitment and personal honesty. They adopt a democratic upbringing style, do not use physical punishment and maintain constant dialogue with their children. The mother, besides being part of a community co-operative, has become a seamstress through a scholarship of the Sedes Sapientiae University. This example also suggests a connection between the public life, the participation in democratic spaces and a more participatory configuration within the family.

chores and the replacement of adult labour force, especially with the advent of women joining the work force and of the single parented families.

*“At home when I go out I leave it up to my boys, I only have boys and the girl is very small so when I go out I take her with me. leave the chores for them, one makes the bed, the eldest prepares the food, another sweeps the house, the other sweeps the studio and I tell them that when I get back I want to find everything nice and tidy.”* (Brazilian mother, rural setting)

Also recurring were the reports that associated the non-fulfilment of tasks with punishments and reprimands received by the children. Sometimes, the increase of domestic chores was configured as the punishment itself. It can be inferred that the lack of autonomy in the choice of chores and the association

of work with punishment results in inverting the social importance of work. Instead of perceiving work as something productive, important and requiring specific skills, children end up relating work to situations of humiliation and punishment. Thus, the educational importance of the activity is lost and the idea that some jobs have less social importance than others, especially chores performed in the household, is reinforced.

The overburden of domestic chores became obvious, especially in the urban low income class and in the rural setting. Children of the middle class only get involved with the standard definition of domestic chore, which comprises only personal hygiene or family interaction activities such as taking the rubbish out or tidying their toys – chores that they perform without regularity or obligation. Many have been using the services of maids in the households. This worker, in fact, was suggested by a child from Jamaica to solve the problem at her house. According to her:

*“There should be a law assigning a helper to each family! Or robots!”*

On the occasions when child labour was reported, it was always associated with financial needs both in the urban low income setting and the rural setting. Even though the money earned is used for buying of personal items, very often wanted by the children themselves, the financial compensations are still used to cover the expenses which the poor families cannot afford for their children. The importance of work in the formation of children is always mentioned, but the reasons for using child labour force are determined, with rare exceptions, by their financial needs.

*“But also for children to buy things they need that sometimes we can’t afford.”*  
(Mexican mother, rural setting)

*“I would like to work to have my own money and not depend on my father and mother. One wants to buy a top to go dancing at the club, things like that, and our mother can’t afford it at that time.”* (Brazilian child, urban low income setting)

*“Poor little things because they work to earn money, live on the streets, don’t have enough money for a coat or something like that, there are days when it’s very cold”*  
(Mexican child, urban middle class)

*“Parents don’t have it. Others don’t have to because their parents have it. Sometimes they want to buy biscuits and haven’t got it.”* (Brazilian child, urban low income setting)

52 Family practices and child participation

The reports from children in the urban low income settings and rural settings in Brazil, Venezuela and Jamaica and in the rural settings in Nicaragua revealed not only very exhausting work situations with a great load of responsibility, but also a significant number of work activities described by the children, which are considered as dangerous, unhealthy and difficult for children between 7 and 12 years old. Among these, we can list the following activities, according to the type of danger they incur in<sup>10</sup>:

Degree of danger	Dangerous	Unhealthy	Difficult
<b>Activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cook.</li> <li>- Take care of younger siblings.</li> <li>- Sew.</li> <li>- Dig holes.</li> <li>- Milk cows.</li> <li>- Treat horses.</li> <li>- Drive tractors.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Wash clothes and kitchen utensils.</li> <li>- Clean windows.</li> <li>- Clean toilets.</li> <li>- Wax the floor.</li> <li>- Mix cement.</li> <li>- Plant and harvest sugarcane.</li> <li>- Cut the grass.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Treat pigs and hens — slaughter them.</li> </ul>

Lastly, it is important to approach a very important matter that refers to the reproduction of gender roles in the distribution of domestic chores for children. As shown in table 3, which displays the characteristics of family practices, domestic chores and child labour in the different countries of study, there is also a gender distribution of the work in the family practices of Brazil, Peru and Venezuela concerning domestic chores. In these contexts, the girls are responsible for the lighter activities performed indoors, or in the company of their mothers or their carers. The boys are responsible for the heavier, more risky chores, especially those that take place outdoors, even when it is a family task, such as carrying the shopping bags or taking the rubbish bags outside.

*“I tell my mother I want to go out in the street but she won’t let me. But you let the boys go out! I tell her. And then she says you are a girl and not a boy. You can look after the things in the house. Then I get really angry!”* (Brazilian child, urban low income setting)

<sup>10</sup> These expressions were taken from the 182 Convention of ILO - International Labor Organization.

In the rural setting, the distribution of chores by gender is even more obvious in both the domestic field and in the farming activities. Boys are considered stronger and braver for activities that incur in the handling of tools, machinery or techniques, regardless of their age or their body build or nutritional condition. As for the girls, considered more frail and scared, they must remain closer to the house and to the domestic chores.

*“They can’t cut the grass or milk the cows because it makes calluses in their hands and they get... when they wash the pots, they perforate the calluses and then they bleed!”* (Brazilian child, rural setting)

The study did not clarify the reasons why adults and children in Jamaica, Mexico and Nicaragua shared domestic chores in a more equal manner. However, the investigation in Nicaragua appears to show a pattern that, while predominantly belonging to families based on a patriarchal and authoritarian code, with little room for the participation of its members, indicates that this pattern is undergoing a changing process. Factors such as the influence of the Sandinista revolution, that strengthened the distribution of a more egalitarian gender ethos, the increasing participation of women in the labour market and the educational, political and social opportunities, the work of organizations and social support systems for women and boys/girls are a few of the possible factors responsible for such changes, pointed out in the study. Besides, the recognition of women and boys/girls as people with rights in the family and in society represents a meaningful step in the culture of the country, for even though there is still a long way to go to reach its effective practice, it will certainly have important results in a more participatory transformation of the family and of the methods of upbringing children.

### 5.1.3. Family practices and formal education

In recent years, countries in Latin America and the Caribbean have developed several strategies to qualify their educational systems<sup>11</sup>. Among these strategies is the increase in compulsory school years, the increase of coverage,

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11 UNESCO. Quality Education for everyone: a subject of human rights, 2007. [http://www.unesco.cl/medios/biblioteca/documentos/documento\\_base\\_educacion\\_calidad\\_para\\_todos\\_asunto\\_derechos\\_humanos\\_ept\\_prelac\\_portugues.pdf](http://www.unesco.cl/medios/biblioteca/documentos/documento_base_educacion_calidad_para_todos_asunto_derechos_humanos_ept_prelac_portugues.pdf).

Table 3 – Demonstration of family practices, domestic chores and child labour by context and country studied

Country Context	Brazil	Jamaica	Mexico	Nicaragua	Peru	Venezuela
Urban – low income setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A lot of domestic work in substitution to adult work;</li> <li>- Presence of a classic division by gender of chores for the children;</li> <li>- Intense child labour.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A lot of domestic work in substitution of adult labour;</li> <li>- Working in the streets to help the mothers in the street vendors.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The children cannot choose the domestic chores;</li> <li>- Punished when they do not perform their chores;</li> <li>- Parents against child labour outside their homes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Distinction between “help” (domestic setting) and “work” (street setting);</li> <li>- Very low levels of child labour reported;</li> <li>- There is no division by gender of the domestic chores.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Parents condemned child labour before the age of 14 years old;</li> <li>- Children reported labour as of 12 years old;</li> <li>- Presence of a classic division by gender of children labour.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A lot of domestic work in substitution to adult work.</li> </ul>
Urban – middle setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Chores performed at home related only to rules of daily routine and personal hygiene;</li> <li>-Presence of maids.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Chores performed at home related only to rules of daily routine and personal hygiene;</li> <li>-Work related to family business;</li> <li>- Presence of domestic maid.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Children cannot choose the domestic chores;</li> <li>- Chores related to personal hygiene;</li> <li>-Punished when they do not perform their chores;</li> <li>- Parents against child labour outside their homes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Work related to family business;</li> <li>-Positive value in the division of domestic chores with adults;</li> <li>- There is no division by gender of domestic chores.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Chores performed at home related only to rules of daily routine and personal hygiene;</li> <li>- Child work accepted for the low income class.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>--Chores performed at home related only to rules of daily routine and personal hygiene;</li> <li>-Chores performed at home related only to rules of daily routine and personal hygiene;</li> <li>-Presence of maids</li> </ul>
Rural setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A lot of domestic work in substitution to adult work;</li> <li>- Presence of a classic division of work by gender for children;</li> <li>-Intense child labour;</li> <li>- Punished when they do not perform their chores.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A lot of domestic chores and work outdoors related to subsistence;</li> <li>-Children seemed to be overloaded with work.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Children cannot choose domestic chores;</li> <li>- Punished when they do not perform their chores;</li> <li>- Parents pro child labour – subsistence.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Children cannot choose domestic chores or work activities outside home;</li> <li>- Children report tiredness and frustration related to work overload.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Age to start work determined by physical characteristics;</li> <li>- Presence of a classic division by gender of the work for children;</li> <li>- Andes culture unifies work, education and fun</li> <li>- Children cannot choose domestic chores nor work activities outside home .</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A lot of domestic chores and outside work related to subsistence;</li> <li>- Presence of a classic division by gender of the work for children.</li> </ul>

the improvement of infrastructure, the development of new curricula and the qualification of teaching staff

These investments have aimed to assure the right to good quality education, the fundamental basis of all the democratic state. However, the data collected in the study on family practices and formal education demonstrated in table 4, show the precariousness of the educational system of the region, especially in the rural setting of the countries researched.

The data of the studies was collected starting with the expressions of the children about the autonomy they could exert at school and about the expectations and evaluations of parents and carers of their children's school. Both children and adults had ambivalent answers with regards to school, as school is not only perceived as a place of enlargement of the domestic world, but also it contains in itself a series of rules and constraints pertaining to its own system.

In general, children from different countries and contexts represented school as a complex world that contains elements that please them, but also have extremely unpleasant situations. Among the pleasing elements is the feeling of autonomy in relation to what they experience at home, and the opportunity to make and meet friends. The reports showed school as the place where more open relations predominate, that is a place of interaction with other children. Especially in the rural setting, school was frequently quoted as the only opportunity of social contact with other children due to the isolation of families in their properties.

Among the unpleasant situations related to school described by the children was the strictness of some teachers and headmasters. The use of a school uniform and some subjects were also listed as unpleasant. Brazilian children complained of the lack of infrastructure and leisure areas in school, and children from the urban low income class and rural environments in Jamaica and in Brazil reported that teachers physically assault the students. However, generally speaking, the most recurrent complaint was the teachers' lack of attention with regards to the students' needs. Similar to the attention required by parents, in school too a lot of the children don't feel they are heard.

*"(...) his teacher, when she was my teacher, everybody can prove it, even my mother because I've been all black and blue here. She used to throw keys, rulers and chalk at us."* (Brazilian child, urban low income setting)

*“They want to teach those that want to learn, if you are restless (talk, answer back) the teacher doesn’t teach.”* (Jamaican child, urban low income class context)

Another important matter was raised by children in Venezuela, Mexico and Jamaica who reported situations of violence which can be defined as bullying<sup>12</sup>. However, although it wasn’t mentioned in other reports, that possibly occurs in all the countries.

*Girl: “What I don’t like is when the other children mess with me”*

*Interviewer: “You don’t like the boys to mess with you? Why do they mess with you?”*

*Girl: “I don’t know why, because when I get there everyone starts saying I am ugly and they hit me.”*

*Interviewer: “They hit you?”*

*Girl: “I speak to the teachers.”*

*Interviewer: “And what do they do?”*

*Girl: “They talk to the boys, but they don’t take any notice.”*

This second category includes the school of urban low income class contexts in most countries researched. Besides facing the structural problems typical of public education in the area (teacher’s low salaries, insufficient teaching materials, reduced technological resources etc), these schools are also situated in areas with a high level of community violence. This situation increases the tension within the school environments, which become responsible for the safety of the children while they themselves are vulnerable to urban violence.

It is worth pointing out that parents in the urban low income class context in Venezuela and Peru referred to school as a “second home” for their children, evidencing the social network role that school can have in suburban communities. In Nicaragua, school is perceived as a much more democratic venue than home because it reflects the socio-political project which has been occurring in the country since the 80’s. The school role in the rural setting of all countries was also referred to as a social support, or rather, as a venue for meeting

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<sup>12</sup> **Bullying** is a word of British origin used to describe acts of physical or psychological violence, intentional and repeated, practiced by an individual (*bully*) or group of individuals with the objective of intimidating or attacking another individual (or group of individuals) unable to defend himself. In Venezuela it is called *chalequeo* and in Brazil *zoação*.

**The Jamaican experience:**

In Jamaica only 10% of the children are enrolled in private kindergartens and elementary schools, which provide very high quality education. The public education system, which serves the remaining 90% of students, does not offer homogeneity in terms of teaching quality, size of schools and students results in qualifying tests. However, the children's academic performance in these first school years is fundamental to decide what type of secondary education they will have and, consequently, if they will be able to follow an academic or technical career, or if they will be expelled of the educational system. For example, only by studying at Traditional Academic High Schools is that a child will be approved for the Teachers Colleges, as well as, if the child attends technical/vocational schools, she will definitely be out of the educational system at the end of her adolescence.

up, exchanges and cooperation between families and the communities. These examples suggest that the strengthening of the educational institutions and the globalization of a high quality public education appears to be based on the construction of a more egalitarian and participatory society.

In the urban context and rural environments, in the middle and low income classes in all the countries that took part of the research, there was no negotiation with the children as to the choice of the school. No child was able to express an opinion as to where and/or with whom to study for different reasons.

On one hand, for the families of urban low income class and rural environments, there are no options of public or low cost schools, so neither parents nor children can choose. School is thought of by parents as a great opportunity for social mobility (quite often an opportunity that the parents themselves didn't have) and the pressure they put on their children to make the most of school is very strong.

However, in the urban middle class families, there are more options and more reports (undoubtedly reduced) of school as a place for education for life, and other attributes besides the strictly useful. However, it is the parents who decide to which school their children will go to. For this, they rely on family traditions or on the new educational technologies presented by the education

Table 4 – Demonstration of family practices and formal education by context and researched country

Country Context	Brazil	Jamaica	Mexico	Nicaragua	Peru	Venezuela
Urban – low income setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Lack of option hinders school choice.</li> <li>-Children unsatisfied with the school and the teachers.</li> <li>-Physical punishment practiced by teachers.</li> <li>-Differences between the wishes of parents and children as to the future.</li> <li>-Expectations of social mobility.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Children do not choose the school.</li> <li>-Situations of violence suffered at school and surroundings.</li> <li>-Physical punishment practiced by teachers</li> <li>-Choice of elementary school determines the child's academic future.</li> <li>-Schools with little infrastructure and low education quality.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-School as possibility of a better life in the future.</li> <li>-Expectations of immediate learning.</li> <li>-School regarded by children as a place of autonomy and to meet with friends.</li> <li>-Children do not choose the school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Children do not choose the school.</li> <li>-Choice of school has economic implications.</li> <li>-School regarded by children as a place of autonomy and to meet with friends.</li> <li>-Bullying.</li> <li>-Teachers with little academic capacity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Children do not choose the school.</li> <li>-Choice of school has economic implications.</li> <li>- School as social support.</li> <li>-Low performance at school must be punished.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-School regarded by children as a place of autonomy and to meet with friends.</li> <li>-Demanding teachers.</li> <li>-Parents trust the school a lot.</li> <li>-Lack of option hinders school choice.</li> <li>-School as social support.</li> </ul>
Urban – middle setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Choice made by parents, according to pedagogic proposition and religion.</li> <li>-Expectations of social mobility.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Children do not choose school.</li> <li>-Private education.</li> <li>-University expectations.</li> <li>-Qualified and democratic teachers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- School as possibility of a better life in the future.</li> <li>-University expectations.</li> <li>-School regarded by children as a place of autonomy and to meet with friends.</li> <li>-Children do not choose school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Children do not choose school</li> <li>-Schools regarded by children as a place of autonomy and to meet with friends.</li> <li>-School choice based on the quality of education.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-School as possibility of a better life in the future.</li> <li>- Low performance at school must be punished.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-School regarded by children as a place of autonomy and to meet with friends.</li> <li>-Demanding teachers.</li> <li>-Children do not choose the school.</li> <li>-School as family tradition.</li> </ul>
Rural setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Lack of option hinders school choice.</li> <li>-Children give positive evaluation to the school.</li> <li>- School as possibility of a better life in the future.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Children do not choose school.</li> <li>-Lack of option hinders school choice.</li> <li>-Physical punishment practiced by teachers.</li> <li>- Bullying.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-School as possibility of a better life in the future.</li> <li>-Low academic expectation.</li> <li>-School regarded by children as a place of autonomy and to meet with friends.</li> <li>-Lack of option hinders school choice.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Lack of option hinders school choice.</li> <li>-School regarded by children as a place of autonomy and meeting with friends.</li> <li>- Work in the fields interferes with school.</li> <li>-Low expectations for the children's academic future.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-School as possibility of a better life in the future.</li> <li>-Expectations of professional skills .</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-School regarded by children as a place of autonomy and to meet with friends.</li> <li>-Lack of option hinders school choice.</li> <li>-School as possibility of a better life in the future.</li> </ul>

market. In this selection process, there seems to be a motivation of social class reproduction, determined by the level of education and by the university career, where there is also very little participation from the children.

The data collected in the study suggest that the right to express an opinion about the school choices as well as the right to a high level education is still far from reality for most children of the urban low income class and rural setting.

#### 5.1.4. Family practices and interaction among the children

The interaction with friends represented the situation in which the children reported more freedom of choice in the different contexts of the six countries researched. It became very clear that friends represented the part of their lives that they conquered themselves. Even in the reports where friends were members of the extended family (cousins, nephews/nieces, uncles/aunts) or belonging to the family circle of friends, the notion of personal choice emphasized the children's statements about their friends and the ways of interacting with them. Similarly, the reasons why they chose a certain friend were related to personal tastes and individual needs.

*"Friend is the one who wants to play with you, the one you see everyday, when you need something he/she will help you."* (Brazilian child, urban low income setting)

*"What are your friends like? They don't tell our secrets to other people."* (Peruvian child, urban middle class context)

This practice of autonomy is guaranteed even when the parents don't agree with their children's choice. Many accounts showed that the children especially the younger ones, take into account the opinions of their parents and carers about their friends, but that doesn't necessarily keep them away from their friends based on these opinions.

*"I don't tell my parents, but I still meet them."* (Mexican child, rural setting)

Parents admitted being aware of this level of interference they have. This interaction with friends in reality has presented itself as a first and important exercise of widening the family setting, with respect to affection ties. Friends, for parents and carers as well as for children, appeared as one of the few spaces

where children effectively have options of choice and can exert a relative autonomy. It can be stated that among the countless limits of child participation accounted so far, the interaction with pairs has proved to be vitally important for the development of children.

Friends were described as something negative and inferior to family bonds only by children of the urban low income class context in Jamaica. It was not possible to develop a clear hypothesis on reasons for these statements, but it can be assumed that they represent the reasons why most children break some extra familiar affectionate bond, as they report situations of envy, jealousy, loss of trust and aggressiveness. Possibly, the group in Jamaica was able to express these more clearly and vehemently.

*“Friends gossip about you”*

*“A friend told my secret to another”*

*“If you aren’t friends with one of them, the others won’t speak to you”*

*“Friends are jealous and angry if we don’t speak to them”*

*“Friends are cruel”*

*“I only have friends at home”*

*“Friends are bad”*

*“I don’t play with them, they are too rough”*

(Jamaican children, urban low income class context)

In general, parents also revealed their concerns with some friendships they consider harmful to their children. They highlighted their concern with “bad companies” interfering with their children’s performance at school or teaching them antisocial behaviours such as stealing or lying. In the urban low income class context of the different countries, the groups of offending youngsters (Venezuelan crooks, Brazilian drug dealers, Peruvian “gangs”, etc) represented a major threat, not only of enticing as well as being responsible for increasing the level of violence in the streets of the communities.

The lack of public safety was appointed as an embarrassment for the enlargement of groups of friends. In violent low income class environments, streets appear as a very dangerous place, where an armed conflict may take place at any minute. For this reason, children are not allowed to attend these places,

Leaving them only the school grounds premises to meet their friends. The lack of other social equipment and places such as clubs, theatres, free courses, cinemas etc., determines a crucial difference in the lives of the children of the

urban low income and middle classes. The latter stand a much better chance of meeting and interacting with their friends, as they live in neighbourhoods full of leisure and cultural options besides the school institution.

*“Now it’s the football club, the “cascareta” and the recreation group that are the best friends. There is also a friend since nursery school.”* (Mexican mother, urban middle class)

The reports from Venezuela and Peru point out the feeling of insecurity experienced by the urban middle class families which, because of the fact that they live close to neighbourhoods of extreme poverty, they are forced to coexist with countless situations of city violence. The streets of large cities are known to all social classes as being dangerous and where people risk their lives. The classes with purchasing power can afford to buy their security in institutions such as sport clubs and in consumption spaces such as shopping centres. The less favoured classes end up being confined and isolated in their small homes.

*“I say that, because I had an incident less than two months ago, my mother is going through a difficult time, things happened, my brother died so she doesn’t want the same to happen to us. (...) So this is how it is: - No, you don’t go out – I must obey because she’s my mother; I’ve got to be quiet.”* (Venezuelan girl, urban low setting)

Some reports pointed out that the parents’ concern with respect to their children’s groups of friends and bad companies is based on the gender principles in force which establish rules and boundaries with regards to the interaction among children. In accordance to behaviours and attitudes expected from boys and girls. For example, the option to restrict the girls from going out and walking around on the streets was recurrent, as the streets are seen as places where sexual harassment or violence can happen to the girls and they are perceived as more vulnerable. In the parents’ opinion, especially for the older girls in the urban low income class and rural setting, “bad company” are considered those who already have boyfriends. Another aspect seen as important to parents is the influence this friendship might have on the sexual behaviour of their daughters, expressed by the fear of an unwanted pregnancy.

As for the boys, the concern they cause to their parents is with regards to using the internet too much, accessing chat rooms and playing video-games. In

addition, boys are also seen as more vulnerable to being allured by gangs of offending youngsters and to drug consumption.

Finally, it can be stated that the interaction with friends has represented the most important space for children to exercise autonomy and choice. Also in this matter, the reports of families revealed that they are attentive and influencing the choices of children without however, exerting the power of decision they have over their children in other situations in life.

## **5.2. Final considerations**

This study, when seeking the identification of the factors associated with promoting the participation of children in the family household in six countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, produced a set of data that show some of the trends of family practices in the region. These practices, some more and others less participatory, were raised according to the perspective of parents, carers and children in the rural and urban environments and in the middle and low income classes. However, due to the exploratory nature of the study,

### **The experience in Brazil:**

The field research in the rural setting in Brazil was carried out in the community of Ribeirão de São Joaquim, located in the Southern region of the State of Rio de Janeiro, which population is distributed between villages and farms. The community has a municipal elementary school, one telephone station, one health centre, one sports court, two catholic and one evangelic churches, two cemeteries, one football field, a square and a bandstand, four bars, groceries, one public fountain, one club and one bus.

This community was outstanding as the most friendly to the children's needs to live with their pairs among the rural environments studied. Being a very small community, all the children know each other and play together in different occasions and spaces, i.e., in the streets, the sports court and the square bandstand.

Table 5- Demonstration of family practices and interaction among the children

Country Context	Brazil	Jamaica	Mexico	Nicaragua	Peru	Venezuela
Urban – Low income setting	- Lack of safe spaces to meet friends; - Children have the liberty to choose friends	- Ambiguous feelings in relation to friends. - Children have the liberty to choose friends - Parents value friendships and distinguish the good friend from "bad companies". - Concern with the "bad companies" of the community - More concern with girls than boys.	- Parents value friendships and distinguish the good friend from "bad companies". - Children make friends in and out of school. - Parents do not know their children's friends well.	- Parents value friendships and distinguish the good friend from "bad companies". - School as the most democratic space to make friends; - Lack of safe spaces to meet friends.	- Lack of safe spaces to meet friends; - Parents value friendships and distinguish the good friend from bad companies. - Concern with juvenile gangs and with drug trafficking and consumption	- Parents value friendships and distinguish the good friend from bad companies. - Fear of the children being involved in situations of violence - Lack of safe spaces to meet friends.
Urban – middle setting	- Children have the liberty to choose friends - Children go to shopping centres, parks and clubs.	- Children have the liberty to choose friends - Parents value friendships and distinguish the good friend from "bad companies".	- Parents value friendships and distinguish the good friend from bad companies. - Children make friends in and out of school; - Children go to sports clubs.	- Parents value friendships and distinguish the good friend from "bad companies". - School as the most democratic space to make friends.	- Parents value friendships and distinguish the good friend from "bad companies". - Concern with the excessive use of chat rooms on the Internet.	- Parents value friendships and distinguish the good friend from "bad companies". - Concern that children will get involved in situations of violence perpetrated by crooks.
Rural setting	- Varied spaces and opportunities to meet friends; - Children have the liberty to choose friends.	- Children have the liberty to choose friends; - Parents value friendships and distinguish good friends from bad companies. - Concern with bad companies in the community	- Parents value friendships and distinguish the good friend from "bad companies". - Children make friends in and out of school.	- School as the most democratic space to make friends; - Children have the liberty to choose friends		- Parents value friendships and distinguish the good friend from "bad companies". - Fear of involvement with crooks.

this data are not intended to cover all the existing diversities in each country studied.

These trends that work as clues for the understanding of family practices, are now reduced to a few conclusions. In spite of being displayed as a group, they don't intend to ignore the cultural diversity of each country, but to draw the intersection lines between the diverse experiences reported. Thus, they create a mosaic of trends with the purpose of exchanging the different styles and establishing conditions to reflect and act on the subject.

1. Low level of children participation. The differences in family practices referring to the children's level of participation were conditioned to the social setting, where the urban middle class context had more participatory, democratic and authoritative practices. Factors like the parents' and carer's education, socioeconomic resources and the available institutions can explain this difference. On the other hand, the low educational levels, the precariousness of social support, the urban violence and the social exclusion cause the rural and low income class environments to be inclined to maintain family practice conceptions of traditional and authoritarian societies. However, as a general rule, even in the most democratic contexts, parents and carers hold the power in most of the children's choices, especially the younger ones that are not considered able to give opinions in ruling their lives.
2. Configuration of families. The children in the rural setting and urban low income class context interact with extensive family networks, in contrast with the families of urban middle class which are more reduced. Members of extended families acquire a special role in the upbringing of the children in the rural setting. A meaningful number of children in the urban low income class context live in families led by women. Stories of break-ups and marital reconstruction were reported, highlighting the role of stepfathers and stepmothers in the children's lives. In all the studied contexts, grandparents, especially the grandmothers are part of the daily life of families. The community networks have a fundamental role in the upbringing of the children in low income settings.
3. Displays of affection determined by age and gender. Smaller children get more displays of affection than older ones, as well as girls compared to boys. There is less physical contact in the displays of affection in the rural setting. Many children can only notice their parents' affection if they correctly fulfil their school and domestic chores. In these cases, affective security is condi-

- tioned to the performance related to good behaviour and to unconditional obedience to parents.
4. Invariable presence of physical punishment. In the region, some very deep rooted traditions still persist that justify the use of physical punishment in families of all social classes and contexts. The eradication of these practices has been difficult, in spite of the efforts to forge and spread a normative body and system of institutions that ban violence and negligence against children in the family setting. Simultaneously, there are signs that point out to the fact that people start to criticize the episodes of violence against children, to perceive them as crimes and to seek competent institutions to report them.
  5. Traditional patterns of family practices are more common in the low income class and rural setting. The disciplinary resources are based mostly in traditions. Parents tend to raise their children as they were raised. Unconditional obedience by children is vehemently appreciated. The interaction and discipline rules are passed on in monologues where only the parents express their motives and reasons for their attitudes. Little information and lack of learning opportunities perpetuate authoritarian and violent family practices. What occurs is a generation transmission of violence, where there are break-ups, of course, but what prevails is the repetition of experiences to which parents were submitted. The isolation of families in the rural setting and the precariousness of social equipment in the urban low income class context appear to influence the maintenance of these practices, even in the families that seek alternative styles of raising their children.
  6. Urban violence establishing family practices. Children in the urban low income setting described situations of extreme violence resulting from the armed confrontation between groups of youths that live on the streets and in the communities. Children from the low income settings described the streets as being a place of imminent dangerous deaths. Children from urban middle class also perceive the streets as dangerous because they can be mugged or attacked. The fear of sexual violence embarrasses girls more than boys. However, the fear of being involved with groups of offending youths is greater in boys. Urban violence ruling family practices.
  7. Gender division of work – The distribution of labour activities inside the house and outside follows a traditional gender diversion. With rare exceptions, the domestic tasks fall more on the girls and the boys are given the tasks that are dangerous and demand physical effort.

8. Disapproval of child labour. Child labour was disapproved of in the parents' statements, but it appeared in the reports of children. There is a tendency to condemn child labour away from home. However, the precarious living and work reality of some families still establishes a considerable amount of work for children in the rural and urban low income class contexts.
9. Overload for children in the low income class and rural setting. Older children in the urban low income class and rural environments are overloaded with domestic work because they replace their parents or other adults in the task of social reproduction. The urban middle class children are protected from responsibilities and they live their childhood as a promise, as time for preparing for future adulthood.
10. Impossibility of achieving good quality upbringing for urban low income class and rural setting. There is an impossibility of a school choice by children for reasons distinguished by context. In the rural setting there is total scarcity of good quality schools. In the urban low income class context there is a lack of investing in public education and financial difficulty in reaching the private sector. In this context. The idea of the children's participation in the "choices" for their formal education is non-existent, as there are options to choose from in general. There are no clear options between on school or another, as well as in these precarious schools there are few options for curriculum's, subjects or courses. The middle class appeals to the private sector and in that way better qualifies their children, however with little participation of the children in these choices, even when there are more options.
11. Formal education as a social mobility project. Even being classified as precarious, the formal education is seen as a possibility of social mobility by families in rural and urban low income class contexts. Families expect their children can have a profession that will assure them a more comfortable life without exploitation of their labour. This perception is almost mythical when compared to the high unemployment rates or underpaid jobs in force in the researched countries.
12. Possibilities of transition from a traditional to a more participatory pattern. The wish to make adjustments to develop more participatory family practices was present in the statements of several families. As an example, we have the tendency of matching physical punishment with emotional support. The use of punishment shows very important cultural and religious traits, however they are no longer applied in the same way as the traditional

manner. Families in all the contexts and countries reported that when they apply physical punishment, they try to talk and explain the reasons why they are doing it to their children. Parents highlighted their efforts to seek new ways of coexistence that are compatible with traditions and at the same time being able to surpass them. However, the children reported that they can't participate by talking. If on the one hand they can have explanations as to why they are punished, on the other hand it is still not allowed that they should answer back or express their views on the punishment they received.

13. The children demand attentive listening and time from adults. For all the groups of children it is very important to participate in playful activities with their parents. They wish to share experiences that go beyond the usual tasks of domestic social reproduction (eat, have baths, etc.). One element that was outstanding was the importance that the children give to time devoted to sharing playful activities with their parents. The feeling of satisfaction linked to time spent with their parents is not necessarily related to the amount of time, but to the fact of this time being completely devoted to the children. The more democratic family practices are praised by the children in a remarkable way in their statements. These practices include the use of reflexive disciplinary strategies where the child can evaluate his/her own actions. They also include the creation of places for playful exchanges where the children join in the playful activities with their parents and carers, which enables them to consider themselves worthy of attention and time, where they can take the initiatives and influence their parents' actions.
14. There is a noticeable difference between the speech and the practice stated, mainly in the middle class. During the focal groups you can often spot the difference between the speech of what mothers and fathers considered correct or appropriate with respect to the upbringing of their children and the practices they reported in their everyday living. It is worth highlighting that this difference appeared in an opposite way, or: some stated they believed in the effectiveness of practices little or not participatory at all, however they described a fairly participatory relationship with their children, while others had a very participatory speech but wasn't coherent with the educational practices they described.

Finally, it was possible to conclude that the participation of children in this study as well as the clarity with which they were able to describe their experi-

ences and feelings, contributed significantly to the wide understanding of family dynamics in the different countries researched. This fact leads us to believe that, when children are given the opportunity to participate of social life, having in mind that participation refers to the combination of practices that aim to encourage, stimulate and allow children to express their views on subjects that affect them (and that these are taken into account) are achieved, higher levels of competence and consequently increasing the quality of their own participation.

The involvement in activities shared with adults and other children, where there is belief in the child's skills to successfully fulfil a given task, appears to encourage the development of children. Child participation is not a means through which can effectively change things, but a chance to develop their autonomy, self-esteem, independence and social skills. When the children notice that their opinions are seriously taken into account, they assume a posture in life that differs a lot from a resigned and submissive position. Their self-esteem is promoted and consequently, the child develops the feeling that he/she is important. They acknowledge themselves as human beings, equal to adults and develop a greater respect towards their peers.

In spite of what was mentioned above, this listening attitude from the adults requires allowing the children some time so that they can express themselves. Children require understanding adults, willing to listen to them and helping them to feel safe and comfortable in the setting in which they are, to enable child participation to happen effectively.

On the other hand, what we observed in the study is that adults overburdened by socioeconomic pressures hardly feel listened to and consequently have difficulty in listening. Populations cornered by urban violence or by the rural exodus experience a huge restriction in their fundamental rights. The lack of dignified work, housing, health, education, culture and leisure, public safety among others,

Limits the ability of adults to express themselves and to conquer a social space truly valued How can adults then listen to children if they themselves have no voice? This state of affairs appears to make the right participation of some children even more difficult to be carried out.

It should be highlighted, however, that some families immersed in the above mentioned context, stated the wish to change and the will to create family practices that cover the demands of children. Some already put them into practice

and act as incongruous voices of traditional patterns. Illustrated here in the speech of a Brazilian mother:

*“That is why now I prefer to talk to my daughters than raise my hand, than getting stressed. I prefer talking than hitting. Because I thought it was wrong, didn’t I? I couldn’t even understand! I wanted to play, I wanted to run. And many times he would say: “go and do that”! then I would see something else – “Let’s go there quickly” – and I would go. Child, let’s play hopscotch, lets skip. Many times I would do what I was told in tears, because I had already taken a beating, because he said something and I didn’t do it. But this is the problem, now I understand it. This is why I don’t do it: a child is not a computer. No, wait, you talk to the child once, twice, three times, it’s useless. The child goes. You have to say it, and repeat it, and repeat it until the child understands she has to do it. I don’t think this is right anymore, to just go and “pow, pow, pow”. Because it didn’t work very well with me, so... (laughs) He would hit me and I would do it again, so... You grow up and become responsible, and you understand. And I also believe that I grew up more because I saw his side of the situation, I began to understand. This is why I think that nowadays I won’t – sometimes I get stressed – but I don’t hit, there’s no such thing. “I really believe talking is best”.*

Usually, in these families it is possible to notice a trend to employ practices that promote the equity of gender and a more balanced distribution of domestic chores, which reflects directly on the upbringing of children and seems to provide a more favourable setting to the participation of children. These tuneless voices usually belonged to fathers and mothers who found more participatory spaces in the workplace, and/or overcame the strict traditions related to traditional roles of gender, for example. In this aspect, listening places for families seem to favour the deflexion about possibilities of change. The speeches below illustrate this tendency:

*“I work and don’t accept to do things in the house on my own. Everything has to be shared, has to be thought and discussed, we both work so there has to be a consensus.”* (mother of child 7-12 years old)

*“We both work so we both must be responsible for looking after the girls, for doing the housework.”* (mother of child 7-12 years old)

It is important to emphasize that the conclusions of this study were only possible to reach by crossing the speeches of children with those of adults, thus creating the complex meanings of the most diverse existing family practices.

### **5.3. Recommendations for action:**

- 1) Cooperate towards the end of structural, institutional, family and interpersonal violence to which children living in the rural and urban low class contexts are subject to in each region.

The realization of more in depth research and studies, together with collective political incidence that organizes the different levels of violence, can help with the necessary impact in public policies that will assure the well-being of children and their families.

- 2) To contribute with the immediate ban of physical and humiliating punishment against children, as well as against any other citizen, meaning women who are victims of domestic violence, prisoners, subordinate and enslaved workers.

The development of campaigns to ban all kinds of violence as a disciplinary strategy must include cuttings of gender, social class and ethnicity, as well as the debates of social movements that fight against torture, enslaved labour and sexual exploitation. Traditions deep-rooted in the culture of the area end up justifying the use of physical and humiliating punishments.

- 3) To promote actions that question the traditional roles of gender related to the sexual division of domestic chores.

The on-going gender division of domestic chores co-operates with the up keeping of gender iniquities and creates, from an early age in children's lives, an uneven and unfair pattern of distribution of labour activities for both girls and boys.

- 4) To give visibility to more participatory family practices in all contexts and social classes.

For the creation of programs and public politics it is worth resorting to the strategies in force or being transformed to produce alternatives of family practices that are really feasible and in time with the reality of each context.

- 5) To include the voices of children in the creation, implementation and evaluation of actions promoting authoritative family practices.

Children, with all their limitations, obviously know what they want and are able to express their desires to include their voices is a fundamental condition for the implementation of an honest discussion between children and adults. It is worth mentioning that when doing that, the adults will have to accept the way children express themselves and not want to change them into small adults and only them listen to them.

- 6) Encourage the dialogue between children and the cultural and family traditions remembered by adults from their own childhood.

The actions that seek to re-evaluate the family practices need to allow the dialogue of the traditional patterns existing in each context with the actual needs of the children. A possibility of dialogue is that one where adults and children can talk about their own experiences when they were children and that way analyze the effectiveness and pertinence of the different strategies of participation, care and discipline.

- 7) Develop programs that allow adults to build up strategies to listen to children and at the same time, maintain their authority and responsibility not just in the family but also in education, health, work, culture and leisure institutions.

Besides the families, other institutions in society don't listen to children either. A socio-political project of effective participation of children should include not only parents and carers but also all the adults who carry out actions in organizations dedicated to childhood.



## 6.

# Part II: Summaries of Country Reports<sup>13</sup>

### 6.1. Summary Brazil

Team responsible for the study:

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Organization: Promundo

Characteristics of the methodology applied in the country.

For collecting the data activities in three different contexts in the State of Rio de Janeiro were carried out. As a rural context the community of Ribeirao de Sao Joaquim was selected. This community is located in the southern “Fluminense” part of the State of Rio de Janeiro and since 1992 is the second district of the municipality of Quatis. The district has a municipal school of basic education, a telephone station, a health centre, a sports field, two catholic churches, one evangelical church, two cemeteries, a football field, a square and a bandstand, four bars, grocery stores, a public water fountain, a social club and a bus.

The community selected for the urban low class context was “Vila do Joao” which is part of the Mare Shanty towns Complex, situated in the Northern side of the municipality of Rio de Janeiro. Mare Complex is considered one of the

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<sup>13</sup> The summaries were prepared out by Promundo based on the data collected and reports sent by the organizations of each country.

largest groups of shanty towns in the city of Rio de Janeiro, having a total area of about 800 thousand square metres subdivided in 16 different communities. Its population accounts for a total of 132.176 inhabitants and almost one third of these are composed of children and pre-adolescents. This population contingent can also be highlighted by its large numbers of North eastern and afro-descendant migrants (65% of the population). This location has the highest concentration of low income population in the municipality of Rio de Janeiro which represents 2, 26% of the total number of inhabitants of the city. This population is involved mainly in the informal labour market and in autonomous activities (the so-called odd jobs) and a considerable part of the resident families is led by women (about 70%).

The third context selected was the urban middle class, represented by mothers, fathers and carers living in the Southern part of the city of Rio de Janeiro, a complex of neighbourhoods traditionally inhabited by the “carioca” (as people from Rio de Janeiro are known) middle class. Besides. The location, middle class was also defined here by the family budget (equal or higher than R\$2,000.00) and school education (university level) of the participants.

For the consultation with the children, groups of thematic activities were carried out. Due to the complexity of the data collection in this age range, each group of children were reunited for five meetings. At the end of these meetings, two children (a boy and a girl) were selected to participate of in-depth interviews. Only the middle class group was not subjected to the consultations with children.

#### Children participating in the research

Children	Rural Setting		Low Income	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
<b>Group of activities</b>				
Group of 7 to 9 years	3	6	5	5
Group of 10 to 12 years	4	8	5	5
<b>In depth interviews</b>				
Group of 7 to 9 years	1	1	1	1
Group of 10 to 12 years	1	1	1	1
<b>Total of children</b>	7	14	10	10

Source: Informe Final/Brazil/2007

For the data collection with fathers, mothers and carers, the technique carried out was the one of focal groups. In the rural and urban low class contexts, 2 focal groups were created: one focal group for parents who have children aged 0 to 6 years and another for those who have children or care for children aged between 7 and 12 years totalizing 6. In the middle class context only one focal group was created with parents of children aged between 0 and 12 years. After the focal groups were carried out, 3 people out of each context were selected to participate in the in-depth interviews in accordance with the protocol of the research.

#### Fathers, mothers and carers participating in the research

	Rural Setting		Low Income		Middle Setting	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
<b>Adults</b>						
Parents of children from 0-6 years	7	3	8	0	7	4
Parents of children from 7-12 years	8	2	8	2	3	1
<b>In depth interviews</b>						
More participatory	1	1	1	1	1	1
Less participatory	1	1	1	1	1	1
<b>Total of parents</b>	15	5	16	2	10	5

\*Parents – are considered as the children's fathers, mothers and carers.

Source: Informe Final/Brazil/2007

#### General configuration of the families participating in the research

- The majority of the rural areas (85%), of the low income community (55.6%) and of middle class (54%) are aged between 30 and 40.
- In the rural areas over half the participants declared themselves as being Caucasian (55%) as well as in the middle class (64.3%). In the low income

community there was a larger division in the interviewees regarding race, the majority being dark (44.4%)

- 80% (16) of participants in the rural area were raised in the countryside. Among those in the low income community, only one person was brought up in the countryside. The remaining were raised in the capital (44.4%) and in the city (50%). In the middle class, more than half were brought up in the capital (73.3%).
- More than half in the rural area (55%) were married. In the low income community, 44.5% were single as well as the middle class interviewees (33.3%).
- More than half among the interviewees carries out paid work: 65% (13) in the rural area and 50% (9) in the low income community. In the middle class 93.3% carry out paid work.
- The majority of interviewees in the rural area and in the low income community earn less than one minimum wage<sup>14</sup>. The average wage in the middle class is R\$2.000, 00 Reais.
- In the rural area, 45% (9) of interviewees are the only ones working to support their families. Another 45% (9) have at least one more person working to support the family. In the low income community 55, 6% (10) are the sole workers to support their families and it was this category that presented the highest number of single people. In the middle class everyone works and 80% in that category have at least two individuals working to support their families.
- The totality of participants in the rural area and the majority in the low income community (61.1%) is catholic. In the middle class this percentage falls to 40%.
- Regarding the gender of the children, in the rural area and in the middle class, the majority is composed of boys, (67.3% and 84.5% respectively), as opposed to the low income community where the majority is composed by girls. (53.3%).
- All the interviewees in the rural area and the majority in the low income and middle class communities, the children belonged to biological mothers (77.8% and 67% respectively).

<sup>14</sup> mid://00000045/%23\_ftnref - 1 minimum wage (1 SM =R\$ 350 = USD\$ 175.00)

## Main findings

1. The children verbalised different opinions to the ones given by their parents about the upbringing they receive, they give more value to the positive educating strategies that don't apply physical and humiliating punishment and are based on dialoguing, patience and understanding.
2. Community violence related to drug dealing contributes to non-participatory attitudes from parents as far as they become concerned with the physical integrity of their children.
3. Street occupation is mainly marked by males in the urban low class community especially when it comes to outdoor work.
4. In the middle class parents give their children freedom to choose their friends and they acknowledge that, even though restricted, they have secure venues to meet. These places are enclosed, such as shopping centres, schools and parks that represent the "duplication of the city" - as they offer everything a city does, but protected from the dangers of the urban violence.
5. The main expectations of children regarding their parents are in the affective and emotional field.
6. The demand from boys in the rural context is primarily for more attention and tenderness from their parents.
7. The displays of affection from fathers in the urban low class context were identified, as well as the importance of appreciating these behaviours.
8. The gender division in labour was displayed in the rural and urban low class contexts. This division was not noticed in the middle class. In this context, children are spared from domestic tasks when families have maids: only when there are no maids, children are encouraged to perform those tasks related to personal and organizational care – make their beds, tidy their toys, wash their underwear and make their own breakfast.
9. Recurring complaints about domestic violence suffered by their mothers were constantly reported by children in the rural and urban low class contexts.
10. The disciplinary strategies are applied according to the gender of the children, where boys are more severely punished than girls.
11. The generation transmission of violence was identified as the children internalized their anger and hatred at the violent upbringing strategies applied by their parents, and how they would like to apply the same strategy to them.
12. The majority of the children reported difficulty in expressing their feelings and opinions, and there were more monologues in the relationship between parents and children than dialogues effectively.

13. The smaller the space given to the children to speak openly to their parents, the more they express their feelings negatively, by presenting disorderly and spiteful behaviour.
14. The space for listening and negotiation between parents and children regarding child labour depends on the age (more control over older children) and family arrangements, meaning that the space for child participation varies according to the child's age, gender, personality, culture and socio-economic context, personal history of the parents, family configuration and gender socialisation of parents and children.
15. Examples of situations where there is child participation, choice of friends, clothes and child labour.
16. We can only recognise how children understand the upbringing they had from their parents and what use they make of their upbringing according to how much parents listened to them. From the interviews with the children, we can show how they play active roles in the process, as they can make their parents review their strategies and behaviour.

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## 6.2 Jamaica

Team responsible for the study:

Janet Brown e Sharon Johnson.  
Organization: Parenting Partners Caribbean.

Characteristics of the methodology applied in the country.

The study in Jamaica tried to examine the parental styles with the objective of not just describing them, but also to identify the potential of family practices that has been enabling many Jamaican children to grow healthily, even though they live in adverse economical conditions and coexisting with violent social practices.

Low and middle class neighborhoods in Kingston and a rural community situated 110 Km from the capital were selected as places for data collection for the study. In order to carry out the interviews with the children, six group activities were carried out in the months of June and July 2006. In all, 60 children took part of the activity, 18 from the rural setting, 28 from the urban low income setting and 14 from the urban middle class setting. Twenty seven were

boys and thirty three girls. All the groups took place in schools where the head masters enabled the selection of the children and obtaining permission from parents so that the children could participate of the interview. Each group met for a whole day and the activities that motivated the children’s participation in the discussions included story telling, drawing, playing games & having snacks. The children were helpful and even excited with the fact that there were adults interested in their opinions for a whole day.

To collect data with fathers, mothers and carers, eight focal groups were carried out, of which 17 adults from the rural setting, 17 from the urban low income setting and 10 from the middle class setting took part in. Out of the 44 participants, 26 were women and 18 were men. Researches also carried out in-depth interviews with 17 adults that had taken part in the focal groups.

**General configuration of the families taking part of the study**

Group	Rural (17)			Urban Popular (17)			Urban Middle setting (10)	
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
<b>Quantity Gender</b>	3 Women	2 Women 2 Men	8 Women 2 Men	6 Women	6 Men	3 Women 2 Men	4 Women	6 Men
<b>Ages</b>	37 – 45	28 – 42	26 – 42	23 – 42	29 – 41	24 –33	35 – 44	28 – 39
<b>Marital Status*</b>	M, M, D	W: S, CR M: S, M	W: D 1, S 2, CR 2, M 3 M: M 2	S 4, CR 4	6 CR	W: S 3 M: S 2	M 3, WI 1	M 3, E 1
<b>Quantity (age of children)</b>	2 (9, 12) 4(10-15) 2 (9, 19)	W: 5 (2-21) 5 (0-17) M: (1, 6) 2 (8, 8)	W: 1 (4), 3(1-3), 3(3-12), 2(3, 8) 3 (9-11), 2 (5-10) 2(6-9) 1 no data M: 2 (3,5), 1 (3)	6 (2-26) 2 (12, 14) 2 (4,12) 6 (4-22) 3 (2-10) 3 (5-10)	3 (8-13) 5 (4-18) 2 (10, 14) 4 ( 3-9) 2 (8, 11) 11 (3 –20’s, 3 adopted)			
<b>Number of rooms/ domicile</b>	1, 2, 3	2 (4)	W: 1, 2(5), 5, 7 M: 3, 2	2, 3, 5 (3), 7	1 (2) 2 (4)	W: 1 (3) M: 2, 3	3(3), 4	2, 3(2), 4

\* M = Married, S = Single, W = Widow, E = Engaged, D = Divorced, CR = Consensual Relationship

### Main findings

1. The children described their family structures in various ways and in none of the contexts did the nuclear family predominate.
2. In all the contexts there was a predominance of mother-based families, with a strong presence of stepfathers.
3. The children in the urban middle class setting mentioned the positive importance of families in their lives, but the children from urban low income class setting showed more ambivalence regarding the role of families in their lives.
4. In all the contexts, children reported intense manners of physical and humiliating punishment highlighting these as the least appreciated behavior of their parents.
5. Only the children of the urban middle class setting mentioned their parents or carers listened to them; in the other environments parents were described as loving and devoted but not as people who listen to children.
6. All the children reported they have domestic tasks and only one child in the middle class mentioned paid work out of the home.
7. There is a gender differentiation in the distributions of domestic tasks where the outdoor tasks are assigned to the boys and indoor tasks to the girls.
8. A few children pointed out they are concerned and overloaded with the amount, the type and the level of responsibility of the domestic tasks.
9. Parents are responsible for the choice of the children's schools. In the urban middle class setting the children expressed satisfaction with the parents' choice, in the rural setting, the children expressed their wish to study and in the urban low income class they reported violence and ill treatment they were subjected to in the school setting (AMBITO).
10. The children in the urban low income setting reported the reflection of urban violence in the school setting where a reproduction of situations of violence occurs between the students and the behavior of the teachers.
11. Most children, in the different environments reported they can choose their friends, but the parameters employed to this choice are very related to the values of their parents and to what they consider good or bad company.
12. For the poorer children, especially those in the urban low income setting, the level of participation is limited due to the fear parents have to expose their children to bad companies and to situations of violence present in the community. This situation, added to the lack of social support net, imposes

considerable limitations to the participation of the children in the practice of choosing leisure activities, personal consumption and even the choice of food.

13. The great majority of adults described adopting physical punishment as a correct way of disciplining children. Adults in the urban low income and rural environments described they applied intense physical punishment.
14. All the adults referred to maternity/paternity as a stressful activity. However, some, although living in adverse conditions, expressed satisfaction when referring to family life.
15. The majority of adults gave great importance to the obedience of their children and listed stealing, lying and interacting with bad companies as behaviors in children that must be reprimanded by them.
16. The adults demonstrated they had little understanding and sensitivity towards the emotional and social needs of their children.
17. All the adults were very interested in the academic life of their children and declared that school is the path for a future of opportunities and professional success.
18. In all the environments, the adults expressed the wish that their children had more opportunities in life, less poverty, and a less painful growth upbringing, obedience and respect were highlighted as the key to achieving such goals.

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### **6.3 Mexico**

Team responsible for the study.

Nashieli Ramírez, Patricia Urbieto, Agustín Rodríguez, María Eugenia Rodríguez, Patricia Romero, Estelí Meza, Andrea Flores, Elsa Castillo.

Organization: Ririki Intervención Social.

### Characteristics of the methodology applied in the country.

In agreement with the protocol sent by Promundo for the development of the study communities in three contexts were selected: rural, urban, urban low income class and urban middle class. The activities were carried out between the months of August and November 2006.

In the rural setting, focal groups and six in-depth interviews were carried out with fathers, mothers and carers in three rural communities in the State of Sinaloa and two appointments and four individual interviews with children in two communities in the State of Hidalgo. The data survey in the urban context was carried out in the Federal District with the realization of the focal groups and four interviews in the low income class setting (Alvaro Obiegon municipality) and two focal groups and three interviews in the middle class setting (Coyocan municipality). The consultation with children was carried out with four groups, two by context and two interviews per group (low income class Alvaro Obregon and Tealpan municipalities. Middle Class context, municipality of Coyocan). In all, 60 children and 80 adults participated in the full process of collecting data.

The consultation with the children was carried out with the support of the facilitators who organized the group session in accordance with the protocol of the study. The groups were carried out in different urban communities which enabled the children to have no direct contact with the adults that took part in the focal groups of fathers, mothers and carers. Given the dimension of the rural

Communities where the consultation was carried out, it was impossible for the children not to know the adults, but the necessary precautions were taken in order not to invalidate the data.

Each consultation lasted for eight hours divided into four themes sessions. To ensure the integrity of the group, the sessions were carried out in a continuous manner. With the objective of complementing the information obtained in the group process, two individual interviews per group were carried out at the end of each consultation.

The focal groups with fathers, mothers and carers were carried out by two facilitators, one coordinating and the other acting as an observer. In the groups carried out in the urban low income class and the middle class context it was ensured that the participants didn't know each other. In the rural context, given the dimension of the community, it wasn't possible to organize the group with people who hadn't had any previous contact. In all the contexts there were prob-

lems with the incorporation of men in the groups, however the participation of at least one father per group was guaranteed.

The focal group activities were organized in three sessions, lasting two hours each. As a first activity the participants answered a questionnaire of closed questions that contemplated general views of social characterization and upbringing styles. At the end of the third session, in-depth interviews were carried out with fathers, mothers and carers who appeared to be more or less participatory in accordance with the definition proposed in the protocol of the study.

### General configuration of the families participating in the study

- The majority of adult participants in the study were women (80% of the participants in the study).
- The predominant age of the adults was from 30 to 40 years, but the urban low class had 43% of the participants aged under 30.
- Only the participants in the rural setting (93%) declared they were brought up in the countryside (93%). The majority of the participants in the urban low class setting (90%) and in the urban middle class setting (95%) were raised in the city.
- 60% of the adult participants in the rural setting only had primary education while 100% of the participants in the urban middle class declared they had technical or higher level education.
- The majority of participants said they were married or living with a partner at the time of the study (100% in the rural setting, 88% in the urban low class setting and 90% in the urban middle class setting).
- The predominant religion was catholic (77% in the rural setting, 83% in the urban low class setting and 75% in the urban middle class setting).
- 60% reported that only one member of the family supports the household and the predominant monthly income in the rural setting was 100 to 300 US dollars (74%), in the urban low class setting it was 100 to 500 US dollars (64%) and in the urban middle class setting it was 1000 to 3000 US dollars (70%).

### Main findings

1. The adult participants referred to meanings about maternity and paternity using the traditional images of gender. The speeches of the women on ma-

ternity showed that it constitutes a fundamental element in the building up of the female identity. The speeches of the men support the value which identifies women with maternity and their determination playing the central role in upbringing their children, excluding men from exercising their paternity role or limiting them to the role of providers.

2. In all three contexts the cultural representations of maternity act as a base and justification for the absence of the father in the upbringing of children. In the rural setting this absence was more outstanding. In the consultation with the children the strong parent figure was the mother.
3. The majority of adults reported that the different upbringing from traditional stereotypes of femininity and masculinity, where girls are seen as delicate, sweet, fragile, attached and tolerable, and boys are seen as freer, strong, brutal, hasty and outgoing
4. Only a small number of the participants (20) in the focal groups declared there was no differentiation in gender in the upbringing of their sons and daughters.
5. In the rural and urban low class fields, there was an outstanding relevance given to the upbringing practices to inculcate in their sons the responsibility and discipline values, to prepare their future as head of the family and providers, and in their daughters the sense of looking after themselves and making themselves respected with regard to their sexuality and their bodies.
6. In all the three social layers, the adults admitted differentiating the upbringing of their children according to their ages. In most cases, these variations were linked to the level of dependence of the children. The data highlighted that, in spite of all the scientific progress on child development, the upbringing practices still persist based on the view that children don't reach "reason" until they are old enough for school, or when they begin to "understand" and then it becomes possible to discipline them.
7. The house rules are imposed by the parents and the children don't participate in the negotiation of these rules.
8. The children in the rural setting pointed out that it is their mothers who reprimand them more, while the urban children pointed out both mothers and fathers.
9. The most utilised method of disciplining in all three environments was physical punishment: only one quarter of adults don't hit their children.

Parents usually combine spanking with reprimands and other types of punishment which, in many cases involve emotional abuse.

10. No differentiation in methods of punishment by gender was reported and only the age variable established the use of punishment. The use of physical punishment is reduced in adolescence.
11. All the children in the rural setting, 17 in the urban low class setting and 10 in the urban middle class setting declared they received physical punishment. Most parents in the urban middle class use their hands to hit; in the other environments the children declared they were hit with objects, especially belts..
12. The majority of adults in all three contexts consider physical punishment necessary and that it does no harm. On the other hand, the adults that don't spank declared they don't apply physical punishment because they find it doesn't work and because they don't want to repeat the mechanisms they were subjected to in their childhood. They declared that hitting children reflects the incapacity of adults of controlling themselves.
13. Although physical punishment is widely used, few adults consider this method as a successful one and in many accounts it appeared as having just an immediate and momentary result.
14. Although the majority of adults declared that the interlocution and the communication with children are other methods to educate and discipline them, only those who didn't apply physical punishment practised these methods frequently.
15. All the children declared that the unhappy moments in the household occur when the parents reprimand them, that is when they get some kind of punishment or are spanked.
16. The majority of the children in the rural and urban low class environments declared that they can't tell their parents the things they like about them; as to the urban middle class stated that they can tell them.
17. In all the environments the parents declared that they value the formal upbringing and they regard it as a legacy they are leaving for their children.
18. The majority of the children consulted declared that what they most like in school is the fact of it being the place where their friends are. And among the things they like the least was the amount of homework, the reprimands from teachers and bullying.

19. The children do not participate in the choice of the school they attend.
20. The results of the focal groups and the consultations with the children indicate that in all the levels the distribution of domestic tasks is an exclusive decision of adults, in most cases of the mother, who decides in which activities the children should engage in.
21. The majority of adults declared that the children are reprimanded if they don't carry out their domestic tasks.
22. The majority of children in the rural and urban middle class environments indicated they like to carry out the domestic tasks, but there are activities they don't like. As to the children in the urban low class setting, they said they don't like to carry out any domestic tasks.
23. Adults in the urban middle class placed themselves mostly (70%) against child labour away from home because they think that childhood is a period of life where one must play and study. The adults in the urban low class who positioned themselves in favour of child labour (36.6%) declared that some families have financial needs that justify the children working. The majority of adults in the rural setting (64.4%) related financial needs to cultural aspects to justify child labour.
24. The children declared that school is the privileged place to make friends and that they are free to choose their friends. The adults declared that they try to meet their children's friends but have no complete control over their children's choices. When the adults comment on the friends, they do it highlighting the negative aspect of the friends they consider might have a bad influence over their children.

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## 6.4. Nicaragua

### Team responsible for the study

Manuel Ortega Hegg, Luis Serra Vasquez e Nancy Aróstegui Sanches

Organization: Centro de Análisis Sociocultural de la Universidad Centroamericana com o apoio do Centro de Apoio a Programas y Proyectos.

Cooperated with the study: Marcelina Castillo, Hloreley Osório, Ana Matilde Lezema, Armando Maltés, Evelyng Morales, Xiomara Irias, Nora Mejía, Blanca Fuentes e Zoila Lobo.

### Characteristics of the methodology applied in the country

The process of data collection with children was carried out through 2 group activity sessions in the rural setting and eight sessions in the urban setting. In the rural setting the groups took place in communities of Condega, one for every age group (7-9 years e 10-12 years). Both groups were joined by 10 children, adding to a total of 20 children, of which 8 were boys and 12 girls.

In the urban setting the groups were carried out with children from the communities of the VI District of Managua. For the selection of the urban groups, in accordance with the the socioeconomic balance, the group of children from private schools (Madre Del Divino Pastor School) were chosen as the group representing the middle class and the children from public schools (Autonomous Institute Benjamin Zeledon) the group representing the low income communities. Thirty four children took part in the consultation, 15 from the urban low income setting and 19 from the middle class, adding 13 boys and 21 girls.

The CAPRI team developed two sessions with each of the six groups of children. The sessions took place on Saturdays and lasted for approximately 4 hours each. The contents of the proposed activities and the instruments as songs, stories and others were adapted by the team for each setting studied.

To collect data with fathers, mothers and carers of children from 0 to 12 years of age, focal groups and in-depth interviews were carried out. For the se-

lection of the participants of focal groups, a small questionnaire was employed for a total of 89 adults. In all, 9 focal groups were carried out, three in each setting, with 10 participants each and 9 in-depth interviews.

### General configuration of the families that took part in the study

- The majority of participants lived in the urban area (57.3%), but 47.2% declared they were brought up in the countryside.
- The majority of the participants were women (79.8%), aged between 26 and 35 (47.2%) and of mixed race (73.5%); 61.8% were mothers, 16.9% fathers and 10.1% grandmothers.
- The majority of the participants had primary education (39.3%) and secondary (36%); 13.5% declared they were illiterate and 10.1% had been to university.
- 68.5% were married or had partners, 14.6% were single and 13.5% were separated.
- The main religion among the participants was catholic (58.4%), the second, evangelical or protestant (31.5%).
- 48.3% of the participants declared they lived in houses with another 4 to 5 people. 38.2% declared they lived in houses with 2 bedrooms followed by 31.5%, who reported they lived in houses with 3 to 4 rooms.
- The family income was generated in its majority by just one member of the family (49.4%) and 29.2% had two people in charge of generating income.
- The average family income varied between 100 and 150 US dollars (22.5%). 43.8% declared an income low than that one and only 33.6% with an income higher than the average.

### Main findings

1. The data from the different instruments revealed that there are important differences in the upbringing styles, particularly when comparing the rural setting with the urban context. Generally speaking, the urban range tends to maintain more authoritarian upbringing styles than the urban area.
2. The differences in the more or less participatory upbringing styles according to the social sphere highlighted the sector of urban middle class as presenting the more participatory and more democratic styles. Factors such as the education of the carer, the economical resources, the possibilities of having education options and others can explain this difference.

3. The differences in the upbringing style according to carers revealed that in general the grandmothers and the fathers tend to have a more authoritarian style than mothers and other carers. However, there are variables as the one that points out that mothers and grandmothers express more affection than the other carers and the fathers express their affection with gifts and other manifestations.
4. Only 40% of the adult participants recognised the children as individuals with rights (using the definition in the questionnaire applied and previously mentioned in the main text). The grandmothers and the fathers were the ones who least recognised the rights of the children.
5. The differences shown between the countryside and the city, between the social spheres and the type of carer did not invalidate the occurrence of some common conceptions. Physical punishment stood out as a common educational factor; however the most obvious mistreatment seems to come from the rural setting and from the urban low income setting. On the other hand, there is rewarding, praising or encouragement as educational factor, the use of dialogues to solve conflicts or the importance of formal education for the children and the prioritising school over work, including domestic, and recreation.
6. There was a clear differentiation of the upbringing practices between the expressed by the children and the declared by adults. The children in general expressed more physical and psychological mistreatments than what was admitted by the carers, but besides that the lack of attention from their parents, the little communication with them, the predominance of physical punishment instead of other methods of discipline, mainly in the rural setting and the urban low income setting. With the exception of the urban middle class context, the children expressed they couldn't choose the schools they attend, but the perception was that the lack of choice was imposed more by the structural circumstances than by the interference of the parents; the children also expressed that the choice of friends is carried out by them, but they use the parents' criteria for these choices.
7. The data obtained in this exploratory study permitted the identification of at least two basic interpretations about the upbringing concepts in Nicaragua: one traditional and authoritarian kind of type and another which is participatory and democratic. This classification doesn't mean that in all the contexts a total differentiation is maintained, as in some cases the groups of fathers, mothers and carers held the same concept; however there were contexts where the differentiations were clearer.

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## 6.5. Peru

### Team responsible for the study:

Jorge Castro Morales; Alejandro Samaniero, Sofia Thery e Nadia Orrilo.

Organization: Instituto de Formación para Educadores de Jóvenes, Niños y Adolescentes Trabajadores de América Latina y el Caribe — IFEJANT.

### Characteristics of methodology applied in the country

The study methodology followed the foreseen protocols and was carried out between the months of June and October of 2006 in two urban contexts in the capital of Peru, Lima, and in a rural setting of the department of Ancash, located in the surroundings of one of the Andean mountains (Conchucos).

For the selection of the researched contexts, specific criteria were followed which elected 4 urban districts of Lima: Independência and Barranco as middle class; Ventanilla and Puente Piedra, as low income class and Working Children and Adolescents groups. The community of Ragash was selected as representative of the rural setting. To organize the activities groups with the children and the focal groups with the fathers, mothers and carers, four schools were selected (Rural setting: Escola Santa Cruz of Regash; Urban Low Income Context: Escola Manuel Seorene Corrales; Urban Middle Class Context: Escola Nicanor Rivera Cáceres and Escola Jesus Maestro), two Non Schooling Programmes of Primary Education (PRONOEI Mis Três Ositos and La Dunas) and a free market (Lince Market). The study in Peru had the participation of low income class and urban middle class families who have working children.

The consultation with the children happened through a module with several sessions that included a set of playing activities and participatory techniques. The number of sessions varied according with the children's ages, with 5 sessions been held for the group of children with ages between 7 and 9 years and 4 sessions for the group with ages between 10 and 12 years.

The focal groups and in depth interviews with fathers, mothers and carers addressed six themes agreed in the study protocol: domestic chores and external work, education, rupture and family conflicts, discipline and punishment, family

interaction and living with partners Motivating questions were included which allowed the opening of dialogues, as well as transversal subjects were presented to the discussions, such as age differences, gender and child participation.

The number of participants in the study presented the following distribution:

	Rural setting	Urban Context	
		Middle setting	Low income setting
Adults with children from 0-06	10	11	8
Adults with children from 07-12	5	4	4
Parents of working children	7	2	6
Children from 07-09 years	12	11	11
Children from 10-12 years	12	10	10
Total	46	38	39

Source: Informe Final Peru, 2007.

**General configuration of the participant families in the study:**

- The age of adults varied between 21 and 74 years 100% of the participants of the urban middle class were aged between 30 and 45 years, 61% of the participants of the urban low income class had between 21 and 29 years and 54% of the rural setting had between 45 and 59 years.
- 59.1% of the adults of the rural setting were of the primary level education (up to six years of study), 70.6% of the urban middle class had college education (up to 16 years of study) and 88.8% of the urban popular context was equally divided in primary and secondary level (up to 11 years of education).
- A significant portion of the adult participants was composed by mother (88.9% of the urban low income class adults, 70.6% of the urban middle class and 54% of the rural setting).
- The majority of the participants of the study were of mixed race (53% of the urban low income class adults, 72% of the urban middle class adults and 100% of the rural setting).
- Approximately 50% of all participants had been raised in the country.
- A large part of the families live with the parents at home (88.9% of the urban low income class, 87.5% of the urban middle class and 86.4% of

- the rural setting). However, there is a representative percentage (12.5%) of homes where only one of the parents takes over the raising of the children.
- In the rural setting 54.5% of the adult participants taking part in the study declared not having received income in the month of the research, surviving from the products of their activities. 100% of the participants of the urban popular context declared a monthly income between 60 and 250 dollars per month.
  - The majority of the participants in the research declared to practice the catholic religion (82.5%).

### Main findings

1. The family organisation and the prevailing upbringing styles favoured more of the exercise of vertical and punishing authority than a dynamic democracy, of exchanging opinions, negotiations and dialogue, that allows the participation of the children in family decisions, as well as their social responsibility in other community spaces.
2. The great majority within the rural setting and urban low income context were described as typologies of authoritarian parental style, with an omnipresent control from parents, except in cases where there is a chaotic adaptability of low income family.
3. The authoritarian parental style was described as that where the parents are demanding, little responsive and with little expression of positive affection, especially in relation to the boys.
4. The psychological resources of the middle class parents were identified as positive to the children's development and are reflected in practices that seek to disrupt the traditional standards of distributing the domestic chores by gender stereotypes. In the way that a couple of working teenagers parents' from La Dunas who displayed such positive attitudes, even at the cost of having to overcome material shortages. They became the example of parents that show to their children a communitarian commitment and personal honesty, in spite of the generalized individualism and corruption in the marginalized urban societies.
5. There were reports in which the mothers' overprotective attitudes, fearing their daughters' precociousness, do not allow them to develop their potentialities, transforming them in shy girls.

6. In general, the fathers that give up their authority in the dysfunction families or in the low income families of chaotic adaptation end up becoming negligent, in the sense that they are nor responsive nor demanding.
7. Some parents mix up authority with authoritarianism and others deny what their own reality presents and make use of common sense educational practices, which ignore the objective conditions in which they live.
8. The upbringing styles reported were modeled by contextual sources of stress and of support. Among these practices, the following highlighted the quality of the marital relationship (marital disputes, experience in parents' separation, dysfunctional families etc); the social support systems (the existence or not of communitarian organizations, validity of the extended family) and the parents' occupational experiences.
9. The parents, especially those in the needier context, conferred to the school a power of social mobility.
10. Many families reported having a direct correlation between a good student and a good son. Thus, not doing school homework and not getting good marks was subject to receiving reprehensions. Independently of the children's other attributes, school performance was the most valued.
11. The macro-social factors derived from the market consecration and the globalisation of the production capitalist system, with its after-effects of evident inequality and unconcern in interpersonal relationships, the poverty and exclusion conditions that generate anomy and material and moral privation which produce suspicions in interpersonal relationships explain the more conservative upbringing styles, with little opening to participation spaces and autonomous development of children.
12. The use of traditional upbringing methods is more accentuated within the rural setting and urban low income class context, e fazem uso indiscriminado de castigo físico como forma de educação corretiva ou como expressão de sentimentos negativos dos pais (cólera).
13. The democratic and pro-participatory styles are practically the exceptions to the rule, whereas (in the sense that) they appeared to have an effectiveness shown in the belief systems of many parents, including some of the urban middle class context.
14. Some parents of Working Children and Adolescents, not all of them, showed an attitude of favorable change to the participation of children in crucial decisions of their lives.

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## 6.6. Venezuela

### Team responsible for the study:

Verónica Zubillaga

Organization: Universidad Simón Bolívar.

### Characteristics of the methodology applied in the country:

To carry out the study in Venezuela, the teaching institutions were chosen as the meeting point of children and relatives. The school selected to represent the rural setting belongs to the State of Miranda, distant one hour and a half from the capital Caracas. In the area of Barrios Populares<sup>15</sup> known as Petare, in Caracas, was located the school representing the urban low income class context. And a school located in one of the urbanizaciones<sup>16</sup> of Caracas represented the context of urban middle class.

The collection of data was carried out between the months of May and November 2006. Six focal groups with fathers, mothers and carers were formed in the three chosen contexts. A total of 74 people took part of the focal groups: 27 in the rural setting, 29 in the urban popular and 18 in the urban middle class. The mothers represented 75% of the participants in the study. Six in depth interviews were also carried out.

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<sup>15</sup> *Barrio popular* in Venezuela designates a geographical area within the city characterised by disordered growth, deficient socioeconomic conditions and a situation of relative privation.

<sup>16</sup> *Urbanizaciones* designates the urban space that is planned and occupied by the medium and high sectors.

The work with the children was developed from two steps: (1) 15 sessions of focal groups, with the participation of 12 to 15 children, and (2) 11 in depth interviews. Taking part of the research were children coming from the rural, urban middle class and low income class contexts. The focal groups were organized taking into account the age bracket of the children, which were gathered in groups ageing between 07 to 09 years and 10 to 12 years. Each group of children took part of 05 sessions of focal group which had the following themes:

1. Introduction of the research and children's consent;
2. Education, school, autonomy and interaction with peers;
3. Domestic chores and working out;
4. Family interaction and discipline;
5. Listening spaces in the family.

As discussion motivation strategy, the researchers used songs and tales taken from the Venezuelan children's literature. To answer the questions, the children were motivated to not only express themselves verbally, but also to design and write. To participate, the child needed only to voluntarily lift up a hand. The focal groups' reports indicated a wide participation of children at all times, independently of age and the social context of origin.

The in depth interviews were performed in the days following the last focal group session, which enabled the children to feel safe and confident to answer the questions of the interviewers. The methodology applied enabled a rich and detailed collection of data. The only limitation was the dimension of some groups, which generated a certain level of dispersion among the children. However, in a general way, the participants expressed their experiences, preferences, and also their sorrows quite frankly.

### General configuration of the families taking part of the study

- The more numerous families interviewed live in the urban low income class context (45% of the domiciles have more than six people). In the rural and urban middle class, 78% of the domiciles have five people or less.
- 62% of the interviewed families in the urban low income class context and 51% in the urban context live in a house with two rooms or less. 56% of the interviewed families of the urban middle class context live in houses with four rooms or more.

- Stories of marital disruption and reconciliation were mentioned in the reports of interaction with stepfathers and stepmothers.
- The families headed by women prevail in the urban low income class context (28%).
- There was a significant presence of grandmothers in the families of all contexts.

### Main findings

1. The children of the rural and urban popular live within extensive family systems, in contrast with the families of urban middle class, which are smaller. The members of the extended family achieve a special role in the upbringing of the children in the rural setting. Within all the studied contexts, the grandparents, especially the grandmother, take part of the day-to-day living of the interviewed children.
2. Most parents, within the three contexts studied, hold on to traditional gender distinctions and consequently highlight the convenience of raising their daughters and sons according to these principles. In the urban popular and the rural environments, the differences of gender are associated to the child's type of character, and in the urban middle class, to the different chores and tasks within the homes. However, it is possible to perceive more alike visions between the girls and boys from talking with some of the fathers and mothers.
3. For all the groups of children interviewed, it is very important to take part in playing activities with their parents. They seek to share experiences that go beyond the routine tasks of social domestic reproduction (eat, take a bath etc.). One element that was highlighted was the importance that children assign to sharing playing activities with their parents. According to some reports, the feeling of satisfaction linked to the time spent with their parents is not necessarily related to the quantity of time, but to the fact that this time is totally dedicated to the children. The moments in which the child becomes their parent's centre of attention were highly valued.
4. The frustrations for not receiving attention from their parents were considerable within the several reports of the urban middle class children. In some cases, this privation was associated to the parents' periods of personal conflict; in others, it was explained by the absence due to long working hours;

- and in others they showed situations where their parents are distracted, do not listen to their kids and give them answers that don't make sense.
5. Very deep traditions of physical punishment still persist in the families, especially in those of the rural and urban popular context. The eradication of these practices has been difficult in spite of the efforts to forge and disseminate a normative structure and a system of institutions that prohibit the violence and negligence against children within the family context.
  6. At the same time, it is necessary to point out that in both the rural and the urban low income class contexts, the children mentioned that other adults (a neighbor, a stepfather) reported or threatened to report the situation to the police and other authorities. In this sense, it can be thought that there are signs that indicate the fact that people are starting to condemn the events of violence against children, to understand them as felonies and to seek competent institutions to report them. This situation shows the importance and the possibilities created when the community chains grow stronger for the peaceful management of conflicts.
  7. Only two children of the urban middle class reported disciplinary strategies that included written exercises and dialogue, favouring introspection. The children showed their agreement with this disciplinary strategy and expressed the importance of being able to evaluate their own behavior throughout time.
  8. The children of the urban low income class context reported the situation of extreme violence resulting from the armed confronting between groups of youngsters that live in the streets and the communities. The children described the streets as a place of impending danger of death. This situation of armed violence is so present in these children's day-to-day life that even the death of a brother was mentioned in one of the groups.
  9. The children of the urban middle class also perceive the streets as dangerous, as they can be mugged there. Therefore, they can't be alone in the streets; they can't go down to play in the playgrounds of the buildings where they live.
  10. The domestic chores occupy quite a lot of the day-to-day life of the children of the urban low income class and rural environments in different senses. The children of the urban low income class context have many responsibilities in the domestic chores. In the rural setting, the distribution of chores follows a division by gender: the girls do the domestic chores and the boys do the work outside.
  11. It can be said that older children in the urban popular and rural environments are so overloaded with domestic chores that they become little adults; the

urban middle class children are preserved from responsibilities and live their childhood as a promise, a time of preparation for the future as an adult.

12. The more democratic upbringings are praised by the children in their reports. These styles understand the use of reflexive strategies of discipline, where the child is capable of evaluating his/her own acts. They also understand the creation of playing spaces where the children play with their parents and carers, and thus allowing them to be perceived as worthy of attention and time, where they can take the initiative and influence their parents' actions.

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