Early Childhood Development and Violence in Brazil

A Field Frame Analysis

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Introduction

Social scientists in Brazil widely recognize community violence as an issue with devastating consequences at all levels of society. Its damaging effects on early childhood development are especially pronounced;[1] however, these effects are often unseen or underreported. Early childhood advocates in Brazil therefore recognize the need to engage the public in a deeper conversation about this issue. A critical step in this process is to understand extant sources of public information by examining the field's existing habits of communication about the impacts of violence on early childhood development. Organizational advocacy materials are one such source and represent an opportunity to better understand public opinion on issues of child development and wellbeing.

To that end, this report examines the diverse narratives being disseminated by organizations advocating for policies that promote positive early childhood development (ECD) and reduce violence in Brazil. Specifically, this report — what FrameWorks calls a Field Frame Analysis — identifies the dominant narratives employed by influential organizations and analyzes the effects of these strategies on public thinking, highlighting those narratives that are likely to be most successful in building public support for science-based policies. This analysis allows us to make recommendations about how to reframe existing communications practices in ways that create a consistent and coherent narrative around ECD and community violence, and deepen public understanding and engagement with these issues.

We define an organizational field as "those organizations that, in the aggregate, constitute a recognized area of institutional life."[2] In this analysis, we find that organizations that address issues related to early childhood development and those that are working to prevent violence constitute two separate fields that seldom overlap. ECD advocacy organizations rarely address issues of violence, and violence-focused organizations say little about early brain development. As such, this report presents findings on separate analyses of each field. It captures the dynamics of how each field is framing the issue, and interprets the consequences for those seeking to build support and public will for ECD and urban violence policies and programs.

The FrameWorks Institute conducted this research as part of a larger multi-method project in collaboration with the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University. The research was sponsored by the Fundação Maria Cecilia Souto Vidigal and the Bernard van Leer Foundation. The overarching goal of the project is to design and test communications

strategies that can be used to generate broader public understanding of early child development and the effect of urban violence on early childhood.

Executive Summary

Findings

In this report, we present results from two separate analyses of (1) organizations that address issues related to early childhood development and (2) organizations working to prevent violence. Below is a summary of the findings.

Organizations that advocate for children's issues disseminate five distinct narratives. This analysis identified five narrative clusters among organizations that advocate for early childhood development. These include *Hierarchy of Needs*, *Families as Targets of Developmental Interventions*, *Black Box Development, Lack of Access to Quality Preschool* and *Right to Education* narratives. These narrative clusters are distinct — for example, organizations working on education issues (using the *Right to Education* narrative) likely do not address issues related to early learning environments (and vice versa). As a result, their public-facing materials indicate that in general, organizations addressing children's issues are operating in very distinct and siloed areas of practice, and there is no overarching narrative that organizes and unifies organizations working on children's issues.

There is scant discussion of the *process* of early brain development in advocacy materials. Organizations regularly argue for greater public awareness of early childhood development issues and for increased professional capacity to address those issues. However, these communications do not *explain how* development happens or include information about the science of early brain development.

Organizations that address violence are telling a uniform story about violence in Brazil, but at the expense of discussions of other important violence-related issues. In contrast to ECD organizations that tend to use dramatically different narratives, these violence-focused groups present a relatively uniform and shared narrative. The overwhelming majority of organizations working on violence issues focus on sexual exploitation, promote awareness campaigns as the primary solution to address issues of violence and argue for violence cessation on the basis of ensuring and protecting children's rights.

There is a lack of fit between the causes and solutions in the *Violence* narrative. Organizations advocating against violence locate the causes of violence at the societal level. However, the primary solution offered in this narrative — expanding awareness through

public campaigns — centers on the assumption that preventing violence simply requires *individual* behavior change. The inherent mismatch between a *societal*-level problem and an *individual*-level solution weakens the internal consistency of this narrative.

Implications

The *Black Box* narrative, as well as the lack of integration between the *Lack of Access to Quality Preschool* and *Right to Education* narratives, leaves intact the public's cognitive holes about development. FrameWorks' interviews with members of the general public revealed that Brazilians generally lack information about early brain development, and are therefore not equipped to conceptualize early environments and experiences as important developmental opportunities.[3] Advocacy organizations' current communications lack a clear explanation of how early development takes place and how early environments contribute to (or impede) development. As a result, they do little to fill the public's cognitive holes and make them smarter about children's development and the actions necessary to improve this process.

The promotion of children's rights may support public skepticism around ECD expertise. FrameWorks' cultural models research shows that the Brazilian public holds a strong degree of skepticism about early child development experts, especially when these experts come from the medical field. The assertion of children's rights will likely be perceived as an infringement on parental rights. Without a deeper explanation of children's development, rights-based discourse is likely to further undermine public trust in expert knowledge.

Focus on sexual exploitation among organizations that are advocating to prevent violence threatens to narrow the public's understanding of violence. FrameWorks' research shows that Brazilians conceptualize violence in broad and nuanced ways, including even subtle forms of violence like neglect, bullying and racism.[4] However, the public is largely unable to connect this understanding with the detrimental effects of violence on children's development. By focusing primarily on sexual exploitation and excluding discussion of other forms of violence and their relationship to early child development, the field misses an opportunity to deepen public understanding of the factors that promote or derail healthy development. Moreover, this focus risks inadvertently narrowing the public's currently broad view of what constitutes violence.

Organizations that are addressing community violence are promoting individual-

level solutions, missing the opportunity to leverage productive public understandings. The Brazilian public draws on a wide range of understandings and assumptions to think about ways to reduce violence. Some of these understandings unproductively focus on punishment and retribution, and obscure consideration of the importance of prevention and rehabilitation programs. Other public understandings, however, are much more productive. For example, the public has robust assumptions about the government's responsibility to improve public services and provide opportunities for rehabilitation within the criminal justice system. The current *Violence* narrative focuses on individual-level solutions, like greater public awareness. This focus emphasizes unproductive existing understandings and misses the opportunity to leverage understandings of the systemic nature of social issues. These discussions are poorly aligned with what experts understand and what the public, with the right frames, is able to see as a societal-level issue.

Recommendations

The Brazilian Core Story of Early Child Development can unify organizations that advocate for children's issues. The Core Story of Early Childhood Development (sometimes called the Core Story of Brain Science) has proven to be a powerful reframing tool for translating the science of early childhood development to non-expert audiences in the United States. FrameWorks has translated and adapted it for the Brazilian context in order to provide a unifying narrative employable by the full range of organizations advocating for greater attention to children's issues. As such, the Core Story has the potential to bring together a highly fractured and siloed field around a narrative with empirically demonstrated effectiveness in improving public understanding and increasing support for evidence-based polices and programs.

Employ the Value of *Future Preparation* to show why preventing violence against children is important for *all* Brazilians. The Brazilian public has a strong sense of collective and social responsibility for addressing issues related to violence. The *Future Preparation* value will help solidify Brazilians' sense of the collective *benefit* of addressing violence.

Use the *Learning Canoe* and *Weaving Skill Ropes* Explanatory Metaphors to show how child/adult interactions foster cognitive development in early learning settings. These Explanatory Metaphors will help build public understanding of *how* child/adult interactions are critical for early learning and cognitive development. Such process understandings are critical in building public will for effective ways of addressing issues of

children's development and wellbeing.

Explain how violence impacts early child development with the *Kick Around* and *Toxic Stress* metaphors. These metaphors will help Brazilians understand the mechanisms by which violence impacts early development, and can be valuable tools in helping create support for policies that would mitigate and prevent the harmful effects of violence on child development.

Theoretical Background

Research on the ways in which fields communicate offers insights into effective messaging strategies. The vast majority of this literature focuses on the *content* of issue frames, and assesses whether the substance of messages resonates with — and ultimately mobilizes — an intended audience. Along with content, however, social movement scholars are also concerned with how the *form* of a message affects public support. This research converges around the importance of narratives in building social movements.[5] Narrative can be defined as "discourses with a clear sequential order that connect events in a meaningful way for a definite audience and thus offer insights about the world and/or people's experiences of it."[6] In short, narrative as applied to social mobilization concerns not only *what* is said, but also *how* it is said. Communications that adhere to a culturally and cognitively familiar narrative form, in which diagnostic claims about social problems are logically linked to values and solution claims, have been shown to be particularly effective in mobilizing collective action.[7] Values, because of their ability to motivate people's engagement with an issue and provide a goal around which to structure their beliefs, are a particularly important part of building effective narratives.[8]

Based on a large body of social science literature as well as a wealth of previous FrameWorks research, the following analysis not only describes the content of the stories being told by ECD and anti-violence advocates, but also focuses on how that content is organized into a coherent narrative structure and where it comes up short. We argue that the more an organization's framing is organized into a cohesive narrative, the more effective it will be in building public understanding and support.

Methods

Two specific questions guide this research:

1. *What are the narratives that influential organizations advocating for ECD and against violence are telling in Brazil, and how are these narratives structured?*

2. *What are the implications of these narratives for public understanding of and support for ECD and violence prevention policies?*

We addressed these questions using a multi-staged research process. The first step in this analysis involved conducting two separate link analyses that "crawled" the Internet to identify 20 influential children's advocacy organizations and 20 influential organizations that advocate against violence. Approximately 10 documents were gathered from each of these organization's Web sites, including press releases, mission statements and reports. This resulted in a sample of 200 documents from early childhood organizations and 200 documents from organizations advocating against violence, each of which was subjected to a separate analysis described below. Each document was coded using a scheme designed to track the narrative components (e.g., values, solutions, plot line) present in a given document.

The last stage of analysis used a statistical technique known as hierarchical cluster analysis to summarize patterns of narrative components.[9] The cluster analysis measured the co-occurrence of four primary narrative components: topic, causal statement, values and solutions. Separate cluster analyses were conducted for the organizational materials sampled from early childhood organizations and those materials sampled from violence prevention organizations, resulting in two sets of research findings. This approach allows us to examine the *content* and *structure* of the narratives (for example, whether they include logically aligned values statements and solutions) in each set of organizational materials. A more detailed explanation of these methods can be found in the Appendix.
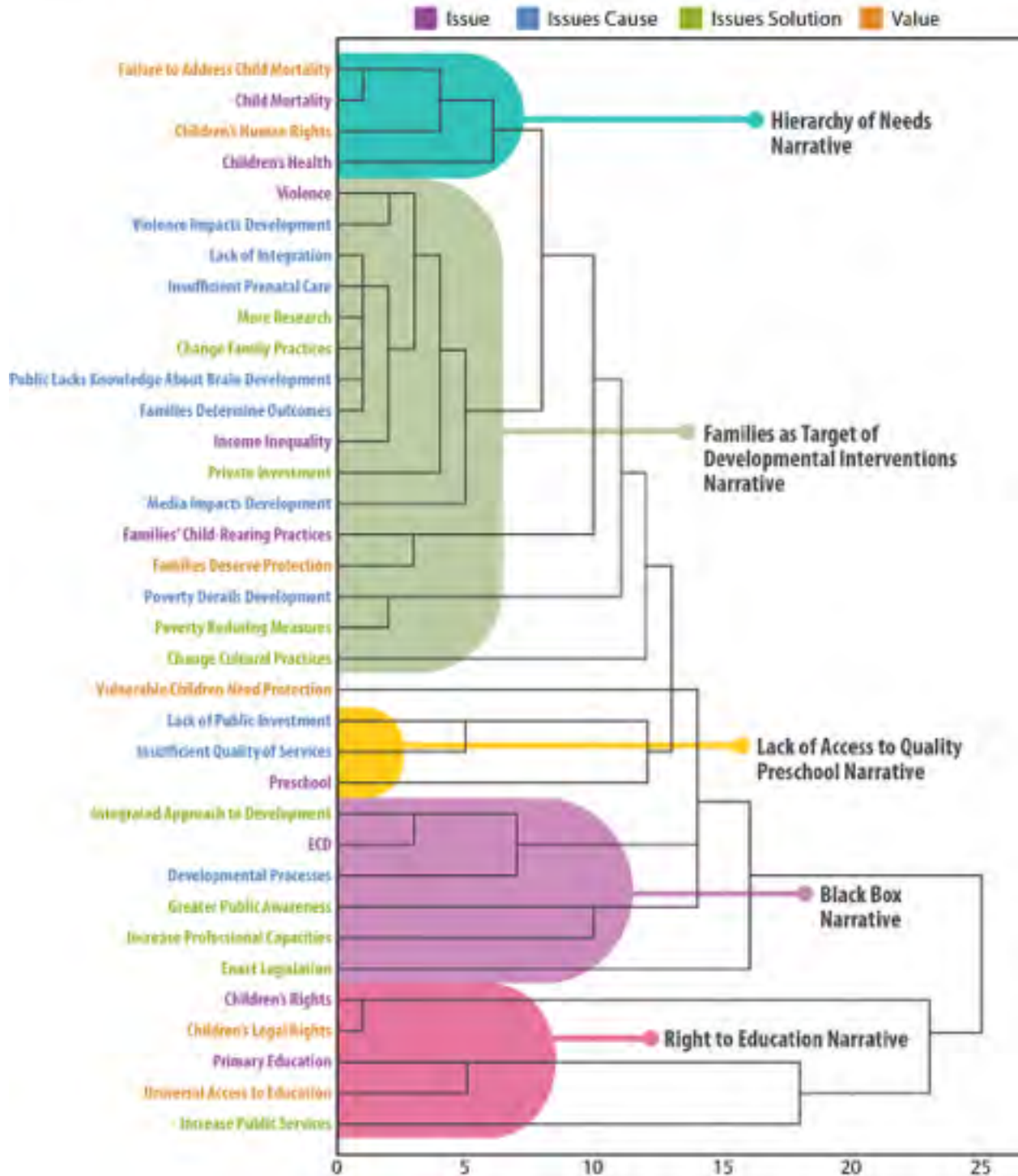
In the sections below, we detail the findings from our analyses of (1) organizational materials selected from early childhood advocacy organizations and (2) materials from organizations working to reduce violence in Brazil.

Findings: Narratives of Early Childhood Advocacy in Brazil

This analysis measures the extent to which early childhood development organizations in Brazil have coalesced around a coherent and consistent narrative about children's issues. The analysis found that there is no single *overarching* or *dominant* narrative. Instead, each organization concentrates on one aspect of early childhood, such as survival and health, or early and primary education, without reference to other topics or to an overarching explanatory framework that structures relationships among these topics. This indicates that the field of children's advocacy organizations in Brazil is fractured and each area appears to be singularly focused on a specific topic area.

The following graphic summarizes the five narrative clusters present among ECD organizations, and highlights the absence of a common narrative that would unite the field. Each narrative is represented by a different color. The labels on the far left refer to the particular components contained within each narrative. The further to the left that a vertical line joins the narrative components, the likelier those components are to appear together in the same piece of communication. For example, the topic "Child Mortality" and the cause "Failure to Address Child Mortality" and the value "Children's Human Rights" are highly likely to appear together in the same communications piece, while the "Children's Health" and "Primary Education" topics are highly unlikely to occur together.

Narrative Clusters: Early Childhood Development Organizations

Legend: Issue | Issues Cause | Issues Solution | Value

Failure to Address Child Mortality
Child Mortality
Children's Human Rights
Children's Health
— **Hierarchy of Needs Narrative**

Violence
Violence Impacts Development
Lack of Integration
Insufficient Prenatal Care
More Research
Change Family Practices
Public Lacks Knowledge About Brain Development
Families Determine Outcomes
Income Inequality
Private Investment
Media Impacts Development
Families' Child-Rearing Practices
Families Deserve Protection
Poverty Derails Development
Poverty Reducing Measures
Change Cultural Practices
— **Families as Target of Developmental Interventions Narrative**

Vulnerable Children Need Protection
Lack of Public Investment
Insufficient Quality of Services
Preschool
— **Lack of Access to Quality Preschool Narrative**

Integrated Approach to Development
ECD
Developmental Processes
Greater Public Awareness
Increase Professional Capacities
Enact Legislation
— **Black Box Narrative**

Children's Rights
Children's Legal Rights
Primary Education
Universal Access to Education
Increase Public Services
— **Right to Education Narrative**

We detail the content and structure of each early childhood advocacy narrative in the sections below.

Hierarchy of Needs Narrative

Organizations associated with this cluster typically argue that children's survival rates and health outcomes are the *most* pressing children's issues. They generally attribute low survival rates and poor health outcomes to a general lack of awareness of the causes of child mortality among members of Brazilian society, from the general public to policymakers to healthcare workers. The following excerpt from the child and youth rights organization ANDI illustrates this type of narrative.

> *The municipal districts must guarantee adequate nutrition for children and pregnant women who might be at risk from malnutrition, as well as providing vaccinations for its population. These actions would reduce infant and maternal mortality at birth.[10]*

The exclusive focus on mortality rates and health outcomes mirrors the *Hierarchy of Needs* cultural model that FrameWorks identified among members of international children's advocacy organizations.[11] Advocates working in international contexts argue that attention to children's early brain development should only come after their more basic needs — such as nutrition and survival — are met. Advocacy organizations in Brazil are similarly employing a *Hierarchy of Needs* narrative and are generally excluding discussions of early brain development.

Families as Target of Intervention Narrative

Another set of organizations promotes a distinct narrative about the role of the family in early childhood development. Organizations belonging to this cluster focus on how families are embedded in social structures characterized by high levels of inequality, which in turn shape parenting strategies and children's early developmental outcomes. For example, they discuss how children from under-resourced communities are negatively affected by poorly integrated services that fail to consider the inter-relationship among physical, social and emotional development; by dissemination of inaccurate information about developmental issues; by insufficient prenatal care; by greater exposure to violence; and by a general lack of public knowledge about issues related to ECD. All of these factors render children from lower socio-economic backgrounds particularly vulnerable to developmental issues.

This attention to context did not extend to discussions of solutions, however. While the causal portion of this narrative embeds Brazilian families in a larger social structure, the solutions cited are directed towards strengthening the family and include little reference to addressing larger social conditions. Solutions particularly centered on encouraging parents

to make changes in culturally-based parenting practices in order to produce better developmental outcomes. The following excerpt demonstrates how organizations in this cluster acknowledge — and even emphasize — that families are embedded in specific social structures, even as they simultaneously identify the family and its behaviors as the locus of intervention.

> *According to Toro (2002), it is through affection that people come to identify themselves with others and are able to understand, love and protect them, or, at the other extreme, attack and reject them. Strong affective ties provide the child with a gradual process of acquiring independence and overcoming adversity, such as violence.*

> *When submitted to situations of social, economic and cultural vulnerability, the family, which is the main context for human development, can become a conflictual unit, which triggers risks and damage for individual growth and well-being, especially for children. It is essential to develop integrated programs and public policies directed toward the strengthening of families so that they can fulfill their role in children's lives.[12]*

This excerpt is typical of organizational materials that employ this narrative, in that it does not advocate for solutions that directly address social inequality. While systemic and structural elements are part of the causal story, the primary point of intervention and solution is family behaviors and interactions, rather than structural conditions or social environments.

Lack of Access to Quality Preschool Narrative

Organizations advocating for the availability of preschools for Brazilian children employ a distinct narrative. The lack of preschools that are universally available and of high quality is primarily attributed to a lack of public investment in these facilities, as well as insufficient attention to their quality. Organizations employing this narrative cluster do not regularly cite solutions to address these problems. In rare cases where solutions are presented, they tend to focus on increased governmental investment. The following excerpts illustrate this trend.

> *Now, it is the State that is failing and does not meet the demand. Creches and pre-schools have lists for children who are waiting to be enrolled. In many cases the Public Ministry has to intervene and introduce a Term of Adjustment that guarantees that the children will be served. If Public Authorities allocate financial resources to offer quality*

child education, pre-school attendance can become universal.[13]

Extending compulsory schooling is good news in a country with so many persistent school access and completion problems. However, by dividing early childhood education, making only part of it compulsory and stating that compulsory access to education should be a priority for public authorities, tensions are also created in the already fragile and gravely disorganized kindergarten phase. We need only remember that the National Education Plan (PNE) 2001-2010 was to guarantee that 50% of children aged between 0 and 3 years would be enrolled by the end of 2010. According to the National Household Study (PNAD/IBGE), only 18.1% of all Brazilian children were enrolled in 2009.[14]

Black Box Narrative

Organizations that specifically addressed the topic of early childhood development do not regularly include causal explanation in their narrative. The narrative employed by these organizations does not explain *how* development occurs or the mechanisms that disrupt it. The solutions present in this narrative include increasing public knowledge about early brain development; increasing professional capacity to address issues related to ECD; enacting policies that promote positive development; and fostering an understanding of the social, emotional and cognitive aspects of early development among the Brazilian public and policymakers. The following excerpt demonstrates how materials included in this narrative may explain the *importance* of early development, but do not explain the *process* of early childhood development.

> *Marcelo Neri, President of the Applied Economics Research Institute (IPEA), was an important advocate for the allocation of funds for early childhood. According to him, the phase prior to formal schooling has the best return index for public investments.[15]*

This excerpt exemplifies the defining feature of the *Black Box* narrative: its lack of causal explanation. Materials employing this narrative rarely provide information to help the reader understand *why* early childhood is an important developmental period or *how* greater investment will yield economic as well as social benefits.

The Right to Education Narrative

A final narrative concentrates on primary education in Brazil. It is important to note that this narrative cluster is distinct from the *Lack of Access to Quality Preschool* Narrative, meaning that organizations that focus on preschool are likely not addressing education for older children, and vice versa. Organizations in the *Right to Education* narrative primarily focused on establishing education as a human right for all Brazilian children. They asserted that, in order for Brazilians to meet their obligations to children, public investment in education must increase. However, *access* to education often overshadowed any focus on *quality* of educational environments. The following excerpt demonstrates this trend.

> *In May, the United Nations' Childhood Fund (Unicef) and the National Campaign for the Right to Education launched the website Not Out of School! (Fora da Escola Não Pode!.) This tool integrates a campaign with the same name, created in 2010, that aims to contribute toward guaranteeing the right of each child and adolescent to learn in Brazil. Despite the determination of the mandatory nature of school attendance for children and adolescents aged between 4 and 17 years with the Law n° 12.796/2013, approximately 3.8 million people in that age range are still out of school.*[16]

Cognitive Implications: Early Childhood Development Narratives

Based on FrameWorks' analysis of the cultural models or implicit patterns of understanding that the public employs to reason about early childhood development in Brazil,[17] we conclude that exposure to the organizational narratives described above is likely to activate the following ways of thinking about early childhood development.

The lack of a common causal story within the siloed organizational discourse on early child development will reinforce compartmentalized public thinking. Previous FrameWorks research has shown that the Brazilian public thinks about development in compartmentalized ways, rather than in integrated ones.[18] Specifically, the public views cognitive development as that which only happens later in childhood, in a formal classroom setting. Development in the first few years is predominantly considered to be only about *physical* development and growth. Consideration of neurobiological processes is generally absent from Brazilians' understanding of ECD, just as it is absent from public-facing communications materials of ECD organizations. By failing to address this absence, those organizations miss a critical opportunity to fill in some important cognitive holes in public understanding — about the integration of social, cognitive and emotional learning and the importance of that integrated learning at all ages and in all settings.

Organizations that tell the *Hierarchy of Needs* narrative will reinforce the narrow public understanding of ECD. The Brazilian public fails to understand that early childhood is a critical period of physical, cognitive and social development, instead assuming that "development" during the first few years of life is only about physical change. ECD organizations that exclusively focus on ensuring survival during early childhood will reinforce the public's dominant notion that physical growth is the sole marker of early development. As a result, communication about the integrated nature of physical, cognitive and social development will become even more challenging.

The separation of the *Lack of Access to Quality Preschools* and *Right to Education* narrative will likely reinforce the Brazilian public's unproductive models of early learning. By failing to discuss the relationship between early learning and subsequent educational experiences and outcomes, ECD organizations will reinforce the Brazilian public's problematic assumption that cognitive development happens only in later years, in formal classrooms.[19] As a result, the public will be poorly equipped to conceptualize the

importance of preschool for cognitive development, and be unable to appreciate the need for programs and policies that promote high-quality early learning environments for all children.

Findings: Advocacy Against Violence in Brazil

In contrast to the more siloed nature of the organizational discourse on early childhood, organizations that address issues related to violence employ a more singular narrative. In fact, the level of uniformity is so great that the cluster analysis — which looks for differentiation among organizational materials — revealed no differentiated clusters in narrative elements. Instead, analysis showed that organizations working on children and violence use one uniform narrative. Below we characterize the components and structure of the *Violence* narrative.

Arguments for Violence Prevention

The majority of the organizational materials focus on child sexual exploitation (53%), while a smaller percentage focus on child labor (26%; see Table 1). Child sexual exploitation includes everything from child sexual abuse that occurs in families to the sex trafficking of children. It is worth noting that neglect was not addressed in the materials sampled for this analysis.

Topic	% of Mentions in Materials
Sexual Exploitation	53
Child Labor	26
Domestic Violence	19
Institutional Violence	14
Street Violence	12
School Violence	9
Teen Violence	9
Drug Violence	7

Table 1: *Topics Mentioned in Violence Advocacy Materials*

Organizations primarily framed the importance of violence prevention with reference to the value of children's rights (Table 2). Over one-third of materials argued that addressing violence is critical because children have the right to live without the fear or threat of violent interactions. The following excerpt illustrates this trend.

> *Children and adolescents are citizens with rights and in a special condition of development who need adult support, guidance and protection. The responsibility for protecting boys and girls against crimes such as sexual abuse and exploitations does not lie just with the State or the family, but with all of us! It is a duty foreseen in the Brazilian Constitution![20]*

The second most common value used in materials concerning violence against children related to the concept of *protection.* This value, found in almost twenty percent of organizational materials, asserted that the public has a responsibility to protect children because they are particularly vulnerable to violence and exploitation.

Table 2: *Values Invoked for Violence Prevention*

Value	% of Mentions in Materials
Children are Deserving of Rights	35
Protection	19
Public Interest	13

Organizational messengers for anti-violence organizations typically included professional experts (Table 3). Members of non-governmental organizations were the most frequently cited messengers, followed by researchers and scientists. Family members or victims of violence were not regularly quoted, which indicates that organizations may be avoiding more sensationalistic accounts of violence against children.

Table 3: *Messengers Cited*

Messenger	% of Organizations That Mention Each Variable
Advocacy Organization	36
Scientist/Researchers	25
Public Administrator	20
Politician	12
Judicial System	10
Family Member/Caregiver	2

Systemic Attribution of Responsibility for Violence

In general, organizations advocating for the reduction of violence attributed responsibility for both causes and potential solutions to institutions outside of the family — such as the political system and the judicial system (Table 4). In fact, less than a quarter of organizational materials mentioned the family as a causal actor. For example, the materials that address child labor generally characterized this issue as one caused by social inequality and the specific configurations of the Brazilian labor market.

The problem can be seen in heavy rural work, a network of urban services and the homes of families that exploit domestic child labor. It takes place informally, in front of society's very eyes and sometimes even with State complicity, and against the Brazilian legislation.[21]

The complex street situation that affects children, adolescents and their families has a historic ballast in our country and is exacerbated at each moment in which vulnerabilities are established for populations with less access to public resources, pushing them toward ever-perverse ways of life and survival, resulting in the increasing numbers of children, adolescents and families involved in child labor.[22]

<div align="center">Table 4: *Actors Responsible for Causing Violence*</div>

Responsible Causal Actors	% of Organizations That Mention Each Variable
Political System	20
Courts	21
Families	18
Schools	8

The following passage illustrates the trend towards societal-level causes. It explicitly calls for a structural analysis of the causes of child labor that looks to economic systems rather than individual actions and behaviors.

> *As a hugely complex phenomenon, child labor indicates the need for a structural understanding of how it is organized. Only this understanding can produce actions that are concerned with establishing new structural labor and production relations.*[23]

In sum, advocacy materials directed towards violence and children tend to focus on how violence against children is more likely to occur under certain social arrangements, such as an unregulated labor market. They were less likely to talk about individual actions and behaviors as the source of violence against children.

Steps to Reduce Violence

The *specific actions* that organizations put forth as ways to reduce violence did not match their strong focus on systemic responsibility. Put another way, there was a mismatch between organizations' attributions of responsibility for causing violence and the types of solutions that they proposed. By far, the most dominant solution mentioned was to increase public awareness of the issues related to violence (see Table 6). As demonstrated by the following passage, organizations consistently argued that the first step in addressing violence against children is to make it "visible" to the general public.

> *The most urgent task is thus to make violence against children and the child sex trade visible and to never lose the capacity for indignations and horror. The recognition of pain is the first step toward denunciation.*[24]

This was followed by reference to greater use of the political and judicial system in Brazil, including greater prosecution of cases of violence against children and harsher punishments of those who are convicted.

Table 5: *Proposed Solutions to Address Violence*

Solution	% of Organizations That Mention Each Variable
Increase Awareness	80
Enact Legislation	43
Greater Action Within the Courts	39
Punish Violence More Severely	27
Increase Social Services	18
Political Intervention	6

In general, the analysis shows that a very high proportion of violence prevention organizations focuses on solutions that address individual-level behavior change, such as increasing individual awareness of issues or punishing individuals who commit such acts. For example, the excerpt above asserts that the exploitation of child labor is directly connected to the structure of the Brazilian market. This diagnosis would suggest the need for laws and policies that better regulate that market — but instead, organizational materials call for greater public recognition of the problem and greater degrees of punishment. They do not push for the types of structural solutions suggested by a diagnosis of structural causes. Organizations are looking to the political system (43%) and the judicial system (39%) to address issues related to violence against children, but this focus is overshadowed by more individual-level solutions.

Cognitive Implications: Violence Narrative

Based on FrameWorks' analysis of the cultural models — or implicit patterns of understanding — that the public employs to reason about violence in Brazil,[25] we conclude that exposure to the organizational narratives described above is likely to activate the following ways of thinking about the impact of violence on children's development.

The focus on awareness campaigns as the primary solution for addressing violence will reduce this issue to an individual-level problem, despite attempts to tell a more structural causal story. Advocacy organizations are effectively describing the societal factors that increase rates of violence against children. When discussing solutions, however, they focus overwhelmingly on public awareness campaigns. The promotion of these campaigns is likely to undermine attempts to define violence as a social problem. Awareness campaigns typically inform *individuals* of the steps they can take to prevent violence or to avoid becoming victims of violence; they do not typically advance policies that address the conditions under which violence takes place. Therefore, while awareness campaigns may provide a robust sense of the scope of the problem of violence against children, they will not expand the public's thinking about systemic and structural solutions to preventing and addressing violence.

The strong focus on sexual violence and exploitation, to the exclusion of other forms of violence, misses an opportunity to support the public's productive extant models and fill in important cognitive holes. In many ways, the Brazilian public has a sophisticated, nuanced and systemic understanding of violence against children. This is probably most apparent in its willingness to classify subtle forms of maltreatment as violent, including neglect**,** bullying and racism.[26] However, Brazilians lack a robust understanding of *how* these more subtle forms of violence can have long-term consequences on health and wellbeing. The emphasis on sexual violence in advocacy materials leaves little space to discuss the mechanisms by which these more subtle (and often more common) forms of violence can impact the developing brain.

Assertion of children's rights may have inadvertent and unproductive impacts on the public's understanding of violence against children. Members of advocacy communities around children's issues have a very sophisticated understanding of the types of legal protections that must be put in place in order to protect children, and of the kinds of institutions responsible for ensuring children's rights. The Brazilian public, on the other hand, has very little access to popular discussions of the meaning of early childhood rights.

In fact, they may view the assertion of children's rights as encroaching on their ability to parent — especially considering the strong *Family Authority* cultural model, which has been shown to cause negative reaction to the recent Spanking Law.[27] Rights-based language may have the unintended consequences of deepening public distrust of early childhood expertise and of entrenching unproductive models of early development and violence.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This analysis suggests that children's advocacy organizations in Brazil would benefit from telling a more complete story about early brain development. This story will help deepen public understanding of the processes and mechanisms of early child development. Moreover, if organizations use the Core Story as a common communications strategy, it may also have the additional benefits of unifying what appears to be a fractured and siloed field and reducing the need for organizations to "compete" for the public's attention. The elements of the Brazilian Core Story are summarized below.[28]

Begin the story with the value of *Future Preparation* to establish early childhood development as an issue that impacts all Brazilians. In a national experimental survey of Brazilians, FrameWorks found that framing communications about ECD with the value of Future Preparation builds significant support for programs and policies that would prevent violence against children and improve outcomes for early child development.[29]

> ### *Future Preparation*
> *It is crucial to develop public policies for early childhood in order to prepare our country for the future.*

Future Preparation firmly establishes early childhood development and violence as a public and collective concern with potential ramifications for all Brazilians. Communicators should use the value early in communications to make sure audiences steer clear of more individualistic interpretations of these issues.

Use the *Brain Architecture* and *Kick Around* metaphors to explain how children's brains develop. The *Brain Architecture* metaphor has now been tested in several national contexts, including Brazil, and has been shown to communicate the iterative and dynamic processes of early brain development.[30] The *Kick Around* metaphor replaces *Serve and Return* in the English version of the Core Story. It explains how brains are built through back-and-forth interactions between a child and his or her caregiver.

> ### *Brain Architecture* and *Kick Around*
> *Children's brain architecture is built through back-and-forth interaction, much like kicking a soccer ball back and forth. Healthy development occurs when young children 'kick the ball' through babbling, gestures, or words, and adults return the kick by*

getting in sync with the child.

Together, these metaphors provide the public with concrete understandings of the process of brain development, and also inoculate against more passive understandings of very young children.

Model interactions between children and caregivers with the *Learning Canoe* metaphor. The *Learning Canoe* communicates the balance between age-appropriate structured guidance and children's freedom to explore, make mistakes and follow their own interests in both preschool and school.

Learning Canoe

Children learn most effectively when they experiment and explore their interests on their own, with support and guidance from an adult or caregiver, very much like two people rowing a canoe with two oars. Both rowers need to coordinate their rowing, and they need space to move their oars as much as they need to for the canoe to move forward. And while a younger and less experienced rower needs guidance, coaching and mentoring, the canoe will tip if that guidance is too rigid, strict or interferes with the child's ability to stretch her arms and row the canoe. Early learning requires the same space, experimentation, guidance and coordination between a child and her caregiver.

Define what develops with the *Weaving Skill Ropes* metaphor*.* The Brazilian public employs a very passive model of learning and tends to emphasize the development of cognitive skills over social and emotional skills.[31] Their perceptions of learning can conflict with the public's rather narrow understanding of the basics as the only important skills, ones that should develop in scholastic contexts. *Weaving Skill Ropes* helps communicators talk about a variety of important skills and explain how those skills develop.

Weaving Skill Ropes

Learning is about the brain weaving skills together to form strong skill ropes. For a rope to be strong and usable, it needs strong strands that are woven together tightly. To do its job, each strand needs all the others.

Weaving is an active process, which can then be extended to the idea that learning requires opportunities for application and practice. This metaphor moves the public toward an understanding of the intertwined, mutually reinforcing nature of learning.

Establish a villain with the *Toxic Stress* metaphor. Brazilians understand that negative life experiences, such as early exposure to violence, are detrimental to children's wellbeing. However, they do not have a sense of the exact mechanisms by which violence impacts the developing brain and other biological systems, and the extent to which adverse experiences can have long-term consequences for health and wellbeing. The *Toxic Stress* metaphor explains how early adversity can disrupt early development, and emphasizes the buffering effect of caregiving relationships.

Toxic Stress

Chronic, severe stressors can cause a response that is toxic to the developing brain and has long-term effects on health and wellness. Supportive relationships can serve as a buffer against a toxic stress response.

Complete the story with a policy-level solution. The Brazilian Core Story of Early Childhood Development is designed to prime a conversation about *solutions*. The narrative is incomplete without the solutions chapter. Organizations are telling a clear story about the social roots of problems that pertain to early childhood development, but their discussion stops at calls for greater public awareness. Communicators should use communications opportunities to argue for policies that will address the systemic issues that prevent all Brazilian children from reaching optimal developmental outcomes.

Appendix: Methods

Stage 1. Identifying Influential Organizations Using Link Analysis

In collaboration with program staff at Fundação Maria Cecilia Souto Vidigal, FrameWorks researchers created one list of over 75 organizations currently involved in ECD, and another of over 50 organizations involved in anti-violence advocacy. Each list was entered into Issue Crawler, a Web-based application that "crawls" an identified set of organizational sites and compiles all the shared links among organizations (including those both in the original set and those identified during the crawl).[32] Separate "crawls" were conducted for the childhood advocacy organizations and the anti-violence organizations. Issue Crawler then used a method called link analysis to determine the "network" of organizations for a given issue area and the degree of prominence or influence of each organization within that network. This method is based on the premise that "modern communication is increasingly organized around computer-mediated technologies," and that the Internet serves as a public repository for information about organizations and their goals, activities, networks and relative influence. On the Web, an organization's influence is "strongly correlated with the organization's reputation for providing reliable and credible information."[33] Thus the density of links between organizational sites can be used as a proxy for the reliability and credibility of that information and by extension, the influence of the organization.

From this process, we selected the following influential organizations to include in the analysis.

Organizations Sampled based from results of the ECD Crawl

NGOs
1. Associação Brasileira de Magistrados, Promotores de Justiça e Defensores Públicos da Infância e da Juventude (ABMP*)*
2. Alana Institute
3. INESC
4. Programa Novas Alianças
5. Oficina de Imagens
6. Programa Novas Alianças
7. ONU
8. UNICEF

Foundations
9. Abrinq Foundation
10. Itaú Social Foundation
11. Promenino (Telefônica Foundation)

Governmental Organizations
12. The Institute for Applies Economic Research (IPEA)
13. The National Foundation for Educational Development (FNDE)
14. The Social Development Ministry (MDS)

Private Initiative
15. C&A Institute

Forum/Network
16. Childhood Alliance
17. National Campaign for the Right to Education
18. Justice for Childhood
19. Nacional Early Childhood Network
20. Everyone for Education

Organization's Sampled based on results from the Anti-Violence Crawl

NGOs
1. ANDI – Communication and Rights
2. CECRIA – Center of Reference, Studies and Actions related to Children and Adolescents
3. Childhood Brasil
4. Socioeconomics Study Institute – Inesc
5. UNESCO
6. UNICEF
7. Brazilian Association of Magistrates, Public Prosecutors and Defenders for Children and Young people (ABMP)
8. Oficina de Imagens – Communication and Education
9. Visão Mundial
10. Repórter Brasil – Communication and Social Projects
11. Cedeca Ceará

Forum/Network
12. National Forum for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labor
13. Educate Don't Hit Network
14. National Early Childhood Network
15. Nacional DCA Forum

Government Organizations
16. National Committee for Combating Sexual Violence against Children and Adolescents
17. National Observatory for Children's and Adolescent's Rights
18. The Presidency's Human Rights Secretariat (SDH/PR)

Foundations
19. Promenino (Telefônica Foundation)
20. Fundabrinq

We then sampled approximately 10 communication materials from each of these organizations. These materials included press releases, reports, mission statements and "About Us" Web pages. They were selected because they contain content about how each organization describes its mission, as well as the specific ECD and anti-violence-related policies that each organization promotes. For each crawl, the sample consisted of 200 materials drawn from these 20 organizations.

Stage 2: Content Selection and Coding

Each document was coded using a scheme designed to track all the narrative components present in organizational materials. Each narrative component comprises a distinct category that contains a number of possible codes. Together, these narrative components map the stories that influential ECD and anti-violence organizations are telling (see Tables 6 and 7).

Table 6: *Variables Included in Early Childhood Development Analysis*

Narrative Component	Description	Examples of codes
Topic or Plotline	What is the document about? What is the primary issue or topic being discussed?	• Child mortality and health • Preschool • Education system
Causal story	What causes problems associated with ECD?	• Cultural practices • Poverty and inequality
Value	Why should the public be concerned about early childhood development? Why is it necessary to address this issue?	• Children's rights • Issue of general public concern • Protect children
Solution	How should ECD be addressed in Brazil?	• Increase awareness • Programs to address racial disparities • Increase the number of visas available to high-skilled immigrants
Character	Who are the responsible causal and solution actors in the narrative?	• Teachers • Students • Program administrators
Messenger	Who are the quoted experts on early childhood development?	• Politicians • Researchers/academics • Advocates
Target of anti-violence programs?	What groups should be the target of ECD measures?	• Children • Indigenous Children • Children from Low SES status
Ages of children Grade level of Target students	What specific ages of children are mentioned?	• 0-3 • 3-6 • Teens

Table 7: Variables Included in Violence Analysis

Narrative Component	Description	Examples of codes
Topic or Plotline	What is the document about? What is the primary issue or topic being discussed?	• Sexual exploitation • Violence associated with †the drug trade • Child Labor
Causal story	What is causing violence?	• Poverty and inequality • Media
Value	Why should the public be concerned about violence? Why is it necessary to address this issue?	• Children's rights • Issue of general public concern • Protect children
Solution	How should violence be addressed in Brazil?	• Increase awareness • Programs to address racial disparities • Increase the number of visas available to high-skilled immigrants
Character	Who are the responsible causal and solution actors in the narrative?	• Teachers • Students • Program administrators
Messenger	Who are the quoted experts on urban violence?	• Politicians • Researchers/academics • Advocates
Target of anti-violence programs?	What groups should be the target of anti-violence measures?	• Children • Indigenous Children • Children from Low SES status
Ages of children Grade level of Target students	What specific ages of children are mentioned?	• 0-3 • 3-6 • Teens

For each organization, we first coded the set of approximately 10 documents belonging to that organization, then summed the number of times that each code was applied across the full set of that organization's materials. This approach yielded a frequency count of codes *per organization*.

Stage 3: Cluster Analysis

We analyzed this raw frequency data using a technique called cluster analysis.[34] The goal of cluster analysis is to identify patterns in a set of data. It uses a statistical algorithm to group objects together on the basis of similarity. In the present analysis, the "objects" are the narrative elements that appear in organizations' mission statements, press releases and reports, and "similarity" refers to the extent to which those objects co-occur in materials. The goal of cluster analysis is to identify clusters, or groups, in which objects within the same group are more similar to each other than to those in other groups (clusters). In other words, objects in the same cluster should co-occur more frequently with each other than they do with objects in other clusters.

Stage 4: Cognitive Implications

Finally, these findings were compared with results from FrameWorks' research on how experts and the public think about ECD and violence.[35] This comparison allowed researchers to detect ways in which existing communications will impact public understanding of these issues.

About The FrameWorks Institute

The FrameWorks Institute is an independent nonprofit organization founded in 1999 to advance science-based communications research and practice. The Institute conducts original, multi-method research to identify the communications strategies that will advance public understanding of social problems and improve public support for remedial policies. The Institute's work also includes teaching the nonprofit sector how to apply these science-based communications strategies in their work for social change. The Institute publishes its

research and recommendations, as well as toolkits and other products for the nonprofit sector, at www.frameworksinstitute.org.

Please follow standard APA rules for citation, with FrameWorks Institute as publisher.

O'Neil, M., Lyra, D., Simon, A., Baran, M. & Haydon, A. (2014). *Early Childhood Development and Violence in Brazil: A Field Frame Analysis.* Washington, DC: FrameWorks Institute.

Endnotes

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