



WHAT IS OLA?

Depression and anxiety are leading causes of youth disability worldwide. Adolescents and young adults who live in big cities more commonly experience stressful events such as **violence, poverty, substance misuse and social isolation**, which puts them at greater risk of developing one or both conditions.

This includes adolescents and young adults from **Latin America**, which is one of the most urban parts of the world with approximately **80% of the population** living in large cities. In addition, young people represent a **¼ of the population** in Latin America. Estimated levels of depression and/or anxiety for adolescents and young adults within the region range from **17% in Colombia** to **26% in Argentina**. Although many individuals experience stressful events, most do not develop depression and/or anxiety. Of those who do experience mental distress, evidence suggests that **50-60% of individuals recover after one year** without accessing treatment from mental health services.

The **OLA study** will take place across **under-resourced** areas of three large Latin American cities: **Buenos Aires (Argentina), Bogotá (Colombia) and Lima (Peru)**. The overall aim of the programme is to identify which characteristics, resources and activities help young people living in urban environments in Latin America to prevent and recover from depression and/or anxiety, using **4 Work Packages (WP)**.

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PROGRESS UPDATE

Study aims of OLA:

- ✓ **WP1:** Develop appropriate methods for assessing resources in young people.
- **WP2:** Determine if resources differ between young people with and without depression and anxiety.
- **WP3:** Identify which resources are linked with recovery from depression and anxiety in young people.
- **WP4:** Exploring examples of what works for young people either to prevent depression and anxiety, or in supporting them to recover.



Adolescent participants (Grade 10) completing the baseline CRF at a local school in Bogota, Colombia. A total of 13 participants completed baseline data collection on this day.

Pilot Study (WP1) – *Phase completed*

Cross sectional study (WP2) – *In progress*

- **WHAT:** Participants will complete the questionnaires developed in WP1.
- **WHO:** 2,040 young people (15–16 years old and 20–24 years old) across the three countries: 1,020 participants experiencing depression and/or anxiety and 1,020 without.
- **WHY:** to understand if characteristics, resources and activities are different in young people who are, and are not experiencing depression and anxiety.

Updates per country

Congratulations to the teams for making great progress with recruitment for the ESM pilot!

- **Colombia** have recruited 244 participants and completed baseline data collection with 147 participants.
- **Argentina** have completed baseline data collection with 219 participants.
- **Peru** have recruited 420 participants and completed baseline data collection with 354 participants.

Longitudinal cohort study (WP3) – *Expected to start in mid 2021*

- **WHAT:** Participants will complete a short number of questionnaires after 6 months and then all questionnaires again after a period of 12 months.
- **WHO:** 1,020 young people (aged 15–16 years and 20–24 years) across the three countries, who took part in the cross-sectional study and who were experiencing depression and/or anxiety when they joined the study.
- **WHY:** to understand which characteristics, resources and activities in young people are linked to recovery from depression and anxiety.

Heartbeat Project

Update since April 2021:

- Currently the research team in the **UK, Brazil and Peru** are analysing all the data collected from:
 - **Non-participant observations** from the Digital Theatre Laboratory where *The Tempest* was created (in April-May 2021).
 - **Semi-structured interviews** with 6 autistic participants and 2 artistic directors from each theatre company (Flute Theatre, UK and Teatro La Plaza, Peru).
 - **Focus groups conversations** with 9 family members of autistic participants, 12 actors (6 from each theatre company) and 4 producers (2 from each theatre company), 9 observers from the arts organisations and 11 observers from the civil society organisations that came to watch the rehearsals and the shows.
- This first draft will aim to be completed by **end of August/early September 2021** in Spanish.
- The final case study report will also be translated in **English** and **Portuguese**.
- The aim is to disseminate the final report to the public, in **both paper and digital formats**, by **October 2021**.
- **AHRC follow-on funding for impact and engagement:**
 - The team are currently working on the follow-on funding application, to **devise a digital resource toolkit** in **Latin America**, that can be easily accessed by parents of autistic children, schoolteachers, psychologists etc. who might be interested in using these games in **personal/professional settings** e.g. at home, schools, arts organisations etc.
- Finally, here is a video produced by **Teatro La Plaza**, which showcases some of the wonderful work of the Heartbeat project, but also highlights the ways in which (online) theatre can reach **people with autism who are experiencing severe isolation** during the COVID-19 pandemic:

Click here to be taken to the video!



Arts partners involved

Flute Theatre, UK
Teatro La Plaza, Peru

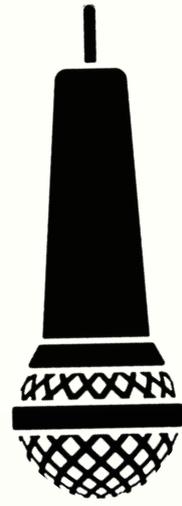


Research Team Involved

Professor Paul Heritage (QMUL, PPP)
Francisco Diez Canseco (CRONICAS)



INTERVIEW WITH...



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From your knowledge/experience, why do you think building resilience in youths living in Latin America is important?

Being able to adopt resilient behaviours and attitudes, enables young people to overcome adversity. I believe that in Latin America, especially in contexts that are unfavourable for personal development, the importance of understanding how to enhance individual and community resources of young people is greater. This will allow us to determine the best strategies to manage assistance resources where they are scarce, and to achieve a better quality of life for young people today and in the future.

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What do you hope will be the impact of OLA?

I hope that, after knowing the results of the study, it will be possible to develop strategies, programmes, even policies based on well-grounded evidence. I think that the most interesting outcome for our study would be to produce reliable evidence to support intervention plans that have an impact on the lives of young people in Latin America, generating benefits for their quality of life and that of their communities.

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“

What is the biggest challenge you've encountered so far working on the OLA project?

Fortunately, we have been able to advance at a very good pace with the project, despite the difficulties imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Beyond the necessary adaptations for this reason, I believe that the most important challenge that we must always bear in mind is to make the project attractive to young people. In addition to helping to recruit participants, the fact that our study becomes interesting for them brings the issue of resilience and emotional well-being closer to young people; which I think is a (small) first step towards generating a change.

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SANTI LUCCHETTI
RESEARCH ASSISTANT
UNIVERSITY OF BUENOS AIRES
ARGENTINA

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