

Few cities around the world provoke the kind of negative emotional response as does Medellín, Colombia. Its image as a dangerous, narco-controlled, guerilla-infested urban environment has been built over many decades. Yet over the past ten years, Medellín has experienced a remarkable turnaround. Owing to a combination of various initiatives, local and foreign investment, and the determination of its people, Medellín has returned from the brink of anarchy to emerge as a potential model for how to resolve urban development conflicts. Perhaps nowhere in Medellín has this pattern of decline and rebirth been more apparent than in the considerably disadvantaged district of “Comuna 13.”

In 2009, **Dr. Holli Drummond** of the Sociology Department joined a project begun by Dr. David Keeling, department head of Geography & Geology, and Dr. John Dizgun, Latin American historian and assistant director of the Kentucky Institute of International Studies (KIIS), by constructing and disseminating an adolescent survey to approximately 1,450 residents of Comuna 13. The survey aims to evaluate the continued

involvement in violence and other risky behavior among neighborhood youth, by examining such factors as neighborhood tenure, religiosity, parenting, concerns about safety, victimization, and “hopelessness.” In the absence of protective factors, Dr. Drummond finds that negative life events lead to vulnerable emotional states, making adoption of deviant beliefs and participation in risky behavior more likely. Moreover, results suggest considerable variation in the experiences of Medellín’s disadvantaged youth.



Medellin, Columbia