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PAL Evaluation El Salvador - Process and Outcome Study

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PAL Evaluation - El Salvador

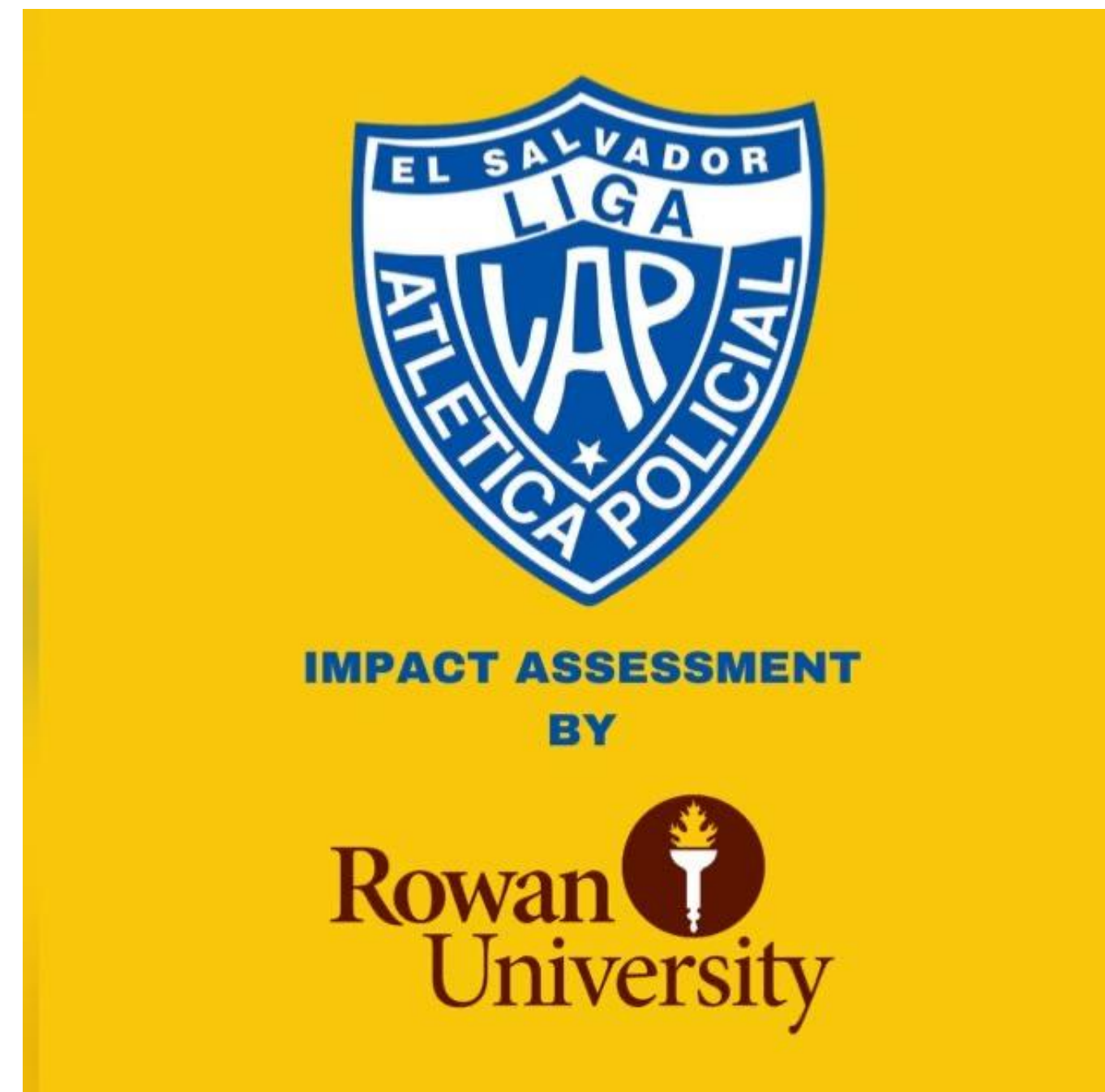
Process & Outcome Study



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Background

- El Salvador: country in Central America; similar geographic size as NJ; Population = 6.4M
 - Extreme poverty, corruption, & high crime rates
- Known for “cycle of gang violence”
 - At-risk youths susceptible to joining gangs
 - Delinquency prevention programs needed
- Police Athletic League (PAL) Program
 - Began in 2012 in a few sites
 - Goal: help youth develop prosocial attitudes and behaviors to resist gangs and crime and to institute positive lifestyles



The PAL Program

- Youths ages 8-17 participate in sports, dance & other activities after school 1 day/wk
- Police officers are the coaches/instructors
 - Establish trust and act as mentors
- To date 25,000+ participants across hundreds of municipalities in El Salvador
- Prior studies of PAL:
 - Surveys of program satisfaction
 - Anecdotal reports of program benefits
- No systematic studies of program impact



Study Overview & Methods

- *Process Evaluation*: examine implementation of PAL (program fidelity over time & across sites)
- *Outcome Evaluation*: examine the influence of PAL on youth attitudes and behaviors
- Data collected by: Central American University (UCA)/Public Opinion Institute (IUDOP)
 - Youth Surveys: pre & post (1 year later)
 - 500 PAL & 500 comparison group
 - Police Survey: 365 PAL coaches
 - In-Depth Interviews: teachers & coaches
 - Focus Groups: parents & community, members/leaders



Research Challenges

- State of Exception (3/2022): militarized response to gang brutality & mass killings
 - Police power to detain and jail anyone suspected of gang activity; 65,000+ arrests
 - Suspension of several constitutional rights
- Socio-political climate:
 - Controversial 2024 presidential election
 - Police non trusting of research
 - Lack of data and accuracy concerns
- Language barriers
- Cultural differences



To be Continued...

- Going into the field next month!

