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Learning Peace: Adolescent Colombians' Interpretations of and Responses to Peace Education Curriculum

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Abstract

Young people's critical role in building peaceful societies has been increasingly recognized in research and policy over the last several decades. This attention has coincided with the development and wider application of peace education in transitional and conflict settings. Within the field, however, there has been less attention to young people's own perspectives, understandings of their roles, and responses to peace education. This study contributes to this literature and the field of peace education by employing psychological theories on development and meaning making in investigating how adolescents respond to peace education in Colombia. In 2015, the Colombian government mandated the inclusion of peace education across all levels of schooling. The law reflected increased attention to young people's potential development and role as peacebuilders. Nevertheless, there has been minimal evaluation of how the law has been received by young Colombians or has influenced their understandings of and orientations toward peace. The methodology in this study involved presenting adolescents with an

excerpt from the Colombian government's proposed curriculum and asking them to respond. To do this, interviews were conducted with 205 adolescents between 15 and 18 years old across 36 schools in various areas of Colombia. Participants were presented with the 1-page framework intended for 10th-grade instruction in the Colombian Ministry of Education's document of tasks and recommendations for peace education. Thematic analysis of the interview data was used to identify key patterns in participants' responses. Analyses revealed three primary themes: youth needed to be prepared for engagement in society, informing served as a foundation for participation in peacebuilding, and peace education needed to bridge the divide between the classroom and social contexts outside of it by promoting concrete action. These themes link together to provide insight into how these adolescents made meaning of peace education, including in relation to their possible roles in a societal project of peace. These adolescents' responses demonstrated that they were attentive to the disconnects between their experiences and understandings and the ways that they were being taught about peace and their own possible roles in it. Such awareness has implications for peace education within Colombia and more broadly as an endeavor to promote prosocial engagement in youth. Overall, the findings highlight that peace education may effectively correspond with young people's development and psychological processing when it is praxis oriented, attentive to their local contexts, and able to be integrated with their identities and envisioned trajectories. In line with the themes in participants' responses, critical peace education may effectively engage and motivate adolescents by providing a broader contextualization with attentiveness to their local contexts and a focus on strategies for application.

Keywords

peace education, Colombia, adolescence, meaning making, critical peace education

In conflict and transitional settings, education broadly plays a key role in perpetuating or addressing various forms of violence by contributing to the socialization and development of younger generations (e.g., Davies, 2004; McGlynn, Zembylas, Bekerman, & Gallagher, 2009; Quaynor, 2012). The advancement of peace education over the last few decades has included attention to how this influence can be harnessed for societal peace. The framework supposes that young people avoid violent behaviors and actions and engage in peace-promoting ones if they are provided tools and opportunities in their schools (Academy for Educational Development [AED], 2005; Harris & Morrison, 2013; Schwartz, 2010). Amid the growing implementation and evaluation of these endeavors, there has been little work on how youth psychologically make meaning of—that is, interpret and respond to—these lessons and policies. Success or failure has often been measured using numbers of participants or short-term outcomes (Cremin, 2016; Gur-Ze'ev, 2011). Yet, this psychological processing is critical because interpretation and response are part of identity development and civic outcomes (Hope & Spencer, 2017; Spencer, 2006).

The current study explored these processes through Colombian adolescents' responses to an excerpt from the government's proposed peace education curriculum. A recent peace process and peace education law in Colombia made it a prime site to explore how young people responded to peace education and how they began to develop understandings of themselves as possible peacebuilders in relation to this instruction. In 2016, the Colombian government of then-president Juan Manuel Santos signed peace accords with the oldest and largest armed revolutionary force, the Revolutionary Armed

Forces of Colombia—Popular Army (the FARC-EP), to end over 5 decades of armed conflict. During the peace negotiations that began in 2012, Santos’s government promoted broader discourse and policy—including a peace education mandate—moving Colombia toward being a more peaceful country. Although a 2015 law required that peace education be a part of the curriculum in all schools, there has been minimal attention to how it has actually been implemented and how students have responded to it.

This study explored Colombian adolescents’ thinking about peace education amid this context by drawing on 205 interviews in 2017, which compose a subset of a broader research project. In these interviews, participants were presented with an excerpt from the government-proposed peace education curriculum for 10th-grade students. The findings can contribute to peace education in Colombia by illuminating gaps between the proposed curriculum and young people’s psychological processes. The implications more broadly support considering young generations’ own perspectives and meaning making in developing peace education curriculum in transitional settings, in which societies are seeking to address and move on from legacies of violence and mass atrocities.

Peace Education and Meaning Making

As peace education has been more progressively theorized, implemented, and evaluated, it also has been more clearly defined. One common foundational definition comes from the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), which described peace education as “the process of promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to bring about behavior changes that will enable children, youth and adults to prevent conflict and violence, both overt and structural; to resolve conflict peacefully; and to create the conditions conducive to peace, whether at an intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, national or international level” (Fountain, 1999, p. 1). Some scholars have noted that these types of umbrella definitions miss, among other elements, the diversity of programming and the inherent necessity to be context specific (Harris & Morrison, 2013; Salomon, 2002; Salomon & Nevo, 2002). A more general definition often employed in theoretical texts draws attention to the need to confront and change the multiplicities of violence. A goal of peace education thus defined is the transformation of education—content, structures, and pedagogical approaches—to address direct, structural, and cultural forms of violence across ecological levels (Harris, 2004; Reardon, 1988). That is, peace education aims to foster attitudes and behaviors that eschew physical violence, deconstruct injustice and exploitation in societies, and change norms and beliefs that justify violence (Galtung, 1990).

Common across these formulations of peace education, schools—and the processes of social and political learning embedded within them—have been recognized as both tied to the perpetuation of violence and as possible sites of transformation (Bajaj, 2015; Nkomo, Weber, & Malada, 2007). This focus relates to a core element of peacebuilding that requires changing meanings; as Lederach argued, “Conflict is connected to meaning, meaning to knowledge, and knowledge is rooted in culture” (Lederach, 1995, p. 8). A just and sustainably peaceful future necessitates thinking in new ways; creating the desire to resolve conflict; and shifting psychological understandings about the self, one’s group, and others (Bekerman, 2009; Harris & Morrison, 2013; Oppenheimer, 2010). Peace education in schools and with younger generations holds the potential to influence these processes and support identity-based outcomes that contribute to societal peace.

Within psychology, these meaning-making processes have been identified as critical to identity development and specifically to the formation of prosocial citizenship. In this application, *meaning* refers to how individuals make sense of their worlds and experiences in dynamic relation to their identities (see Power & Velez, 2020). A rich literature details how individuals—as actors in groups—process, interpret, and readapt discourses, ideas, and norms based on their social interactions and ecologies (e.g., Bruner, 1990; Hammack, 2008). Meaning making occurs over time; ecological contexts change, individuals develop, and they may be exposed to new lessons or expectations. The processing and response inform the identities that individuals hold, with implications for civic action and attitudes (Hope & Spencer, 2017; Spencer, Dupree, & Hartmann, 1997). In relation to peace, attention to how individuals understand and think about peace within their everyday lives and contexts “points to ways in which resiliencies and resistances are perceived and supported” (Berents, 2018, p. 154). In other words, individuals’ contextualized meaning making can highlight challenges and opportunities to their inclusion in peacebuilding.

Adolescence, Development, and Peace

Adolescence is a particularly salient time in the life course for meaning making in relation to identity development and pro- or antisocial outcomes. As a period of “emergent participatory citizenship,” adolescence encompasses a number of developmental processes involved in orientations as members of communities and societies. During adolescence, individuals develop capabilities for more abstract thinking, become increasingly curious about social and political issues, consider the future possibilities and trajectories of themselves and their societies, and form a more concrete sense of self (Erikson, 1968; Torney-Purta & Amadeo, 2011; Youniss, McLellan, & Yates, 1997). Their emerging self-concept is based on how they understand society and their place in it, with implications for their attitudes, thoughts, and actions as citizens and community members (Flanagan, 2004; Haste, 2004; Hope & Spencer, 2017).

A developmental perspective on peace is attentive to how these processes shape the ways that individuals think about peace and act toward others (Oppenheimer, 2010). Young people are potential contributors to peacebuilding at various levels, and their emerging identities and meaning making underlie this connection in the present and into the future (Bekerman, 2009; Bellino, 2017; Berents & McEvoy-Levy, 2015; Parker, 2016). As an example, developmental theory has been used to demonstrate patterns in the changing ways that children and adolescents define peace. Changes in the structure of thinking—for example, the emergence of abstract reasoning—interact with changing social awareness and interaction to influence the ways that individuals across the early years understand peace. In a review of empirical research on this thinking, young children (ages 5–9 years) were found to talk mostly about peace as the absence of quarrels between them and their friends or a lack of war between countries (i.e., concrete negative peace), whereas older adolescents invoked the importance of more abstract ideals or systems, such as tolerance, equality, democracy, and human rights (Hakvoort & Oppenheimer, 1998; Oppenheimer, 2012).

Although the current article focuses on young people’s response to peace education, it applies a developmental perspective on how sociocognitive processes during adolescence illuminate the ways young people think about themselves and peace in relation to their education. Attention to young people’s meaning making can contribute to peace education that is more consonant with their perspectives and development and thus more effective in promoting prosocial outcomes (Spencer,

1999; Spencer, Harpalani, Fegley, Dell'Angelo, & Seaton, 2003). To this end, the methodology in this study centered on participants' meaning making in relation to peace education as a critical part of their development of identity-based orientations toward peace.

Evaluating Peace Education

Through this approach, the current study extends work on evaluating peace education policy and initiatives while also further demonstrating the utility of developmental psychology for peace education. In general, there is a need for more research on peace education initiatives and curriculum, especially as situated in child and adolescent development (Hakvoort, 2002; Oppenheimer, 2010; Salomon, 2013). As the field of peace education has grown recently, debates emerged over how its implementation should be evaluated. Many assessments have consisted of descriptions; opinions based on anecdotal evidence; or, when more systematic, assessing a program's impact on limited, desired outcomes (Harris & Morrison, 2013; Nevo & Brem, 2002). Qualitative studies have largely attended not to how students process and receive peace education but, rather, to changes in behavior and attitudes. Although such work is valuable, the underlying psychological mechanisms and meaning making have important developmental and identity-based implications and thus should also be more deeply investigated. If "peace education stimulates, at best, a change in consciousness, where students develop peaceful attitudes and skills" (Harris & Morrison, 2013, p. 218), then it is important to better understand how students are psychologically processing and responding to what they are experiencing.

The approach in this study drew on the developmental salience of meaning making and identity development in adolescence. The aim was to better understand young people's responses to and stated beliefs about what peace education should entail. This involved attention to the meaning they are making in relation to implicit and explicit messages about peace embedded within education (Berents & McEvoy-Levy, 2015; Quaynor, 2015). To this end, the current study investigated young people's psychological processing of peace in relation to peace education. The recent peace process and 2015 law in Colombia offered a prime opportunity to focus on adolescents' meaning making in reference to educational initiatives aimed at promoting their development as active peacebuilders.

The Colombian Context

Violence and armed conflict have marked Colombia's modern history through an expansive web of actors, victims, and motivating factors. This violence is often situated as beginning in the 1950s. In the more than half a century since then, a prevalent element has been the armed conflict between the government and the FARC-EP (Richani, 2013). When these two sides began peace talks in 2012, the over 5 decades of armed conflict had caused more than 220,000 deaths, led to almost 28,000 kidnappings, and forced almost 6 million to be displaced from their homes (Agencia de la Organizacion de Naciones Unidas para los Refugiados [ACNUR], 2017; Centro de Memoria Histórica [CNMH], 2013). The extensive nature of the conflict and its impacts have imbued the lives of many citizens and permeated public and political discourse.

The peace process with the FARC-EP was not the first demobilization of an armed group nor the first attempt to find common ground between the state and the FARC-EP. Building on previous successes and failures, the government situated the negotiations amid an attempt to create a more broadly peaceful Colombia by promoting widespread political participation and ownership of peace (Posada-Carbó, 2017). One specific focus was youth: The government and civil society undertook an extensive effort to

promote youth engagement in peacebuilding across various levels (Chaux & Velásquez, 2016; Sánchez Meertens, 2017; Velez, Ballesteros, & Sanchez Meertens, 2019).

As part of this peacebuilding project, a peace education bill—*Ley 1732*, known as the *Cátedra de la Paz*—was enacted in 2015. The law mandated that primary, secondary, and postsecondary schools incorporate 2 of 12 broad, peace-related themes into their curriculum. The topics ranged from justice and human rights to conflict resolution, historical memory, and protection of the nation’s cultural and natural resources. Based on the law’s structure and the decentralized Colombian school system, the requirement was uniform and legally binding, but its actual implementation varied widely (Chaux & Velásquez, 2016). The law also embodied an effort by the government to promote individual young people in assuming responsibility to become peacebuilders (Sánchez Meertens, 2017). This emphasis is exemplified by President Santos’s rhetoric when signing the bill: “We should turn our schools into places that support social harmony, camaraderie, and begin the process of building peace with our children and youth because they are the future of our country. . . . This peace is not being negotiated in La Havana, but rather should begin in the interior of each of you in their everyday lives” (Ministerio de Educación [MEN], 2015). A year after the law was enacted, the Colombian Ministry of Education produced two documents for educators as guidelines: an orientation to general principles, theories, and purposes and a guide with specific lessons for each grade level (Chaux et al., 2016; Chaux & Velásquez, 2016). These documents—although critiqued for not adequately addressing all 12 topics within the peace education law—were presented by the government as what schools should draw on in fulfilling the mandate. They represent broader government discourses about youth and peace, as well as intended goals and an underlying framework for peace education as a part of peacebuilding in Colombia (Sánchez Meertens, 2017; Velez, in press).

Research Questions

To date, there has been minimal evaluation of the impacts or effects of the peace education mandate in Colombia. Yet, the setting provides an opportunity to study how young people respond to peace education frameworks because of the historical context, extensive attempt to work toward making Colombia a more peaceful society, and specific focus on younger generations as agents in peacebuilding. The current study explored how a sample of older Colombian adolescents responded to the proposed framework for peace education in 10th grade, with attentiveness to the consonance or dissonance they expressed as well as how they discussed peace and young people’s role in it. Within a broader research project on young Colombians’ development in relation to peace, this study addressed the research question, “how do Colombian adolescents respond to the framing in the official peace education curriculum of their potential development and involvement as peacebuilders?” To this end, the study investigated adolescents’ meaning making in relation to a proposed official framework. Their meaning making was investigated by presenting them with an excerpt from the government peace education curriculum as a prompt. The analysis offers insights not only for the Colombian context but also for considering how to deepen developmental psychology’s contributions to evaluating peace education. The research question demonstrated an approach to considering young people’s interpretation of discourses and lessons presented in peace education. This processing plays a pivotal role in their identity development and subsequent behaviors and orientations as members of society (Spencer, 2006; Spencer et al., 1997).

Method

The data for this study came from a larger mixed-methods project with Colombian adolescents as the peace process ended and the accords were implemented. In 2016 and 2017, interviews and surveys were conducted to investigate civic and identity development amid the dynamic societal context and how they made meaning of their experiences and discourses about youth, peace, and citizenship. This study drew on a portion of the interview that asked participants to read and respond to a peace education framework in the official government curriculum.

Sample

The broader data collection involved 233 adolescents across Colombia. For the current analysis, 205 participants were included because the remaining participants did not respond to this portion of the interview as a result of time constraints at their schools. Of these 205 participants, just over half (51%) were female, and the average age was 16.40 years (standard deviation [*SD*] = 0.91). The participants came from 36 schools and over 15 municipalities. The school sites were spread across a number of major metropolitan areas in Colombia, as well as a few rural communities in different regions. The largest group lived in the capital city of Bogotá (27%), whereas approximately a fifth came from the Cali area (19%), a similar percentage from the city and surrounding suburbs of Medellín (19%), and the rest from various rural or smaller urban zones scattered across the country (35%). The sample did not include adolescents in areas where the conflict had been the strongest in recent years, although some urban participants had migrated to the cities after being displaced from their previous homes in conflict-affected areas. Still, just over half self-identified as affected by the conflict in some way. Using government assignment of six socioeconomic strata, 59% of the sample came from the lower two designations, a third from the middle two strata, and the rest from the upper two. Although a small portion of the sample was Afro-Colombian (5%), there were no participants who identified as belonging to indigenous groups. Outreach to schools in indigenous communities was attempted, but logistical issues prevented interviews from being done in these sites. The voice of indigenous Colombian adolescents, therefore, is not a part of this sample and should be explored in future research.

Instruments

The prompt (see Appendix A) used to elicit participants' opinions and understandings of peace education came from the Colombian Ministry of Education's *Desempeños de educación para la paz: para ser enriquecidos por los docentes de Colombia* [Applications and Goals for Peace Education: To be enriched by Colombian teachers] for 10th graders. The excerpt chosen was age appropriate and presented a broader framework for how the Ministry of Education proposed structuring peace education. In it, the Ministry of Education presents a four-part framework centered on fostering students' ability to recognize, contextualize, personalize, and address "principal problems in their surroundings." It emphasizes teaching about historical and social processes leading to the current moment, as well as democratic citizenship and participation in "the construction of peace in and from schools." This section of the interview (see Appendix B for full interview protocol) was structured to explore these adolescents' thinking about peace education in their schools and as part of their broader meaning making of peace (i.e., understanding of its possibility, what it entailed, and how they could contribute to it). The interview thus not only allowed participants to voice their opinions specifically in relation to this proposal but also allowed for the analysis to consider how they more broadly discussed peace in Colombia in relation to youth and education.

Procedure

All interview procedures and materials were approved by the researcher's Institutional Review Board and then discussed and agreed upon by schools where the data were collected. Participants for this study were recruited through their schools. Using maximum-variation sampling, schools were chosen to encompass a diversity of local contexts (Patton, 1999; Suri, 2011). This process involved input and support from the national Ministry of Education, as well as regional Secretaries of Education and other educational nonprofit organizations. For the areas outside Bogotá, this process involved connecting with the Secretaries of Education to explain the project and its goals for diversity. Sites were selected based on discussions between the primary researcher and governmental contact, who then connected the researcher to the sites. Once sites were selected, the study was presented to administrators to ask for their institution's participation. After this was obtained, consent forms were sent to a sample of students and their guardians. The sample was chosen by school administrators based on the researcher's request for a diverse group (e.g., with respect to academic achievement, school involvement). No incentives were provided to participants.

Participants were interviewed by the primary researcher (Gabriel Velez) and a Colombian research assistant for 30 to 60 min in a private space within the school. The protocol encompassed various sections, such as interviewees' perspectives on the peace process, what peace meant, their contributions to peace, and their visions of their own and their country's future. First-level questions included, "What does peace mean to you?"; "Do you live in peace?"; and "Do you think you can contribute to peace at a community level?" For the current study, the data came from the final section, in which interviewees were presented with and asked to respond to an introductory section from the suggested peace education curriculum for 10th graders. The method elicited responses to peace education from a common basis (as opposed to the diverse ways it was implemented in their schools) and allowed the investigation of their opinions of the official framework. Although this study focused specifically on this section of the interview, it was part of a larger, integrative investigation into young Colombians' meaning making about peace in relation to their own identities (Velez, 2019).

As noted, interviews were conducted both by the primary researcher and a research assistant, who was a trained undergraduate psychology student. It is important to acknowledge the different positionalities of these two interviewers. The primary researcher is of Colombian heritage but is not a native Spanish speaker and came from a university in the United States, whereas the research assistant is Colombian and was studying there. Although interviews were conducted individually, a collaborative approach was taken more broadly. That is, the two interviewers debriefed immediately following each school visit. These conversations included discussions about general impressions of the school, student reactions to the interviewers, and patterns in what respondents described. These factors were also discussed in relation to possible biases that each researcher held given their positionalities. Notes were taken on these conversations and considered during the analytic process, in which both interviewers were involved.

Analytic Procedure

Interviews were taped and then transcribed in the original Spanish by the primary researcher (who is fluent in both languages) and a team of trained graduate students from a Colombian university. Quotes have been translated into English for this publication but were analyzed in the original Spanish. Transcriptions were analyzed using thematic analysis, which is appropriate for investigating questions of

meaning making because it allows for researchers to identify patterns across the specific responses, thus addressing how contexts and discourses may be influencing individuals' experience of their social worlds (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

This analytic process involved transcribing, reading, and rereading the interviews before generating codes to identify key elements in the data and then collating these into potential themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Each section of the interviews was marked by the primary researcher, and then the section pertaining to peace education was coded by this same person. The analytic process also involved first reviewing these excerpts for whether participants expressed positive, negative, neutral, or no sentiments about the proposal. This was determined by both the primary researcher and research assistant independently marking transcripts, with 95% agreement between the two. Then, an open-coding procedure was used to first identify topics and ideas in each transcript. The primary researcher read and reread all transcripts and then coded topics in how participants described young people's role in peace as they responded to the peace education curriculum. Codes included "critical thinking," "young people are the future," and "political participation." Codes were mutually exclusive, although multiple codes could be applied to a single transcript if multiple ideas were noted. Reliability was checked through a process of the research assistant (who conducted interviews) coding a random selection of the excerpts (20%) using the same set of codes. There was 85% agreement in coding frequency between the primary researcher and the research assistant (Yardley, 2007). The two then engaged in a conversation to analyze broader patterns across the codes to identify key themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Yardley, 2007).

Results

The analyses for this study were guided by the overall research question, "How do Colombian adolescents respond to the framing in the official peace education curriculum of their potential development and involvement as peacebuilders?" In the following discussion, the findings from their general responses are first presented before detailing the themes that emerged from the analyses.

Overall, 70% of participants expressed positive opinions about the proposal, whereas 11% noted disagreeing with it, and the remainder did not express a positive or negative opinion. Even among those who agreed with the proposal, there were mentions of how it could be improved. First, some questioned whether the proposal would be carried out. For example, Andrés said, "What it says here is really good. The issue is that it isn't applied. It's worth nothing to plan things that aren't actually carried out." Among respondents who did not agree with the proposal, some participants took issue with the content, and others noted that it was biased. The latter included Diego, whose response was as follows:

The government has had so much propaganda in favor of peace. In terms of education and so many other ways that one begins to feel that they have to do this because this isn't the right way to peace. If they have to teach you how to make peace, it's because they have to push their propaganda.

Aside from these critiques from a small number of participants, three themes emerged from the thematic analysis: youth as the future drivers of peace, informing as a basis for participation, and the need for peace education to foster an action orientation beyond the classroom. These themes were interconnected and indivisible. For example, participants described the future orientation of youth as rooted in their ability to concretely act as citizens, described how informing facilitated young people

engaging in peacebuilding, and situated action as providing concrete strategies to fulfill the potential of youth as future peacebuilders. Yet, each was distinct in that it was clearly articulated by these adolescents as a critical part of how peace education should be structured.

Theme 1: Youth as the Future Drivers of Peace

Many students described the importance of acknowledging and promoting the active role that adolescents play in building a peaceful society. They highlighted and elaborated on the proposal's assertion that young people can influence the "construction of history, able to make decisions and undertake actions that can transform their surroundings." To this end, they detailed that peace education should be oriented toward allowing and promoting young people as critical and participatory citizens into the future. This education process involved raising awareness in young people themselves and building direct links between their lives and peacebuilding.

A first area in which participants asserted young people's agency was in fostering a feeling of connection to and empowerment in the societal project of peace. They responded that the proposal's four steps were important because they could make young people aware of how peace and the challenges to it were relevant to all of their futures. Angie, from a school with low socioeconomic status (SES) in Bogotá, articulated this perspective:

It's a basic first step to understand and then be able to identify the problem. It also seems good to me that the problem is not talked about as something external, but rather is something involves us. Something that affects all of us because it's necessary for people to also feel immersed in this role. We may be small, but we still have to know that at some point we are going to be adults and it is something that is not isolated and doesn't concern us, but rather something that imbues all areas.

Angie noted that the proposal offered a path toward promoting the internalization of peacebuilding as affecting everyone's social contexts and futures. Greater awareness is necessary because young people must assume their roles in society and think beyond their immediate (both personal and temporal—i.e., current moment as adolescents) contexts.

Other participants specifically described peace education as having the potential to promote young people's capacity to become active, participatory citizens. This response often involved reference to the proposal's emphasis on promoting students' roles as "interdependent citizens of a democratic society." Building on this section, participants described how peace education could help foster and develop a sense of citizenship that would facilitate their role in shaping the future. As an example, Helen, who came from a rural area, said:

We, as people, as youth, as citizens, have the right to participate in the process and to be organized. Since it will be our future if we achieve peace, we should be purposeful in our actions and have good opportunities. This recognizes that peace is also connected to us as citizens.

Helen indicated that for her, peace education could help situate peace within young people's responsibilities and actions as citizens with a stake in future conditions and opportunities.

Whereas Helen described young people's current roles as citizens, some others focused on the future by emphasizing responsible voting as a key element of citizenship that peace education could foster. The proposal excerpt does not mention specific forms of political action, but these adolescents invoked

voting and other forms of democratic participation. Furthermore, they explicitly rooted this goal in education and described it as future oriented (i.e., toward their future citizenship).

The cross-cutting nature of this element is demonstrated by Daniela and Brayan. Daniela came from a low-resource area of Medellín, one of the largest metropolises in the heart of Colombia, and Brayan from an elite private school outside of Cucuta, a small city on the Venezuelan border. Both described the need for peace education to develop decision-making capabilities in relation to political action. Daniela detailed, “We are going to vote for the next president who will represent us—really for all of the leaders, who will support us in the future. To do this we need to know what is going on around us, in terms of peace, but also the economy and everything.” Daniela then directly connected this knowledge to education providing young people with the tools to make these voting decisions. Similarly, Brayan stated:

They should develop this plan so that we can be people capable of making decisions when the time comes because sooner or later, our time is going to come, and we will be electing our representatives. So, it’s important they instill this in us now so we can begin preparing.

He noted that the proposal should focus on promoting behaviors and values that will matter as youth become future adult citizens. In these and other responses, peace education was presented as laying the groundwork for young people to be informed citizens, including as political actors. Peace education is thus framed as a future-oriented civic enterprise; its purpose is to foster awareness in young people for future political and social behavior. Within this framing, the project of peace is deeply related to a political project of fostering young people’s participation as citizens and, specifically, voters.

In summary, the first main pattern across participants’ responses presented peace education as necessary to prepare young people to be future social and political drivers. They responded to the curriculum excerpt by highlighting how youth should be educated to understand how peace informs their lives, as well as how to make informed political decisions to promote the development of peace. This pathway of peace education motivating political action addresses structural violence; the active role of peace that these participants described involved voting and civic action to change social structures. These efforts were oriented toward the future because both peace and young people’s agency in changing society were described as processes (i.e., peace would be achieved later, and young people will become adult, voting citizens), for which the groundwork could be laid through peace education in the present.

Theme 2: Informing as a Basis for Participation

A second, connected theme was that informing young people about peace was a necessary basis for their social and political participation. Interviewees highlighted that by providing contextualization for conflict and other problems, peace education would not simply offer factual information but, rather, could foster awareness and motivation to become peacebuilders. As stated succinctly by Esteban, who was from a low-SES school in Bogotá, peace education could be a foundation for participation by giving greater clarity and recognition of social issues: “We cannot take action against something we don’t know and understand because we don’t know what was going on, we don’t know what happened, and we don’t understand all of what it entailed.” This conceptualization of peace education extended beyond informing abstractly or teaching theory to focus on preparing for actively engaging in peace. Camila, from a low-SES school outside of Medellín, articulated this perspective in stating, “They

shouldn't tell us what peace is, what violence is. They should teach us to be more open. They can inform us about the topic so that we can then give our opinion, to say that we can do this in a different way or this we can change." Peace education, for Camila and others, should employ knowledge and information to inspire autonomous problem solving and decision making.

Within this pattern in the responses, contextualization encompassed both historical roots of violence and the lived experiences of those deeply affected by it. First, becoming aware of historical and social processes was described as an important step for understanding the present and then being able to act on social issues. For example, Alexa, from a high-SES school in Cucuta, stated that young people would "learn more about society and the world" with this proposal. She went on to say:

This would help us recognize and appreciate all of these acts of violence that there were in the past. All of the massacres that happened so that we will not allow the same things to happen. And to be a better person in the future and be able to help the world. It makes you rethink things and not join armed or illicit groups. It's a good proposal because also our teachers can learn more, teach us more, and then we can teach our parents about what is happening in the world.

Like other interviewees, Alexa situated a better understanding of the past as inspiration for action in the future. These impacts could be diverse—Alexa mentioned preventing massacres, helping the world, not joining armed groups, and teaching adults—but the foundation for all these impacts was framed as being knowledgeable about the past.

Interviewees also highlighted a second, similar process of contextualization for peace education, which involved a deeper understanding of the real experiences of those actually living the conflict. Situating violence in context was not only historical but also social: recognizing and appreciating why and how armed conflict emerged, then being able to participate in supporting peace. Miguel, from a low-SES school in Medellin, demonstrated this framework in saying that peace education should help students:

See peace as tied to context, as lived by actual people who suffer the conflict. It should entail truly understanding what they are experiencing in this current peace process or asking their opinion or what they have lived through. Even FARC members because you could say that they have created war or done other things, but we also haven't really considered what are the roots, why this began.

Miguel defined *context* as the processes that lead people to become involved in violence. Giving depth and clarity to the perspectives of victims, the FARC-EP, and others also entailed questioning the discourses in the popular mind-set and media about the conflict. To this end, contextualization could help young people be active and thoughtful recipients of messages in the broader society. One participant from a low-SES school in Medellín, Javier, described how being informed by peace education could lead youth to be agents in promoting richer understandings of what was occurring in society and thus promoting peace:

We are seeing mostly what the news tells us. This proposal could help us, as youth, understand better the current moment and how society got here, and thus know better how to communicate and connect with other people. Other people who have suffered or also those who do not believe in peace. We, as students, can inform ourselves and then pass on to others

the information that they are teaching us. It can be richer and more contextualized than in the newspaper, where they say 10 people have died and that's it.

As Javier detailed, contextualization beyond usual sources and discourses could facilitate young people's propensity to be active in raising others' awareness and counteracting cycles of violence. In this way, knowledge of historical and social trajectories would empower young people to connect and enlighten others in working toward peace.

An additional element of contextualization was being able to appreciate other people's perspectives. Interviewees extended the proposal's focus on identifying and recognizing to empathy: truly internalizing how and why others experienced the conflict and the world more generally. Miguel, quoted earlier, demonstrated this element in focusing on why FARC-EP members may have joined or been involved in violence, whereas others more broadly situated it in empathizing with others. Laura, from a low-SES rural school, noted:

When one is capable of recognizing the problem, one can act to address it. So, it's good because there it says that the teachers have the ability to shape the different content with respect to helping us learn why this is happening. Then, when we are capable of putting ourselves in the shoes of other people and be empathetic, we can act in our everyday lives.

Laura began by agreeing that identifying is necessary for action, then clarified that this recognition involved being able to appreciate other people's perspectives. In this framing, learning why and how conflict is occurring helps young people better understand the experiences and motivations of individuals in order to prevent and counteract violence.

Lastly, being knowledgeable and informed was revealed to provide a key foundation for participation in peacebuilding by motivating youth. Again, participants extended peace education beyond conveying material to fostering an orientation toward understanding one's place within a broader context. To this end, Julian, from a middle-SES school in Bogotá, noted:

There are people—for lack of information or because nothing has happened to them—who simply do not care. They simply let things happen. This is the only issue I see with this proposal. How do we get these people to understand that even though they have nothing to do with this, it affects all of us indirectly or directly?

Julian framed the link between informing and action as a challenge to the proposal. Yet, by asking this question, he emphasized the importance of informing as motivating to be active and connected to peace.

Other interviewees detailed that informing sparked motivation for participation but described the proposal as effective in achieving this end. As with Julian, they often recognized that it would be difficult to get some young people to engage, but they also noted that informing could generate interest and knowledge for action. For example, Isabella, from a low-SES school in Cali, stated:

This will help us act more because we will be more informed. There are youth who do not pay much attention or give it much importance, but there are others who didn't care about this topic and then depending on how you explain it to them and inform them, you can generate interest in knowing more about what is happening and how they can help.

Isabella articulated that if framed correctly, informing could overcome the lack of interest by connecting peace to young people's lives. The sentiments conveyed by Isabella were echoed by other interviewees, such as Valentina, who was from a central rural area: "This strikes me as good because many students don't know about peace and thus don't really care about it. They laugh and make fun. This seems good to me because it supports teachers in helping them take it seriously and understand what peace means and how important it is." Valentina directly rooted peers' lack of interest in a lack of knowledge. Through a peace education that fostered richer understandings, antipathy and disregard could be overcome.

This second theme encompassed a pattern among interviewees in describing the informative role of peace education as a critical foundation for young people's participation in peacebuilding. Contextualization gave depth and breadth to violence in society—specifically structural and direct violence—by providing historical roots and raising awareness of various experiences of conflict. Understanding more about the history of the armed conflict and the current peace process not only facilitated the ability to feel empathy and to inform others but also motivated young people to feel connected and invested. Importantly, for Julian, Valentina, and others, contextualization as motivation was integrally linked to the implicit or explicit goal of promoting action. A lack of knowledge or interest was recognized as a clear impediment to young people's engagement. They would be inspired to be peacebuilders when peace education raised awareness with an orientation toward active participation.

Theme 3: Fostering an Action Orientation Beyond the Classroom

Building on the first two themes, interviewees also emphasized action as a critical element of peace education. They highlighted the proposal's fourth step—"Act, use strategies"—and extended this to argue for spaces, instruction, and empowerment to bring this content to their everyday lives. These responses demonstrated a clear delineation between the school and broader society, which interviewees described as difficult but not impossible to bridge.

Many interviewees expressed frustration with how teaching, assignments, and discussion often remained in the classroom. Some were critical of current approaches in their schools because the instruction failed to effectively link education with action. Their critique did not center on the teachers or lessons they learned but, rather, the difficulty in peace education expanding beyond being a school subject. This element was demonstrated by the response from Maria, from a low-SES school in a rural area, who mentioned that she liked her Catedra de la Paz class the previous year, but, "The problem was converting it into something more than theory, more than just writing and things like that. We never could see it from another perspective, from the real world and all of that. This was what bothered me." The theoretical approach Maria experienced mirrored traditional educational approaches that remain within the institution. She, like others, expressed that this framework was limited in its applicability.

Other interviewees underlined the difficulty in enacting what was taught about peace education. This discussion extended from the proposal's fourth step, with participants expressing that an action orientation to peace education was necessary for young people to truly become peacebuilders. Elian, from a middle-SES school in Bogotá, conveyed this idea in saying:

Actually, it's difficult to realize the action part, the change part. To say, yeah, we are going to actually make this change happen, we are going to apply what we have learned. Often, the most that happens it is stays within the context of the classroom. But I think the idea of this proposal

is to change this. To leave the context of the classroom and move into the real world to generate a more positive change.

Elian acknowledged that this connection was a hard one to make but was ultimately what would lead to a more peaceful society.

The same sentiment was echoed by other interviewees who mentioned that peace education should not simply be concerned with bridging the classroom with the world outside of it but also offer opportunities to integrate these lessons into everyday life and social interactions. Two examples of this perspective were the responses of Juliana and Juan Esteban, from two different low-SES schools in Bogotá. Juliana stated, “They definitely need to teach us how to act. What tools do we have to act? How can we act? What strategies should we use in what situations?” Similarly, Juan Esteban articulated this integration as necessary to turn peace from something theoretical to something *vivencial*—that is, “lived” or “experienced”:

It often stays in a classroom and isn’t experienced. It has to be brought to your lived context. What you learned—from social studies, the peace process, history, all of it. As in, they have to help you bring it to your communities and there integrate and apply it all.

Both participants not only expressed that it was critical for young people to apply the tools and lessons about peace to their everyday contexts but also specifically that peace education needed to concretely and explicitly guide them.

In this third theme identified in the analyses, interviewees emphasized the need to extend peace education beyond the classroom—as more than writing, theory, activities—to applications in their everyday lives, communities, and societies. They acknowledged the challenge of this integration but also stated that it was necessary for young people to be able to contribute to peace and promote change. These participants situated this discussion in relation to the proposal’s fourth step: acting and using strategies to transform their social contexts. This focus draws attention to young people’s role in combatting the structural violence embedded in these contexts.

Discussion

In this study, a sample of Colombian adolescents was asked to respond to an excerpt from the Ministry of Education’s proposed peace education curriculum. The research question asked how these participants considered the government’s framing of young people’s potential as peacebuilders as insight into their meaning-making processes. This approach was based on a theoretical framework situating meaning making as an integral part of young people’s development as citizens and potential peacebuilders. In general, these adolescents approved of the Ministry of Education’s peace education framework. Three themes emerged from analyses of their responses: Youth needed to be prepared for engagement in society, being informed about history and the current process served as a foundation for participation in peacebuilding, and peace education needed to bridge the divide between the classroom and social contexts outside of it by promoting concrete action. These themes link together to provide insight into how these adolescents made meaning of peace education in relation to their possible roles in peacebuilding. The first detailed a motivational basis—in line with the proposal itself, these youth generally conveyed a sense that young generations need support and education to help prepare them to contribute to societal peace. The second provided a means for how to foster this motivation and begin

to engage young people by providing context and raising awareness of how peace could be supported. Finally, the third demonstrated the importance of building on this motivation through concrete opportunities linking the classroom and broader society. As a whole, the findings contribute to understanding how adolescents think about themselves as potential peacebuilders, demonstrating the value of incorporating youth voices in developing peace education and engaging young people in societal peace through education.

First, these findings may support that developmental processes and contexts can illuminate the intersection of education, peace, and identity in young people. This sample of Colombian adolescents valued peace education that concretely prepared them for action in the future, whether as citizens or as potential peacebuilders. They agreed with the proposal on their potential as active participants in politics and society while articulating that peace education could provide concrete strategies for action and motivation to assume these roles. The focus in this formulation was on combatting structural violence; actions as citizens could change social systems, rather than preventing direct physical harm or addressing cultural norms underlying violence in their society.

These sentiments can be understood within a developmental framework that has broadly been identified across various populations of young people. As part of their psychological meaning-making processes, older adolescents are increasingly thinking about their future trajectories and preparing for the transition to adulthood (Erikson, 1968; Havighurst, 1948; Seginer, 2003). They face the end of precollegiate schooling, as well as changing responsibilities, expectations, and norms in the process of becoming adult members of society (Arnett, 2004; Hope & Spencer, 2017). The salience of forming future orientations involves adolescents' emerging cognitive and reflective capabilities but also involves processing cultural, social, and historical contexts. That is, thinking about the self and one's future is a salient task for many adolescents, but understandings of opportunities, challenges, and attitudes are rooted in how they make meaning of ecological contexts (Nurmi, Poole, & Kalakoski, 1994; Seginer, 2003; Spencer et al., 1997).

This developmental framework may clarify the emphases on engagement, action beyond the classroom, and future participation in society. As these adolescents defined their trajectories as adult citizens embedded within Colombian society, it is fitting that they articulated how peace education could prepare them to act and contribute to broader societal projects (i.e., peace). Furthermore, the developmental context of adolescence may explain why they focused on action beyond their schools; as part of a process of constructing their identities as members of society and citizens, they sought concrete strategies for participation in relevant contexts (i.e., outside of the classroom). Thinking about their place in broader societal systems and structures could then feed into a desire to have peace education provide them with opportunities to address structural violence. Additionally, their responses demonstrated the developmental potential of peace education focused on youth. These participants were generally positive about the possibility of young people as agents of change in Colombian society. Pessimism and obstacles to being active in peacebuilding were not presented as insurmountable, which can be understood as reflecting a developmental benefit of younger generations that other scholars have also identified: They are flexible and able to form new understandings, orientations, and actions toward conflict and peace (Berents & McEvoy-Levy, 2015; Del Felice & Wisler, 2007).

Although there was little cynicism about youth's potential participation in peace, participants acknowledged the challenge of motivating other adolescents to engage. Interviewees described

overcoming this by raising awareness by contextualizing and broadening the scope of peace and conflict in Colombia. Therefore, an important element of peace education for them was situating young people within historical and social processes. Teaching about peace should involve linking the conflict and its history to the current moment and their lives. By integrating the contextualization into their lives, an applied focus for peace education may bolster adolescents' capacity to feel connected and efficacious in building peace. This link is supported by literature on civic development and perspectives from liberation psychology. Empirical research has demonstrated numerous benefits to adolescents having an active voice as citizens of their classrooms and being involved in activities that spark change in the community (e.g., volunteering, protesting), such as greater awareness of social problems, increased civic self-efficacy, and sustained civic engagement (e.g., Crocetti, Jahromi, & Meeus, 2012; Montero, 2007; Torney-Purta & Amadeo, 2011; Youniss et al., 1997). Furthermore, focusing on this collective potential beyond classroom contexts can draw on liberation psychology's focus on structural change through collective action and awareness (Martín-Baró, 1994; Watts & Flanagan, 2007). As the youth themselves in this study seemed to indicate, moving beyond individuals in schools has the potential to engage with young people's motivation to contribute to peace and offer them concrete opportunities to link their actions to efforts to address structural and cultural violence. The findings from the current study also support possible benefits for a similar orientation to peace education because these participants expressed needing to connect their peers to peace (i.e., raise their awareness) and provide specific strategies for action outside of the classroom.

Within the Colombian context, an action orientation also may be important given growing polarization within and cynicism toward traditional politics. During the peace process, there were a number of corruption scandals, and Colombian politics became increasingly divisive because of the controversial nature of the negotiations ("Colombianos, optimistas con la paz pero no tanto con Santos," 2016; Pachon, 2017). More broadly, even as Colombia appeared to be making progress toward ending direct violence from the armed conflict, issues of structural violence were still salient in current events and social discourses (Sánchez Meertens, 2017). Yet, these youth were not antipathetic about civil and political affairs; even as adolescents during the peace process were less trusting of political and civic institutions, they were active as citizens and participating in nuanced ways outside of traditional political avenues (Dario et al., 2017; Velez, 2019). For these young people, it may be particularly important that peace education offers concrete strategies and applications as they seek ways to contribute to a peaceful future even amid disillusionment with the state and its agents.

Implications

These findings can contribute to peace education in transitional societies in multiple ways, particularly by bringing a developmental lens to how peace education can engender a change in consciousness in adolescents (Hakvoort, 2002; Harris & Morrison, 2013; Salomon, 2013). First, an action orientation may serve both to motivate and engage young people, especially in relation to addressing structural violence. This interpretation is bolstered by civic development literature and builds on participants' descriptions of how to inform and motivate young people (Hope & Spencer, 2017; Watts & Flanagan, 2007). Second, developmental processes and tasks inform the ways that adolescents think about and experience their education, including peace education (Spencer, 2006). Broadly implementing peace education alone will not turn schools into sites of transformation (Bajaj, 2015). Fostering a peacebuilding orientation may require a curriculum that is consonant with salient aspects of their lives, including sense of self and future trajectory, as well as the social systems in which they are embedded. Overall, the findings

highlight that peace education may effectively correspond with young people's development and psychological processing when it is praxis oriented, attentive to their local contexts, and able to be integrated with their identities and envisioned trajectories.

Building on these points, critical peace education—which “attends to power, local meanings, and enabling voice, participation and agency through the peace education process” (Bajaj, 2015, p. 154)—may be an effective approach to engaging young people as peacebuilders. Critical peace education prioritizes a learning process based on local meanings and realities in order to foster students' transformative agency and democratic participation (Bajaj, 2008; Giroux, 1988). This framework is both developmentally and contextually relevant. It is also oriented toward a praxis that situates conflict outside of the individual (i.e., addressing structural violence in systems and historically rooted structures) but provides concrete opportunities to see one's actions as able to work toward addressing these issues (Bickmore, 2008). In line with themes in participants' responses, critical peace education may effectively engage and motivate young Colombians by providing a broader contextualization with attentiveness to their local contexts and a focus on strategies for application.

Limitations and Future Directions

The current study offered an analysis of how a diverse sample of Colombian adolescents thought about peace education as indicated by their responses to an excerpt from the government's suggested curriculum. The findings contribute to understanding young people's thinking about peace, as well as the development of peace education in Colombia and other transitional settings. Still, there are at least a few limitations that must be acknowledged. First, the sample was not representative of Colombian adolescents as a whole. Certain subgroups were not part of the sample—such as indigenous young people or those who had joined armed groups—for various reasons, including accessibility. These individuals may have expressed different perspectives on the excerpt because of their different experiences of the conflict and related concerns (e.g., immediate end of hostilities).

Second, the methodology may not be complete in understanding adolescents' thinking about peace education. An alternative approach, for example, could have explored their responses to what was enacted in classrooms. Using a prompt also may have primed participants based on the ideas presented in the excerpt. The methodology was chosen to provide a common basis for response that was feasible and presented a broad framework. Longer segments of the document would have been difficult for participants to process and respond to in the interview. Additionally, the general nature of the framework in the excerpt facilitated a more expansive discussion, as opposed to a specific lesson, which may have been too limited. Still, the findings from this study should be considered one part of what inherently must be a broader investigation of psychological processes. The study could be further developed as part of an integrative and multifaceted research project that includes other methods, such as ethnographic observations of peace education classes in Colombia (Power, Velez, Qadafi, & Tennant, 2018).

Conclusion

Young people's critical role in building peaceful societies has been increasingly recognized in research and policy over the last several decades. This attention has coincided with the development and wider application of peace education in transitional and conflict settings. Within the field, however, there has been less attention to young people's own perspectives, understandings of their roles, and responses to

peace education (Berents & McEvoy-Levy, 2015; McEvoy-Levy, 2011; Schwartz, 2010). Psychological theory and research, particularly on adolescent development, demonstrates that these interpretive processes are linked to identity-based outcomes, including in relation to peace and conflict. The current study thus explored how a sample of Colombian adolescents responded to an excerpt from the government's proposed peace education curriculum. In their responses, these participants situated peace education as preparing youth for future citizenship, expressed that this goal could be accomplished through contextualizing and linking peace to students' lives, and noted that peace education must integrate instruction in the classroom to action in the world outside of it.

Peace education is still very much a developing field that encompasses a broad diversity of perspectives, content, and goals (Cremin, 2016; Harris & Morrison, 2013). It has been critiqued for being a top-down approach and minimally attentive to the lived realities and resilience of young people in conflict settings (e.g., Berents & McEvoy-Levy, 2015; Richmond & Mitchell, 2011). Adolescents' orientations toward conflict and peace—such as promoting a culture of peace or potential involvement in armed groups—emerge from everyday experiences and understandings of themselves and their social ecologies. In order for peace education to be effective in reaching them, their experience must be consonant with developmental processes and these emerging understandings (Spencer, 2006). The findings from this study indicated that participants recognized the complexity of engaging peers and bridging the classroom and the world beyond it. Young people may hold ideas as to the opportunities, tools, and applications needed to achieve these ends. Furthermore, attention to youth voices provides insight into significant challenges to peace education, such as the critique by some interviewees that the proposal was part of broader political propaganda. Greater attention to young people's voices in the conceptualization and application of curriculum can serve a core purpose of peace education by “advancing our ability to inform and generalize, rather than prescribe, processes that enable students to think and act collectively towards greater peace and social justice” (Bajaj, 2008, p. 141).

Footnotes

1 Social strata are an official designation by the Colombian state. These strata are numbered 1–6 and are designated as follows: 1 = low-low, 2 = low, 3 = low-medium, 4 = medium, 5 = medium-high, and 6 = high (Bushnell & Hudson, 2010).

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Excerpt of Government Curriculum

10th Grade²

The activities and goals suggested in this proposal for 10th and 11th grades strive to develop in students the ability to identify the principal problems in their surroundings (Step I: Identify), develop the skills needed to recognize the problems as part of a particular historical framework, closely related to social, political, and economic elements (Step R: Recognize), encourage their capacity to analyze and investigate in relation to their own positions and actions (Step C: Connect) and finally, to promote students' action using strategies of prevention of issues and transformation of their surroundings (Step A: Act).

I. Identify

R. Recognize

C. Compare, establish relationships, connect

A. Act, use strategies

With this objective in mind, the activities and goals are organized around studying significant historical events in Colombia, which are the means by which the students can put into practice the abilities and skills necessary to analyze how historical events came to be and what is the role of the different actors in the present. This approach permits young people to comprehend that they are actors in the construction of history, able to make decisions and undertake actions that can transform their

surroundings. Lastly, the activities and strategies that are proposed also seek to facilitate the students in acting as interdependent citizens of a democratic society, in a globalized world, and with an understanding of their responsibilities as transcending the limits of their local contexts. In tenth grade, the proposal for Peace Education is closely connected to the proposal for the Social Sciences. It is expected that the two proposals are complementary so that students can better understand the conflict, the history of violence, and the construction of peace from a reflective perspective on the recent history of Colombia. This proposal of activities and goals for Peace Education seeks to promote students transcending the cognitive processes they are developing in social sciences, which are a foundation, to develop the socioemotional abilities necessary to participate in an informed and responsible way in initiatives, projects, and actions to build peace in their contexts. Even though this proposal is organized in a chronological manner, the professor could work on the core ideas in any way that is most pertinent to the students in their contexts. The order of the main ideas by grade that is presented allows the inclusive reconstruction of national historical memory from a dialogue of different versions of the conflict, violence, and peace, searching to identify the spaces for participation in the construction of peace in and from schools.

APPENDIX B

Today is _____, and I am interviewing participant number _____. Are you willing to participate in this interview? Are you willing to have this interview audiotaped?

This is an interview about peace, the peace process in Colombia and your ideas about these topics. I am interested in hearing your ideas about peace and your and your country's futures. There are no right or wrong answers to my questions. I will guide you through the interview so that we finish it all in about 45 min.

The interview is for research purposes only, and its main goal is simply to hear your story. Everything you say is voluntary, anonymous, and confidential.

I think you will enjoy the interview. Do you have any questions?

Section 1: Peace Process

1. The first part is about the peace process between the government and the FARC.
 - What do you think about the peace process?
 - Do you think the peace process will change Colombia?
 - In this context, do you think forgiveness and reconciliation are possible?
 - Have you or your family been affected by the conflict?

Section 2: The Future

1. The second part is about your future and that of your country.
 - How do you see the country in the future? For example, in 15 years, what will the country be like?
 - Changing to the personal, how do you see yourself in 15 years? What do you want to be and what do you want to do?

- What is your dream?
2. Do you think that the country's future will affect yours? Will it affect you achieving your dream?

Section 3: General Ideas

1. The third part is about how you understand some general concepts.
 - In general, as a concept, what does peace mean to you?
 - Do you believe that you live in peace? Why or why not?
 - What is your role as a citizen? What does citizenship mean?
 - What are human rights to you?
 - What are some examples?
 - Is Colombia a country where human rights are respected?

Section 4: Own Role in Peacebuilding

1. The fourth part is about how you see your own role in peacebuilding in Colombia.
 - Do you think that you are able to support peace in Colombia? Why or why not?
 - In your community?
 - What have you done in the last year to support peace?

Thank you for participating in this interview.

Appendix Footnotes

² In the Colombian system, 10th grade is the equivalent of 11th grade in the U.S. system.