

Dissertation submitted to fulfill the requirements for the degree of Doctor in
Media and Communication Studies

CHILDREN IN THE CONTEXT OF ARMED CONFLICT

From Victimization to Peace Promoting Narratives

MARIA CAMILA OSPINA ALVARADO
2019-2020

Taos Institute advisor: Prof. dr. Kenneth Gergen
VUB Promoters: Prof. dr. Gerrit Loots
Dr. Julia Villanueva
Prof. dr. Leo Van Audenhove

Social Sciences & Solvay Business School

Acknowledgements

I am deeply grateful for the opportunity that life has given me to go through this process under the guidance of my teacher, mentor, and friend, Kenneth Gergen, who had already inspired many of my ideas and practices before I met him. I wish also to thank Kenneth Gergen for his invaluable contributions and appreciative and wise manner in accompanying me in this learning process, helping me to get through difficult moments and to create possibilities for peace-building in Colombia, a country that needs it so much.

I also thank Gerrit Loots, Julia Villanueva, and Leo Van Audenhove for lighting my path, and helping to enrich the research process by means of their previous work with children in contexts of armed conflict.

Similarly, I thank the TAOS Institute and the Free University of Brussels for being houses of learning and for helping new ideas to flourish.

I want to thank each one of the children and their families and teachers who participated in this peace-building practice and who taught me, not only with their life stories, but with the games and laughter they had maintained alive in spite of the atrocities of the armed conflict.

I am particularly grateful to my family: my parents Sara Victoria Alvarado and Héctor Fabio Ospina for inviting me from my early years to dream of constructing a better country for children, and for accompanying me today in that construction; my sister Angélica María Ospina, for having followed some roads for peace-building with me from our first years, and because today, with Daniel Serrano, she teaches me appreciative ways of relating to children in early childhood; my companion Mauricio Cárdenas for the commitment to our country he embodies and motivates me to construct; and my nieces Sofía and Valentina for inviting me to see the great potential of early childhood for transformation through affection and play.

I thank my companions of the Centro de Estudios Avanzados en Niñez y Juventud of the Cinde foundation and the Universidad de Manizales for showing me multiple paths for peace-building for two decades now, and for continuing to construct new paths every day: in particular, for their company in the workshops, Mónica Ramírez, María Alejandra Fajardo, and Irma Lucía Serna.

Lastly, I would like to thank Bill Dickinson for his work in putting together the translation of this text in a careful process.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Research	12
Some Details of My Life Experience: A Note on My Identity as a Researcher.....	13
The Present Research and Its Relevance.....	14
From Victimization to the Constitution of Children as Political Subjects.....	15
Organization of the Thesis.....	18
Part I The Context of Inquiry: Armed Conflict and Early Childhood	20
Overview of Part I: The Context of Inquiry: Armed Conflict and Early Childhood	21
Chapter 2: The Context of Violence in Colombia and the Lives of Children	22
The Roots of Violence: Structural and/or Relational?.....	22
The Macro-Social Context and the Naturalization of Violence.....	24
The historical tradition of violence in Colombia	
The cultural and social traditions of violence	
Economic vulnerability and the maintenance of violence	
The role of the State and the maintenance of violence	
The Micro-Social Context of Violence.....	34
Family arrangements in the Colombian context	
The naturalization of violence within the family	
Repercussions of armed violence in the family and community	
The contribution of relational norms in micro contexts to the maintenance of violence	
Interactions with armed actors in subjects' close relational circles, and the breach of international law	
Interactions in the educational environment	
Research on Children in the Context of Armed Conflict.....	43
Ethical and Political Responsibility of the Researcher.....	47
In Summary.....	49

Chapter 3: Laws and Policies for Protection and the Prevention of Violence.....	50
International Agreements for the Protection of Children.....	50
Additional Protocol II of the Geneva Conventions.....	51
Convention on the Rights of the Child.....	52
Optional Protocol.....	54
Colombian National Policy for the Protection of Children.....	56
The Colombian Constitution.....	57
Relevant Legislation.....	58
Government Economic and Social Documents (CONPES).....	61
The Colombian National Plan for Childhood and Adolescence.....	62
Public Policy for the Comprehensive Protection of Children.....	67
National Actions for the Protection of Children.....	68
The “De Cero a Siempre” Strategy.....	68
Protecting Children Against Armed Conflict.....	69
Civil Society Actions for the Protection of Children.....	70
In Conclusion.....	73
Chapter 4: Violations of Children’s Rights.....	74
By Way of Introduction: The Breach Between Advances in Policy and Actual Violations of Children’s Rights.....	74
Violations of Children’s Rights in Contexts of Armed Conflict, According to Areas of Rights.....	79
Violation of the Rights to Life and Survival.....	79
The right to life	
The right to health	
The right to food	
Violation of Children’s Development Rights.....	85
The right to education	
The right to play and recreation	
Violation of Children’s Right to Protection.....	90
Protection from sexual violence	
Protection against recruitment	

Statistics on children and young people in the ranks of armed groups	
Motives that lead children to enter an armed group	
Children’s roles in the armed groups	
The consequences that their involvement with armed groups bring upon children	
Protection from explosive devices	
Protection from forced displacement	
The Violation of Children’s Participation Rights.....	100
Insufficiencies in Response to the Violation of Rights.....	101
Deficiency in State Action.....	101
International Cooperation and its Problems.....	102
In Summary.....	103
Chapter 5: Reflections on Legislation, Public Policy, and Protection Measures...	106
Advances and Limits in the Inclusion of Children in the Public Agenda.....	106
Tensions Between Legislation and Difficulties in its Implementation.....	108
Inconsistencies in the Law.....	110
Is the Focus on Protection Rather Than Prevention?.....	112
Summarizing Reflections on Legislation, Policy, and Protection.....	114
Chapter 6: Routes Towards Change.....	117
Initiatives for Intervention and Recommendations in the Context of Armed Conflict..	117
Macro Level Approaches.....	117
A United Nations initiative: The work of Graça Machel	
Recommendations of the Defensoría del Pueblo	
The Human Rights Watch initiative	
Summary of macro approaches	
Macro Social and Micro Relational Approaches.....	129
An initiative for schools as territories of peace	
The work of V. Lugo	
An initiative of Save the Children and CINDE: The work of Mojica and Quintero	

An initiative of UNICEF et al.	
Summary of macro and micro approaches	
Macro Social and Micro Relational Approaches for Early Childhood.....	143
An initiative of Save the Children and OEI	
Community initiatives with the participation children in of early childhood	
Summary of macro social and micro relational approaches for early childhood	
Summary of Initiatives and Recommendations.....	148
Part II From Victimization to Peace Promoting Narratives.....	150
Overview of Part II: From Victimization to Peace Promoting Narratives.....	151
Chapter 7: Methodology: Peace-Building as Action Research.....	152
Research as a Practical Commitment to Peace-Building: Researcher Positioning, Epistemological and Methodological Approach	153
The Research Process in Detail.....	160
The Participants.....	161
The Physical Context.....	163
Research Team.....	164
The Workshop Process.....	165
Workshop Focus.....	170
1. The impact of violence among children and their relations	
2. Resources for defense from the effects of violence	
3. Recognition of resources and potentials	
4. Focusing on possible futures	
5. Counter stories that enable peace-building	
Workshop Strategies and Activities.....	172
1. Impact of violence among children and their relations, and	
2. Resources for defense from the effects of violence	
Impact of violence from early childhood	
Resources for defense from the effects of violence in early childhood	
Impact of violence as told by families	

	Resources for defense from the effects of violence as told by families	
	Impact of violence as related by the teachers	
	Resources for defense from the effects of violence as told by the teachers	
3.	Recognition of resources and potentials	
	Resources and potentials of children	
	Resources and potentials within families	
	Resources and potentials as recognized by teachers	
4.	Focusing on possible futures	
5.	Counter stories that enable peace-building	
6.	Maintaining both the alternative stories and the changes achieved	
7.	Sharing results and closure	
	Data Analysis.....	193
	Ethical Considerations.....	198
	Action Research: A Possible Path for Peace-Building and the Creation of New Comprehension.....	199
	Chapter 8: Adverse Effects of Violence Among the Children and Their Resources for Defense.....	200
	Effects of Violence as Voiced by Children.....	201
	Fear in the Presence of Violence.....	202
	Effects of Violence in Relations.....	202
	Defending Against the Effects of Violence.....	211
	Concrete Actions as Resources for Defense.....	211
	Relationships as Resources.....	213
	Adverse Effects Of and Defense Against Violence.....	216
	Chapter 9: The Families Speak: Violence and Resources for Resistance.....	219
	Effects of Violence and Resources for Defense From the Parents' Standpoint.....	219
	Effects of Violence on Family Relations.....	220
	Disappearance of Family Members.....	220
	Disintegration of Families in Exile.....	221
	The Naturalization of Violence.....	222

Resources for Defending Against the Impact of Violence.....	223
Avoiding Venues of Violence.....	223
Memory Work.....	225
Communication Potentials.....	225
Teaching Non-Violence.....	226
The Importance of Play.....	227
Concluding Reflection.....	228
Chapter 10: The Teachers Speak: Violence and Resources for Resistance.....	230
Effects of Violence and Resources for Defense From the Teachers' Standpoint.....	230
Effects of Violence on Children.....	231
The Naturalization of Violence and Its Objects.....	231
Labelling of Children in Terms of Difficulties in Attention.....	232
Children Named as Fearful, Nervous, Timid, Passive, or Aggressive Due to Violence.....	233
Normalization of the Children: Peace as Pacification, Obedience, and Calm...	235
Effects of Violence on Family Relations.....	238
Emotional Effects on Families: Bad Tempers, Aggression, and Violence Within the Family.....	239
Fears Transmitted Between Generations by Parents Teaching Defense by Violent Means and Isolation.....	240
Resources for Defending Against the Impact of Violence Among Children.....	244
Activities Involving Children's Interest, Enjoyment, and Interaction.....	244
Respectful and Collaborative Relations Among Peers.....	245
The Mediation of Adults in the Transformation of Conflicts.....	247
Resources for Defending Against the Impact of Violence on Children's Relations.....	247
Affective Relational Practices in the Educational Environment.....	247
Communication in the Educational Environment.....	248
Solidarity Rather Than Competition in the Educational Environment.....	248
Articulation Between Family and Educational Institution.....	249
Affection, Tenderness, and Play in Family Relations.....	250
Support for Children's Education and Quality of Life.....	251
Concluding Reflection.....	251

Chapter 11: Resources and Potentials for Peace-Building	254
Potentials of Young Children.....	255
Life Potential.....	255
Affective potential.....	256
Ethical Potential.....	258
Potential of Play and Enjoyment With Others.....	261
Potential in Exploration and Investigation.....	263
Cognitive Potential.....	263
Creative Potential for Transforming Conflicts.....	264
Communicative Potential.....	265
Spiritual Potential.....	266
Potentials of Families for Peace-Building.....	267
Life Potential.....	267
Affective Potential.....	268
Ethical Potential.....	269
Relational Potential.....	272
Creative Potential for Transforming Conflicts.....	274
Communicative Potential.....	275
Political Potential.....	276
Potentials in the Educational Context.....	277
Affective Potential.....	278
Ethical Potential.....	279
The Potential of Play and Enjoyment With Others.....	280
Peace-Building Potentials in the Community Context.....	281
Communicative Potential.....	281
Ethical Potential.....	282
Reflections on the Potentials of Children and Their Relational Agents.....	283
Chapter 12: Counter Stories of Peace and Possible Futures	285
A Multiplicity of Counter Stories as Future Visioning.....	285
Future Possibilities in Children’s Education and Agency.....	286
Children’s Education as a Means Toward Peaceful Futures.....	286

Absence of violence in future educational environments	
Parent education at school for an alternative future	
Children’s Agency in Building Their Futures.....	288
Building Peace through Family Relations.....	289
Dreams of Return to Rural Territory With Security.....	289
Building a Future Away From the Armed Conflict.....	290
Talking About Past Violence to Avoid Repetition.....	292
Work and Economic Opportunities as a Future Away From Violence.....	292
Role of the State in Building Alternative Futures.....	294
Uncertainty and Inaction: Remnants of the Dominant Story.....	297
Reflections on Counter Stories of Peace and Possible Futures.....	299
Part III Research and the Potentials of Generative Peace.....	301
Overview of Part III: Research and the Potentials of Generative Peace.....	302
Chapter 13: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations: An Invitation to Dialogue.....	303
Action Research for Building Peace: Summary and Discussion.....	304
The Learning of Families and Teachers From the Process.....	326
My Reflections and Learning From the Project.....	330
Learning as a Researcher.....	330
My Learning as a Person.....	332
Learning From the Research Regarding Peace-Building With Children in Early Childhood.....	334
Toward Generative Peace.....	337
Recommendations for Public Policy.....	340
New Options for Transformational Research.....	346
References.....	349
Appendixes.....	370
Appendix 1: Letter of Invitation, Informed Consent, Informed Assent	371

Appendix 2: Workshops for Families, Children, School and Child Care Center Staff, and
Community Actors 374

Appendix 3: Diploma of Recognition 425

Chapter 1

Introduction to the Research

This document centers on the process and results of a research project on children in early childhood¹ in contexts of armed conflict, oriented both to comprehension and the strengthening of peace-building processes. The project aims to progress from the victimization of these children towards narratives that contribute to the realization of peace. It is carried out within the framework of a research program on the political meanings and practices of children and young people in contexts of vulnerability in Bogotá, Antioquia, and the Colombian coffee growing region. The research program aims to provide a possible route to the consolidation of democracy, peace, and reconciliation by means of citizen education processes. It is sponsored by Colciencias, the organization responsible for research in science and technology in Colombia, and carried out by a consortium for democracy, reconciliation, and peace, involving young peace-builders, including children in early childhood. The consortium is made up of three Colombian entities, la Fundación Centro Internacional de Educación y Desarrollo Humano – CINDE, la Universidad de Manizales, and la Universidad Pedagógica Nacional.

The present research builds on the activities of a center for advanced studies on childhood and youth (Centro de Estudios Avanzados en Niñez y Juventud) of the CINDE foundation and the University of Manizales. It was conducted within the framework of the peace-building practices carried out during the 20 years of execution of a program involving children's and young people's agency as peace-builders (Niños, niñas y jóvenes constructores-as de paz), and during the 9 years of execution of a peace-building project (Convidarte para la Paz).

The above program and project are carried out in an alliance between the center for advanced studies on childhood and youth (Centro de Estudios Avanzados en Niñez y Juventud) of the CINDE foundation, the University of Manizales, and co-operating entities: UNICEF, Fundación Restrepo Barco, Save the Children, Children of the Andes, Secretaría de Educación Municipal de Manizales, Secretaría de Educación Departamental del Huila, and Secretaría de Educación del Distrito Capital. The children's and young people's peace-building program, Niños, Niñas y Jóvenes Constructores de Paz, has been implemented in 18 Colombian regions since 1998. This program aims to promote peaceful attitudes, concepts, and political practices by developing ethical, affective, creative, communicative, and political human potentials for peace-building. The peace-building project Convidarte para la Paz, which began in 2009, took these ideas and trajectory as a starting point in its work with children in early childhood and their

1 From here on, children in early childhood are referred to as *children*.

families. This project has been conceptually and methodologically enriched by the present study.

For many years I have been present in and participated in the children's and young people's peace-building program, Niños, Niñas y Jóvenes Constructores de Paz. Below, I describe some elements of my recent history and personal experience.

Some Details of My Life Experience: A Note on My Identity as a Researcher

Previous experiences have marked my interest in peace-building with children and their families. These include practices that I undertook as part of my graduate and master's degrees, and master's thesis in centers for the protection of minors; direct work with families in a condition of vulnerability (such as homeless people); and research work with children and families from contexts of armed conflict. Both in my personal experiences and research projects, I have noted that, in general, the view that professionals and researchers had concerning these children and families constructed them in terms of deficit and shortcomings. The present study builds on the findings of previous research in which I participated (Gallo & Ospina-Alvarado, 2010; Ospina-Alvarado & Gallo, 2011; Alvarado, Ospina, Quintero, Ospina-Alvarado & Patiño, 2012; Ospina-Alvarado, Alvarado & Ospina, 2014). The present study takes a critical position regarding educational, community, and therapeutic practices, and the framework of public policy that supports these practices. It questions a role assigned to the children and their families based on the viewpoint of their protection. This orientation emphasizes deficit, and describes the children using concepts such as aggression and bad behavior. It also positions them as victims.

My work has been oriented, and continues to be into the present study, towards the construction of alternative stories based on individual and relational resources and potentials. I have carried out this commitment using a social constructionist approach that has become a useful lens for understanding, and also a way of life. The approach also represents an affinity with my family life and history.

Since I can remember, I have felt a great sensitivity for the pain of others, and had an interest in social justice and peace-building, having participated in social work, voluntary work, and research and social projects (Niños, niñas y jóvenes constructores de paz, presently, Convidarte para la paz). In my family, many of our conversations have been about the importance of our own participation as a family in the construction of a more equitable and humane country, and of being coherent in our daily lives with the ideals we have for our country.

I aim to continue working in contexts of high vulnerability, such as the armed conflict, with an orientation towards the potentials of a social constructionist perspective. This path arises out of my background, and brings my previous experiences into play with my research interests. Because I aim to contribute to strengthening the potentials of

children, working with constructionism and its recognition of individual and relational resources and potentials offers useful advantages. The work also begins with a critical perspective in social psychology, in which I have been interested since my graduate and master's studies, and the seminars I guide. The naturalization of deficit-based language in contexts of vulnerability was found to be problematic. It was thus important to focus on relational contexts such as the family and the child care centers, aiming to promote alternative family and educational relational practices.

Finally, the Colombian context of violence has always affected me and caused me great distress.

The Present Research and Its Relevance

The present research begins with the recognition of a context of armed conflict, in which certain hegemonic narratives have been constructed, legitimized, and reproduced.

These narratives include the actors involved, and the ends, the means, and consequences of all forms of violence and violation of rights. In the narratives, the experiences, knowledge, needs, and expectations of some social actors are considered as immature, and have been left aside. This has meant that from children's first years of life, narratives concerning them position them as victims, and in some cases as aggressors. This situation leaves them in a state of dependence and passivity in relation to adults. That is, in the history of the Colombian armed conflict, society has assigned children a role in which violent or aggressive practices are reproduced and repeated. Yet, they have not been accepted as subjects with a creative capacity for building peace.

The study, carried out in the cities of Bogotá and Pereira, took, as starting points, these victimizing readings about children in early childhood, and the lack of recognition of their creative potential for peace-building. In the light of this situation, the objective of the research was to comprehend the effects of the armed conflict suffered by the children, their families, and their teachers; to comprehend their resources for defense from those effects, and their potentials for contributing to peace-building; and to provide an educational proposal that, based on potentials and future possibilities, contributes to peace-building from children's early years. In this sense, the research aimed to illuminate the peace-building potentials already present in children's relational practices in the context of armed conflict, by means of a commitment to both comprehension and transformation. This implied setting in motion a process of action research effected through the children's narratives and relational practices, and those of their families, teachers, and other community agents.² The action research orientation is allied with social constructionist theory and narrative theory. Thus, some strategies from these

2 Agents relating to the children, such as their families, teachers, and other community agents are referred to from here on as relational agents or socializing agents.

perspectives were adapted, transformed, and implemented, in educational, and community settings. As will be seen below in the results of the research, these theories, when put into practice, fostered the strengthening of individual, relational, and collective potentials for peace-building that were already present among the group of participants, by promoting relations based on affection, acceptance of others, and respect.

The research project also aimed to bring about impacts and transformations by contributing tools to the local contexts and everyday interactions of children in early childhood, their families, and other relational actors. The project aimed to promote strategies to enable breaking circles of violence in which violence present in contexts of armed conflict is naturalized and internalized. This was to be achieved by strengthening the construction of narratives based on the children's agency from their early years, in preference to a position that reinforces their victimization. The promotion of dialogue with the designers and executors of public policy on early childhood in Colombia is also of continued interest, in order to foster peace-building from macro spheres.

Beginning from these research interests, I ask: In what ways have the children, their families from contexts of armed conflict, and their teachers resisted a deterministic reproduction of circles of violence and hegemonic narratives of violence, violation, and victimization? What social constructionist strategies and narratives may contribute to peace-building from their early years?

Taking into account my experiences and previous work, the Colombian context and its implications for children in early childhood, as well as the research objectives and questions described, I carried out the study in the light of the following arguments that may be added to the dialogue.

From Victimization to the Constitution of Children as Political Subjects

The major logic of this action research is that we are bringing about a shift from victim to political actor, in effect, a re-narration by the children and their families from contexts of armed conflict. This logic draws from the theoretical bases of social constructionism and narrative therapy literature, used at an opportune moment during the application of the methodology. In chapters 8 to 12, I include my proposal for peace-building and deal with some of the theoretical points of reference connected with practice. However, in this introductory section, I include some of the references that guided my research.

The transformation from victimization to potentials implied understanding that, as proposed in social constructionism, truths about the self are historical constructions, subject to a social context and to certain networks of relations (Gergen, 1996, 2006a, 2006b). In this sense, it was possible for me to embark, with the children, their families, and their teachers, on the task of co-constructing possibilities to re-narrate their life stories in a way that does not repeat their victimization.

In this context, re-narrating made sense, given that as Shotter (1996, in Pakman, 1996) proposes, the self exists only in language, implies negotiation, and is organized within social groups. These ideas led me, rather than understanding language as a representation of reality, to contemplate the generative function of language as action (Burr, 1995). The contributions of Gergen (2006a; 2007) were fundamental inasmuch as Western culture, and its indiscriminate appropriation in other latitudes has led us to make use of terms that refer to people in terms of defects, anomalies, problems, deficiencies, and incapacity, resulting in the emergence of feelings of insufficiency and obligation.

As may be seen throughout this document, such deficit-based narratives are intensified in contexts of armed conflict, in which children, especially those in their early years, are seen as defenseless and immature, the only approach to them being one of protection as victims of the conflict. This view, in the form of a hegemonic discourse or dominant story, has enabled a commitment to their protection and to the guarantees that they and their families have as victims, but has also led to their lives being understood from a view of impossibility and impotence.

These conditions made up a horizon of understanding in which the present research aims to recognize collective and individual resources in situations of violence, without ignoring the ravages the children and their families have suffered. This aim is shared with such authors as Barudy and Marquebreucq (2006) and Pérez-Sales (2004). These kinds of approaches have emerged within the framework of the decolonial proposals of authors, who like Santos (2011) in the sociology of emergences, have proposed an orientation towards capacity or potential and the possibilities and future potentialities of social actors.

In addition to determining the movement from victimization towards potentials, I emphasized the importance of participation in collaborative processes. This was one of the motives in carrying out the present study by means of action research. Consequently, following Anderson and Goolishian (1998) it was of key importance that comprehension be generated by establishing communicative acts in which new meanings are constructed, fostered by collaborative processes. Starting from this perspective implied undertaking the research as a collaborative practice.

As well as the contributions of social constructionism to this research, those of narrative therapy were fundamental. This perspective was of key importance with regard to understanding narrative as including a temporal dimension, as White and Epston (1993) put forward, in that events occur within time, in which meaning is prolonged, an organization of experience is formed, and experience is narrated in order to comprehend it.

In this sense, perhaps the principal contribution of the emphasis on narrative was that stories not only describe people's lives, but at the same time form their lives (Freeman, Epston & Lobovits, 2001). Narrative therapy has also enabled me to understand that the children's and families' narratives do not include the totality of their

experience. Accounts may often discard experiences that do not fit with the dominant narrative (White & Epston, 1993). Yet, with each new version, people rewrite their lives (White & Epston, 1993, p. 30).

In particular, the narrative approach was of great use. On recognizing that a deficit-based view has led to violence being seen as an inherent element among the children and their families, it was important to undertake a process of identification of, not only the effects of the armed conflict, but also of the resources for defense from them, as well as individual and relational potentials, and possibilities for orientation towards the future that contribute to peace-building.

In line with this approach (White & Epston, 1993), I take it as understood that the children are not the problem. The problem is violence, and, in line with the proposals of Monk and Winslade (2013), the narrative approach enables a person to leave aside feelings of guilt for violence, and to act with regard to it. In chapter 7, the reader may find a methodological description of the application of these ideas, put into operation for peace-building.

Narrative therapy, in coordination with the ideas of social constructionism, enabled me to understand that the co-construction of multiple alternative stories of peace was both possible and necessary. Experiences in the context of armed conflict lead, in many cases, to the construction of one sole dominant story based on violence, in which a history of violence is repeated as a unique possibility. In the present research, the commitment to the construction of alternative stories of multiple instances of peace implied inquiring about the multiple voices, of which, among other authors, Shotter (1996, in Pakman, 1996) and Carey and Russell (2002) have spoken.

The co-construction of alternative stories of peace with the children, and their families and educators ratified both what Carey and Russell (2002) have affirmed, in that the construction of alternative arguments is possible, and what Schnitman and Schnitman (2002) proposed, in that the consolidation of new storylines in which the subject takes an active position is also feasible.

It is worth pointing out that the construction of alternative stories of peace, to paraphrase the words of Freeman, Epston, and Lobovits (2001), reflects both the way in which children prefer to be known and the richness of their lives.

One of the ways I found for the construction of alternative stories of peace was an orientation to the participant's desired peaceful futures. Muñoz (2008) has proposed that, in order to construct peace, it is necessary to look to the future, and to participate in the present in the regulation of conflicts by peaceful means, while Lederach (2014) proposes the future as a horizon whose construction begins in the present. These assertions are relevant for the study inasmuch as a context of armed conflict leads in many cases to a vision in which there is no future: One knows one is living at the moment, but does not know what will happen next.

The logic set out here according to the referents of social constructionism and narrative therapy, and practical and experiential learning in a dialogue of knowledge and understanding with the participants, have been the principal horizon which guided my action research, as may be seen below in the subject matter of the chapters of this document.

Organization of the Thesis

The text is divided into three parts: Part I, The Context of Inquiry – Armed Conflict and Early Childhood; Part II, From Victimization to Peace Promoting Narratives; and Part III, Research and the Potentials of Generative Peace. Part I provides a background for the research on children in contexts of armed conflict. It is made up of chapters 2-6, which set out the context of the armed conflict, the impact of conflict regarding the rights of children and their families, the public policies and laws aimed at dealing with these effects, and some initiatives that have been carried out to reduce them.

The aim of part I is to set out the historic, social, cultural, and economic context that surrounds children in early childhood and their families from contexts of armed conflict. This context has an impact on what I will later describe as the negative effects of the armed conflict and resources for defense from violence. The emphasis in part I on laws, policies, and measures, and on previous research, aims to show the breach between policy and practice that my research aims to help to fill, as an educational proposal oriented to peace-building. Likewise, this first part shows that context, policies, and previous research have led to a vision of the children in terms of deficit, and a dominant discourse that ignores the multiplicity and richness present in their lives and relations, while maintaining readings and narratives that re-victimize them. The foregoing provides the reason for my research, which, as may be seen in Part II, goes beyond the negative effects of the armed conflict on the children and their relations, to include their resources for defense from violence, their individual and relational resources and potentials for peace building, and their orientation towards possible futures based on peaceful relations.

Part II contains the research itself. In Chapters 7 to 12, the action research and the results arising out of the transformation – from victimization to the co-construction of narratives that contribute to peace-building – are described. The methodological proposal set out in Chapter 7 arises as a critical reading of the context and of the public policies shown in the first chapters, 2 to 6. In it, I describe the methodological approach of my research, the participants, and their context; as well as a description of the workshops carried out, data analysis, and ethical considerations. As action research, the approach involved an active process of peace-building, which I explain. As may be seen in Chapter 7, my practical and methodological proposal transcends deficit-based views that are centered exclusively on the violation of children's rights. Rather, it centers on the relational practices of the children, their families, and teachers, and their actions against

reproducing ways of relating based on violence. The proposal has an orientation towards potentials, resources, and future possibilities that contribute to peace-building. In Chapters 8 to 12, I detail my proposal for peace-building, incorporating the results of the study according to an analysis of participants' narratives, in dialogue with some previous conceptualizations.

Part III contains the final chapter, Chapter 13, in which I include, in a proposal for generative peace, the main conclusions of the study, its contributions in methodological, theoretical, and practical terms, the discussion involving the results of the research and previous literature, and some recommendations for public policy. I invite the reader to join a commitment to peace-building with children from their early years. The more committed we are, and the more we listen to these children, the greater the impact will be.

Part I

The Context of Inquiry: Armed Conflict and Early Childhood

Overview of Part I

The Context of Inquiry: Armed Conflict and Early Childhood

Part I of this text comprises Chapters: 2. The Context of Violence in Colombia and the Lives of Children; 3. Laws and Policies for Protection and the Prevention of Violence; 4. Violations of Children's Rights; 5. Reflections on Legislation, Public Policy, and Protection Measures; and 6. Routes Towards Change. In general, Part I aims to contribute to understanding of the context of armed conflict and its implications in the lives of children and in family biographies.

Chapter 2 centers on a review of the context, taking into account structural factors that have contributed to the maintenance of violence in Colombia in historic, social, cultural, economic, and political terms. The chapter also deals with relational circumstances that arise in family, educational, and community environments with the presence of armed groups.

Chapter 3 covers the international treaties or agreements that Colombia has ratified in relation to children and families from contexts of armed conflict, and the Colombian laws and documents that regulate the rights of this population in terms of prevention against violence associated with the armed conflict, and protection after having suffered its effects. Furthermore, some measures implemented to contribute to the protection of children are included.

Chapter 4 shows recent developments among previous studies that note the violation of the rights of children and their families: parents being mostly young people. The chapter also shows the violation of the rights of children and young people to education and development, life and survival, protection, and participation.

Chapter 5 puts the two previous chapters (3 and 4) into dialogue, showing that, in spite of significant advances in public policy and the adoption of treaties and agreements, there are still very large breaches between what ought to be, as prescribed by public policy, and what is, in practice. This is revealed by the circumstances and violations of rights that children and families are exposed to in contexts of armed conflict.

Finally, Chapter 6 shows the state of practice in terms of some experiences, interventions, and recommendations at a macro-structural level to counter the negative effects of violence associated with the armed conflict and prevent them, and other initiatives that have been directed towards the micro-relational level, or focused directly on early childhood. Some of the practices and experiences described are connected to processes of action research.

Chapter 2

The Context of Violence in Colombia and the Lives of Children

This chapter deals with the roots of violence in terms of its structural and relational configuration. It sets out the situation of Colombian children in contexts³ of armed conflict, through an analysis of the circumstances related to the maintenance of violence: macro, including historical, social, cultural, economic, and political factors; and micro, including relations with the family, educational environment, and armed groups. Statistical data related to these issues are included. Some research oriented towards understanding violence in contexts of armed conflict is also described in the chapter, along with the related implications for children's lives. In addition, the importance of research and the construction of understanding in the Latin American context is discussed.

The Roots of Violence: Structural and/or Relational?

In my view, the acceptance, or *naturalization*, of violence is facilitated by both macro circumstances and micro relational practices. Some authors (Contreras, 2003; González, Bolívar & Vásquez, 2002; Castellanos & Torres, 2008; Alvarado et al., 2012) have pointed out the significance of both structural and relational aspects in the configuration of violence. As stated by Alvarado et al. (2012), the manifestations of war include not only armed actors, but also the civil population. This population may become a military target, become directly involved in the conflict, or be used in pressure strategies. Scholars (Contreras, 2003; González et al., 2002; Castellanos & Torres, 2008; Alvarado et al., 2012) have highlighted the impossibility of defining what constitutes the conflict and the violence from just one perspective.

In relation to conflict, Contreras (2003) suggests that both objective causes (of a social, economic, and political nature) and subjective causes give rise to the political motivation of the actors. This author states that subjective causes arise from social processes, yet the war itself takes on a different dynamic, moving away from the reasons for its emergence, and ultimately influencing political and social action. Thus, Contreras does not believe that there exists a natural manner of dividing causes of action between subjective and objective. Similarly, González et al. (2002) suggest that the comprehension of violence has to transcend structural analysis, and include the subjective and the relational:

3 In the present study I refer not only to the context of armed conflict but to contexts of armed conflict, given that in Colombia, there is not merely one context. Multiple territories, actors, and historic moments make up the differentiated contexts from which the participating families come.

Focusing on the comprehension of violence, not only through structural aspects, but also taking into account the collective actors and subjects who constitute those structural aspects, enables establishment of the relationship between objective conditions and subjective dispositions. This facilitates inquiring into: the correspondence between structures and violence; and the “impact of violence, types of violence, and armed actors, with regard to the creation of the structures.” (González et al., 2002, pp. 40-41).

Therefore, it is relevant “to focus on historical processes that form structural contexts and that function as ‘conditions that create possibilities in response to the violent options of certain individual and collective actors’” (Castellanos, 2008, pp. 520-529, as cited in Alvarado et al., 2012, p. 33).

In line with this approach, the first historical commission on the Colombian armed conflict made up of Colombian scholars (Comisión Histórica del Conflicto y sus Víctimas, 2015) has recognized that both the causes of the Colombian armed conflict and the reasons for its maintenance involve both structural and subjective factors.

The peace agreement between the Colombian government and the FARC-EP (Alto Comisionado para la Paz, 2016) recognizes the importance of introducing transformations in the structural factors that have historically maintained violence, as expressed, for example, in the concentration of land ownership, and also the importance of directly addressing the violation of rights suffered by social actors, including children.

Similarly, the social constructionist perspective emphasizes the importance of the historical and social context in the configuration of relationships, but, at the same time, opens the opportunity to collectively construct new possibilities (Gergen, 2007). Removing the material and objectifying nature of social, economic, cultural, and political reality opens the way for transforming everyday interactional processes by means of alternative dialogical practices.

To focus exclusively on either the structural or the subjective perpetuates the Cartesian tradition in which dichotomies and divisions are normalized, even when such divisions are arbitrarily established from the point of view of a person or group of persons. Although the separation of structural causes from relational causes appears a natural classification, this arrangement is socially constructed. Therefore, in this study, I focus on the potential for transforming relational practices without ignoring the broader social and cultural context. While cultural and social practices in a country in which armed conflict is present may be based on eliminating those who differ, small transformations can be made in everyday interactions, and these may lead to relationships unaffected by violence.

The impact of social practices in children’s social construction suggests that in many cases, everyday relationships, marked by social and cultural practices, violate the fundamental rights of children from their early years. A young person who participated in the conflict made the following comments in reference to his early childhood:

“When I was four years old, I was orphaned because of the violence. When we (sisters and brothers) were left alone, we joined the guerrillas. My first combat was when I was eight years old” (**Child ex-soldier**, in Fundación Imaginación, Tejido Humano, Fundación Corona, Enable USA Second Chance, 2007).

As pointed out by theorists and by the children themselves, violence includes not only social, cultural, political, economic, and historical aspects, but also everyday interactions, mainly involving family members or significant persons in the children’s lives. These macro and micro circumstances are present in the Colombian context as elements in the creation of violence.

The Macro-Social Context and the Naturalization of Violence

Below, some of the macro-social factors related to the presence of violence in Colombia are set out. This section deals with the tradition of violence that has afflicted the country’s history, as well as some cultural and social aspects of violence. Furthermore, economic vulnerability and the role of the State are shown as elements that contribute to the maintenance of violence in Colombia.

The historical tradition of violence in Colombia

It is worth noting that many social and cultural practices present in Colombian society are largely based on a logic of extermination - by any means, including violence - of whomever is seen as the opponent. This logic has its origins in the early history of the country. It has been present in successive independence wars, the civil wars of the 19th century, the land wars at the beginning of the 20th century, and the partisan wars spanning the whole of the 20th century until the present. These conflicts demonstrate that many social actors in Colombia have long opted for violence as a strategy to resolve problems, the victims being other social actors caught in the midst of the conflict.

Up to the time of writing, all the various armed actors involved, including guerrilla groups, paramilitaries, and the Colombian army, have contributed to the radicalization of the conflict. For example, in order to react to the strategies of the army and the paramilitary groups, guerrillas have departed from their founding ideals of social protest and demands. Paramilitary groups, whose members have been granted special conditions to serve short sentences, have been supported by the government and effectively condoned. This has often led to the concealment of information on the sources and extent of violence.

The guerrilla and paramilitary groups can be categorized as irregular armed groups in the recent evolution of the armed conflict in Colombia. Álvarez-Correa & Aguirre (2002) note that the guerrillas grew in the mid 20th century from mobilizations of rural poor people who demanded land. In 1949, in the midst of internal conflict in Colombia between supporters of the principal political parties of the time - the Liberal and Conservative Parties - guerrilla groups consisting of mobilized Liberals were created.

These groups later adopted communist ideas. Among the guerrilla groups that have emerged in Colombia are the EPL, Ejército Popular de Liberación, the ELN, Ejército de Liberación Nacional, and the FARC, Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia.

As noted by Gonzalez et al. (2002), paramilitarism has been a “political, social, and economic project with national scope and regional differences” (p. 60). Paramilitary groups have enabled the defense of the economic interests of certain Colombian social sectors. Thus, paramilitarism has been related to “the structural weakness of government to enforce within the regional elites a framework of democratic action for the resolution of social conflict” (Álvarez-Correa & Aguirre, 2002, p. 29).

A Colombian interdenominational commission for justice and peace (La Comisión Intercongregacional de Justicia y Paz de la Conferencia de Religiosos de Colombia, 1995) suggests that paramilitary groups, in order to evade the responsibilities implied by their recognition as illegal armed actors, have chosen to obstruct justice, impede the search for the truth, block investigations and clarifications, fake identities, and falsify realities.

Similarly, one of the scholars who was part of the Historical Commission on the Armed Conflict emphasizes that, along with four other factors, private security is a cause of the Colombian armed conflict, and those five factors have maintained it historically:

These five factors – inheritance of an exterminating cycle, agrarian inequality constructed through the political allocation of property rights, horizontal exclusions of small-scale farmers, continuance of private security provision, and powerful localist tendencies of the Colombian political system that led to a dislocation between society and politics – not only were important pro-conflict factors, but combined to generate a historical sequence that would be directly associated with our descent into a civil war (Gutiérrez, 2015, p. 533).

The armed conflict in Colombia has had different nuances in its distinct stages. In recent times, the decade of the nineties is described by Gonzalez et al. (2002):

The dynamic of the armed conflict in the nineties moved around two axes, which relate in some way to the dimensions of violence denominated as “objective” and “subjective”. The historical evolution of the armed actors in conflict, particularly that of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) [a guerrilla group] and the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC) [a paramilitary group] demonstrates a gradual and continual development of strategic plans of expansion. Yet, the territorial expansion of these two groups has taken place in opposite directions: the FARC guerrilla group came into being around zones of rural settlers who lived in poverty, and later expanded to richer or more integrated regions with profound social inequality; while the AUC paramilitaries originated in richer zones with consolidated local power bases, from where they moved to peripheral settlements, to gain access to territory where the cultivation of illicit

crops was expanding, or to strategic geographic corridors for the traffic of arms (p. 49).

The armed conflict in Colombia has a historically complex character. Within the armed groups, this complexity includes multiple stakeholders, different forms of territorial control, and various sources of funding. A common element among armed groups is their funding from illicit economic activities such as drug production and trafficking, extortion, and kidnapping. An example of the complexity of the conflict is to be found in the department of Norte de Santander, where the FARC and ELN guerrilla groups are involved in coca cultivation and drug production in rural areas, and paramilitary groups control trafficking routes and local drug distribution, as well as gasoline smuggling in municipal centers and the capital of the department (Niño, 2012). Similarly, Castellanos and Torres (2008) explain violence as a phenomenon linked to illegal political activities with connections to highly profitable criminal activities such as those of the narcotics economy.

In addition, the complexity of the Colombian armed conflict has diverse expressions according to the region:

Violence is not spread evenly and with equal intensity over the territory of Colombia as a whole. The armed confrontation is highly differentiated according to the internal dynamics of the region, its population, forms of social cohesion, and economic organization (González & Bolívar, 2003, as cited in Torrado, Camargo, Pineda & Bejarano, 2009, p.63).

Romero and Castañeda (2009) have argued that the characteristics of rural and urban territories, as well as demographic, socio-historical, natural, and political features have implications on the functioning of a territory and on the relationship between armed groups and the civil population. For example, armed conflict has historically been concentrated mainly in border areas: an especially important one being an area of southern Colombia traditionally controlled by the FARC guerrilla.⁴ Despite the greater presence of conflict in such regions, the war spread to all 5 geographical regions⁵ and 29 of the 54 sub-regions of the country. The departments that have experienced greater risk and vulnerability in the recruitment of children and young people by armed groups are: Arauca, Putumayo, Norte de Santander, Meta, Chocó, Caquetá, Guaviare, Cauca, Antioquia, and Valle del Cauca, the Andean region having the highest percentage (33%) of municipalities at risk (Springer, 2008).

4 From 1999 to 2002, Colombian president Andrés Pastrana authorized a demilitarized zone in the region of Caguán, southern Colombia, for the purpose of negotiating with the FARC guerrilla group as part of a peace initiative.

5 Geographically, Colombia is often classified into five natural regions: Andean; Caribbean; Pacific; Orinoquia; and Amazon. These are divided into natural sub-regions. Politically, Colombia is divided into 32 departments which are subdivided into municipalities (made up of urban, rural, or both urban and rural areas). At another level, there are indigenous territories, which may cover parts of more than one department or municipality. Metropolitan areas, which may be made up of various municipalities, are another type of division.

Over time, the epicenters, areas, and intensity of fighting between various forces have changed. Conflict increased during 2010 in the departments of Arauca, Cauca, Córdoba, Meta, Nariño, and Norte de Santander (Organización de las Naciones Unidas, 2010), where it had already been building up over the previous years. In 2009, 50% of the municipalities of Norte de Santander were classified as high and medium risk, according to the Humanitarian Situation Risk Index (HSRI). In that same year, the Catatumbo sub-region was the area that endured the greatest effects and risk for the population. Later, in 2010 and 2011, the conflict escalated in areas with a previously low index, such as the urban and metropolitan areas of Cúcuta, and the municipality of Ocaña (Niño, 2012).

Within the same territories, the armed conflict has changed through the years. According to Niño (2012), the armed conflict in the department of Norte de Santander, which includes the Catatumbo sub-region, has altered, developing from a dispute between the different armed groups in the territory, to its de facto administration by these same actors, mainly re-formed paramilitary groups. The resulting organizational system has been involved in the production and marketing of narcotics, which in turn has helped to maintain the armed structures of the various armed actors.

This kind of historical transformation has also taken place in territories such as Montes de María (a group of mountains in the Caribbean region of Colombia), in which, according to an observatory of ethnic territories (Observatorio de Territorios Étnicos, 2010), conflict is caused by a concentration of land ownership in few hands. From 1920 onwards, this issue has been the origin of various forms of agrarian struggle in the area. Actors such as landowners, cattle farmers, and politicians have exercised pressure over development plans to suit their interests, large estates have increased, and the cattle farming economy has been strengthened to the detriment of small-scale farmers, thus increasing inequalities and confrontations.

In the recent history of the country, it is worth highlighting an event of great importance: the signing of the peace agreement between the Government of President Juan Manuel Santos and the FARC-EP, which emphasizes “that peace has come to be universally described as a superior human right and as a prerequisite for the exercising of all other rights and duties incumbent upon individuals and citizens” (Alto Comisionado para la Paz, 2016, p. 2). In summary, this agreement contributes to the rights of the population affected by the armed conflict, among them children and their relational agents:

the sum of the agreements that make up the new Final Agreement contribute to the satisfaction of fundamental rights such as political, social, economic, and cultural rights; the rights of the victims of the conflict to truth, justice and reparation; the rights of children and adolescents; the right to freedom of worship and its free exercise; the fundamental right to individual and / or collective legal and physical security; and the fundamental right of each individual and of society

not to suffer the repetition of the tragedy of the internal armed conflict (Alto Comisionado para la Paz, 2016, p. 2).

Historically the agreement is of great importance for our country. However, there was great polarization in Colombia with regard to it, which led to a very close vote in the plebiscite, the no vote winning at that time, the peace agreement being later approved by the Colombian congress. Added to this, with the 2018 change of government, many of the above purposes were truncated by a return to warlike strategies, framed in the continuance of the “democratic security” policy of ex-president Uribe.

The cultural and social traditions of violence

The above history of the armed conflict in Colombia has taken place within a macro context that includes a culture and society that have traditionally been accustomed to violence. The main conclusion reached at the 5th meeting of the American Ministry on Early Childhood and Social Policy in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) is that some of the worst social and legal offenders who exercise violence against children are the children’s own family, civil society organizations, the government, and young people. Violence in Colombia occurs principally in cultural situations in which the youngest people are generally treated as objects of protection, or objects of violence. This has happened with the situation of family violence against children and adolescents, which between January 2015 and December 2019 reached 50,159 cases (Alianza por la Niñez Colombiana, 2020). The abuse of power in the LAC region favors not only maltreatment, but also sexual, emotional, and physical abuse among the families of children and young people (UNICEF, 2000).

As mentioned by the Bogotá district authority, relationships grounded in the domination-submission pattern, in which children are subordinate to adults, are among the main causes of family violence. Such relationships may be based on the maintenance of conceptions of paternal authority, maternal style, and authoritarian parenting customs. In this interactional pattern, power relations in which physical and psychological damage is considered a useful tool for discipline and education may be present in the upbringing of children. Additionally, premature and non-planned parenthood can cause parents to reject their children, causing difficulty in the establishment of an affective attachment between the young parents and their children (Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá, 2004).

Interactions involving violence may be fostered under circumstances of economic or marital crisis. These conditions may cause seclusion within families and isolate them from support systems. In addition, the consumption of alcohol and psychoactive substances may result in a loss of emotional control, which is sometimes present in situations of violence. The lack of traditions for resolving day-to-day problems in loving and respectful ways, coupled with feelings of fear, and difficulties in communication within families, lead the weaker party, in this case the child, to submit and accept the use of force from the adult who holds the power (Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá, 2004).

Demonstrations of force produce fear of abandonment in the child. This leads to the child's greater feeling of helplessness, which in turn reaffirms the adult's dominant role, contributing to the furtherance of interactional patterns involving violence. Jiménez and Ochoa (1997) note that many children in the Colombian context, and particularly very young children, experience vulnerability related to maltreatment, abandonment, larceny, drugs, displacement,⁶ and prostitution. These experiences take place in contexts of extreme poverty, violence, drug trafficking, and inequity.

Violence is present in the lives of many Colombian children. According to national statistics, held by the Colombian institute for forensic science, 50 children under the age of 4 years were murdered in 2010. In the same year, 2,796 cases of sexual abuse against children under 4 years of age were reported. These statistics show an increase when compared to the figures for previous years. The under-reporting (70%) of sexual offenses makes this situation seem less serious than it actually is (Instituto Nacional de Medicina Legal y Ciencias Forenses, FORENSIS, 2010, as cited in Comisión Intersectorial para la Primera Infancia, 2011). The most recent data in this regard cover up until 2018, the year in which the Colombian national institute of legal medicine and forensic sciences (Instituto Nacional de Medicina Legal y Ciencias Forenses, FORENSIS, 2018), refers to children under 4 years of age: 42 cases of violent death, 55 cases of homicide, 344 cases of children who suffered interpersonal violence, 1,787 cases of domestic violence, and 2,920 cases of children who attended legal medical examinations for alleged sexual offenses.

In this context of violent practices, which may be naturalized within families, the recruitment of children into armed groups has been a common occurrence, despite it being a war crime (Sierra, Lozano, Guerrero & Salamanca, 2009). However, the manner of children's participation in conflict differs: those who do not participate directly in combat are sometimes forced to be part of the conflict in activities such as "the installation of mines,⁷ serving as couriers or messengers, informing, spying, purchasing provisions, [and] loading supplies" (Grajales, 1999, p. 1). The implications of the conflict for the lives of children are diverse, and vary with their age. Even in the case of early childhood, the delicate nature of the children's movements and the small size of their hands and bodies are utilized for the installation of land mines.

The suffering of children in the context of war is exacerbated by their having to witness and participate in crimes of war committed against others:

6 Forced displacement: according to the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement internally displaced people (IDPs) are "persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border" (OCHA, 2004, para. 2, p. 1).

7 Mines or land mines: refers here to artefacts built for the war, which are hidden in the ground and kill, or mutilate the legs of, the victim.

There were really disturbing things, like having to watch my own companions being shot for mistakes, like stealing food. They formed a jury, a court-martial, and if the majority voted for execution, then they shot them; if the majority said: “give them another opportunity,” then they gave it to them (González, 2002, p. 164).

In addition, Alvarado, et al. (2012) stated that there is no indication that the conflict will end or that the armed groups in one form or another will cease to exist. These groups continue to expand their ranks, which represents a risk for children who have been part of an irregular group, or who face the consequences of conflict in the contexts where they live.

In this panorama, the effects of the armed conflict, being much more socially visible, tend to hide its causes. Thus, the historical, cultural, and social tradition of violence in Colombia continues, without its causes being totally addressed. This situation is complicated by economic inequality, which exacerbates and, in some cases, causes conflict and violence.

Economic vulnerability and the maintenance of violence

The macro context in which children live in Colombia is not only evident in social and cultural practices, but also in vulnerability resulting from conditions of poverty. Various agents such as armed groups, academia, and NGOs have pointed to structural problems such as inequitable distribution of wealth and social exclusion as causes of the Colombian armed conflict. These conditions have not changed in more than 50 years of conflict. According to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (1999, as cited by Coalico & CCJ, 2009), growth and economic development have had no effect in eliminating inequality. Today, Colombia is the fourth most inequitable country in the world (Banco Mundial, 2019).

The Colombian ombudsman states that structural issues such as poverty, unemployment, and inequality are factors that prevent children’s enjoyment of rights and become risk factors that increase the possibility of their becoming involved with illegal armed groups (Defensoría del Pueblo, 2002).

According to the Colombian national statistics department (DANE), up to September 2000, 59.8 per cent of children have unmet basic needs, i.e. live below the poverty line, and 9 per cent live in indigence, resulting in a deterioration in their living conditions and those of their families, a situation that tends to exacerbate further the human rights crisis from which children suffer (Defensoría del Pueblo, 2002, p. 22).

The Colombian national development plan for 2010-2014 refers to a context in which 56% of children aged between 0 and 5 years live in a situation of poverty. In effect, 2,875,634 Colombian children of this age group experience economic vulnerability. Some 24.6% of children up to four years of age in vulnerable conditions have full access

to the integrated care package,⁸ 41.4% have partial access, and 34% do not have access at all. Furthermore, 54.1% of five-year-old children have partial access to the comprehensive services, while 45.9% have no access (Plan Nacional de Desarrollo 2010 - 2014, as cited in Comisión Intersectorial para la Primera Infancia, 2011).

According to a Colombian national survey on nutrition, in addition to the conditions of poverty that critically affect Colombian children in their early childhood, the impact of economic vulnerability is expressed in public health statistics: one out of eight children experience chronic malnutrition, and the number of months of exclusive breast feeding fell from 2.2 in 2005 to 1.8 in 2010 (Encuesta Nacional de Situación Nutricional, ENSIN, 2010, as cited in, Comisión Intersectorial para la Primera Infancia, 2011). A Colombian national survey of demography and health lists other statistics for 2010: one out of five children has not completed the vaccination schedule; just one out of four children attends the check-ups for growth and development; the proportion of families in which women are heads of household increased from 30% in 2005 to 34% in 2010; one out of six children has problems of overweight or obesity; some 19% of adolescents are mothers; only half of the children born between 2005 and 2010 were planned; and one out of five pregnant women do not attend a health service institution (Encuesta Nacional de Demografía y Salud, ENDS, 2010, as cited in, Comisión Intersectorial para la Primera Infancia, 2011).

More recently, a commission of experts (Alvarado, 2020) reported that 10.448% of the Colombian population (total 49,834,240) are children under 5 years of age. The Colombian family welfare institute, ICBF (2018) reported that, in 2016, 11.7% of the population under the age of 5 lived in extreme poverty. The Colombian national planning department, DNP (2019) revealed that 50% of children aged 3, and 36% of those aged 4 do not participate in the educational system:

children who manage to access childcare or formal education programs do so mostly in community based family welfare homes (45%) and private sector nurseries or preschools (26%). Taking into account the importance of the quality of initial education in the development of a minor, it is worrying that the greater part of the educational offer at this level (72.3%) provides only care services, leaving aside pedagogical components and training for higher levels (DNP, 2019, p. 120).

In terms of health, the commission of experts (Alvarado, 2020) quotes the Inter-American Development Bank to show that 22% of children under 1 year old and 15% of children between 2 and 5 years have no affiliation to the health system; 36% of children under 1 year old, and 21% of those between 2 and 5 years old who are part of level 1 of the system for selecting the beneficiaries of social programs, SISBEN, are not covered by

8 This public policy seeks to provide an integrated package of services to all Colombian children, which includes access to healthcare, education, and recreation. The government aims to deliver these in an inter-sectoral manner, so all children receive systematic and complete attention and support.

the health system; and approximately 23% of children under 5 years old are not participating in the required growth and development controls.

Although useful in certain respects, these statistics demonstrate a perspective on child development in which the main focus is on health and biological outcomes. This manner of describing issues affecting Colombian children, being a linear and determinant perspective, does not account for relationships and does not encourage the emergence of alternatives to interactions and relational practices affected by violence.

Furthermore, according to the Bogotá district authority, even though violence and poverty have been named as two of the major social determinants in people's lives and interactions, maltreatment of children is not exclusively present in families that live in poverty, but in many families of different socio-economic strata⁹ in Colombia. However, there are some differences in the expression of maltreatment, with physical maltreatment being more common among poorer families and psychological maltreatment more frequent in wealthier families (Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá, 2004).

Additionally, in the context of armed conflict, poverty and violence are among the causes and results of forced displacement. Due to both the imminent risk of armed violence and adverse economic conditions, families are forced to leave their land. According to a Bogotá district entity for social integration (Secretaría Distrital de Integración Social, 2007), violence is present in big cities like Bogotá, which are typical destinations for displaced families. Subcultures from different regions are crowded together in one city, living in very small spaces, with different needs, interests, and customs. In such situations, violence may be seen as a way of resolving conflicts. Furthermore, families have had to leave their belongings and properties, as well as their work. In most cases, their work was agricultural production, and helped to feed the family. Thus, their arrival in the city, with few opportunities for earning money, leads to further impoverishment.

The role of the State and the maintenance of violence

In addition to the historical, social, cultural, and economic conditions in which children live, the role played by the Colombian State has also affected children in contexts of armed conflict. According to Niño (2012), violence in Colombia “is caused by issues such as injustice and inequality, both consequences of the social structure of a society” (p. 55). In practice, this means that violence is the result of scarce State presence in certain areas, exemplified by a lack of institutional programs that would tend to reduce inequality. Thus, due to the absence of the State, there exist conditions that maintain and perpetuate the violation of children's rights by actors such as institutions, the family, society, and armed groups (Niño, 2012). More recently, Lugo (2017) has argued that the

9 Socio-economic strata: in Colombia, public services utilize a classification system based on socio-economic status. Households are classified in strata, numbered from one to six, with one corresponding to the stratum with the lowest level of household income, and six the highest.

naturalization of violence in contexts of armed conflict has been due to both the presence of armed groups and the absence of the State.

During the presidency of Belisario Betancur (1982-1986) a commission of experts, set up to analyze violence, stated that most of the violence in the country was more related to quality of life than struggles for control of the State (Castellanos & Torres, 2008). Similarly, the Colombian State approach of military confrontation, although it has achieved some weakening of illegal armed groups, still presents serious problems as regards security and protection of human rights (Organización de las Naciones Unidas, 2010).

Continuing the policy of President Uribe's government, the present government's response to the Colombian armed conflict was based on strengthening the army, and a vision of armed confrontation as the only way to attack armed groups, particularly the guerrillas. This approach has contributed not only to undermining security and the protection of human rights, as mentioned by the UN (Organización de las Naciones Unidas, 2010), but also to fostering a paradoxical culture in which violence itself is accepted as being not only legitimate but the best way to reduce violence.

In addition to the lack of State presence, impunity, understood as the absence of State action in response to cases of violence or social injustice, constitutes another problem regarding the role of the State in maintaining violence. Although the government should be one of the main agents for the protection of children, it has not acted effectively in many critical violent situations. The Colombian armed conflict is characterized by impunity (Organización de las Naciones Unidas, 2010) and by difficulty in access to justice. All kinds of violations of citizens' human rights occur without legal action or punishment (Coalico & CCJ, 2009), and the "unclear relationship of high State officials and businessmen with paramilitaries" (Coalico & CCJ, 2009, p.17) is of concern.

In the case of Latin America, the effects of impunity on childhood should be taken into consideration (Ramírez-Ocampo, 2008). Impunity obstructs reconciliation, an act that requires maintenance of the historical memory of the violence that occurred, the security of non-repetition of the events, and forgiveness. In Colombia, all these factors, reconciliation, historical memory, non-repetition, and forgiveness, are needed to transform cultural practices based on violence. It is important that, on one hand, those who have committed violent acts do not repeat them, and on the other, those who have been victims do not act through a sense of vengeance, and do not relate to others through internalized violence (Beristain, 2000).

The inefficacy of government response adds to the failure of mechanisms of justice and reparation: consequently, people resolve conflicts through violent means (Beristain, 2000). In addition, as stated by Ramírez-Ocampo (2008), poverty makes the situation more complex, diminishing the exercise of citizenship and civil, political, and social rights.

In short, macro-social factors permeate the lives of Colombian children, and lead to violence being naturalized as part of everyday life. Over the years, the logic of extermination has been maintained, and the various armed actors have contributed to the radicalization of a complex conflict with diverse manifestations in different regions and times. At both social and cultural levels, the population has become accustomed to violence. This has resulted in: the treatment of children as objects of protection or violence; the foundation of family relationships on patriarchal domination with a frequent presence of violence in its many forms; and the ease of recruitment of children. Economically, poverty has led to violence, and this in turn has led to greater poverty and inequality, forced displacement representing a recurring cycle of both violence and poverty. Lastly, the State has contributed to the maintenance of violence, because some of its actions, and its lack of action resulting in impunity, have fostered the violation of children's rights. Furthermore, the State policy of using force¹⁰ favors the naturalization of violence among the population, particularly among children, in a paradoxical belief that violence is necessary to combat violence.

The Micro-Social Context of Violence

In addition to difficulties at the macro level, there are problems at the micro level, most of which involve families and other relational actors. Families face difficulties in raising and caring for very young children in Colombia: contributing to the maintenance of violence at the micro level. It should be noted that, when referring to child maltreatment or other forms of family violence, it is not possible to talk in lineal terms or to refer to independent causes. Violence is a complex, social, and cultural phenomenon with multiple, interdependent determinants and circular causalities.

Diverse actors contribute to the maintenance of violence associated with armed conflict, not only in family-related circumstances, but in other situations in the children's close relational framework, for example, in community and educational environments, or in territories where armed actors are present.

Family arrangements in the Colombian context

The macro context characteristics described above often force families to organize themselves in ways that can contribute to the maintenance of violence. Grandparents or older brothers and sisters often assume the responsibility of caring for children. In other cases, there are revised family arrangements in which teenage parents are obliged to live with their extended family due to lack of economic resources. Given this kind of family organization, in some instances, parents may lose their authority, because the rules of

10 As an example, President Uribe was elected on a mandate to use force. This mandate was put into practice with strong military action against guerrilla groups, which were perceived as the country's biggest problem by supporters of military action.

grandparents or extended family may be weaker than theirs. In these cases, violence may be seen as an option in relating, as a way for adults to keep power in the family. Very large families may live in small spaces, leading to conflicts among family members about such matters as decision-making or housing conditions. Furthermore, economic pressures may exacerbate conflicts.

The Bogotá district entity for social integration noted a transformation within the population, with conflictive and ambivalent processes becoming part of the lives of people, families, and societies (Secretaría Distrital de Integración Social, 2007). Even though more liberal legislation has been created, there has not been a corresponding transformation in gender and intergenerational relationships. The root of domestic violence is in the maintenance of hierarchical relationships based on a series of factors: intergenerational and gender differences, domination and submission, non-acceptance of others (children and women) in their differences, disrespect, and the silencing of women and children's voices. Males and adults continue to dominate relationships, making unilateral decisions about the lives of children, and possibly furthering violence and abuse.

Some statistics show that domestic violence against children and adolescents is exercised by various family members, especially adults who are significant figures in the types of family organizations mentioned above. In 2011, of the 14,211 cases reported by the Colombian national planning department (Departamento Nacional de Planeación, 2011b), 4,679 were committed by fathers, 4,179 by mothers, 1,209 by stepfathers, 1,014 by other civil or consanguineous relatives, 821 by uncles or aunts, 753 by brothers or sisters, 306 by grandparents or grandmothers, 283 by stepmothers, and 256 by cousins. Similarly, violence is directed towards greater numbers of girls than boys. Of the cases of domestic violence committed by family members in 2011, 7,450 were against girls, and 6,292 against boys.¹¹

According to the data provided by the Alliance for Colombian Children (Alianza por la Niñez Colombiana, 2020), in 2015, 18% of a total of 10,432 cases of domestic violence against children were against children under 4 years old; in 2016, 16% of 10,182 total cases were against this same age group; in 2017 16% of 10,385 cases; in 2018, 17% of 10,794; and in 2019, 15% of 8,466 total cases were against this population. In the period from January 2015 to December 2019, 14.3% of cases of domestic violence involving girls corresponded to the age range of 0 to 4 years, while among boys 18.22% of cases corresponded to that age range. With regard to childhood in general, in the period analyzed, the father is the main aggressor (31.31%), followed by the mother (19.16%), the stepfather (9.11%), other civil or blood relatives (5.82%), the uncle or aunt (5.66%), caregiver (5.26%), brother or sister (5.12%), grandfather or grandmother

11 It is important to note that these statistics are an underestimate, because many cases are never reported.

(3.13%), stepmother (1.95%), cousin (1.78%), brother-in-law or sister-in-law (1.54%), and father-in-law or mother-in-law (1.17%).

The naturalization of violence within the family

In addition to violence caused by gender and intergenerational domination as described above, armed conflict in Colombia has naturalized violence, and thus internalized it in families. This manifests itself in some cases as child maltreatment. The Bogotá district secretariat for social integration states that child vulnerability has worsened. Cases of child maltreatment, family violence, and conflict increased from 52,714 in 2004 to 55,513 in 2005. Additionally, continuous challenges faced by the people of Bogotá, such as displacement, poverty, and the naturalization of violence affect the response of families in caregiving and their ability to protect and assist family members (5% of the population of Bogotá were considered to be permanently limited by such challenges in 2005) (Secretaría Distrital de Integración Social, 2007). In 2019, 198 cases of domestic violence against girls under 4 years of age and 187 cases against boys of that age were reported in Bogotá. With respect to children in general in Colombia, from January 2015 to December 2019, 27.21% of cases of family violence occurred during situations of displacement from one place to another, and 3.28 % during armed confrontations (Alianza por la Niñez Colombiana, 2020). The study undertaken by Salazar (1992, as cited in Alvarado et al., 2012) stated that:

in the early nineties, there were already people displaced from their land. When these people arrived in the cities, they were exposed to a hostile environment and to a series of conditions that affected their intra-family relationships, raising the risk for children (Alvarado et al., 2012, p. 38).

Local authorities often describe the situation of children in their early childhood in terms of multiple forms of violence, maltreatment being common among these interactions. Durán, Acero, and Torrado (2003) suggest that child maltreatment consists of any action by an adult that negatively interferes with the physical, mental, and emotional development of a child. Physical, emotional, psychological, and institutional maltreatment are included in this definition, as well as abuse, sexual exploitation, and negligence. As many family interactions within our present context fall within this description, there is a need to construct different possibilities for interaction.

The maltreatment of young children has been present in Colombia in different social contexts and historical periods. In general, families had been traditionally conceived of as private interactional environments. This is one of the reasons why maltreatment and other forms of violence are treated as family issues and, in some cases, why they are not understood as societal problems. However, according to Durán et al. (2003) maltreatment must be addressed from the public sphere, in order to detect it, prevent it, and attend to its manifestations. Indeed, in recent times maltreatment has been made visible as a problem. As the family is now considered a public environment, today

some public entities have the right to intervene in cases of maltreatment and other forms of family violence.

Repercussions of armed violence in the family and community

In the micro context, maltreatment and violence within the family are exacerbated by the imminent presence of armed violence in and around family and community environments, where various violent practices become naturalized. Several studies (Ceballos & Bello, 2001; Defensoría del Pueblo, 2002; Lugo, 2017; Niño, 2012; Villanueva O'Driscoll, 2013) have asserted that children's rights to protection are violated not only by their displacement, the effects of land mines, and their direct involvement in the conflict as a member of an armed group. There are other modes of participation in the conflict, such as those related to the naturalization and internalization of the conflict in children's lives and relationships, within the community and family. Adverse effects of violence present among families can be one of the reasons why children join the ranks of armed groups.

Ceballos and Bello (2001) suggest that, for children, living with violence on a daily basis in family and community settings, with the presence of armed actors in these contexts, leads to violence becoming a natural part of reality or a "must":

In violence as a continuous experience and as a sudden event, there is an adult who represses, punishes, harasses, and threatens: an adult other than parents and relatives who cannot, as they do, "justify these actions as being for [the children's] own good." Such adult strangers threaten to, or actually do, deprive them of the source of love, protection, and stability (Ceballos & Bello, 2001, p. 49).

Ceballos and Bello (2001) emphasize the strong connection between domestic abuse and armed conflict. They state that physical and psychological maltreatment are among the main causes in the family sphere for children entering an armed group:

Although thousands of children suffer from this same situation without directly becoming part of the conflict, the difference in areas where there is a presence of armed actors is that children visualize [in the armed groups] a way out, however false, from their situation of maltreatment (p. 27).

Domestic violence is a factor that affects the protection of children who have either directly experienced armed conflict or whose parents or other socializing agents have participated in it. The Defensoría del Pueblo (2006) found that rights to protection from violence and to the free development of personality had been violated in the families of many demobilized children and young people. A third of them had been maltreated, two-thirds were hit at least once in their childhood, and a quarter had to live with frequent beatings. Violence in the home was illustrated by Niño (2012), who states that, in the municipality of Tibú (2,696 km²) in the north of Colombia, and other contexts in which armed conflict is present, family relationships are marked by distrust, emotional distance, violence, and a lack of support, communication, and company. In these

contexts, girls in early childhood are the most negatively affected by domestic violence, on being placed at the lowest level in family hierarchies, and thus in a greater state of vulnerability.

In addition, violence within the family may motivate the involvement of children in the actions of armed groups by leading them to see manifestations of violence in scenarios outside the family, such as those of the armed conflict, as natural. Violence within the family is one reason why children and young people take to the streets, where there is a risk of becoming involved in small-scale drug trafficking networks, armed confrontations, and prostitution (Niño, 2012).

In summary, the rights of children are violated indirectly through the naturalization of violence in their everyday lives and in their principal relations such as those at home. These relations may be based on distance, distrust, and a lack of support, communication, and companionship. Although the Colombian Ministry of Defense has initiated some actions for the comprehensive protection of children and their socializing agents, as will be seen in the next chapter, these have not been enough to guarantee protection.

The contribution of relational norms in micro contexts to the maintenance of violence

In addition to the naturalized violence present within families in Colombia, conflict creates specific patterns of relating between various actors in their relationships in micro contexts. The presence of armed groups imposes certain rules and restrictions on territories, and defines ways of being and living. These rules and restrictions transform everyday lifestyles and rights. Fear, due to the presence of armed actors has been, and continues to be, part of life (Niño, 2012; Coalico & CCJ, 2009).

The various expressions of conflict, including armed actions, affect the population not only physically but also in their everyday experience, and limit their effective reaction to emergencies. Both the rules set by the armed groups and fear of these groups restrict mobility (Niño, 2012). This kind of situation happened in the Gulf of Morrosquillo when drug traffickers purchased a significant amount of land there. A large part of Colombia's narcotics traffic occurs in this area, which forms part of the region of Montes de María, in the departments of Sucre and Bolívar. The land purchase was the prelude to the construction of condominiums, and runways used for drug trafficking. The drug traffickers maintain that these activities stimulate the economy of the region through the purchase of construction materials, etc., and that the population benefits through offers of payment for land and donations of television sets or other items of value for schools (Observatorio de Territorios Étnicos, 2010). Confinement,¹² the restriction of the

12 Confinement is understood to be “a situation in which rights and freedoms are violated, involving the restriction of movement as well as access to items needed for survival—a situation to which the civilian population is subjected as a consequence of military, economic, political, cultural,

movement of groups of people, is another of the limitations imposed by armed groups on populations and the relationships within them. This phenomenon occurred in San Onofre (Sucre), where mobility restrictions were imposed on the population by means of a curfew during night hours. The curfew was intended to clear the way for drug trafficking. Night school was canceled; dance, music, and art groups could not continue; and animal husbandry was abolished (Observatorio de Territorios Étnicos, 2010).

Interactions with armed actors in subjects' close relational circles, and the breach of international law

In the context of the armed conflict in Colombia, all armed actors, including illegal groups such as guerrillas and paramilitaries, as well as the Colombian security forces, consistently violate international humanitarian law, affecting the civilian population (Coalico & CCJ, 2009). An example of this kind of situation is found in the areas of La Gabarra, Las Vegas, and Vetas in the north of Colombia, where there is a historical presence of the FARC and ELN guerrilla groups, and the Colombian Army and Police. According to Niño (2012), and based on information from the Colombian ombudsman's early warning system, in these zones there are killings of adolescents (both female and male), a high risk of recruitment of minors of 14 to 17 years, and attacks on and harassment of the security forces. The situation is similar in other municipalities of the region. In the municipal center of Tibú there is a high risk of recruitment of adolescents and young people by paramilitary groups. On the road between La Gabarra, Tibú, and Cúcuta, constant restrictions on mobility, threats, and extortion are carried out by paramilitary groups. In the region of Tres Bocas, there are guerrilla attacks on the army with unconventional explosive devices. In zones where paramilitary groups are present, bridges are blown up, and the risk of recruitment of young people and adolescents causes displacement (Niño, 2012).

In the region of Norte de Santander, paramilitary groups that have re-formed after the recent demobilization process hire teenagers and contract gangs of common criminals, while guerrillas maintain their groups by indoctrinating and recruiting children and adolescents. In the city of Cúcuta, illegal armed groups are most active in neighborhoods where the displaced population has settled, resulting in both limitations on the rights of this population and intra-urban displacement (Niño, 2012).

With the arrival of paramilitaries in San Onofre, civilians were displaced and their expressions, opinions, and participation were prohibited (Observatorio de Territorios Étnicos, 2010). Similarly, Ila, Martínez, Arias, Núñez, and Caicedo (2009) in their study of the dynamics of the armed conflict in the regions of Arauca, Putumayo, and Magdalena Medio, reported constant military actions and violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. These authors state that the presence in Putumayo of

social or environmental practices, explicit or implicit, carried out by legal or illegal armed groups in the context of the armed conflict [9]" (Ordóñez, 2009).

military forces has resulted in forced displacement, as military bases are located in residential, recreational, and educational areas. Also, in this area, the civilian population has been stigmatized, as small-farmers growing coca and food crops (culturally established customs) are dubbed guerrillas or collaborators of the FARC.

According to a registry of victims (Registro Único de Víctimas, Unidad para la Atención y Reparación Integral a las Víctimas, 2020), up until February 29, 2020, 335,999 children from 0 to 5 years of age have been victims of the armed conflict, and 8,194 children and adolescents have been linked to activities related to armed groups. According to Coalico (2019), 126 occurrences of armed conflict caused direct impacts on children and young people between January and July of 2019.

As Save the Children (2018) has revealed, after reviewing data up until September 1, 2018 from the official registry of victims (Registro Único de Víctimas, Unidad para la Atención y Reparación Integral a las Víctimas, 2018), 18% of children and adolescents affected directly or indirectly by the armed conflict are children in early childhood. In particular, Save the Children, citing data from a Colombian national information network (Red Nacional de Información, 2018), points out that by far the most common effect experienced by children under 5 years of age is forced displacement, occurring in 96.33% of the cases of affected children. There are low percentages of other effects, such as threats (2.39%), homicide (0.57%), others (0.39%), terrorist acts, attacks, combat, and harassment (0.11%), forced disappearance (0.11%), crimes against freedom and sexual integrity (0.04%), and other victimizing acts with an even lower percentage. For its part, the Colombian national institute for legal medicine and forensic sciences (Instituto Nacional de Medicina Legal y Ciencias Forenses, FORENSIS, 2018) revealed that in 2018 there were 64 boys and girls under the age of 4 missing.

Because displacement is the victimizing fact that most affects early childhood, it should be noted that 126 occurrences of multiple and mass displacement have affected 38,490 people in Colombia between 1st January and 31st August 2018 (Codhes, 2018). The armed conflict has brought about 8,970,712 victimizing acts up to February 22, 2020, of which 7,992,981 have involved forced displacement (Unidad para la Atención y Reparación Integral a las Víctimas, 2020).

Interactions in the educational environment

The context of armed conflict affects children's educational environments in various ways, and favors the maintenance of interactions marked by violence, resulting in inappropriate conditions in schools. Armed actors permeate the everyday spaces in which children and their socializing agents participate, such as early childhood centers and schools. Alvarado et al. (2012) report the inadequate training of teachers, coupled with a lack of State support, as causing difficulties in learning environments in areas of armed conflict. The curricula for training teachers in these areas are disconnected from the

specific needs of the context of the Colombian armed conflict, and the curricula of the educational institutions they work in are not related to the context of war.

There are some attempts at government level to respond to the effects of armed conflict on children. The Colombian ministry for education cites a project carried out with families who have been affected by the war in Colombia (Tejiendo vínculos desde la primera infancia, con el enfoque de resiliencia familiar). This project seeks to strengthen recovery capabilities, family ties, and family resilience for children in early childhood, through art. By 2010, 12,130 families and 830 teachers and public servants had been involved in the project (Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 2010).

Similarly, the Colombian ministry for education states that:

Teachers in areas affected by the conflict are being trained from the perspective of psychosocial care. They will carry out processes that contribute to the socio-affective recovery of displaced children and young people, and their reintegration in education through a pedagogical proposal called School and Displacement. Additionally, schools that teach forgiveness and reconciliation, through the ESPERE program, will continue in municipalities with large populations of displaced persons and demobilized children. This program seeks to promote among young people the theory and practice of forgiveness and reconciliation, in order to contribute to building a culture of coexistence and peace (Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 2008, p. 17).

Although some programs have been carried out in response to the context of war, Alvarado, et al. (2012) warn that teachers who work in these areas do so because they are obliged to. This is due to economic conditions, and the teachers' need to rise through the teaching ranks, and not by choice, or through an interest in being social leaders who contribute to rejecting violence as a norm.

Educators are caught in the crossfire between guerrillas, paramilitaries, and the army, each of which attempt to conquer territories and their populations. This leads to the inhabitants of these communities becoming military targets because of the suspicions they arouse in one or another of the armed actors. Within this logic, teachers also fall into the category of enemies [of the armed groups] (Alvarado, et al., 2012, p. 200).

In the context of armed conflict, teachers may be unkind to children. They may fail to create strategies with families to discourage children from abandoning school to join armed groups. Interactions between teachers and children may be highly hierarchical and mediated by fear, influenced by the kinds of relations within the armed groups. There are great uncertainties, and the lives of both teachers and students are in danger (Alvarado, et al., 2012). Particular types of interactions based on violence become established.

Also, according to Alvarado et al. (2012) legal and illegal armed actors have turned educational environments into military targets, so that the infrastructure of these

institutions is impaired and fear is engendered. Similarly, resources for libraries and teaching aids that promote peace-building and social justice are limited, and the decoration of the spaces neither responds to the context nor contributes to a rejection of violence. These authors suggest further that armed actors set land mines around educational institutions to instill terror.

The following narrative deals with a way in which educational environments are permeated by armed actors:

We organized a meeting at the school and people [armed actors] appeared. Presently, we had fifteen to thirty people [attending the meeting]. I gave the welcome speech and there were plenty of other discourses. We talked a lot about the *paracos* (colloquial: paramilitaries) because people were afraid of them. We told the people to tell us if a stranger came, to keep us informed (Brett, 2003, p. 69).

As another illustration of the interventions of armed actors in schools, Sierra et al. cite the words of some teachers who were threatened because they tried to discourage children from joining guerrilla groups:

The indigenous teachers told us that they had a big fight with the kids who wanted to join the guerrillas. “We tried to deter them”, they said, “but the guerrilla commander came to the school and threatened us The children went willingly, because they offered two hundred thousand pesos a month. When they came back we said, ‘Did they pay you the two hundred thousand pesos?’ And they said, ‘No’. So, I believe that [this concept of] ‘voluntary’ does not exist” (Sierra et al., 2009, p. 50).

The details described here contribute to violence becoming part of everyday life. In this process, the presence of armed groups and military actions become accepted as natural. Furthermore, in the places in which they are re-settled, a different kind of violence awaits children who have been members of armed groups or displaced: Both other students and teachers discriminate against them. In many cases, such discrimination discourages them from attending school, as shown in the following narrative: “At first, the kids did not want to go to school. It hurt them being called ‘displaced *saladeros*,’¹³ and they were afraid of the teachers” (Lozano, 2005, p. 91).

Thus, the educational environments, which could be fundamental spaces where violence is prevented and not accepted as normal, become places in which it is maintained. Many children, as evidenced in the comments below, avoid them:

The boys, El Mono, Yeisson, Armando, Joseph, Chayán, and Jairo cannot read or write. All of them have an excuse not to go to school: “I don’t like it.” “If my

13 *Desplazado Saladero*: an insult referring to the fact that the people are displaced, and to a place of origin. *Saladeros* are people from the village of El Salado, located in the Montes de María region. This population has been tragically affected by the armed conflict, in particular by the biggest massacre carried out by paramilitaries, in which over a 100 people died and many were tortured in February of 2000.

mom goes out to a farm and something happens to her, you're left alone in La Gabarra and nobody will tell you." "The teachers are angry, and they hit you." "Why study if what I want is money?" Yet all of them know about drinking bouts and gambling at the billiard hall (Lozano, 2005, p 31).

Instead of attending educational institutions, as mentioned in Alvarado et al. (2012), many children prefer to work in brick kilns and mines, or as coca pickers. This last occupation brings them even closer to war, because the coca trade is managed by illegal armed groups, and working with coca leads them to see, first this activity, and then other actions of the armed groups, as normal.

In summary, the naturalization of violence in contexts of armed conflict may be fostered through conditions present in the macro context and also through relations in micro contexts that may be strongly marked by violence. Family organization, changing family arrangements, teenage pregnancy, and overcrowding promote violence. Domestic abuse must be addressed not only in the private, but in the public sphere. Similarly, armed conflict leads to children accepting the presence of armed groups and illicit activities as natural in the community environment. Children participate in interactions with armed actors. This engenders violence and breaches international humanitarian law. All actors violate norms, such as those relating to the recruitment of young people, displacement, and military actions. Finally, educational environments, which could be crucial for building peace, also favor the maintenance of interactions marked by violence. Important factors in this case are the inadequate training and low motivation of teachers, the lack of connection between the topics studied and the local context, the presence of armed actors, educational settings damaged by the war, and hierarchical relations based on fear and exclusion.

Research on Children in the Context of Armed Conflict

The roots, maintenance, and naturalization of violence transcend a focus of micro or macro contexts, because violent practices in both contexts have permeated the lives of children in territories where armed conflict is present. Research and academic accounts on the condition of children in the context of armed conflict have undergone a change of approach in the last two decades, partly due to transformations in economic, political, and legal spheres. Although, from the early nineties, research focused on macrostructural aspects, later in that decade the emphasis shifted to children as individuals. Thus, at the beginning of the nineties, studies emphasized the structural and political nature of violence. Before that decade, research had focused on the rights outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children (Universidad Nacional. Observatorio Sobre Infancia, 2002). A study carried out by an Andean committee of lawyers (Comisión Andina de Juristas, 1995, as cited in Universidad Nacional. Observatorio Sobre Infancia, 2002) stated that the guarantee of children's rights is violated through various acts: the

assassination of children by illegal groups; actions committed by government agents against children's rights, including murder and torture; and the practice of "social cleansing,"¹⁴ carried out by private groups in complicity with the government.

Research conducted towards the end of the 1990s often focused on the impact of armed conflict on children, and perceived them as active agents, rather than passive recipients, as they had been seen before the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Universidad Nacional. Observatorio Sobre Infancia, 2002). As an example, Bello and Ruiz (2002) undertook a study on armed conflict, children, and young people. This study had a psycho-social perspective, in which the authors analyzed the effects of experiences of violence on children's psycho-social development, as well as the effects of their socialization in the context of armed conflict. These authors identify consequences such as: "the violation of personal and collective identity, and the footprint that war leaves in the imaginaries and meanings that are constructed during adolescence" (Bello & Ruiz 2002, as cited in Alvarado et al., 2012, p. 39). Bello and Ruiz (2002) state that, through children's participation in war, there are changes in their relationship with death, and in interpersonal, sexual, and friend relationships. According to these authors, fear of death is no longer dominant, and death starts to become part of children's daily lives; interpersonal relationships become based more on strongly hierarchical interactions; and sexual or friendly relations that were previously part of intimacy begin to be governed by those who are in the dominant position in power relations.

According to another study, the consequences of armed conflict, such as the violation of children's identities and the assignment of new meaning to their imaginaries, can be found in their narratives:

Signs of sadness were appearing on the faces of the two girls. "If God wanted this to happen, it was for a reason," said Monica "Time passes and it is difficult to assimilate, it looks like this is for a lifetime." In the day it is not such a torment for her, but at night, when she takes off the prosthesis and leaves it in the corner of the room, she feels in her chest "a little thing" and it makes her think: "Why are we children the victims of war?" (Lozano, 2005, p. 69).

Other studies carried out after 2000 have focused on the participation of children in armed conflict. One of these, titled *Guerreros sin Sombra* [Warriors Without a Shadow] (Álvarez-Correa & Aguirre, 2002), focused on the risk factors that lead to the entry of children into irregular armed groups. This research involved a psychological and sociological characterization of children and young people in armed groups. The characterization included a wide statistical description and a compilation of the narratives of children who have participated in an armed group. In this study, Álvarez-Correa and Aguirre (2002) found that, in the armed groups, routines, training, functions, and

14 Social cleansing: elimination of what some persons consider as "undesirable" elements in society. In Colombia, there have been killings or "disappearances" of prostitutes, street children, criminals, homosexuals, and homeless people.

management of sexuality are differentiated according to the place, the organizational scheme, and the group. However, despite some differences, there are many similarities in the daily life of the various armed groups for children and young people. These are manifest in the way they feel and plan their lives, an interest in belonging to either the guerrillas or the paramilitaries being a constant factor.

Likewise, in this study it was found that the educational level of the children involved in armed groups is low. In the year 2000, on average these children left school after finishing sixth grade.¹⁵ In general, the armed groups take no initiatives for children's education. Training in these groups is geared towards the ideals of the group, regulations, rules, indoctrination against other armed groups, weapons handling, and skills such as scaling walls and crossing rivers, among other activities necessary for war (Alvarez-Correa & Aguirre, 2002).

Research undertaken by Human Rights Watch (2003) analyzes aspects in the lives of child combatants in Colombia, such as their life in the ranks, recreation, recruitment, contact with families, training, religion, and participation in mass executions. This study shows the deterioration of children's living conditions, and an increase in the use of children in combat. Children are useful inasmuch as they do not calculate risks so much, eat less, and are inclined to obey. Moreover, the study finds that the use of children in conflict is advantageous to armed groups, because of their cheap labor, rapid adaptation, and respect for authority, as mentioned above.

The report mentions that the recruitment of children to the ranks of armed groups is a relatively new phenomenon. Around 1950, children participated in the conflict tangentially, accompanying families who had escaped from attacks, or living in the camps of an armed group. However, only recently have children participated directly in the fighting. There were large recruitment campaigns in the 1990s by both guerrillas and paramilitaries (Human Rights Watch, 2003). According to Human Rights Watch (2003) the entry of children into armed groups is due partly to worsening living conditions. Many child soldiers abandoned studies in the fifth grade. Furthermore, many civilian families sympathize with, or live near the base of, one or another of the armed groups. These families may be victims of intimidation and attacks by other armed groups, so it is common for children to seek refuge with the armed group with which their family sympathizes or with the group located closer to their home.

The majority of children who enter the armed groups come from surroundings of great poverty and have few opportunities for education and social progress. Many of them are abandoned by their parents, are in the care of other family members, or have not received affection in their families. A large number of these children have been victims of domestic violence or sexual abuse within their families. Many children have worked before joining armed groups, some of them in activities related to the armed groups and drug processing (Human Rights Watch, 2003).

15 Sixth grade students would be approximately 12 years old.

Lozano (2005) compiled the narratives of children who have participated in armed groups or experienced situations of armed conflict in different regions of the country and in diverse conditions, describing their experiences of recruitment, massacres, and desertion. This author states that: “The marks left by the conflict on children are very deep. But, like many of the realities in Colombia, it is an invisible problem about which we only know figures” (Lozano, 2005, p. 12). In her study, Lozano (2005) identified that children living in the context of armed conflict have no projection of the future, seeing death as imminent. From the time they are very small, under six years of age, they begin to carry out activities related to armed groups or drugs, or at least are in contact with these activities through accompanying their parents in work related to drug production. By having contact, as they grow, with armed groups and their activities, children see entry into these groups as the only possible way forward. Furthermore, very young children have been exposed to extremely violent situations, such as massacres.

Several of the children whose narratives were collected by Lozano (2005) disagree with many of the actions they have to carry out within the armed groups, feeling that often they are sent to fight in the front line as a means of protection for the rest of the group. However, Lozano mentions that in most cases it is not possible for them to express their disagreement. Some children say that they enjoy combat and feel recognized by their peers when they are good with weapons. Others mention that, for them, war is like a game, and are not really aware of the implications of their participation in the armed conflict.

Another study reviewed documentary films as sources. The authors of this study trace the impact that children’s war games have on their lives, among children who may or not be directly involved in the conflict (Chávez & Romero, 2008). These authors base their analysis on certain issues: “the reasons why minors join an armed group, whether guerrilla or paramilitary; the reasons why they remain in the armed group; the psycho-social effects of their permanence in the group; and the impacts caused when leaving the armed group” (Chávez & Romero, 2008, p.3). It is worth noting that, although, for children, the experience of recruitment and participation in armed conflict might result in various harmful psycho-social and relational effects, these children also acquire potential strengths in their relationships, and are able, if actions are carried out with this objective, to visualize options for the future other than war. Alvarado et al. (2012) suggest that solidarity is among the children’s main relational strengths, and that fostering the possibility of their imagining futures different from war is an important first step towards changing violent practices. This suggests a transformation in the concept of children in armed conflict among academics. Such studies describe children not as victims but as active agents.

The experience of war does not erase the tenderness, the curiosity, the wishes, and the dreams that they now have for a new life. Solidarity is expressed in a very strong manner among those who have managed to construct relationships

mediated by affection: powerful links maintained in the midst of combat, in desertion, and now in their new life (Bello & Ruiz, 2002, p. 35-36).

Though, at times, these qualities may not be visible, solidarity and kindness towards others are present among the narratives of children in the context of war: “in combat, you can move anywhere. Once we jumped down the mountain and I had to go and back up the girls, while my friend had to go and back up the boys” (*Child Soldier* in González, 2002, p. 83).

Children placed in the context of war may participate in multiple forms of violence, and be labeled as both victims and perpetrators. They are recruited in their early years, and may be told they have the option to join an armed group or not. However, in the majority of cases, they do not have any choice other than to take part in a formal or informal armed group, as there are no economic, social, or political alternatives. The children may be socially constructed on a basis that includes violation of their rights. Their games begin to be those of war, and, from a very young age, their body appears bigger because they are holding a rifle. Many children fail to consider their future, because death is a normal part of their everyday life, and thus thinking about the future has no meaning for them. Children are also used as sexual objects; they are forced to live on the streets begging for food; and they are encouraged to use drugs and to get involved in delinquency. Thus, they participate in interactions based on multiple forms of brutality.

In summary, studies have shown that the involvement of children in armed conflict is related to both macro-social and relational factors. In macro terms, factors such as violence, poverty, and lack of access to education have promoted the naturalization of war as part of a perceived option for progress in the face of the difficult conditions experienced. Similarly, in relational terms, in many of these cases families have not provided the bonds of affection and protection for children. These children, having lived close to armed groups, see participation in them as being desirable. This may be due to their experience, knowledge of, and previous relation with the group. However, upon entering the armed groups, some children feel opposed to the actions they have to carry out, but have to silence their dissent as a means of protection. Similarly, although in many cases it is said that the entry and permanence of children in armed groups is voluntary, in most cases it is a route of escape from a lack of opportunities for the future and the terrible situation of poverty otherwise experienced. This is added to the interest on the part of the armed group to obtain, through the children, cheap labor, and obedient and fearless warriors.

Ethical and Political Responsibility of the Researcher

Given the context of violence described above, with both macro and micro circumstances maintaining violent practices and interactions, I believe the social sciences in Colombia have an important responsibility to participate in transformation. In Latin America, Martin-Baró (1998) developed the concept of raising awareness through the

perspective of liberation psychology. This approach implies that a combination of psychological, social, and political factors can alter personal awareness. This author emphasized that social transformation is possible if certain factors are present such as a popular or grassroots organization, awareness about the implications of events and social conditions on people's lives, and the recovery of historical memory. As emphasized by Martin-Baró (1998), problems such as violence have lain outside of the interests of traditional psychology, which has been principally oriented to individuals, their personal liberation, and their achievement of personal goals. However, psychology has forgotten the relevance of the relationship between individual liberation and social liberation. Thus, in a context of inequality, a discipline such as psychology, and in a wider manner, the social sciences, must contribute to correcting this imbalance and bringing about a society based on social justice. Sánchez (2005) argues that the commitment that psychology has to human rights does not solely imply an ethical and political responsibility, but also a recognition of the complex nature of human beings. In this respect, psychology must recognize the dignity of human life, and permit subjects and their communities access to optimum conditions in their cultural and historical development (Sánchez, 2005).

This complex nature of human beings implies that researchers in this field should be aware of historical tradition, social and cultural practices, and economic and political circumstances, such as those present in the Colombian context. They should also be aware of the possibility of introducing changes, both in scientific methods, and in orienting research towards creating ideas that can foster relational transformation in children's interactions.

In a Latin-American setting, these reflections cannot ignore the issue of oppression that emerges in political processes, and its influence on people's lives and relationships. The social sciences in Latin America should recognize the diverse forms of oppression that have historically dominated the continent. In the words of Santos (2009), oppression occurs in "... exploitation, patriarchy, commodity fetishism, and unequal differences of identity, resulting in sexism, racism, ethnic cleansing, and domination, which recur as asymmetries of power between political subjects who in theory are equal in power but in practice are not" (p. 2). In the context of early childhood, the questions put forward for research in the social sciences in Latin America should involve an orientation towards making known the effects of both the macro and micro contexts on these children, and identifying new categories of analysis. As Santos (2009) mentions, changes with regard to oppression and the issues mentioned above have been brought about by some Latin-American critics, who express themselves in an anti-establishment manner that fosters social transformation. However, "new acts of resistance and struggles are at the moment local, not well developed, embryonic" (Santos, 2009, p. 2).

In Summary

In short, this chapter shows how violence associated with armed conflict is nurtured by both macro circumstances and micro relations. Thus, violence cannot be thought of as solely a structural outcome, or solely the result of everyday social interaction. Macro elements that form the basis of violence, such as historical, cultural, social, economic, and political aspects are significant, yet so are micro processes such as family organization, arrangements, and relationships; interactions in the educational environment; and relations with armed groups. Some of the studies presented in the chapter were oriented towards understanding the structural causes of violence; others towards understanding the effects of violence on children; and yet others include both structural and relational components. This variety of approaches shows a need to understand the complexity of the causes and the consequences of conflict-related violence from both macro and micro viewpoints.

Finally, in this chapter, given the context of armed conflict, I have highlighted the need to undertake research in social sciences that contributes to making known and transforming the reality described, and provides relevant knowledge of the Colombian and Latin American context. Taking this context into account, the following chapter presents a critical view of the public policies created to address the issue of violence in the context of armed conflict. This review will contrast some policy achievements with the children's reality, which, despite these institutional accomplishments, continues to be a public problem. Children are still taking part in the war as victims or perpetrators, or participating indirectly as members of communities in close contact with the armed conflict. This situation calls for new actions from social researchers in Colombia. I shall return to this issue in the introduction to my own study in Chapter 7, Part II.

Chapter 3

Laws and Policies for Protection and the Prevention of Violence

In response to the previously described macro and micro situations of children and their families in the context of armed conflict, regulations and laws have been created both globally and in Colombia. These have been primarily designed to protect children in the face of the negative effects of the armed conflict, and, in some cases, to prevent the naturalization of violence in the environments in which they participate. In the present chapter, I describe the laws and policies of interest here, beginning with an outline of ratified international agreements, followed by a review of the Colombian policies that cover this population, and which emphasize their protection from violence. The subsequent section describes some of the Colombian government's national strategies for protecting those children. Then follows a discussion of some of the previous research on measures designed for the protection of children in situations of armed conflict. Lastly, I show the ways in which civil action has complemented the Colombian government measures, in a review of selected cases. In chapter 5, I contribute a critical look at these laws and policies with regard to the population under study, after demonstrating the breach between what, according to policy, ought to be, and what actually happens in practice.

Below, and with regard to the focus on protection of children mentioned above, I review the international agreements adopted by the Colombian government.

International Agreements for the Protection of Children

As mentioned in the previous chapter, multiple forms of violence have become naturalized in the contexts in which many young Colombian children live, both through macro circumstances (historical, social, cultural, economic, and political) and micro circumstances (relationships and conversations). In order to reduce the impact of the effects of armed conflict on children, the Colombian government has ratified international agreements and established laws for their protection. Some of the major international agreements dealing with protection are presented and commented on in this section. Among others, three international agreements are referred to: Additional Protocol II of the Geneva Conventions, which regulates the situation of victims of internal armed conflict; the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which covers such rights generally and emphasizes the protection of child victims of armed conflict and their physical, psychological, and social recovery; and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which deals with the participation of children in armed conflict, sets minimum ages for their involvement, and regulates their demobilization from armed groups and reintegration.

Additional Protocol II of the Geneva Conventions

The 1977 Additional Protocol II of the Geneva Conventions, relating to victims of non-international armed conflicts, was created as an extension of the Geneva Conventions of August 12, 1949, and, as such, is part of International Humanitarian Law (UN, 1977). Initially, the Geneva Conventions were drafted principally with regard to international conflicts.

Given that States are the only subjects of international law, it is difficult to implement agreements or treaties in conflicts such as the Colombian one, in which irregular groups are the counterpart (Girón, 2006). The definition of armed conflicts that are not of an international character is given in Protocol II:

[They are those that] take place in the territory of a High Contracting Party between its armed forces and dissident armed forces or other organized armed groups which, under responsible command, exercise such control over a part of its territory as to enable them to carry out sustained and concerted military operations and to implement this protocol (UN, 1977, Protocol II, part 1, art. 1, para.1).

Colombia's ratification of the Protocol implies neither the recognition of the legal status nor acceptance of the belligerent character of the irregular forces, and thus does not facilitate implementation of the concept of protection that the Protocol includes in Article 4 in reference to children:

Children shall be provided with the care and aid they require, and in particular:

(a) they shall receive an education, including religious and moral education, in keeping with the wishes of their parents, or in the absence of parents, of those responsible for their care;

(b) all appropriate steps shall be taken to facilitate the reunion of families temporarily separated;

(c) children who have not attained the age of fifteen years shall neither be recruited in the armed forces or groups nor allowed to take part in hostilities;

(d) the special protection provided by this Article to children who have not attained the age of fifteen years shall remain applicable to them if they take a direct part in hostilities despite the provisions of subparagraph (c) and are captured;

(e) measures shall be taken, if necessary, and whenever possible with the consent of their parents or persons who by law or custom are primarily responsible for their care, to remove children temporarily from the area in which hostilities are taking place to a safer area within the country and ensure that they are accompanied by persons responsible for their safety and well-being (UN Protocol II, 1977, part II, art. 4, para. 3).

The scope of the Protocol provides for the establishment of humanitarian assistance to child victims of the internal armed conflict. However, its perspective of protection offers no elements for the prevention of violence or of the violation of children's rights, with the exception of the prohibition on recruitment of children under 15, and an exploration of the options for removing children from the territory in which hostilities take place. Prohibiting their involvement and moving them to another place can in some cases prevent their participation. Nevertheless, the problem of violence associated with armed conflict continues to be part of the daily lives of these children, and actions that promote prevention of violence at its roots and the protection of their rights have not been established.

In addition to Protocol II, the ratification in Colombia of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) adds to the focus on protection, with specific regard to the points highlighted below.

Convention on the Rights of the Child

The protection of children in the context of armed conflict was also established by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 20 November 1989. The Convention consists of 54 articles, covering matters ranging from physical development to the right of children to express their views freely. This document is part of the body of international mechanisms for the protection of children in situations of armed conflict. The CRC contains rules for States on the treatment and rights of children:

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to promote physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of a child victim of: any form of neglect, exploitation, or abuse; torture or any other form of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; or armed conflicts. Such recovery and reintegration shall take place in an environment which fosters the health, self-respect and dignity of the child (UN CRC, 1989, art. 39).

The CRC is legally binding and replaces the statement of children's rights adopted by the Sixteenth Plenary Session of the Assembly of the United Nations on November 20, 1959. Again, it approaches children from the point of view of their protection. Regarding the protection of children's rights, the Bogotá district authority states that "The Convention on the Rights of the Child, ... [has been] approved in Colombia in Act 12 of 1991" (Alcaldía de Bogotá, 2011, p. 1).

Article 19 of the CRC determines some basic responsibilities:

1. States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or

exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child (UN CRC, 1989). Article 32 deals specifically with child labor:

1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development (UN CRC, 1989).

As implemented in a decree issued by the Bogotá district authority (Artículo 7 del decreto 520, Alcaldía de Bogotá, 2011), article 19 of the CRC approaches children not only from a standpoint of protection, but also from a rights-oriented perspective. This focuses on guaranteeing "the best interests of the child" by creating and maintaining laws oriented towards children's development and the promotion of their rights.

The Colombian Political Constitution of 1991 ratified the CRC. This Convention became the principal instrument for the creation of child protection policies in Colombia. In articles 44 and 45 of the Constitution of 1991, and in the laws that implement those articles, the Colombian government ratified international conventions on child rights, and adopted declarations promulgated by the United Nations General Assembly on the issue of children (Alcaldía de Bogotá, 2011).

According to Durán et al. (2003), the concept of "needs" is eliminated in the CRC, because, among other reasons, this concept was used in welfarist and paternalist approaches in which adults determine the situations that should be addressed and treated with compassion. This change of approach transformed the way in which the Colombian government handles issues on children. Nowadays in Colombia, children are subjects of rights and the government and society must safeguard these and adopt the necessary means for their effective guarantee.

In short, through its orientation towards the rights and protection of children, the Convention on the Rights of the Child has contributed a general policy framework for measures of protection against maltreatment, negligence, other forms of violence, and work that may interrupt children's studies or cause them some kind of injury. In particular, the CRC has regulated the rehabilitation and social reintegration of children who have taken part in the armed conflict. However, as with Protocol II, despite the progress of the CRC in protection against different types of violence and the reintegration into society of children involved in the armed conflict, this Convention does not clearly promote activities for the prevention of violence.

In addition to the UN documents already mentioned, there is an Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, which includes measures to implement the provisions of the CRC. It should be noted that States have the primary responsibility to safeguard children's rights, for which they can avail of international cooperation.

Optional Protocol

In New York, on 25 May 2000, an Optional Protocol was agreed between the United States of America and other governments. It deals with the involvement of children in armed conflict. This Protocol aims to regulate the age at which children can participate in the armed conflict, as well as to promote the demobilization and reintegration of those who are participating in the conflict contrary to its measures.

In Article 38, the CRC provides that “States Parties shall take all feasible measures to ensure that persons who have not attained the age of fifteen years do not take a direct part in hostilities” (CRC, UN, 1989, art. 38, para. 2). Thus, the CRC covers children up to 15 years of age. This was established so low in order to achieve greater international support, because many countries induct children under 18 into their armies. However, in Colombia, in order to extend protection to those under 18 years old, there have been efforts to promote the Optional Protocol to the CRC (Girón, 2006).

In paragraph 3 of article 3, the Optional Protocol determines that recruitment of children between 16 and 18 years into forces of the State should be voluntary, and take place with the informed consent of their parents:

States Parties that permit voluntary recruitment into their national armed forces under the age of 18 shall maintain safeguards to ensure, as a minimum, that:

- (a) Such recruitment is genuinely voluntary;
- (b) Such recruitment is done with the informed consent of the person’s parents or legal guardians;
- (c) Such persons are fully informed of the duties involved in such military service;
- (d) Such persons provide reliable proof of age prior to acceptance into national military service (UN, Optional Protocol, 2000).

While, in the case of non-State armed groups, article 4 of the Optional Protocol states the following:

1. Armed groups that are distinct from the armed forces of a State should not, under any circumstances, recruit or use in hostilities persons under the age of 18 years.
2. States Parties shall take all feasible measures to prevent such recruitment and use, including the adoption of legal measures necessary to prohibit and criminalize such practices.
3. The application of the present article shall not affect the legal status of any party to an armed conflict (UN, Optional Protocol, 2000).

Article 6 of the Protocol postulates that all measures should be taken by States Parties for demobilization and reintegration to society of children who participate in armed conflict:

1. Each State Party shall take all necessary legal, administrative and other measures to ensure the effective implementation and enforcement of the provisions of this Protocol within its jurisdiction.
2. States Parties undertake to make the principles and provisions of the present Protocol widely known and promoted by appropriate means, to adults and children alike.
3. States Parties shall take all feasible measures to ensure that persons within their jurisdiction recruited or used in hostilities contrary to this Protocol are demobilized or otherwise released from service. States Parties shall, when necessary, accord to these persons all appropriate assistance for their physical and psychological recovery and their social reintegration (UN, Optional Protocol, 2000).

However, despite the provisions of the Protocol, in Colombia, events that contradict its measures may be observed:

On 20 December 1999, the Colombian government managed to demobilize a number of child soldiers from its ranks [armed forces]. Almost a year later, the government signed the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, which raises the age of recruitment from 15 to 18 years (Universidad Nacional de Colombia. Observatorio sobre Infancia, 2002, p. 61).

Despite this, as Sierra et al. (2009) point out, Resolution 1612 of 2005 of the Security Council of the United Nations “put in place a monitoring mechanism to track the most serious situations [of child recruitment] (including those in Colombia, whose government was opposed, until February 2008, when it accepted, with reservations, to comply)” (Sierra et al., 2009, p. 24).

According to Alvarado et al. (2012) the Colombian government has ratified the CRC, applying its Optional Protocol voluntarily in the ranks of the Colombian army, but has resisted a monitoring mechanism. These authors relate this resistance to the situation experienced by children in illegal groups in Colombia: “the Colombian armed conflict highlights the fragmentation of the nation; furthermore, the violation of international rules by parastatal organisms questions the legitimacy of the State. This could have led to the Colombian government’s rejection of the monitoring mechanism” (Alvarado et al., 2012, p. 50).

Thus, the CRC Optional Protocol has sought to protect children under 18 from recruitment by illegal armed groups, although it implies that countries may include children between 16 and 18 years of age in their armies, with the consent of the children and their families. The Protocol also proposes the implementation of measures to prevent the recruitment of children into illegal armed groups and foster their demobilization and reintegration when they have been part of these groups. Thus, the Colombian government

has adopted the Protocol, but, as noted by some studies, has not supported the process of monitoring the presence of minors in State forces.

As outlined, Colombia has adopted certain international agreements, among which are Protocol II, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and its Optional Protocol. These three agreements, and the way in which they have been implemented in Colombia, are focused mainly on preventing the involvement of children in illegal armed groups, demobilizing them, and reintegrating them into society. Educational work with children and their relational contexts can lead to a rejection of violence associated with the armed conflict as a natural way of relating, and thus prevent violence and the involvement of children in the conflict. Yet, there is no proposal in the agreements for any work in educational processes.

Actions in Colombia resulting from the adoption of the three agreements have not been directed towards promoting relationships based on alternative non-violent practices. Even though regulations have been aimed at protecting children, the resulting proposals have been directed towards taking action once the problem of armed conflict and child recruitment has already happened. They do not address processes that could lead to the reduction of this problem at its root.

In addition to its presence in international agreements adopted by Colombia, the protection approach in relation to children has influenced various laws at national level. Below, some elements of relevant Colombian law are outlined.

Colombian National Policy for the Protection of Children

Colombian laws and ratified international agreements have been designed to regulate relationships between adults and children, among other objectives. Much of this legislation has been designed to protect children against various forms of violence, such as those originating in the armed conflict. However, at the same time, the laws may be designed to protect society from the children. Government strategies have been directed primarily towards the protection of children, and do not focus on the prevention of multiple forms of violence. Action to prevent the violation of children's rights and construct alternatives to violent interactions is lacking. This represents a vacuum that must be addressed in Colombia.

The remaining sections in this chapter deal with some of the principal Colombian legislation, public policies, and actions taken toward the protection of children in situations of armed conflict. Founded to a great extent on international norms, several Colombian laws and policies are oriented towards the protection of children. These include articles in the Colombian Political Constitution; relevant legislation;¹⁶

16 Among the principal Colombian laws oriented towards guaranteeing children's rights, one of them (Ley 12 de 1991, Congreso de Colombia) implements principles of the CRC. Another law (Ley 833 de 2003, Congreso de Colombia) seeks to guarantee children's rights through applying the CRC Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict. The Colombian law on

government documents issued by a Colombian national advisory council for economic and social policy (CONPES);¹⁷ a national plan for childhood and adolescence (el Plan Nacional para la Niñez y la Adolescencia 2009-2019); a national plan for comprehensive care and reparation in the face of armed conflict (Plan Nacional para la Atención y la Reparación Integral a Víctimas); and measures for comprehensive protection. The review in this chapter ends with a look at some of the ways in which civil society has supplemented State actions for the protection of children.

The Colombian Constitution

The protection of children in the context of armed conflict is dealt with in the Colombian Constitution of 1991, some of whose elements are detailed below. The Constitution ratified the principles for the protection of children established by the CRC. Article 5 of the Constitution states that the responsibility for the protection of children rests with the family, society, and the State. In addition to this co-responsibility for the protection of children, article 44 of the Political Constitution restates their fundamental rights, thus giving these rights a constitutional status:

The fundamental rights of children are: life, physical integrity, health and social security, a balanced diet, name and nationality, a family and not to be separated from it, care and love, education and culture, recreation, and free expression of opinion. They shall be protected against all forms of abandonment, physical or moral violence, kidnap, sale, sexual abuse, labor exploitation, economic exploitation, and hazardous work. They shall also enjoy the other rights enshrined in the Constitution, laws, and international treaties ratified by Colombia. The family, society, and the State have an obligation to assist and protect children to ensure their harmonious and comprehensive development and full exercise of rights. Any citizen may request compliance from the competent authority and the punishment of offenders. The rights of children take precedence over the rights of others (República de Colombia, 1991, art. 44).

As mentioned by Martínez et al. (2004, cited in Alvarado et al., 2012, p. 51) “The catalogue of rights of Colombian children is made up of the above constitutional provisions,” together with “Articles 45, 50, and 67, which give special attention to health and education and the preferential access children should have to these services” (Alvarado et al., 2012, p. 51).

17 infancy and adolescence (Ley 1098 de 2006, Congreso de Colombia) safeguards children’s rights. Finally, the law on victims (Ley 1448 de 2011, Congreso de Colombia) includes a section with the rights of children and adolescents in contexts of armed conflict.

CONPES: *Consejo Nacional de Política Económica y Social* [National Council for Economic and Social Policy]. The President directs this council, whose function is to coordinate and advise the government on public investment and social policy issues. CONPES documents are published by the Colombian national planning department (Departamento Nacional de Planeación, DNP).

Thus, the Colombian Constitution promotes the guarantee, by families, society, and the State, of children's rights to life, integrity, education, health, food, care, affection, family, and free expression, among others. It places the rights of children, in accordance with the CRC, above the rights of other citizens. The perspective in the Constitution is one of protection of children against multiple instances of violence, child labor, and negligent treatment. Below, some Colombian laws that adopt this same perspective are detailed.

Relevant Legislation

This subheading covers information related to the Colombian laws that follow the protection perspective (Ley 12 de 1991, Ley 418 de 1997, Ley 599 de 2000, Ley 1098 de 2006, and Ley 1448 de 2011, Congreso de Colombia), among which, one of 2006 emphasizes the population of children and young people,¹⁸ and one from 2011 refers to people in contexts of armed conflict.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted by the UN in 1989, and ratified in Colombia, not only in the Constitution of 1991, but also in a law of that same year (Ley 12 de 1991, Congreso de Colombia). This law is based on a perception of children as mentally and physically immature, and in need of protection and care before and after birth. A paragraph of the preamble to the law points out that there are children in all countries of the world who live in exceptionally problematic conditions and who should receive special treatment.

Paragraph 2 of Article 3 of this law details the approach:

States Parties undertake to ensure the child such protection and care as is necessary for her or his well-being, taking into account the rights and duties of parents, guardians, or other persons responsible for the child, and, to this end, shall take all legislative and administrative measures (Ley 12, 1991, Congreso de Colombia).

Despite the relevance of adopting international standards, it is worth taking into account the implications of the viewpoint adopted. In it, children are seen from a perspective of deficiency, which generalizes and groups them all together, regardless of the particular context of Colombia, and the different contexts within the country. The international standards that are often applied here in Colombia have generally been thought out and framed for European and North American contexts. If the situations that arise in the Colombian context are understood from the viewpoint of these international

18 This law (Ley 1098 de 2006, Congreso de Colombia) is still in force, given that, up to this time, no other set of laws has been formulated to take its place. By means of the 2006 law, a legal code (Código de la Infancia y la Adolescencia), which establishes and regulates children's rights, was issued. However, certain alterations that modify some of the articles of the 2006 law have been made, such as those set out in another law (Ley 1878 del 9 de enero de 2018, Congreso de Colombia).

standards, those situations will always fail either to meet expectations or to comply with what is considered normal. Measures must be constructed that suit the Colombian context and take cultural contexts and practices into account, without ignoring human rights and their guarantee from early childhood as proposed internationally.

The Colombian government has ratified various international conventions and has enacted laws aimed at the protection of children in times of peace. Despite this, the implementation of legislation to protect children in the context of the armed conflict has not run so smoothly. As Alvarado et al. (2012) point out, most of the measures have been designed to assist victims of the conflict in general, without specifying the protection of children:

Such is the case of a law (Ley 418 de 1997, título II, Congreso de Colombia), which includes measures for “attention for victims of violent incidents that arise in the context of the internal armed conflict.” The law reaffirms the right of victims of political violence to humanitarian assistance (p. 52).

The reformed Colombian penal code (Código Penal Colombiano) classifies various types of conduct that imply violations of International Humanitarian Law (Congreso de Colombia, 2000). This categorization is set out in a law (Ley 599 de 2000), a section of which (título II) defines crimes against persons and objects protected by IHL (Ley 599, 2000). However, as pointed out in the case of other laws, there is no explicit protection for children in this reform.

Nevertheless, a specific emphasis on children is explicit in the law on childhood and adolescence (Ley 1098 de 2006, Congreso de Colombia), which replaced the law on minors (Código del Menor). As noted by Martínez, Convers, and Jiménez (2004), this law represented significant progress in public policy, on incorporating different approaches, including ideas from academia, various foundations, the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the United Nations Committee on Human Rights.

Article 7 of this Colombian law on infancy and adolescence defines comprehensive protection:

recognition [of children and adolescents] as subjects of rights; guarantee and fulfillment of their rights; prevention of threats to or violation of their rights; and the assurance of the immediate restoration of these, in compliance with the principle of the best interests of the child. Comprehensive protection is embodied in the set of policies, plans, programs, and actions that are implemented at the national, provincial, district, and municipal levels, with the corresponding allocation of financial, physical, and human resources (Ley 1098 de 2006, Congreso de Colombia).

Yet, in spite of its emphasis on children, the above law maintains both the perspective of protection of children and the protection of society from them:

In November 2006, the law on children and adolescents (Ley 1098 de 2006, Congreso de Colombia) entered into force.... This law establishes a special system

of criminal responsibility. No children under 14 can be tried, and the Colombian Institute of Family Welfare (ICBF) is to take charge of children in case of offenses.... Children can be held in specialized establishments for periods between 1 and 5 years, but only from the age of 16, and for offences in the Penal Code with penalties higher than six years imprisonment ... In proceedings in which children are considered victims, the following will be taken into account: “the principles of the superior interests of the child, prevalence of child rights, comprehensive protection, ... the rights enshrined in international conventions” (artículo 192), and the increase of sentences for those who commit crimes against children (Sierra et al., 2009, p. 29).

A Colombian law of 2011 (Ley 1448 de 2011, Congreso de Colombia) includes measures for care, assistance, and comprehensive reparation for victims of the armed conflict. Its name (Ley de Víctimas) designates the individuals who have lived through the armed conflict “victims,” a deficit-based condition and deterministic label that is difficult for them to shake off throughout their lives. The law also uses terms such as “vulnerability” and “manifest weakness” to refer to them, along with subsequent measures for their protection, and involves assistance that takes the form of handouts, such as humanitarian aid. Yet, the law does propose significant advances in relation to the rights of the communities that have experienced the armed conflict. While not specifically referring to early childhood, it contemplates families’ rights to truth, justice, comprehensive reparation, family reunification, memory, restitution of housing, training for work, and their not having to experience violence or sexual abuse, the latter helping to prevent unwanted pregnancies with subsequent repercussions for children in early childhood. Furthermore, the law directs that it is the State’s duty to counteract situations of forced displacement.

This law (Ley 1448 de 2011, Congreso de Colombia), while not dealing with the implications of each of its articles on children, does have a specific section about children and adolescents under 18 years of age, without specific mention of early childhood. In this section, the law refers to rights similar to those set forth for adults, such as comprehensive reparation, yet does not explicitly show what this right implies for children, even though it regulates this particular right for children who have been victims of antipersonnel mines and orphaned children. In this section on children and adolescents, the law regulates coverage in health and education, mentioning preschool education (3-6 years), but not initial education (0-3 years). It also regulates children’s comprehensive protection. It is worth noting that children, young people, and women have been included in the forums for participation of victims, but the participation of early childhood is not clear in forums carried out with adult thought and action.

Various laws in Colombia have emphasized protection (Ley 12 de 1991; Ley 418 de 1997; Ley 599 de 2000; Ley 1098 de 2006; Ley 1448 de 2011, Congreso de Colombia), some of them specifically with regard to the child population (Ley 1098 de

2006), others with regard to the context of armed conflict without direct reference to children (Ley 418 de 1997, Ley 599 de 2000), and others with general reference to the population in the context of armed conflict, and with a particular mention of children and adolescents (Ley 1448 de 2011). In certain cases, laws do not simply provide for protection, but for comprehensive protection, including prevention (Ley 1098 de 2006). As stated before, in some of the laws, the protection perspective leads to a vision of children as incomplete (Ley 12 de 1991), and certain laws have not only emphasized the protection of children, but also the protection of society from them (Ley 1098 de 2006).

In addition to the stipulations of the Colombian Constitution and laws based on a perspective of protection of children, often adopted from international regulations, there are other documents with a similar viewpoint that contribute to the development of Colombian public policy (CONPES). These policy documents refer to topics related to the present study: children; their protection from violence, particularly in relation to the armed conflict; and the regulation of the relations between children and adults, such as those in families.

Government Economic and Social Documents (CONPES)

Several Colombian national planning documents, issued by a Colombian national advisory council for economic and social policy (CONPES), and published by the Colombian national planning department, DNP, determine public policy for children in terms of peace-building, State actions related to violence, and the context of the armed conflict. They are titled numerically (CONPES 3077, 2000; CONPES 3144, 2001a; CONPES 3622, 2009; and CONPES 3673, 2010, DNP). In the first of these, (CONPES 3077), the coordination of a peace policy, (Haz Paz), is assigned to a presidential council for social policy, (Consejería Presidencial para la Política Social). Subsequently, in another document (CONPES 3144) it was established that the Colombian family welfare institute (ICBF) would carry out coordination of policy between government sectors, among them those of health and education.¹⁹ The coordination of policy was to be based on a comprehensive public policy for prevention, detection, attention to, and monitoring of intra-family violence. This process began in April 2003.

Alvarado et al. (2012) report some progress:

Preventing and attending to family violence, through a strategy involving various government sectors designed to support children, young people, families, and communities, has implied the transmission of principles and values of coexistence and the provision of basic family units with strategies for peaceful problem solving (p. 44).

19 This policy coordination is known in Colombia as *intersectorial* [involving various government sectors].

Another government document (CONPES 3622, DNP, 2009) points out the significance of projects that benefit children and adolescents. This document sets out the strategic importance of five investment projects led by the Colombian family welfare institute (ICBF). Some of these projects are aimed at dealing with matters at a national level: attention to early childhood; attention for childhood and support for the family to enable the exercise of children's rights; attention for the forcibly displaced population; nutritional support for children and young people; and improvement in the government's institutional management and its support for preventive action. Another project not specifically aimed at national coverage is concerned with actions for the preservation and restitution of the comprehensive exercise of child and family rights. Some of these government programs take into account the subject population of the present study, such as those directed towards early childhood, families, and displaced persons.

Furthermore, a government document (CONPES 3673, DNP, 2010) deals with issues related to the recruitment and use of children and adolescents by illegal armed groups and organized criminal groups. This document identifies three main problems: armed groups, present occasionally, frequently, or on a transitory basis within the relational spaces of children and adolescents, may recruit or use the children in some way; expressions of violence and exploitation involving children and adolescents exist in family and community contexts, along with a cultural acceptance of such actions; and national and local institutional provisions for guaranteeing children's and adolescents' rights do not respond to the context, and include actions that are neither pertinent nor effective. Even though the children participating in the present study were not involved directly with armed groups, they have been exposed to situations such as those mentioned above, in family and community environments.

These national planning documents demonstrate progress in some matters: the construction of a public policy of peace; the leadership of the Colombian family welfare institute, ICBF, in an integrated approach to family violence that aims to detect, attend to, monitor, and prevent violence within the family; the creation of projects for early childhood, childhood, and young people, focusing on rights, work with families, and specific action for the forcibly displaced population; and the identification of problems related to the recruitment and use of children and adolescents by illegal armed groups.

In addition to these government economic and social documents, Colombia has a national plan for guaranteeing the rights of children and adolescents, which reveals the importance of designing public policy for this population.

The Colombian National Plan for Childhood and Adolescence

The Colombian national plan for childhood and adolescence (Plan Nacional para la Niñez y la Adolescencia 2009-2019) aims to provide this population with equality of opportunities. The plan contains twelve objectives (Ministerio de la Protección Social,

2009). Three of these objectives (1, 10, and 11) refer directly to violence or the armed conflict, while the other objectives may have a bearing on children in the context of armed conflict. In this section, some elements of the plan that concern the subject population of the present study are dealt with.

The first objective of the national plan, as mentioned by the Colombian ministry responsible (Ministerio de la Protección Social, 2009), is to prevent the deaths of children, including deaths through violence. The second objective relates to the maintenance of family ties, which, could contribute to the guarantee of the family as a unit in such situations, although it makes no direct mention of forced displacement.

The third and fourth objectives, which deal with health and nutrition for children, emphasize the nutrition of pregnant and lactating women, and the importance of nutrition in the first years of life (Ministerio de la Protección Social, 2009). Without explicitly stating a guarantee of nutrition in the context of armed conflict, these objectives could cover particular needs arising from the effects of the cultivation of coca on farmland, and difficulties in access to food and health services.

The fifth objective of the plan is to ensure quality education (Ministerio de la Protección Social, 2009). Though this objective does not specifically refer to violations of this right due to the armed conflict, it could be understood as contemplating the special needs of children that arise from three factors: danger in accessing educational institutions; lack of education relevant to the context; and the naturalization of war in educational institutions, through the direct or indirect presence of combatants and their ideals and propaganda.

The sixth and seventh objectives, concerning play and affection (Ministerio de la Protección Social, 2009), while not explicitly dealing with special needs related to the armed conflict, could have a bearing on breaches of this right, for example, due to children being obliged to work at an early age or subjected to dangers such as landmines.

The eighth objective, which refers to the civil registration of all children, emphasizes the population in early childhood (Ministerio de la Protección Social, 2009), while not referring specifically to children in the context of armed conflict. The ninth objective, participation as a citizen, does not specifically deal with adverse impacts on the right to participation caused by the dangers present in contexts of armed conflict: adverse effects that are especially exacerbated in the cases of girls and young women. The tenth objective, prevention of abuse and maltreatment, becomes relevant in the context of armed conflict, in which violence in its multiple expressions is naturalized.

The eleventh objective relates directly to the actions of armed groups on children: No child or adolescent [should] participate in any activity that is harmful, or be the victim of violent actions. We will decidedly combat the exposure of minors to hazardous conditions, any of the worst forms of child labor and exploitation, use or abuse by armed groups, sexual exploitation, or mendicancy. Our commitment is to ensure that no child or adolescent has to work or beg for support and that no

one takes advantage of them for personal or political gain (Ministerio de la Protección Social, 2009, p. 18).

The twelfth objective of the national plan refers to sanctions against adolescents who have broken the law (Ministerio de la Protección Social, 2009). The socializing agents of children in early childhood may be part of this group of adolescents.

Additionally, the Colombian national plan for childhood and adolescence refers to emergency guarantees to deal with critical situations, including those caused by illegal armed groups:

Critical situations consist essentially of maltreatment, abuse, sexual exploitation, labor exploitation, begging, involvement in armed groups, forced displacement, and [the use of] land mines. These situations require four types of protective measures: early identification of risks and prevention; immediate personalized protection; restoration of rights in the shortest possible time; and reprimand or prosecution [of those who caused the injury], repair of the injury, and the sanction and rehabilitation of those responsible for having have deprived the right (Ministerio de la Protección Social, 2009, p. 36).

Recognizing the extensive presence of children in illegal armed groups, the national plan for childhood and adolescence proposes that no child or young person be recruited or utilized by them, and aims to guarantee children's rights and family life:

In 2003, it was estimated that 11,000 children and adolescents were involved in illegal armed groups. According to the ICBF, about 3,000 have been demobilized and applied for support mechanisms, and an unknown number have demobilized without notifying the authorities. The number of those currently involved in such groups is not known. The Colombian family welfare system [Sistema de Bienestar Familiar], supported by several public and non-governmental bodies guarantees restoration of the rights of persons under 18 years of age demobilized from illegal armed groups. These rights include specialist support, reinsertion in families, and access to income (Ministerio de la Protección Social, 2009, p. 57).

Finally, the plan proposes alternatives for children and adolescents, including education, job training, activities for better use of time, vocational counseling, productive projects, and the promotion of coexistence:

The Colombian family welfare institute (Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar), the Colombian ombudsman (Defensoría del Pueblo), and all other public and private entities, with the support of international cooperation, will strengthen the actions of the National Plan for preventing the involvement of children in armed conflict using concrete actions to provide the child, adolescent, and young population with new life alternatives through productive projects, training for work, formal education, training in use of free time, career counseling, and the promotion of coexistence, among others, to permit the full enjoyment of

rights and permanence within the family and society to which they belong (Ministerio de la Protección Social, 2009, p 57).

Briefly, this 2009 - 2019 plan (Plan Nacional para la Niñez y la Adolescencia 2009-2019) for actions directed towards children and adolescents in Colombia, including children in the context of armed conflict, is strongly oriented towards each of the areas of child rights (life and survival, development, protection, and participation). In some sections of the plan, reference is made to the importance of constructing public policies to guarantee the rights and protection of children in the context of armed conflict. Public policies for the protection of children are derived from this plan, as well as laws and further plans. Although some of the stated objectives of the plan do not explicitly mention children in early childhood in contexts of armed conflict, they do refer to children and to the family and community environments in which children participate. This is important to the present study, because both its group of participants and modes of relating to them are regulated by the plan.

In addition to this plan aimed at children and young people, there is a plan referring to comprehensive care and reparation for the population in contexts of armed conflict.

The Colombian National Plan for Comprehensive Care and Reparation of Victims

The Colombian national plan for comprehensive care and reparation of victims (Plan Nacional de Atención y Reparación Integral a las Víctimas) is established in a decree (Decreto 1725 de 2012, Presidencia de la República de Colombia, 2012a). It includes the measures stipulated in the law (Ley 1448 de 2011, Congreso de Colombia) dealing with victim's rights to truth, justice, and comprehensive reparation, as well as restitution of the rights violated, with the subsequent guarantee of non-repetition of the violent acts experienced by the population in contexts of armed conflict. The plan seeks "to establish the necessary mechanisms for the implementation of all the measures of care, assistance, and comprehensive reparation contemplated in the aforementioned law" (Presidencia de la República de Colombia, 2012a, p. 1).

This plan for care and reparation includes detailed provisions and implications for children of each of its articles through a differential approach that emphasizes women, widows, women heads of families, and children, particularly orphans. However, it does not explain the place of early childhood, mentioning it only in a very specific way in the right to education and health, as part of the comprehensive care proposed by the State policy for comprehensive development for early childhood (De Cero a Siempre). The plan indirectly contributes to early childhood through benefits for these children's families, such as the restitution of their lands, with priority for those families with orphaned children and adolescents; the restitution of their homes, with priority if there are children and adolescents; family reunification; job creation; physical and psychosocial recovery; as well as through benefits for communities, such as rebuilding the community fabric and collective reparation, which must guarantee that the recruitment of children

and adolescents is eliminated in the communities, include their needs, and, in ethnic groups, respond to cultural and child rearing practices (Presidencia de la República de Colombia, 2012b).

The plan (Presidencia de la República de Colombia, 2012b) also directs that children and adolescents be included in the registry of victims (Registro Único de Víctimas); that they have preferential access to education and health, through comprehensive early childhood care based on the State policy for comprehensive development for early childhood (De Cero a Siempre); that comprehensive reparation be adapted to their needs, with differential routes that take into account their comprehensive protection, their non-discrimination, their participation, and contemplate the best interests of the child; that the restoration of their rights be in accord with the moment of their life cycle; that, in the case of forced displacement, they or their families receive compensation; that they receive rehabilitation differentiated according to the moment of the life cycle, through a program of psychosocial attention and comprehensive health for victims (Programa de Atención Psicosocial y Salud Integral a Víctimas), for their physical and psychosocial recovery; that after the exercises of truth and memory, if it be required to apologize to this population, it be done with the accompaniment of the Colombian welfare institute, ICBF, and that, in such exercises, they be considered as subjects of rights, using actions that do not harm them and promote the comprehensive protection of their rights, with participatory methodologies that respond to their right to the truth, their psychosocial support, and that make known the impacts on them; that in terms of the guarantee of non-repetition, their separation from armed groups be achieved, and their inclusion in new environments promoted, with social and cultural reintegration if they come from ethnic groups; that, – while attending to their comprehensive protection and the best interests of the child with co-responsibility between family, society and the State, and in relation to prevention and protection –, the violation of their rights is avoided, prevented, or mitigated, with regard to displacement, recruitment and utilization, antipersonnel mines, unexploded ordnance or improvised explosives – making use of pedagogical strategies –, social control by illegal armed groups, and threats to their lives and personal integrity; and that their right to justice be guaranteed with a differential sense that considers their needs and responds to the law (Código de Infancia y Adolescencia, Ley 1098 de 2006), with an emphasis on preventing impunity and repetition, and with psychosocial support. Regarding participation guidelines, children and adolescents are considered in terms of a communication strategy that enables them to inform themselves.

In the next section, some definitions, goals, and reflections on public policy governing protection are detailed, and then, in the following section, specific measures that address the situation in Colombia are presented.

Public Policy for the Comprehensive Protection of Children

As indicated in the preceding section, Colombian national policy on child issues has been primarily oriented towards protection.

As an introduction to the measures for protection listed in the following section, the present section provides a definition of comprehensive protection, reviews the objectives of some actions guided by the paradigm of comprehensive protection, and gives an outline of other relevant elements of public policy.

The concept of protection has been subject to changes in Colombia, partly through international influences, comprehensive protection having become the guiding principle in current policy:

In 1989, some formal changes were made. The initial concept of protecting minors in an irregular situation was modified to the concept of *comprehensive protection*: from special legal measures to rights.... Recruitment, which was not previously an issue, began to be mentioned in the Convention of 1989, and has become a concern at international level.... Only from 1990 on, did combatant children become a concern in Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) processes. Before that year children could not be held criminally responsible (Sierra et al., 2009, pp. 19-20).

The goal of comprehensive protection is the development of children's potentials. According to this perspective, children suffering situations of poverty, homelessness, child labor, or lack of education should not be seen from the point of view of their needs, but as children excluded from the system of protection and whose rights have been violated (Durán et al., 2003). Consequently, comprehensive protection should focus on preventing any violation of the rights of children, in order to thus restore the necessary conditions for their full development.

This approach aims to improve socialization environments in order to make them more caring, safe, and respectful of the rights of children (Durán et al., 2003). For this same reason, at international level, the CRC permits States to intervene in cases of violation of children's rights by families or other social actors (Durán et al., 2003).

Hence, local, regional, and national government entities should include public policies in their plans that ensure the capability and effectiveness of government in responding to the comprehensive protection of children, and restore civil deliberation and co-responsibility, and the public values of communities. Public policy should be understood in terms of a specific plan of action oriented towards concrete problems. Such an action plan would be based on proven information and knowledge of the components and causes of problematic situations considered as public, such as domestic violence (FV), poverty, and environmental destruction, among others.

The previously mentioned issues could be broken up into smaller sets of problems that should be addressed individually through public policy approaches (Aguilar, 2006).

The term *social protection* would be considered important in the formulation of these policies. This term implies a series of public interventions to assist individuals, households, and communities in improving the management of risk. Thus, specific policies that focus on each of the needs of the populations requiring such care would be designed (Guerrero, 2006).

In summary, in Colombia, the adoption of international standards and the drafting of legislation on children has been based on the viewpoint of their protection. This has had two contradictory implications: on one side, a desire to guarantee their rights, but, on another side, a viewpoint of deficit, in which children are seen from their first years as infants (from Latin *infans*: unable to speak), defenseless, and abnormal with regard to international parameters. Public policies have incorporated this double effect. Some policies, more centered on the first implication, protection as the guarantee of rights, have proposed a shift of approach from protection to comprehensive protection. On the positive side, this change contributes an emphasis on the development of children's potential, prevention, and the restoration of the conditions needed to guarantee their rights. However, both the international standards and Colombian law described here imply the two effects of the protection viewpoint: guarantee of rights, as well as readings based on deficit. The international standards and Colombian laws, along with the perceived needs of children in the Colombian context, have guided Colombian public policy decision makers in designing national and local protection measures. Some of the measures are described in the next two sections.

National Actions for the Protection of Children

Two of the principal measures used in Colombia for the protection of children are outlined below. The first, the *De Cero a Siempre* [from zero to forever] strategy, relating to children in general, focuses on comprehensive early childhood care. The second measure, a protection program for victims and witnesses, is designed for children who have experienced the context of armed conflict.

The “De Cero a Siempre” Strategy

With reference to national and international norms, the strategy titled *De Cero a Siempre*, administered by a commission on early childhood, was created as a vehicle to promote comprehensive early childhood care (Atención Integral a la Primera Infancia - AIPI) in Colombia. It is worth pointing out that this strategy acquired the status of law in Colombia (Ley 1804 de 2016, Congreso de Colombia), which opens great challenges in terms of its regulation and implementation. The strategy aims to guarantee comprehensive, inter-sectoral, inter-institutional, and universal early childhood care. Its objective is to guarantee the rights of children under the age of five to protection, health, nutrition, and education. The *De Cero a Siempre* strategy aims to involve family,

community, society, and government in the defense of children's rights (Comisión Intersectorial de Primera Infancia, 2012).

The De Cero a Siempre strategy focuses on children living in extreme poverty and vulnerability: a population that has not previously had universal comprehensive care. In order to reach full coverage, economic resources from the Colombian national budget and private institutions have been invested in this strategy, and a national De Cero a Siempre fund was created (Comisión Intersectorial de Primera Infancia, 2012).

The objectives of the De Cero a Siempre strategy include the creation of links between local and regional levels, and between private and public spheres, the education of agents involved in the guarantee of children's rights, and the improvement of comprehensive early childhood care institutions (Comisión Intersectorial de Primera Infancia, 2012).

The strategy responds to three important issues: attention and care for early childhood, in the light of its implications in poverty reduction; the high potential in early years for biological, social, neurological, and affective development, which is the basis for the development of abilities, capacities, and potentials; and the commitments assumed at national and international levels by the Colombian government for guaranteeing children's rights (Comisión Intersectorial de Primera Infancia, 2012).

In brief, the De Cero a Siempre strategy is oriented towards comprehensive early childhood attention and care, in recognition of the importance of strengthening the development of children in early childhood as a social and economic investment for Colombia. This strategy is directed towards children in early childhood in general, although it emphasizes the need for attention of those in a condition of vulnerability.

In addition to the above measure, oriented towards early childhood in general, a program for victims and witnesses was created to protect children who have experienced the armed conflict. This measure is detailed in the following section.

Protecting Children Against Armed Conflict

By means of a law on children and adolescents (Ley de Infancia y Adolescencia), the Colombian Institute of Family Welfare (ICBF), is charged with protecting society against children who have broken the law, as well as protecting child victims of the Colombian armed conflict. The Institute's responsibilities include the execution of programs for victims and witnesses:

[the] implementation of programs for personal development and strengthening of personal resources for management of the crisis and decision-making, for children and young people under 18 and their families who are covered by the Public Prosecutor's (Fiscalía) protection program for victims and witnesses (Girón, 2006, p. 56).

The protection program for victims and witnesses was established in 1999 and has prioritized the reintegration of children, attempting to facilitate conditions for “a normal life for child soldiers” (Sierra et al., 2009, p. 26).

The program for victims and witnesses focuses on the protection of children as a fundamental element. This measure is aimed at children who, seen through the paradigm of normality and abnormality, fall outside what is accepted as normal, being perceived as vulnerable and thus different. The measure has taken up the approach of protection, both of the children themselves and of society from them.

In addition to the above measures of an institutional character, the next section covers some previous research on civil society actions for the protection of children in the context of armed conflict.

Civil Society Actions for the Protection of Children

In Colombia, in addition to State measures to protect children, initiatives have emerged from civil society. As mentioned in Coalico and CCJ (2009), given a lack of government action, the civil sector has sought to respond to the situation experienced by children in the context of armed conflict. These authors note that civil society actions have primarily been directed towards certain objectives: making known the problems associated with the armed conflict and the need for intervention by the State, the population in general, and families; promoting government action in response to international agreements adopted by Colombia; and influencing public policy to ensure that the problems associated with the armed conflict are contemplated therein. Other civil society actions are aimed at prevention, through education, and training in protection rights and the use of free time, for both children and young people (Coalico & CCJ, 2009, Niño, 2012).

Among these civil society actions are some local and small-scale initiatives that have had a great impact: the work done by teachers in San Onofre (Observatorio de Territorios Étnicos, 2010); the creation of residential schools (Coalico & CCJ, 2009); and actions with approaches differentiated according to particular populations, such as the Ruta Jurídica initiative, aimed specifically at indigenous children and adolescents in order to prevent their recruitment, promote demobilization, and define State responsibilities (Coalico & CCJ, 2009). There are also large-scale actions such as the Colombian Children’s Movement for Peace (Movimiento de Niños por la Paz) (UNICEF, 1998), and a protection network created by several non-governmental organizations (Coalico & CCJ, 2009).

As reported by the Observatorio de Territorios Étnicos (2010), an entity for the defense of ethnic territories, teachers in the San Onofre region have focused their work on reconstruction of children as subjects who have experienced the impact of armed conflict:

They have taken the momentous decision to give up plans to obtain higher quality education, as the school could not and should not make efforts in this direction when the important issue is to attend a more urgent reality: the reconstruction of the subjectivities of children who have suffered the armed conflict (Observatorio de Territorios Étnicos, 2010, p. 30).

These teachers have shown their students new ways of relating and participating, different from those common in the armed conflict. This action has fostered links between the school and community. Various initiatives have been carried out: protection and intermediation; promotion of events in which children take an active role in the search for alternatives; creation of new educational models that fit the context; creation of practices that counteract the culture of violence; and appreciation of the value of Afro-Colombian culture and its historical reconstruction (Observatorio de Territorios Étnicos, 2010):

During the 10 years of paramilitary presence in San Onofre, teachers were the ones who upheld the social image of the State in communities [assuming the role in protection that corresponds to the State]. The school and teachers developed strategies to protect students, such as hiding a girl for more than two months to keep her from being abused by the paramilitary commander of the area (Observatorio de Territorios Étnicos, 2010, p. 28).

In another initiative, residential schools were created in the Bajo Putumayo region. Families, seeking to protect their children from recruitment by illegal armed groups, took them to closed educational institutions where they studied, and were fed and protected from the dangers of the armed conflict (Coalico & CCJ, 2009).

The Ruta Jurídica legal initiative for Colombian indigenous children and adolescents has also sought to prevent the recruitment of this population. Furthermore, in some cases it has helped indigenous children and adolescents to leave illegal armed groups. This initiative has contributed to the autonomy of the indigenous community inasmuch as it has promoted the delimitation of State actions, which enables the indigenous community a greater area of influence (Coalico & CCJ, 2009):

The emphasis on differential treatment to be given to indigenous children who are affected by armed conflict is the central axis of this proposal, in whose application, priority should be given to the social, economic, cultural, and political institutions of each community, which must be respected (Coalico & CCJ, 2009, p. 106).

The Colombian Children's Movement for Peace obtained widespread recognition on having been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, as mentioned by Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict (2004), yet this movement has still not had the desired impact. This peace initiative mobilized the Children's Mandate for Peace and Rights, consisting of an election held on 25 October 1996, in which children voted, prioritizing three rights: life and good health; peace and protection; and love and family. As UNICEF

stated (1998), the fact that this initiative has been among the nominees for the Nobel Peace Prize is a challenge to nations in conflict, inasmuch as children and young people have carried out actions with profound effects in a situation in which adults have found no paths to peace. UNICEF pointed out the reception given to the Children's Mandate for Peace and Rights. No more than 300,000 children were expected to vote, but more than 2.7 million children between 7 and 18 voted, equivalent to a third of the children in this age group in Colombia. In municipalities with the greatest presence of violence, more than 90% of children voted.

The initiative led to more than 10 million adults mobilizing a year later to vote in support of the Children's Mandate for Peace and Rights. This adult vote showed war, and the atrocities that occur in it, to be unacceptable, and demonstrated participants' interest in supporting peace-building. Both the children's and adults' initiatives led to a focus on the theme of peace in Colombia, which was evident in the subsequent presidential elections and administration of president Andrés Pastrana. In the following years, the children's movement continued to support the work for peace. The rights to survival and peace voted for in the Children's Mandate continued to be a focus in the activities of various organizations and community groups (UNICEF, 1998).

Finally, another major initiative is the safety net created by a group of non-governmental organizations such as Bemposta, Justapaz, and Coalico. This network aims to promote the protection of children and young people who are at risk of being recruited. In addition to local actions, the network carries out work at a regional level, and both inside and outside the zone of influence of the armed conflict (Coalico & CCJ, 2009).

In short, civil society has carried out various actions to protect children from the armed conflict, and in particular from their recruitment by armed groups. In some cases, these initiatives have come from important actors such as teachers in association with community members. This was the case in San Onofre (Observatorio de Territorios Étnicos, 2010). Actions have also been proposed by families in partnership with educational institutions, such as the boarding schools mentioned above (Coalico & CCJ, 2009). In other cases, the proposals have come from institutions or actors at the macro level, as in the case of the Ruta Jurídica initiative (Coalico & CCJ, 2009), the Colombian Children's Peace Movement (Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, 2004), and the protection network consisting of various non-governmental organizations (Coalico & CCJ, 2009).

With regard to the objectives of the civil society initiatives, some aim to prevent the recruitment of children and young people, such as the residential schools, the Ruta Jurídica, and the protection network (Coalico & CCJ, 2009). Other actions, taken once children have been demobilized from armed groups, have been concerned with their reconstruction and creating alternative relationships to those involving violence (as in the case of the teachers in San Onofre) (Observatorio de Territorios Étnicos, 2010). Civil society actions have also focused on promoting State response, influencing public policy,

and participating in training processes (Coalico & CCJ, 2009). Furthermore, members of civil society have promoted children's rights to survival, peace, and affection, as in the case of the Colombian Children's Peace Movement (Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, 2004).

Civil society has supplemented State efforts with actions aimed at the protection of children. Progress has been made in Colombia on some points: State adoption of international agreements and regulations; national legislation; and initiatives of the population in general, which have promoted very relevant and innovative processes to create alternatives to the violence associated with armed conflict. However, despite the combined efforts of various actors for the protection and guarantee of the rights of children in the context of armed conflict, major violations of these rights continue, as may be seen in Chapter 4. Reflections on these matters will be dealt with in more detail in Chapter 5.

In Conclusion

Thus, this chapter has shown how, in Colombia, numerous public policies and measures have emphasized the fulfillment of children's rights. These measures include ratified international agreements such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and some international Protocols; Colombian national policy represented in the Constitution, legislation, economic measures (CONPES), the Colombian National Plan for Childhood and Adolescence, the Colombian national plan for attention and reparation of victims (Plan Nacional de Atención y Reparación Integral a Víctimas), and public policy for the comprehensive protection of children. Furthermore, there are government measures such as the "De cero a siempre" strategy, and the protection program for victims and witnesses. In spite of these measures, the review above shows that, in many cases, as previous studies have concluded, there is a discrepancy between the guidelines for institutions applying the CRC and the actual performance of these protection centers (Carcelén & Martínez, 2008; March, 2007; Sierra, 2004).

Despite national and international initiatives to ensure the comprehensive protection of children in the context of armed conflict, major violations of the rights of these children continue (Alvarado et al., 2012; Ceballos & Bello, 2001) as will be detailed in the next chapter, Chapter 4. In Chapter 5, I develop a critical view with regard to these shortcomings, the limits I have identified in public policy, and the connections of both these points with this study, and the breach between what is proposed in the treaties, laws, policies, and measures (Chapter 3) and the violation of the rights of children (Chapter 4). Chapter 4 offers a critical review of the actions of the State and other agents, such as the international community, in the light of the violation of the rights of children in the context of armed conflict.

Chapter 4

Violations of Children's Rights

Dealing with the violation of children's rights in contexts of armed conflict, and citing previous research on the subject, this chapter shows the breach between these violations and the State actions, regulations, and civil society initiatives described in the previous chapter. Reflections on this contrast – between the laws and policies described in Chapter 3 and the violations of children's rights shown in the present chapter – will be set out in Chapter 5. The present chapter aims to demonstrate that, though there have been significant advances in public policy, there still remains much to be done in order to deconstruct the factors that determine impacts on the population under study. This disparity, among other grounds, justifies the importance of a study such as the present one, which aims to deconstruct patterns of relating that reproduce violence, and to contribute to co-constructing alternative narratives and relational practices that favor peace-building.

By means of a review of previous studies, the following introduction to the present chapter details the discrepancy between what public policy proposes, and the reality of the violations of the rights of children and their socializing agents in contexts of armed conflict. After the introduction, I deal with violations of children's rights in terms of specific areas of these rights, as defined by a Colombian plan for children and young people (Plan Nacional para la Niñez y la Adolescencia 2009-2019) (Ministerio de la Protección Social, 2009). The plan contemplates the rights to life, survival, development, protection, and participation. As set out in the previous chapter on the public policies and agreements adopted, progress has been made in the matter of these rights. Yet, there is a need for continued joint work between the State and civil society to guarantee the rights of children and their socializing agents. Although the regulations and legislation described in the preceding chapter have led to actions aimed at improving conditions for childhood in the context of armed conflict, numerous violations still occur in various areas of children's rights. The overview below illustrates that research in Colombia has enabled a more complex comprehension of violence, and of the violation of these rights. The chapter ends with details of some of the shortcomings in the response to the violation of rights, due to lack of action by the State, and to its offloading certain responsibilities onto international cooperation.

By Way of Introduction: The Breach Between Advances in Policy and Actual Violations of Children's Rights

In spite of progress in regulations and social research, as Alvarado et al. (2012) state, “the research on children in armed conflict is still not sufficiently coordinated with

the policies, programs, and projects created by the government, private enterprise, and civil society to attend this population and guarantee its rights” (p. 37). As Villanueva O’Driscoll (2013) has shown, adverse effects on children in contexts of armed conflict are a historical phenomenon, although emphasis on such effects and subsequent action in terms of policy is recent: “In recent years, there has been a growing attention towards the phenomenon of children involved in armed groups On a political level it is being advocated to enter the political agenda worldwide” (p. 17). Torrado et al. (2009) argue that, to guarantee the rights of children in early childhood, eight basic conditions must be met: secure family ties; loving relationships in which the child learns with others from their experience in the world; decent housing, clean water, and a healthy environment; adequate food for mother and child during pregnancy and breastfeeding, and for the child to six years of age; timely and quality healthcare for children in early childhood and for mother and child during pregnancy and breastfeeding; the possibility of play, and conditions for recreation and leisure; access to quality early childhood education, and cultural assets such as literature, music, and popular traditions; and opportunities for participation.

In this regard, Torrado et al. (2009), on analyzing data presented by UNICEF, state that the socialization of children in the context of armed conflict may violate the exercise of their rights:

Thus, the environment for socialization of children in a family context affected by armed conflict may be far from being a loving space that strengthens the capacities of children and promotes their recognition as subjects of rights, due to the difficulties of parents, family members, and institutions in meeting their needs and contributing to the fulfillment of their rights (Torrado et al., 2009, p. 92).

Villanueva, Loots, Losantos, Exeni, Berckmans, and Derluyn (2017) show that one of the central discourses among organizations in contact with children and young people in contexts of armed conflict is law-oriented:

Through the law 1448 of victims and land restitution ratified in 2011, they are recognized as a group of victims whose rights have been violated and who have desocialised from society due to their engagement with armed groups ... The time in the armed group is seen as a lost time, where all their rights are violated, from sexual abuse to forced labour. Moreover, it is characterised by rough experiences, where children lose their name, friends, family, and childhood. Children are considered not as active agents in crime, but as passive subjects of crime (pp. 92-93).

As Romero and Castañeda suggest (2009), in the context of armed conflict, children are affected by several factors:

landmines; forced displacement; kidnapping, of both children and their parents; migration of parents’ abroad, with children being left in the care of relatives and sometimes friends or neighbors; being handed over to “support families” when

parents are combatants; demobilization of parents from illegal armed groups; maltreatment and abandonment by their families; forced disappearance of parents or relatives; confinement; attacks and armed takeover of municipalities; fumigation of illicit crops; and the murders and massacres of their families and neighbors (p. 39).

As Sierra et al. mentioned (2009), even children who do not belong to an armed group, but have lived in the context of armed conflict have become familiar with military objects from their early years:

Springer's study reveals further information: Before entering the ranks formally, children perform the task of handling and transporting explosives and mines ..., they carry weapons hidden in their notebooks or under the wings of hens [From] 6 or 7 years of age they may already be at the service of the armed groups The handling of explosives is a job that they continue to carry out from this time; young children are better able to manipulate these artifacts and many manufacture and place anti-personnel mines (Sierra et al., 2009, pp. 43-44).

The experience of violence in everyday situations leads easily to its naturalization: "Especially in communities that are very exposed to the conflict a sort of **naturalization** develops and it is incorporated into the culture" (Villanueva O'Driscoll, 2013, p. 54). As Villanueva O'Driscoll (2013) shows with regard to the everyday presence of violence and its adverse effect on children, it is not possible to clearly differentiate the degree to which violence is related to the armed conflict from its relation to established social and cultural practices:

the intertwinement and **naturalization of social violence** is an important aspect when speaking about the involvement of children in the conflict, whereby the armed conflict and involved armed groups cannot be separated from other social dynamics in a clear-cut way (p. 67).

The naturalization of violence increases with the everyday presence of armed actors and people's perception of the value of, or their fear of, the armed actor's practices, given the absence of the State:

Being born and living in a conflict zone implies proximity or cohabitation with armed groups and a daily relationship with the armed actors, which in some cases serve as the authority for civil people. The communities of origin of these children and young [people] may perceive these groups as kind people who live in solidarity.... In other cases, this cohabitation leads to first-hand experiences at a young age with extreme violence including armed insurrection, massacres, forced displacement, threats and kidnapping These armed groups become associated with, and the object of, either empathy or fear. In the midst of this context, the culture performs the social construction of children.... The family validates this way of life, and sometimes drives it and legitimizes it. These families may facilitate, or at least not prevent enrollment (Lugo, 2017, pp. 28-30).

Children are the most vulnerable population in the context of armed conflict, because, as well as being affected by war directly, they are victims of everyday violence (Torrado, Durán, Serrato, Del Castillo, Buitrago & Acero, 2002). Children who live in situations of ongoing armed conflict are more vulnerable to becoming involved in the conflict than other members of the population because they are more susceptible to the naturalization of violence in their lives due to their youth. They not only live with violence on a daily basis in their families and other relational contexts, but are also affected by hostilities and other activities of the war through events such as losing family members, disintegration of the family, and their utilization as collaborators and informers.

In their study, Ceballos and Bello (2001) assert that children's collaboration with armed actors is one form of their participation in armed conflict that is not often identified. Their collaboration then leads to their daily lives becoming increasingly caught up in actions associated with the armed conflict, and consequently the conflict becomes naturalized in their lives. Another form of children's participation set out by these authors is as victims of the armed conflict, although in many cases the label of victim largely obscures the fact that this is a mode of participation in the conflict:

Participation as a victim is not just [involvement in] acts of violence and all that they imply. It is also indicative of the degradation of the war, [understood as] ... the obligation imposed by armed groups to exclude no one from the conflict (Ceballos & Bello, p. 26).

The effects of armed conflict on children are wide ranging. A 1999 UNICEF study identified several actions carried out by children in armed groups: manufacturing, installation, and detection of landmines; identification of collaborators of the adversary group; murder of civilians; involvement in kidnapping, torture, and armed confrontations; and participation in hazardous activities such as acting as guides, taking messages, purchasing items for the group, keeping watch, and cooking (Torres, 2006). They work as informants, messengers, spies, orderlies, and combatants. In many cases, they are involved in combat, using light weapons (Torrado, et al., 2002).

In contexts of armed conflict, children's social construction takes place within an environment that includes threatening situations.

Children are threatened both by warnings that something will happen to them, and actual carrying out of threats. The **maiming and murdering** by armed groups is common because children do not obey, disagree to join the group, have a relationship with someone from another group or because they are in the wrong place at the wrong time (Villanueva O'Driscoll, 2013, p. 56).

Sierra et al. (2009) emphasize that when the youngest children enter armed groups, they have to perform activities that are not appropriate to their age: "Once fully in the camps, they carry out all the tasks of an adult: fighting, standing guard, cooking, caring for the sick, planting, cultivating, picking coca, and taking care of kidnapped persons" (Sierra et al., 2009, p. 44).

Several studies on children in the context of armed conflict are conducted with a quantitative approach, aiming to identify the impact of the conflict on children through statistics. However, researchers state that quantitative data from previous research are not completely reliable. As Villanueva O'Driscoll and Loots (2014) mention: "There has been little qualitative research focusing on children's narratives about their life-world in Colombia" (p. 367). Furthermore, most of the studies on children in armed conflict are generally carried out without explicit reference to early childhood (Alvarado et al., 2012; Coalico and CCJ, 2009; Defensoría del Pueblo, 2002; Hernandez and Restrepo, 2011; Human Rights Watch, 2003; Moreno, Carmona and Tobón, 2010; Niño, 2012; Ospina-Alvarado, Alvarado, Carmona and Ospina, 2017; Sierra, Lozano, Guerrero and Salamanca, 2009; Torrado, et al., 2002; Organización de las Naciones Unidas, 2010; Villanueva O'Driscoll, 2013; Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, 2004). Other studies focus on children and young people without reference to early childhood (Ceballos and Bello, 2001; Defensoría del Pueblo, 2006; Lugo, 2017; Montoya, 2008; Observatorio de Territorios Étnicos, 2010; Springer, 2008; Villanueva O'Driscoll and Loots, 2014). Only in a few cases do the studies focus particularly on early childhood (Ilá, Martínez, Arias, Núñez and Caicedo, 2009; Romero and Castañeda, 2009; Torrado, et al., 2009).

Some studies reveal a situation in which children are vulnerable to being drawn into actions related to the armed conflict because of their low cost to the armed groups: Incorporating children and youth into armed groups has other advantages for the armed organizations: children can learn faster than adults; they are less critical, easily intimidated, less likely to leave, more faithful to the commanders and rarely do they arouse suspicion among security forces. They eat less, and they do not demand salary; they move themselves easier and faster. In other words, it is an inexpensive way to keep the troops (Lugo, 2017, p. 26).

However, despite making no specific reference to early childhood, several studies (Ceballos & Bello, 2001; Torrado, et al., 2002; Human Rights Watch, 2003; Sierra, Lozano, Guerrero & Salamanca, 2009; and Alvarado et al., 2012) show how the youngest children are in the most vulnerable situation:

The particular age within the life cycle is also an advantage, because [when children are younger] the learning process is faster and children grasp and assimilate causes, motives, values, methods, and even handling of weapons as normal; it is then not easy for them to create different ways of life or critical positions, and much less to establish ethical questioning (Ceballos & Bello, 2001, p. 30).

Human Rights Watch (2003) also draws attention to the increased vulnerability of the youngest children: "Children are especially useful in the war because they infrequently calculate risks, adapt easily in a violent environment, eat less, earn less, and are always ready to obey" (p. 40). Torrado et al. (2002) assert that children form the

social group most likely to be victimized in the armed conflict because they cannot escape, cannot defend themselves, are agile and lively, take orders, generally have no vices, and are not afraid of risk and death. In addition, many of the resources they need for survival may be destroyed in the conflict.

Violations of Children's Rights in Contexts of Armed Conflict, According to Areas of Rights

The studies reviewed in the previous section note the breach between policy and the real impacts on the rights of children and their relational agents in contexts of armed conflict. Below, I set out the results of previous studies that detail, expand on, and exemplify these impacts in terms of specific areas of rights. The following section outlines previous research on rights violations that affect children in early childhood and their socializing agents. The focus is on certain specific areas of rights: life and survival, development, protection, and participation.

Violation of the Rights to Life and Survival

The rights to life, health, and food are among the children's rights that are violated in contexts of armed conflict. As UNICEF states (2009, as cited in Niño, 2012) "Each year there are thousands of children who die as a direct result of combat, bullet or knife wounds, bombs, and landmines, but many more die of malnutrition and disease caused or aggravated by armed conflict" (p. 58). The effects of armed conflict on the youngest children include both the consequences of the destruction of food and crops and an increase in illnesses resulting from Colombian army control of food and medicines in areas of conflict (Ardila, 1995).

The right to life

One of the main rights affected in the context of armed conflict is the right to life. The infringement of this right may not only affect children in early childhood by the loss of their own lives. They are also affected by the deaths of their socializing agents, which places them in a state of defenselessness. Torrado et al. (2002) show that, from 1996, concern was raised about the direct involvement of children in the war, and this issue has remained a focus of interest in subsequent years. In 1996, according to these authors, the number of recruited children killed in combat began to be used as an indicator in analysis of the damage and injury caused by living among armed conflict.

It is not possible to identify the number of deaths of children in early childhood due to armed conflict, because the figures given by the UN (Organización de las Naciones Unidas, 2010) are not broken down according to age:

In 2010, reports of unlawful killings continued, including those of children, despite the policy of zero tolerance for human rights violations announced by the government, and measures put in place by the Colombian Ministry of Defense. So far, it has not been possible to determine the total number of forced disappearances of children due to armed conflict, as the official figures are not broken down by age (Organización de las Naciones Unidas, 2010, p 42).

As mentioned, in addition to the direct violation of children's right to life, their relational agents also suffer violation of this right. Many women are forced to move with their children when faced with death in the context of armed conflict. As an example, the United Nations (Organización de las Naciones Unidas, 2010) cites the displacement of women and children in the department of Cauca in the south west of Colombia, while men are the principal victims of homicide in the municipalities of Cúcuta and Tibú in the north of Colombia, another area of armed conflict. Some of them are fathers of children in early childhood. Approximately 70% of the homicides reported in Tibú in 2010 by the Colombian forensic medicine institute (Instituto de Medicina Legal) were due to political violence (armed conflict, terrorism, and guerrilla actions). This source reports that, in Cúcuta, 39% of homicide victims were aged between 0 and 26 years, and they were mostly male (Niño, 2012).

The right to health

With regard to the right to health, the Comisión Colombiana de Juristas [Colombian Commission of Jurists] (2003, as cited in Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, 2004) states that children are the population group most affected by the difficulties in the health service in Colombia. They suffer and die from preventable or treatable diseases such as chronic malnutrition, anemia, dehydration, and other diseases specific to the territories from which they originate, such as dengue, malaria, and respiratory infections.

Niño (2012) warns "The situation is not encouraging. Areas where conflicts occur are often the same as those that have greater structural violence, in which the enjoyment of the right to health is seriously affected" (p. 58). Certain barriers prevent children's socializing agents, and therefore the children themselves, from access to health services: lack of roads; natural barriers; poor information; distance; and lack of money for transport, medicines, and services.

In addition to these barriers to the use of health services, there are difficulties in rural areas involving health professionals and the facilities in which their services are delivered. Niño (2012) notes some of these: the permanence of professionals in rural areas is intermittent; health care institutions lack medicines, equipment, and staff; and only a limited range of health problems can be addressed. This means that families have to travel to other municipalities, further hindering access due to economic factors.

With regard to mothers, both expectant and of children in early childhood, Niño (2012) reviewed some indicators of sexual and reproductive rights. These are related to health promotion, prevention of disease, and care. Concerning maternal mortality, Niño found that 40% of deaths of women in the department of Norte de Santander were associated with pregnancy. The city of Cúcuta and municipality of Ocaña rank first and second in maternal deaths, and the municipality of Tibú ranks third. The most affected group is that of women between the ages of 14 and 24. In the period between 2005 and 2010, 42% of maternal deaths were of women in this age group. Ten per cent of the deaths of expectant mothers are due to homicides and other external events.

In contexts of armed conflict, mothers of children in early childhood are often very young, as shown by the figures for pregnancy. According to her study in Norte de Santander, Niño (2012) states that teenage pregnancies (15-19 years) are more frequent in the municipality of Tibú than in the rest of the department; between 2008 and 2009, there was an increased percentage of adolescent mothers in the 10 to 14, and 15 to 19 year-old age groups. Also, according to this research, Cúcuta is the municipality with the highest percentage of pregnant adolescents and young women.

Additionally, in the context of the war, health difficulties arise with regard to the acquisition of HIV among parents of children in early childhood, thus increasing the risk for the children:

Conflicts create and consolidate many of the conditions and human rights abuses in which the HIV epidemic thrives. Poverty, powerlessness, and social instability, each of which can facilitate HIV transmission, are aggravated during wars and armed conflicts. Physical and sexual violence, forced displacement, and unexpected destitution, the collapse of social structures, and the breakdown of the rule of law can put people at greater risk of HIV infection (Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, 2004, p. 20).

With regard to early childhood, a study by Torrado et al. (2009) found a concurrence involving a large number of indigenous children in this age group, poor drinking water, and a high intensity of conflict. These authors found that, from pregnancy through children's early years, there were violations of the rights to prenatal care, hospital care during delivery, immunization, and nutrition.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, in the context of the war, several armed groups maintain themselves through the cultivation and trafficking of illicit crops. Niño (2012) states that the eradication of these crops by aerial spraying of glyphosate affects the health of the youngest children and their socializing agents, due to the contamination of water sources and the problems caused by skin contact with this product. In the department of Norte de Santander, where spraying is carried out, from 2006 onwards the causes of mortality among children under one year old changed, congenital malformations beginning to account for a part of them.

Many children in early childhood whose mothers have joined the ranks of an armed group have health problems due to failed abortion attempts. In their study, Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict (2004) found that during and after recruitment “girls are victims of sexual harassment and abuse, forced use of intrauterine devices, contraceptive injections, forced abortion, and rape” (p. 30). These authors note that the FARC - EP guerrilla group carries out such actions against 12 year-old girls as part of a policy named “sexual freedom.” “Girls are held solely responsible for any pregnancy that may occur and are subsequently forced to abort. Adolescent girls may be recruited for special missions that require having sex with Army soldiers for the purpose of obtaining information” (Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, 2004, p. 32).

The Defensoría del Pueblo (2006) found the rate of abortions among adolescents demobilized from illegal armed groups to be 10 percentage points above global rates. All the abortions were carried out during the time these adolescents were members of the groups. According to this study, 93.9% of young ex-combatants of both sexes said they had received information on the consequences of unprotected sex, and 90% reported having been informed on the exercise of sexuality. The major risk identified by the young men was contagion of HIV, and, by young women, that of pregnancy.

The right to food

In addition to the rights to life and health of both children in early childhood and their socializing agents, their right to food has also been violated, especially in the cases of children who do not receive exclusive breastfeeding or whose mothers suffer from malnutrition. In her study, Niño (2012) analyzes the indicator of chronic malnutrition, noting that the highest prevalence of malnutrition in the department of Norte de Santander is in the municipality of Tibú, mainly among children who are in the last years of early childhood (5-6 years), or older (up to 17 years). Furthermore, while the prevalence of underweight children is decreasing in the department as a whole, in Tibú it is increasing.

In Colombia as a whole, the department of Norte de Santander occupies first place in demographic vulnerability with regard to the right to food. Niño (2012) notes some demographic elements among the causes of this violation in Norte de Santander: women heads of household with low incomes are less likely to purchase food (42%); families have 11 members on average; few families have both parents (14%); and some families include disabled persons (8.42%).

According to research by Niño (2012), the department of Norte de Santander is the most vulnerable in Colombia with regard to food availability. A large percentage (34%) of families depend on donations for their food; over half of the families (56.31%) lack one of the essential food groups in their diet; and a significant proportion (40%) of families did not feed their children by exclusive breastfeeding in the first 6 months of

their lives. Additionally, this department has an alarming figure for vulnerability in food security (96%).

In the urban context, despite the availability of food, low family income increases the risk of an unbalanced and insufficient diet. In the rural context, factors such as water shortages, coca and palm crop planting, and the low quality of land affect food production, reducing planting areas and exacerbating the need to purchase food for family consumption. Added to this, forced displacement means that families lose both the land they use for growing crops for home consumption and their economic sustainability.

Coca cultivation, part of the culture associated with the war in Colombia, has marked the family economy and food security. The sale of coca leaf provides a higher income than that obtained from other crops. Although families recognize the impacts of having illicit crops on their lands, they still link these crops to their household economies, due to a lack of opportunities for marketing legal products (Niño, 2012). The spraying of illicit crops affects food security, as stated by Ila et al. (2009). In the words of these authors, these eradication programs “end up subjecting children and their families to scenarios of starvation and disease, because, as coca crops are eliminated, their food crops are also killed off, a situation that can lead to malnutrition levels in these rural areas” (p. 159).

In addition to the limitations in access to food mentioned above, armed groups impose restrictions on families and extort money from them in exchange for allowing them to bring food to their homes (Niño, 2012). Furthermore, unlawful confinement exacerbates malnutrition among children in their early years, through lack of access to food: “In the context of confinement, the food crisis becomes unmanageable, especially affecting the youngest children, who suffer high rates of malnutrition. Although no specific data on this issue was found, almost all interviewees referred to this situation” (Ila, et al., 2009, p. 259).

Ila et al. (2009) suggest that, in certain situations, violations of the rights of children are due to structural poverty issues. However, regarding many situations related to rights violations, these authors indicate other causes:

It is undeniable that the conflict greatly aggravated some of them, such as the food crisis in rural areas of the department (chronic child malnutrition), and skin conditions and respiratory problems due to aerial spraying in border municipalities, although there are no systematic studies that demonstrate the magnitude of the problem (p. 185).

Given the above violations of the right to food, State subsidies, such as those from a government program (*Familias en Acción*),²⁰ have contributed to improving the

20 *Familias en Acción* is a conditional cash transfer program that seeks to contribute to: reducing poverty and inequality of income; forming human capital; and improving the living conditions of poor and vulnerable families. These objectives are targeted by an income supplement. The program focuses on families which: have children under 18; are poor and vulnerable according to a government rating system; belong to the *Unidos* network; and are displaced, or belong to the

nutrition of displaced or vulnerable children (Niño, 2012). Even so, these strategies have not been sufficient to ensure an adequate diet for the children. Furthermore, this type of strategy (direct subsidy) has implications for the way in which families position themselves, because, as objects of welfarist strategies, they may become idle, expecting the State to solve their economic difficulties at all times.

In summary, in the context of armed conflict, the rights to life and survival (rights to life, health, and food) of the youngest children have been violated both by events that affect them directly and by those that affect their parents. Furthermore, these rights are affected not only by structural violence, but by specific situations, such as displacement, that come about in the context of armed conflict and exacerbate the poverty mentioned above. The loss of children's own lives or those of their socializing agents are among the principal violations of rights that occur due to the armed conflict. But also, children are frequently orphaned or suffer the loss of a father. In terms of health, children in the context of armed conflict are subject to a great risk, caused by barriers in access to healthcare, including the difficulty of entering medicines into areas of conflict, and fear among health service providers. Prenatal care and childbirth are affected by the armed conflict, and many children die in their first year from treatable diseases, due, among other reasons, to a lack of both nutrition and immunization. In the context of armed conflict, children's health is also impaired through the deterioration of parents' health due to such factors as HIV, and because of difficulties associated with failed abortion attempts, and an increase in sexual violence. In addition, illnesses and congenital malformations occur due to the use of fumigants on illicit crops.

Thus, in the context of armed conflict, the diet of children in early childhood is affected by various factors: a reduction in the practice of exclusive breastfeeding; the malnutrition of mothers; destruction of food stocks through warfare; low availability of food; conditions of poverty exacerbated by the conflict; the extortion of families for access to food; and, due to the eradication of illicit crops, a loss of food crops and a deterioration in food security. The State has provided subsidies, which have helped families to obtain food but have not been sufficient to solve the problems arising from the war.

In addition to the rights mentioned above whose violation affects both children and their principal relational agents, other rights, such as development rights, are strongly affected in the context of armed conflict.

indigenous population (Departamento Administrativo para la Prosperidad Social, 2017). It is worth pointing out that the law (Ley 1948 de 2019, Congreso de Colombia) regulates the operation of that program.

Violation of Children's Development Rights

The right to education (UNCRC, Articles 28, 29, 1989) and the right to play and recreation (UNCRC, Article 31, 1989) are among the development rights of children in early childhood and their socializing agents that are violated in the context of armed conflict.

The right to education

Ardila (1995), reviewing secondary information in reports on displacement, identified that the right to education is violated in the context of armed conflict, as children do not attend due to the dangers involved in going to school. Morales (1999, as cited in Torrado, et al., 2002) states that, in the context of armed conflict, children's rights to education are affected when their disposition for activities other than war is undermined and transformed by entry into an armed group. The children and their socializing agents may regard their entry into an armed group as natural, and this leads to education being the first thing that is left aside.

With regard to education in the department of Norte de Santander, in her study, Niño (2012) discusses children who leave school before the statutory age, and those who have simply never attended. This author found that, generally, school attendance is limited. Primary education (6 to 11 years of age, approximately) is attended by 77% of eligible children, which includes siblings or other socializing agents of children. Of those eligible for secondary school (11 to 18 years of age, approximately), which includes a large number of parents of children in early childhood, only 38% attend. Niño identified that girls have greater difficulty than boys in entering the educational system, but boys are less likely to remain in the system, typically abandoning studies during the move from primary to secondary.

Niño (2012) reports a census carried out by la Universidad Francisco de Paula Santander in 2010 in 12 neighborhoods of the city of Cúcuta, a zone where armed conflict is present. The school grades with the highest dropout rate are first (age 5 approx.) and fifth (age 9 approx.). According to the census, 40.84% of young persons aged 18-24 years, and 87% of children between 5 and 10 years do not attend school. Of all the children who do not attend school, 54% are boys and 46% girls. The author found several factors among the causes of the non-attendance: lack of motivation for study (48%), difficulty of entry due to being over-age (33%), economic problems in the family (24%), the need to work (21%), other reasons (13%), pregnancy and subsequent maternity or paternity (11%), lack of places in school (9%), lack of documents for admission (5%), and being in a marital relationship (4%).

Among the barriers to the right to education identified in the study are the costs of materials, uniforms, and refreshments. Not wearing a uniform and failure to bring materials lead to penalties for the children. There is a greater attendance at schools where

lunch and refreshments are available, though a lack of food at home may also be a reason for not attending school. In the context of armed conflict, the high costs associated with access to education, and economic difficulties in the family add to the causes of non-attendance (Niño, 2012).

Additionally, facilities and staff (teaching and administrative) are insufficient for proper execution of the educational process. Teachers are frequently changed and do not receive timely payments, and courses begin late due to delays in appointment and hiring. These factors cause stoppages and delays in academic periods. Faced with continuous changes and shortages of teachers, children and their socializing agents are not motivated to attend the educational institutions (Niño, 2012).

Other factors leading to the violation of the right to education are related more directly to the context of war. Changes in the family structure because of the armed conflict mean that children and young persons are often left in charge of domestic tasks that would in other circumstances be carried out by adults. Siblings often undertake the care of children in early childhood. Fighting or other actions related to the conflict, such as massacres in or around schools, limit and prevent attendance at these institutions, as people seek to protect themselves against the imminent dangers of leaving the house. Educational institutions thus become symbols of terror. The deterioration of school infrastructure due to armed actions, the signs of violence, the bloodstains, and the ruins associate these places with painful memories. Forced displacement leads to children and young people having to interrupt or start educational processes late, and then being subjected to exclusion as they are perceived as “lazy” due to their being older (Niño, 2012).

The findings of Niño (2012) coincide with the research conducted by Coalico and CCJ (2009). These studies illustrate how actions of the Colombian armed forces pose a threat to children and their socializing agents. The armed forces carry out actions in schools, put forward as educational, to instruct children and indoctrinate them in militaristic principles. The latter study shows the interference of armed actors in educational content in several municipalities of Chocó and Bolívar. The UN Secretary General reports the risk to the lives of children caused by the presence of armed actors in educational institutions in the departments of Arauca, Antioquia, Norte de Santander, and Córdoba (Organización de las Naciones Unidas, 2010).

The context of the armed conflict turns educational institutions into scenarios in which armed groups seek recruits and supporters with economic promises, intimidation, social control, and deception, as was found in 12 Colombian departments. This is shown in a narrative cited by Coalico and CCJ:

The guerrillas enter schools to recruit children. An example of this that I personally knew happened in Macarena (department of Meta) where the Seventh and Yarí fronts of the FARC guerrilla group occupied the surroundings of the school. When the children came out for a break, the guerrillas began to tell them

to come and join them, and that they would want for nothing, and would not have to study any more in order to get money and new weapons. This is bad, because it separates the children from school and family (Coalico & CCJ, 2009, p. 51).

In this context, children and their socializing agents witness interactions between the educational institutions and armed groups in everyday scenarios:

The most worrying case happened on July 11, 2007, when four men arrived at the premises of the educational institution called Colegio CEDEPRO [Medellín] in search of the directors. The men demanded that the institution organize a group of young people to be taken by bus to the La Alpujarra Administrative Center, to participate in a mass meeting in support of the paramilitary commander Diego Fernando Murillo Bejarano, alias “Don Berna,” who was to begin a process of voluntary surrender to the public prosecutor. After their refusal, the school directors were subjected to insults for their “lack of collaboration,” and later were seriously threatened (Coalico & CCJ, 2009, p. 52).

The study carried out by Niño (2012) reports that children living in the context of war enter education late, or are at risk of not being part of the educational system at all. This affects children in early childhood either directly, or indirectly through their socializing agents. Niño suggests that, in the case of displaced families, the probability of dropping out of school is 30%. When families have suffered the murder of a member, the probability is 52%.

Also, the workload borne by girls and women in housework and caring for the family limits their participation and leads to their abandoning studies. There are many cases of adolescent mothers dropping out of school. This may be because the school system does not provide the conditions for their permanence, and because, culturally, there is pressure for these adolescents to assume roles (mother, housewife, partner) that do not allow them to study (Niño, 2012).

The rural environment entails additional conditions that become barriers to education for children and their socializing agents. In many cases, they are obliged to deal with natural hazards, such as those related to livestock or caused by the climate, or risks due to the conflict, among which are landmines, forced recruitment, and sexual violence. In the rural sector of the municipality of Tibú (2,696 km²), children must travel vast distances to the educational institutions. Often families cannot afford the high cost of transport. This, in addition to the presence of armed groups, drug trafficking, and small-scale arms trafficking, leads to children’s non-attendance at school or to their abandonment of the educational process in this municipality (Niño, 2012).

Like Niño (2012), the Defensoría del Pueblo (2002) reports violation of rights to education of children and their socializing agents. The research undertaken by this government entity found certain educational circumstances in which the rights of children are violated and they become vulnerable to joining armed groups: abandonment of studies; high levels of repetition in elementary school; and a gap in levels of illiteracy

between urban and rural areas. The demobilized children and young persons gave various reasons for abandoning studies prior to their recruitment by illegal armed groups: “economic difficulties; the long distance between school and home; entry into the labor market; and difficulties with the teachers, either because teachers were absent, or because the students did not like them, among others” (Defensoría del Pueblo, 2002, p. 27).

In addition to the barriers and limitations affecting the right to education, the Defensoría del Pueblo (2006) concluded that the educational system itself violates this right, because school curricula are not adapted to focus on rights, and thus a requirement for educational adaptability is not met. Children and their socializing agents, such as young people, must adapt to the educational services as supplied. These services usually do not suit their interests and needs, for example their being older than usual, and are insufficient and of inadequate quality. Thus, the right to education is violated in terms of availability and suitability. Although the study illustrates the violation of the right to education, it also recognizes the efforts of the Colombian Institute of Family Welfare (ICBF) and the Ministry of Education in promoting access to formal, quality education for children and young people demobilized from armed groups. These initiatives are represented in legislation issued by the Colombian Ministry of Education (Resolución 2620, 2004, Ministerio de Educación Nacional) aiming to eliminate requirements, ensure cost-free education, and promote specialized training for teachers.

The right to play and recreation

Another violation of children’s development rights in the context of armed conflict involves the right of children to play and recreation, which is violated, for example, by actions related to the war such as the use of explosive artifacts including mines, and the fact that children have to assume roles which do not allow time for play. This right is set out in article 31 of the UNCRC:

1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.
2. States Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity.

Torrado et al. (2009) report that one of the principal violations of the rights of children under 6 years of age caused by the war involves the right to play and recreation. The main cause of violations of this right is related to the fear instilled among families and educators due to landmines being placed close to homes and schools.

The youngest children’s construction and socialization processes are affected, since play is one of the main settings in which these processes take place. Torrado et al. (2009) emphasize the following points:

Play is a principal and valuable scenario for children to establish interactions, form social relationships, learn to be with others, and develop cognitive and psychomotor skills. Opportunities to access materials for play in family surroundings, first educational institutions, and spaces in which the child circulates provide a greater likelihood of healthy and rewarding development. The adults close to the child should promote play and recreation to ensure full development (pp. 119-120).

However, the kind of socialization children experience in the midst of armed conflict leads to the impossibility of enjoying childhood and a decent life, because the dynamics of war mean that, from a very early age, they must assume roles that do not permit them to act as children (Delgado, as cited in Torrado et al., 2002).

In summary, with regard to the development rights of children and their socializing agents in the context of war, both education and play are affected. Several factors are among the principal limitations on the right to education: danger from armed confrontations or explosives on the often long journey to school; displacement, leading to children and young people falling behind in their studies; risks within educational institutions due to actions such as massacres and recruitment; difficulties in educational institutions, including lack of space, absence of teachers, underpaid teachers, and insufficient equipment and personnel; economic difficulties in families; and adolescent pregnancy, with its consequent maternal and parental implications.

Educational processes are permeated by the presence of armed conflict, with curricula being affected by the interests of the armed groups, and educational institutions displaying symbols of war on their walls. Furthermore, curricula are not oriented to the rights and needs of children and their socializing agents. All the limitations on the right to education indicated here keep children from entering educational institutions, resulting later in their being overage students, repeating courses, or abandoning studies altogether. Thus, though efforts have been made by the ICBF and the Ministry of Education, there are still major constraints and problems affecting the right to education.

In the context of armed conflict, children are not usually disposed towards education or play because they have to assume other roles such as caring for younger siblings, housework, and work and activities associated with armed groups. Explosive devices such as landmines, and the presence of armed actors in the places in which the relational processes of children in early childhood take place cast doubt among their socializing agents, such as family and other educational agents, on the concept of play as being pleasurable and healthy. Play and recreation are seen as risk situations that call for protection, and children's socialization and development is consequently affected.

As set out here, the development rights of children and their socializing agents are affected in the context of war. Education and play are neglected because other needs related the children's protection become more relevant. This is dealt with in more detail in the next section.

Violation of Children's Right to Protection

The defenselessness of children in their early years means that their rights to protection are easily violated. As set out below, in the context of armed conflict, protection rights are violated in several ways: sexual violence; recruitment of socializing agents; utilization of children from early childhood in the war; minefields; displacement of families; and domestic violence. A study by the Colombian ombudsman (Defensoría del Pueblo, 2002) found various forms of violation of the rights of children, adolescents, and young people: maltreatment, domestic violence, verbal psychological insults, lack of freedom, and sexual abuse.

As stated by Torrado et al. (2009), the violation of the youngest children's rights to protection relates not only to violence against these children as a direct result of the conflict, such as torture, massacres, and murder, among others, but also to all those situations that prevent their free, proper, healthy, and comprehensive development. These authors emphasize that the family has a great responsibility in the comprehensive development of children in early childhood, and that these children should be recognized as legitimate in their differences. Children's comprehensive development may be truncated by changes in family dynamics and structure due to the armed conflict.

Torrado et al. (2002) report that children are among the populations most affected by the armed conflict. Children are exposed to several risks: involvement in armed groups; being uprooted from their territory due to displacement; being orphaned; forced disappearance; kidnap; danger from the burning of buses; being caught in crossfire; and losing their lives as a result of armed confrontations, guerrilla attacks, grenades, and landmines. These authors follow the UNICEF approach, according to which such events, if survived, hinder children's development, on harming their physical and mental health.

Protection from sexual violence

In the context of armed conflict, protection rights are also affected by gender-based sexual violence. In many cases, this leads to unwanted births in environments in which rights cannot be guaranteed. Sexual violence affects the socializing agents of children in early childhood, who may be other children, adolescent girls, or young women. It transforms the scenarios in which their socialization takes place.

Sexual violence, as shown by Niño (2012), implies discrimination according to gender and age. Women, especially girls and young women, are the most affected by the violation of their rights in this matter. In Cúcuta, 77% of cases of sexual violence reported to the Colombian institute for forensic medicine (Medicina Legal) in 2010 were against women and girls. Children, adolescents, and young persons of both sexes make up 94% of the victims. According to this source, those most affected by sexual violence are children under 11 years of age.

Niño (2012) asserts that the type of social construction of femininity and masculinity that occurs in the context of armed conflict increases the violation of rights. Armed actors demonstrate domination over the enemy by sexual violence against women, the enemy being thus shown as unable to protect its women. According to Niño's study, this type of violence constitutes a military tactic and / or policy. The author cites research conducted by Corporación Humanas, about actions committed between 1999 and 2004 in the region of Catatumbo: sexual violence was present in collective massacres and attacks. The motives behind sexual violence include extraction of information by torture, and control of territory by forced pregnancy, as the latter creates ties of kinship with the armed group that commits the rape (Niño, 2012).

Disproportionate domestic violence and all other forms of sexual violence are often derived from the "culture of violence" caused by war. This may be the case in Colombia, where forced or coerced prostitution, domestic violence, trafficking of persons for sexual purposes, and other forms of sexual exploitation occur in part due to the disproportionate poverty caused by the war, which affects women and girls (Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, 2004, p. 23).

In the context of the armed conflict, girls and women may be sexually enslaved. This may happen when they are recruited by an armed group, or alternatively, on being forcibly displaced, they may become involved in prostitution networks at the service of drug traffickers and paramilitary groups (Niño, 2012).

Protection against recruitment

The recruitment of their socializing agents causes another violation of the protection rights of children in early childhood. The studies reviewed below refer to the recruitment of children and young people in general, who may be the socializing agents of the subject population of this study: children in early childhood. The section below includes statistics that show the presence of children and young people in the ranks of armed groups; the motives that lead children to enter an armed group; the children's roles in the armed groups; and the consequences that their involvement with the armed groups bring upon them.

Statistics on children and young people in the ranks of armed groups

The statistics regarding the participation of children in activities related to armed groups vary from source to source. Much research has been aimed at quantifying the presence of children in armed conflict (Alvarez & Aguirre, 2002, in Torres, 2006; UNICEF, 1999, in Torres, 2006; Human Rights Watch, 2003), with a high variation in the figures, depending on the year and author of the study.

Torrado et al. (2002) assert that, up to 1997, child soldiers did not appear in statistics: the term child soldiers being understood as children involved with the regular armed forces or illegal groups. According to these authors, the various armed groups

deny the presence of children, even though small arms and light weapons that can be handled by children have proliferated.

Alvarez and Aguirre (2002, as cited in Torres, 2006) maintain that a reliable figure cannot be ascertained regarding the number of children and young people who have participated in armed conflict globally, but these authors calculated an estimate for the world of between 150,000 and 300,000 at the end of the 1990s. UNICEF (as cited in Torres, 2006) gave an approximate figure of 6,000 children in armed groups in Colombia in 1999. Human Rights Watch (2003), through interviews with children and a review of documentation, estimated that, in 2003, there were at least 11,000 child soldiers in Colombia, and attributed the increase in this figure to recruitment campaigns by illegal armed groups. The children interviewed said that most of the combatants in illegal armed groups are children. At the end of 2003, the Secretary General of the United Nations announced that there were 14,000 children and adolescents involved in armed groups and urban militias in Colombia, giving this country the fourth highest number of child soldiers in the world (Torres, 2006).

With regard to the unreliability of data indicated in the introduction of this chapter, Torres (2006) maintains that the fact that armed actors hide the participation of children in their groups is one factor that hinders the establishment of reliable statistics. The armed groups keep children's involvement secret because the International Criminal Court penalizes their recruitment as a war crime. Another factor affecting the establishment of figures is the difficulty of access to armed groups due to a lack of security for researchers.

Motives that lead children to enter an armed group

Even when illegal armed groups have regulations against the involvement of children, they continue to join these groups due to the conditions of vulnerability in which they live, seeing their entry into an armed group as one of the few options available. In her study, Villanueva O'Driscoll (2013) emphasizes that the motives behind children's recruitment are complex and cannot be reduced to a small few. This author thus groups them into personal motives, family practices, the actions of armed groups and their presence in the territory occupied by the children, and the broader context, "the personal (microsystem), family, armed group (mesosystem), and environment (exosystem) sphere" (p. 84).

A study by Human Rights Watch (2003) affirms that, in practice, children are still recruited by the FARC guerrilla, although the rules of the group state that their entry must be voluntary and conscious, and is not allowed under the age of 15. The HRW study reports that spokesmen for this guerrilla group have argued that the children themselves ask to join, and on various occasions their mothers take them to the armed group, because they are unable to feed them. The rules of the ELN guerrilla group supposedly prohibit the recruitment of children under 16 years of age. The report states that the presence of children in its ranks is claimed by the group's leaders to be due to the desire of children

and their families. The ELN leaders maintain that families who are close to the guerrillas and sympathize with this group bring their children to save them from the attacks, intimidation, and harassment that the State and paramilitaries carry out against civil society.

The participation of children in both paramilitary and guerrilla groups has been documented. The Defensoría del Pueblo (1997, as cited in Torrado, et al., 2002) refers to their participation in these groups as victims of armed conflict and, at the same time, as protagonists and active individuals. This report points out that the sons and daughters of members of these insurgent groups are also active in them.

Among the motives involved in children's entry into armed groups are the conditions in which they and their families live. These often include economic hardship, lack of access to education, and family ties that are not based on affection or the protection of children, among other privations.

The Human Rights Watch study (2003) states that many of the children who enlist in the ranks of armed groups are from highly vulnerable environments, with difficult family conditions: domestic violence; sexual abuse; abandonment, in some cases associated with economic difficulties; unstable family relationships; and lack of affection and support. Children susceptible to recruitment may be exposed to other critical factors: poverty, and the hardships it brings; lack of access to education from the early years of life; limitations on progress; badly paid child labor, sometimes linked to the activities of armed groups, such as in the processing of cocaine; and the insecurity present in the places in which the children live.

The socializing agents of children in early childhood, including other children and young people, agree to join armed groups as a consequence of the above factors and others. Furthermore, inadequate conditions to guarantee children's rights, both within the family and generally, make it harder for children and young people to dissociate themselves from the armed groups.

Adult-centered culture is at the root of recruitment. The persons recruited may be the children's socializing agents, or children recently out of early childhood. Socialization in scenarios of armed conflict is based on an adult-centered perspective. The fact that control in the armed groups is mainly in the hands of male adults facilitates the recruitment of minors, who are weaker. Niño (2012) explains that the recruitment of children and young people by the guerrilla groups is due to their usefulness as future adult soldiers. The values present in the children's and young people's socialization contexts may be those related to money, the prestige of arms and symbols of war, and the objectification of women. Niño asserts that this type of culture is found much more within the reformed paramilitary groups, in which symbols of power are involved in children's recruitment.

A culture in which conflict-related violence is seen as natural facilitates the recruitment of the socializing agents of children in early childhood and the involvement

of the children themselves as informants or messengers. Violence is spread through the direct and indirect participation of children and their socializing agents in the conflict, and becomes increasingly rooted in the relational scenarios in which they participate:

The rural community, in which the development of children and adolescents who become involved in illegal groups ... normally takes place, is immersed in the culture of violence. These children have grown up in this culture and have formed a positive identification of the armed actors. Their desires and goals arise out of this situation, including those of revenge, death, affiliation, and consent or support for the cause of one or another armed group. It is almost impossible not to take sides. The culture is one of authoritarianism and the rule of the gun, where owning one provides recognition and power over others. This culture also values child labor and holds education and formal training for work in contempt (Defensoría del Pueblo, 2002, p. 37).

The Colombian ombudsman (Defensoría del Pueblo, 2002) states that the participation of families in armed groups, or their closeness to them, encourages the entry of children and young people into these groups. Involvement in armed groups may also occur as a means of protection against threats or reprisals. The study carried out by this government entity did not find a determining relationship between the maltreatment of children and their involvement in armed groups, but mentioned adult-centered, authoritarian, and aggressive family relationships as factors that promote participation in, or recruitment by, armed groups. A lack of protection from family, State, and society may be added to these factors.

In another study, the Colombian ombudsman (Defensoría del Pueblo, 2006) shows that children and young people demobilized from armed groups had some common reasons for having entered or participated in these groups in the first place: domestic violence, maltreatment, and child labor; displacement, massacres, or the taking or capture of communities; lack of opportunities, and the need to sustain and contribute to the maintenance of the family, combined with promises of compensation given by the groups; and the presence of one or another armed group in the territory.

Children's roles in the armed groups

With regard to actions and tasks of children and young people in the armed groups, Torrado, et al. (2002) cite a report by Coalición (1999), which highlights the presence of children in armies that operate in internal armed conflicts, particularly in Colombia. The report sees the situation from the perspective of gender, showing that different needs within the armed groups lead to a sexual division of labor. Montoya (2008) provides some details about what recruited children and young people do:

Being a child recruit involves formal membership of the fronts, squadrons, and columns of the illegal groups. It entails "being part of the group." Members are uniformed and equipped with weapons, and undergo initiation rituals, ideological education, and training. They carry out military duties in rural or urban combat,

maintenance work to preserve the proper functioning of the group in its operating headquarters, and recruiting of other young people. All this contributes to the maintenance of the military structure, among other aspects (p. 43).

The consequences that their involvement with armed groups bring upon children

Lastly, regarding the consequences that involvement with armed groups bring, it is worth pointing out that these recruited children lose their freedom and sometimes their lives:

The involvement of children in the armed conflict seriously violates their right to individual freedom. This claim is supported by the results of a study, which establishes that abandoning the armed group involves penalties including death. Likewise, children's expressions and feelings must adjust to life in the conflict, and thus they are not free (Defensoría del Pueblo, 2002, p. 24).

As I began to outline in chapter 2, there are studies on the consequences of participation in armed conflict. Dos Mundos (2000, as cited in Torrado et al., 2002) states that children involved in armed conflict are seen by society as victims, although they sometimes participate directly in military action. This organization reports that victimization occurs according to the scenario, the manner of children's involvement in armed groups, and their roles within them.

When children's parents or other socializing agents enlist in an armed group, it is unlikely that these people will be present in children's lives again:

Furthermore, following demobilization from the armed group, adolescents can hardly return to their places of origin and their families. Families are even occasionally compelled to leave their places of residence to avoid retaliation by illegal groups that their relatives have left (Defensoría del Pueblo, 2002, p. 24).

A study notes the great number of children and young people who have participated in illegal armed groups, with an emphasis on those who participated in a Colombian program for the social reinsertion of children previously involved in the armed conflict:

Between 1999 and 2013, up to 5156 children participated in the governmental insertion programme for children disengaged from armed groups (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2013). Though the programme has evolved through the years, in recent years it consists principally of three phases, namely (1) emotional stabilisation; (2) specialised attention towards violated rights regarding education, health, psychosocial well being, and registration of citizenship; and (3) consolidation of the life project. Additionally, there is a follow-up of social integration. Depending on the situation and possibilities of the child and its entourage, these phases are fulfilled through an institutionalised or socio-family path (ICBF, 2010) (Villanueva, et al., 2017, p. 87).

In cases in which parents or socializing agents of children in early childhood return home having been among the ranks of armed groups, or are forcibly displaced with their families, certain types of relationships may be formed within the family due to the many forms of violence that they have had to endure.

Protection from explosive devices

Minefields constitute another factor that violates the protection rights of children and their socializing agents. The report by Coalico & CCJ (2009) states that the FARC and ELN guerrilla groups continue to use landmines against civilians, affecting children from birth:

On 20 January 2008, in the municipality of Palmira (Valle), a pregnant woman and her nine-month old daughter died after accidentally stepping on a landmine installed by an unidentified guerrilla group. After seven days of searching, Martha Liliana Machin and the girl, Luisa Fernanda Villota Machin, were found on a trail in the mountainous Combia sector of Cabuyal township, at about four kilometers from the La Grecia farm. The woman had lost parts of her limbs and crawled with the child for several meters trying unsuccessfully to save their lives. The girl's body was found beside that of her mother (Coalico & CCJ, 2009, p. 19).

Torrado et al. (2002), show how child victims of landmines and war artifacts represent a little studied problem of the armed conflict in Colombia. These authors cited research conducted by the ombudsman (Defensoría del Pueblo), which questioned the lack of information on this issue, despite the large number of children reported as having been affected by explosive devices such as landmines and grenades. This latter research followed up International Red Cross reports that had noted an absence of information, and argued that Colombia is among the countries in which more of these artifacts are used and children injured.

In some areas, landmines are moved by rains and floods, so maps showing their location are unreliable. Children, from their earliest years, may become victims by stepping on unmarked mines as they go to school. This situation is exacerbated in rural areas where children play in mined areas, or work in agriculture (Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, 2004).

In many cases, when people do not die immediately due to an explosion, care for survivors, during both the emergency itself and subsequent medical treatment, is limited. Many of the health centers are located in urban areas, while most of the survivors are in rural areas. There may also be a major financial and emotional burden on the immediate relatives of the victims of mines, which often leads to the breakdown of families (Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, 2004).

Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict (2004) shows how, even though Colombia has regulations aimed at protecting the rights of disabled people, the effect of the legislation is limited. The report states that the government covers the cost of a single

prosthesis and treatment performed in the first year after the incident, but hides behind the excuse that the fulfillment of rights is obstructed by the ongoing war. Also, the report warns that the information on rights provided for victims and civil society in general is insufficient and yet another aspect in which compliance is inadequate.

Protection from forced displacement

Displacement is another key element that affects the protection rights of children in early childhood and their socializing agents.

Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict (2004), on analyzing the data provided by CODHES and other entities, stated in 2004 that Colombia had the second highest number of displaced persons in the world (at least 2.5 million), Sudan having the most. CODHES (2006, as cited in Hernández & Restrepo, 2011) reported that 3,832,000 Colombians were forcibly displaced between 1985 and 2006. The report of the Norwegian Refugee Council and Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (2013), after analyzing the figures provided by the Colombian government in December 2012 (almost 4,900,000), and by CODHES in December 2011 (5,454,766), stated that, in December 2012, there were between 4,900,000 and 5,500,000 displaced people in the country. The statistics for year 2016, held by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (2017), show a significant increase in displaced persons to 7,246,000, with 56,000 new cases of displacement reported between January and June of 2017. The report by Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict (2004) emphasized that, according to government sources, various NGOs, and the United Nations, between 48 and 55 per cent of the displaced population were children and adolescents. This figure is similar to that given by the Colombian Constitutional Court (as cited in Coalico & CCJ, 2009), which stated that approximately 50 per cent of the displaced population was under 18.

As Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict (2004) warns, a factor of under-registration affects the figures for displacement, due to the discrimination and other repercussions that may occur when someone identifies themselves as displaced. This gap between the real situation and registered figures exists mainly in the departments of Antioquia, Casanare, Sucre, and Chocó.

Furthermore, the environments in which displaced populations are located are often used as a place for the recruitment of children and young people: “There are indications that camps for refugees and internally displaced persons are often the preferred sites for the recruitment of child soldiers, due to the convenient fact that a number of vulnerable children are concentrated within them” (Coalico & CCJ, 2009, p. 43).

Displacement may also be caused by attempts to avoid recruitment: “In 2008 there were various reports that threats of recruitment of children had caused displacement of local populations in at least five departments: Arauca, Nariño, Norte de Santander, Putumayo, and Valle del Cauca” (Coalico & CCJ, 2009, p. 43).

According to official data analyzed by the Secretary General of the United Nations Security Council, in September 2010, 61,047 Colombians had registered as being newly displaced, of which 30,488 were children (15,644 boys and 14,844 girls) (Organización de las Naciones Unidas, 2010). In 2010, a government agency, Acción Social (2010, as cited in Hernández & Restrepo, 2011), reported 39,606 displaced children between the ages of 0 and 7, among which 48.2% were boys, and 51.7% girls.

Torrado et al. (2009) point out that threats and harassment lead to the displacement of families, with far-reaching effects: family routines change; emotional and cultural rootlessness is caused by loss of the material and symbolic assets on which the family life project was based; and there is increased poverty. These authors show how displacement prevents the education of children and their socializing agents, as well as the fulfillment of the rights of children in early childhood:

The family directly affected and their children under six are deprived of their formation as citizens, as well as their enjoyment of rights, when these [formation as citizens, enjoyment of rights] take place in conditions of instability, disorder, uncertainty, and loss as a result of displacement (Torrado et al., 2009, p. 96).

Ceballos and Bello (2001), explain that displacement is one of the principal ways in which children are affected by the armed conflict. These authors maintain that, before the event of displacement occurs, children have already been exposed to violence and deterioration of the social fabric that surrounds them. With regard to exposure to violence, these authors provide some details:

This moment [the past before displacement] implies that every child in a situation of displacement has witnessed, observed, and experienced violence, some with more severity, intensity, and continuity than others. Violence is the imminence of the disappearance of the figures that represent support and protection. For others, violence is more than a threat, because their close and intimate protection figures have been killed or suffered forced disappearance (Ceballos & Bello, 2001, p. 48).

Regarding the deterioration of social fabric before displacement, Ceballos and Bello (2001) state that fear, mistrust, and conflict appear in children's relations, and thus their opportunities to be and act as children are limited, because, for example, they are obliged to undertake specific actions such as maintaining silence in order to protect themselves:

These processes of deterioration of social fabric do not only mean that children are permanently subjected to risk, but to the obligation almost always imposed by adults of controlling their spontaneity and vitality, and ultimately "repressing their condition as children." This is expressed in the orders to be quiet, tell lies, and not to ask questions or watch (Ceballos & Bello, 2001, p. 48).

The Colombian ombudsman (Defensoría del Pueblo) states that the armed conflict is at the root of the violation of children's right to protection (1997, as cited in Torrado et al., 2002) in a report that makes reference to IHL, the UNCRC, and recommendations

from the Fifth Regional Consultation on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children in Latin America and the Caribbean (Bogotá, April 1996). It should be pointed out that this report refers to children as actors and not only to their condition of displacement, orphans, or victims of landmines.

In summary, as shown in this and the previous three subsections, several of the rights to protection pertaining to children and their socializing agents are violated within contexts of armed conflict. The children are defenseless and may be subject to torture, armed confrontations, abductions, and enforced disappearances. Due to the armed conflict, they are also affected indirectly in ways that prevent their full development. Among the violations of children's right to protection are sexual violence, recruitment of socializing agents, the use of explosive devices, forced displacement, and the presence of violence in the family and community.

One of the rights violated within the context of armed conflict is that of protection from sexual violence. Sexual violence against boys, girls, adolescent and young women, and women in general is common. Often, sexual violence involves unwanted pregnancies. It may occur in situations of displacement and recruitment, or be motivated by acquisition of information or domination over enemies and territory.

Recruitment into an armed group can affect children's rights to protection in different ways. A child's right to protection may be affected when socializing agents, for example parents, are recruited into armed groups. In other cases, the children themselves are recruited, although, as mentioned previously, this fact is concealed by armed groups and there are no reliable statistics on its occurrence. With recruitment comes a loss of liberty and, sometimes, life itself. Recruited boys and girls are mainly from families close to an armed group. In the group, their rights are violated, and they suffer poverty, insecurity, and physical and psychological maltreatment. The families of recruited children may also have undergone changes due to the armed conflict, and violence may be an accepted part of living. In cases of demobilization, it is unusual for individuals to return to their families.

Children's protection rights and those of their relational agents are also violated by explosive devices such as land mines. Although landmines affect children from birth, this is a little studied subject. Civil society has little information regarding benefits received from the State, yet victims experience difficulties in treatment and the breakdown of families often results.

Finally, forced displacement is another fundamental violation of the protection rights of children and their socializing agents. Although it often goes unreported, the figures on this phenomenon are still huge. In many cases, displacement occurs as protection against recruitment. However, the places that households come to inhabit after displacement are preferred scenarios for the recruitment of combatants.

The former violations of rights to protection and, generally, violations of the rest of the rights mentioned in this chapter have led children and their relational agents to

seek refuge in private environments and to avoid participation in public spheres or spaces. Thus, the participation rights of children and their socializing agents are affected in the context of armed conflict.

The Violation of Children's Participation Rights

In a desire to avoid breaches of protection rights, in many instances children in their early years and their socializing agents become excluded or exclude themselves from scenarios of participation in the public sphere, such as public spaces or events.

The armed conflict causes several socio-political effects on Colombian children. There may be a loss of their reference groups, such as family, and loss of the bases of personal identity related to the tradition and culture they had to leave behind on being exiled. Their rights to express opinions, ideas, and needs, and to organize may be infringed due to isolation. Furthermore, their right to participation in the public world may be infringed because they are obliged to remain silent as a means of protection and a way of dealing with a conflict that has broken their social ties and left them in a situation of insecurity (Ardila, 1995).

In addition to children, girls and women are particularly affected by violation of their right to participation. Women and girls, fearing sexual violence, may avoid public spaces and seek protection at home. However, in many cases, even this space may be violated when they are alone. In an urban context, in which girls and women participate somewhat more in scenarios outside the home, and in which men are present, the risk of being sexually abused increases (Niño, 2012).

Niño (2012) states that, in some circumstances, the participation of girls outside the home is only possible when they are in the company of other people, as there are high risks due to the presence of armed actors, who may commit acts of sexual violence against the girls. In the urban context, girls and adolescent and young women limit their participation in public spaces due to fear of the dangers in the street. In rural areas, there is little chance of participation for children and their socializing agents, who may be adolescent and young women. The possibilities of enjoying the right of participation are limited for these young people, as armed actors monitor them.

It is worth noting, that, while participation rights are fundamental to children's development, and can contribute to the prevention, care, and protection of children who have been directly or indirectly involved in the armed conflict, the violation of the right to participation has not been recognized or studied (Niño, 2012).

Briefly, with regard to rights to participation, in the context of armed conflict, reference groups such as the family may be lost, and rights to free expression, organization, and participation violated, as personal and family protection are sought. Girls and young women are the most affected in their right to participate due to fear of sexual violence, in many cases having to be accompanied in public places. The situation

is worse in the rural context, in which children are also affected. The violation of children's right to participation limits their development.

The following section expands on the insufficiency of Colombian government response to the violation of rights referred to above, in areas including prevention and protection for children against violence, and the restoration of their rights. The international community has in many cases filled the vacuum left by the Colombian State. Some highlights from research on this subject are presented.

Insufficiencies in Response to the Violation of Rights

Protection measures taken by the government have not been sufficient to guarantee the rights of children in the context of armed conflict. In addition to criticism of State actions, this section includes criticism of the initiatives of international organizations, which, on assuming leadership in social actions in Colombia, have contributed towards the government's failure to provide a definitive response to the violation of children's rights.

Deficiency in State Action

Action by the Colombian State has been insufficient to mobilize force against the armed groups and cartels, and consequently to ensure the protection of children and the restitution of their rights. Likewise, there has been a lack of coordination between the entities responsible for guaranteeing children's rights. The response has been neither timely nor of adequate quality (Coalico & Comisión Colombiana de Juristas CCJ, 2009), with the result that children in early childhood and their socializing agents continue to participate in the armed conflict.

The State agenda has ignored the urgent need to guarantee the rights of children who have been affected by the war, thus failing to establish safe and peaceful family, community, and social union. These children are either given a relegated place within development plans, or simply not incorporated at all as people requiring special attention:

The matter of the injury caused by the conflict to members of this population group appears but marginally in the affairs of national, regional, and local government institutions. This issue does not occupy an important place in most local authority development plans, and in many of them does not appear at all. In consequence, the matter is not part of government agendas, and there is no public pressure for the government to take responsibility to safeguard the rights of children affected by armed conflict (Romero & Castañeda, 2009, p. 39).

Romero and Castañeda (2009) point out that the lack of attention given to early childhood is due to weak legislation leading to programs unsuitable for this particular population. According to these authors, children in early childhood are not included

conclusively in State care strategies and programs, and their importance in society in general is not recognized.

The absence of early childhood from State action plans suggests that citizenship is associated with age, as a result of a uniquely biological vision in which one is considered a citizen after attaining a certain stage of biological development. This narrow viewpoint has no room for the possibilities of action and transformation that could emerge from the children in early childhood themselves and in their relationships. Children have a great potential to influence relations, for example in their families and in the child care centers. They are able to transform culturally rooted practices such as those based on violence and institute new relational practices that tend towards peace-building.

Coalico and CCJ (2009) also point out a lack of attention in the State agenda for children in early childhood in situations of armed conflict. Furthermore, these authors point out that the Colombian government does not recognize the use, by its armed forces, of children and young people. Thus, the effectiveness and transparency of the policy of prevention is threatened. Furthermore, these authors argue that the fact that the authorities do not recognize criminal gangs as participants in the armed conflict means that some recruitment of children is not taken into account, and the necessary preventive actions are not carried out. These situations occur in spite of the existence of a system designed to provide alerts on recruitment, monitoring, and risk reports in areas of conflict.

Coalico and CCJ (2009) state that the confrontational character of the previous government's (2002-2010) security policy, and a certain culture that promotes the militarization of civil society have hampered the prevention of children's participation in the conflict and the recruitment of their socializing agents. In this atmosphere, children's social construction may occur relationally through their interest in participating in military life and belonging to an armed group, whether legal or not.

In summary, the State agenda and government action have been inadequate. This inadequacy has led to the effects of armed conflict on the youngest children being obscured, the presence of children in armed conflict being ignored, and the action of the armed forces in fostering such participation being disregarded. Thus, adequate prevention processes are impeded. Furthermore, a culture of militarization has been established in civil society through relational practices and confrontational government strategies. International cooperation initiatives have attempted to find solutions to this situation. Some of these are described below.

International Cooperation and its Problems

While some programs involving international cooperation have been carried out in conjunction with the Colombian government, the fact remains that the contribution of the international organizations has been greater than that of the Colombian government in many cases. Coalico and CCJ (2009) cite the actions of countries such as the Netherlands,

Norway, Canada, Sweden, and the United Kingdom, and organizations such as USAID and the European Commission. These States and organizations have all helped to finance processes for the protection of children, and the reintegration of their socializing agents, as well as an incipient policy for the prevention of recruitment. They have part-funded programs to protect demobilized children and young people carried out by the Colombian Institute of Family Welfare (ICBF) and a commission for the prevention of recruitment (Comisión Intersectorial para la Prevención del Reclutamiento). Coalico and CCJ (2009) question the failure of the role of the Colombian government, asserting that Colombia's contribution has been less than that of international cooperation, while the case should be the opposite.

Coalico and CCJ (2009) make two criticisms of international cooperation. One is of the indirect way in which international funding finances the war by covering a lack of State resources available for social action caused by expenditure on the conflict:

In fact, this form of cooperation is addressed indirectly to war... If international cooperation finances part of this social spending [including health, education, and sanitation], which cannot be properly attended because part of the national budget goes to war, then it is indirectly financing the war. This is what is happening in Colombia (Bocchi, 2009, cited by Coalico & CCJ, 2009, p.98).

The second criticism is that international cooperation lacks political influence with regard to the situation of early childhood in contexts of armed conflict. For example, contributions from international cooperation have been made to a public policy that fails to recognize the government's promotion of the use of children in intelligence work. Paradoxically, the policy is supported by a commission for the prevention of recruitment (Comisión Intersectorial para la Prevención del Reclutamiento) (Coalico & CCJ, 2009).

In short, research papers (Coalico & CCJ, 2009, Romero & Castañeda, 2009) have pointed out the Colombian government's lack of acknowledgement of children who have lived in the context of armed conflict, and particularly its lack of specific action aimed at protecting children (Romero & Castañeda, 2009). Furthermore, some studies (Coalico & CCJ, 2009; Bocchi, 2009, cited by Coalico & CCJ, 2009) call attention to how international cooperation, without a clear political position in favor of these children, fills vacuums in protection and prevention left by the State. This, rather than providing a definitive answer to the problem of adverse effects among children in contexts of armed conflict, constitutes a contribution to the war: While the international organizations address social action, the government can allocate resources to war.

In Summary

This chapter has dealt with the violation of the rights to life and survival, development, protection, and participation of children and their relational agents. Although there are a number of laws and Colombian and international agreements aimed

at guaranteeing these rights, in the context of the armed conflict in this country, the guarantee is affected by violence. As shown in the studies discussed above, violence often becomes naturalized among families that have experienced armed conflict. Thus, the family may not constitute a socialization scenario based on affection, and consequently children's development will be limited. Children may participate directly in armed groups, be victims of landmines or kidnapping, or experience violence in their homes. Their families may suffer forced displacement, the effects of being demobilized combatants, forced disappearance, kidnap, confinement, and murder, among other atrocities. As result of these situations, relationships marked by maltreatment and abandonment may develop within families.

As set out in more detail at the beginning of the chapter, the above factors cause the violation of children's rights to life and survival, including the right to health and food, and in some cases result in their deaths due to a variety of causes: preventable diseases; armed confrontations; barriers preventing access to health services; difficulties with healthcare providers or professionals; poor health conditions of expectant mothers, who in many cases are adolescents; lack of care for unborn or children in early childhood in terms of vaccines and prenatal attention; and congenital diseases or malformations due to the fumigation of illicit crops. Health difficulties may be also caused by abortion attempts. Many of the families who have lived in the context of armed conflict endure unfavorable economic conditions and cannot guarantee children in early childhood a good level of nutrition. Furthermore, the spraying of illicit crops may eradicate the entire family agricultural system.

Children's development rights are also violated, among them the rights to education, play, and recreation. While education is of a poor quality for those who have access to it, others simply do not attend school. Among those who do, there are high rates of abandonment, due to such factors as physical and economic barriers to access, fear, domestic duties, and hunger at home. The right to play and recreation is affected by fear of landmines or armed groups, and by the responsibilities that children are obliged to assume at home.

Children's and families' rights to protection are also affected because of several issues: deaths of children; deaths of their socializing agents; physical and psychological abuse; displacement; minefields; sexual violence, leading to unwanted births; recruitment of children's socializing agents; and the use of children in war. The protection of children is also affected by direct actions such as massacres, and other situations arising in the context of war that limit human development. Finally, although the right to participation of children is poorly studied, in rural areas, its violation affects both boys and girls, and in urban areas mainly girls.

The whole situation described here – the violation of children's rights, limitations of State action, absence of early childhood from development plans leading to the international community identifying needs for contributions – brings into question the

policies and measures taken in Colombia for the protection of children. The next chapter details my reflections on the relation between legislation, public policy, and protection measures, as set out in Chapter 3, and the violation of the rights of children in early childhood and their relational agents detailed in the present Chapter, 4.

Chapter 5

Reflections on Legislation, Public Policy, and Protection Measures

In spite of having signed various treaties for the protection of children in the context of armed conflict, Colombia has failed in significant ways to ensure such protection. This has been explained as a consequence, both of legislation, which at times does not cover the complexity of the situations and subjects upon which it acts, and of problems in the implementation of public policy (Girón, 2006), which continue to result in a wide breach between the indications of the law and actual social practices, as will be argued later in this chapter. The present analysis of the breach between what happens in practice and the advances with regard to international regulations, national and local legislation, public policy, and protection measures for children in the Colombian armed conflict is carried out in the light of several other studies on the violation of the rights of these children, as described in the previous chapter. The deficiency of the Colombian State in the matter of these children's protection is evident in these studies. In this chapter, I aim to carry out a critical reading of legislation, public policy, and protection measures that, while proposing the guarantee of children's rights, present some inconsistencies and have not achieved this proposition, as will be argued throughout the chapter.

In response to the facts set out in the previous chapters, this chapter provides a critical reading of legislation, public policy, and protection measures affecting children in relation to the armed conflict. The chapter details certain tensions: First, I set out some advances with regard to the appearance of children in the public agenda, while pointing out their limitations with regard to the particularities of children in contexts of armed conflict and the specificities of early childhood. Second, the chapter deals with the tension between advances in legislation, public policy, and protection measures, and the failures in their implementation. Third, I present some inconsistencies within and between some Colombian laws, policies and measures, and also between the latter and some international treaties and agreements. Finally, the chapter reveals the tension between, on one hand, the protection of children whose rights have already been violated and, on the other, the prevention of such violation.

Advances and Limits in the Inclusion of Children in the Public Agenda

International agreements adopted in Colombia, and their impact on law and public policy have served to make known the condition of children in Colombia, by focusing on them, noting their importance to society. Yet, certain interpretations of these international agreements ignore the peculiarities of the Colombian context in assuming that children

worldwide have the same problems and conditions of vulnerability. These kinds of interpretations reduce the complexity of multiple childhoods and multiple contexts.

Both the target populations of public policy and the creation of such policy are complex. Torres (2006) cautions that the definitions given to the problems addressed in public policy are human constructions. This is why it is important to inquire into the definitions behind the policies that concern these children in a thesis that aims to contribute to peace-building with children in contexts of armed conflict and their relational agents. Elder and Cobb (1984) had previously commented on the definitions given to the problems addressed in public policy:

Policy problems in this sense are social constructs reflecting particular conceptions of reality. Since a multiplicity of definitions of a problem is always possible, what is at issue in the agenda building process is not just which problems will be considered but how those problems will be defined (Elder & Cobb, 1984, p. 115).

Thus, the situations of children who experience armed conflict are many and varied, and there is no single way of understanding them. It would be worth analyzing the assumptions about these children behind each of the policies adopted. Elder and Cobb (1993) argue that “public policy problems do not emerge directly from the [particular] situation. They require interpretation and definition” (p. 91):

Defining a problem involves selecting and highlighting certain realities and making judgments about them. These realities may reflect the situation. However, the facts considered relevant are necessarily dependent on a reference frame and on the implicit theories of those assessing the situation. Moreover, although a common frame of reference may be shared, it is not often that relevant facts are fully known or knowable. Often inferences, assumptions, and even imagination must be used to form an idea of them (Elder and Cobb, 1993, p. 91).²¹

Torres (2006) points out that the fact that certain issues are objects of interest in public policy favors the direction of attention towards these problems, which are thus more likely than others to be taken into account in the public agenda. Furthermore, this author suggests that the inclusion of an item on the public agenda may imply that only one type of response is to be applied and does not necessarily mean that there is total clarity about the actors involved. Torres follows the lines of Roth’s approach (2006) on the drafting and implementation of public policies, in which, in the process of definition of policies, one particular answer to the problem will predominate over others; the drafting of a law does not mean that its implementation will be effective; and the formulation of policy is not a finished process, due to action in local, national, and

21 This text of Elder and Cobb 1993, is taken from a Spanish translation by Alva Senzek in the collection titled *Problemas Públicos y Agenda de Gobierno*, edited by Luis F. Aguilar Villanueva. The original English text was published under the title *Agenda-Building and the Politics of Aging* in *Policy Sciences Journal*, vol 13, no 1, 1984.

international contexts, the appearance of new interests and actors, and changes in theories.

In Colombia, the violation of children's rights has recently emerged as an issue to be addressed through public policies focused on protection. In spite of this, children in early childhood are not recognized explicitly in the public agenda, and certain policies are impossible to fulfill given the reality of the context. The fact that early childhood in contexts of armed conflict does not appear explicitly referred to in the public agenda does not imply that these children are not recognized in the agenda. However, it does indicate some limitations. Below I present some critical readings that show the breaches between policy and the children's reality.

Tensions Between Legislation and Difficulties in its Implementation

As Alvarado et al. (2012) stated, conditions in regions where there is acute and intensified conflict impede proper compliance with legislation and the implementation of programs for the protection of children. A lack of State presence distinguishes the most violent situations in Colombia, and results in an absence of guarantees for the protection of children in the context of conflict, communities having to take on roles that should be occupied by the State.

It is worth noting that, despite progress in adopting international treaties, and the creation of laws and policies, the problem of lack of guarantees for protection remains unsolved and children are still involved in the war. This is shown in the following quote on the initial interest of the ELN guerrilla group to exclude children from its ranks and the subsequent failure to implement an agreement on this matter:

Neither international conventions nor the law oblige irregular groups to take measures to protect children in conflict. The case of the ELN is relevant here. This armed guerrilla group is the only one that has tried to adopt the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In 1998, two leaders of the group signed an agreement with the Colombian government (el Acuerdo de Puerta del Cielo) in the city of Mainz, Germany. In this document, the ELN resolved not to recruit children under 16 and contemplated the option of raising the minimum age of recruitment to 18 years in the future. Unfortunately, acts of war committed by the group damaged the atmosphere of the negotiations and prevented the implementation of the agreement (Montoya, 2008, as cited in Alvarado, et al., 2012, p. 53-54).

The inability of Colombian law to ensure the protection of minors may be related to its political shortcomings. Romero (1997, as cited in Torrado et al., 2002) indicates that children are victims in the conflict, given two main facts: they are not conscious of their participation, and laws that should guarantee their protection do not fulfill this function. According to this author, children are unaware of their reasons for participating in armed

groups, while adults are conscious of their actions. Romero argues that this situation places children in a state of victimization.

Romero (1997, as cited in Torrado et al., 2002) also points out that, in Colombia there is a large body of law that aims to regulate the participation of children and young people in armed conflict, with the objective of protecting their rights in the light of the provisions of international law. This legislation states that, if children participate in actions and are not combatants, the State must protect them and the enemy respect them. However, actors involved in the conflict, including children and young people, are not aware of this law, and thus are not in a position to demand its observation. Given the disparity between the legislation and reality, Romero points out a need to recognize the effects of the armed conflict on children and take appropriate action: review the impact of armed conflict on children and young people; take into account the fact that war permits children neither dignity nor enjoyment of their lives; and promote civil society action to compel armed actors to respect IHL.

In an approach similar to that of Romero on this point, Coalico and CCJ (2009) argue that the violation of children's rights remains a pressing problem. There are high levels of impunity and the Colombian armed forces violate the provisions of IHL on the rights and protection of children in armed conflict.

As a result of a review of various studies, Torrado et al. (2002) concluded that there is a need for a transformation of the political framework covering children who have lived in the context of armed conflict, with the objective of supporting and promoting long term social change to deal with inequality and social injustice. These authors point out the study by Colmenares (1994), which highlights discrepancies between International Humanitarian Law and the reality of violence in Colombia. While IHL is intended to regulate the protection of persons and goods affected by armed conflict, the reality is that legal and illegal armed actors in Colombia harm both civilians and combatants without distinction.

Some government decrees on the utilization of children are not adhered to in practice. One decree (Decreto 128 de 2003) prohibits the utilization of demobilized children under 18 years of age in military intelligence activities, while another (Decreto 2767 de 2004) rules that children under 18 be excluded from collaboration or cooperation with law enforcement. However, the Colombian armed forces use children as informants (Defensoría del Pueblo, 2006). As shown in a collection of secondary data compiled by Ardila (1995, cited in Torrado, et al., 2002) based on reports on displacement, the army uses children in its intelligence bases, constituting sociopolitical injury. Villanueva et al. (2017) note that:

Participants mentioned that equally to other armed groups, the army has also recruited children and has used them for logistic information for example. Moreover, they mentioned governmental troops have found to be guilty of killing children that were falsely suggested to have been killed in battle (p. 96).

As well as the difficulties in the implementation of the laws, public policies, and measures referred to in this section, there are some inconsistencies within and between them, and also between them and international agreements and treaties. These are described in the following section.

Inconsistencies in the Law

In addition to non-compliance with agreements, laws, and policies, due, among other reasons, to the particularities of the context, there are inconsistencies and contradictions within and between certain laws. Coalico and CCJ (2009) indicate some internal incoherence in the law on justice and peace (Ley de Justicia y Paz, Ley 975 de 2005), as well as discrepancies with regard to international provisions:

In practice ... [this law] involves very broad risks of impunity, as, in joint operation with a decree (Decreto 128 de 2003), it enables omitting investigation of this offense [recruitment] in the accreditation process for demobilization, and releases [its perpetrators] from any kind of conviction for this war crime (Coalico & CCJ, 2009, p. 61).

This law (Ley de Justicia y Paz, Ley 975 de 2005) allows children involved in armed conflict to hand themselves over or be handed over to the State without affecting the benefits of the demobilization process of the armed actors who recruited them. The Colombian State thus violates international standards by tolerating, without bringing to justice or punishing the crime of recruiting children. Given the lack of sanction, it is likely that armed groups will continue to recruit children, in contradiction of international law (Coalico & CCJ, 2009).

The law on childhood and adolescence (Ley 1098 de 2006, Congreso de Colombia) is inconsistent with international law on the use and recruitment of children by State armed forces. Colombian law condemns the recruitment of children by groups outside the law, but does not explicitly prohibit its use by State armed forces. This law empowers the Colombian police to conduct educational activities that are not within its competence, in some cases leading to children being marked as military objectives by illegal armed groups (Coalico & CCJ, 2009).

In addition to the use of children in military activities and the education imparted by the Colombian police force already mentioned, a report mentions other extreme situations in which the State has responsibility. Torrado, et al. (2002) cite a 1995 report by Human Rights Watch, and an Andean legal commission [Comisión Andina de Juristas]. The situations involve violations of children's human rights by government agents, including the torture and murder of children; "social cleansing" involving murder and forced disappearance of children under State auspices; the abandonment of children by the State; and difficulties associated with the rehabilitation and social reintegration of children in situations of abandonment and violence.

In addition to the serious situations described, there is an absence of State protection in children's regions of origin. Thus, instead of being the State's responsibility, protection is assumed by communities, who, lacking knowledge of their constitutional rights, make no demands on the State for them. When rights are violated, the response may be individual rather than collective (Bello, 2001).

Another legal inconsistency is indicated by Coalico and CCJ (2009). On reviewing the law on children and adolescents (*Ley de Infancia y Adolescencia*), these authors suggest that, because these children are also victims of the crime of recruitment, there are contradictions between this Colombian law and international standards on the treatment of demobilized children who commit crimes during the period they are members of armed groups. They point out the inconsistency:

Penalties imposed on the adults responsible for recruiting underage persons [are] equal to or less than those for the child and adolescent victims of this war crime, creating disparity with regard to the special treatment that child victims of recruitment who incur in infractions of criminal law should receive according to the provisions of the law on justice and peace (*Ley de Justicia y Paz*) (Coalico & CCJ, 2009, p. 68).

Thus, this discrepancy, with regard to the fact that penalties for adults are equal to or lower than those for children, contradicts the law on justice and peace (*Ley 975 de 2005*). This law states clearly that the special needs of children and other actors such as women and elderly or disabled persons should be taken into account by State institutions: "Courts, technical support entities, and the State attorney for justice and peace shall take into account the special needs of women, girls, children, senior citizens, or people with disabilities who participate in the process (*Ley de Justicia y Paz, 975 of 2005, art 41, chap. VIII*).

The law on children and adolescents (*Ley de Infancia y Adolescencia - Ley 1098, 2006, Congreso de Colombia*) represents an improvement with regard to the incorporation into national legislation of international measures on juvenile criminal responsibility and the participation of children and young people in armed conflict. However, this law could affect the guarantee of the rights of children in Colombia, because of a series of issues: it ignores the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child; promotes greater vulnerability of the rights of children involved in crimes in comparison to adults; sets the highest penalties for children in Latin America; imposes penalties that are not educational and which infringe the principle of the superior interests of the child; and privileges the protection of the community from demobilized children perceived as dangerous rather than restoring their rights and creating opportunities for them (Coalico & CCJ, 2009).

In contrast to this, a 1995 report by Comisión Andina de Juristas highlights the impunity enjoyed by the murderers of children, who include State actors and insurgent

groups. Such impunity is contrary to the provisions of International Humanitarian Law (Torrado et al., 2002), and exacerbates the vulnerability of children.

In addition to the inconsistencies described above, Serra (2010) points out that International Humanitarian Law has not guaranteed the protection of the rights of children, given their vulnerability in situations of armed conflict: “In this area of law, the protection of children is focused on them as victims of the conflict, and as protection from the perspective of humanitarian intervention, and not on the protection of their rights before violation occurs” (Serra, 2010, p. 90).

In this sense, policy has been mainly oriented towards the protection of rights that have already been violated. Yet, policy may also be used preventively against situations that could lead to the violation of rights, or to build relationships that foster accepting others as legitimate, rather than annihilating them. Ceballos and Bello (2001) comment on this: “Government initiatives are insufficient to address the problem, not only as regards attention but also with regard to prevention of the participation of children and young people in the conflict” (p. 20). Below, given that this opens the way to the focus of my research on potentials and potentialities in contrast to deficits and shortcomings, I set out more detail on the tension that exists between prevention and protection and stems from the inconsistencies between certain laws.

Is the Focus on Protection Rather Than Prevention?

The forced recruitment of children and young people, who may be the socializing agents of children in early childhood, has been evident in Colombia since 1997 (Montoya, 2008). In response to this situation, the State has assumed the obligation of protecting children and adolescents from joining and being recruited by armed groups, by means of a law on children and adolescents (Ley 1098 de 2006, Congreso de Colombia). However, up to early 2020, no public policy has been formulated or implemented to prevent such a situation, really protect children and young people, and punish the perpetrators of this crime:

Eleven years after this problem became apparent, there has been no formulation ... of any national public policy or coordinated State action to prevent, protect, control, and strongly sanction this crime against persons protected by IHL, in whose perpetration minors are not only passive subjects, but are special victims, because they participate directly in hostilities (Montoya, 2008, p. 48).

Though there has existed an incipient public policy on children and armed conflict, it has been mainly focused on attending and protecting children and young victims of the conflict, but not particularly on guaranteeing the prevention of their forced recruitment. However, progress has been made in including infancy in departmental and municipal development plans, the prevention of recruitment being mentioned explicitly in these. This step forward is due to the work of the Office of the Inspector General of

Colombia (Procuraduría) since 2004, and to a commission for the prevention of recruitment and utilization of children (Comisión Intersectorial para la Prevención del Reclutamiento y Utilización de Niños) since its creation in 2007. The issue of prevention of recruitment has thus been included in the development plans of 47 municipalities. However, in only two of these had resources been assigned to actions for such prevention by 2009 (Coalico & CCJ, 2009).

The Colombian government commission (Comisión Intersectorial para la Prevención del Reclutamiento y Utilización de Niños) promotes protective environments to prevent the violation of rights. It works on the premise that, with a greater guarantee of rights, there is less risk of recruitment and use of children in war. The commission directs and carries out “oversight of the rights of children” with the objective of ensuring that the plans and institutional programs of the entities that make up the Colombian family welfare system (Sistema Nacional de Bienestar Familiar) are put into operation by means of strategies for the protection of children against recruitment (Coalico & CCJ, 2009). The commission was created to coordinate the actions of the international community, civil society organizations, and the various national and local State agencies (Vicepresidencia de la República de Colombia, 2014).

The recent (2016) peace agreement between the Colombian government and the FARC - EP guerilla group, ratified by the Colombian congress and senate in November 2016, has been added to the measures described above, centered on the protection of citizens from the consequences of the Colombian armed conflict. Although this favors protection with regard to the recruitment of children and their socializing agents, it will be important to carry out a critical review of the impacts of the agreement in the long term. Such a review of its impacts would aim to identify whether the agreement fosters processes for the prevention of violence and promotion of peace-building, or fosters only processes of protection against the de facto consequences of the armed conflict. Although even the latter would be a step in the right direction, it would probably make necessary new actions directed towards peace-building.

As we find, the Colombian government’s perspective on children, referred to in the various laws, policies, and measures analyzed, limits the possibility for alternatives to violent interactions by focusing on protection rather than prevention because it sees children as either victims or perpetrators. This implies that either children must be protected, or society be protected from them. Yet, the government’s perspective on public policy on protection is presented as being simply for the protection of children, and not for the protection of society from them. Gergen (2007) has highlighted the importance of nurturing relationships to strengthen children’s creative possibilities and thereby reduce the destructive potential of conflicts. However, Colombian policy measures for the protection of children are not aimed at creating alternatives to family and community relationships involving violence. Instead, by taking children out of their family contexts and into protection institutions, the measures for protection destroy relationships and their

creative potential for solving problems such as violence. Rather than removing and putting an end to the problem of violence, Colombian protection institutions take children out of their surroundings into a context in which violence is often present in relationships, situations of maltreatment and abuse being perpetrated that keep circles of violence alive.

In Colombia, child protection measures are based on a point of view of deficiency, and the necessity of exercising protection in the cases of people who are vulnerable or whose rights have been violated. In these measures, children, and more so, the youngest children, are seen from the point of view of their victimization. Gergen (2007) has called attention to the implications of the discourse of deficiency for the social construction of the person. However, within the context of the public policy of protection and the child protection centers, children's social construction continues to be based on a view that victimizes them. Regarding this, Ceballos and Bello (2001) set out some of the implications of victimization and trauma:

Speaking of a victim leads to an association with the traumatic effect suggested by experiences of blood and barbarism. Trauma implies a vital event for a subject, against which he is helpless and his capacity for response is precarious due to the intensity, unexpected nature, and overload to which he is exposed. It relates to a shock linked to ... feelings with generally pathological lasting impressions on the human psyche (p. 67).

The deficiency perspective on children living in the context of armed conflict in Colombia has not led to the solution of their problems. Paradoxically, although public policies on protection exist, and thus it could be expected that significant changes in protection against violence would have occurred, the social and cultural practices in Colombia are still based on the presence of violence.

Summarizing Reflections on Legislation, Policy, and Protection

In summary, this review first suggests that great advances have been made in regulations at the international, national, and local levels regarding children in the context of armed conflict. Some progress can be identified with regard to international agreements adopted in Colombia, as well as in other regulations, legislation, public policy, and measures with an emphasis on protection. Efforts in Colombia to ensure the comprehensive protection of children have materialized in strategies at national level, and at local level in the district of Bogotá.

These developments are identified in several studies, some of which, with ascending numbers of children participating in armed conflict, show how official measures, laws, and policies have failed to ensure their full protection. Furthermore, measures presented as being for the protection of children have also been aimed at the protection of society from them. Children continue to participate in armed conflict from their early years, in different ways according to their age. Their involvement is both

direct and indirect. Among other tasks, they act as informants, and are involved in the production of elements for war, such as mines. The studies mentioned commonly focus on childhood generally, rather than early childhood in particular.²² In some cases, the studies focus on childhood and youth.²³ However, some of the studies reviewed do refer to the effects of armed conflict on children from an early age and are particularly focused on early childhood.²⁴

Regarding the scope of Colombian laws and policy, there have been several studies on the violation of children's rights in the context of armed conflict. The studies show a need for new policies and actions that ensure children's enjoyment of rights in this context. These initiatives could promote safe and protective bonds in important relational environments such as the family.

Child protection measures at national level have sought to protect children against diverse forms of violence, including violence associated with armed conflict and maltreatment. Yet, these measures have been oriented towards children from the viewpoint of their vulnerability, and not through strategies for prevention that would promote alternative relations. Measures for protection are also focused on separating children from their families, and thus fail to foster relationships based on affection, respect, acceptance of others as legitimate, communication, and trust within families.

Briefly, in spite of advances in regulation and policy, criticisms arise. There are inconsistencies within the regulations themselves, and also between the different laws that affect children. Furthermore, discrepancies occur between the regulations and the reality faced by children, families, and communities in the context of the Colombian armed conflict. From a social constructionist point of view, I question the focus on protection in both public policy and research, inasmuch as such policies and approaches define children as victims in a condition of vulnerability and deficiency. In contrast to this understanding and approach, and in order to contribute to alternative relationships and to peace-building, the present study proposes an orientation towards the development of the individual and relational resources and potentials of children in early childhood and their socializing agents.

This reflection on the resources and potential of children forms a prologue to the next chapter, in which other researcher's proposals for addressing the situation of children in armed conflict are described. In addition to the progress in legislation and policy, with the limitations described, the contributions of Colombian civil society are significant. Along with international cooperation, civil society initiatives have at times

22 As reviewed in the research of Alvarado et al. (2012), Coalico & CCJ (2009), Defensoría del Pueblo (2002), Hernández & Restrepo (2011), Human Rights Watch (2003), Moreno, et al. (2010), Niño (2012), Organización de las Naciones Unidas (2010), Sierra, et al. (2009), Torrado, et al. (2002) and Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict (2004).

23 As in the case of the research carried out by Ceballos & Bello (2001), Defensoría del Pueblo (2006), Montoya, (2008), Observatorio de Territorios Étnicos (2010), and Springer (2008).

24 As in the case of three of the studies reviewed (Ilá, et al., 2009; Romero & Castañeda, 2009; Torrado, et a., 2009).

filled some gaps in State action on protection and prevention for children in the context of armed conflict, some of which will be described in the following chapter.

The chapters that follow will describe an action research project informed by the preceding analyses. It is a project that does not pathologize children. Rather, it treats children, and their families and teachers, as agents who can transform violence. It sees future scenarios in which transformations can be achieved, and maintains a commitment to the potential and strengths of children in early childhood and the relationships in which they participate. These potentials and strengths are present even in the context of armed conflict.

Chapter 6

Routes Towards Change

In Chapter 4, I analyzed the situation of young children and their socializing agents with regard to the violation of their rights in the context of armed conflict. In the previous chapter, Chapter 5, I reviewed some voids and criticisms concerning the respective public policies and regulations, showing various examples of their limitations. I described the paradigm of child protection processes that take children out of their relational contexts, and the situation of children who, in spite of great advances in regulations and public policy, continue to live in adverse conditions, in which, for example, they may be used as collaborators in armed conflict and illegal activities. The present chapter deals with actions that could bring about significant change for these children and the people relating to them. In it, I review significant interventions and the recommendations of various authors regarding the context of armed conflict.

Initiatives for Intervention and Recommendations in the Context of Armed Conflict

This first section of this chapter has three parts. In the first part, I outline the initiatives of various authors, with a principal focus on attention to children in the context of armed conflict at the structural, or macro, level. The initiatives include recommendations for government, public policy, society, and culture. In the second part, I review approaches and recommendations for these children that cover not only the macro level already described, but additionally micro levels, and some contributions toward socialization scenarios, such as school and family. Finally, in the third part, I describe a few initiatives for children at an early age that incorporate both macro and micro approaches, and also serve as excellent examples of care for this population.

Macro Level Approaches

Researchers on the subject of childhood and armed conflict frequently cite programs and actions that have been designed to improve the conditions of children in this context, or offer proposals about the design of such programs and actions. Some researchers make a case for programs at a macro-social level.

A United Nations initiative: The work of Graça Machel

In 1993, “the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution calling for the Secretary-General to appoint an independent expert to lead a study on the impact of armed conflict on children” (UNICEF, 2009, p. 2). Graça Machel, a Mozambican politician and humanitarian, was appointed to carry out this study (1996), which sets out

the urgency of demobilizing children and reintegrating them into society. This author warns that peace treaties have never focused on children as a population, and thus, ensuing actions have not contemplated their special needs. She suggests that countries recognize child soldiers in order to design effective demobilization processes. A first lesson for my research, after reviewing Machel's work, concerns the importance of listening to the children's voices, in order to respond accordingly to their needs. This implies having a cultural sensitivity, as our research group has proposed (Ospina-Alvarado, Alvarado and Fajardo, 2016). It implies an exercise of putting multiple cultures into dialogue, those of the children, and of our culture, in an intergenerational process in which novel results can emerge.

Machel (1996) proposes that reintegrating children who have been involved in war into social life should involve helping them to reconstruct a base for individual life, and to re-establish contact with their families and community. Reintegration should take into account the privations suffered in children's development and the specific situations they have lived through. The author explains that, once children return to their families, it may be difficult to guarantee their welfare, and consequently proposes a period of community support in which children live together with their peers. The lesson here for my research lies in the importance of reconstructing lives and reestablishing contact with relational agents, taking into account an exercise involving liberation from cycles in which violence is reproduced, and the construction of conditions to give new meaning to life.

Machel (1996) warns of difficulties in government and civil society actions due to children who have been involved in armed conflict having a perception of violence as normal. Machel's proposal is relevant for the present study inasmuch as children have a greater potential for learning in early childhood, and, in this stage of socialization, the naturalization of violence may be learned more easily. According to Machel, an acceptance of violence can also be exacerbated by poverty and social injustice. Consequently, the energies, ideas, and experiences of these children should be channeled towards actions and objectives other than those involving violence.

In order to prevent future recruitment of children, Machel (1996) suggests that countries make progress towards approving international regulations for their protection in contexts of armed conflict. This author states that governments should stop forcibly recruiting children into the ranks of their armed forces, create appropriate mechanisms for vigilance, such as a registry of the births and ages of all children, and provide for legal and institutional support to guarantee the prevention of abuse. Machel argues that local communities should understand and apply national regulations on the recruitment of children, and organize collectively to promote compliance with these regulations. Perhaps the main lesson here for my research concerns the importance of the potential present in collective action, and in participation in collaborative practices that transcend both the children and their families and link communities. Machel's report suggests that the

United Nations and other international organizations provide information about the participation of children in armed conflict, set out this problem before authorities and armed forces, support local communities, and, working with governments, exercise pressure upon illegal armed groups. It should be borne in mind that it may be more difficult to exercise pressure on illegal groups than on government armed forces. It may be supposed that the present time, with the implementation of a peace agreement, is promising with regard to Machel's proposals above, although with the recent change of government, there have been many breaches of the points agreed, and a reversal in terms of peace in Colombia.

In addition to putting forward actions regarding child soldiers, Machel (1996) makes some suggestions concerning internally displaced and refugee children, and demonstrates a need for support to help families stay together. Because families are the principal socialization environment of children in early childhood, Machel's proposals for actions to support families have a great relevance for the present study. As a priority, the author also proposes that programs should try to reunite children with their families and detect children who are alone, in order to guarantee their survival and protection in situations that may be exacerbated in this case, such as those involving abuse in general, and specifically sexual abuse. In cases in which children go into care because of the absence of their immediate or extended family, Machel states that it is vital to carry out vigilance through a community-based system, and recommends that, if ties with the child's family are broken and there is no possibility of children and family reuniting, adoption should be facilitated.

In addition to the above situations involving child soldiers, refugees, and displaced persons, Machel argues that actions should be taken to eliminate sexual abuse: rape should be legislated against at national and international level "as a crime against the physical integrity of the individual" (Machel, 1996, art. 104, p. 32); pregnancies arising from rape should be understood as seriously damaging; and there should be review and strengthening of mechanisms and procedures for investigation, communication, indictment, and punishment of rape, as well as protection for victims who report being raped. Machel also argues that appropriate resources should be made available to deal with pregnancies resulting from rape. This is relevant to the present study on early childhood in terms of working with the children's mothers who may have suffered sexual violence.

With the objective of eliminating sexual violence, the author (Machel, 1996) suggests several actions: promote a gender balance among candidates for leading posts in international judicial organizations and other relevant entities; emphasize gender, children's rights, and responsible behavior towards women and children in military training; punish those who commit crimes against this population; create clear and simple systems for reporting sexual abuse; and promote programs in communities on the subjects of hygiene in procreation, advice on rights, personal and professional education

for those who have been victims of abuse, and psycho-social support for mothers who have been victims of abuse. The principal actions suggested by Machel that contribute to children in early childhood, and are thus fundamental to the present research, are centered around family relations, especially in terms of gender relations and approaches to children.

Furthermore, Machel (1996) makes some suggestions for the psycho-social welfare of children. Programs for assistance should take into account psycho-social attention at all stages, in preference to programs being created exclusively for mental health. Attention should not be oriented towards the child's emotional damage, but towards the re-establishment of normal life, by means of promoting, among families and communities, both structured activities, such as education, play, and sport, and spontaneously created activities. Psycho-social programs for children should incorporate local culture, social and political relevance, human development, rights, and community networks. Finally, governments, organizations, and donors should avoid the institutionalization of children, seeking in the long-term their reintegration into their environments. The psycho-social approach coincides with the present research in that the focus is on peace-building rather than protection from violence, and on specific actions in relational environments that incorporate activities preferred by children in early childhood, such as play.

On the subject of regulations, Machel (1996) makes recommendations to various actors: countries that have not yet signed the CRC should do so as soon as possible; all countries should adopt laws in accordance with international regulations; governments should educate personnel essential for peace, such as judges, police, and armed forces, in humanitarian law and human rights; humanitarian organizations should educate personnel on humanitarian law and human rights, assist governments in the education of children on their rights, and make agreements with non-state entities on compliance with humanitarian law and human rights; civil society should disseminate and defend those rights; UNICEF should create broader guidelines for the protection and care of children in the context of armed conflict; and the Committee on the Rights of the Child should include in its reports the specific measures on protection adopted by States. To complement Machel's initiative, it is important that the laws and measures this author proposes be focused on peace-building and prevention of violence and not only on protection from the consequences of violence.

Machel (1996) states that reconstruction and reconciliation are possible ways out of armed conflict. She proposes physical, economic, political, cultural, and psycho-social reconstruction, involving not only children but their families, community, and country. This process requires the creation of programs for the protection of children and the consolidation of social structures, with the objective of creating possibilities for the future. Children should be a central part of it. Reconstruction is facilitated by the mediation of young people, through their personal resources and contributions to long-

term solutions. Machel maintains that transitory programs, in which the means of subsistence are given to families, are sometimes necessary but are never sufficient. The education of children should be a central part of programs oriented toward reconstruction, and education should provide the children with formal qualifications. Lastly, the author suggests the need to introduce changes at the cultural level, by means of the demilitarization of communities, which will enable children to understand that violence is not the only way of resolving conflicts. Thus, it is evident that many of Machel's proposals are relevant to the present study and demonstrate the importance of an approach that includes the various actors relating to the children; goes beyond perceiving the children as individuals alone; takes multiple voices into account, giving a significant place to the children's voices; constructs future possibilities from the present; emphasizes potentials and potentialities; and contributes by means of educational processes to the denaturalization of violence and the demilitarization of everyday life.

On the subject of community healing, Machel (1996) argues that commissions for truth and human rights, and reconciliation groups can play a significant role. This author says such entities are important in that they contribute to ensuring some key conditions for reconciliation: those who commit crimes and violations assume their moral, political, and legal responsibilities; victims remember the events that have occurred; and the community constantly monitors rights and contributes to democratic processes. Machel maintains that, to achieve reconciliation, justice is necessary, and that this requires action by international organizations to contribute to capturing and punishing the guilty, and carry out surveillance within countries to make sure that impunity does not occur. The resources and powers of international courts should be strengthened to ensure prosecution of the worst abuses. It is of fundamental importance to have special provisions for any prosecution of children who may be criminally responsible. These provisions should be oriented toward the children's social reintegration, respect their best interests, and keep generally in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The lesson in this case for my research lies in the political responsibility incurred with regard to children in contexts of armed conflict, understood as responsibility for the other.

Machel (1996) states that the prevention of armed conflict is a key process, because it is the best way to protect children. This author proposes that the international community address the causes of violence by supporting children's human development in an equitable manner, to include all children. Both governments and the international community should be responsible for the process, to which civil society should contribute. Machel recommends that civil society organizations continue contributing by carrying out research, establishing alliances and networks, promoting campaigns against the existence of child soldiers, and supporting the creation of suitable environments for children. This is one of the recommendations most taken into account in the present Colombian context, given that the peace processes have reactivated research and innovation practices directed towards studying the impacts of the armed conflict and

strengthening peace-building processes; in the same way, Machel's recommendation is of great relevance for the present study in that it recognizes the importance of research, like the present study, oriented to peace-building processes with actors affected by the armed conflict, that goes beyond the perspective of protection to recover peace-building processes, through actions for prevention and simultaneously for the agency of the participants. Machel emphasizes that proposals should be drafted in a participatory and equitable manner:

All people need to feel that they have a fair share in decision-making, equal access to resources, the ability to participate fully in civil and political society and the freedom to affirm their own identities and fully express their aspirations (Machel, 1996, art. 253 p. 71).

Among actions for the prevention of armed conflict, Machel proposes education for peace. This would be carried out through schools that provide ethical education and integrate "traditional values of cooperation through religious and community leaders with international legal standards" (Machel, 1996, p. 79). The author suggests promoting peace, respect for human rights, social justice, and acceptance of responsibility through schools, to help children resolve conflicts using alternatives to violence. To accomplish this, children should be trained in critical thinking, communication skills, negotiation, and problem solving. Graça Machel suggests that adults, as well as children, should be taught techniques for resolving conflicts, with a focus on tolerance. Furthermore, the media should promote the acceptance of diversity, respect, and peaceful co-existence. The author warns that education programs for peace are insufficient, because they lack solid mechanisms for reconciliation, protection of minorities, and social justice. Several of these actions have also been proposed by our research group to promote schools as territories of peace, as is set out in more detail below (Alvarado et al., 2012), and are of great relevance for the present action research that is in itself an educational proposal for the agency of participants.

Lastly, to prevent the effects of armed conflict on children, Machel (1996) states that it is important to strengthen both early warning systems and mechanisms that reduce the vulnerability of children by means of emergency programs. The actions of civil society, government, and regional organizations should be directed towards "providing their own early warning, advocating international and local human rights standards, promoting community-level peace-building and offering mediators" (para. 264, p. 74).

To summarize Machel's (1996) proposals, this author advocates that children should be declared "zones of peace," backed by coordinated actions involving governments, the international community, civil society, and the children themselves. These actions would include educational and community initiatives to prevent armed conflicts by means of education for peace, demilitarization, and early warnings. In cases where armed conflict is already present, the author suggests that, with the participation of the various actors mentioned, legislation and measures be put in place, and several

actions carried out: Children should be demobilized from legal and illegal armed groups, and reintegrated into social life. Conditions for family welfare should be created. Children should have relevant education, with training for older children, and they should be involved in non-violent activities. Governments should take action against recruitment, and States should adopt regulations for protection. The media should report the participation of children in armed conflict. Unaccompanied displaced children should be detected and protected. Children should be protected against sexual abuse and psycho-social attention be given. All actions related to anti-personnel mines and other explosive artifacts should be eliminated. Children's health and nutrition should be guaranteed, and their psycho-social welfare promoted. Their education should be re-established, supported, and maintained. There should be physical, economic, political, cultural, and psycho-social reconstruction, and reconciliation.

To summarize the contribution of the work of Machel to my research, I highlight this author's emphasis on listening to the voices of the children, as well as those of their relational agents, in order to respond to their needs; the importance given to relational processes, and reconstructing the family and community ties fractured in the context of armed conflict by means of practices in which children reconstruct their lives and strengthen their relations; the power of collective action and participation in collaborative practices at community level; the relevance of promoting, from the present, alternative futures that recover social actors' powers and strengths; and the pertinence of contributing educational peace-building processes that transcend protection and are based on prevention and agency.

Recommendations of the Defensoría del Pueblo

With a macro-level approach similar to that of Machel (1996), a Colombian government ombudsman organization, Defensoría del Pueblo, whose aim is to defend human rights in Colombia, makes suggestions for legislators and authorities about working with children in the context of armed conflict. This entity recommends the development of legislation oriented towards children who leave armed groups, proposing "regulations that establish the obligations of all the institutions responsible for the protection of the rights of these children, such as those in the sectors of education, health, employment, and welfare" (Defensoría del Pueblo, 2002, p. 39). The Colombian ombudsman also suggests the creation of laws to protect child victims of the conflict who have experienced hardships such as displacement or loss of their families.

The Colombian government ombudsman puts forward actions that the authorities should carry out. At national level, this body recommends that the Colombian legislature guarantee the laws relating to children in the context of armed conflict, and comply with international regulations. The government is urged to take charge of children's education in rights; community prevention of the involvement of children in armed actions; the creation of measures for the demobilization and reintegration of children into families

and society; and intermediation in peace dialogs to stop the recruitment of children and demobilize those involved in armed groups (Defensoría del Pueblo, 2002). Fifteen years after the ombudsman's report, peace processes have included some of these proposals, although the principal focus has not been on children. The value of the Colombian government ombudsman's recommendations to the present research is related to the importance given to educating children on their rights, which in terms of the present study implies their recognition as political subjects; and the emphasis on processes of prevention rather than on protection with regard to violated rights. In the present research, this corresponds to participation in peace-building processes.

The Colombian ombudsman (Defensoría del Pueblo (2002) makes specific recommendations to ministries. The Colombian ministry for justice should ensure observance of the law on the recruitment of minors, and sanction this crime, while communicating sanctions to the nation and the international community; carry out programs to promote people's own defense of their rights and improve their opportunities for reporting rights violations; and train officials in charge of exercising the law on the need to protect children who have left or been demobilized from armed groups. The ombudsman also proposed a list of actions for the Colombian ministry for education. The ministry should create a national education program with adequate coverage and quality that reaches zones of armed conflict, is adapted to the children's needs, and oriented toward their permanence in the educational process; carry out campaigns for the protection of children; train teachers in rights, integrated education, and orientation towards the needs of the students; create programs for demobilized children with a rapid educational process that enables them to enter technological and technical training; and promote sexual education among schools and families. Some of these suggestions have been included in the 2016 peace agreements to be offered as part of the curriculum of educational institutions. Similarly, the ombudsman asks the Colombian ministry for health to attend two major issues: ensure that all children have opportune access to healthcare, giving priority to the sexual health of adolescents; and implement programs to prevent the use of psychoactive substances and deal with problems of addiction. The Colombian ministry for labor and social security is urged to broaden actions to prevent the involvement of children in armed conflict, one of the worst forms of child labor.

The principal action proposed by the Colombian ombudsman (Defensoría del Pueblo, 2002) for the Colombian civil registry [Registraduría Nacional del Estado Civil] consists of providing identification documents for all the children registered in the protection programs of the Colombian family welfare institute (ICBF), and especially for those who have left or been demobilized from the armed conflict. The ombudsman suggests that the ICBF itself carry out several actions. This Colombian welfare institute should implement a national policy centered on the rights of children; form an agreement with the ministry of education on education adapted to the needs of demobilized children; broaden the coverage of its programs to include all demobilized children; coordinate its

actions with the entities that manage family and social reintegration and economic support for children's reinsertion; coordinate the monitoring of children demobilized from the conflict, identifying their needs for support; increase the effective operation of the Haz Paz peace policy, extending its sphere of implementation to schools and society; and coordinate with municipal and district authorities on supporting families and on changing cultural practices that exacerbate the violation of rights. The ombudsman recommends that the Colombian National Training Service (SENA), in coordination with the ICBF, carry out training programs differentiated according to the needs of demobilized children. The principal value of the Colombian ombudsman's recommendations for the present study is seen in terms of the suggested psycho-social and educational support given to families to foster relational practices that contribute to peace-building. Furthermore, for some time, the ombudsman has been emphasizing the importance of taking children's needs into account. This is a fundamental part of the present study, which, as detailed above in chapter 5, points out several voids with regard to the present laws and measures, some of which are focused more on an adult-centered vision than on the children's own voices.

In addition to the above measures at the national level, the Colombian ombudsman (Defensoría del Pueblo, 2002) proposes actions at the local level: local authorities should comply with national regulations on children by creating commissions in all municipalities to offer care, and by co-financing protection programs. Furthermore, local authorities, in coordination with national authorities, should put forward activities for children's use of leisure time, which include their views and expectations.

In summary, the recommendations of the Colombian government ombudsman (Defensoría del Pueblo, 2002) place great emphasis on strengthening legislation and creating actions to be carried out by national and local authorities in order to bring about change among children in the context of armed conflict, and in the environments in which children's development occurs. As regards legislation, the ombudsman points out the importance of creating regulations oriented towards protecting the rights of children demobilized from armed groups and other child victims of the armed conflict. With regard to the authorities, the ombudsman sets out a need to create and strengthen actions at the national level on the part of the Colombian government, congress, certain ministries, the civil registry, the Colombian welfare institute (ICBF), the national training service (SENA), and authorities at the local and regional levels. The value of the Colombian government ombudsman's recommendations to the present study relates to the inclusion of multiple voices in the research process, giving an important place to the voices and needs of the children; the promotion of educational processes in which children, families, and other relational agents learn; and the promotion of initiatives for prevention, linked to peace-building processes.

The Human Rights Watch initiative

As well as the Colombian ombudsman, the organization Human Rights Watch (2003) has made suggestions for the Colombian government, as well as recommendations for guerrilla groups, paramilitary groups, and the international community. Human Rights Watch gives a long list of directives related to guerrilla and paramilitary groups, and recommends that the policies be disseminated among the armed groups and the civil population in situations of armed conflict. Some of the recommendations have been incorporated into the agreement (2016) between the Colombian government and the FARC-EP guerrilla group. Human Rights Watch recommends that the illegal groups implement effective policies on not recruiting children under the age of 18 and demobilize those who are already in their ranks. The groups should prohibit those who recruit and use minors from occupying positions of command; ensure that demobilized children are taken to a humanitarian organization; cooperate with humanitarian agencies in the revision of recruitment practices; prohibit the kidnapping of children; liberate children who have been kidnapped; punish those within the armed groups who do not comply with rules about kidnapping; ensure that children and their families are not subject to reprisals; guarantee that commanders understand and apply international humanitarian law (IHL); not execute any child; not permit children to take part in confrontations or collaborate with the groups; ensure that children are not trained in the use of arms and explosives; take wounded or sick children to hospitals with adequate facilities; not permit obligatory abortion; and provide contraceptives and sexual education. The recommendations that Human Rights Watch make for civil society are of relevance to the present study in terms of the importance they place on making visible the laws, policies, and measures that regulate the rights of children in contexts of armed conflict, as well as the rights of their relational agents.

Human Rights Watch (2003) makes many suggestions for the Colombian government that coincide in part with those made by Machel (1996) and the Colombian ombudsman (Defensoría del Pueblo, 2002). Some of these have been incorporated into the peace agreement (2016) and, although not directly aimed at children in early childhood, concern their relational agents. The government should prohibit and punish the utilization of children under 18 in armed forces as recruits or informants; demand, in peace agreements with armed groups, the abandonment of recruitment and release of the children from their ranks; investigate and punish lack of compliance with the latter requirement; ensure that child combatants who are captured, or who give themselves up, return to their families and obtain protection, education, psychological attention, and treatment; ensure that both the military and government comply with International Humanitarian Law; expand the coverage of the Colombian welfare institute's program for the rehabilitation of former child soldiers; ensure that children's views are taken into account in rehabilitation measures; uphold "the right to defense and due process of children in any legal proceedings" (Human Rights Watch, p. 36); ensure that punishment

of child combatants takes into account mitigating circumstances such as situations involving the recruitment of children, and threats to their lives and those of their families; use actions such as detaining or imprisoning children only as a last resort; ensure that the age of criminal responsibility is not established below 18 years without taking into account the fact that maturity is limited at an early age; and advocate that the Colombian congress adhere to international agreements on the participation of children in armed conflict. The learning here for the present study concerns the pertinence of carrying out transformational research that involves, as a psychosocial process, educational and therapeutic components for children and their families, and keeps dialogue in motion, even in the face of the atrocities and violence of the armed conflict that are set against these aims, as they break down social tissue and destroy trust in others.

In addition to suggestions for the government, Human Rights Watch (2003) makes suggestions for the international community, asking the United States government and the European Union to express disapproval of the recruitment of children, links between paramilitaries and the army, and the de facto amnesty given to the recruitment of children. This organization also asks the international community to call on the Colombian government to prohibit recruitment in peace agreements, and provide resources for the rehabilitation of children. Human Rights Watch asks the United Nations to investigate progress in the demobilization of children, contribute measures to facilitate this process, and report on and condemn their utilization and recruitment in armed conflict.

In brief, with regard to children in the armed conflict, Human Rights Watch (2003) has issued suggestions to armed groups, the Colombian government, and the international community, requesting them to take action to remove children from the ranks of the various legal and illegal armed groups, and prevent their recruitment and utilization. To accomplish this, Human Rights Watch suggests measures and sanctions, training on issues related to International Humanitarian Law, and the protection of families and children who are undergoing family reintegration. In addition, guerrilla and paramilitary groups are asked not to kidnap and kill children, or to force abortions, and to provide sexual education. The government is asked to consider the circumstances of recruited children and their level of maturity when setting the age of criminal responsibility and establishing punishment, and to exhaust all measures before detaining or imprisoning child offenders. The international community is asked to provide financial resources for the rehabilitation of children, conduct research and produce reports on their recruitment and utilization, and speak out against the links between paramilitaries and the army, and the de facto amnesty on the recruitment and use of children. The recommendations of Human Rights watch ratify the importance of studies such as the present one, which document the experiences of children and their relational agents in contexts of armed conflict; in which the children's rights are made known in a review of

the laws, policies, and measures; and processes of movement are produced by means of educational and therapeutic practices.

Summary of macro approaches

To summarize this section, macro level initiatives focused on childhood are primarily oriented towards ensuring that children do not become involved in legal and illegal armed groups, and that those who are involved are demobilized. Children's involvement includes their utilization as collaborators and informants as well as their participation in the ranks of these groups. The initiatives reviewed above argue the importance of prioritizing children in measures and agreements related to the armed conflict, and of ensuring their reinsertion and protection in family and community environments. Some important elements of these initiatives can be highlighted. Education must respond to the needs of the children and their families; cultural change must come about to guarantee rights, and transform a perception of violence as natural in children's lives; health and psychological and social welfare must be guaranteed; and sexual abuse prevented by means of education and other measures. To achieve these ends, authors cite specific actions to be carried out by government, the international community, civil society, and non-governmental organizations (Machel, 1996; Defensoría del Pueblo, 2002; Human Rights Watch, 2003).

At the macro level, these authors differ in certain respects. Machel (1996) recommends promoting change through the use of media and networks; fostering economic change with regard to poverty and injustice; supporting families in staying together when displacement occurs; protecting displaced children, especially those who have been left alone; carrying out actions to achieve reconstruction and reconciliation; preventing the use of explosive devices; and reducing government militarization. The Colombian ombudsman (Defensoría del Pueblo, 2002) sets out the need to protect former child soldiers and child victims of armed conflict, and specifies actions for Congress, government ministries, and certain entities, such as the welfare institute (ICBF), as well as proposing actions for legislation and for territorial authorities. This Colombian ombudsman entity proposes actions at national level, including preventing the consumption of psychoactive substances and providing identification documents for all children. At local level, the ombudsman recommends the promotion of actions for the use of free time, in coordination with national entities. Human Rights Watch (2003) makes suggestions to guerrilla and paramilitary groups regarding prohibiting the recruitment of children, demobilizing those who are currently part of the armed groups, and abolishing the abduction and punishment of children. This organization proposes that the Colombian government give minors differential treatment when establishing sentences, and only imprison minors as a last resort. Human Rights Watch also suggests that the international community condemn links between the army and paramilitaries.

With some similarities and certain differences, the initiatives outlined above have broadened the meaning of a macro perspective on work oriented towards children in the context of armed conflict. The progress regarding the macro understanding of the context has made an important contribution to the present study in that, although my study's specific focus is on fundamental relational processes, this is understood as being within a broader context which the study itself may influence. The relevance of the initiatives documented above to the present study concerns several points: fostering advocacy at a social, cultural, and political level, by means of making visible the laws, policies, and measures related to the rights of children in contexts of armed conflict; giving special attention to the children's voices in order to respond to their needs; including other voices and important actors, such as the children's families and communities, and reconstructing relations fragmented by violence; emphasizing the potentials of social actors and constructing future possibilities; and participating in educational and therapeutic processes that take into account the importance of transformational research oriented towards peace-building processes. Below, I describe some suggestions, which, in addition to proposing macro approaches, emphasize changes at the micro level.

Macro Social and Micro Relational Approaches

This section on macro social and micro relational approaches covers some initiatives that, while recognizing the importance of introducing cultural, social, and political changes, also identify micro scenarios such as the school, the family, and the community as environments from which contributions to peace-building can be made.

An initiative for schools as territories of peace

Alvarado, et al. (2012), who include the present author, have focused on a proposal that children form part of, and contribute to, the construction of peace territories. After carrying out a study on peace-building with children in schools in the context of armed conflict in Colombia, these authors proposed that schools become territories of peace, by means of both macro and micro social changes. Change at the micro level is achieved through actions in which the school becomes a territory where children, young people, and their families are accepted.

Alvarado et al. (2012) propose a commitment to popular education and Latin-American thought, in which, following the work of Freire (1996, as cited in Alvarado, et al., 2012), people participating in education can reinvent the world. The proposal is characterized by active resistance to injustice by non-violent means, and its authors advocate the creation of awareness through critical reflection that endorses diversity and tolerance. Alvarado et al. maintain that conflict can be positive, when resolved peacefully and creatively. This initiative for education aims to promote free access to knowledge, using information technology and communication to bring about change:

quality education with free access to knowledge, making use of the tools offered by new information and communication technology, well used, and not as instruments of indoctrination charged with forming contingents for the market and consumer society (Alvarado, et al., 2012, p. 225).

Among the contributions of the proposal of Alvarado et al. (2012) to the present study, I highlight the importance given to the educational institution as an environment for peace-building and for the creation of transformations, in this case, breaking circles of violence. In their initiative Alvarado et al. recommend several actions in relation to education for peace and non-violence to the Colombian educational establishment. These incorporate both macro-social and micro-relational levels: promote peace and liberation through dialogue, diversity, and education for political and citizen participation; strengthen education as a “form of non-violent resistance” (p. 228); promote education for ethics, morals, intellect, and direct and democratic participation; teach open and equitable law for the people; control decisions that affect the community; and bring about a “fundamental structural change in which all forms of exclusion, inequality, and injustice are eradicated” (p. 229).

The invitation by Alvarado et al. (2012) to collectively give new meaning to schools in the context of armed conflict implies considering them as territories of peace and also their historical and social deconstruction and reconstruction. This involves saying “no” decisively to violence in various areas of life. In the words of Alvarado et al. (2012), “‘no’ to violence, ‘no’ to patriarchy, ‘no’ to weapons, ‘no’ to military power, ‘no’ to bloodshed, ‘no’ to giving birth to children for war, ‘no’ to obligatory military service, and ‘yes’ to conscientious objection” (p. 229). The re-construction of the school is oriented around peace. This means saying “no” to violence, both direct violence that personally affects people, and indirect violence that affects them at a structural level (Galtung, 1985, as cited in Alvarado et al., 2012). Alvarado et al. also consider that peace means rejecting the violence present in war, poverty, material privation, repression, denial of human rights, and denial of superior needs (Jarés, 1999, as cited in Alvarado et al., 2012). This approach contributes to the present study in terms of its commitment to decidedly break circles of violence; also in its commitment to constructing, within families, relational practices that move away from patriarchy; as well as its positioning from which participants refuse to bear children for war.

This socially critical model of peace is based on a positive view of peace, which implies a creative vision of conflicts as a central element in education for peace. The model advocates not only the acquisition of knowledge, but socio-affective, moral, and political development in schools. It implies a broad vision of peace involving macro changes, and takes a critical view of social structures from a clear ethical and political position. The model is designed to combat structural and symbolic violence through a liberating curriculum that rejects social injustice. It strengthens the role of the teacher, who becomes a researcher on the context with a clear ethical and political position. The

model includes a curriculum to overcome violence, and places emphasis on activities outside traditional subjects, such as research on community history. It follows a line of peace in everyday actions, because living peace, rather than teaching it, is the aim (Alvarado, et al., 2012). The importance given to the role of teachers in the peace-territory schools brings to the present study its emphasis on relational practices that transcend a perspective on the individual alone, and enable the construction and transformation of “our lives together.”

In the peace territory schools, alternative communication methods are seen as a tool for revealing and reporting injustice. Liberation from the arms race, conquest, and the indoctrination of world powers is a concern in these schools. Following the approaches of Ghandi, Martin Luther King, and Freire (in Alvarado et al., 2012), the peace territory schools involve education in resistance against control and injustice, and promote relations characterized by cooperation and dialogue. Others are perceived as equals, and difference is accepted as legitimate. Actions in the schools are based on the needs of the children and young people, and the requirements of the contexts in which they live. The schools foster critical readings of these socio-historical contexts, and support the socio-political participation of children and young people. At the same time, the work of the teachers receives just and remunerated recognition (Alvarado et al., 2012). In this sense, the proposal of schools as peace territories teaches the present research the liberating possibility of educational practices; as well as the relevance of maintaining dialogue and respecting others, in spite of differences.

The curriculum of the peace territory schools retrieves traditional and native culture. It includes interaction with the immediate environment, and dialogue involving local geography, the economy, culture, and politics. The curriculum sets out the idea that, within the micro-cosmos of the school, proposals for peace should be based on the realities of the micro relations in which children and young people participate. History with memory is emphasized in order to liberate actors in the educational process, so that history is not repeated. The curriculum promotes cooperation between families, schools, and the environment, and highlights problems within the context of armed conflict, such as child labor. The pedagogy in the peace territory schools uses classes that are open to the symbolic and cultural expression of the community; a connection with nature; the promotion of expression through popular communication systems (posters, radio, etc.); an orientation towards the needs of the students; a vision of the classroom and school scenarios as “democratic community spaces for experimentation, creation, and freedom” (p. 240); teaching methods that make use of available resources; open air spaces; the district or neighborhood and their practices, such as agriculture, as learning scenarios; the creation of conditions for children to become local history researchers; collective resources; the negotiation of content and educational spaces; and the equitable negotiation of the various educational processes involving students, teachers, families, school, and community (Alvarado, et al., 2012). The learning for the present research

from the schools as peace territories initiative takes place in terms of the establishment of heterarchical relations in the educational and research process; the complexity of approaches with the children, which includes the environments they participate in; the creation of collaborative practices among the multiple actors participating in the process; the inclusion of the children's voices and needs; and the emphasis on collective resources.

The main action proposed by Alvarado et al. (2012) for the peace territory schools involves a "living memory expedition," in which the different participants, with children and young people playing an active role, create an album of the memory of their communities. These authors suggest that the expedition should include active non-violence and resistance. Using memory, the actors involved create a "Manual of Agreement" for coexistence in the school: an experience intended to reach beyond the walls of the school. The principal role of the children and young people is to act as researchers in three lines of research that contribute to the process of deconstruction and reconstruction of the context and the school itself: "1. Violence and Death; 2. Nature and Culture; 3. History and Economy" (Alvarado, et al., 2012, p. 241).

The various actors relating to the children and young people at both macro and micro levels are important in the creation and maintenance of the peace territory schools. Teachers play a fundamental role in these schools by mediating through reflection and openness; promoting dialogue with families, children, and young people; carrying out a constant diagnosis of the local context while positioning themselves permanently as researchers; participating in the creation of conciliation strategies; living active non-violence; promoting cultural leadership; and coordinating their work with new information and communication technologies. Parents also participate actively in the consolidation of the peace territory schools by understanding the needs of the community; taking interest in the school and its teachers; negotiating the non-dominance of their children by the school; fostering dialogue with the teachers and children; promoting gender equality in their relationships; maintaining good relations with their children; and openly saying no to sexism, patriarchy, and war. The community makes another significant contribution to the peace territory schools, given that it educates through dialogue and cooperation with the schools. At the same time, the community itself undergoes changes through the presence of the peace territory schools: democratic children emerge from the schools to influence at community level; and the resistance nurtured by the schools enables the children to make proposals and negotiate to improve the community (Alvarado et al., 2012).

In summary, through a call for the deconstruction and reconstruction of schools Alvarado et al. (2012) propose that it is both necessary and possible to bring about changes in the contexts in which children and young people live. The aim is to liberate them from patterns of exclusion, injustice, inequality, sexism, patriarchy, and the values of war that occur in macro-social spheres and permeate micro-relational levels. Hence, macro and micro level changes should be promoted, in which concerns for peace orient

pedagogical and educational practice. Children, young people, and their relational agents should use their creative potential to resolve conflicts by peaceful rather than violent means. This implies saying “no” to violence and living peace through everyday acts. Peace territory schools should foster appreciation of diversity and tolerance; retrieval of cultural heritage; open access to knowledge; civil, political, democratic, ethical, and moral education; creation of spaces for political participation and equitable negotiation; and active participation on the part of all agents, including, not only children, young people, and teachers, but also families and the community. In these schools, dialogue between the various actors is fundamental, as well as their positioning as researchers of both present contexts and socio-political and cultural history. Thus, actions in the schools respond appropriately to the contexts and the needs of the actors and encourage critical readings of their contexts. Schools and other actors will contribute towards family, community, and social transformation.

The proposal of Alvarado et al. (2012) offers us a metaphor, or “way of thinking about ourselves,” in the educational environment. This is the metaphor of the school being a territory of peace, in which the children’s voices are the starting point; the relations among the various social actors and collective resources are fundamental in the construction of new realities; dialogue and collaboration among actors are the basis for making “our lives together;” the deconstruction of hegemonic discourse and practice, such as that involving violence as a unique mode of relating, and patriarchy as a form of domination, is of great relevance; and in which the agency of social actors as political subjects, who value difference and construct possibilities for transformation together, is fundamental.

The work of V. Lugo

Victoria Lugo (2017) has proposed a process named “The Green Zone” as a working alternative or transformational dialogical practice with children and young people previously linked to the actions of armed groups. This author has referred to the process as “on the margins,” for various reasons:

The dominant is located in the center, the alternative, on the margins. There is a certain freedom on the margins, the freedom of not having to meet the expectations or give in to peer pressure or conform to standards. On several occasions I observed this freedom in them, the freedom to be unconventional. A goal of this inquiry was to present an alternative to the dominant discourse on child and youth ex-combatants in Colombia. We meet on the borders of their world and mine (Lugo, 2017, p. 55).

One of the contributions the work of Lugo brings to the present study, in the form of relational and dialogical practice, concerns its orientation towards the deconstruction of a dominant story about the lives of children from contexts of armed conflict, and the co-construction of multiple alternative stories about their lives.

The practice carried out by Lugo with children has been principally dialogical, and promotes the space in-between people:

As McNamee and Shotter (2004) affirm, when someone performs an action, this action cannot be attributed entirely to the individual, because these actions are partially formed by the actions of others. Our dialogic actions, our *Green Zone*, belong neither to the youth nor to me; it was truly “ours” (Lugo, 2017, pp. 54-55).

The process proposed contemplates the use of artistic and narrative workshops based around the collective actions of the children and young people. It uses audio visual techniques, as well as collective dialogues and narratives that arise out of an aesthetic or artistic production. The narrative expressions are approached in different ways:

we developed different kind of narratives in the *Green Zone*: performative, visual/oral, written, and life stories. Performative narratives refer to stories told through body actions with or without the use of spoken words. These include the collective formation of images with bodies, role playing, performing action sequences with puppets, neutral masks, a body shadow performance, every day and fictional scenes, and other improvisational exercises ... some stories were written down in the form of letters, notes, and cards and a fictional story was written jointly. I wrote more than anyone: letters and emails sharing stories of my everyday life, acknowledgments of their participation in the workshop, and certificates about what they achieved in the workshop. The ex-combatants made a lot of drawings and always presented them orally in front of their peers (Lugo, 2017, p. 57).

The methodological wealth of Lugo’s work has inspired the present study with a broad horizon for the creation of dialogues with the children and their relational agents, dialogues which necessarily involve art and play and transcend oral language; such dialogues have also been proposed in transformational research that includes but goes beyond the production of knowledge. The transformational practice proposed by Lugo has enabled ex-combatant children and young people to give new meaning to their life experiences and to analyze reflectively some events that, at times, were far from any possibility of being talked about and understood:

Expanding their possibilities and ability to tell stories allowed the youth, and those of us who listened to them, to relate the events in their lives in the context of a different meaning. This occurs within the framework of actual experience. Relating these facts implies structuring perceptual experience (images at times disassociated from words), organizing the fragments of their stories (scattered puzzle pieces), connecting memories, recalling certain pieces they thought had been lost, and being able to narrate meaningfully and coherently. The way events unfold in the stories promotes the perception that the world is changing, that each story has multiple perspectives and versions. This is critical for children and youth who have been to war (Lugo, 2017, p. 67).

Furthermore, the practice brought about effects on the relational agents of the children and young people, specifically the professional staff who carried out the Tutor Home Program:

Trained professionals realized that there are other ways of relating to youth ex-combatants, which may more effectively bring about change and transformation. This eventually resulted in a training process for the entire team of professionals constituting an expression of the *Green Zone* for other external audiences (Lugo, 2017, pp. 69-70).

Lugo's proposal has shown the present study the importance of including the children's relational agents in such a way that they themselves are the ones who identify relational modes that foster changes among the children.]

The process carried out by Lugo (2017) with children and young people implies a micro approach using dialogue and relations. It is aimed at uninstalling adverse effects among them brought about by macro conditions in their respective contexts. It allows the children and young people to recognize ways of relating other than those influenced by the structural violence they have experienced at first hand in the ranks of armed groups. Yet, the explicit proposal with the micro-relational component also provides a way of deconstructing the determining factors at macro level that have marked the children's life contexts. The present study has much in common with Lugo's research. The importance given to relational and dialogical practices in the co-construction of transformations with children from contexts of armed conflict features among the learning from Lugo's work. Lugo shows that it is possible to deconstruct dominant discourses that come out of these contexts, construct multiple alternative stories, and foster changes by means of the relations in which the children participate.

An initiative of Save the Children and CINDE: The work of Mojica and Quintero

A study carried out by Mojica and Quintero (1993) emphasizes an integration of macro and micro processes. The authors gathered together the strategies and methodologies used in nineteen projects carried out by several NGOs in work with children in contexts of violence. The contexts covered in the projects that Mojica and Quintero studied include situations such as forced displacement, breakdown of families and communities, criminality in neighborhoods, economic limitations, lack of opportunities in education, the need to work at an early age, and repression from official entities, among others. The projects fostered changes brought about through social recognition and education for citizen participation. The effects of violent situations on children were treated as affecting all aspects of their lives, in individual, collective, contextual, and other ways. The projects were thus oriented towards comprehensive attention for the children that incorporates "education, mental and physical health, production, community connections, recreation, etc." (Mojica & Quintero, 1993, p. 29).

Mojica and Quintero emphasize the fact that, at times, comprehensive attention is achieved through networks involving different organizations.

Among the lessons for the present study from the work of Mojica and Quintero (1993), I note the importance of recognizing the contexts, territories, and experiences of the children and their relational agents, and also of promoting the participation of various actors.

As these researchers also note, in many of the social projects they studied, the coordinating hubs are the children's and young people's grassroots organizations, through which children strengthen a sense of belonging and construct alternatives together. The initiatives studied by these authors take children into account as individuals as well as participants in the network to which they belong, the individual, the personal, the social, and the collective being considered relevant. The projects focused on the identity of the children, their emotional ties, and the commitment of the community. The reconstruction of children's and young people's identities involves the recovery of their vision of themselves as people who acknowledge history and position themselves with dignity in the present, and the deconstruction of an identity in which they are valued only as future adults (Mojica & Quintero, 1993). The lesson for the present study concerns the importance of not only including in the spectrum the children in their individuality, but of having a relational, collective, and social approach.

In order to realize these proposals concerning children's identity, organizations have to improve the quality of life and conditions of children and young people; provide a solution to unsatisfied needs in a suitable environment; comprehensively understand the context, including social and affective elements; bring about the redefinition of authority in socialization spaces, promoting interactions that are both affectionate and respectful of differences; create alternative actions in which children and young people play an organizing role; develop projects oriented towards the identity and sense of belonging of this population; facilitate the autonomous and participatory organization of the target population; and construct a new pedagogical model suitable for both the contexts and the needs of children and young people, so that, with training, this population may participate in the creation of an alternative society. In this sense, learning for the present study concerns several points: the relevance of fostering educational processes in which there is a response to the needs of the children by means of social research; this response is relevant to the context; socialization processes based on valuing differences are promoted; and children's construction as political subjects with autonomy, capacity for participation, and transformational potential is fostered.

Training and education are central elements in the projects compiled by Mojica and Quintero (1993), as they are in the initiative of Alvarado et al. (2012). In the interventions described by both these studies, children are seen as active social subjects who can bring about change in their environments, and not as passive receptors of external circumstances. Consequently, the authors of both studies propose basing

interventions on the needs, interests, and experiences of the children, and suggest carrying out a diagnosis of the local context with them.

Mojica and Quintero (1993) studied various projects involving children who had been exposed to violence. Some of these projects were based on child victims of socio-political violence in the context of armed conflict. Most of the initiatives were aimed at political and social change. The projects studied dealt with social inequality and injustice, and incorporated concepts such as self-management and social recognition. Given the conditions of poverty in the context of armed conflict, the initiatives included assistance in dealing with factors such as malnutrition, unemployment, sexual abuse, abuse of power by State forces, and the violation of rights in general. The various programs emphasized the need to establish long-term processes to enable the proposed political and social changes.

Some of the actions and strategies in the programs studied by Mojica and Quintero (1993) dealt with children affected by displacement. The authors identify three possible lines of action with regard to this population. The first, comprehensive attention, includes various dimensions or areas of work, project actions with broad coverage, and work not only with children and young people, but also with their families and other adults. Initiatives for comprehensive attention involve these actors in “organization, participation, and self-management in areas such as health, education, the environment, production, and culture” (Mojica & Quintero, 1993, p. 34). The second line of action these authors noted for children affected by displacement is education with a community emphasis, in which children and young people participate in grassroots organizations. This also provides some degree of prevention of violence, although the education process is not directly oriented towards prevention. Other aspects in the second, or educational, line of action are “healthcare, technical training, recreation, artistic and cultural activities, and production” (Mojica & Quintero, 1993, p. 34). In the third line of action, subjects are approached from the point of view of mental health, with individual, group, and family therapy. Research processes are incorporated, along with training for professionals in contact with the target population. The studies reviewed by Mojica and Quintero form a contribution to the present study in that they note the importance of research that incorporates educational, community, and therapeutic components at the same time: action research oriented to transformational processes.

These authors mention other projects oriented towards the prevention of violence through “socialization alternatives, possibilities for development and self-realization, and the strengthening of family and community ties” (Mojica & Quintero, 1993, pp. 37-38). In this case, the projects cited focused on education and training involving various actors, such as family, educators, and the community in interaction with children and young people. However, Mojica and Quintero state that the great majority of the programs analyzed were of a remedial nature, being oriented towards children who have already been affected by violence and are at risk. There thus appears a challenge for the present

research in terms of work on peace-building processes in which, not only is there protection after the violation of rights but, creative modes of “staying together” are co-constructed.

One common element of the strategies studied by Mojica and Quintero (1993) is the inclusion of different phases, which may not be carried out in order, and in some cases are executed in parallel. Many of the programs studied involved comprehensive interventions directed towards a broad range of problems. Project actions may have taken place in shelters and children’s and young people’s homes. In the particular case of displaced children, support may have been given in children’s homes or in project headquarters.

Mojica and Quintero (1993) mention participatory methodologies in which the children play an active and important role in activities such as community diagnoses, the prioritization of their needs, and action and reflection oriented towards creating alternatives. Organizations for children and young people deal with their own subjects of interest and involve the children’s decisions. Another element present in many of the programs studied is training for community promoters, so that these agents, with greater development, knowledge, and reflection, can strengthen the actions of the collective. One of the main strategies used involves workshops with children and young people on various subjects: “technical training, reconstruction of community history, understanding the origin and context of problems, reflection on personal situations, and support for those who begin the process” (Mojica & Quintero, 1993, pp. 41-42). In some of the programs, the work incorporates a participatory research component; and through systematization, a few programs have advanced in the development of intervention models. The lesson for the present research centers on the importance of collaborative practices in the research process and of the identification of the significant role that educators play in bringing about subsequent changes in their relations with the children.

Gathering together suggestions and ideas for future action, Mojica and Quintero (1993) set out the need to focus on prevention, maintaining that, with the community as an alternative to socialization scenarios involving violence, children and young people who have experienced violence will have a different reference frame in which to construct their identities. The authors argue that political violence is related to macro processes, but through the promotion of a different kind of socialization at the micro level it will be possible to influence the other levels, including those of community and society. In the case of displaced children and young persons, Mojica and Quintero state that it is essential to rescue the displaced population’s cultural traditions, and modes of organization and participation, for example:

there is a need to carry out an updated diagnosis of their conditions in order to visualize what kind of intervention is necessary and with what perspective to work: that of return [to their places of origin], re-population [in a new place], or attention in the present settlements... The diagnosis will also provide better

resources to demand of the State the recognition of displaced persons in the country [Colombia] and thus obtain the commitment of the church and national and international organisms (Mojica & Quintero, 1993, pp. 50-51).

In the present research, Mojica and Quintero's (1993) review has fostered recognition of the importance of learning from the resources present, not only within each person but also in the collectives and territories they participate in.

Based on the various programs and projects studied, these authors propose that mechanisms be created for reporting current situations and the situation of children participating in the project; agreements be made with both the State and non-government organizations; and joint coordinated action be carried out involving government entities, social organizations, and the private sector. The authors point out the importance of systematization processes, carried out from the beginning of the initiatives, which contribute to the creation of intervention models. The various institutions involved should work in coordination in networks.

In summary, Mojica and Quintero (1993) reviewed nineteen projects executed in contexts of violence, in some cases armed. Their review indicates the importance of several factors in these initiatives: preventative actions; the consolidation of grassroots organizations; the creation of alternative socialization scenarios; training for citizen participation; comprehensive attention; the integration of both individual and social levels in the approach; diagnosis by the community; and participatory processes in which children and young people play a central role. For the context of armed conflict, the authors point out the importance of making changes in the social and political sphere by tackling social injustice and inequality, and promoting self-management and social recognition. The principal contributions from Mojica and Quintero's study to the present study concern social research proposals for transformational alternatives for peace that incorporate several factors: collaborative processes among the various actors, with a significant place for educators; recognition of the particularities and resources not only of social actors but also of their territories; and educational, therapeutic, community practices that favor processes of political socialization.

An initiative of UNICEF et al.

Another initiative for bringing about change at both micro and macro levels has been published by UNICEF, the Colombian presidency, vice-presidency, ministry of foreign affairs, and the Colombian family welfare institute (UNICEF, Presidencia de la República de Colombia, Vicepresidencia de la República de Colombia, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de la República de Colombia, & ICBF, 2013). This proposal is different from those developed by Alvarado et al. (2012), Lugo (2017), and those studied by Mojica and Quintero (1993) in that it emphasizes the macro level as a route for influencing micro levels, although it does indicate some actions for micro environments such as the family and school. UNICEF et al. (2013) maintain that, in order to facilitate

changes in protection at individual, family, and community levels, and position children and adolescents as subjects of rights, socioeconomic improvement and cultural change must be introduced among children, adolescents, families, educational institutions, communities, public officials, and other strategic actors who work with childhood. The initiative of UNICEF et al. thus involves the participation of various actors in multiple environments. In this plan, families, schools, churches, institutions, social organizations, and municipalities collaborate in processes involving several government sectors such as education and health, the State and communities cooperate, and the community takes on importance as a protective environment for children and adolescents by creating its own strategies.

The protective community environments proposed by UNICEF et al. (2013) aim to promote the commitment and capacity of the government; demand strong legislative frameworks and the application of the law; support traditions, practices, and attitudes that contribute to protection; promote protection through joint actions involving the media and communities; educate children and young people on their rights as an important tool for everyday life; broaden children's and young people's participation in community development, and in their own human development and protection; strengthen the capacity of families, schools, and communities for the protection of children, by means of the creation of community protection networks and a focus on rights in schools; guarantee children's health, education, and nutrition, including care services, prevention against violent situations and exploitation, and their reinsertion into society; and create efficient systems to enable the operation of "monitoring, surveillance, and reporting" (UNICEF et al., p. 73). Perhaps the main contribution of the protective community environments to the present study is made in terms of the importance it places on the relational environments in which children participate, strengthening capacities in them, creating community networks, and children's health, education, and nutrition, including care services.

A further strategy, proposed by a Colombian presidential program for young people, (Colombia Joven) aims to strengthen protective environments for children and adolescents. The strategy, called *Golombiao*, is based on games for peace, and operates through sport, recreation, and play in places affected by armed conflict. It is oriented towards "promoting peace, tolerance, understanding, ... social cohesion ... reconciliation, and reintegration of all families and child victims of the conflict" (UNICEF et al., 2013, p. 81). Moreover, the strategy aims to bring about "co-existence, participation, and gender equity" among children and adolescents (UNICEF et al., 2013, p. 81).

UNICEF et al. (2013) propose various significant actions involving families, schools, communities, and institutions for the protection of children against recruitment. The actions proposed include the "implementation of the route for prevention to comprehensively protect infancy at risk of recruitment and utilization;" the opening of

spaces in which children can demand their rights; the creation of “positive forms of education and protection” (UNICEF et al., p. 83); and participation, communication, and advocacy on the part of children and adolescents. UNICEF et al. suggest that institutions, schools, and families carry out programs to support people taking care of children, such as parents, to help them protect the children. These same actors are also urged to create activities with the participation of children and adolescents to promote a culture of legality. Families, schools, and communities are asked to create extracurricular pursuits that strengthen coexistence through activities in art, culture, and sport.

UNICEF et al. (2013) propose further actions. Schools and institutions should provide suitable conditions for displaced children and create plans to regulate the use of weapons in educational environments. Communities and institutions are urged to evaluate the impact of policies on children and families, promote social responsibility in organizations and businesses, so that neither child labor nor the sexual exploitation of children are permitted, and to create programs to raise awareness on preventing violence and promoting children’s rights. Families and schools should develop affective ties, promote equitable access to education, and collaborate in creating and executing programs.

UNICEF et al. (2013) also make suggestions for certain individual actors. For example, families are asked to create a space for the participation of children in decision-making. The Colombian State is urged to train the armed forces in International Humanitarian Law; prevent arms trafficking; offer “promotion and support for a system of adolescent penal responsibility that respects rights, and strengthening of alternatives to privation of liberty” (UNICEF et al., p. 84); train judges, the police force, and other actors in juvenile and adolescent justice; create strategies for the prevention of child labor; provide attention through approaches focused on gender and ethnicity for children and adolescents at risk of recruitment or utilization by armed groups; offer education and professional orientation for adolescents at risk of recruitment or utilization by armed groups; create mechanisms for accountability, and systems for information on and monitoring of children’s rights; strengthen the “technical capacity of officials and strategic actors” (UNICEF, et al., p. 85) in the area of children’s rights; and provide technical help for regions and municipalities on the construction of policies for childhood.

In brief, UNICEF et al. (2013) propose the need to introduce cultural and socioeconomic changes involving action at macro level by actors such as institutions, as well as actions at a micro level involving families, schools, and the community. In this scheme, children and adolescents are key subjects and active agents in promoting their own human development and rights, and community development. The initiative aims to consolidate protective environments for children and adolescents to prevent violence, such as gender-based exclusion, and to promote the rights and coexistence of children and adolescents in the contexts in which they participate. One example of the protective

environments suggested by these authors involves games for peace (Golombiao). This is a strategy that uses sport and play to promote protection, peace, coexistence, participation, gender equity, reconciliation, and the reinsertion into society of children from contexts of armed conflict.

The principal contributions of the actions proposed by UNICEF et al. (2013) to the present study concern several points: the need for dialogue between social research and public policy, with which the review of laws, politics, and measures undertaken in the previous chapters takes on great relevance; the importance of the inclusion of the various actors relating to the children, giving explicit recommendations for the families, who are key actors in the present study; and the use of language and ways of relating that are familiar to the actors, play being fundamental as a mediation in transformational research with children.

Summary of macro and micro approaches

To summarize this section on macro and micro level approaches, the research carried out by Alvarado et al. (2012), Lugo (2017), Mojica and Quintero (1993), and UNICEF et al. (2013) demonstrates a clear intention to bring about change at a macro level, incorporating social, political, and cultural elements, and at a micro level with the inclusion of various actors such as the family, teachers, community, and institutions. This type of approach aims to attack the root causes of injustice and social and economic exclusion. It involves socialization processes in which the children and young people play an active role. Furthermore, the initiatives of Alvarado et al. and Mojica and Quintero emphasize that educational processes should contribute to training for citizen participation, and respond to the needs of the students by carrying out a historical diagnosis to determine the type of intervention needed.

The main focus of our initiative in Alvarado et al. (2012) is the school as a scenario to motivate multiple changes at community and family level. Our approach features a clear commitment to open access to knowledge, the recovery of tradition, the use of contexts and natural resources, the creative transformation of conflicts, and research carried out by all the actors involved. By positioning participants as researchers, cultural practices based on violence that emerged through certain social processes at specific historical moments can be deconstructed, and practices in the community and schools reconstructed by means of a decision to “say no” to violence. Lugo (2017) shows the potential of dialogue and aesthetics in transforming relational practices that have been learned by children and young people living in macro conditions imposed by armed groups and among the violence established in contexts of armed conflict. Through micro relational processes, these potentials enable the children and young people to give new meaning to experiences and construct new ways of relating. Mojica and Quintero (1993) stress the importance of social recognition and comprehensive attention brought about through networks, and including elements such as health, recreation, and therapy. The

nineteen experiences studied by these authors focus on the participation of children and young people in grassroots organizations, the consolidation of their identities, the re-establishment of their emotional ties, and their commitment to the community. Most of these experiences took place after violence had already occurred, and some few incorporated prevention. UNICEF et al. (2013) emphasize the influence of macro level changes on the micro-level, and focus on the community as a protective environment in a fundamental relationship with the government. These authors cite the example of the Golombiao games for peace as an experience designed to bring about peace, coexistence, and inclusion. They also emphasize the comprehensive protection of children and young people.

The principal contributions of the initiatives of Alvarado et al. (2012), Lugo (2017), Mojica and Quintero (1993), and UNICEF et al. (2013) to the present study center around the transformational function of social research with children from contexts of armed conflict: through comprehension of the importance of educational, therapeutic, community practices for peace-building; recognition of the centrality of the voices and needs of the children; comprehension of and approach to the children by means of their relations with significant agents such as their families and teachers; identification of the importance of practices located in the territories inhabited by the social actors; recovery of the relevance of dialogical and collaborative practices in which play and art are mediations fundamental to the deconstruction of dominant narratives of violence and patriarchy, and fundamental to the co-construction of alternative stories of peace; promotion of processes of political socialization and constitution of political subjectivities; and entry into dialogue with public policy.

The initiatives covered in this and the former section represent significant progress in macro and micro level approaches for children, and at times for young people, in the context of armed conflict. However, early childhood is not mentioned specifically in any of them, and will be dealt with in the following section.

Macro Social and Micro Relational Approaches for Early Childhood

There have been few developments in research dealing with interventions and recommendations specifically for the population of early childhood in the context of armed conflict. Below, I detail some initiatives that incorporate actions oriented towards this population, and which are relevant to the present study.

An initiative of Save the Children and OEI

Romero and Castañeda (2009), studied the state of the art in research on early childhood, with an emphasis on the regions of Putumayo, Magdalena Medio, and Arauca in Colombia. These authors make recommendations for research, interventions, and public policy, and take into account both the macro and micro elements of the contexts in

which children under six years old live. They point out a lack of research, documentation, and bibliography with regard to children in early childhood in the context of armed conflict. In general terms, Romero and Castañeda set out the challenges of creating educational institutions adapted to the needs of this population; promoting, in these institutions, the recognition of the children as subjects and not as objects; training them as citizens; and at the same time, guaranteeing their economic, cultural, and social rights in such a way that makes their true exercise of citizenship possible. The lesson here for the present study centers on comprehension of the children in their early years, their positioning as political subjects being fundamental.

Romero and Castañeda (2009) suggest that researchers create indicators to facilitate an understanding of the violation of the rights of children in early childhood in zones of armed conflict, nearby zones, and places receiving displaced populations. They also propose the development of descriptive research on the situation of children in the context of armed conflict, by means of interdisciplinary work involving research centers, research groups, and the universities of Colombia and other countries. These authors set out the importance of carrying out studies on the differentiated effects of the armed conflict on rural territories, and Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities; and they cite the need to establish processes for communicating the results, debates, and evaluations of impact arising from the research carried out. The initiative of Romero and Castañeda confirms that it is important for studies such as the present one to form part of broader academic communities such as the center for advanced studies on childhood and youth (Centro de Estudios Avanzados en Niñez y Juventud - alianza Cinde-Universidad de Manizales) and the research group within which the study takes place, spaces that have fostered interlocution with other actors and the socialization of the advances of research.

Taking into account the findings of the research processes they studied, Romero and Castañeda (2009) propose a list of subjects for further research on the consequences of armed conflict: the effects on cultural conditions and implications on the identity and subjectivity of children in early childhood and their socializing agents; the implications of the armed conflict on family structure, way of life, and patterns of upbringing, care, and education provided by mothers, fathers, educators, and other caregivers; changes in the emotional and physical health of children under six years of age due to situations related to armed conflict, such as the presence of chemicals in the environment; effects on “conditions and opportunities for exercise of the right to play, leisure, and recreation” (p. 280); effects on participation and training for participation of children and families; impact on the children of combatants and ex-combatants, and demobilized adolescents; and implications for the providers of services of health, education, food, and protection for children. The present study incorporates some of the subjects proposed by Romero and Castañeda for further study: relational, social, and cultural construction of the children’s subjectivities and identities; the relational frameworks that are formed among

the children, their families, and their teachers; and the participation of the children, and their constitution as political subjects who contribute to peace-building.

For interventions, with particular reference to State projects, Romero and Castañeda (2009) recommend developing the technical capacity of programs and projects aimed at families and children in early childhood. Developing the technical capacity of these programs implies creating and strengthening initiatives involving prevention, with an emphasis on family affection and ties with children in early childhood; consolidating and drafting strategies to reconstruct affective ties and protective and secure environments; establishing and strengthening criteria for attention and supply of services to indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities and others present in rural territories; strengthening support networks at family, community, and social levels to improve emotional, physical, and economic conditions among populations who have been, or are, at risk of being forcibly displaced; designing and implementing programs for comprehensive reparation, including mechanisms for the restitution of rights, and psychological and social attention; and strengthening human capital to raise awareness on, attend, and monitor the rights of children in early childhood. Although the present study is not a State project, it is connected to a peace program, *Convidarte para la Paz*, run by a center for advanced studies on childhood and youth (Centro de Estudios Avanzados en Niñez y Juventud - alianza Cinde-Universidad de Manizales) oriented towards children in early childhood, their families, teachers, and educational staff, with a focus that goes beyond prevention, and lies in the field of peace-building with an emphasis on affective, ethical, ludic, communicative, political relations in family and educational environments.

These authors make many recommendations for action in public policy, which should encourage groups involved in research on the armed conflict and violation of rights to make direct reference to early childhood as a prioritized population; raise awareness about children in early childhood in national and international monitoring strategies; develop mechanisms for early warning and reporting violations of the rights of children under six years of age in actions related to the armed conflict; ensure that systems for registering information on the effects of the armed conflict make known the situation of children in early childhood; develop capacity for dealing with children and families among local authorities and foster programs for attention in the territories most affected by the conflict; contribute resources, through municipal and departmental development plans, for social and economic programs oriented towards the rights of children in early childhood; strengthen systems for tracking, monitoring, and evaluating local and regional policies on problems arising from armed conflict; and promote the development of a unified information system at local, regional, and national levels to monitor the human rights of children and adolescents, with a differentiated emphasis on early childhood. In this sense, the initiative of Romero and Castañeda (2009) validates the importance of the review of laws, policies, and measures carried out in the previous

chapters, given that, with this review, it will be possible to formulate recommendations for public policy that emerge from the present study.

In summary, Romero and Castañeda (2009) make many suggestions for research, interventions, and public policy for children in early childhood in the context of armed conflict. With regard to the former, the authors highlight the importance of continuing research on the population in early childhood affected by the armed conflict. They point out a lack of research in this area, and suggest a need to create indicators, carry out descriptive research, disseminate the results of the research, and treat rural areas, and indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities with a differentiated approach. Romero and Castañeda maintain that some essential factors in interventions carried out through programs and projects are the development of technical capacity in the programs, including a focus on prevention, strengthening emotional ties, and protective environments; the creation of criteria for attention and of services for Afro-Colombian, indigenous, and rural populations; the strengthening of support networks for displacement and the risk of displacement; comprehensive reparation; and the development of human capital. The authors suggest that public policy establish mechanisms for early warning and reporting; strengthen the capacity of local authorities and programs for attention; improve systems for monitoring and evaluating policies; contribute resources for social and economic programs on rights; promote a unified information system that covers local, departmental, and national levels; and emphasize early childhood in reports on the armed conflict and on the violation of rights, both in national and international monitoring strategies, and in information systems.

The report prepared by Romero and Castañeda (2009) is of fundamental importance to my work, given the various coincidences between the two: the central position of children in early childhood as political subjects; the issues prioritized, which include the political subjectivity and participation of children, and the importance of their relational agents, who include families, teachers, and educational staff; the relevance placed on dialogue with broader academic communities, which fosters interdisciplinary discourse, and the establishment of installed capacity within the framework of a research center and educational program, in this case a center for advanced studies on childhood and youth (Centro de Estudios Avanzados en Niñez y Juventud - alianza Cinde-Universidad de Manizales) and the peace program (Convidarte para la Paz); and the interest in contributing recommendations for public policy that emerge from the learning and results of the research.

Community initiatives with the participation children in of early childhood

An initiative in the form of a community center dedicated to support for the displaced population is situated in a municipality near Bogotá (Centro de Desarrollo Comunitario de Apoyo a la Población en Desplazamiento de Altos de Cazuca, Soacha). The initiative involves community work for children in early childhood in circumstances

of displacement. A corporation for infancy and development (Corporación Infancia y Desarrollo, 2014) carries out this project under the economic auspices of the international community and public and private sector alliances. The initiative aims to provide comprehensive attention and raise awareness on human rights among children, young people, and families. The project is based on the premise that it is essential to strengthen the human development of children, young people, and families, because forced displacement places limits on this development at psychological, social, and educational levels. Pedagogical and play activities for children in early childhood are aimed at strengthening them psychologically and socially. The project promotes protection of children under one year of age through actions and reflection with families and adolescent mothers. The learning from this initiative for my own work concerns the importance of an approach with a prolonged impact that links psychosocial and educational processes, and incorporates a play-based methodology with children in their early years and their families, aiming to mend ties that have been broken due to the armed conflict.

This initiative is complemented by another carried out by an NGO for social development (Buenos padres buen comienzo, as cited in Corporación Infancia y Desarrollo and Fundación Corona, 2014), which is oriented to promoting the comprehensive development of children in early childhood by strengthening the educational skills of their parents. The program focuses on health, nutrition, affection, beliefs, values, and language, and its methodologies involve play and recreation. Like the previous initiative, the project is carried out in Soacha, a municipality near Bogotá, but has broader coverage, reaching other towns and cities in the departments of Cundinamarca (Madrid, Bogotá, Sopó), and Tolima (Ibagué). Funding for the project comes from corporate social responsibility. The lesson that this initiative brings to the present study relates to its recognition of the relevance of affective, ethical, and communicative ties within the family, and the use of methodologies based on play with an educational and transformational objective.

The community level initiatives with the participation of children in early childhood carried out by the NGO, Corporación Infancia y Desarrollo (2014), have contributed to my methodological design in terms of the inclusion of a psychosocial and educational approach of prolonged effect with ludic methodologies and appropriate language for dialogue among the children and their relational agents that fosters processes of transformation and strengthening of family and community ties.

Summary of macro social and micro relational approaches for early childhood

Although most of the initiatives reviewed in this chapter are concerned with children in general and do not emphasize early childhood, the initiatives that work with children in their early years deal with important matters for the present study: the concept

of children as political subjects, with an emphasis on their participation; the importance of the children's relational agents in the constitution of their subjectivities and identities, and in particular as political subjects; the inclusion in the research exercise of a psychosocial and educational approach of long-term effect, with play-based methodologies that foster processes of transformation and strengthening of family and community ties; the relevance given to dialogue with broader academic communities, which fosters interlocution between disciplines and the establishment of installed capacity; and the interest in providing recommendations for public policy.

Summary of Initiatives and Recommendations

The various documents reviewed in this chapter set out important recommendations for building peace in relation to the armed conflict. They provide recommendations for public policy and institutions, and for socializing agents such as the family, schools, and the community. At a macro-level, some research papers reviewed above propose structural changes in cultural, social, economic, and political spheres. Other studies make proposals for both macro and micro levels, prioritizing the role of the school in creating possibilities for building peace. At micro-level, the school, the family, and the community are seen as important peace territories. Yet it can be seen that there are few studies directed specifically towards early childhood and the armed conflict. This results in a vacuum in understanding the effects of the armed conflict on children in their early years, and on the relationships in which they participate. Similarly, there are few studies that make proposals for action with regard to early childhood and its relational contexts. In general, the information dealt with here indicates a void with regard to interventions carried out for the population in early childhood.

This vacuum affirms the relevance of the present study. Beyond the vacuum, from the review of the research in this chapter, significant learning emerges for the study with regard to the importance of several points: giving special attention to the voices of children in order to respond to their needs, by means of approaching them as political subjects and fostering their participation; recognizing life stories marked by violence, aiming to give new meaning to experiences; including other voices and significant actors in the process of political socialization, such as the children's families, teachers, educational staff, and communities, thus repairing relations fragmented by violence; participating in educational, psychosocial, therapeutic, community processes with long-term effects, situated in territories, in the framework of transformational research oriented towards peace-building, with an emphasis on the powers of social actors and future possibilities; promoting the agency of the children, their families, and other relational agents, by means of recognizing their strengths and potential, and constructing future possibilities; carrying out dialogical and collaborative practices in which play and art are fundamental mediations in deconstructing dominant, violent, patriarchal discourses, and

co-constructing alternative stories of peace; entering into dialogues with broader academic communities to foster interdisciplinary conversation and the establishment of installed capacity; and fostering social, cultural, and political advocacy by making known the laws, policies, and measures concerning the rights of children in contexts of armed conflict, and making recommendations for policy.

However, in spite of the significant contributions in terms of proposals and recommendations made in these documents, most of them do not indicate implementation processes, which are mentioned only as recommendations, nor do they detail the progress achieved. Thus, the nature of the changes that can be brought about through these proposals is not clear. However, in the cases of Mojica and Quintero (1993), Lugo (2017), and Alvarado et al. (2012) some of the proposals studied have been implemented. Mojica and Quintero documented the implementation of nineteen programs and projects; and Alvarado et al. reported on the implementation and results of a national children and young people's peace-building program (Programa Nacional Niños, Niñas y Jóvenes Constructores de Paz). These projects and programs have had a significant impact, as has been reported by the authors. However, this section deals mainly with proposals and suggestions.

Most of the initiatives described in this chapter focus on the population of children in general and not specifically on early childhood. In the words of Ardila: "the armed conflict is not considered as a fundamental problem in relation to infancy. There are several government programs which address infancy, but there are no specific programs or projects directed towards infancy as victim of the armed conflict" (Ardila, 1995, p. 41).

In relation to the progress and the shortcomings referred to in this chapter, my study offers a proposal for peace-building that I have already put into practice. The following chapters deal more fully with this proposal for intervention that uses action research methodology, as well as the results and analysis obtained through its application. Up to now, I have carried out the initiative within a micro-relational environment, though I am ultimately interested in influencing macro spheres, such as public policy. In the next chapter, on methodology, I explain my proposal, which involves a particular reading of children: as agents with the capacity to contribute to processes of transformation oriented to peace-building.

Part II

From Victimization to Peace Promoting Narratives

Overview of Part II

From Victimization to Peace Promoting Narratives

The second part of this document centers on the research itself. In Chapter 7, titled *Methodology: Peace-Building as Action Research*, the methodology of the study is set out with a description of the type of study, the group of participants, their context, the research team, procedure, data analysis, and ethical considerations.

The following chapters present the results of the study according to the thematic analysis of narratives, my interpretations, and a dialogue with previous literature. The themes into which the chapters are organized emerged in the two places where the study was carried out, Bogotá and Pereira, but are only differentiated according to these two contexts when pertinent. Reference to the families of children in early childhood mostly indicates the mothers, whose participation was greater than that of the fathers, but the distinction between mothers and fathers is made where pertinent. Thus, Part II includes Chapters 8. *Adverse Effects of Violence Among the Children and Their Resources for Defense*; 9. *The Families Speak: Violence and Resources for Resistance*; 10. *The Teachers Speak: Violence and Resources for Resistance*; 11. *Resources and Potentials for Peace-Building*; and 12. *Counter Stories of Peace and Possible Futures*. Specifically, Chapters 8, 9, and 10 deal with the negative impacts of violence and resources for defense among the three groups of participants (children, families, and teachers), Chapter 11 is centered on the potentials for peace-building that children, their families, and educational and community environments have, and Chapter 12 shows the orientation of the participants to possible futures of peace.

Chapter 7

Methodology: Peace-Building as Action Research

In part I, I set out the international and Colombian regulations and law relating to children in early childhood and their families in contexts of armed conflict, and described research that notes the violation of children's rights in those contexts. This review demonstrates that laws, regulations, and research focus mainly on the violation of the rights of children in their early years and on the necessary protection. However, this focus also leads to deficit-based views and approaches regarding the children and their families. On the one side, such views and approaches favor the protection of the children, but, on the other side, they position them within a perspective of the children's defenselessness, violation, and victimization (Alvarado, et al., 2012; Barudy & Marquebreucq, 2006; Gergen, 2007; Ospina-Alvarado, 2015; Ospina-Alvarado et al., 2017; Ospina-Alvarado et al., 2014; and Pérez-Sales, 2004). This then limits the children's capacity for agency in building peace, because they remain involved in a cycle of violence. In this cycle, being receptors of violent practices, the children are victimized and positioned in terms of deficit. Thus, their actions and potential to bring about transformations are limited, in that violence may once again be exercised upon them, beginning another cycle of violence. The practice proposed and carried out in the present research arises as an alternative to these views and approaches. It fosters recognition of the capacity for agency that the children possess from their early years, as well as recognition of their families' capacity for agency. In peace-building, the children's and families' capacity for agency is expressed in their individual, relational, and collective strengths and potentials, and in the possibility of building future horizons out of the present.

This chapter on methodology sets out a practice for peace-building as a process of action research. The practice represents a commitment to transformation by means of raising consciousness, among the children and families participating, of their potential as peace-building agents. Transformation occurs through the participants' articulation and recognition of resources for defense from the negative impact of violence in their lives, identification of resources available for peace building, and an orientation towards future possibilities. Following action research methodology (Fals-Borda, 1978, 1991; Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991; Ghiso, 2000; McNamee & Hosking, 2012; Melero-Aguilar, 2011; and Rahman, 1991), the present study included workshops and observation processes oriented to prompt transformation by means of dialogical, artistic, and play-oriented practices. This enabled gathering the narratives of the children, their families, educational staff interacting with them, and other community agents. The workshops and observation processes were further oriented to the enrichment of relational and dialogical practices in the service of peace-building. The information gathered was processed by a thematic analysis of the narratives (Riessman, 2008) elicited in each workshop. The data

from responses to the questions asked in the workshops, and the stories shared by the children, their parents, and teachers also provided insights into their resources and about the orientation to future possibilities for peace-building.

The next section of the present chapter, titled *Research as a Practical Commitment to Peace-Building: Researcher Positioning, Epistemological and Methodological Approach*, deals with my positioning as a researcher, and a description of the action research methodology in both epistemological and methodological terms. The subsequent section, titled *The Research Process in Detail*, details the participants; their physical contexts; the research team; workshop process, focuses, strategies, and activities; data analysis; and ethical considerations. The chapter thus provides a methodological description of the study.

Research as a Practical Commitment to Peace-Building: Researcher Positioning, Epistemological and Methodological Approach

Along with a social constructionist approach (see chapter 1), I have positioned myself as a relational researcher. I cannot say that I am the same person who began the process. Stories, charged with resources, potentials, learning, and hopes, and stories of experiences of the effects of armed conflict have affected me. It is not possible to separate the facts from the values of the researcher. As proposed by Gergen (2007), the research has included an ethical-political positioning, with a clear commitment to the kinds of dialogues and relations promoted in the process: those that approach peace-building with the active participation of both children in their early years and their relational agents.

Taking the starting point of the ideas of social constructionism has led me to participate in a polyvocal inquiry, implying the inclusion of diverse voices, passing from a focus on the individual to an emphasis on relations, taking into account that “methods no less than theory and data contribute to cultural intelligibility and forms of life” (Gergen, 2007, p. 112). In this sense, the option of transformation and research, going beyond comprehension alone in order to promote agency among the collective of participants in peace-building processes, brought me to the field of action research, with a particular emphasis on dialogical practices as peace-builders, considering the generative nature of language, as proposed by Gergen. These interests are present in an epistemological approach that connects the critical and hermeneutic focus (Alvarado, Gómez, Ospina-Alvarado & Ospina, 2014; Alvarado, Ospina-Alvarado & Sánchez-León, 2016; Ospina-Alvarado, Alvarado & Fajardo, 2016).

In particular, the present study takes up the action research proposal of Ghiso (2000), an Argentinian who has carried out action research in Colombia, and who denounced dominant discourses, ideas, and symbols that come from dominant sectors, and control people, their knowledge, and actions, placing them in unequal conditions and

weakening their autonomy. In line with this author, the present action research aims to transcend these hegemonic orders.

The critical and transformational commitment of the present research has promoted deconstructing the dominant and oppressive discourse mentioned above, and constructing and making visible other, more peaceful ways of relating. In the words of McNamee and Hosking (2012) this commitment is related to the proposal made by relational constructionism for research practices as constructors of relations and realities:

relational constructionism aims to explore the sorts of life that become possible through different inter-actions, including (but not restricted to) different ways of talking.... As we relate in some more or less transformative inquiry process, who we are and who or what is other are co-created together with an order of value (pp. 42-43).

The present action research is also influenced by the transformational and political initiative proposed by Fals-Borda (1991), a Colombian author, in participatory action-research, PAR, with regard to the relevance of linking experience and commitment in the construction of knowledge oriented to communities in greater conditions of vulnerability and oppression, with objectives of social transformation. In this way, by means of the workshops that I describe below in this chapter, I sought to promote ways of relating, not only among the participants, but also between them and myself as a researcher. As Fals-Borda (1991) has explained: “This dialectical tension in commitment-and praxis leads to a rejection of the asymmetry implicit in the subject/object relationship that characterizes traditional academic research and most tasks of daily life” (p. 4). It is worth taking into account that, as proposed by Rahman (1991): “It is not easy to establish a truly subject-subject relation at the very outset with people who are traditionally victims of a dominating structure” (p. 17).

This is the case of families from contexts of armed conflict and their children in early childhood, who have been recognized and named by the State as victims. While positioning them within perspectives based on deficit and vulnerability, this recognition has enabled their access to certain rights, although material reparation is no guarantee of the exercise of rights. The commitment to agency in the present study, rather than promoting views of people’s resilience from which the State can continue to oppress and violate the rights of the population in contexts of violence, aims to visibilize and strengthen relational practices based on peace-building, moving away from a dominant story about their lives towards multiple narratives and alternative practices. This commitment corresponds to the participatory action research orientation that has influenced the present study, which, as proposed by Rahman and Fals-Borda (1991), defends the multiple and diverse forms of life, resists homogenization, and emerges as an alternative for survival in the face of patterns of domination that distance themselves from peace and justice.

Furthermore, the study relates to the ethical approach to action research with early childhood proposed by Bitou and Waller (2017), Eckhoff (2019), Hill (2003), Horgan (2016), MacNaughton and Hughes (2009), Pascal and Bertram (2009), Souto-Manning and Hanson Mitchell (2010), and by Waller and Bitou (2011), in that it considers children by means of their own voices and capacity for agency and participation. As sustained by Erwin et al. (2012), and Grellet (2000), who have carried out processes of action research with children in early childhood, these children have capacity for play, reflexive thinking, and creativity; or as Souto-Manning and Hanson Mitchell have registered through their action research, it is relevant to comprehend the children in their early years as experts, respecting and valuing them as human beings in their diversity, and, in this way, bring about practices of justice and sociopolitical consciousness. This is relevant, taking into account that, as Horgan has mentioned, in her action research with children and review of previous studies, rather than arrive at a “true voice,” it is of interest to listen to and comprehend the diverse voices of the children, which are at times incoherent in terms of rational adult thinking. This is a challenge for research that implies transcending orality and linking children’s other expressive resources. As Clark (2001, 2005) has proposed in action research with children in early childhood in England, the way in which we, as adults, listen to the children is fundamentally important. Furthermore, Bitou and Waller, in action research with children in early childhood in England and Greece, point out that it is of interest to comprehend not only the children’s voices but also their silences.

Following Horgan (2016), who carried out action research with children in early childhood in Ireland and reviewed the state of the art in action research with children and young people worldwide, there are multiple techniques to enable hearing the children’s own voices, such as those that use puppets, drawing, drama, storytelling, among others, but the most significant factor in this, in terms of action research and achieving the children’s real participation, is the relation which is formed with them. Erwin, et al. (2012), and Waller and Bitou (2011) emphasize the importance of the relation in action research with children in early childhood. In the present study, it was fundamentally important to maintain a relation of respect and recognition with the children, in which they felt happy to participate in the process, forming a relation different from that which they had with their teachers, which was sometimes based on hierarchy and fear. This recognizes, as Ang (2015), Hill (2003), Horgan (2016), and Waller and Bitou (2011) have noted, power relations present in intergenerational encounters, not only between children and other adults, but between the children and researcher. Furthermore, ethical positioning is fundamental.

The present study also took the learning of Horgan (2016), in action research with early childhood, in terms of group work, rather than individual, as making greater participation possible. This is similar to what Salmon and Riessman (2013) propose about eliciting narratives among children by listening to their peers, and to what Ross and Arsenault (2018) report about the importance of including peers in action research with

children in early childhood. In the present study, group work fostered the emergence of shared meanings, as will be seen in the section on data analysis. The group work consisted of multiple play-oriented creative strategies, which are shown in the descriptions of the workshops. As Horgan has set out from her own action research and from a review of previous research, “Visual and activity focused methods have been demonstrated as being especially useful in research with children” (p. 9). Similarly, Dawani (2016) has proposed research work using visual and performance methods, and Hecht (2007), in research with children of an indigenous community in Argentina, has mentioned that workshops that bring together reflection and play enable recognition of previous experiences, problems, needs, and context of the participants and their community, reflection on practice, the creation of knowledge, and openness to changes in planned methodology according to occurrences in the encounter.

In relation to the types of PAR proposed by Fals-Borda, the present action research study is positioned in terms of collective research, inasmuch as it involves the participation of a group of children, families, and teachers in workshops based on collective dialogical, play-oriented, and artistic practices:

Collective research. This is the use of information collected and systematized on a group basis, as a source of data and objective knowledge of facts resulting from meetings, socio-dramas, public assemblies, committees, fact-finding trips and so on. This collective and dialogical method not only produces data which may be immediately corrected or verified. It also provides a social validation of objective knowledge which cannot be achieved through other individual methods based on surveys or fieldwork. In this way, confirmation is obtained of the positive values of dialogue, discussion, argumentation and consensus in the objective investigation of social realities (Fals-Borda, 1991, p. 8).

Although PAR proposes action at both macro and micro level, the scope of the present action research study falls within micro-level relational practices. This is not because the importance of advocacy in structural spheres, as Ang (2015), and Ross and Arsenault (2018) have maintained in their studies, is not considered, but because of the difficulty of influencing those spheres. “At the micro level, PAR is a philosophy and style of work with the people to promote people’s empowerment for changing their immediate environment – social and physical – in their favor” (Rahman, 1991, p. 16).

The dialogical nature of the present action research is a correlate of both the generative practice recognized by social constructionism (Gergen, 2007; Gergen, 2012), and the self-awareness proposed by PAR in which dialogue is taken as a point of entry to social processes, as a possibility for participants to generate awareness of the situations that affect them, and as an alternative for finding solutions and undertaking political actions (Fals-Borda, 1991).

Melero-Aguilar (2011) also emphasizes the dialogical character of PAR:

the value that the critical theory acquires, because of the importance it projects in the word, discourse, and capacity to express and converse of the subject with whom the research is carried out, through accompanying them, towards bringing out their critical and emancipatory capacity (p. 352).

Furthermore, Ghiso (2000) highlights the transforming and interactive character of a dialogue of knowledge: “interaction characterized by dialogue gives new context and meaning to pedagogical and investigative tools that facilitate reflection and the construction of meaning of processes, actions, knowledge, histories, and, territoriality” (p. 2).

The commitment to collective transformational dialogical action research places emphasis on the inclusion of multiple voices, which is why the understanding generated refers to the stories of the participants, as will be detailed in the section on thematic analysis of narratives. The approach of Fals Borda (1978) is set out in this way: “In action research, it is essential to know and appreciate the role played by popular wisdom, common sense, and the culture of a people, in order to obtain and create scientific knowledge” (p. 16). The inclusion of multiple voices and knowledge in the present study takes up the proposals of Berckmans (2014), Erwin, Puig, Evenson, and Beresford (2012), Hatch, Greer, and Bailey (2006), MacNaughton and Hughes (2009), Ross and Arsenault (2018), Souto-Manning and Hanson Mitchell (2010), and Stamopoulos (2015) for action research, which should be oriented not only to the children, but also to their families, comprehending them as experts as Souto-Manning and Hanson Mitchell have argued. In the case of the present study, this inclusion extends to the children’s teachers. Guerra and Figueroa (2018) in Chile, Kumpulainen and Ouakrim-Soivio (2019) in Finland, Foulkes and St John Robb (2019), and Stamopoulos (2015) in Australia, and Hatch, Greer, and Bailey (2006), Ross and Arsenault (2018), Rust (2007), and Souto-Manning and Hanson Mitchell (2010) in the United States emphasize the importance of teachers being researchers on their own educational practice with early childhood, in order to qualify it by means of a systematic and reflexive exercise, such as action research. This, as Souto-Manning and Hanson Mitchell have indicated, and as occurs in the present study, may be documented by means of a thematic analysis of narratives. Stamopoulos mentions the relevance of involving the directors of the educational institution and, in general, other staff of the institution, in a similar way to the invitation of the present study to all of the educational community of the child care centers, including the directors, although counting on their participation was not always possible.

The present research study echoes the indications of Erwin et al. (2012), Ross and Arsenault (2018), and Stamopoulos (2015), with regard to the importance of including the community in these kinds of studies with early childhood, in the same way as Ross and Arsenault emphasize for children who have suffered trauma associated with violence. In the present study, participants were asked about their relations in the community and neighborhood. Ang (2015), on carrying out action research with children in early

childhood in Singapore, and after reviewing the state of the art in this field worldwide, affirms the importance of fostering the active participation of all those who are interested that transformations be brought about in the action research process. Erwin, et al. emphasize that, the aim is not only to obtain the participation of various actors, but also to create a sense of belonging, for which certain rituals, according to the particular culture, are important throughout the encounters.

Taking up the former ideas in the present research, a route of investigation was co-constructed in the manner of a spiral, which will be described below and which began with an expansive cycle of action research, dialogue of knowledge, and cultural negotiation, as Ghiso (2015) proposes. This author maintains that, rather than having a closed methodological route, it is of fundamental importance to travel with the participants through the following moments:

1. Construct a common identity (us) that questions, starting from reality. In the case of the present study, this is connected to experiences related to the armed conflict. The participants were involved in this process throughout the present study. As pointed out in the conclusions, it was interesting that, by the end of the study, experiences of the armed conflict were not the only ones common to the participants. There were also the friendships they had formed.
2. See and describe reality through the voices of those involved. In the present study this was explored by asking the various participants about the negative impacts of violence in their lives and relations and their resources for defense. All the participants were involved in this.
3. Social perception, which implies how the collective of participants perceive reality. This was carried out through workshops, as collective processes in which it was possible to identify similarities and differences in ways of perceiving experiences related to the armed conflict. All participants were involved in this, with differentiated workshop designs for each of the groups of participants, and some workshops that brought together the whole collective.
4. Interpretation, implying the deconstruction of perceptions. This was effected in the study by means of asking the participants for explanations of experiences, and multiple searches to deconstruct a dominant narrative about violence and violation, using strategies such as the identification of resources for defense from violence, and of potentials for peace-building. Work on this was carried out with all participants, although greater participation was achieved among the families and teachers. The action was carried out through the workshops with all participants, and although the children were present, their participation was partial, for example, in theatrical presentations with their families, or with drawings, but the narratives came principally from the adults. One of the reasons for this is that communication with adults is more narrative, while, with the

- children communication transcends the narrative, incorporating the performative, actions, corporality, and generally, other expressions.
5. Construction and prioritization of alternatives or routes with the group of participants, which in the present study took place by means of an orientation to possible futures of peace. This process was carried out with all the participants, although, for the reasons mentioned in the previous paragraph, the narratives emerged principally from the adults.
 6. Adjustments, implying that what is imagined be related to what is possible. In the study, this involved the identification of present actions to reach desired futures of peace, and the identification of the actors necessary to achieving these futures. In the same way as in the two previous moments, although the children were present, their participation was partial, and the principal voices that appeared were those of the adults. However, the children did participate, for example, through their acting in the theatrical sketches.
 7. Action on reality implied, in this study, the relational transformations expressed by participants in their daily lives throughout the process, and the emergence of the proposal *Convidarte para la Paz* [Living Together for Peace]. The transformations were narrated principally by the group of adults although, in relational terms, some learning was identified among the children by means of observation. These lessons were also recognized by their families and teachers. The emergence of the educational proposal, *Convidarte para la Paz*, exemplifies what O'Connell Rust (2007) has named reflexive practice about early childhood as a fundamental element in action research.
 8. Validation and legitimation in the community reality, which in the present study took place through the learning mentioned by the participants. Once more, the principal narratives in this sense came from the group of adults, although the children expressed that they liked being recognized for their potentials, and their role as peace-builders.

The methodological spiral of the present study also takes up the particularities set out by MacNaughton and Hughes (2009) for the research cycle with early childhood. This implies, from phase 1, in which the research interest and the transformational intention are defined, changing the practices and relations which, as a researcher, one enters into with children, their families, teachers, and community agents. In the present study, this implied going beyond the violation of their rights, and recognizing the relevance of their voices, knowledge, and experiences. The multiple voices, as Rust (2007) has proposed, were found by means of multiple pedagogical tools suitable for educational processes with early childhood, such as drawing, maps or charts of spaces, remembering stories, photographs, observations, audio recordings, conversations, interviews, and social dramas, among other tools. The action research journey proposed by MacNaughton and Hughes was worked with in the present study by means of the

memos designed by Maxwell (2005), starting from a central element of action research, the identity memo of the researcher, whose reflections I include in Chapter 1. The development of the action research spiral I propose, after reviewing the approaches of the authors mentioned, may be seen in figure 1.



Figure 1: Spiral of action research for peace: author's own construction bringing together the proposals of Ghiso (2015), MacNaughton and Hughes (2009), Maxwell (2005), Rust (2007), and those of the author.

The Research Process in Detail

As has been mentioned throughout this document, in the present research I begin with the recognition of a context of armed conflict in which certain dominant narratives have historically been constructed, legitimized, and reproduced with regard to the actors involved, and the violation of their rights. This has meant that the children and their families are narrated as victims, and in some cases as perpetrators in contexts of war. This situation leaves them in a state of dependency, passivity, and vulnerability. In this context, with the present research, I aim to contribute strategies for the collective creation of narratives that support the construction of peaceful relations based on affection, acceptance of others, equality, and respect. This work is carried out using the social constructionist perspective of social science in educational and community processes carried out with the children, their families, and educational agents.

As a study phenomenon, narrative was understood as generative, and as creating new realities (Gergen, 2007; Gergen, 2009; Schnitman, 2006; Ospina-Alvarado, Carmona-Parra & Alvarado-Salgado, 2014; Ospina-Alvarado, 2015; Ospina-Alvarado, et al., 2017). In the present study, this view was related to the interest in de-constructing dominant stories constructed in violent contexts, and co-constructing counter stories.

Below are described the group of participants; their context; the research team; the process, focuses, strategies, and activities of the workshops; the type of data analysis; and ethical considerations.

The Participants

The primary participants in this inquiry were children between three and six years old. They and their families live at present in Bogotá or Pereira, the cities in which I carried out the study. In Bogotá, I worked with 8 girls and 16 boys; in Pereira, with 11 girls and 9 boys. Some of them came from contexts with a presence of armed conflict, and along with their families, have experienced forced displacement. In some cases, the mothers of these children were pregnant in a context of armed conflict, and their families were obliged to move to Bogotá or Pereira, the children being born in these cities. In other cases, both pregnancy and birth took place in the cities, after the exile of families from their habitats.

The participation of the families, as the main relational agents of the children, was also fundamental in this study. Their participation was voluntary. All the families from contexts of armed conflict whose children attended the child care centers were convened. However, not all the families, or all family members opted to participate. In Bogotá, 8 mothers and 7 fathers participated; and in Pereira, 15 mothers participated. Some possibly did not participate for reasons of their own protection, because they preferred not to remember experiences of the armed conflict, so their children would know nothing of their experiences in that context, or because of lack of time. The families are principally from the regions of Nariño, Huila, Cauca, Magdalena, Córdoba, Chocó, and Caldas. Most of the families are in a condition of displacement and hold documents recognizing their status as such. These families have been the victims of threats, terrorist acts, massacres, attempts on their lives, and illegal recruitment²⁵. Others were demobilized from illegal armed groups. The parents' ages varied between 22 and 50. Most have a primary school degree, some have a secondary school degree, and one mother has a university degree. The socio-economic level of the families varies from very low to medium low.²⁶ The

25 Illegal recruitment: implies recruitment among communities to fill the ranks of illegal armed groups, in which on occasions children, young people, and their families are involved. Recruitment in communities is illegal in the case of illegal armed groups. The recruitment of children is always illegal.

26 Socio-economic strata: In Colombia, public services utilize a classification system based on socio-economic status. Households are classified in strata, numbered from zero to six, with zero

great majority of the mothers participating are housewives, some others are engaged in leatherwork, and one is a teacher. Some of the fathers work in leatherwork and construction, and others as machine operators or traders. In addition to the nuclear families, some families live with their extended family, for instance with grandparents, or uncles and aunts.

The teachers who participated in the project in Bogotá consisted of ten women and one man, from the Casita de los Rincones child care center in the locality of San Cristobal Sur. In the city of Pereira, five female staff of a child care center participated: four teachers and the director. The child care center is called Re+Creo, and belongs to the Corporación Crisol foundation. The educational level of the teachers varied from technical training, university studies of between five and eight semesters, to a master's degree, in the case of the child care center director in Pereira.

Table 1 summarizes the information on each group of participants (Children, Families, Educational Staff) who participated in the process of the six workshops described below.

Table 1
Number of participants by city

Group of participants	Location	Number of participants	Total by city
Children (age 3-6)	Bogotá	8 girls	24
		16 boys	
	Pereira	11 girls	20
		9 boys	
Families (age 22-50)	Bogotá	8 mothers	15
		7 fathers	
	Pereira	15 mothers	15
Teachers	Bogotá	10 women	11
		1 man	
	Pereira	5 women	5

The above information about the families and their origins was traced initially in the files of the child care centers, in which the social worker, the psychologist, and the teachers register the information about individual children and their families. Subsequently, a survey was applied to inquire about the names of the people living in the household, their ages, education, and occupations, the place of origin of the family, and

corresponding to the stratum with the lowest level of household income, and six the highest. In the initial characterization for the present study, participants were asked about their socio-economic stratum, and it was found that they were classified among strata 1, 2, and 3.

their socioeconomic strata. Other questions concerned documents certifying or corroborating their status as displaced persons, the names of the children participating in the project, and their ages and places of origin.

The Physical Context

As mentioned above, the research was carried out in the context of two children's care centers: a child care center called Casita de los Rincones in the locality of San Cristobal Sur in Bogotá, and the Re+Creo child care center in the city of Pereira. Some details of these two contexts follow. In this study, contexts receiving families from areas of armed conflict were taken into account. It was thus important to contemplate the places of transit: from territories of origin to territories of refuge.

Bogotá receives large numbers of people who have lived directly in the context of armed conflict. The Bogotá district secretary for education (Secretaría de Educación del Distrito, 2014) maintains that between September 2010 and September 2014, 204,064 victims of war arrived (an average of 140 people a day), the San Cristobal district being one of the six localities in which they are principally located, the others being Ciudad Bolívar, Bosa, Kennedy, Suba, and Usme. This authority also states that there is greater social inequality in the six localities above than in other areas of the city. This creates a risk of re-victimization among those who arrive in a condition of displacement to these parts of the city. They encounter not only new forms of violence, but also urban segregation, exclusion, and discrimination.

The district secretary for education (Secretaría de Educación del Distrito, 2014) also states that, in Bogotá, children up to five years old make up 12.1% of the displaced population. On arrival in Bogotá, these children are incorporated into the displaced register.

The same sources of information reveal that the locality of San Cristobal, has the fifth largest number of people classified as war victims in the city (15,763). Furthermore, the district secretary for education (Secretaría de Educación del Distrito, 2014), quoting another source (IEPRI, 2012), notes that the San Cristobal locality is one of the four localities in Bogotá that are home to over 70% of people living in low socio-economic strata (1 and 2).

The child care center Jardín Infantil Casita de los Rincones serves children up to five years old. The child care center receives co-financing from the district secretary of education and civil society organizations (Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá, 2006-2011).

It is worth noting that a participatory research initiative (PAR) was carried out in the San Cristobal locality of Bogotá in the early 1990s, with the participation of families in the children's educational setting. This initiative, called Núcleos de Educación Familiar, was oriented towards the prevention of violence in the family, educational, and neighborhood environment. It began with 18 district schools and was later carried out in

the whole of Bogotá in 360 public schools, by means of inter-institutional action, as part of a project of the Bogotá district authority (Plan de Desarrollo Distrital “Formar Ciudad,” 1994-1997) (García, 2005). This research is of great relevance for the present study, because action research has principally been carried out with communities, collectives, or organizations in the Colombian context, in some cases with the participation of children as part of the community, but not with families, as in the case of the study mentioned above; and much less with children, families, and teachers at the center of the process, as in the present action research.

Another part of the study was carried out in the city of Pereira, in the Re+Creo child care center. This child care center is located in the Las Colonias neighborhood in the district of Cerritos in the rural sector of the city, whose population belongs to low socio-economic strata (1 and 2). A great number of the families who live in this neighborhood have been displaced due to violence in different zones of Colombia, such as the interior, both the Pacific and Caribbean coasts, and the south of Colombia.

A foundation called Corporación Crisol arrived in the Las Colonias neighborhood in Pereira about 12 years previous to the present study, with the aim of carrying out social work. Among the foundation’s educational proposals, the child care center gives primary attention to young children. Various tools that involve community work are used, such as the construction of knowledge as a social responsibility. The community in general around the Re+Creo child care center links to the foundation through activities such as self-esteem workshops, training for small businesses, English classes, bird-watching, and artistic and cultural processes, among others. These activities use strategies such as love, care, education, health, and nutrition, as well as coordinated work between children and their families (Fundación Crisol, 2019). All the teachers of the Re+Creo child care center are mothers from the sector, who, with the help of the Corporación Crisol foundation, have begun university studies.

The sector of Pereira where the child care center is located has a notable lack of infrastructure. Access roads are in a bad state, public services are of a low quality, the nearest health center is 30 minutes away by motorized transport, most of the houses have mud floors, and many of them are made only of wood offcuts or giant bamboo. The population suffers a serious lack of economic resources. Children are often left alone because their parents need to go out and earn a living. Almost all of the fathers work in agriculture or construction. The mothers who work are involved in agriculture, informal work such as street sales, and house cleaning.

Research Team

The present action research fostered multiple instances of dialogue and types of participation. One was with the group of participants described above. Another involved the research team as part of the process, with my participation as principal researcher.

Initially, after the co-construction of the research objectives with the participants, and after the start of the process, it was found that the participation of various actors in the research team would be important. For one, in the work with the children, we agreed on the participation of their families and teachers as co-researchers in the process. They were thus present in the workshops as researchers. On another point, we saw that it was important to have more than one facilitator in each workshop, especially because of the play-oriented character of the work with the children, and also in moments in the work with families and teachers in small groups. For this reason, three master's degree students, whom I was accompanying in their educational process, were engaged in the work. Their names appear in the acknowledgements at the beginning of the document.

After the conversations and agreement with the participants, other instances of dialogue about the design of the workshops took place: with my advisor Kenneth Gergen; with a research group on political, ethical, and moral perspectives for childhood and youth belonging to the study center (Grupo de investigación en Perspectivas Políticas, Éticas y Morales de la Niñez y la Juventud del Centro de Estudios Avanzados en Niñez y Juventud de la alianza Cinde y Universidad de Manizales); and with the research group of the Program that covers the present study.

Below, I describe the workshops I carried out as part of the action research.

The Workshop Process

The research was put into practice through 13 workshops carried out over the period of a year, with meetings approximately every two weeks. All three groups of actors (children, families, and teachers) participated independently in three of the workshops, and together in another four workshops. The groups were described in more detail in the section on participants. The proposal of dialogical, play-oriented, creative workshops arose, for one part, through taking into account the preferred ways of relating of each group of actors and, for another part, because of the interest in strengthening peaceful relations. As Fals-Borda (1991) proposed: “There are no fixed deadlines in this work, but each project persists in time and proceeds according to its own cultural vision and political expectations until the proposed goals are reached” (p. 7). This was exactly what happened in the last three workshops, in which the learning of the participants was observed, and it was identified that the objectives constructed collectively at the beginning of the process were being accomplished.

Table 2 summarizes the topics and participants in each workshop.

Table 2
Workshop topic and participants

Workshop number	Topic	Participants	Number of participants in Bogotá	Number of participants in Pereira

1	Impact of violence among children and their relations	Children between 3 and 6 years of age, accompanied by a family member, or, if not possible, by a member of the educational staff as a co-researcher	Girls: 8 Boys: 16	Girls: 11 Boys: 9
2	Impact of violence among children and their relations	Families from contexts of armed conflict	Mothers: 8 Fathers: 7	Mothers: 15
3	Impact of violence among children and their relations	Educational staff	Teachers (f): 10 Teacher (m): 1	Teachers (f): 5 Director (f): 1
4	Resources for defense from the effects of violence	Children between 3 and 6 years of age, accompanied by a family member, or, if not possible, by a member of the educational staff as a co-researcher	Girls: 8 Boys: 16	Girls: 11 Boys: 9
5	Resources for defense from the effects of violence	Families from contexts of armed conflict	Mothers: 8 Fathers: 7	Mothers: 15
6	Resources for defense from the effects of violence	Educational staff	Teachers (f): 10 Teacher (m): 1	Teachers (f): 5 Director (f): 1
7	Recognition of resources and potentials	Children between 3 and 6 years of age, accompanied by a family member, or, if not possible, by a member of the educational staff as a co-researcher	Girls: 8 Boys: 16	Girls: 11 Boys: 9
8	Recognition of resources and potentials	Families from contexts of armed conflict	Mothers: 8 Fathers: 7	Mothers: 15

9	Recognition of resources and potentials	Educational staff	Teachers (f): 10 Teacher (m): 1	Teachers (f): 5 Director (f): 1
10	Focusing on possible futures	Children, families, and educational staff	Girls: 8 Boys: 16 Mothers: 8 Fathers: 7 Teachers (f): 10 Teacher (m): 1	Girls: 11 Boys: 9 Mothers: 15 Teachers (f): 5 Director (f): 1
11	Counter stories that enable peace-building	Children, families, and educational staff	Girls: 8 Boys: 16 Mothers: 8 Fathers: 7 Teachers (f): 10 Teacher (m): 1	Girls: 11 Boys: 9 Mothers: 15 Teachers (f): 5 Director (f): 1
12	Maintaining both the alternative stories and the changes achieved	Children, families, and educational staff	Girls: 8 Boys: 16 Mothers: 8 Fathers: 7 Teachers (f): 10 Teacher (m): 1	Girls: 11 Boys: 9 Mothers: 15 Teachers (f): 5 Director (f): 1
13	Sharing results and closure	Children, families and educational staff	Girls: 8 Boys: 16 Mothers: 8 Fathers: 7 Teachers (f): 10 Teacher (m): 1	Girls: 11 Boys: 9 Mothers: 15 Teachers (f): 5 Director (f): 1

The duration of the workshops with the children was one hour, with the families and teachers, two hours, and the workshops with all three groups lasted two and a half hours. All the sessions were recorded and later transcribed. The children's and accompanying person's participation was documented at different moments in photographs, along with the products of the workshops.²⁷ In the case of the educational staff, although the work was proposed in terms of workshops, on some occasions, due to the short amount of time these participants had available, a technique similar to that of focus groups was employed. In order to keep the families in the process, they were invited to the meetings through the children's school agendas and weekly calendar. Furthermore, each family was called previously, to remind them of the workshops.

27 Those who were willing to appear and those who wished not to appear in the photographs were taken into account according to a signed statement of consent from the families.

During the workshops involving children, the activities and questions were carried out through play, with puppets, modeling clay, and other media.

In the case of the children, the workshops were introduced by a short puppet play carried out in the first encounter. The play serves to motivate the children, to get to know each other, to present the project, identify their contributions to the co-construction of the project, and to gain the children's attention from the first moment. It was framed within the idea of the values of friendship and respect. This idea supports the approach set out in the project, which involves ties of affection, respect, justice, and bringing about peace-building. It was important to make the children laugh, and to get them to participate by answering simple and short questions, in order to maintain their attention. The facilitator represented two characters with the puppets, and a scene from the child care center was evoked:

Anita: Hello Juanito. We are going to study. Today is a beautiful sunny day.

Juanito: Hello Anita. I'm so happy to see you. How are you?

(The characters chase each other on their way to school. They run after each other, tickle each other, help to carry a school bag, and engage in activities that exemplify a life with cordiality and friendship. This makes the children laugh: for example, at the comments, or the faces of the puppets as they are being chased.)

Anita: Well, thank you Juanito. Have you heard? They are inviting us to some meetings at the school.

Juanito: Yes, but I don't understand very well what they are for. Do you?

Anita: My mother told me to go to the meetings. That we were going to play with puppets and modeling clay, to get to know each other as friends, and to build peace. But I didn't understand very well what peace is. Do you know what it is?

Juanito: Mmm. The teacher said the other day that it was to love each other, listen to each other, and respect each other.

Anita: I like that. Would you like to come with me to the meetings?

Juanito: Of course, Anita. (to the children) And you little friends: Will you accompany us?

With the families and the group of educational staff, the research was introduced in the first encounter by co-constructing the workshop topics, the approach, and the schedule through the use of images and keywords on brightly colored posters. This will be shown below. It was important to use clear language without technical expressions such as appreciative approach, social constructionist approach, and the names of potentials. The co-construction of dialogue was fostered from the beginning, and at the end of the workshop, a space was opened for further questions.

The *subject matter* was set out and agreed on collectively, emphasizing an interest in working with children between the ages of three and six whose families had lived directly or indirectly in contexts of armed conflict, as well as with the children's families and educators. The aim was that the children participate from their early years in peace-

building processes. The interest, rather than re-victimizing the families or children, was in identifying the strengths of children, families, and school or child care center, thus promoting relations without adverse effects of violence or with less of them.

I mentioned that, in this research, the children are understood systemically and ecologically within their relations, such as those in the family and school or child care center. The children, families, and school or child care center are also part of other contexts such as the neighborhood, the park, or the street. Children and their families are also constantly aware of communication media, form part of a society, a country such as Colombia, or a religious community, and are affected by what happens in politics.

With regard to the *social constructionist and appreciative approach* and the lessons learned from previous programs with approaches mainly oriented towards potentials (e.g. Niños, Niñas y Jóvenes Constructores de Paz and Convidarte para la Paz), I set out some of the focus points of the study in terms of potentials, without naming them. The participants and I decided that the study would aim to promote human potential for peace-building, and that this involves fostering love for self and others and care for nature (affective potential); taking ethical decisions for the good of others and not only oneself (ethical potential); creativity as a key element in the transformation of conflicts away from violent ends (creative potential for the transformation of conflicts); communication, in which others are accepted despite being different (communicative potential); and the possibility of building with others and bringing about change (political potential).

Figure 2 shows photos of the posters presented to the families and educational staff as starting point for the process of co-construction of the project.

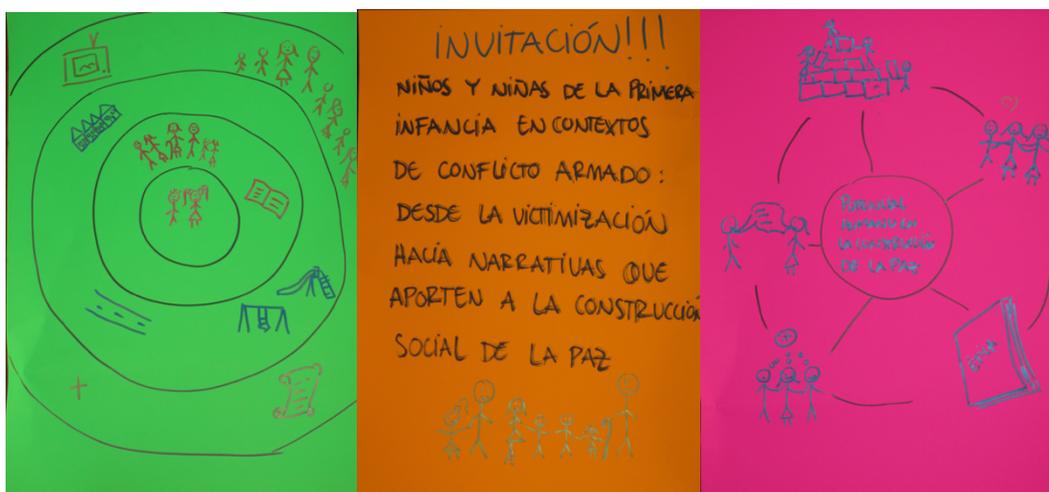


Figure 2: Posters used in presenting and co-constructing the project with the families and educational staff.

The workshops for the families and the educational staff began with a suggestion on my part and the collective construction, with the group of participants, of the aims of

the meetings: 1. to comprehend how the children describe themselves and how they are described by others; 2. to take away the ill effects of violence from the people and their relations, beginning by understanding what violence had done in their lives; 3. to comprehend what the families would not like to forget about their experiences; 4. to see what happens in the family, school, or child care center when violence is not present; 5. to identify the strengths and abilities of the children, families, and school or child care center; 6. to understand what peaceful future the families wish for and are able to build; 7. to describe the lives of the children, their families, and the school or child care center in a preferred manner; 8. to sustain the advances made in the workshops and meetings; 9. to share what we have found in the study, in order to analyze as a group whether or not the findings of others are in the same line as our own.

Figure 3 shows photographs of the posters used to collectively construct intentionalities concerning the workshops.

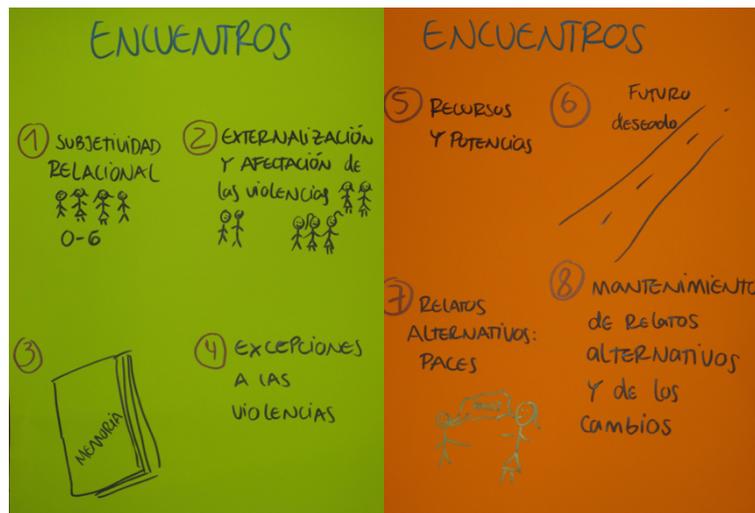


Figure 3: Posters used to construct collective intentionalities concerning the workshops with the families and educational staff.

After presenting the workshops, constructing common interests in the project, and answering the questions that arose, the aforementioned consents and assents were signed (Appendix 1).

Workshop Focus

The workshops aimed: 1. to strengthen the peace-building process with young children from contexts of armed conflict; 2. to provide strategies for the collective creation of narratives that contribute to the construction of peaceful relations; and 3. to strengthen the creation of bonds in the participants' relational contexts in order to enable the emergence of peaceful relations.

The workshops used various social constructionist and narrative tools that were designed to foster comprehension and transformation at the same time. The themes dealt with were multiple, as listed below:

1. **The impact of violence among children and their relations**

The Colombian context evoked an interest in researching violence associated with the armed conflict and its negative effects among children, their families, and relations in the child care center. The resulting research aims to open a way, inspired by the proposal of White and Epston (1993), for separating the children and their relations from adverse effects on their lives. It involves understanding that the children and their families are not the problem, but rather, the problem is violence as a naturalized practice within the culture.

2. **Resources for defense from the effects of violence**

Following the approaches of White and Epston (1993), and White (1994, 2007), the idea emerged that the negative effects of violence cannot correspond to the totality of the children's vital and relational experiences. There thus followed inquiry about the moments in the children's lives and relational environments in which the negative effects of violence were less present, opening possibilities for relations that approach peace-building.

3. **Recognition of resources and potentials**

Using the approaches set out by Gergen (2007, 2009, 2012) and knowledge and understanding from two peace-building programs (Niños, Niñas y Jóvenes Constructores de Paz and Convidarte para la Paz) (Alvarado, et al., 2012; Ospina-Alvarado, Loaiza & Alvarado, 2016), dominant narratives based on deficit-oriented readings about the families were de-constructed and the emergence of new stories, in which the children and their families become active agents in peace-building by using their own potentials was fostered.

4. **Focusing on possible futures**

Reflection on the ideas of White (2007), Alvarado et al. (2012), Muñoz (2008), and Lederach (2014), led to consideration of the futures that the families want for their children, the children's own dreams, and actions in the present that begin to construct these dreams, incorporating family and community history.

5. **Counter stories that enable peace-building**

The creation of counter stories (White & Epston, 1993; Monk & Winslade, 2013), was made possible by putting together all the knowledge and understanding that emerged through the above mentioned tools. That is, new modes of recognizing the children and

their families came about by exploring resources for defense from the adverse effects of violence in the children's lives and relations, recognition of potentials, and an orientation towards future possibilities, and through stories that reveal their contribution to peace-building.

Workshop Strategies and Activities

It may be pertinent at this point to describe the significant strategies employed to achieve the various ends described above, and to illustrate the ways they were used in the workshop activities. As stated previously, four of the workshops facilitated the meeting of the three groups of actors (children, families, and teachers and community agents), and other workshops were oriented to a specific group. All the workshops were carried out in the child care centers. The workshop guide can be found in Appendix 2. Below, I summarize research strategies and related activities within the various workshops.

1. Impact of violence among children and their relations

The exercise of identification of the negative effects of violence in the children's lives and relations was carried out in three workshops, one with each group of participants. The questions and activities carried out with each group of actors will be presented below.

Impact of violence from early childhood

The strategy of identification of the negative impacts of violence was applied through a workshop in which the children in early childhood participated, accompanied by a family member or teacher as a co-researcher.

In preparation for the workshop, teachers and family members were asked about some examples from the children's lives in which adverse effects of violence had been present. The example might have been a situation in the school or child care center in which a conflict had ended in a violent way. In the workshop, one of the narratives was retold in the manner of a story or tale, always maintaining a language that does not victimize the children and their families again. One of the ways of doing this is by not using such names as violent child, aggressive child, or violent family.

The workshop dealt with the identification of the impact of violence associated with armed conflict among the children and their relations. The aims were: 1. to identify the impact of the armed conflict and the violence associated with it in the lives and relationships of the children; 2. to begin the process of differentiating the children and their family and community relationships from the life of violence associated with armed conflict; and 3. to start forming bonds among the children that facilitate the emergence of peaceful relations.

In order to separate the narratives about the children from the negative effects of violence in their lives and relations, these effects were first identified. This involved

children, helped by a family member, molding various figures of their own creation with modeling clay: Don Violencio,²⁸ or a figure with another name representing violence; a figure bearing the child's own name; other figures with the names of the closest people in the family; and others representing community actors (in the case that these are present in the child's life) (see chapters, 8, 9, and 10).

Through the voice of another modeling clay figure, the facilitator accompanying the workshop told a story about how Don Violencio comes into the lives of children, their families, and their communities, and obliges them to do things they would not do if he were not there. While the story was being told, the facilitator asked some of the modeling clay figures (with the names of children, family, community) what Don Violencio is making them do, and what happens in their relationships when they let him in. Similarly, they were asked to describe what this character, Don Violencio, is like, what forms he takes, in which moments he appears, and to remember when he came into their lives or relationships.



Figure 4: Photo from the workshop carried out with the children to identify, by means of play, the negative impacts of violence on their lives and relations.

Impact of violence as told by families

Work on the identification of the adverse effects of violence among families was oriented towards similar aims to those that had guided the work with the children. It was carried out in one workshop. Although the workshop was designed for the families without their children, the children were so happy at the presence of their families in the child care center that they wanted to join them. The workshop consisted of a space to tell stories about the impact of the armed conflict. At the beginning, an activity was carried

28 Because of the difficulty of translating, or finding a literal equivalent in English, for the Colombian Spanish title of *Don*, in the name Don Violencio, given to the personification of violence in the workshops, the title and name is used without translation. An approximate translation would be Mr. Violence.

out in which families could share and react to each other's experiences. The work was oriented towards reconstructing violence, and its expressions in the children's lives and relations, as an entity outside of them. The questions and activities described below were used. Care was taken not to describe the children as violent, nor to describe their families as violent because they come from a context of armed conflict. The work was oriented to identifying: 1. expressions of violence in their lives, through the characterization of violence; and 2. the modes in which violence has affected the children and their relations.

The work was conducted by the researcher, who asked the questions that appear in the next paragraph. The activity involved participants telling stories and passing a ball of wool to another person who identified with or wished to react to the story: If a participant believed that someone else's expression had a connection with her or his own experience, that person asked for the ball. The ball of wool unwound as it was passed around, and thus the threads that the participants were left holding formed a network or web. This process was to be carried out until all the participants were connected through the network. It was interesting to see how the experiences of the families are connected, although each had its own characteristics. When participants had not identified directly with what the others had expressed and thus were still not connected to the network, represented by the unwinding woolen thread, they expressed in what way their experience had been different from those of the others, contributing in this way to the construction of the web. The families themselves pointed out that this, and other activities, had given them the opportunity to understand that others had had similar experiences, and that they were not alone. Public storytelling (White & Epston, 1993) was designed to help participants to create ties, feel better about their experiences, and recognize that others had experienced the impact of violence associated with the armed conflict on their lives and relations.



Figure 7: Photo of the workshop carried out with families to identify the adverse effects of violence. The activity illustrated is the human network.

The human network with the families enabled the characterization and personification of the adverse effects of violence on children, their families, and other relational agents, showing expressions such as aggressiveness as affecting the children but not being part of them. The network was constructed through the exploration of various subjects through questions, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3
Questions with families on the impact of violence

Objective	Questions
To inquire about the impact of violence on children:	- How do you think the various expressions of violence, armed conflict, maltreatment, abuse, have affected your child?
To explore the impact of violence on the family and family relations:	- How do you think the various expressions of violence, armed conflict, maltreatment, and abuse have affected your family? - How do you think they have affected relationships among you?
To find out about the impact of violence on the child care center, and on the relations within it:	- How do you believe the different expressions of violence, armed conflict, maltreatment, and abuse have affected the school or child care center? - How do you believe these expressions have affected relationships among the people in the school or child care center?
To study the impact of violence on the community and community relations:	- How do you think the various expressions of violence, armed conflict, maltreatment, and abuse have affected your community? - How do you think they have affected relationships between you?

Subsequently, in the workshop, a reflection was carried out on how it is normal that violence would have affected people and their relations, and how there are connections between one and another, common experiences, points of encounter, and misunderstandings. This enabled the participants to understand that they are not alone, and that others have had similar experiences, although at times the ways they are affected are different. Each person summarized in a phrase what they had learned through hearing the others, and, in groups, made a poster showing this learning (results in Chapter 9).

Impact of violence as related by the teachers

With the teachers, as with the other groups, the exercise of identifying the negative effects of violence associated with armed conflict was carried out through one workshop. Using the same methodology as in the first workshop with the families, the

first workshop with the teachers consisted of a space in which to tell and listen to stories about the negative impact of violence in the children’s lives and relations. This provides a way for the participating teachers to remain alert to the adverse effects of violence. To begin the first workshop, the teachers talked about the changes oriented to peace-building they had begun to notice among the children and families who participated in the study (resources and potentials in Chapter 11, their impact on peace-building in Chapter 13, and results of both workshops in Chapter 10).

After the introductory activity, in the first workshop, the teachers continued identifying more of the adverse effects of violence related to the armed conflict on the lives and relations of the children and their families. Using the same technique as mentioned above with the families, a network was created among the teachers by passing around a ball of wool that unwound as it was passed. This activity was guided by questions. The questions are part of a narrative mediation that aims to identify effects of violence that have become naturalized in contexts of armed conflict. If a teacher identified with what someone else had said, she asked for the ball of wool. This process was carried out until all the participants were connected to the network. The questions I asked the group of teachers are shown in Table 5 (results in Chapter 10).

Table 5
Questions with teachers on the impact of violence

Objective	Questions
To find out about the impact of violence on children:	- How do you think the various expressions of violence (armed conflict, maltreatment, abuse) have affected children who have lived in contexts of armed conflict or whose families have lived in that context?
To find out about the impact of violence on the family and family relations:	- How do you think the various expressions of violence (armed conflict, maltreatment, abuse) have affected the families of these children? - How do you think they have affected family relationships?
To find out about the impact of violence on the school or child care center and relations in these places:	- How do you believe that the different expressions of violence (armed conflict, maltreatment, abuse) have affected the school or child care center and/or yourselves as professionals? - How do you believe these expressions of violence have affected relations among yourselves and the children?
To find out about the impact of violence on the community and community relations:	- How do you think the various expressions of violence (armed conflict, maltreatment, abuse) have affected the community and/or the neighborhood? - How do you think these expressions of violence have affected relations among the people who live in the neighborhood?

- What do you think has affected the relations among the people who live in the neighborhood and the children?
--

After the former activity with the ball of wool, involving the questions and the teachers' responses, the workshop facilitators reflected on how violence affects people and their relations. In this activity using the reflecting team process (Andersen, 1994), the facilitators took care to use language that does not victimize, and to explain that the problem is not the children and their families but the negative effects of violence (see details of this activity in the next paragraph). Based on this reflection, the teachers wrote messages for the participating families and children. The teachers' messages were oriented towards promoting learning and potentials, and ensuring participants are not victimized again. The messages were shared with the families and children in a subsequent meeting. Some of these messages are included in Chapter 11, which deals with resources and potentials for peace-building.



Figure 10: Photo of the workshop carried out with teachers to identify the negative effects of violence associated with armed conflict. The photo shows the human network.

At the closing of all the workshops with the families and teachers, the technique of the reflecting team developed by Tom Andersen (1994) was used. The families, as the inside team, heard the reflections of the workshop facilitators, who assumed the role of an outside team offering reflections. In this role, the facilitators talked about what stood out for them in the workshop. The facilitators highlighted appreciatively resources and potentials that they had begun to identify among the participants that could contribute to strengthening ties among them by bringing to light experiences common to all. It is important that the facilitators do not make eye contact with the participants during this activity, as the objective is that participants hear others talk about the positive values they see in both the participants and their relationships. Social construction of the subject happens not only in conversations, but also in listening to what people say to others. After the activity, participants were not asked for their opinions about what was said, as this would lose the effect produced by their being the audience. The intention was simply to

have the participants listen to what others say. Finally, each person was asked to express how she or he felt about the workshop and what impressions they were left with, or what learning they would take away with them from the encounter.

2. Resources for defense from the effects of violence

The second workshop for each group was oriented to the identification of resources for defense from the negative impacts of violence among children and their relations (results in Chapters 8, 9, and 10).

Resources for defense from the effects of violence in early childhood

The second workshop with children dealt with exploring resources for defense from the negative effects of violence on the children and their relations. The workshop aimed: 1. to facilitate the identification of past, present, and future moments without, or with less, impact of violence in the children's lives and relational contexts; 2. to continue the process of creating bonds that foster peaceful relations among children; and 3. to encourage each child's learning through the experiences narrated by their peers (results in Chapter 8).

As in the first workshop involving the children, the second workshop began with the children getting to know each other through singing, and also closed with music. Participants jointly remembered the story told in the first workshop about Don Violencio, which was re-told by the facilitators.



Figure 5: Photo from the workshop carried out with the children to identify, by means of play, past, present, and future moments without, or with less, impact of violence in the children's lives and relational contexts.

Then, the same groups as in the first workshop were formed. A facilitator in each group related quickly, in the voice of his modeling clay puppet, the ways in which Don Violencio had affected the children's lives and relations. The figures of modeling clay created in the first workshop were used. By means of play, children and their families were asked about times when they have managed to keep Don Violencio out, and how

they did it. Likewise, they were asked for other ways in which they could keep Don Violencio away, and whether they could think of some friends or allies to help them keep him out. Where present, these friends and allies were molded in modeling clay.



Figure 6: Photo from the workshop carried out with the children to identify, by means of play, past, present, and future moments without, or with less, impact of violence in the children’s lives and relational contexts.

Subsequently, by turns, each of the groups recounted some of the constructed narratives about the moments in which they had kept Don Violencio away, while the other groups gathered around and listened. The facilitator spoke through her puppet inviting the children and their companions to speak through their puppets about resources for defense from violence in their lives and relations. All the children were able to take a short turn and share something. At the end of the activity, the group of children and families were asked what they had learned from the experience of others.

Resources for defense from the effects of violence as told by families

The second workshop involving families dealt with exploring resources for defense from the negative effects of violence, understood as individual and relational strategies and resources that participants already use to reduce the effects of violence. It had several aims. 1. The families were to identify past, present, and future moments without, or with less, impact of violence among their children’s lives and relational contexts. 2. With the identification of these resources for defense, the workshop sought to develop alternative narratives, give support to counter-stories, and increase the families’ sense of agency. 3. The process of creating bonds that foster peaceful relations within children’s relational contexts was to be continued, and each participant’s learning encouraged in the light of the experiences narrated by their peers in different relational contexts (results in Chapter 9).



Figure 8: Photo of the workshop carried out with families to identify their resources for defense from the adverse effects of violence. The activity illustrated is the collective compilation of a book about the lessons learned.

Towards achieving these objectives, families collectively drafted a book on the lessons they had learned. Each family was given a sheet of paper to write or draw in response to the questions below. Later, participants were asked to present to the group what they had captured on their paper, and to expand in cases where necessary. The questions shown in Table 4 were answered in writing or in a drawing.

Table 4

Questions on resources for defense with families

Objective	Questions
To explore resources for defense (past, present, and future) from the effects of violence that have become naturalized in the lives of the children:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - At what moments in the life of your son or daughter have the negative effects of violence not been present, or been present less than at other times? - Could you tell us a story about your son or daughter in the present, in which there are either no adverse effects of violence or less effects than at other times? - Taking into consideration what your son or daughter is like, what future options would not involve adverse effects of violence or involve less effects than are present at other times?
To explore resources for defense (past, present, and future) from the impacts of violence in family relationships:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In which family interactions have there been no effects of violence or less effects than at other times? - Could you tell me a story about your current family relationships in which there are no adverse effects of violence or less effects than at other times? - Taking into consideration your family relationships, what are some possible future options that would not have adverse

	effects of violence or less effects than at other times?
To explore resources for defense (past, present, future) from the effects of violence that have become naturalized in community relations:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In which community or children’s center interactions have there been no adverse effects of violence or less than at other times? - Could you tell me a current story about the community or children’s center in which there are no adverse effects of violence or less effects than at other times? - Taking into consideration previous experiences with the community or children’s center, what future options are possible in which there would be no adverse effects of violence or less effects than at other times?



Figure 9: Photo of the workshop carried out with families to identify their resources for defense from the adverse effects of violence. Participants hold their collectively created book about lessons learned.

Resources for defense from the effects of violence as told by the teachers

The second workshop with the teachers was oriented to exploring resources for defense from the negative impact of violence as a path to peace-building: resources understood as ways in which families and their children have resisted these effects and found other ways of relating that approach peace-building. This workshop aimed: 1. to facilitate the identification of past, present, and future moments without an impact of violence or with less impact in the children’s lives and relational contexts; 2. to develop alternative narratives, giving support to counter-stories, and increasing participants’ sense of agency; 3. to continue the process of creating bonds that facilitate the emergence of peaceful relations within the children’s relational contexts; and 4. to encourage each participant’s learning through the experiences narrated by their peers in each relational context (results in Chapter 10).

As in the previous workshop, described above, at the beginning of the second workshop, the teachers talked about what changes oriented to peace-building they had

begun to notice among the children and families who participated in the study (see results on resources and potentials in Chapter 11, and learning and changes in Chapter 13).

In the workshop, the teachers collectively drafted a book on resources for defense from violence in the lives and relations of the children. They identified some of the lessons learned that could contribute to peace-building. Each person was given a sheet of paper to write or draw something in response to the questions below. Later, participants were asked to present to the group what they had previously expressed on the paper, and to expand on this in cases where appropriate. The questions asked are shown in Table 6.

Table 6
Questions on resources for defense with teachers

Objective	Question
To explore, as a path to peace-building, resources for defense (past, present, and future) from the ill effects of violence internalized and naturalized among the children, and to identify their influence on reducing the negative effects of violence:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What moments in the lives of children do you know about in which there have not been adverse impacts of violence, or less impacts than at other times? - Could you tell me a story about the children in which there are no ill effects of violence or less than at other times, or in which the children contribute to peace-building? - Taking into consideration what the children are like: In what possible future options would there be no impact of violence, or less than at other times, or could the children contribute to peace-building?
To explore resources for defense (past, present, and future) from the effects of violence in family relationships:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What interactions among the families of children do you know of in which there has been no negative impact of violence or less than at other times, or in which the families contribute to peace? - Could you tell us a story about the current relationships of the families in which there is no negative impact of violence or less than at other times, or in which they contribute to peace? - Taking into consideration the relationships within the children's families: What future options would not involve the adverse effects of violence or involve less than at other times, or in which families contribute to peace-building?
To explore resources for defense (past, present, and future) from the effects of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What interactions in the community or children's center have not involved negative effects of violence or involved less than at other times? - Could you tell us a story about the community or children's

<p>violence in relations in the community, child care center, or school, as an opening to peace-building:</p>	<p>center in which there is no negative impact of violence, or less than at other times, or in which the community or child care center contribute to peace?</p> <p>- According to your previous experiences with the community or child care center, what future options within the community or the center would not involve negative impacts from violence, or involve less than at other times, or in which possibilities for peace-building arise?</p>
---	---

The participating teachers wrote and drew their replies to the questions on paper and, in the cases where the teachers so desired, these were later socialized.



Figure 11: Photo of the workshop carried out with teachers to identify resources for defense from the adverse effects of violence among the children and their relational agents. The photo shows a moment during the compilation of the collective book on lessons learned.

In the same way as in other workshops with the teachers, the workshop closed with a reflecting team, followed by questions about how the participants felt during the workshop and what they had learned and would take away with them.

3. Recognition of resources and potentials

In the present study, throughout the workshops with the children, their families, and teachers, I maintained an appreciative attitude toward the participants' resources, learning, and potentials. I further emphasized the study's orientation towards potentials and resources in a workshop with each of the three groups of participants, which I will describe later. The workshop had certain defined aims: 1. to promote recognition of the resources, strengths, and individual and collective potential of the children, their families, teachers, community actors, and others with significant relationships involving the

children; 2. to continue the process of forming bonds that facilitate the emergence of peaceful relations in social contexts involving the children (e.g. children to children, families to families, etc.); and 3. to encourage learning through the resources identified by other actors in each social context involving the children.

The workshops on the recognition of resources and potentials with the different groups of participants are described below (results in Chapter 11).

Resources and potentials of children

One of the workshops carried out with young children aimed to identify individual and relational resources and potentials in the voices of these boys and girls. This was done by means of play with puppets, play being one of the principal strategies in intergenerational dialogue between children in early childhood and adults.

Working jointly with a family member or a teacher, children recalled the stories told in the first two workshops using the character of Don Violencio. All participants, including the facilitator, communicated through puppets, the children through puppets bearing their names. The facilitator, positioned behind a puppet theatre, invited a child with an accompanying family or school staff member to join her, while the other participants remained seated until their turn came around. At times, a second child was invited to take part simultaneously with the first, and the facilitator asked both children questions behind the puppet theatre. When the child was ready with his or her puppet, the facilitator began by greeting with a puppet: “Hello (child’s name) how have you been?”; “Hello (accompanying person’s name).” In play, children and their families were asked, through the puppet with the name of the boy or girl, about a number of topics as set out in Table 7.

Table 7
Identifying children’s resources and potentials through play with puppets

Objective	Questions
To identify individual resources:	<p>To each child:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What do you like to do most? - If a friend were asked what he likes about you, what would she or he say? <p>A family member with another puppet was asked:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What do you like most about (name of child)? <p>Other children, were asked through the puppets about a companion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What do you like most about (name of child)? <p>At this point, the facilitator represented Don Violencio</p>

	<p>arriving, and the questions identifying individual resources continued:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is it about you that enables you to keep Don Violencio away? <p>A family member with another puppet was asked:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is it about (name of child) that enables her or him to keep Don Violencio away? <p>Through the puppets, other children were asked about a companion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is it about (name of child) that enables her or him to keep Don Violencio away?
<p>To identify collective resources, using the puppets, the facilitator asked:</p>	<p>To each child:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What do you like most about your family? - What has your family done to close the door to Don Violencio? <p>The accompanying family member was asked:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is it about your family that enables you, has enabled you, or may enable you to close the door to Don Violencio? - What do you like the most about the children’s center, or the people you meet in the park, or on the street? <p>At this point, the facilitator represented Don Violencio arriving at the school, and the questions through the puppets about collective resources continued:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What can be done in the school or child care center so that Don Violencio can’t come in? <p>An accompanying family member was asked:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is it about the child care center that keeps, has kept, or could keep Don Violencio out? <p>The facilitator represented Don Violencio arriving at the park, and further questions about collective resources were asked through the puppets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What can you and your friends do so Don Violencio does not come into the park and lets you play? <p>An accompanying person was asked:</p>

	<p>- What is it about the people who go to the park that keeps, has kept, or could keep Don Violencio away, so that the people can play?</p> <p>The facilitator represented Don Violencio arriving in the street or neighborhood, and continued asking questions through the puppets:</p> <p>- What can you do in the neighborhood or the street to make Don Violencio go away?</p> <p>An accompanying person was asked:</p> <p>- What is it about the people you know in the neighborhood that keeps, has kept, or could keep Don Violencio away when you are on the street or in the neighborhood?</p>
--	--



Figure 12: Photo of the workshop carried out with young children, using play with puppets, in order to identify individual and relational resources and potentials in the voices of these boys and girls.

After carrying out the activity with one of the children and his or her family member or other companion, all the other children and their companions took turns, with the rest of the children and families watching. It was important that the dialogue be a game and acted out, rather than an interview, taking into account the fact that play is the preferred mode of relating for children in early childhood and facilitates inter-generational encounters. In Appendix 2, there is a complete description of all the workshops.

Resources and potentials within families

A workshop was held on the recognition of resources and potentials with families. In groups, each participant was asked to share the changes oriented to peace-building they had noted among their children, families, other children and their families, and

teachers who had participated in the previous workshops. Subsequently, family members were asked to draw the figure of their child on one or two sheets of paper, and to write reflections inside the figure, or to create images, making reference to individual resources. The facilitator asked questions to orient this process: “What do you feel it is about your daughter or son that has enabled, enables, or may enable her or him to begin to create protection against violence?” Taking into account the work of previous programs, Niños, Niñas y Jóvenes Constructores de Paz, and Convidarte para la Paz, (Alvarado, et al., 2012; Ospina-Alvarado, 2015; Ospina-Alvarado, Loaiza & Alvarado, 2016), participants were asked to include the answers to certain questions in their drawings as described in Table 8.

Table 8
Questions on potentials for peace-building with families

Peace-building potentials	Questions
In relation to affective potential, near the heart in the drawing, they were asked:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What do you think it is about your daughter or son that enables her or him to love her/himself? - What do you think it is about your daughter or son that enables her or him to love others?
In relation to ethical potential, around the arms in the drawing, families were asked:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What characteristics of your daughter or son enable her or him to make fair decisions?
With regard to communicative potential, near the mouth on the drawing, the participants expressed themselves in response to the question:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What characteristics of your daughter or son enable her or him to communicate with others respectfully?
In relation to creative potential for transformation of conflicts, near the head on the drawing, parents wrote responses to:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What do you think it is about your daughter or son that enables her or him to resolve conflicts as they arise?
With regard to political potential, near the hands on the drawing,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What characteristics of your daughter or son enable her or him to work with others? - What enables her or him to take democratic decisions?

they wrote in response to:	- What enables her or him to promote the common good?
----------------------------	---

Families were asked to place a circle in woolen thread around the picture of their child. The circle represents the family. Within the circle, families placed words or images that referred to collective resources in response to the question: “What do you feel it is about your family relationships that has enabled, enables, or could enable you to protect yourselves against violence?” Each family made a larger circle representing the community or children’s center, in which they responded to the following: “What elements in the relations in the community have enabled, enable, or could enable its members to begin to form a shield against violence?”



Figure 13: Photo of the workshop carried out with the families to identify their resources and potentials, and those of their children. Participants make a body map that includes the child’s potentials for peace-building in relation to parts of the body.

Families showed their images with the circles to the other families. At the end of the activity, each family was asked what they had learned from the experiences of the other families.

Resources and potentials as recognized by teachers

A workshop was held with children’s center staff and community actors on resources and potentials. In groups of approximately three persons, the participants, mostly teachers, were asked to share what changes oriented to peace-building they had continued to note among the children, families, and teachers participating in the project. In two or three groups, the participants created a map of the community or children’s center. On the map, figures of children, families, staff of the children’s center, and community members were placed in the spaces where they usually participate. In a sticker placed near each figure of these actors, responses were written in relation to a question about the children and their individual resources: “What do think it is about the children that has enabled, enables, or could enable them to create a shield against

violence?” The questions about various potentials and resources made use of peace-building potentials – affective, ethical, communicative, creative (for transforming conflict), and political – as set out in our previous projects involving children in early childhood and young people (Alvarado, et al., 2012; Ospina-Alvarado, 2015; Ospina-Alvarado, Loaiza & Alvarado, 2016). The teaching and community participants were asked to respond to the questions in Table 9.

Table 9
Questions on peace-building potentials with teachers

Objective	Questions
To find out about the children’s affective potential:	- What do you think it is about the children that enables them to love themselves? - What do you think it is about the children that enables them to love others?
To inquire into the children’s perceived ethical potential:	- What characteristics of the children enable them to make fair decisions?
To find out about communicative potential:	- What characteristics of the children enable them to communicate with others respectfully?
To find out about creative potential for transformation of conflicts:	- What do you think it is about the children that enables them to resolve conflicts as they arise?
To find out about their view of the children’s political potential:	- What characteristics do the children have that enable them to work with others? - What enables them to take democratic decisions? - What enables them to promote the common good?

The questions asked in this workshop enabled certain understanding with regard to the children’s resources and potentials. This is presented in the following chapters as findings of the study. The questions also bring out and strengthen the potentials.

An activity was carried out to identify collective resources. Working on the pictures of the families they had made, or the texts they had written, the teaching and community participants answered the question: “What is it about family relationships that has enabled, enables, or could enable family members to form a shield against violence?” As in the other groups, participants were asked not only about their immediate relations but also about their environment, although the present research did not specifically cover the aspect of the children’s wider environment. On the drawings of the community or the children’s center, participants responded to the following: “What do you think it is about

community relationships that has enabled, enables, or could enable members to form a shield against violence?”



Figure 14: Photo of the workshop carried out with the teachers to identify the resources and potentials of the children and their relational agents. The teachers make a map of the child care center that includes the potentials of the various actors for peace-building.

Each group presented the map created. At the end of the activity, each group was asked what they learned from the experiences of other groups.

4. Focusing on possible futures

The workshop on possible futures, carried out with the three groups of participants (children, families, and teachers), aimed: 1. to promote the creation of counter stories describing alternative futures without violence among families and other relational contexts involving children; 2. to continue the process of creating bonds within the various relational contexts involving children (e.g. children to children, families to families, etc.); and 3. to continue to form bonds among children and the actors in the various relational contexts in which the children are involved (children, families, community actors, and teachers) (results in Chapter 12).

Groups were formed with the children, families, and teachers. Each group was asked to set out, on flipchart paper, a drawing or other artistic presentation to express how they would like the family or group (school/child care center; community/neighborhood) and their relationships to be. Each group presented their artwork. The person accompanying the workshop assumed the role of a journalist and guided the discussion through the questions presented in Table 10.

Table 10

Questions on possible futures

Objective	Questions
To inquire about future dreams:	- What is your dream family or group like? - What are the relationships in that dream family or group like?

To identify resources or potential:	- What part of that family or group of your dreams is already present in your family or group? - What individual or collective potential and strengths enable you to get closer to that future?
To identify strategies in progress:	- What are you doing now to get closer to that future?
To identify transformation by means of action:	- What are some small, concrete actions that could bring you closer to that family or group of your dreams?



Figure 15: Photo of the workshop carried out with the three groups of participants (children, families, and teachers) to promote the creation of counter stories describing alternative futures without violence among the families and other relational contexts involving children. The photo shows a moment from an artistic presentation to express possibilities for the family or group (school/child care center; community/neighborhood) and their relationships.

5. Counter stories that enable peace-building

The workshop on creating counter stories to enable peace-building with the three groups of participants (children in early childhood; their families; and education professionals with community actors) was oriented to two objectives: 1. to foster the creation of stories to counter those involving violence; and 2. to strengthen the bonds between the children and other actors in the various relational contexts in which the children are involved.

The researcher accompanying the workshop promoted reflection on the importance of not forgetting events experienced, so as to contribute to a future in which violent events are not repeated and to create other possibilities. In groups made up of all three sets of participants (children, families, and teachers), the following were reviewed: the allies and friends identified by the children; the books created by families and educators in past workshops; the photos of the figures made by families; the maps of the

community or child care center created by teachers or community actors; and the photos of previous workshops (results in Chapter 12).

Each group selected one of the stories that had been told in the previous workshops in which they had participated, and created a theatrical sketch or play about a preferred outcome for that story. The plays were acted in front of the other groups. For each play, the questions included in Table 11, were discussed collectively.

Table 11

Questions on counter stories

Questions about the plays
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- What motives did the characters have to act as they did?- What were the qualities of respect and forgiveness, and how could these ethical values be achieved in each story?- Who else should be part of the story?- How could you invite those people to participate in it?- What new outcomes could be thought of for each story?- How could these stories contribute to peace-building in the context of the Colombian armed conflict?- According to your previous experiences with the community or child care center, what future options within the community or the center would not involve the ill effects of violence, or involve less negative impact from violence than at other times?- According to your previous experiences with the community or child care center, in which situations would possibilities for peace-building arise?



Figure 16: Photo of the workshop carried out with the three groups of participants (children, families, and teachers) to promote the creation of counter stories of peace. The photo shows a moment from a theatrical sketch or play about a possible outcome for the story.

6. Maintaining both the alternative stories and the changes achieved

The research sought not only to bring about understanding but also transformation. Thus, it was important to design a strategy to maintain the counter stories with open endings and centered on potentials and future possibilities rather than on victimization caused by violence associated with the armed conflict. This would enable families to sustain and care for the relations of solidarity created through their participation in the workshops. This workshop has a singular relevance for the present research, because it enabled the identification of the appropriateness of the study, by asking participants about their learning, and also fostered the establishment of installed capacity through agreement on ways of maintaining the changes achieved. The activities carried out in this workshop are described in Appendix 2.

7. Sharing results and closure

A key element in the research was the design of a space for dialogue in which the results of the research could be shared with the participants and meanings and interpretations could be co-constructed. The feedback of the participants was fundamental in fostering interpretations using the themes and subthemes that reflected the experiences of the participating social actors, as well as my reading as a researcher. However, even more significant was the ritual closure, which aimed to reinforce the continuance of the process of change begun in the workshops. The activities carried out in this workshop are described in Appendix 2.

Data Analysis

Using Riessman's (2008) approach, in the present research I carried out a thematic analysis, in which, as the author proposes, "Data are interpreted in light of thematics developed by the investigator (influenced by prior and emergent theory, the concrete purpose of an investigation, the data themselves, political commitments, and other factors)" (p. 54).

All the workshops were recorded. In the case of the families and the teachers, the transcriptions include everything said in each conversational space. In the case of the children, a key element was deciding what to transcribe and what not to transcribe from the recordings, given that, at certain moments, there were references to the snacks being shared, someone wanted to go the bathroom, or mention was made of a television program that the children had seen, without relation to the research, and thus, although everything was recorded, not all of it was transcribed. For this reason, I made the transcriptions taking into account the proposal of Riessman (2008):

Transcribing discourse, like photography, is an interpretive practice. Representing "what happened" in an interview is a "fixation" of action into written form.

Transcriptions are by definition incomplete, partial, and selective—constructed by an investigator (who may or not also be the transcriber) (p. 50).

The transcriptions were cleaned up a little, basically in terms of eliminating my repetitions as interviewer, or in some cases in which there were repetitions of some words in the participants' narratives, ellipsis points (. . .) were used to indicate when information was omitted. As well as the recordings, texts written by the families and teachers in the workshops were transcribed, and photographs were taken of texts and other products of the workshops. In the case of the workshops with the children, photographs were taken of the figures they made from modeling clay. Additionally, the transcribed voices of the participants were translated, aiming to maintain the meaning of the kind of language used, and of expressions linked to the context. In cases in which an expression from Colombian culture was used, a footnote was included to explain its meaning in context.

It should be pointed out that, in the case of the children, there was not always a complete story, but multiple dialogues, not necessarily closed, that were reopened at different moments, coming close to the small story approach: “the ‘small story’ approach allows attention to ‘under-represented narrative activities, such as tellings of ongoing events, future or hypothetical events, shared (known) events, but also allusions to tellings, deferrals of tellings, and refusals to tell’” (Georgakopoulou, 2006a: 123) (Phoenix, 2013, pp. 72-73). What occurred in this sense in the present study echoes what Salmon and Riessman (2013) propose with regard to research in which children's voices are listened to.

Studies of children's talk have shown that the development of expressive capacity is fostered by adults who receive and respond to what the child is trying to say, without a continuous corrective questioning of the way they say it. A tolerance of some ambiguity, a willingness to wait for meaning to emerge: this is the kind of generous listening which facilitates a flowering of narrative art” (Salmon and Riessman, p. 198).

As will be seen in the results, when a child says something, as in the case of their talking about parent's consumption of alcohol, the other children continue, telling their small stories on the subject, in a similar way to that set out by Salmon and Riessman (2013): “children aid each other's expressive development. Children teach children how to narrate; in subtle ways they instruct each other, especially the need to take the audience's position into account” (p. 202).

Furthermore, as shown in the results, in the research it was recognized that, on working with children, it was essential to understand that their narratives sometimes included their experiences and those of their families, and at other times were permeated by their imaginations in the way that Ricoeur (2006) has proposed with regard to fictional narratives. Thus, it was of interest not to discard narratives that referred to monsters, superheroes, or witches, which are also part of the children's lives, and, therefore, these narratives are also incorporated into the analysis.

After making the transcriptions, a first exercise of thematization was carried out, using the program Atlas ti, and including the interpretation given to each theme in a memo, according to the meanings constructed about the stories. In this, as Riessman (2008) proposes, I “grouped the stories” (p. 61), taking into account their regularities, similarities, and differences. On this matter, Tamboukou (2010) has stated, “Narrative form rather emerges as the unfolding of a rhythm of differences and repetitions” (p. 47). The experiences were ordered into common themes among the narratives. The general themes coincided with those emphases agreed on with the participants for each workshop, and thus included their interests as well as the focus of the present research, and the bases of social constructionism and narrative therapy from which I began in the study. I grouped the information into general themes: the adverse effects of violence among the children and their resources for defense (Chapter 8), effects of violence and resources for defense from the parents’ standpoint (Chapter 9), effects of violence and resources for defense from the teachers’ standpoint (Chapter 10), resources and potentials for peace-building (Chapter 11), and counter stories of peace and possible futures (Chapter 12).

Although “Investigators in the thematic narrative tradition typically pay little attention to how a story unfolds in a conversational exchange or the questioner’s role in constituting it” (Riessman, 2008, p. 58), I was interested to maintain a dialogical character, and to include, in certain cases, fragments of conversation among the participants and myself, given that, as a process of action research, the questions, conversational moments, play, and artistic expression had not only the object of comprehension, but also an interest in transformation, in which my participation in the conversation was also important. Loots et al. have described this kind of view about narratives:

Researchers may even view narratives much more generally, as fields of communication traversed by storylines that do not need to be broken down between narrators and audiences, narratives and contexts, or narrative language and the other materialities involved with narrative (Loots et al., this volume) (Andrews, Squire, & Tamboukou, 2013, p. 6).

The connections between some stories and others by means of themes were made not only by myself. They also came about at the moment someone narrated their experience in a workshop and another person connected their own experience with that of the person speaking, for example, through the dynamic of the network made by passing a ball of thread, as previously described in this chapter. This activity fostered the emergence of collective narratives that, in turn, helped the reconstruction of relational ties among the participating families, which had been broken by the uncertainty and fragmentation brought about by the armed conflict and violence in general. Narrative connections also occurred when another person or myself took what was said in one workshop to another workshop with a different group of participants. As Loots, Coppens,

and Sermijn (2013) have proposed, “people continuously create different kinds of connections between story elements throughout their speaking” (p. 112), or as Tamboukou (2013) has put forward:

This is the point of remaining on the surface of narrative analysis: it is the act of treating narratives as multiplicities of meanings and creating a map of how different stories connect with other stories, discourses and practices in shaping meanings and perceptions and in constituting the real and ultimately the subject herself (p. 97).

In the present research, this implied diverse points of articulation, of connecting meanings together, rather than cutting and putting them together: For one part, it involved recognizing the previous connections in the life stories, which is why some questions were oriented to what other persons would say with regard to the children or the families. Further connections were made in the process of telling stories, when not only personal stories but also the relational networks were interwoven. This occurred in several of the workshops with families and teachers. Other points of interconnection occurred when, as has been mentioned already, in the workshops, participants related to what another had said and proceeded to narrate their own experience, or when a participant or myself brought something that had emerged in one workshop to another. Meanings were also connected when I, in the analytical process, placed in dialogue what had been said at two separate conversational moments, going back to the spiral in which these comprehensions and interpretations were discussed with the participants, setting out the bases for an exercise of co-construction of meanings.

After carrying out the thematization described, I reviewed the conversation fragments or the stories that had been grouped in each theme, in order to identify particularities that had emerged in the stories, and in the connections among them. This process is named by Riessman (2008) as “subsequent coding of narrative segments” (p. 65), in which “the researcher zooms in, identifying the underlying assumptions in each account and naming (coding) them. Particular cases are then selected to illustrate general patterns—range and variation—and the underlying assumptions of different cases are compared” (Riessman, 2008, p. 57). Within each theme, I brought together the voices of each group of participants and started to create subthemes, bring together part of texts, and construct more subthemes. I carried out this process using the Atlas ti program once more, constructing a memo with the interpretation given to each story, and its connection with other stories, the subtheme, and the general theme. In dialogue with my advisor, my students, and at times with the participants, we looked to what people were meaning in the context, and interwove the interpretations.

The subthemes emerged out of the discussions that arose within each general theme with each group of participants (children, families, teachers), and are thus more linked to the content emerging from the participants’ own voices. The subthemes incorporate some of the participants own words, and my analysis, carried out in dialogue

with them, and with my advisor. It was there in the subthemes, linked to the content and words narrated by the participants, that the innovative part of the present study emerged. Subthemes appeared that had not been previously conceived, such as life potential, potential of play and enjoyment with others, potential in exploration and investigation, and spiritual potential. For example, it had not occurred to me to inquire into the topic of spirituality, which emerged in the conversational and play-oriented activities, both with families and children. This topic has a sense that is perhaps peculiar to a country such as Colombia, which has had a strong base in Catholicism. Thus, there appeared an emergent meaning as a subtheme, in a similar way to that proposed by Tamboukou (2010):

While however, there is always a direction, a searchlight rotating rhythmically, the researcher in the archive should always leave space for the appearance of new analytical perspectives, for unexpected findings and unforeseen encounters that will interrogate her own way of reasoning (p. 168).

These kinds of emergent potentials, as well as other elements in the subthemes, which may be reviewed in the results of the present study, provide an original contribution to the current academic discussion on the topic.

This process of identifying emergent subthemes that outlined particularities within the themes, in dialogue with my advisor and the participants, implied analyzing the participants' stories and rewriting them in a way that made sense; the sense arose out of the themes that emerged in the stories, in which we took into account who was telling the story, who that person was speaking about, whether it was a case of an individual or relational process, and what were the emerging subjects or themes according to which the experience was ordered. The meaning of the stories was negotiated with the participants and put into dialogue with my advisor; the methodology, using workshops as collaborative processes in which the participants' stories were interwoven and discussed, was key to this.

In this way, some subthemes emerged in the dialogue with participants, and in some cases from their own use of words, in conversation with our interpretations as a research group. The themes and subthemes are described in the chapters that incorporate the results, their interpretation, and the relation with previous literature. The modality of play-oriented, creative, conversational workshops, and, in particular, the last workshops, were fundamental to the construction of shared meanings about the preliminary conclusions of the research group, which were placed in dialogue with the group of participants.

The confrontation of meanings constructed about the participants happened not only at the end of the process. Rather, with the different workshops and participants, I repeatedly proposed reviewing what had emerged in the narratives of a particular workshop, and the current comprehension of those narratives. In other cases, it was not I who proposed this but, for example, a teacher who had been in an encounter with the families, and who subsequently brought to the conversation their voices, or voices from

dialogues she had sustained with families at other times. This was done with care not to violate the trust involved in the friendships that the participants had been forming for some time.

The multiple dialogical spaces we participated in within the framework of the action research are a correlate of the idea that “investigators, in turn, interpret the interpretations” (Riessman, 2008, p. 188). Thus, rather than arriving at an absolute truth about the event the families and their children in early childhood had lived through, the interest was focused on their experience regarding the event, on the interpretation that each participant made of the occurrences, and on being open to multiple alternative stories that enabled moving away from a dominant story of violence and violation. As Creswell (2007) proposes, this kind of analysis implies that, as a researcher, I give voice to the stories of others, and I create meanings about the children and their families in the process of telling these stories. Thus, this type of analysis takes note of both the participants’ own voices and meanings, as well as the co-creation I contributed to as author, in dialogue with my advisor and the participants. Furthermore, it is possible to see what Gergen (2007) has named as the social construction present in dialogue and in relations: The narratives not only described, but, as part of this action research, were constitutive of the participants, as White and Epston (1993) have proposed.

Ethical Considerations

The study was first approved by the Taos Institute to be carried out as a doctoral thesis. Subsequently, it was presented to the ethical committee of a center for advanced studies on childhood and youth pertaining to an alliance between the CINDE foundation and the University of Manizales (comité de ética del Centro de Estudios Avanzados en Niñez y Juventud de la alianza Cinde-Universidad de Manizales). The ethical committee considered that the study did not in any way imply the re-victimization of participants, because the intention was the development of agency for peace-building from resources and potentials, rather than a deficit-based reading, of families from contexts of armed conflict and their children in early childhood.

Furthermore, the project was presented to the Bogotá district secretary for social integration (Secretaría Distrital de Integración Social), which endorsed it and suggested the child care center, Casita de los Rincones, for its implementation in Bogotá. The project was presented to the directors of the two child care centers, in Bogotá and Pereira, and endorsed by both institutions.

The main ethical endorsement was given by the participants. The families, on feeling interested in the project, and considering that it would foster their well-being and that of their children, decided to participate, signing the informed consent for their own participation and the informed consent for adults authorizing the participation of children. The teachers also agreed to participate and signed the informed consent. The children

verbally expressed their interest in participating, their liking for the workshops and the play activities and also signed or left a mark on the informed assent.

The names of the group of participants are not revealed, in compliance with the proper management of their confidentiality. The photographs are used in cases in which the authorization to take them and use them for purposes of the study was signed in the informed consents.

Action Research: A Possible Path for Peace-Building and the Creation of New Comprehension

To conclude, the present study represented a practical commitment to peace-building. Using the framework of action research, a series of workshops was co-created in which children, teachers and families participated. The workshops employed dialogical, collaborative, and narrative practices relevant to the participants' construction of realities. In contrast to what children and families may have experienced in other situations, no blame was directed towards the families because of their coming from contexts of armed conflict. This approach was propitiated by the research team and fostered by the educational team. Narratives were evoked that fostered the emergence of meanings and the transformation of both meanings and practices. The hope was not only to more fully comprehend the realities of children in the context of armed conflict, but to deconstruct the deficit-based view of children and families, and to foster their potentials for active participation in peace-building.

Chapter 8

Adverse Effects of Violence Among the Children and Their Resources for Defense²⁹

The present chapter focuses on the use of play as a means of giving the children an opportunity to express themselves about the effects of violence associated with armed conflict, and on their resources for combatting these effects, which would not be revealed in a direct interview.

As one of the starting points of the study, I began with the view that the children involved have a life full of experiences other than of the violence associated with the armed conflict. The workshops that I carried out with children, families, and educators enabled me to see the importance of identifying both the adverse effects of violence on the children and their resources for resisting those effects: understanding violence, not as the children's lives in themselves, but rather, as a problem that has affected their lives and relationships.

In the present study, the personification of violence as a problem led to the creation of a character called "Don Violencio." Characteristics were attributed to Don Violencio, personifying him using adjectives and actions from the children's own experiences.



Figure 17: The character of Don Violencio molded in modeling clay by a girl in early childhood, giving the character form, size, and color.

29 Some of the results, interpretations, and dialogue with literature contained in this chapter are to be presented as an article in the *Journal of Family Therapy*.



Figure 18: Character of Don Violencio molded in modeling clay by a boy in early childhood, giving the character the form of a monster.

There follows a description of the results of the research with regard to two of the themes, and the four related subthemes that emerged from the voices of the participants and my exercise of interpretation: the theme of the effects of violence as voiced by children, with the subthemes of fear in the presence of violence, and effects of violence in relations; and the theme of defending against the effects of violence, with the subthemes of concrete actions as resources for defense, and relationships as resources.

Effects of Violence as Voiced by Children

The children talk about the ways in which Don Violencio has affected their lives and relationships, making them aggressive towards others, either physically or verbally. They emphasize war games, with a naturalization of weapons and death. The effects of violence on children in early childhood as described by the children themselves include their fear and cries when Don Violencio arrives, and their feeling attacked by others. As the boys and girls mention, violence is reproduced in multiple scenarios. It appears in the mass media and – with the presence of Don Violencio – in everyday relations such as those that take place in the child care center or in the family. In the child care center, the adverse relational effects of violence are evident when children find among themselves that the way to keep Don Violencio away is with weapons in war games. As the children themselves indicate – often without explanations, or with explanations that move between imagination and reality – relations affected by violence emerge from patterns learned within the family. In the family, these relations are marked at times by gender differences or a father's consumption of alcohol. In some family relations, children are involved in aggression against their parents.

Fear in the Presence of Violence

Below are some examples showing the *individual impact* of violence among the boys and girls, who feel fear in its presence.

Two sisters express their fear of Don Violencio in the house and in the park:

Researcher: When does Don Violencio appear? When you are with whom?

Girl 2b: With my mother. . . . He comes by here and frightens us.

. . .

Researcher: And, if Don Violencio gets up and leaves the house, where do you think he goes?

Girl 2a: The park.

Researcher: And, what does he do in the park?

Girl 2a: He frightens the children.

A girl mentions her fear of Don Violencio, showing various reactions such as fear and laughter. She also mentions the presence of Don Violencio in her relation with her mother, in which the girl shouts:

Researcher: Girl 2b. Let's tell everyone about when Don Violencio arrives.

Girl 2b: When we are with my mother, Don Violencio arrives. He frightens us, and makes us laugh. . . . He makes us shout.

Effects of Violence in Relations

As well as fear of the presence of violence, there are *adverse effects of violence in the relations* in which children participate. These include actions that Don Violencio leads children to carry out in their relations in various locales such as the street, the park, the child care center, and the family.

Manifestations of aggression among children that occur when Don Violencio is present include actions such as slamming doors:

Researcher: What else does Don Violencio make you do?

Boy 6: Slam the door.

A girl mentions some actions that Don Violencio makes children do in the park.

Researcher: And in the park, what does Don Violencio make children do?

Girl 2a: Pinch, bite, and hit.

A boy notes the naturalization of violence in actions such as playing football:

Boy 8: We went to play football.

Researcher: When you went to play football, did Don Violencio appear?

Boy 8: Yes, to punch and spit.

A boy refers to physical aggression towards friends as an action oriented by Don Violencio:

Researcher: Don Violencio arrived. What did he make you do?

Boy 6: Hit [. . .] my friends.

...

Researcher: And, where does Don Violencio go?

Boy 6: To the house. Rough boys hit others.

The following fragment of conversation with some children notes the presence of Don Violencio in the child care center, expressed in physical and verbal actions such as pinching, hitting, and shouting:

Boy 5: He makes us hit.

Researcher: What does Don Violencio make us do in the child care center?

Boy 5: Shout . . . Hit . . .

...

Researcher: And when Don Violencio arrives here at the child care center, what happens?

Boy 6: He pinches the children.

Researcher: Does Don Violencio pinch the children? And what does he make you all do when he comes to the child care center? What does he make you all do?

Girl 2b: Pinch.

Researcher: Pinch who?

Girl 2b: Girl 2a

Researcher: Your sister?

Girl 2b: Because she always pinches me at home.

A boy talks about aggressive actions that occur in the child care center with the presence of Don Violencio:

Researcher: What does Don Violencio make you do in the child care center?

Boy 21: Push people.

Researcher: What else does he make you do?

Boy 21: Hit. Punch.

The following fragment of conversation with a boy shows direct and indirect aggression with the presence of Don Violencio at the child care center:

Researcher: What does Don Violencio make you do when he comes into child care center?

Boy 11: Makes us hit the children.

Researcher: What else?

Boy 11: Make some modeling clay balls and slam the door on the children.

As the following fragment of a conversation with two children shows, their relations are affected by violence. The circle of violence is maintained by the boys' responses to each other. Fighting as a way of relating is reproduced in multiple scenarios, such as in mass media and the child care center.

Researcher: What are you playing at with the dolls?

Boy 5: Biting. . . . Just because.

Researcher: What are you playing?

Boy 6: Hanging. Because he fights me a lot.

Researcher: And why?

Boy 5: Because he fights me as well.

Researcher: And where did you see this fighting?

Boy 6: On television. . . . I saw the supermen. . . . Superheroes fight people because they [the superheroes] are monsters.

A boy talks about the presence of Don Violencio at the child care center in moments of play:

Researcher: What does Don Violencio make you do when he arrives at the child care center?

Boy 13: Play nasty games with the toys.

Effects among children in early childhood include appalling games of war. A boy highlights war games in which Don Violencio is present:

Researcher: What does Don Violencio make us do at home?

Boy 5: Play with guns.

Another boy talks about war games, finding killing the only way to counteract Don Violencio:

Researcher: Where does Don Violencio go?

Boy 9: To the house.

Researcher: And what does he do in the house?

Boy 9: Makes children hit.

Researcher: And what do we do so he doesn't do that any more?

Boy 9: Have to kill him.

Researcher: What does he make the neighbors do?

Boy 9: Hit with their fists.

Researcher: Do you want to tell us anything else about Don Violencio?

Boy 9: This morning I was playing with my gun.

Researcher: Does Don Violencio make you do that?

Boy 9: No, I was only killing him.

Researcher: And, were you with anyone?

Boy 9: With my mother and with my father.

Researcher: And, did he make you do anything to them?

Boy 9: I keep the pistol. When Don Violencio comes, I will kill him with the pistol.

The following fragment of conversation with a boy contains a reference to the use of weapons and death as natural. In the mediation, in the form of a game, on being asked about ways of distancing Don Violencio, this boy mentions the use of weapons, indicating that this is normal because they are used by the police:

Researcher: And what shall we do so that Don Violencio will not make us do things we don't like?

Boy 5: Grab guns.

Researcher: And what should we do so that he doesn't make us grab guns?

Boy 5: The police have guns.

Researcher: That is, Don Violencio makes the police pick up guns.

Boy 5: Because they are adults.

Researcher: And, what should we do so that Don Violencio doesn't make us pick up guns?

Boy 5: Die.

A boy says that violence must be done away with by more violence. He mentions that he and his companions keep Don Violencio away from the child care center by playing at war:

Researcher: And, is there someone that helps us to keep Don Violencio away? Who helps you?

Boy 8: Yes. My friend, Boy 12, Boy 5, and Boy 13.

Researcher: Ah, your friend, Boy 12, Boy 5, and Boy 13 help you to keep Don Violencio from coming. And how do they do that?

Boy 8: We have to kill him.

Researcher: And how do you do that?

Boy 8: We have to kill him with a pistol . . . No, no, no.

Researcher: What do you do with your friends?

Boy 8: Playing. When we were playing, Don Violencio arrived.

Researcher: When you were playing, Don Violencio arrived? And what did you do?

Boy 8: We got out our waistcoat with pistols.

The following fragment of conversation with a boy shows that the presence of Don Violencio in different scenarios such as the home, or the child care center creates aggression in relations. The boy exemplifies this through shoves and punches in his relations with friends:

Boy 22: Yes, when Don Violencio comes, he shoves and punches.

Researcher: Where does he come to?

Boy 22: To the house.

Researcher: Which people does Don Violencio make do things?

Boy 22: Friends.

Researcher: And, are your friends at home?

Boy 22: Yes.

Researcher: And what does Don Violencio make your friends do?

Boy 22: Shove.

Researcher: What does he make us do if he goes to the child care center?

Boy 22: Shove.

A fragment of dialogue with a boy shows that patterns of violence learned in the family are repeated in play:

Researcher: What are you playing?

Boy 6: Transformers (boy fighting).

Researcher: Transformers. Why are you hitting your friend? Who taught you?

Boy 6: My father.

Researcher: What did he say about why you have to hit your friend?

Boy 6: Just because.

Violence, experienced both within the family and because of external conditions, affects children's relations. In the following dialogue with two boys, there are momentary gaps with regard to why fights occur in their relating. One of them says that violence has been learned from his father. Another says he has learned violence from both his father and mother. One of the boys refers to the loss of his grandmother through violence, and talks about the poverty of his family, and the exile they live because of displacement:

Researcher: Are you two friends?

Boy 5: Yes.

Researcher: And, why did you hit each other?

Boy 6: Just because.

Researcher: But why? . . . Who taught you to hit someone?

Boy 6: My father.

Researcher: Who taught you?

Boy 5: My father hit me, and I cried. . . . My mother as well.

Researcher: And why?

Boy 5: They hit me. My mother hit me. . . . With the belt.

Boy 6: They hit me too, with the belt.

Researcher: Did you like your father hitting you with the belt?

Boy 6: Yes.

Researcher: Why did you like it?

Boy 6: Because my father fights a lot with me. He doesn't put on movies for me, nor games. My grandmother is gone. My grandfather . . . is gone.

Researcher: Where did they go?

Boy 6: Far away.

Researcher: Why did they go?

Boy 6: Because they killed my grandmother I don't have television, or a bed. Only a house.

Researcher: Ah! But you have a house.

Boy 6: Now I live far away from [open] space, from the land.

Researcher: Where is [the open] space and the land?

Boy 6: On the moon, it would be. . . . I'm never going back there.

Researcher: Why did you all come?

Boy 6: It's that they shoved me. I fell, and they robbed me here.

The conversation fragment above shows how structural conditions and relational practices affect the lives of children. At the structural level, there may be an absence of basic economic conditions, along with structural violence in which extreme events occur, such as the murder of grandparents. At the relational level, there may be a naturalization of violence within the family in which fathers and mothers carry out violent acts on the children. The children reproduce some of these relational practices involving violence in other scenarios such as the child care center.

The following fragment of conversation, in play with a boy and a girl, shows the effects that Don Violencio has caused in their family relations. The children refer to expressions of violence in their parent's actions:

Researcher: And what else does Don Violencio make you do?

Boy 21: My father hit me very hard.

Researcher: Sometimes, Don Violencio appears and makes your father hit you very hard. What does Don Violencio make your mother do?

Boy 21: He makes her jump and bite father. He makes mother and father pinch [others].

A boy refers to the presence of Don Violencio in his family, on mentioning his father's aggressions towards his mother:

Researcher: Sometimes Don Violencio appears and makes us bite or treat someone badly here in the child care center.

Boy 5: But my father bit my mother.

The following fragment of a conversation with a girl shows the presence of Don Violencio in her family relations, through her actions towards different family members:

Researcher: And, what does Don Violencio make you do to your mother?

Girl 2a: Hit her.

Researcher: Does he make you do anything to your grandparents?

Girl 2a: Pinch them.

Researcher: And who else?

Girl 2a: Pinch my auntie. . . . He makes you hit brothers and sisters.

A girl mentions the presence of Don Violencio in her relations – including family relations – as expressed in aggression:

Researcher: What does Don Violencio makes us do?

Girl 2a: That we shout, bite our parents, and pinch our mother.

In the following fragment of a conversation with some children, the presence of Don Violencio in the family can be seen in the fights and forms of offending others:

Researcher: When has Don Violencio appeared?

Boy 21: At home.

Researcher: What does he make you do at home?

...

Girl 20: Fight and spit.

Girl 4: And he makes us stick out our tongues.

A boy refers to the presence of Don Violencio in his relations with his sister, which are marked by a hierarchy related to their age and sex:

Boy 13: He [Don Violencio] comes in the day, but he makes me hit my little sister.

The following fragment of conversation shows how children have been affected by Don Violencio, who makes them bite, pinch, hit, and shout at others. It reveals the naturalization of violence in the family, in relations such as those established with grandparents and younger siblings.

Researcher: What does Don Violencio make you do?

Boy 1: Pinch.

Researcher: And what else does Don Violencio make you do?

Boy 5: Bite.

Researcher: Who does he make you to do this to?

Boy 5: To our grandparents . . .

Researcher: And, what does that make them do?

Boy 5: Cry out.

Researcher: What does Don Violencio make us do that we don't like?

Boy 6: Hit.

...

Researcher: What does Don Violencio make you do?

Boy 11: Push.

Researcher: What does he make us do?

Boy 8: He makes the baby cry.

The following fragment of a conversation with a girl and two boys shows the presence of Don Violencio in family relations in view of the fathers' consumption of alcohol, and his hitting their mother:

Girl 4: My father, when he comes home drunk, hits my mother.

Researcher: So, Don Violencio appears when your father is drunk. At what other times does Don Violencio arrive?

Boy 13: My father hits my mother when he is drunk.

Boy 21: My father was drinking beer. So, he was drunk, and my father hit my mother.

Lastly, the relational effects not only imply aggression received by the children, but also their aggressions against their parents in scenarios such as the home and the park. A boy tells of his aggression towards his parents with the presence of Don Violencio:

Researcher: And if we open the door to Don Violencio, what does he make us do?

Boy 11: Hit our parents.

Researcher: Do you remember a day when that happened?

Boy 11: On Sunday at home.

Another boy refers to the presence of Don Violencio in the park, when he hits his father:

Boy 13: When we were at the park, Don Violencio came.

Researcher: And when you are in the park, what does he make you do?

Boy 13: Don Violencio makes me hit my father.

The narratives above enabled the identification of the negative impacts that violence has caused in children's lives, as well as in their significant relations. Additionally, the children expressed effects of violence that are related to the violation of their protection, as shown below.

The children refer not only to what Don Violencio makes them do, but also to how they feel the aggression of others through the presence of Don Violencio. The following fragment of a conversation with children notes the presence of Don Violencio in relational contexts such as the street, in which children are subject to the violence of others or are driven towards consumerism:

Researcher: Where does Don Violencio come to?

Boy 13: To the street.

Researcher: And what does he do?

Boy 13: He hits me.

Researcher: And what does he make you do?

Boy 13: Buy.

Researcher: When does he come?

Boy 13: At night.

Researcher: And where does he come to?

Girl 4: To the street, and to our home.

A boy notes the aggressions of others towards him, with the presence of Don Violencio, not specifying who the others assaulting him are:

Researcher: What does Don Violencio do?

Boy 4: They fight me and hit me on the foot.

A boy highlights the punishments present in the child care center, in which the naturalization of violence occurs:

Researcher: Do you like to come here to the child care center?

Boy 6: Yesterday, I didn't like it. Because they reprimand me, and punish me.

This fragment of play with a boy shows the father's physical aggression as an expression of Don Violencio in family relations:

Researcher: Sometimes, we open the door to Don Violence [playing with the doll of Don Violencio that the boy made]. What are you like Don Violencio? Father [playing with the doll the boy made of his father], does Don Violencio make you do things to the child that you don't want to do?

Boy 6: Hit, like this, on the forehead.

A girl refers to the presence of Don Violencio in her house as physical aggression:

Researcher: If they open the door of the house to him, what does he make us do?

Girl 2a: Pinch. . . . Bite. . . . Hit.

Researcher: And if Don Violencio gets up and goes to where your mother is, what does he make her do?

Girl 2a: Hit.

Researcher: When did that happen?

Girl 2a: The other day. . . . A good while ago.

The presence of Don Violencio in the family is expressed in physical aggression in different relations:

Researcher: Tell me what happens when Don Violencio comes?

Boy 6: My father hits my mother.

Researcher: Don Violencio makes your father hit your mother.

Boy 6: D hits me.

Researcher: Who is D?

Boy 6: My cousin.

In the following fragment of conversation with a boy, the presence of Don Violencio in his family can be seen in his father's aggression towards his mother, causing ambivalent feelings in the child:

Researcher: Who are you with when Don Violencio appears?

Boy 6: With my mother and father. He came when my father was biting my mother.

Researcher: And, what else does Don Violencio make them do?

Boy 6: He frightens us and makes us laugh.

A boy refers to violence between his parents and maltreatment towards himself through the presence of Don Violencio:

Boy 6: My father and my mother were fighting.

Researcher: Yes, because Don Violencio appeared. And what happened?

Boy 6: The day I was ill, they hit me on the head.

The following fragment of conversation with some boys and girls shows what happens when Don Violencio comes to their homes, provoking aggression between the different family members, in hierarchies ordered mainly by gender and age:

Researcher: And what happens when Don Violencio arrives?

Boy 13: He hits my father.

Researcher: And what happens with your father?

Boy 13: My father hits my mother.

Researcher: And your mother, what does she do?

Boy 13: My mother hits my sister.

Researcher: And what happens with your sister?

Boy 13: She hits my father.

Researcher: What happens when Don Violencio arrives?

Girl 4: That my father hits my mother.

Researcher: What happens when Don Violencio arrives?

Boy 12: He [my father] scolds me. . . . My father pulls my mother's hair.

The fragment above shows relational patterns among the families of children in which violence is present. These patterns include violence carried out by men against women and by adults against children. The relational patterns are connected to the patriarchal culture historically present in Colombia, which leaves the weakest unprotected against the strongest or those with greater power.

In these many ways, the children who participated in the study refer to the impact of Don Violencio on their relations, at home and at the child care center. Similarly, they mention the naturalization of violence in contexts that include the family sphere, a father's drinking, or their own violence against their parents. The adverse effects of violence on children are strong, as has been shown here through their own voices, the voices of their families and educators, and my interpretation of these voices. However, the mediation in the form of play and the construction of Don Violencio as an entity with specific characteristics independent from those of the children enabled them, and their relational agents, to identify resources for defense from the ill effects of violence in their lives and relations. These resources for defense then become available to them as tools, with which they are already contributing to peace-building processes, and which they will continue to use.

Defending Against the Effects of Violence

In the present study, the mediation in the form of play includes a review of the ways in which the children, their relational agents, and the relations among these agents have left violence aside, or have managed to avoid it. This enables, first, recognition that violence is neither the whole of life nor the whole of the relations in which children participate, and hence that there are moments when violence is not present. In the present study, these moments are called resources for defense, understood as ways in which the participants do not allow violence to affect them adversely.

Concrete Actions as Resources for Defense

In the case of children in early childhood, resources for defense from the ill consequences of violence at a personal level are seen in peace-building actions. Among the ways that children find to keep Don Violencio away is that of not fighting, not spitting, and turning to an adult in the face of aggression from others. There also appear actions in play that are related to the development of concrete thinking among children of

this age. The children mention that other moments in which they keep Don Violencio away are during vacations or illness.

The following fragment of conversation with some boys and a girl shows that, in order to keep Don Violencio away, it is important not to fight. This includes concrete actions such as not punching, biting, or spitting at other boys and girls. In some cases these actions appear to be an expansion of the teacher's remarks on how to be "good."

Researcher: Here we agree to something very important, which is listening to each other. Another very important thing is sharing. . . .

Boy 21: And we don't punch with our fists.

Boy 22: We don't bite each other.

Girl 20: And not spit.

Boy 5: Fighting, no.

Boy 6: And not to punch people.

Boy 11: Not to spit.

A four-year-old boy mentions ways in which he keeps Don Violencio away, such as by not fighting. The boy also mentions moments in which Don Violencio is not present, such as during vacations or illness. In the mediation in the form of play, he also refers to an action related to his concrete thinking, that of preventing Don Violencio from coming in.

Researcher: Boy 5, what do you do so that Don Violencio doesn't come in and make us do what we don't want to do?

Boy 5: Stop him. One doesn't have to fight with others.

Researcher: And what do you do so that he doesn't make us fight?

Boy 5: Keep him out.

On being asked about ways of keeping Don Violencio away, and in line with the concrete thinking of children of this age, a four-year-old girl refers to literal elements such as closing the door to him:

Researcher: Girl 2b. Have you closed the door to Don Violencio?

Girl 2b: Yes, very hard. We also put our hands to the door, and we put our backs to the door.

Researcher: You have closed the door very firmly. And what have you done so that he doesn't come in?

Girl 2b: Close it with keys.

Researcher: And, when have you closed the door with the key so that he doesn't come in?

Girl 2b: When we go to sleep, he doesn't wake us up and frighten us.

When her sister acts aggressively towards her, a girl turns to an adult instead of returning the aggression. She identifies this as a strategy.

Girl 4: Don Violencio comes, and my sister hits me.

Researcher: And what kind of things do you do when Don Violence arrives?

Girl 4: I call my mother.

Thus, some children in the present study talk about everyday actions in which they use resources for defense in their lives. The children also identify resources for defense from violence in their relationships.

Relationships as Resources

In this section, dialogue with children reveals ways in which relations figure in defending them against violence. Below are some fragments of conversation in which children refer to others who serve as resources to help them keep violence away.

The boys and girls narrate various resources for defense from violence in relations, which occur through simple everyday relational actions, or *small and concrete actions*. The resources include maintaining relations mediated by play with others in the child care center and in the family; and keeping violence away with the help of allies at home and at the child care center. Resources for defense in the family mean that Don Violencio is not present in the family. They also include being able to count on the presence of mother and father; on father not hitting anyone; being with father in actions such as watching television; and playing with father, so he does not hit mother.

According to the children, their resources for defense include having their families as allies in closing the door to Don Violencio. A boy says that Don Violencio does not come to his family:

Researcher: Good. Boy 5, tell the children what you do so that Don Violencio doesn't come in and make us do things we don't like?

Boy 5: When they come to my house, they don't come in.

Researcher: Good. But who are your allies in closing the door to Don Violencio?

Boy 13: My father, my mother, and my aunt . . . and my brother, and my sister. I have a brother. My brother also helps me to close the door to Don Violencio.



Figure 19: A family is an ally to the child in closing the door to Don Violencio.

In the following fragment of conversation, some children talk about playing with other people as a relational practice in which they can keep Don Violencio away at the child care center:

Researcher: Do you have allies so that Don Violencio doesn't come in? I'm going to give you some modeling clay, and you are going to tell me who are your friends in closing the door to Don Violencio?

Boy 9: Girl 16.

Researcher: It's girl 16 who is a friend?

Boy 9: Yes, a friend.

Researcher: So, I'm going to give you all modeling clay. So you [Boy 9] can make Girl 16, who helps you close the door to Don Violencio. When you [Boy 9] are with Girl 16, doesn't Don Violencio appear? What do you all like to do with Girl 16?

Boy 9: Play.

Researcher: That is, when you play with Girl 16, do you close the door to Don Violencio? You have friends . . .

Girl 2b: With Boy 9 and Boy 15.

Researcher: That is, when you are with Boy 9 and Boy 15, Don Violencio doesn't appear? What do you do with Boy 9 and Boy 15?

Boy 9: We play in the park and Don Violencio hides.

A boy mentions playing with his sister as a moment in which they manage to keep Don Violencio away from their family:

Researcher: What do you do in the afternoons?

Boy 13: My sister and I play.

Researcher: And Don Violencio doesn't come? Or does he?

Boy 13: He doesn't come.

The two previous exchanges show how play constitutes a relational space in which peaceful ways of relating emerge, making it possible to keep violence away. Play is a potent moment in the family, the child care center, and in the community, as represented in this case by the park.

Some tools identified through the exercise can be used later by the children in their relations with others. Other tools are only possible in play and imagination. The following fragment of conversation with a child, Boy 11, shows the type of actions that children carry out with people who are close to them to keep Don Violencio out. These are everyday actions in which children can participate to improve relationships in their families. They include passing the bottle to baby brother, and actions arising from children's concrete thinking and imagination, such as barring the door so that Don Violencio doesn't come in, or throwing snowballs at him, so he cannot pass, although

there is no snow in the children's environment in Colombia. Among his allies in keeping Don Violencio away, Boy 11 mentions his mother as a significant person.

Researcher: What can we do so that Don Violencio doesn't come in?

Boy 11: He comes in the house, and goes to the kindergarten. He comes in the house and frightens the baby.

Researcher: What do you do so he doesn't frighten the baby?

Boy 11: With the baby's bottle.

Researcher: What do we do so that he doesn't come in?

Boy 11: Throw things at him. Make some snowballs and throw them at him.

Researcher: What else do you do?

Boy 11: He comes in the kindergarten, and does things to us that we don't like.

Researcher: What do you do so he doesn't come into the child care center?

Boy 11: Close the door.

...

Researcher: And does anyone help you?

Boy 11: My Mother

Researcher: And what does your mother do?

Boy 11: Make some snowballs and hit him here?

In this way, the exercise fosters the empowerment of children from their first years. They identify actions they can carry out directly to keep violence away. Children's empowerment happens in a relational manner when they identify significant allies, such as their mothers, who support them in keeping violence away.

The examples of the children's voices below show parents' kindness and sharing with children as resources for defense against violence in the family.

A child maintains that the fact that his father doesn't hit anyone keeps Don Violencio away:

Researcher: What is your father doing so that Don Violencio does not come in?

Boy 11: He doesn't hit.

A boy says that, while sharing time with his father, Don Violencio is not present. This shows how sharing constitutes an important tool for peace-building in the family environment. An example of the time the child shares with his father is while watching television, in which they manage to keep Don Violencio away:

Researcher: Boy 13, you were going to tell us who you made here.

Boy 13: I made my father.

Researcher: And when you are with your father, does Don Violencio come?

Boy 13: No.

Researcher: And, when you are with your father, what do you do?

Boy 13: Watch television.

Researcher: Good. When you watch television with your father, does Don Violencio come?

Boy 13: No.

A boy finds a resource for defense from violence in play with his father, so that his father does not use aggression against his mother:

Researcher: Oh! That is, you close the door on him by playing ball with your father?

Boy 21: Yes.

Researcher: Oh! How nice.

Boy 21: So that he doesn't hit mother.

Researcher: That is, playing with father makes him not hit mother?

Boy 21: Yes.

As we see, children identify ways to defend against violence in their relations in educational and family environments. In both environments, they demonstrate that play can be a relational moment that contributes to keeping Don Violencio away. In my view, this contributes to peace-building through the experience of being with and sharing with others. Furthermore, children highlight the importance of their allies in managing to keep Don Violencio away. These may be important people such as their parents.

Adverse Effects Of and Defense Against Violence

Through carrying out this exercise of recognition of the adverse effects of violence and resources for defense, with play as the form of mediation with the children, I conclude that the use of play as a means of giving the children an opportunity to express themselves, about the effects of violence and their resources for combatting these effects, has enabled me to approach the children's meanings and practices in a way that would not be revealed in a direct interview. In this study, this practice also implies reviewing the ways in which violence has affected the children's lives and relations in families and child care centers. Monk and Winslade (2013) assert that "It is more productive to inquire into the effects of these problems, because it is the effects which can more easily be operated on to bring about change" (p. 70).

The children's narratives reveal the effects of violence, and also reveal their resources for resisting them. In the present study, this was effected by means of showing that the adverse effects caused by violence are not the whole of their lives and relations, by means of play, using the tool of naming Don Violencio as a character that arrives in the children's lives and relations with others, and who creates certain difficulties, and by means of not naming the children or their families as violent. This corresponds to what Monk and Winslade (2013) call "giving the problem story a name" (p. 63). As interpreted from the narratives, the children's stories include not only the adverse effects of violence, but also resources for resisting violence. The present study reveals resources that have been overlooked in a majority of preceding studies, which have often been centered on showing only the negative effects of violence (Bello and Ruiz, 2002; Ceballos & Bello,

2001; Defensoría del Pueblo, 2002; Human Rights Watch, 2003; Lozano, 2005; Niño, 2012; Sierra, et al., 2009; Torrado, et al., 2002; Torrado et al., 2009; Universidad Nacional. Observatorio Sobre Infancia, 2002).

The voices of the children, and my interpretation of them, showed the negative effects of violence, in terms of the children's verbal or physical aggressiveness, war games, fear of violence, and the reproduction of violence in relational environments like the family and child care center, marked by gender differences. However, it is interesting that there are subjective resources for defense from violence which bring the children nearer to peace-building, through actions such as not fighting or spitting, or seeking the mediation of an adult in conflicts. There are also relational resources for defense, with the mediation of play and interactions in the family and the child care center, such as counting on the presence of parents, and stopping father from hitting mother. From these resources for defense there emerge, as Gergen (2012) has proposed, the creative potential of relations.

In this sense, although the negative effects of violence were inquired into, the principal focus of the research was on the ways in which the children and their relational agents have resisted reproducing violence. This involves revealing everyday ways in which, instead of reproducing violence, the participants contribute to peace-building. The process demonstrated that children's lives and relations are rich and complex, and that they are active agents in the process of peace-building. Thus, it was possible to identify children's actions that contradict a narrative permeated by violence. This contributes to building counter stories through an emphasis on resources for defense, and the acknowledgment of people's qualities and attributes.

This led me to think along the lines of White and Epston (1993) that the children and their families are not the problem, nor are their relationships the problem. The problem is the violence they have had to live with and the adverse effects that violence has caused in their lives and relations. On reflecting on this idea, I also saw that violence has been present, but has not been the only thing that has marked their lives, which are rich and full. I realized that violence does not necessarily have to continue determining the lives of these children. In the narrative view, the moments in which the problem does not completely dominate a person's life are called exceptions or unique outcomes (White & Epston, 1993), and in the present study they have been named resources for defense from violence.

The deconstruction of dominant stories saturated by violence and the construction of alternative stories of peace requires working with the children through their own interests, needs, and modes of expression. However, even when, through their multiple narrative expressions, children construct alternative stories centered on their resources for defense, this is not sufficient to sustain peaceful ways of relating. For that to happen, children's participation in significant relations, such as those with their families and educational agents, is necessary. As will be seen in the next chapter, the voices of children

are enriched by those of their relational agents, making available not only a great number of resources for defense from violence, both at individual and relational levels, but also, strategies that contribute to peace-building.

Chapter 9

The Families Speak: Violence and Resources for Resistance³⁰

As I have proposed, relational processes can play a fundamental role in building resources for peace-building. Thus, the inclusion of relational agents in the children's lives is of key importance. Especially important in the present study is the way in which the children and their parents are positioned as "victims" or "peace-builders." This does not imply that there is no agency or potential for transformation on the part of the children themselves, but rather, indicates the importance of the relational process in their lives. In this sense, working alone with children without reference to their relational agents does not help new understandings and practices to take root. Working with the children's relational agents may encourage the development of peace-building resources into the future.

In the present chapter we turn to the children's parents and my interpretation of their stories. How do they view the effects of violence, and how do they describe their resources for defending against these effects? To illustrate this, I set out the results concerning two of the themes that emerged from family meanings and the subthemes that came out of them: 1. the theme of the effects of violence on family relations, with the subthemes disappearance of family members, disintegration of families in exile, and the naturalization of violence; and 2. the theme of resources for defending against the impact of violence, with its subthemes of avoiding venues of violence, memory work, communication potentials, teaching non-violence, and the importance of play. Subsequently, in the concluding section, I incorporate the discussion involving the voices of the families, my interpretations, and previous literature.

Effects of Violence and Resources for Defense From the Parents' Standpoint

As described in Chapter 7, two workshops were carried out with the children's families. The workshops were designed for the families without the presence of the children. However, due to the great significance for the children of their parents being present at the child care center, in some cases, the children came into the workshops. The workshops were carried out with an understanding that violence had negatively affected family biographies, but that, at the same time, families had constructed resources for defense that have enabled them contribute to peace-building. Their potentials and resources have helped them to counteract the effects of violence in their lives, and to find ways of breaking a dominant narrative in which expressions of violence may exclude

30 Some of the results, interpretations, and the dialogue with literature contained in this chapter are to be presented as an article in the *Journal of Family Therapy*.

other ways of relating.

Below, the chapter sets out the negative effects of violence on families, which may be related to the disappearance of family members, the disintegration of families in exile, and the naturalization of violence. These effects are countered when families identify the principal resources for defense from them among their children. Families sometimes narrate these resources with regard to an absence of violence in the children's lives, which they attribute to the children having been born or living outside the context of armed conflict. Furthermore, the families talk about characteristics and actions of their young children that enable them to keep the negative impacts of violence away from their lives, and also to contribute to peace-building processes. As well as the resources for defense from violence in the children's lives, families also describe resources for defense from the ill effects of violence in their children's relations, as well as describing some of their own contributions to peace-building, showing the importance of the family environment.

Below are some of the results that emerged from the families' voices and my interpretations.

Effects of Violence on Family Relations

Mothers talk about experiences that show how violence – and especially that associated with the armed conflict – has affected their family relations. Families refer to being affected by the disappearance of relatives and disintegration.

Disappearance of Family Members

The context of armed conflict creates different types of human loss. One of these is forced disappearance, in which a person may disappear without families knowing their whereabouts. Generally this means that the person who disappeared is dead, yet the bereaved have no body, nor do they know the truth about what happened. This causes a sensation of unease among families, as they continue to await the appearance of a family member, who in many cases will never return.

A mother emphasizes that the younger children are the ones who are most affected by the disappearance of a family member, telling a story that shows the effects on her nephew, who is currently 10 years old, but who was small when he lived in the context of armed conflict:

Mother 2:³¹ As Mother 1 says, they are ones who are most affected at times. And there are moments [violence related to armed conflict] that affect them,

31 In order to preserve the families' anonymity, they were assigned a random number. Parents and their children share the same number. The child's number is the same as that of the rest of his or her family, and family members are specified as mother, father, etc.

personally, and mentally, as if they get confused in the head, and all. At least, the one who more or less lived this in the past was my nephew, who is 10 now. He was small, but he remembers, and he says “Is it true, Auntie, that it’s over?” “Yes it’s over son. It’s not going to happen again.” And he remembers a lot. Most of all my brother. He says that he [the mother’s brother] watched him many times. That he came close to greet him, and all. Well that’s what he came and told us just now, here. Well, he had never told us. And it happened that my brother, when they took him. . . . we don’t exactly know whether he is alive or dead, not the slightest idea. But, he [the boy] says, two years ago, a year ago, was the last time my brother greeted him and carried him. So, there are things that he is very aware of and that he does not forget. But now, these kinds of things [events related to the conflict] don’t happen, thank God.

Disintegration of Families in Exile

The exile of displaced families brings not only material loss. In many cases, families are forced to disintegrate, which implies a worse loss. Members of an extended family generally have to relocate themselves in different territories, some remaining in territories with a presence of armed conflict, and others fleeing to the cities.

The following fragment of a conversation with two mothers shows their views on how the armed conflict has affected their families. Their chief focus is on the disintegration of the family, including the conflicts that arise among family members, the separation that they have to undergo because of their displacement, and the naturalization of violence in the new territories they arrive in after being exiled.

Researcher: Well. And, how has what you lived through affected your families?

Mother 2: Too much.

Researcher: In what kinds of things?

Mother 2: In our being together. When one is in the family, one is very close. And these things happen, and it’s like . . . it gets destroyed. The family breaks up little by little. Some in one place and others in another. Now, there are conflicts and arguments over nothing. Yes, because of that.

Researcher: Well. And do you see anything else that has affected the family?

Mother 8: No. Well it’s that. Separating oneself from the family. Not being together with the family. It would be that. Being far away from the family. Not being able to be close to them for that reason.

Researcher: Yes. Because the family stayed there, and you came here.

Mother 8: Yes. One is alone here. Well, it’s difficult at times, being far away from the family.

Researcher: Obviously. And what do you think has affected the family?

Mother 8: Also the break-up, because one doesn’t see them any more.

The following fragment of a conversation with two mothers shows the difficulty of recovering family unity when family members live in different places:

Researcher: Well, and what can you do to continue with your families in spite of the fact that now you are here? What can you do? Or, what have you started to do?

Mother 2: Well, I haven't done anything yet.

Researcher: Yes. And, doesn't any idea of what to do occur to you, so that the family remains united in spite of the distance?

Mother 2: No. Well most of us are here. In Pasto there are three sisters. Two are in the city of Pasto, and one is in a war zone. But, to be there always [in that region], no. Now it's not the same.

Researcher: Good. And have you managed to do anything to keep the family together? Or, has anything that you could do occurred to you?

Mother 1: No, well it's complicated. It's difficult, because living here in this city is a serious business.

The Naturalization of Violence

In some cases, effects are not directly related to the armed conflict, but to the naturalization of violence in the environments the children inhabit, such as the neighborhood. Some mothers mention that violence is experienced as something natural in the neighborhood, and that the only way that it will not permeate the lives of their children is by their keeping away from that context, and not going out in the street, where they are exposed to violence. A mother emphasizes that, in spite of avoiding the street, her daughters accept violence as something natural in their lives. She attributes this to what can be heard through the window in her community:

Mother 2: In the neighborhood [we manage to keep out violence] by not going out of the house. Well, in the place where I live, there are some really terrible girls. That is, one goes out to run after a ball, [because] they have already broken our window. And one goes out and tells them that, no, to play properly, and they answer you with some [bad] words. They are very vulgar, and, among themselves, I have noticed that, when they are playing, for example . . . they fight amongst themselves. They hit and kick each other, and all that. So, in order that one's children don't see or do that, well, the best thing is that one stays away from those people. And they come, and my daughters hear them, and now they say to me, "No, mother, if they say that to me, I will hit them." The little one says, "I will kill them." And that's because they listen, because it surprises me that my daughters say that, because I haven't taught them that, but they hear it. Because it's like a little square, where we live. And there, one says, one wouldn't imagine that they would say so much, those children of 10 and 11 years old, but they say things that my daughters hear.

Mother 1: In the community. Well, he is small. He stays with me in the house, so [violence] does not occur.

A mother says that one way of countering the adverse effects of violence is by not having contact with other persons of the community:

Researcher: And, Mother 7. Would you tell us what there is in the neighborhood that keeps violence away?

Mother 7: Well, let's say in the neighborhood where I live, I almost don't speak to anyone, and, well, they don't [speak] either. So, in that case, I say that there is no dialogue or exchange of words.

Researcher: And in the neighborhood where you lived before?

Mother 7: Well, no. It was a farm, far away from everything. We had no neighborhood. Only father went out to buy the provisions, and that was it. We were almost always there in the family, alone. And now we are there in this neighborhood, and neither do they talk to me, nor I to them, and we haven't had problems either.

It is worth pointing out that the naturalization of violence in Colombia has to do not only with the effects of armed conflict on the children's lives, but with social, historical, cultural, political, and economic conditions that have occurred in parallel to the armed conflict, and which extend beyond the territories affected directly by the conflict.

Among the various adverse effects of violence on the children's relations, their families identify some as fundamental. These include the loss or disappearance of a family member, the disintegration of families, and the naturalization of violence in the community context.

As a path to peace-building, expressions of the ill effects of violence foster the emergence of resources for resistance. These accounts of resistance contradict the dominant story of violence, a story that typically excludes non-violent resources for relating. We turn now to the parents' articulation of resources.

Resources for Defending Against the Impact of Violence

Mothers locate peace-promoting resources in small and concrete everyday actions. These are ways of avoiding, reducing conflicts, or generating alternative ways of relating. The mothers identify practices that promote peace, which include avoiding places where violence may occur, working with memory, communication, teaching non-violence, and play.

Avoiding Venues of Violence

Resistance to the ill effects of violence in the lives of children can take the form of avoiding places where armed conflict is taking place. For example, on being asked what

she could do so that the armed conflict did not affect the lives of her daughters, a mother mentions leaving the territory where it is directly taking place. She also cites closing her circle of relations as a method of protection against threats:

Mother 2: Maybe, so as not to affect them, to stay away from my city, because, if I go back there, that will affect them, because of what one has lived. Threats and all that. I wouldn't like the girls to be affected. That's why I keep them here, and I almost don't let them relate to anyone.

Another example of avoiding the negative effects of violence on the lives of children by staying away from areas of armed conflict may be seen in the following fragment of conversation with three mothers. Their narrative shows how they perceive their children would be adversely affected, were they to return to the territory from which they were displaced. The mothers perceive that, in order to avoid the adverse effects of violence on their families, and to protect their children, they must remain far away from any direct experience of the armed conflict and from illegal armed groups:

Researcher: Yes. So, that's what you do so that they are not affected. Stay here and not go back. So, even though you are here, could they [the children] be affected in some way?

Mother 2: Hmm, yes. Yes, I believe that [violence] could affect them.

Researcher: How?

Mother 2: Maybe because, like, for the people who do that [violence], there is no place where one can hide, and that could possibly affect them here. Yes.

Researcher [addressing other members of the group]: Well, now. One of you who also believes what she has just told us. Do you believe something similar?

Mother 1: I believe the same. That the choice is to stay here and not go back there. All the same, these things affect you. And the children, even more.

Researcher: How do you believe that you have been affected in ways that you wouldn't want your children to be affected?

Mother 1: Well, at least, in that place, there are lots of guerrillas.

Researcher: Very well. How do you feel that what you lived in the context of armed conflict, or violence, has affected them [children]?

Mother 8: Well, I believe that they have not been affected, because one has moved far away from all those things there, and one is here in this place, and able to overcome the other things that happened back there.

Researcher: So, it's similar to what they [other women] are saying. Staying here would be a way of protecting them. What other things could you do to protect them?

Mother 8: Well, yes, to be far away from all those places over there, where they did one so much damage, and all that, so that the children don't suffer everything I lived through.

A third example of avoiding the effects of violence by shifting one's place of living, is provided by a mother who notes that her children have not been affected by violence during their early years because their family kept them away from the conflict:

Mother 2: Well, I wrote about my daughters. That violence has not appeared and has not been present because, also yes, they were born in Pasto, but they were babies, and we always had them remote from that. And, from there, I came here, and since then it has not appeared.

Memory Work

One of the most interesting resources identified by these mothers includes memory work, that is, using heuristics that facilitate forgetting violent, frightening, or stressful experiences. As one mother shows, forgetting may be facilitated by avoiding places that stir up bad memories.

Mother 3: At the moment, violence is not present, because we are far away from the causes that could bring violence to my family, thanks to God. Today, we are stable, and happy not to remember what we lived through.

Another mother states that the way to keep the negative impact of violence away from her family is by avoiding the house where they lived before displacement:

Mother 2: Not to go back to the house, I think. Because if, like, you shift things to the past, there is where it all starts again.

In the mothers' narratives, practices for resisting violence at family level appear in specific actions of remembrance that contribute to peace-building. These practices include remembering care for the environment, family unity, tolerance, and rejection of violence in the family:

Mother 2: What I remember about my family. When we were able to cultivate the land and harvest fruits. Family gatherings, happy, with all united.

Mother 8: Avoiding violence in the family, not being intolerant.

Communication Potentials

Other resources that contribute to peace-building center on communication, and especially the way in which talking together could aid in understanding and the transformation of conflict. As one mother reports:

Mother 2: Violence is not present because we are a very communicative and comprehending family, and we try to solve conflicts by talking, so that the children have a good image of us as parents.

Another mother emphasizes the importance of family interchange or of communication within the family:

Researcher: Very well. Now you, Mother 1, are going to share with us moments of life and situations in the past in which violence has not been present.

Mother 1: Well, in the family, as I remember, when I was a child . . . that we went out for walks with the family. . . . The family gatherings that we had at home, and the like.

Also pointing to the importance of communication, a mother talks about some ways in which the family resists the negative effects of violence by avoiding media with expressions of violence:

Mother 7: Well, in my case, we talk, and we avoid putting on violent television programs for the young boy, and he now knows. Let's say, that he sees a movie in which they are killing or fighting. He doesn't like it, and he stays watching, but he knows now that it's violence. We talk a lot, and if he or I are in a bad temper, we stay silent and we talk later at another time.

Teaching Non-Violence

An important resource for resisting the effects of violence is teaching, in both family and school settings.

A mother describes how she has taught her daughters about respect, kindness, dialogue, and the protection of an adult. She says that this has meant that her daughters are not aggressive, and violence is not present in relational contexts such as the family, home, and park. However, the mother also mentions that she has taught the girls how to defend themselves against persisting aggression:

Mother 2: Today my daughters are not aggressive, because I have taught them to be meek and to respect others. Their environment is parks. They play with earth and are happy. Well, fighting isn't present in my house. I have taken them to the park, and it has not been present there either, because I have taught them, and instilled into them, to be kind, meek, and respectful, and, when someone does something against them, to tell an adult, and all. But when there are, let's say, people that go past the limit, who are too rude, I have taught them not to let it happen and hit back. So, I say to them "If they respond aggressively and you talk, and they continue, well you have to hit them back and learn to defend yourselves." But, most of all, they are not rude. They are not aggressive.

Similarly, a mother says:

Mother 1: Today my daughters are not present in violence because I have taught them to be kind, meek, and to respect others.

Some of the mothers say that violence does not appear in the school atmosphere because the teachers teach the children how to relate without violence, based on values such as respect, and also because of the multiple activities the children carry out in that environment.

Mother 2: In the kindergarten, there is no aggression, because, as there are teachers who are professionals in this, they teach the children not to be aggressive, but to respect each other.

Mother 1: Well, in my case, I think that, here in the kindergarten, the teachers devote their attention to them, and they carry out a lot of activities.

Some narratives emphasize the actions and characteristics of the teachers with regard to their education, and the education they give to the children:

Mother 2: I think, and I see, that there are no ill effects of violence in the kindergarten because the teachers are well trained in child care. They are educated, and the children have an enjoyable time with them.

Mother 1: I believe that bad effects of violence are not present at the kindergarten because they are educated people and they educate the children so that violence will be less present within them in the future, for a good society.

On being asked about future resources for defense from the negative impact of violence in the child care center, one of the mothers reiterates the educating role of the teachers:

Mother 1: In the center, it could be that bad effects of violence don't occur because the teachers are people who educate for a better future.

The Importance of Play

Play as a relational practice preferred by children is a significant contribution to peace-building in the educational, family, and community environment.

A mother notes the importance of play in the educational environment, as something that enables children to keep violence at a distance:

Mother 8: Now, the way in which I see that the effects of violence are less present is, for example, [their] being able to live their childhood. That the children live and play here in the kindergarten to live their childhood.

A mother says that the negative effects of violence do not appear in the lives and relations of her children because they share such things as toys, food, play, and games with companions and siblings, both at home and in the child care center:

Mother 1: My children are small and they are curious, and ill effects of violence do not occur in their lives. They aren't present because we take him to the kindergarten and he lives happily with his companions. He plays and, in the afternoon when he arrives home, he is the same. He plays with his brother. So, for that reason, I don't believe that there is any violence. In the drawing, there are all the companions from the kindergarten. All of them, just like they are here, sharing, playing, like that.

A mother refers to the park, a fundamental space for play, as a place where the children are happy:

Mother 1: Their environment is parks. They play with the sand and are happy.

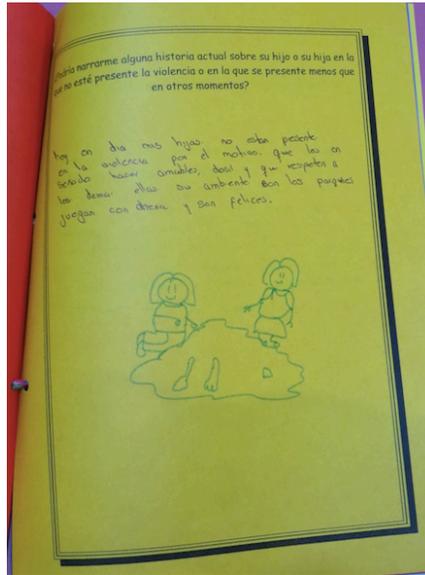


Figure 20: A mother's drawing shows play as a resource for peace-building.

In this manner, families narrate various ways in which they defend against the adverse effects of violence on relations, making reference to family, educational, and community contexts. The resources for defense are related in some cases to an absence of violence due to a family's distance from the context of armed conflict. Families talk about avoiding places where violence may occur. In the majority of cases relating to family and educational contexts, families indicated resistances from the impacts of violence found in small and concrete actions. Among the ways to resist the ill effects of violence are memory work, in which families prefer to forget certain painful experiences and situations, the use of communication potentials that provide families with multiple forms of interaction other than those that involve violence, the teaching of non-violence in both family and educational environments, and valuing play as a form of relating preferred by children in the various environments they participate in.

Concluding Reflection

As illustrated in the present chapter, parents gave voice to many ill effects of violence on their families, and to resources for defending against these effects. The present study shows that, in the context of the armed conflict, the languages of deficit have been intensified. This has been denounced by Gergen (2007) as part of a process of colonization of western culture. Through such deficit-based languages, families from contexts of armed conflict have been named by Colombian society as passive victims who receive and reproduce violence (Ospina-Alvarado, 2015; Ospina-Alvarado, et al.,

2017; Ospina-Alvarado, Alvarado & Ospina, 2014; Ospina-Alvarado, Carmona-Parra & Alvarado-Salgado, 2014). The resources are often understood as commonplace practices that contribute to everyday peace making. The families' recognition and understanding of these resources demonstrate how they can define themselves as active agents in the process of contributing to peace-building with their children.

The group process carried out in the study can be viewed as a form of collective learning. The defenses against the ill effects of violence do not belong to one family alone. The group situation enables them to learn from each other, creating a dense network of understandings that allows the deconstruction of dominant narratives based on violence, and the reconstruction of alternative stories and modes of relating with multiple resources for action.

The resources for defense that families narrate, both at a family level and in small and concrete actions in which their children participate, are similar to the expressions of imperfect peace, as defined by Muñoz (2008, p. 29). Expressions of imperfect peace are dynamic, unfinished, in process, and recognize conflicts as potentials. Muñoz goes on to say that:

An essential quality of peace is the promotion of the peaceful management, transformation, or regulation of conflicts, . . . interactions in spaces in which the peaceful regulation of conflicts is strengthened are a quality of imperfect peace. This means that the actors of peace are many and also that peace can be promoted from any space. In this way, the maximum benefit can be obtained, benefiting oneself and others (2008, p. 36).

Parents' everyday practices can resist the negative impacts of violence on their lives and the lives of their children. Parents can transform conflicts peacefully and thus act as political subjects (Alvarado & Ospina-Alvarado, 2009) in contributing to an imperfect peace.

Working with these families has enabled me to identify that, beyond the adverse conditions they face, the families have great potentials and resources for peace-building. It is important that the children's other essential relational agents, such as their teachers, add their voices to the resources for reducing the negative impact of violence, and to the process of constructing generative and alternative narratives of peace. We will explore this possibility in the next chapter.

Chapter 10

The Teachers Speak: Violence and Resources for Resistance³²

In this study, the identification of the negative impacts of violence associated with the context of armed conflict, and of resources for defense from them, implied working not only with children in early childhood, as described in Chapter 8, but also with the children's most important relational agents, their families, as described in Chapter 9, and their teachers, as described in this chapter. The inquiries carried out with teachers, as well as with children and their families, were guided by language that does not pathologize, in which the negative impact of violence on lives and relations, as described in previous chapters, is seen as the problem, rather than the children and families themselves.

The present chapter is based on the voices of the teachers, accompanied by my interpretations, and, in the last part, in dialogue with previous literature. Their stories describe the adverse effects of violence that they identify among children and their family relations. The teacher's narratives also include resources for defense from the negative effects of violence they identify among the children and in their relations in family and educational environments. These resources form paths to peace-building.

Effects of Violence and Resources for Defense From the Teachers' Standpoint

As mentioned in Chapter 7, two workshops were carried out with the children's teachers. One workshop was designed to identify the effects of violence associated with the armed conflict on the children's lives and relations. The other was oriented to identifying resources for defense from these adverse effects, and possible routes to peace-building. This process is relevant because the phenomenon of violence has been present in Colombia for many decades, which has led to its becoming naturalized in people's lives and relations, and to its constituting a dominant narrative in Colombia. In the case of families coming from the context of armed conflict, and their children in early childhood, this dominant narrative has been accentuated. It speaks to children from their first years of life in terms of aggression and of impacts of violence in their lives and relations. Families have recounted the dominant narrative to their children, as shown in Chapter 9. Their educators have also talked about the children in this way, and even the children talk about themselves in terms of aggression and violence, as shown in Chapter 8. As will be shown in the second half of this chapter, the process allowed the teachers to identify ways to contribute to peace-building processes in educational and family

32 Some of the results, interpretations, and the dialogue with literature contained in this chapter are to be presented as an article in the *Journal of Family Therapy*.

environments, and increase the resources for defense by which these relational spheres are less affected by violence.

The paragraphs that follow in this chapter record four themes and fifteen subthemes that emerged from the narratives of the teachers, along with my interpretations of them: 1. The theme of effects of violence on children, with the subthemes of the naturalization of violence and its objects; labelling of children in terms of difficulties in attention; children named as fearful, nervous, timid, passive, or aggressive due to violence; and normalization of the children – peace as pacification, obedience, and calm; 2. The theme of effects of violence on family relations, with the subthemes of emotional effects on families – bad tempers, aggression, and violence within the family; and fears transmitted between generations by parents teaching defense by violent means and isolation; 3. The theme of resources for defending against the impact of violence among children, with the subthemes of activities involving children’s interest, enjoyment, and interaction; respectful and collaborative relations among peers; and the mediation of adults in the transformation of conflicts; 4. The theme of resources for defending against the impact of violence on children’s relations, with the subthemes of affective relational practices in the educational environment; communication in the educational environment; solidarity rather than competition in the educational environment; articulation between family and educational institution; affection, tenderness, and play in family relations; and support for children’s education and quality of life. Lastly, the section with a concluding reflection includes a discussion, in which the results that emerged from the voices of the teachers, and my interpretation of them, are placed in dialogue with previous literature.

Effects of Violence on Children

Teachers identified the effects of the armed conflict on family members, whether the conflict was experienced directly or indirectly. They say that the effects are experienced differently by each person, and it is impossible to generalize about them. Among the effects on children who did not experience the armed conflict directly, but whose families did, teachers refer to the naturalization of violence and its objects; the children’s dispersed attention; their fear of other people, especially adults or unknown persons; their timidity; passivity; aggressiveness; and their normalization, in terms of obedience and calm.

The Naturalization of Violence and Its Objects

The experiences of families in contexts of armed conflict, and, in general, violence as a social and cultural practice that has historically marked Colombian territory, have engendered the naturalization of violence among children, the objects of war being present in their games.

A fragment of conversation with a group of teachers shows a naturalization of violence, weapons being present in the children's games. Here, the effects of violence are not only on family relations but also on peer relations:

Teacher 11: I would say that where conflict is most present here in the institution is at playtime, because, at the time of interacting with their companions, they do it aggressively. In my case, I have a boy . . . So, for example, when they get out the toy dinner service, there are some little knives for them to play at meals, and such, but the boys don't play like that. They play, grabbing the knife and trying to hurt the other one.

Researcher: But, in the case of those boys and girls I mentioned, who are those who lived in the context of the armed conflict . . . or whose families lived with the armed conflict in that case.

Teacher 11: Yes, I have one . . . and he also, for example, grabs pistols, or grabs, for example, a toy . . . that is in the form of a pistol and they play at that. It could be a ruler. So they play at that. They also use the drill for that.

Teacher 2: The tools that, let's say, are for building, they turn them into weapons. Now, the drill is a pistol each time they pick it up.

Teacher 3: And, because they see the example, they do it as well.

Teacher 11: We began with the little ones as well, because they were going to start the same thing with the toy airplanes as well. So, I got Boy 1, and I said, "No, come on. Let's look for a screw and we are going to put it in the wall, and there we will put the screw in with the drill. So, I was explaining to them how to play with the drill, because they were going to do the same as well.

Labelling of Children in Terms of Difficulties in Attention

Teachers were asked about children whose families come from contexts of armed conflict, and sometimes describe them with regard to difficulties in their attention. As an illustration, a teacher points out these children's difficulties in concentration and paying attention:

Teacher 1:³³ Yes, these children demonstrate attention deficit, in which it is an effort for them to concentrate on activities for prolonged periods.

Two women teachers speak about attention deficit as a subjective characteristic of one of the three-year-old children:

Teacher 11: In contrast, Boy 1 has a problem of attention.

Teacher 2: Yes, because, he has a toy and he starts gazing at the ceiling. And in the dining room with everyone, he gets distracted. He stays there [looking] at the ceiling. He is "in the clouds," as teacher 11 says.

33 In order to preserve the anonymity of the teachers participating, they have been given a random number. The teachers' numbers bear no relation to the families' and children's numbers.

Children Named as Fearful, Nervous, Timid, Passive, or Aggressive Due to Violence

At times, the group of teachers describe children whose families come from contexts of armed conflict in terms of viewpoints based on deficit and shortcomings, in which the children are perceived as being fearful, nervous, timid, passive, or aggressive because of the violent situations experienced by their families.

One of the teachers tells the story of a child whose family lived in the context of armed conflict, and who fears other people, especially strangers, and persons older than himself. The child seeks protection in a safe person, such as his mother or a teacher:

Teacher 1: But at least in my case . . . that the attitudes of Boy 11 and Boy 15 are more or less similar. It is that – at least the boy I’m referring to – he shows a lot of fear of other people. So, when he sees that there is a new person who he doesn’t know, he becomes afraid. When he sees big people, he is frightened. But I don’t know if the case . . . if he has lived through displacement. I really don’t know. He has a single, displaced mother, but he shows a lot of fear of adults, and the process of socialization on his entering the child care center was somewhat difficult for him because he was very afraid and cried a lot. He saw a figure of authority in me, and so he stayed behind me all the time. I don’t know. All children tend, if they have a toy, to explore, and he never once dared to explore. He stayed stuck. Like, with this attachment, and to this feeling of being with someone who gave him security. Obviously, the process of time has meant that he is now a little more connected, and all, but, even so, when he is faced with anyone new, although it is only the teacher who handles logistics, with whom he has no close contact, she makes him nervous. The last time, she sat at his side, because she was going to tell Boy 5 to eat, and tears welled up in his eyes, and he became nervous, just because an unknown person was near. If another person talks to him, he immediately becomes nervous, and all his bodily nature changes completely. So, he, of all the children we have here, I believe, is the one who is most emotionally affected by this process [the armed conflict]. I don’t know. I don’t know his history very well. I only know that he is displaced, but I don’t know if he really experienced [the armed conflict]. But, as it seems, yes, because, either he lived something of violence, because, yes, he is very frightened of big people, including big children. One day an older sister of one of the girls here came in, and he got an attack of crying, and he got behind his mother’s legs, and said, “Big children no! Big children no!”.

The following fragment of a conversation between two teachers includes effects on children, such as their being timid, spoilt, nervous, and backward in development:

Teacher 3: Also there are some parents who are very protective, so the children arrive very timid, very spoiled, and they even get nervous about going to the bathroom, because the mother [usually] has them and takes them by the hand.

Teacher 5: I believe that . . . they also cause a lot of the overprotection of these children, maybe because they fear [someone] harming them or something. So, this sets back a lot of processes [in the child's development]

The following fragment of a conversation between two teachers shows how they identify effects in children whose families have lived among the armed conflict. The teachers see timidity, fear, and, at times, aggression in the children:

Teacher 11: As Teacher 3 says, he was very calm and self-absorbed. He always took refuge in toys. He went, took out toys . . . and went into a corner, and stayed there alone with his toys. He didn't have much contact with the other children. Maybe to ask them for some toy, but he wouldn't dare to take it from them. He always came and asked me, or came to complain, but, with them, no. That was something curious that appeared to me about him, because he wouldn't go and take the toy from them or fight with them, but he always came and told me, or he got into a corner, like with a face as though he was going to cry. But, well, that was the only curious thing I saw. But that was the first week of class. I don't know what he's like now.

Teacher 3: And, I have another boy, Boy 8. He is a boy who, when he comes in, he comes in crying. And I go and talk to him . . . to try to interact with him, and now he isn't afraid or shy with me . . . and I try to talk to him, and he is aggressive. Him! Like, the one who doesn't speak. He doesn't like to be touched. But, at mealtimes, he is super sensible. He is autonomous. That seems to me to be very curious. There is another boy. . . . When one gives him a toy he is very sensible. He stays there with the toy and amuses himself with it. Also, they take the toys off him, but he doesn't go and fight with those who take the toys away from him. In contrast, this Boy 8, yes. The only time he is calm is in the dining room, but, when he is with the children in activities, he is stubborn. He doesn't take any notice of you. You talk to him and say, "Listen, come here. Come over here," and he starts to indicate that he won't. So, the children do not behave in the same way at all times, whether playing or in an activity.

One teacher refers to timidity and crying as effects on a child:

Teacher 10: When he arrives, he cries. . . . like a lot. What I see in Boy 8 is that he is, like, very timid, very self-absorbed.

Two teachers note the passivity of one of the boys, using a mental pathology to describe it:

Teacher 11: Let's see if Teacher 3 [his present class teacher] works with him, because he certainly has something. I don't know, autism or something. He stays fixed to one point. He stays there still, or goes under the table.

Teacher 2: Well, on the days I had him, he was like that. He had a toy and he would stay still like that. He didn't interact.

Some teachers talk about Boy 15's passivity:

Researcher: And what would it be about him that allows him to stay there still and not begin to shout or fight with someone?

Teacher 11: It's his passivity with regard to his environment. He is very passive. For his age, he is very passive.

Teacher 2: But, so, there we can begin to talk about another thing. As a teacher, one can arrive at a moment, during one's observation, trying to help the boy integrate, creating new strategies, so that he integrates. So, when one uses these strategies, one gets to the point of saying, "Ah! So, here, at this point, another professional is needed to come in and intervene." Because he is already a boy who is very quiet and isolates himself from his companions, even though one tries to give him toys or encourages him to play . . .

Teacher 11: Even though you interact with them. But, you go away, and he remains the same.

Teacher 2: Yes. So, there, one says that it would be important that another professional observe him.

A teacher describes passivity in a child as a subjective characteristic:

Teacher 11: He is a passive boy. He prefers to give away the toy, stay away, and not fight.... He is very passive about everything. He doesn't show interest.

Normalization of the Children: Peace as Pacification, Obedience, and Calm

Some of the teachers refer to normality in children's lives occurring through quiet, calm, or an absence of action. Yet, it is worth questioning the approach of some of the teachers to peace, when it is seen as pacification or normalization, inasmuch as it may contradict the position upheld by this study: a commitment to peace-building through relational practices, with a vision of the children and their families as agents for change and political subjects. Examples of the teacher's views are seen in cases where they speak of the children's being calm and sensible at lunchtime, quiet when watching television, or different when going to sleep. This will be seen below in some of the narratives.

As an example of normality, on being asked about interactions in the child care center in which aggression is not present, some of the teachers associate an absence of aggression with times of immobility such as sleep. This is questionable, in that, during sleep, there is a total absence of activity. It would lead to the consideration that some teachers prefer children not to act, and that passivity is here confused with an absence of violent acts:

Teacher 11: While asleep.

Teacher 3: At playtime, the children use toys to make weapons. When there is no

aggression, I would say, is at sleeping and eating times.

In some cases the dominant narrative about the impact of violence being present in the lives of the children was so strong that it did not allow the teachers to see other arguments or facts that contradict it, and to take account of resources for defense in which children contribute to peace-building. Any such resources for defense would be a possible way of constructing alternative narratives about the children as peace-builders. The obvious case of sleep was identified as a resource for defense: a time at which children are not active in any sense, whether in relation to aggression or any other activity. Nevertheless, the identification of this moment did provide a starting point for a discussion that helps in some way to begin to deconstruct the dominant narrative. It enabled the teachers to identify, at least at the time of sleep, and possibly at others such as mealtimes, when aggression is not present among the children who were subjects of the study.

Complementing the previous example, the following fragment of a conversation among some teachers, adding a further dimension to the earlier overview, shows how they associate an absence of violence with quiet and calm, identifying sleep as a moment in which children's aggression is absent:

Teacher 11: Aggression does not happen when they are asleep . . . Because you don't have to encourage them to sleep, because they go to sleep easily.

Teacher 7: Or having to lull them to sleep. No, I've never seen that.

Teacher 5: It's that their attitude is different when they are going to sleep, because they are in a different mood in spite of the fact that they lie down and some of them have trouble sleeping and they begin to play or kick their feet. They do not have the idea that, "I have to fight against some other person for something, or for some reason." No. They get into their mood of how to sleep. They begin to play with their feet, but there is not that disposition for conflict or for fighting such as in other activities. And, at mealtimes, I think aggression appears. I think, in contrast to the vision of my dear colleague, Teacher 11, I see that they get a little uneasy, as if they wanted to do something to the other with the plate. They begin to look to see how they could take it away. How they can push it. How they can grab it. I see that there is even an urge to bother the one who is at their side more.

Teacher 6: Yes. It's that one can see that the child may be very inactive in the activity, but at lunchtime, because [the child] knows it's lunchtime, he becomes [active].

. . .

Teacher 11: And I set the time for sleeping also for Boy 12, because, well . . . rather, he takes it calmly at the moment of going to bed. And he knows now that, well, he goes and lies down and doesn't demonstrate any kind of aggression.

Teacher 2: It's that there are children who take it as a pleasure, because sleeping is pleasant, but, rather, the children don't see it like that.

Another example of calm or tranquility is given by some teachers. They associate an absence of aggression among children with quiet and calm, which they identify as occurring at moments such as mealtimes:

Teacher 3: When child 14 is having lunch, he is calm and you cannot note any aggression towards any companion.

In correlation with this phenomenon, the following fragment of a conversation among teachers shows lunchtime as a space in which the children's aggression is kept away. Teachers identify certain actions in which children behave sensibly, keep an agreement to remain eating, and don't bother others. In this case also, the idea that some teachers associate peace with obedience is questioned:

Researcher: What are the potentials and resources that children have? What are the characteristics that enable them to keep violence away? So, who wants to begin?

Teacher 11: So, at mealtimes they stay concentrated, eating.

Researcher: And what is it about them that enables them to remain seated, eating?

Teacher 11: Well, because in the dining room, sometimes there is a rule that we are seated and we are eating. So, in that moment they now know, and they go and find their seat, because the idea is that each child begins to differentiate about where they go, because they are separated among tables, because we mix girls with boys. So, they use their place, and at mealtimes they remain sensible, waiting for their food.

Researcher: That is to say, that they are capable of following agreements. If an agreement is made that a certain table is theirs, and they have to remain there, they do it.

Teacher 11: Yes, obviously for a short time, because when they are there for a while they begin to stand up from their seats, saying they have to go to the bathroom, or they get distracted. Or, when they have finished, they begin to get impatient and stand up and bother a companion.

Teacher 2: I have particular cases, [one of] which is Boy 17. He does not manifest aggression when he is in the dining room. He sits down very sensible, and is obedient. I would say that this goes with eating habits. In general, they don't show any problem or anything. Well, there, rather, they have respect for food. They get on with it, and they know that, if they sit there, it is to eat, and they are obedient in this area.

Researcher: So, there respect comes into play.

Teacher 3: I have Boy 15 among them there, and it is like, in the classroom, [and] in the dining room, he is the same. He stays there quiet. If you leave him an hour, he stays there still.

Complementing the previous example, two teachers emphasize the calmness of one of their students, noting him as being sensible at mealtimes:

Teacher 11: That he is a child who does not need reprimanding for brusqueness or because he has to eat, because, rather, one . . . at mealtimes one has to motivate him rather than insist [or say], “Eat this because we are going now.” No, rather, one says, “We are going to finish now. We are going to sleep now.” So, you say that to him, and he does it. But he’s not like those children where you have to be on top of them saying, “Do it. Do it,” because he is very obedient. He pays attention to orders, and follows instructions.

Teacher 2: Yes, at mealtimes he is very sensible.

Another example in this line can be seen in the conversation fragment below, in which the teachers identify watching television as a moment in which aggression is not present because the children are calm:

Teacher 3: They are calm when they are watching films or television. They pay attention.

Teacher 4: One particular moment when the children seem to calm down or moderate their brusque ways is when they are watching television.

We must also consider that, because teachers are important socializing agents, children may internalize and naturalize their views, defining themselves in these terms. When summarizing the findings of this study with regard to the impacts of violence associated with the armed conflict among children, it is worth noting that the teachers describe children whose families come from contexts of armed conflict in terms of the naturalization of violence in their lives, their difficulty in concentration and attention, fear of others, difficulty in relating to others, late development, passivity, nervousness, shyness, aggression, whining, and their being spoiled. Some teachers describe the children’s passivity, timidity, and aggressiveness with psychiatric labels such as attention deficit, hyperactivity, and autism, and it may be that some of the teachers’ views add further to the damage to the children’s lives from the effects of violence associated with the armed conflict. Furthermore, teachers may value the normalization of the children as expressed in their calmness and obedience. As well as the effects they identify among the children themselves, the teachers identify effects in the relations in which the children participate.

Effects of Violence on Family Relations

The teachers who participated in the present study indicate that relations in which violence occurs can emerge out of learning within the family, at times related to displacement. The teachers highlight two modes of impact on relations due to violence: parents may be affected emotionally by the armed conflict, causing expressions of temperament, aggression, and violence within the family; and parents may teach their

children to defend themselves by violent means or to isolate themselves, with the intention that their children do not suffer the same negative impacts they themselves suffered due to the armed conflict.

Emotional Effects on Families: Bad Tempers, Aggression, and Violence Within the Family

Below, are some examples of the first type of impact on relations. The teachers consider that the armed conflict has directly affected families emotionally. They refer to various examples of bad temper or aggression on the part of parents, as well as situations of violence within families.

A fragment of conversation shows how children are indirectly affected in relations with parents, who may not have time for their children, be bad tempered, or be indifferent towards the children on having been directly affected by the armed conflict. One of the teachers suggests that families coming from contexts of armed conflict need psychological attention to deal with their emotions and the impacts of violence associated with the armed conflict, so that they do not discharge the ill effects in their relations with their children:

Teacher 11: Sometimes we should . . . I don't know. I believe you have already done this, because it's something kind of psychological, and, in all research, I would imagine, one would commence in that way. And, it's, like, to do a workshop in which one can see the feelings and emotions that certain things give the parents. Because, at times, it's a way for one to see what feeling they have about this kind of thing, or about what happened.

Teacher 3: But, for the parents, or for the children?

Teacher 11: No, the parents. Because, what I told you just now is true. Maybe the child is not affected directly at the moment the violence occurred, there where they were. But, rather, what affects them is the attitude of their parents with regard to these situations. Because, well, the father had to come, as an adult, to get the apartment. And the child was always at his side, and maybe his father doesn't have time, is in a bad temper, or feeling indifferent. This affects the boy more than the moment when all that happened.

A woman teacher refers to the effects on mothers and fathers who have lived with the armed conflict and have been mistreated or suffered impacts in that context. These effects may be expressed in interactions with their children in which violence emerges. So, although parents do not want their children to repeat their stories, if they repress and do not deal with their own emotions after the impacts of the armed conflict, physical violence may appear in the family as a form of relating, or of resolving conflicts.

Teacher 7: That they bring out those things that they feel, because maybe they repress it, and maybe say, "Well, I was hit," and they don't want the same for their

children, but they take it and take it, and one day they are going to explode. And this is when, maybe, they hit the children”.

One last example is given in the following fragment of a conversation between two women teachers. Taking a critical view of this situation, the teachers observe how parents transmit the emotional effects of the armed conflict to their children:

Teacher 2: Yes, it’s that sometimes it’s difficult, because, I say that, however aware one is about bringing about a change, there is already an emotional mark that does not let one react in another way to certain aggressions. So, in the moment that the person feels attacked or that someone is attacking their child, they have a very marked way of reacting, and very defensive. So, it’s complicated. I think that, if it happened to oneself . . . I believe at times, that one isn’t aware of how one is reacting. Maybe the father of Boy 8 isn’t even conscious of his bodily expression, of how he changes, or of what his face looks like, because he feels that something is happening, something is going to happen to his son that shouldn’t happen. So, he reacts that way, and that part is very difficult.

Teacher 11: And it is important that they understand that problems and those kinds of things shouldn’t be solved with violence, because what he said to the boy, “If they hit you, well, hit back, defend yourself,” isn’t the way. Well, what are you teaching the child? And if you want people to respect you, well, you must also give respect. In this case, teach the boy respect. When your companion hits you, well, tell him not to do it, that one does not do that. To respect people. But how are you going to teach or correct the boy by telling him to act with violence? That is, you are not teaching him anything. . . . Because the things they come here with, is, because maybe they have lived them at home, and they come and do it here.

Fears Transmitted Between Generations by Parents Teaching Defense by Violent Means and Isolation

The teachers state that the fears of families due to the violence experienced in contexts of armed conflict have led them to legitimize violence, by teaching their children to hit back or to defend themselves and by promoting the isolation of their children for protection.

The collective narrative below, involving two female teachers, a male teacher, and the researcher, shows how families may be affected negatively by having difficulty in establishing relations in the new contexts in which they arrive after displacement. They may close into small circles to protect themselves against a repetition of violence in these new environments or against being excluded because they come from contexts of armed conflict. Families may also legitimize violence as way of relating to others by teaching children to defend themselves. This reinforces the findings shown in Chapter 8, in which

the children themselves recognize the importance of protecting themselves against others, something they have learnt from their parents:

Teacher 1: I was somewhat in agreement that the conflict does not necessarily imply harm to the child, but rather the adult, and what the adult does with this. Because, let's say, if an adult, because of what has happened in the conflict, does not manage his or her emotions, he or she will feel fears, blame, anxiety, pain, and rage. So, this rage is transmitted to the persons who surround the adult, in this case the children, and the effects are going to be more indirect. Not directly because of what happened, due to the conflict, because of what occurred, because of the event itself, but, because of something that happens starting from what the experience creates, through the sensations and emotions that the event caused. So, what happens in that case is that the person takes it out on the child. We discharge our emotions with them – the anger, rage, fears – and we begin to create another type of conduct or behavior in those children.

Researcher: OK. Does anyone connect with this? ... Or, for example, you [teacher], what type of behavior have you seen? Not directly among the children, but among families. What kinds of behaviors could have an indirect effect on the children?

Teacher 1: Well, one doesn't know directly, let's say, the specific family and the actual case. But, let's say, the idea of closing oneself to other spaces, other circles. That is, closing oneself up into one's own circle, in which "I only think about myself and my children's safety," through fear of going back and repeating. That is, fear of repetition. [They say] "Yes, I believe that people will do it again." "Maybe in the city, the same thing will happen." So, this feeling of fear is always present. So, they are going to manifest it again by closing circles. "I don't participate in community, political, social spaces, or even in the kindergarten." They will say, "I don't participate in the meeting because, maybe at that place, there are also ex-combatants," or, "There are ordinary people there who I am not interested in telling my story to," or, "If I tell them, maybe I would feel marked out," or, "I would feel, like, observed." So, because of that, one sees them as shut inside a small circle that does not allow them to broaden themselves towards other prospects.

Researcher: This, for example, is a little different from what you said in the last workshop. That you believed, rather, that they consolidated relations.

Teacher 5: But, Teacher 1 was saying that, in fact, because of what one sees, wasn't he? It may be that Teacher 1 is supposing some things, but, I can confirm it. But, what Teacher 1 is saying makes a lot of sense, because one comes with a rejection, a resentment about what happened, and people don't accept one easily. It's like, when you come from one group to another place, it's not going to be that they accept you.

Teacher 6: In addition to the fact that they are uniting among themselves . . . they are talking to each other. They are integrating and forming a help network. Well, among themselves. Those who have experienced the same conflict. So, maybe they can close themselves up against other people they don't know, or don't know where they come from, or what the people want with them. I was going to say something as well. . . . The way the parents demonstrate emotion. That rage. That pain. Well, what we said the last time was that they encouraged aggression in the children. The idea of "Don't just take it. Hit him back." They already have aggression near the surface. And, well, they think that the best way to solve conflicts is like that. So . . . without knowing it, they are doing harm. They are doing harm, because they are encouraging their children to be aggressive and to solve conflicts in the same way as those who forced them out of the place they came from.

Researcher: When we were in the first workshop . . . So, we were with the puppets, and there were some that started to fight with the puppets. One hit the other, and vice versa. So, I went up and said to them, "Good, and what are you playing?" So, one said to me, "We are playing at biting." I said, "But why are you playing at biting?" They said to me, "Because you have to defend yourself." . . . And I said, "Very well, but, who told you that you have to defend yourself?" [The answer was] "My father." "And you [other boy], why are you hitting him?" "Because you have to defend yourself." Both had the same argument that one has to defend oneself. And I said to him, "And who taught you?" "My father and my mother as well." So, it's like that same way of saying, "I defend myself." But, both of them are standing in the same position, but, the way to settle it is by blows. So, then they said to me, "At home I see this." And I said, well, "Why? What do you see at home?" "At home, they hit me as well." "And why do they hit you?" "Because I do things wrong." So, they see that [if] the other does things wrong, the way is to hit him. That is what they have learnt, and, there also, they repeat, and repeat it, without questioning themselves. But, the two of them were standing with the same posture, and both of them with the same learning. . . . And why do they do it? And they said, "Just because." "But why?" "Just because." So, this also becomes naturalized.

Below are some examples in which parents legitimize violence by teaching their children to defend themselves by violent means. A teacher mentions the case of a father who wants to teach his son to be strong, and to defend himself from others: in the father's terms, to be tough. The teacher mentions how the boy's relation with his father affects the child's other relations, in which he has difficulty in establishing dialogue:

Teacher 3: What I do have, with the displaced boy in my class, is the father of Boy 8. That he says the boy must be taught in terms of being tough. That the boy shouldn't let anyone away with anything and hit back, because, where he comes

from, “you have to kill in order to survive.” So, accordingly, the boy has to learn to defend himself, and the boy himself doesn’t speak. He has problems, I believe, from his father’s treatment of him, because it is very severe.

Another example is seen in a teacher’s narrative, showing how violence associated with the armed conflict affects relations in the family. Parents who have lived in the context of armed conflict may teach their children in terms of violence. The following narrative from a male teacher is about a father teaching his young son:

Teacher 1: Yes, I would say that the fact that they are aggressive . . . that they have lived with violence, generates more violence in them. That is because, as well, Boy 10 is a boy who is displaced and, there, the father gets annoyed when, let’s say, someone has hit the boy. And, one day he came up, very upset with me, and he said that someone had hit the boy, and that he tells the boy that he has to hit back at the other children, because he mustn’t let anyone away with anything. So, because they reflect this violence, and they instill the children with it, like, that they must hit back and not let others do it to them, maybe, I don’t know, they think that this helps to avoid what happened to themselves or . . . I don’t know what reflections they have, but they certainly encourage aggression in their children a lot. That is, they tell them to hit back and not to be stupid. That they have to hit them. That if someone hits them, they have to hit back harder, like this.

Another example of the impact identified in the children’s relations is shown in the following fragment of a conversation among some teachers. It refers to how some parents teach their children to defend themselves, to feel no fear, and to act in an aggressive manner, with the intention that what happened to them will not happen to their children:

Teacher 11: Well, I am a mother as well, and at times one wants to be strong with one’s children. And one says that it is better to foster independence in them, to build a strong person. When that thing happened to me with Boy 8, I went to the director and said to her, “Why does that man speak to me so roughly? Why does he speak like that?” And she told me that it is not the first time that this has happened. That he has already had a problem with other teachers, and that, once, someone was going to hit the child, and he said, “Well defend yourself! Why don’t you hit back?” Sometimes, we, as parents, in order that children are not affected as we were, what we want is to create in them, like, strong people who know how to defend themselves.

Teacher 2: What happened to them? Yes, they suffered. Yes, they have felt fear. They don’t want them [the children] to have this fear, so they teach them to be strong, “If they hit you, don’t let them. If they are going to do it, hit back. Grab something and hit them.”

Teacher 11: So, acting violently is being a strong person.

In this way, the teachers identify relational effects of the armed conflict on families. These effects indirectly affect children in early childhood and cause the naturalization of violence in their other relations, such as those with their peer groups. Important effects on family relations of violence associated with the armed conflict involve emotional impacts in terms of temperament or aggression on the part of parents, as well as their teaching children about defending themselves by using violent means. In other cases, the effects of violence come through parents overprotecting children, because they want the children not to suffer what they themselves underwent in contexts of armed conflict. Teachers participating in the present study are critical of such teaching, which, in many cases, implies the presence of violence as an everyday fact. Thus, the potential of a change of perspective is important, given that, as well as identifying effects on children and their relations caused by violence, teachers are also able to identify the ways in which children and their relational agents manage to keep violence away or reduce its impact. This contributes towards children and families not being victimized again and strengthening themselves as peace-builders.

Resources for Defending Against the Impact of Violence Among Children

The teachers identify resources for defense from the negative impacts of violence on children's lives in three ways. First, many of the teachers associate resources for defense with activities that children in early childhood enjoy, are interested in, or which permit them to interact with others. Second, some teachers refer to resources for defense from the adverse effects of violence that occur through the children's respectful and cooperative relations with their peers. Third, the teachers refer to occasions in which children actively seek the mediation of an adult to resolve conflicts that arise.

Activities Involving Children's Interest, Enjoyment, and Interaction

Below, I present some examples of resources for defense from the adverse effects of violence that occur through activities the children enjoy have interest in, or which enable them to interact with others. These can be a first way of contributing to peace-building.

On being asked about resources for defense from the negative impact of violence in the lives of children, one of the teachers refers to play. The question was "What moments in the lives of children do you know about in which there has been no negative effect of violence or less than at other times?":

Teacher 11: In play.

Some teachers see peaceful interactions in everyday spaces and actions such as mealtimes:

Teacher 11: In the dining room. In some activities.

Teacher 2: Aggression is least present at lunchtime. In carrying out some activities.

In addition to the former example, a teacher highlights everyday activities in which possible conflicts in the child care center are dealt with by peaceful means, in moments when children are absorbed in an activity, or at lunchtime:

Teacher 11: Well, aggression occurs less during some activities. For example, when their attention is attracted by an activity, and there is, like, a kind of focus on the activity. And, during lunchtime, there is a moment of respect. But it's like, in those moments. Well, there are some children who have those moments [resources for defense from the adverse effects of violence].

Two of the women teachers identify specific actions in the lives of children, such as their helping companions, that emerge in certain activities and moments in the child care center:

Teacher 11: Today we carried out body exercises, massages, and hand and eye coordination. In this activity, the children did not manifest aggression towards their companions. They enjoyed the activity, and it was observed that they even helped their companions.

Teacher 3: Girl 16 is a very affectionate girl. She is always willing to collaborate and is always aware of her companions. In spite of moments when she gets upset, Girl 16 is ready to help the teacher or adult who asks for her help.

As another example of the resources and activities that contribute to peace-building in the educational environment, a woman teacher identifies singing as one of the everyday activities in which the impact of violence is not present. The teacher says that in this activity children relax and do not notice situations that could lead to aggression:

Teacher 4: When we sing, the children have a more relaxed attitude. They are not paying attention to what their companion is doing, and there are less conflicts.

Similarly, another of the teachers identifies walking, and the singing that accompanies it, as actions in which the negative impact of violence does not arise in the lives of the children:

Teacher 3: When they are walking, there is no aggression. They sing enthusiastically and pay attention to what they are doing.

Respectful and Collaborative Relations Among Peers

Among the children's resources for defense from the negative impact of violence in the child care center that form a path to peace-building are relations that include respect, empathy, and sharing. The following fragment of a conversation between two teachers shows moments in the child care center in which the impacts of violence have not been present. It demonstrates collaboration, respect, and empathy as relational practices present in everyday actions that contribute to peace-building:

Teacher 2: I have an anecdote about when aggression was not present at the kindergarten. It was today. While the children were being weighed, one of the teachers took the children and was weighing them, so they had to take off their shoes. One of the girls hid the shoes of another girl companion, and didn't say anything. At the time, the girl, I'm sure, thought that she would be told off, and that's why she didn't say anything. So, I asked them all to help me find the shoes, because they weren't to be seen anywhere . . . and everyone began to look for the girl's shoes to help her . . . That was kind of beautiful, because they were all desperately looking around the place, under the toys, until they found the shoes. And then the children helped the girl to put them on.

Teacher 11: It's that one, generally, when this kind of thing occurs, or when we are in a period of adaptation, would keep the children occupied. One always says, "If you keep them occupied, there will be no aggression. There will be no violence." That is, generally, this never works, because, for example, we are playing with counters, so the other one wants to play with them too, and if the child doesn't give them to him, he hits him. But, let's say, today, we worked on some exercises in which all the children participated, and I noted that there was no aggression at that moment, because everyone was concentrating, watching how they had to do the exercises and everyone wanted to do it the way the teacher was doing it. So, they were like, "Watch I can do it now." If the other ones couldn't do it, just by touching them, they said that it was like this, or however it was. So, I could see this empathy, or that the child put himself in the place of his companion, and, as he couldn't do it, so [he said], "I am going to teach you." So, at that moment, it seemed very curious to me.

In line with the above, a teacher tells a story in which a girl contributes to peace-building and puts aside the negative effects of violence, in order to collaborate and help to care for others:

Researcher: Good, let's look at the lives of those children that I mentioned to you. In which moments has violence been absent or less present?

Teacher 3: Well, I don't know because, well, thinking about those moments, one girl occurs to me. Maybe, with regard to behavior that they display that is so similar. All of them tend to behave with tantrums. She has her tantrum, but she has something very special that one, at times, doesn't see, or it doesn't stand out so much, and it is that she is always ready to collaborate, and she is very responsible towards the other children. That is, when they say the bus is here, she is aware of where everyone is. That Boy 23 is ready with his glasses. That everyone is there and ready. That no one gets left behind. She devotes attention to those who are in her group and, for example, when she is in a bad temper and having a tantrum, one says to her, "Do me the favor of taking such and such a person." At that instant, she forgets that she is angry, takes on what she has to do,

and goes and does it. Her disposition changes totally when she feels she is being useful, that she is helping someone. She has this [quality], which seems very nice, and that, maybe, we don't see it often, or we don't take it into account, but she does have that, something really special about her.

The Mediation of Adults in the Transformation of Conflicts

Another way in which children contribute to peace-building is by seeking the mediation of an adult in order to jointly find a way out of conflicts. One of the teachers identifies a child's requests for the mediation of an adult when conflict arises as the kind of action that contributes to decreasing the adverse effects of violence in the children's lives:

Teacher 4: There is a boy, Boy 1, who likes toys very much. When he wants a toy that another child has, he will seek the mediation of an adult.

Thus, teachers identify children's resources for defense from the adverse effects of violence in their lives. These incorporate, first of all, concrete activities that the children enjoy, and which interest them and allow them to interact with others. Secondly, teachers identify respect, empathy, and collaboration as resources for defense. Thirdly, teachers mention children seeking the mediation of adults in dealing with conflicts that arise in play. As well as the resources for defense in the lives of children in early childhood described above, teachers also identify resources for defense from the adverse effects of violence in the children's relations. This will be dealt with subsequently.

Resources for Defending Against the Impact of Violence on Children's Relations

Teachers talk about resources for defense from the negative impact of violence on children's relations. These resources are manifested in relational practices that favor peace-building and the transformation of conflicts by peaceful means in educational and family environments. The principal relational practices that can contribute to peace-building in the educational environment are affection, communication, and solidarity. The teachers also emphasize the importance of articulation between family and educational spheres. With regard to relational practices that contribute to peace-building in the family environment, the teachers emphasize the importance of affection, tenderness, play, and the support given by their parents to the children's welfare and studies. Below, I copy some narratives to exemplify relational practices that contribute to peace-building in educational and family environments.

Affective Relational Practices in the Educational Environment

Affection in pedagogical relations forms one of the principal resources that

contribute to peace-building. One of the women teachers provides an example with regard to the educational environment. She identifies peaceful relational practices charged with affection that contribute to a reduction or absence of negative impacts of violence on the children's lives:

Teacher 2: When one deals with the children with affection, such as when one gives them a hug or speaks affectionately to them.

Communication in the Educational Environment

Among educational practices that foster peace-building, teachers highlight communication as an everyday mediation. As examples, the teachers identify some places in which, in the future, there may be no impact of violence, or in which the impact will be less present than at other times, such as the dining room and the park, as well as in activities such as play. They emphasize the importance of establishing communication as a custom in these activities and spaces.

Teacher 11: In play, the dining room, in some activities, in the park, in the washroom.

Teacher 2: One of the options would be to engage in communication as a custom.

Teacher 4: At lunchtime, a space of peaceful coexistence may be achieved.

In a similar way, the teachers refer to practice that could be promoted at the child care center such as dialogue. Below, a fragment of a conversation between two teachers notes future resources for defense from the effects of violence at the child care center by means of actions that the teachers could begin to bring about, such as establishing the habit of communication. The teachers also refer to moments in which aggression can be kept away, such as at mealtimes and play:

Researcher: Good, and thinking about the future, in accordance with the experiences you have already had here, or your previous experiences, what would be possible options in which the impact of violence would not be present or would be less present?

Teacher 2: Well, now it's like to create the habit of communication among them. That habit in which, by talking, as they say, you sort out problems.

Teacher 11: I put it, like, in play, in the dining room, in some activities, because these are habits that are being created from here into the future. But that does not mean that it won't be there to some degree, because, yes, it [manifestation of violence] appears, but, well, not as much as it is appearing now, at the moment.

Solidarity Rather Than Competition in the Educational Environment

Among relational practices that foster peace-building in the educational environment, teachers mention solidarity as countering competition. The conversation

below among a group of teachers shows collaboration and support as a resource for defense that reduces aggression in the child care center:

Teacher 3: I put [wrote] that one could carry out group work, so that they would be solidary with each other . . . and different groups. And so, there would be competitions, and each group would say, “Well, this is my patch,” let’s say. So, we help each other among ourselves. We be friendly. We collaborate, so that we all gain. So, it could be like that as well.

Researcher: Good. Very well.

Teacher 3: And thinking about that, it would also maybe be very good . . . It’s that competition sometimes creates a little aggression, because I want to win against the other, so I can do anything that maybe does not appear to me to be very ethical, but I do it because I need to win. When there is competition, there is a lot of rivalry, so thinking about that, it would appear to me great that the big children would help the small ones in something, like: “Today, you are going to help her go to the bathroom.” Like godparents, “You are going to help him eat from his lunchbox.” And that would create a more solidary spirit, because, it’s that competition makes them rival each other somewhat.

Teacher 11: This stage of maturity in which children do not fear competing, or it’s losing that they don’t like. So, one matures with time. . . .

Teacher 3: No, and it’s that, now, in order to win, they do anything to the other, and they won’t say anything. They do anything to the other one and continue.

Teacher 11: Yes, so, how to explain it properly. That the one who loses, well really, no. . . .

Teacher 2: Yes, well, yes, “You are going to have another opportunity” . . . “If not, well, later we will do it again and you will be able to, or tomorrow.” With that, you give them the opportunity to win as well, because if they always lose, well, no, it’s not right [laughs]. Competing to lose, well, no.

Articulation Between Family and Educational Institution

Peace-building with children in early childhood requires articulated work between the family and educational institution, these being the children’s principal environments. An example of a relational practice that contributes to peace-building and incorporates both family and educational environments is given below. In it, a teacher identifies the importance of involving families in the actions of the child care center, so that, in the future, the effects of violence will not be present in relations between the families and their children.

Researcher: What would you have to do so that aggression would be less present among families?

Teacher 2: Like, to involve them in the whole process that the kindergarten carries out, so they can see how we manage the children. So that they can see how we are with the children.

The above resources for defense from the negative impact of violence in relations in the educational institution are paths to peace-building. Teachers identify some moments in family relations in which there are peaceful relational practices, and no ill effects of violence or less than at other times.

Affection, Tenderness, and Play in Family Relations

The group of teachers identifies families' relational practices that contribute to peace-building, among which are affection, tenderness, and play.

As a first example of peaceful relational practices among families, the teachers mention moments that include affection and play, such as during the separation of families on leaving children at the center and the greetings on picking them up:

Teacher 11: At the time of bringing the children to the center. At the time of picking their children up.

Teacher 2: When they say goodbye with a hug, a caress, or maybe a game through the railings.

Teacher 4: At the time of leaving their children, the mothers seem very preoccupied about the children's crying. They ask, in the afternoon, when they pick them up, if they were crying for a long time.

In the following fragment of conversation, some teachers identify the moment when parents pick up their children from the child care center as a resource for defense from the negative impact of violence, because of the demonstrations of affection and tenderness that arise at this time, fostering peace.

Teacher 11: Sometimes, I don't know. I haven't had the advantage of being at the door in the afternoons, but my window is opposite the door, and, it's like, at the time they receive the children, they always receive them with a hug, like, "How did it go, son?" or "champion," or "prince." So, at that moment, I haven't seen aggression. I haven't seen the first parent who arrives, and the child is over there, away from them [laughs]!

Teacher 3: It's that this is the most tender moment, in which there is zero aggression, It's when they leave them, and most of all the infants, because, those mothers, it breaks their hearts to see their children crying, and so they go, and in the afternoon they ask you, "Oh did he cry a lot?" "How was she?" They leave them, but they go away with such sadness. One mother said to me, "Oh, I cried more than him," and I said, "Yes, because he cried for a while after he came in, but then didn't cry any more," and she just laughed. So, that moment is kind of the most touching. They could forget about anything [bad].

Teacher 11: Because, it's not even the same in the morning when they leave them, because, for example, I was at the door this morning, and they are in a hurry, and the mother says, "No, go in, son!" Whilst, when they are picking them up there, they receive them with a hug and a kiss.

Teacher 2: Missing being with them during the day.

In line with the former, one of the teachers illustrates a moment in which the adverse effects of violence are not present in the center. It concerns the affection and sense of impotence of parents on seeing that their children are upset on arriving for the first time at the child care center. This is seen as a contribution to peace-building:

Teacher 4: The children that enter the kindergarten for the first time suffer a brusque change on being separated from their families for several hours. This situation causes a sense of vulnerability in the parents.

Support for Children's Education and Quality of Life

Teachers identify resources among the family, such as their support for children's studies or moving to a different place to improve the children's quality of life as examples of relational practices that contribute both to peace-building among families and to the reduction of the effects of violence. The following account from a teacher is an example of this:

Teacher 2: When they want to improve the children's quality of life by changing its context. Start them studying. By looking after their welfare.

In the ways described above, teachers identify resources for defense from the effects of violence in the educational environment. These resources for defense occur in relational practices that contribute to peace-building. They include demonstrations of affection and communication between the teachers and the children, as well as relations with solidarity instead of competition. Resources for defense identified by teachers in the educational environment include both past and present moments, as well as future possibilities for peace. The teachers point out the importance of relations and work between families and school as a contribution to peace-building. Lastly, teachers identify some actions among families that contribute to peace-building, for example, demonstrations of affection between parents and their children, as the children are left or picked up at the kindergarten, as well as support for the children's education and quality of life.

Concluding Reflection

A reflection emerging from the present study is that educational and, sometimes, community environments have become scenarios in which diagnostic modes of approaching children in early childhood may become naturalized, in a similar way as set

out by Gergen (2007) with regard to the implications of educational practices centered on a language of deficit. In the process, both families and children in early childhood from contexts of armed conflict may be subject to perceptions that involve hegemonic narratives of violence and violation. The present study reveals the narratives of teachers about the effects of violence on the children, mediated by my interpretation. These narratives include the naturalization of violence and its objects in the children's daily lives, the labelling of children in terms of attention deficit, nervousness, timidity, passivity, and aggressiveness, as well as the "normalization," experienced through obedience and calm. The teachers also narrate the negative effects of violence on families. Among these are instances of emotional impacts expressed in bad tempers, aggression, violence within the family, and fears transmitted between generations, in which parents teach their children defense by violent means and isolation.

Yet, the results also show ways in which the children and their relational agents manage to reduce or eradicate the negative impact of violence in their lives and relations, opening paths for peace-building. The children's resources for defense emerge out of activities of interest, pleasure, interaction through respectful relations, collaboration among equals, and with the requests they make for mediation from adults in the transformation of conflict. In the educational environment, resources for defense in the children's relations are seen in affective relational practices, communication, solidarity instead of competition, articulation between family and educational environments, affection, and the support of parents for the education and quality of life of their children. The exercise of identification of resources for defense from the negative effects of violence forms a fundamental strategy in the sphere of education and attention for children in early childhood, making it possible to speak about and relate to children in their early years and their parents by means of multiple stories with diverse expressions of peace.

The exercise carried out with the teachers adds to those carried out with the children and families, contributing to the construction of new relational networks in which the effects of violence do not form part of the nature of these children and their families, but are phenomena that affect them without determining them univocally. The creativity of the teachers is fostered in this way, and they thus augment the peace-building efforts of the children and their families, in a way similar to that proposed by Alvarado et al. (2012), Ospina-Alvarado, et al. (2016), and Ospina-Ramírez and Ospina-Alvarado (2017), regarding creative potential for peace-building.

Teachers are able to identify resources for defense from negative impacts of violence in children's lives and relations in family, educational, and community environments. In addition, the teachers do not solely perceive these resources for defense from a viewpoint in which violence is understood as being that of the armed conflict, and consequently, peace understood as an absence of armed conflict, similar to the negative peace that Galtung (1969) described. The teachers go further. They identify small and

concrete actions and relational practices that are expressions of peace in construction; peace in the process of becoming; and peace in plural. These expressions are born out of the children and the relations in which they participate. Teachers are able to identify actions that foster these multiple and commonplace experiences of peace. They recognize practices that foster peaceful relations as occurring in past, present, and future timescales. This demonstrates the historic nature of peace-building, as recognized in the work of Alvarado et al. (2012).

This daily construction of peace requires permanent orientation towards resources and potentials, giving new meaning to experiences by means of multiple and open possibilities. This subject is developed further in the following chapter.

Chapter 11

Resources and Potentials for Peace-Building³⁴

In the present research, the orientation towards resources and potentials for peace-building implied a clear commitment to neither blaming, victimizing, nor pathologizing. The proposal consisted of recognizing the boys and girls, families, and teachers through their differences, their contributions to peace-building, and their potentials. As a teacher spoke of children and families in one of the workshops, in the name of the teachers:

Teacher 1: I recognize you as a unique and special being, as a person without fear, free of all resentment or desire for vengeance. I recognize the importance of your role in society as a peace-builder, I receive you as an equal in an unequal world.

This message also recognizes the potential for peace-building among children and families, and values their uniqueness and courage in moving ahead in spite of what has been experienced.

Below, I present the results obtained in the workshops regarding potentials for peace-building with children, their families, and teachers. These workshops were described in Chapter 7 in which action research as a contribution to peace-building was presented.

The results are arranged according to four themes that include my interpretations of the voices of the participants: 1. The theme of potentials of young children with the subthemes of life potential, affective potential, ethical potential, potential of play and enjoyment with others, potential in exploration and investigation, cognitive potential, creative potential for transforming conflicts, communicative potential, and spiritual potential; 2. The theme of potentials of families for peace-building with the subthemes of life potential, affective potential, ethical potential, relational potential, creative potential for transforming conflicts, communicative potential, and political potential; 3. The theme of potentials in the educational context with the subthemes of affective potential, ethical potential, and the potential of play and enjoyment with others; 4. The theme of peace-building potentials in the community context with the subthemes of communicative potential and ethical potential.

The first theme contains what the three groups of participants, children, families, and teachers identified as the potentials and resources for peace-building among *children*. The second theme contains potentials and resources which the families and teachers identify as *family potentials* that include relations between parents and children. The third theme contains potentials and resources that the group of mothers and teachers find

34 Some of the results, interpretations, and the dialogue with previous literature contained in this chapter are to be presented in an article in the Journal of Family Therapy.

Mother 7: He takes decisions such as bathing himself, brushing his teeth, putting on his pajamas at night, and there you are.

The following fragment of a conversation with this mother shows examples of life potential such as oral hygiene, eating, and taking medicine as elements of self-care in a child in early childhood. Similarly, the mother talks about her child looking for help and care from significant adults. The mother says that these things show that the boy loves himself:

Researcher: What characteristics do you see that the boy has to love himself and love others?

Mother 7: Well he . . . let's say, I talk to him so that he is well, and so his teeth don't rot, and he is not ill. He has to know how to brush his teeth. He lets me brush his teeth. Let's say, that is part of him loving himself.

Researcher: That someone brushes his teeth is what you are saying?

Mother 7: Yes, his teeth. So they don't decay.

Researcher: That is, with that, you now believe that he begins to identify that it's important to look after oneself?

Mother 7: Yes, because he now comes and says, "Brush your teeth mother, because they will fall out." And, now he asks me to brush his teeth. . . . At first, he didn't like it, but now he lets me brush his teeth. "Mother brush my teeth, because they will fall out." "Let's say that this is part of him loving himself. Another thing is that he doesn't like to eat, but I talk to him, and tell him that he will get ill. So, lately, he says "If I don't eat, I will get ill." When he is ill, I explain to him that if he doesn't take the medicine, well, he will get ill. So, he himself, by his own decision, accepts. If his stomach aches, well, he tells me to massage it. If he has wet himself, he tells me to change his nappy and dry him. Let's say that this is also part of him loving himself.

A mother relates some types of self-care in which her son demonstrates that he loves himself:

Mother 8: Bathing himself, brushing his teeth, taking care of his clothes . . . the things he has.

Among children in early childhood, the potential of caring for their own life is highly related to the potential of affection for themselves, a key element in the development of potential for affection towards others.

Affective Potential

Affection is one of children's potentials that involves both individual and relational levels.

Affective potential implies that, from their first years of life, children love themselves as a step towards loving others, and they love others as a necessary element in

loving themselves. Affective potential incorporates an active role on the part of children. One expression of affection during children's first years occurs through tenderness. Another is having fun, an expression that children love themselves. Affection also implies identifying what is positive in others, loving them through the love they give, and children loving their families. Children's love for their family is demonstrated in sharing and in play.

One mother, referring to her child, mentions loving oneself as a preliminary step in loving others, something that forms part of children's social construction, and contributes to peace-building through affection:

Mother 8: My son loves himself in order to love others.

This mother emphasizes, as part of affective potential, the importance of her son loving others in order to love himself:

Mother 8: In order to love himself, he also has to love others and share what he has with the people that are close to him.

On asking the mother about the ways in which her son loves himself, a mother mentions fun and play in the park:

Mother 7: Well I think that, having fun, because this is loving oneself. He likes to go to the park. I believe that [is loving oneself].

This mother says that her son loves his family and that one expression of this affection is sharing. She also says that he shows affection with his friends in play:

Mother 8: He loves his father, the baby, the little brother he shares with.

Researcher: So, one way of loving his brother and yourselves is sharing?

Mother 8: Yes, to share with others.

Researcher: OK. What other things does he do to demonstrate that he loves others? Let's say, sharing. What else?

Mother 8: Playing. Having friends.

...

Researcher: What other things does Boy 8 do that demonstrate that he loves others?

Mother 8: Playing. Sharing anything.

Similarly, another mother mentions that her son shows affection towards others in sharing and play:

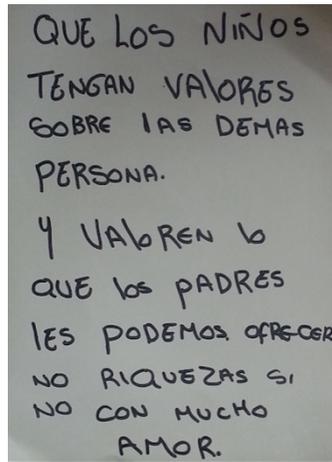
Researcher: What does he do to show that he loves others?

Mother 7: Share, play, run with the children.

At the end of the workshop, families were asked to leave messages for their children regarding the resources and potentials dealt with in the workshop, some of which are included below.

Among relational potentials, affection linked to family unity, and the values present in children's relations with their families represent a step towards the children basing relations with others on these same values:

Mother 2: That children have values with regard to other people. And value what their parents can offer them. Not riches, but with a lot of love.



QUE LOS NIÑOS
TENGAN VALORES
SOBRE LAS DEMAS
PERSONA.

Y VALOREN LO
QUE LOS PADRES
LES PODEMOS OFRECER.
NO RIQUEZAS SI
NO CON MUCHO
AMOR.

Figure 22: A message left by one of the mothers for her children during the workshops.

These potentials contribute to peace-building through affection and ethical positioning. One of the expressions of affection in children's first years is through tenderness, smiles, and making eyes – a form of interaction among the youngest children that consists of closing their eyes when another person does so. A mother's description of her young son shows how she perceives him as an affectionate child, and also how, through affection, he contributes to peace-building with others. Furthermore, the mother mentions contributions to peace-building through ethical acts, such as asking a favor, expressing gratitude, and apologizing:

Mother 1: Ask the favor, say thank you, smile, make eyes, offer hugs, apologize.

Another of the mothers relates affective potential with ethical potential. With regard to affective potential, she refers to her son's expressions of affection towards his siblings, herself, and his father, while ethical potential is seen in sharing, another of her son's values. Both affective and ethical potentials demonstrate the child's participation in peace-building processes:

Mother 2: He loves his parents, babies, his little brother, to share. Sharing with others.

During children's early years, affective potential involves their loving themselves as a key element in loving others. Affection in relations with others is expressed in the values that make up ethical potential for peace-building.

Ethical Potential

Ethical potential as a contribution to peace-building includes children's initiatives, such as sharing. With ethical potential as a base, children invite others to share in play, as

a way of showing them affection, making the decision to share toys and proposing this to their companions. Children experience ethical potential through values such as compassion (from which expressions of affection emerge), asking for favors, apologizing, and being good people.

Sharing is a fundamental process in children's relational constitution, and is also an ethical potential through which they contribute to peace-building. In the following fragment of conversation, two girls mention that, in order to contribute to joint work, sharing is essential. They have learned this value in their relations in diverse scenarios such as the family and the school:

Researcher: How will we be able to do something among all of us?

Girl: Share.

Researcher: Who taught you to share?

Girl: My teacher.

Researcher: Who taught you to share?

Girl: With my mother, making paper airplanes.

A mother refers to her son's generosity and interest for sharing with others, expressed in moments such as mealtimes and play:

Researcher: And, what do you see in him that shows he is capable of loving others?

Mother 7: Well, let's say, he is eating something, and he offers it to others. And, let's say, if he is playing, he invites others to play with him.

This mother highlights sharing as one of her son's ways of relating to his friends at mealtimes:

Mother 7: Let's say, if he is eating, he invites other little friends to eat with him. He shares the food. I believe it's that.

The mother describes her son's sharing:

Mother 7: Well, yes. If he has a toy, and the other one wants it, he explains and changes it.

Researcher: How's that?

Mother 7: Let's say that he has a toy . . . and the other little companion . . . and he wants the one the other child has, or the other child wants his toy. So, he asks to change them. He gives his one and the other child gives his.

The mother mentions that her son shares his toys. She says that her son proposes exchanging toys to his companions, by means of a fair practice that implies that each of them are left with some toy, and that the other has the option to decide whether or not he is interested in changing his toy:

Mother 7: Well, I wrote that he likes being with others. When, let's say, he has a toy and another companion has another, so, he proposes to him that they exchange. He lends the toy to the other child and the other child lends his toy to him, and he [Boy 7] proposes that it be fair. Well, let's say, there, the boy has one

of those little playthings. So, he asks him the favor of lending it to him. But then the other boy says, “No,” and he says, “Well, OK. Another day.”

Similarly, another mother highlights her son’s characteristics of respect and sharing at playtimes:

Researcher: I’ll read what we have here, and, later, you go into more detail. So, we had that he relates to the children; runs to play, to pass the toy to the other child; tries to move the toys and attract attention instead of shouting; he is respectful; he tries not to be a selfish person; he shares what he has. So, here, we are going to expand with what characteristics Boy 8 has that enable him to communicate respectfully. When he communicates respectfully with others, what things does he do?

Mother 8: Well, it stands out when he is among the children playing, he is not rude. If he sees a child playing [and he notices that the child is going to cry] he passes him toys, so he doesn’t cry. It seems to me that respect is based on that. Trying not to disrespect the other children, and to be happy among themselves.

The following fragment of a conversation with a mother shows her son’s concrete actions guided by compassion for others, including dialogue and caresses:

Mother 7: If he sees anyone crying, he talks to them and tries to cheer them up, so they don’t cry. He says, “No more. Don’t cry any more.”

Researcher: Like, considerate with others. Does he understand the feelings of others?

Mother 7: Well, yes, because when he sees them cry, he caresses them . . . If he sees a child crying, he caresses him and tells him not to cry any more. If he sees anyone crying, he caresses their face and tells them, “Don’t cry any more.” And if, let’s say, he [the other child] is alone, he encourages him to run, and to play.

A mother mentions that her son contributes to closing the door to Don Violencio by means of values that enable him to be a good person, such as thanking people, asking for a favor, sharing, and asking for forgiveness:

Mother 7: Asking a favor. Saying thank you. He likes to share food and, well, he apologizes when he hits me by accident, or has some kind of tantrum. He says sorry. Well, I think that, let’s say, in a manner of speaking, he is learning to be a good person. Like, to act in a good way.

Some mothers sent messages to their children related to the importance of being “good people,” by means of the good example that they set for them:

Mother 1: That they are beautiful children . . . and to provide them with all that is necessary for them to be good people.

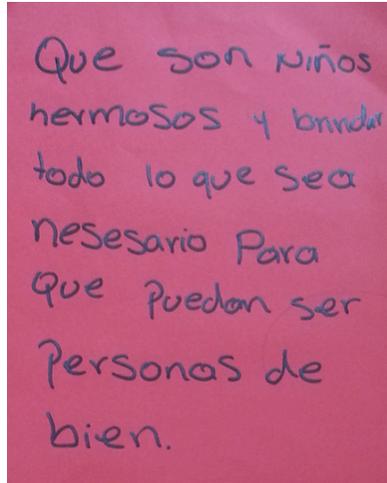


Figure 23: A message left by one of the mothers for her children during the workshops.

Mother 8: To move forward with the children day by day, be united in the family, and provide them with a good example.

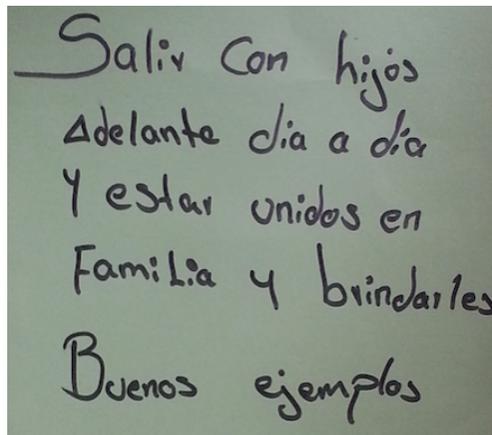


Figure 24: A message left by one of the mothers for her children during the workshops.

In this way, the ethical potential of children in early childhood includes their experiencing values such as sharing, generosity, and compassion, among others. At times, children in their early years experience these values in play, and at other times they become interested in investigating what is new in these experiences.

Potential of Play and Enjoyment With Others

Play is a potential for peace-building and favors other potentials such as ethical potential and creative potential for the transformation of conflicts. Play favors meeting others through sharing and respect.

One mother's account refers to her son's enjoyment with others and his seeking encounters with others as pleasure. These acts construct children relationally, and, at the same time, demonstrate the potential of play and enjoyment with others as a way to peace-building in early years. The mother's narrative shows how her son invites his companions to enjoy themselves with him and how he enjoys encounters with others. Sharing and compassion for the pain of others are also mentioned. Furthermore, the mother's description of her son includes his seeking alternatives so that other children are not sad. In the mother's words, her son:

Mother 1: Enjoys himself, invites others to play and share, and encourages them to enjoy themselves together. If he sees someone crying, he encourages them not to cry any more.

As this mother's narrative shows, play and enjoyment, along with sharing, form an ethical process. Conflicts can be transformed through play by using simple strategies such as the exchange of toys:

Mother 1: He likes to be with others. To exchange toys. If he has a toy, and his companion has another, well, he asks to exchange them.

Another mother demonstrates the relation between ethical potential and the potential of play and enjoyment. The mother says that her son's relating to his companions is a way of both contributing towards peace-building from his first years, and building his own identity. With regard to ethical potential, the mother states that her son shares with and passes toys to his companions. Likewise, she describes him as respectful. Respect for others as legitimate in their differences is another contribution to peace-building. With regard to the potential of play and enjoyment with others, the mother says that play allows her son to find alternative ways of expression that make shouting unnecessary. The act of sharing also emerges in play:

Mother 2: He relates with the children. He runs to play and pass the toy. He tries to move the toys and attract attention (without shouting). He is very respectful. Rather than being a selfish person, he shares what he has.

A mother emphasizes that her son likes to play and have fun with other children, at times participating with generosity in games:

Mother 7: Well, he likes to enjoy himself. He invites others to play with him. He likes to share as well – on occasions, because he doesn't like others to touch his things – and he encourages others to enjoy themselves together, play together, run together.

This mother mentions that her son takes the initiative in convening the others to share through play:

Mother 7: Well, when he is alone, he encourages others to play, to run together, to laugh together.

Play, and the enjoyment of it, constitute a fundamental potential for peace-building in children in early childhood. Play enables setting relational values in motion

among children. In addition to play, exploration and investigation coexist in early childhood with children's experience of values.

Potential in Exploration and Investigation

The peace-building potentials of children in early childhood include exploring, being active, and constantly asking questions. These are fundamental processes in the children's constitution as political subjects.

In addition to the presence of ethical potential, and potential in play and enjoyment, a mother's story introduces the potential of exploration, inquiry, and being active. These potentials contribute both to children's social construction in their first years and to their establishing relations that favor peace-building:

Mother 2: He is a very agitated child. What he sees, he grabs. If someone needs something, he passes it. He wants to explore everything "What is this for? What is that for?" He likes to play a lot, to be helpful, and to share.

At the end of her narrative, this mother refers to ethical potential and the potential of play and enjoyment with others. Among her son's characteristics, this mother mentions that he is helpful and likes sharing and play. These attributes contribute to peace-building through caring about relations with others. Throughout, the mother's narrative demonstrates the idea that allowing themselves to be surprised at the world and at what is new leads children at first to want to explore the world and later to care for it. Questions about what is new lead to the construction of a subject who investigates, who is curious about the world, and who, through inquiry, can contribute to peace-building.

A mother relates her son's exploration and questions with sharing and help:

Mother 8: Well, he shares with others and wants to explore everything he sees. "What it's for?" If someone needs something, he passes it, or asks what it is for.

As well as exploring and investigating, some children make use of their intelligence to experience values such as comprehending others.

Cognitive Potential

Some families indicate that children's intelligence contributes from their early years to understanding others. A mother points out what another mother said about the intelligence of her son as a means for understanding others, sharing with them, and keeping away from situations where violence is present:

Researcher: Would you like to tell us, Mother 8, anything that Mother 7 shared with us that stood out for you?

Mother 8: That children are very intelligent. They are little people, but that they . . . One talks to them, or what other people say to them, they understand, and they

share whatever they can, and if a problem arises, they stay away from the problem, and from shouting. No more, just that.

In this way, the intelligence of children in early childhood enables them to understand others and find solutions for conflicts that arise.

Creative Potential for Transforming Conflicts

Creative potential for transforming conflicts involves ways of coming to agreements and making peace among children in early childhood and their companions, including such options as giving toys to others to resolve conflicts, and moving away so as not to exacerbate conflict.

A mother says that her son's way of resolving conflicts is to move away while the two parties calm down:

Researcher: What is it about him that enables him to resolve a conflict? For example, if a child wants to take a toy away from him. So, how does he resolve that? Or if the baby hits him. That is, how does he settle conflicts?

Mother 8: Moving away. It's like that. When someone is fighting, he goes away and keeps on one side. . . . If they take a toy away from him, he leaves it at that. That would be the solution. Well, if he takes a toy away from another child, and for example, the child cries or something . . . so, he leaves it, so the child doesn't cry. And after, when the child is happy, then it's over. Well, he is a boy who hardly has to hear shouting and he keeps away. He's not a child who likes to hear shouting and things like that. He likes to keep away from all that. Well, to keep away when he hears shouts, and not share. Wait till the people stop shouting to be at their side. But he stays away from everything such as shouting, and everything that could include violence.

Another mother mentions that her son moves away when there are conflicts:

Researcher: And Boy 7? What is it about him that enables him to resolve the conflicts that arise?

Mother 7: Being away from everything when there are shouts, bad words. He, like, he escapes from things like that. He doesn't want to be included in them. He goes to his room and stays away from everyone.

A mother recognizes the importance of what another mother had said about how her very young son finds creative ways of transforming conflicts, such as getting away from them:

Researcher: Good, very well. Thank you. Would you like to tell us, Mother 7, anything of what Mother 8 has said that has stood out for you?

Mother 7: Well, it struck my attention that he is a child, and in spite of his early years – he is two – that he hears shouts and goes away. That is, he is quite little

and he has, like, the intelligence of an adult. Well, to hear shouting, and get himself away. Well, that stood out for me.

A teacher mentions the act of giving toys to others as an alternative found by one of the children to transform conflicts:

Researcher: What is it about them? . . . What characteristics do they have that enable them to find creative solutions to transform conflicts? For example, if two children want a toy, how do they resolve it? But, not only how do they resolve it, but what characterizes the children that enables them to resolve conflicts without violence?

Teacher 11: Well, I think that Boy 7 opts for giving away the toy and staying quiet.

A mother sees ethical and play potentials as creative ways to transform conflicts. Among creative ways of resolving conflict, this mother refers to her child's active stance regarding non-violence – as displayed by his moving away if there is a confrontation and his letting other children have toys – as an active position with regard to finding solutions. The mother mentions her son's compassion as a way of dealing with conflicts. This is seen in the way he seeks alternatives such as letting the other child have the toys, so as not to cause the child suffering:

Mother 2: Removing himself. If anyone is fighting, he goes away. If they take a toy from him, he leaves it at that, providing a solution. He lets the other child have it, so the child can play and won't cry.

A mother says that her son looks for various alternatives to resolve conflicts including dialogue, listening, sharing toys, and apologizing:

Researcher: What is it about your son that enables him to resolve a conflict creatively?

Mother 8: Well, let's say he listens . . . talks. If the fight or the conflict is for toys, well, he tries to change them or something, to do something, and tries to make peace sometimes with his little companions. And if, say, he hits one of the little companions, he apologizes.

In this way, from their early years children identify alternatives to resolve conflicts by peaceful rather than violent means, keep away from fights, make use of values such as sharing or apologizing, and seek resolution through dialogue and listening. These alternatives are a significant contribution to communicative potential for peace-building.

Communicative Potential

Boys and girls in early childhood contribute to communicative potential for peace-building through dialogue, and, at the same time, through action. Furthermore, communicative potential is experienced bodily.

A mother says that some of her son's ways of communicating oriented to peace-building occur in bodily expressions such as smiling, making eyes, or opening his arms to be cuddled. These are modes of communication mediated by affection:

Researcher: What does he do to communicate respectfully?

Mother 7: He smiles when someone does something for him. He makes eyes when he is happy or when you give him affection. He offers hugs if one is in a good mood. He smiles or makes eyes, [has] a contented face, and all. Like satisfied. He offers hugs, like, because he's grateful.

Children in early childhood contribute to communicative potential for peace-building not only through dialogue, but also through their actions. Another mother's description of her son notes the exchange of toys as one of the actions in which children communicate and contribute in meeting with other children. The mother refers to her son's ethical potential, given that he is able to share with others in actions such as exchanging toys. Furthermore, the mother's description of her child notes creative potential for the transformation of conflicts, because the boy arrives at agreements, "He tries to make peace," and seeks ways of resolving conflicts:

Mother 1: He listens, talks, exchanges toys, tries to make peace, apologizes.

Communicative potential enables children in early childhood to find peaceful ways of approaching situations of conflict. This potential goes beyond oral communication, and incorporates bodily expressions and actions. Additionally, some children mention God in referring to peaceful relations.

Spiritual Potential

Although the present study did not inquire into children's religious beliefs, or the connection between their beliefs and peace-building processes, some children related peace with living in peace with God, or with learning from God to live in peace with other people. The following fragment of conversation with a girl and a boy contains the idea that peace implies being at peace with God, which includes acts such as praying. Reference is also made to following the word of God in bringing peace to others:

Researcher: What have you heard spoken about peace?

Girl 20: That all should bring peace to God. That God said that they should bring each other peace.

Boy 21: God.

Girl 20: Pray.

In this way, children demonstrate that there is a need to take into account the development of spiritual potential as way towards strengthening peaceful relations.

In summary, as has been evident from the children's own voices and those of their relational agents, children in early childhood have potentials for peace-building, which are fundamental in their relations with themselves and with others. The present study, as

well as bringing out the resources and potentials for peace-building among children in early childhood, takes into account the peace-building potentials of their relational agents. Those potentials that are identified as part of the family environment are presented below.

Potentials of Families for Peace-Building

At a relational level, the dialogues reveal that there are various ways through which the family can contribute to peace-building. They involve several potentials: life potential implying care for life and health; affective potential, recognizing love and tenderness as transforming; ethical potential, implying teaching children values; relational potential concerning building and maintaining relations, in which solidarity and support are fundamental; communicative potential, using dialogue as a way to transform conflicts; creative potential for the transformation of conflicts, meaning the mediation of differences by peaceful means; and political potential, with the possibility of parents' resistance to armed conflict. At times, families experience a specific potential, and at other times multiple potentials.

Below, I set out some contributions to peace-building mentioned by families and teachers with regard to family relations:

Life Potential

The potential of caring for life includes the families' learning in the context of armed conflict with regard to valuing life and health. On being asked about learning from experiences of the armed conflict, a mother refers to valuing life as the main lesson she has learned. She also mentions gratitude for what she has, which came after experiencing losses:

Mother 2: Hmm. Maybe valuing life because, maybe I wouldn't be here talking, and valuing what we have now.

On being asked how her family has moved ahead, another mother refers to the potential of caring for life in peace-building, demonstrating both life and health as potential. The mother mentions that her family has managed to move ahead after displacement by valuing both life and health:

Mother 7: Well, the way in which we have seen it is, well, by forgetting. Or not forgetting, but, like, saying, 'Well, it's not the end of life. We have life, and we have health'.

The mothers who participated in the present study show the fact of having life and health – in spite of all that they experienced in the context of armed conflict – as potential. Their gratitude for this potential has enabled them to move ahead with regard to

their experiences. This demonstrates love and affection for one's own life as a fundamental element in affection for others.

Affective Potential

The affective potential experienced within families implies that love for children is transforming; a desire to find something different for children than what parents experienced; multiple expressions of love incorporating both the body and actions; and love and tenderness in the family as protecting against maltreatment. Affective potential has a relational nature, incorporating an active role on the part of the family in valuing what is positive in others.

The following fragment of conversation with a mother includes a recognition of affective potential as an important contribution to peace-building in the family. The mother begins to show love for her child as an agent for change, and wants to find something different for him than what she experienced:

Mother 7: Well, I think, for example, my son. . . . He was born. He didn't see any of that. And, well, I think that is a reason to move ahead and, maybe, one having lived that, well, to look out and see that he is not going to live it. Well, yes, that's what I think.

In the following fragment of conversation, a mother mentions various modes of expressing affection in the family, including caresses, hugs, sharing tasks, and support in difficult moments:

Researcher: What way do you see that love is manifested in the family?

Mother 7: Well, giving one another affection. Understanding each other. Demonstrations of love. A hug. A gesture. Understanding each person's efforts . . . the fact that he works, that I work. Let's say, these are the demonstrations.

Researcher: Valuing what others do?

Mother 7: Yes, so valuing as well. Goals as well. At difficult moments, when the child was hospitalized, there was a lot of unity among the three of us. Like, with a lot of help.

Researcher: Yes, you see that one potential is being able to be together.

Mother 7: The support.

In the following story, a mother shows the importance of affection and tenderness, as key elements to counteract expressions of violence in the family when conflicts arise:

Mother 4: Relations always have to be excellent. There should not be aggression, maltreatment. That sometimes happens because we, as adults, let ourselves fill up with stress and bad temper . . . sometimes financial issues, and problems, but we shouldn't let ourselves be carried away with this, so that the family is always happy. As parents, we should give love, understanding, tenderness to our children,

so that they – when the time comes, or when they form a family – build love and peace.

One of the families shows the importance of affective potential in keeping relations peaceful. The family understands that this potential comes from affection towards others, valuing what is positive, and the love that emerges through spirituality and a relation with God:

Mother 18: Good things in others, and asking God for a lot of love.

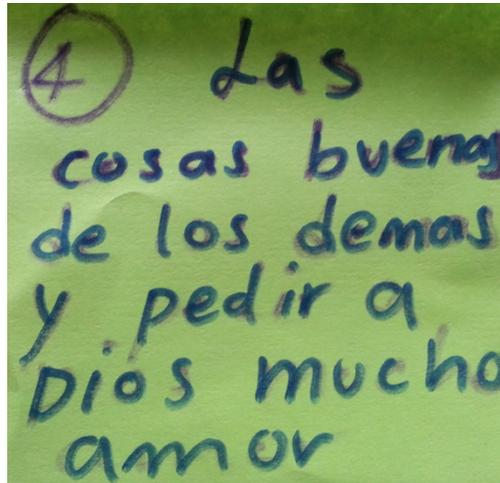


Figure 25: A message written by one of the mothers as a contribution to a collective mural.

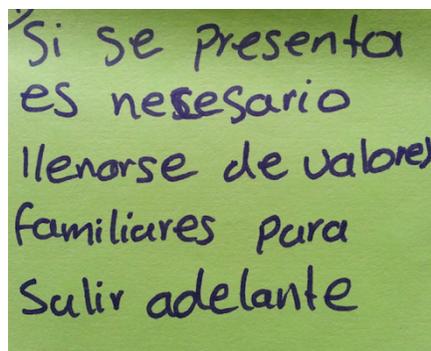
Among families, affection is a motive for getting ahead. Love for their children makes families want the children not to repeat their own life stories, which have been marked by violence. The affection of mothers for the family, and specifically their children, has multiple expressions, manifest among them the practice of living according to values.

Ethical Potential

In families, ethical potential includes teaching children values, such as “good acts,” being honorable, working, and in general, being “good people.” Among the values that make up ethical potential are family unity, sharing in the family, respect, trust, courage, support, solidarity, a positive attitude to experiences, forgiveness for others, and, at times, the act of forgetting bad things that have happened. Ethical potential also implies a relation with God in which ethics include moral values, forgiveness being possible through experiencing spirituality.

One of the families mentions that, to contribute to peace-building and keep the alternative relations they have been building, values within the family are essential. Parents should teach children these values:

Mother 18: If it [violence] happens, one must fill oneself with family values to move forward. . . . Teaching children to be good people, and to do good things for people.



Si se presenta
es necesario
llenarse de valores
familiares para
salir adelante

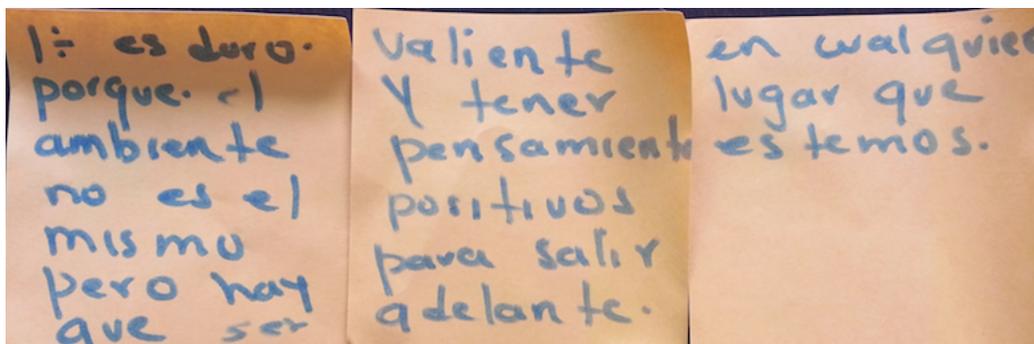
Figure 26: A message written by one of the mothers as a contribution to a collective mural.

Ethical potential for peace-building implies teaching children values:

Mother 7: Yes. Well, I say, “Don’t teach them bad things,” because there are many families who [teach bad things]. That also leads to aggression and such, and to experience, almost, things worse, much worse. So, instill good things in them. To be honorable, to be a worker, to be a good person. And so, maybe like that, they won’t suffer. Here in the city, everything is different. They may suffer in different ways.

A family says that, in order to maintain peaceful relations, certain qualities and attitudes are essential such as respect, trust, courage, and a positive outlook on life, in spite of the difficulty of living with the process of displacement:

Mother 18: Trust. With love, respect, joy. And to live in harmony . . . It’s hard, because the atmosphere is not the same, but one has to be brave and have positive thoughts to get ahead in whatever place we find ourselves.



¡: es duro.
porque el
ambiente
no es el
mismo
pero hay
que ser
valiente
y tener
pensamientos
positivos
para salir
adelante.
en cualquier
lugar que
estemos.

Figure 27: A message written by one of the mothers as a contribution to a collective mural.

One of the families says that, in order to maintain peaceful relations, it is

important to practice ethical and moral values such as respect and forgiveness, and in some cases forget things that happened, all accompanied by a strong belief in God:

Mother 18: They say that to live without hate it is necessary to forgive and forget bad things to have peace. With respect. Why hit back, although sometimes it happens, but it brings one harm. Forgetting the bad, and asking God for a lot of strength.

The following fragment of a conversation with one of the mothers shows ethical potentials in the family, such as support and unity:

Researcher: What other strength do you identify? Well, also in the people in the family. What other strengths do you see in them that could guarantee a different future? Good things, powerful things, which they could use to transform violent situations?

Mother 2: Hmm, well, above all, the support is a strength that enables us to move forward.

Researcher: Being together? That's clearly a strength.

Mother 2: Yes. Well, I think that, when a mother and a father are not present, the family disintegrates totally.

In a similar way to the former, a father mentions support and solidarity within the family, and that of persons close to the family. Another element of ethical potential that has enabled families to get ahead is the value they place on work. This is shown in the conversation:

Researcher: Well, how do you believe that you [as a family] have been able to move on?

Father 6: Because we have worked. There have been people who have helped us. For example, I work in tailoring, and people have helped me a lot to learn this job. From that, I teach my wife. We go on from there, and now we work a lot in tailoring. We have now made purchases to become independent, and my wife . . . yes, we work independently.

Researcher: You have done a lot. How long have you been here?

Father 6: Six years. Yes, we have people here now. People that work with us. We give them work.

Researcher: OK, Father 6. And, what strengths do you see in the family? What good things do you see that could be potentials in the family, so that . . . you can have a different future?

Father 6: Eh, work, and try to get ahead. Work hard, because you have to work hard to have anything, when the government, I believe, doesn't help with anything.

Researcher: That is, you have the potential of work. What other strengths do you see, outside of this potential for work?

Father 6: Eh, that one tries to help people, people that come from [the context of armed conflict]. Eh, give them work, help them, to give them information about where they can get help. Well, the help is only a little, but it can be of great use.

Researcher: But, in spite of everything, you have had a different future here, right? A different precedent. So, I see many strengths there. You mention the capacity for work. Outside of the capacity for work, what else comes to mind? What potentials do you see in your wife, for example?

Father 6: My wife is a hard working woman who can do anything. Anything that has to be done.

Researcher: How many children do you have? And, is your wife very enterprising and courageous?

Father 6: Yes, well, because I am here, she is in charge there. So, she just called me and said if I got delayed, that she was there looking after things. So, if I'm not there, she is there. So that's good, that she supports me a lot, and I support her as well.

Researcher: So, support would be another strength. That is, you have accompanied each other and united.

Father 6: Yes, in spite of what we have experienced, we haven't had family problems.

Researcher: And, do you see other potentials among the people in the family to guarantee a different future, a better future?

Father 6: Well, yes they are there. I work with two brothers, and, well, yes, they are there working with me, and they help me with what has to be done.

As part of ethical potential for peace-building, one mother mentions respect, a fundamental element in family relations. The mother states the importance of respecting children, and also other people that are close:

Mother 2: Respect, for children and for the people that surround us. One part would be beginning from there.

The ethical potential of families who participated in the present study incorporates the values put into play in their relations, and the experience of spirituality. Families' ethical potential also includes an interest in teaching children the values mentioned above, and being guided by those values, not only with regard to children, but also other people in the community. In some families, the value of both family and community relations are highlighted.

Relational Potential

As well as the values indicated with regard to ethical potential, families identify the value of building and maintaining relations, in which factors such as solidarity and support are fundamental. Valuing relations indicates the relating potential present among

families who, having lived in the context of the armed conflict and arrived in a new place such as Bogotá, unite and support each other, creating community networks. Their relating potential includes valuing family relations as key factors in community processes; important relational processes take place both inside the family and in relations with other persons in the community.

A teacher's story highlights some key characteristics in the relations of families installed in a new territory after displacement. The teacher notes unity and solidarity among these attributes:

Teacher 5: They, here, let's say that they have found, like, this refuge, and – also I don't know this very well because I am new – but I see that, here, there is a lot of unity among them. I don't know if they knew each other before. I don't know why they arrived here, and why all of them live here. I have no idea why, but I see that there is a lot of support between one family and another. There is, like, a support network, and this also makes for the creation of certain ties, and that they make the situation a little easier.

The following fragment of collective narrative involving three teachers shows the unity and network building of families who have lived with the armed conflict and come from a common territory. Unity and the network are seen in the shared celebrations and solidary acts, in which these families support each other in preference to others:

Researcher: And, let's say, about the community. They told me, for example, that the party is something they carry out at community level. Do you know anything else about the relations at community level?

Teacher 5: Well, I have seen a lot of unity. Everyone knows each other. So, at weekends, I imagine that they meet amongst themselves, and that they carry out activities like normal people, like parties, and such like things. And they are very united and help each other.

Teacher 2: When Boy 5's uncle died, that was a meeting among all of them. They collected to buy the coffin to bury him. . . . for all that. Look at something very beautiful. They work among themselves. So, for example, if Father 5 has no work, so, the other, Father 3 [brother of Father 5], or the others, give him work.

Teacher 1: Well, what Teacher 2 said. The support network that they have created amongst themselves.

Teacher 2: But, it's like that. Closed. It's not as if you, as a person from Bogotá, so I'm going to prefer to give you the work. No. First, those from Nariño, my colony, and the others are after. It's a support network.

One of the mothers mentions the importance of family relations as strengtheners at community level. The mother emphasizes key elements of family relations such as love and comprehension, and also collaboration, an element that connects the family with other people in the community:

Mother 4: The family is very important in a community because we demonstrate

love, comprehension, and collaboration with other people.

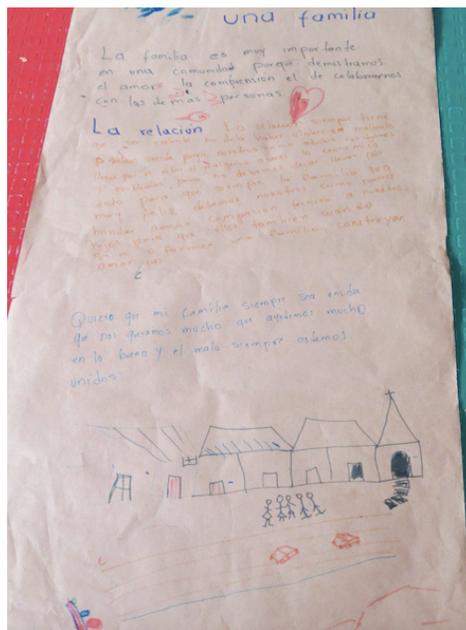


Figure 28: A narrative and image of a dream family proposed by one of the mothers.

In the present study, relational potential emerges as a key dimension in peace-building within and through the family system. Relational potential emphasizes factors such as unity and solidarity, which go beyond the limits of the family to reach the community context. This potential also brings with it the possibility of conflict, always present in relations. In order to contribute to peace-building processes, it is essential to transform conflicts so that they do not end in expressions of violence.

Creative Potential for Transforming Conflicts

Among families, creative potential for transforming conflicts implies taking actions according to conflicts that occur in relational contexts.

A mother speaks of the importance of reacting differently to conflict according to the situation. The mother mentions how, at times, one alternative may be to distance oneself from it, and, at other times, to talk. Her children also use these strategies, as she has mentioned in other narratives:

Researcher: And, if you think about the future, for example, that some problem were to arise. Some conflict. What options do you believe are available in the neighborhood? How could you keep away from violence? Up to now violence has not appeared, but, what would happen if violence came to the neighborhood? What could you do to keep it away?

Mother 7: Well, in truth, myself, I would stay silent. I wouldn't say anything. Like, them over there, and me here. Although there would be an option of speaking. That would depend on the option, on the problem of the thing. That's what I say.

Conflicts are transformed among families in different ways, according to the situation. One of them, dialogue, relates directly to communicative potential for peace-building.

Communicative Potential

Some mothers refer to their family's communicative practices as a way to transform conflicts. Others mention that, among families, communicative potential implies being able to speak about both positive and negative experiences.

Among the means a mother identifies for transforming conflicts within the family are communicative practices, including remaining silent or talking, and ethical potential involving comprehension as a way of dealing with difficulties. In answer to the question of how the family solves its conflicts, a mother states:

Mother 1: According to the case. Whether it is necessary to maintain silence, talk, understand.

One mother mentions that the family seeks simple ways, such as dialogue, to resolve difficulties. She identifies conflict as inherent in family relations, and maintains that it can be dealt with by trying to resolve it as soon and as simply as possible, so that it does not become a bigger problem. The mother was asked about family relations:

Mother 2: The family is distanced from everything that is violence. If there are problems, because in a home there may be problems, try to solve them in an easy way, not to aggravate them more, because it will be worse. Talking. You have to talk to people.

Another mother expresses ideas similar to those of Mother 2, emphasizing that dialogue among the family has contributed to dealing with problems that have arisen:

Mother 8: Well, there are problems, because, in fact, there may be problems in the family. Well, try to resolve them easily, and not make them bigger, because that would be worse.

Researcher: And, for example, what is a way to resolve them easily?

Mother 8: Talking. Through dialogue with people.

On thinking about difficulties and conflicts that arise, a mother emphasizes the importance of dialogue as a way to resolve situations:

Researcher: What is there within the family that enables you to relate to each other peacefully, or keep away from violence? You told me that, as soon as Boy 8 hears shouting, he distances himself. And, among you as family, what would there be?

Mother 8: Also to be distanced from all that would be violence. Well, the best thing would be dialogue. That there be a lot of dialogue among the people you share with, and try to make things better, and avoid any kind of problems, any argument, or what may happen, [by] talking. And avoid all argument. Anything that could represent violence.

A mother emphasizes dialogue as a family process that has enabled them to deal with conflicts. The mother says that her son can take on multiple roles, both in listening and talking:

Mother 7: Let's say, when they are fighting, well, I speak to him, and he listens, and sometimes he takes notice, and sometimes he doesn't. And, well, he also talks, as a way of negotiating, and tries to make peace by talking

On being asked about ways of keeping relations peaceful, a family emphasizes open dialogue that includes talking about both positive and negative experiences, and assuming a position of peace with regard to such dialogue:

Mother 1: With peace. With dialogue about good and bad things.

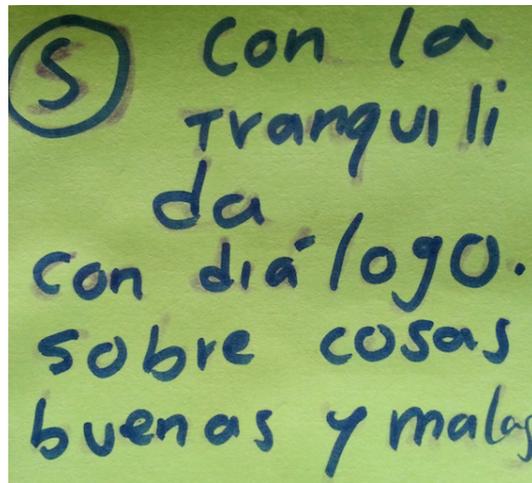


Figure 29: A message written by one of the mothers as a contribution to a collective mural.

Communicative potential implies that families engage in dialogue as a tool to resolve conflicts, difficulties, and problems by pacific means. This takes into account both positive and negative experiences. Being able to talk about what is negative, or at times keep quiet about it for self-protection, indicates resistance as a part of families' political potential.

Political Potential

In the case of the families who participated in the present study, political potential refers to the possibility of parents' resistance to armed conflict. Resistance in situations of

armed conflict takes many forms, such as silence, leaving one's territory, having courage, not giving in, seeking help, and struggling to get ahead in a new life. One of these, silence, is mentioned by a mother:

Researcher: And, all of you, what resistance did you put up, so that this wouldn't happen?

Mother 2: Well, maybe not to talk. Not to say anything.

This mother sees silence as a way of resisting, which includes not thinking about what happened in the context of armed conflict:

Researcher: But, you found ways of resisting. And what were you trying to do, for example, by keeping quiet.

Mother 2: Well, maybe we were trying not to think about that [what happened].

The mother also refers to her courage, not giving in, struggling, and seeking help among the family as forms of resistance:

Researcher: In what other way did you resist?

Mother 2: Eh. Maybe by showing courage.

Researcher: But, did you confront each other? Were there ways that you could resist?

Mother 2: Because we did not give up.

Researcher: And how did you confront them?

Mother 2: Well, going to find my brother. Asking people, some people, and then others. Struggling to move on.

In this way, families who have experienced the armed conflict have resisted: sometimes through silence as a form of protection, and at other times, through refusing to give up, courage, and struggling to move ahead, displacement itself also being a form of resistance.

In summary, the families who participated in the present study – most of them in a condition of displacement – have managed to overcome the label of victims by identifying their own significant potentials for peace-building. Other actors, such as teachers, have also identified these potentials among families. In addition to the potentials indicated above with regard to children and their families, the study enabled the identification of potentials for peace-building in the educational environment, and among its teachers.

Potentials in the Educational Context

There are diverse potentials in the educational institution – in particular among the children and between the children and teachers – that can contribute to peace. The main potentials are found within relations of affection, the ethical domain, and the contribution to play and enjoyment with others. This implies thinking of the educational institution and the pedagogical relation as being not solely for studying curricular content but also as

an instance of formation of citizens and of education for life with others.

Contributions to peace-building identified among the educational environment include those of the teachers, the children, and their relations: children and their peers, and children and their teachers. Relations that foster peace in this environment are presented below according to each of the potentials: affective potential, ethical potential, and the potential of play and enjoyment with others.

Affective Potential

In the educational environment, affective potential is demonstrated in caring relations between teachers and children:

Researcher: For example, with the teachers here. What characteristics do you see in the group of educators and professionals who work with your child that enable keeping violence away?

Mother 7: I like them because, let's say, they teach without the need to hit or shout at them. And with rules. And they show them affection. They love them, and take good care of them. But, all the same, the children spend more time with them than with their parents.

Researcher: How do you see that?

Mother 7: They aren't related, but nevertheless, they [the teachers] love them [the children]. They take care that nothing happens to them.

The following fragment of conversation with some teachers shows the affection present in relations with the children, who want to be treated kindly and show tenderness in return:

Researcher: Good. Now, we are going to look at number two, in which we are going to share what qualities they have that enable them to love themselves and to love others.

Teacher 3: I would put it that, sometimes at bedtimes, Boy 8 likes to be treated kindly. To be told to sleep face down. That someone adjusts his blanket. And he begins to do it alone with his friends as well. So, he goes like this with his eyes,³⁵ and this is at bedtime . . .

Researcher: Like his tenderness, maybe. If we look for a characteristic, we could say that it is this tenderness, which is letting oneself be pampered and letting others treat one kindly.

Teacher 2: I also see, more or less, what the teacher is saying. He lets the teacher make a fuss over him, and sees, like, this protecting person in the teacher, and let's himself, as it were, go along with it.

35 Making eyes is a way of communicating that children use in their early years before they have developed language, or when they speak very little. This gesture, which consists of blinking continuously, is generally understood by adults as a demonstration of affection.

In this way, affective potential in the educational context incorporates two-way relations between teachers and children in early childhood. There are expressions of affection between these groups. As well as affection, values are significant as a fundamental contribution to peace-building in the educational environment.

Ethical Potential

In the educational context, ethical potential is found, for one, in the teachers' respect and kind treatment of children. A mother's remarks are revealing:

Researcher: And for example, among the teachers. . . . What would they do to keep violence away?

Mother 8: Give them respect, as the children they are. Take care of them, so that they are kept away from everything that is bad. Treat them well. With respect.

A teacher tells how, in the educational environment, she has taught her students to apologize if they do something that is disrespectful of another person:

Teacher 2: Well, I spoke about my group in general, the young ones that are affected. I would say tenderness. Well, they, . . . from the beginning, when I came into the institution, I saw when they hit each other, or when they lack respect for one another, and I tried not only to call their attention to it, as such, but, "If you hit your companion, do me a favor, and you go and apologize, and ask him to forgive you, because what you did is badly done." So, I – almost to all of them – I taught them this, and well, now they do it like that. They know if they commit an error and, "Oh, I'm sorry, I'm sorry." They make a mistake and they hold each other and hug, and this is already a demonstration of tenderness. Just the same, I would say that this is also our contribution, because we had to teach that to the children. To apologize if they commit an error. They apologize if they know they are wrong. They have to accept that they committed these errors, and apologize, because, if one doesn't teach them like that, but one goes there and only scolds them . . . no. You have to teach them that. When they are older, they then grow up with that thing.

A teacher notes the ways in which children apologize and feel blame for unfair things done to others in the child care center:

Researcher: Good. Now we are going to look at what characteristics enable the children to take decisions beyond their own interests. Fair decisions, based also on what happens with others.

Teacher 3: I would say that one thing that they take like that is when they see a companion crying. When they see that something unfair has happened, and see the other one crying, they feel bad. They feel sad. So, I would say, the feeling of blame that makes them feel bad, and apologize. That they feel that it is not good to do a certain thing.

Researcher: Like, that they are able to put themselves in the shoes of the other one?

Teacher 3: Yes. And it happens in the whole institution. All over.

A mother emphasizes values present in relations in the child care center. These values are seen in respect among the children and teachers, sharing in play among the children and among the children and the teachers, and teachers setting an example in relations:

Mother 8: Well it would be that the teachers . . . that they have good respect for them [children] so that they [children] also understand that one should begin with respect. And here, they spend a lot of time playing and sharing with the children, and they are kept away from everything bad. It depends on them [the teachers] to play and share a lot with the children . . .

Researcher: Would you like to share anything of what you see in the child care center that enables children and teachers to keep violence away?

Mother 8: Well, what I see is that they teach them, and they teach them without shouting, without hitting them. So, well, that is, like, separated from violence. And they also teach them to share, not to be selfish, and to have good manners.

In the educational context, ethical potential occurs in relations between teachers and children, and also in peer relations among children in early childhood. It is manifest in respect, kind treatment, and the sharing that is fundamental in play.

The Potential of Play and Enjoyment With Others

This potential for peace-building in the educational setting includes play with others, as well as the pleasure of having fun and playing with others. Children can show themselves as beings with care, generosity, and affection, as they communicate with others through play. In this sense, play constitutes a potential in which all the other potentials for peace-building are expressed.

On speaking about children in the child care center, families identify the relationship between ethical potential and the potential of play and enjoyment with others. When asked about the child care center, a mother says that sharing is one way in which children relate while they are distanced from violence in this institution. The mother points out the teachers' respect for the children's differences, and their understanding of the children's characteristics and particularities as children. This mother also mentions care for the children as a key element in relations between teachers and students. In addition to ethical potential, the stories show how children find a space for play, enjoyment, and being with their companions in the child care center. This enables them to stay away from the negative effects of violence and build peaceful relations:

Mother 2: In the child care center at least, the children's behavior is playing, sharing with their friends, being happy, and being far away from the effects of

violence. The teachers show them respect. Also, because they are children, the teachers take care that they are kept away from everything. They treat the children well, with respect.

Similarly, a mother highlights play in the child care center as a contribution to peace-building and keeping violence away, because it fosters happiness and sharing:

Mother 8: What there is here in the child care center is – at least one boy – their behavior is to play and be distanced from all that is violence. Sharing with friends. Being happy. Playing.

Play – as a potential that strengthens ethical potential for peace-building – constitutes a possibility of being happy and sharing with other children, which favors peaceful relations in the educational environment.

In summary, relations formed in the educational environment are a significant contribution to the denaturalization of violence and to peace-building. Children participate in relations with their teachers and peers in which affection, values, and play are experienced as potentials for peace. In the present study, as well as the potentials mentioned with regard to children, their families, and teachers, some peace-building potentials were identified in the community context.

Peace-Building Potentials in the Community Context

With regard to the neighborhood, the principal potential that families identify is communication. They also highlight the importance of living by their values in the community context.

Communicative Potential

As a way to deal with conflicts in the community environment, families highlight dialogue. Some mention the importance of acting differently according to the situation, at times maintaining silence, and at other times talking.

A mother tells a story in which she identifies dialogue and communication in general as ways of dealing with conflicts that arise at community level:

Researcher: Is there anything else in the community, in the neighborhood, to keep violence away? Anything that is done?

Mother 8: Communicating with people. Well, look. I live in a house, and I'll tell you a little story. I live in a rented house, and they rent apartments or rooms, and there was a little argument with a lady from there, and there was never any dialogue with these people. All the same, we collaborated. But, with this argument that happened, well, they didn't want to. They were the ones who made the mistake of causing a problem for something like that. There was never any dialogue. And they live in the same house. So, I went away on a trip. I was with

the children for some days, there in Cali, on a trip, and when I came back, well, the lady with whom there was the problem was ill. She was in delicate state, and so the only thing that could [and did] happen was a conversation, so there wouldn't be any more problems. Because if you live in the same house, it's not right that there are problems, because, well, you bump into the people all the time, and the only way there is – well, I thought – was talking and discussing things. And it was like that, well, discussing things . . . Well, I would think that, not only in the neighborhood, but at any time that violence appears, for example, some misunderstanding or problems, well, the best solution would be to talk about it, to discuss it. It can help. Well, one helps people because there are people who maybe sometimes are worse off than oneself, and it would be the best solution. Well, talking about and discussing . . . a misunderstanding or a mistake. Try to resolve it in the best way, and avoid anything that could lead to misunderstanding.

Another mother mentions the importance of understanding the situations and positions of others, and then, in resolving situations, choosing dialogue at certain times and silence at other times as contributions to peace-building.

Researcher: With the neighbors and the people in the neighborhood, how could you keep violence away?

Mother 7: Well, let's say, I would say, according to the case. As I said, whether it is necessary to remain silent. Yes, keeping quiet, maintaining silence, or depending . . . talking, depending on the situation and understanding the situation. And if it is with some neighbor, putting oneself in the place of that person [according to] what has happened or what would happen.

Communicative potential in the community context implies dialogue as way of transforming conflicts, but also the possibility of maintaining silence at moments when saying things may worsen difficulties. In addition to communicative potential, families point out the importance of values in community life.

Ethical Potential

In the community context, families live ethical potential through actions such as being helpful.

A mother mentions that, to keep violence away in the neighborhood, it is important to be helpful and forget problems related to violence:

Researcher: Good, and in the community? For example, in the neighborhood where you live, what things are there that enable you to keep away from violence?

Mother 8: Being helpful with people that one knows. Being helpful, and one trying to forget, [so] that there is no violence.

In this way, maintaining values with neighbors constitutes a contribution to peace-building in the community context.

In summary, communication, including both dialogue and silence, and values such as being helpful and forgiving contribute to peaceful relations in the community.

Reflections on the Potentials of Children and Their Relational Agents

The present study identified the individual and relational potentials for peace-building of children and potentials for peace-building also located in the context of the family, the child care center, and the community environment. This enabled the deconstruction of dominant stories based on violence as exclusive narratives present among both children whose families have experienced the armed conflict and their relational contexts. Dominant narratives containing violence can be an exclusive dimension in the lives of children and families from the context of the Colombian armed conflict. Narratives that contain or are affected by violence may have traditionally been their way of talking about themselves, and the way they are narrated about by others. Furthermore, by recognizing themselves as victims, they manage to obtain some of their rights and receive economic subsidies as has been revealed in previous studies (Ospina-Alvarado, Alvarado, Carmona, & Arroyo, 2018). Thus, dominant narratives may have meant that children and their families not only have access to recognition of their rights, but also that they position themselves as victims. This may result in their silencing or neglecting the multiple resources and potentials that are also part of their lives and relations. Even such contexts as schools and the community have been identified as environments that reproduce adverse effects of violence and the consequential re-victimization of these children.

The present study revealed multiple alternative stories that had been obscured by visions and practices based on victimization. Expressions of multiple potentials were identified among the children: life potential, affective potential, ethical potential, the potential of play and enjoyment with others, the potential of exploration and investigation, cognitive potential, creative potential for transforming conflicts, communicative potential, and spiritual potential. The family potentials that the study showed were life potential, affective potential, ethical potential, relational potential, creative potential for transforming conflicts, communicative potential, and political potential. Potentials for peace-building present in the educational context were affective potential, ethical potential, and the potential of play and enjoyment with others. Lastly, the potentials present in the community context were communicative potential and ethical potential.

Previous studies have recognized some potentials for peace-building present among older children such as affective potential, ethical potential, creative potential for transforming conflicts, and communicative potential (Alvarado, et al., 2012; Ospina-Alvarado, 2015; Ospina-Alvarado, Loaiza, & Alvarado, 2016). As seen in the present study, children have other potentials such as the potential of caring for life, the potential

of play and enjoyment with others, cognitive potential, spiritual potential, and the potential of exploration and investigation. This approach, involving children's investigation as a path towards peace-building, relates to a proposal for schools as territories for peace (Las Escuelas como Territorios de Paz, Alvarado, et al., 2012), in which older children investigate their cultural roots and socio-cultural context as a way to deconstruct some forms of relating and reconstruct others that contribute to everyday relational experiences of peace.

Alvarado et al. (2012) have emphasized the potentials that older children and young people have, while the present study, as well as dealing with the potentials of children in early childhood, includes those of their relational agents, such as their families and teachers, and community actors. Relational potential for peace-building, identified in this study as part of the family environment, is similar to the generative potential that Gergen (2012) has proposed in with regard to the creative care of relations. Ethical potential in the family environment, as some mothers point out, involves the importance of respecting not only the children but other persons in contact with the family. In the terminology of Alvarado and colleagues, this implies contributing to the broadening of an ethical circle,³⁶ a process which arises in the present research also, as part of the potentials for peace-building resulting out of the educational environment. The relations that the families narrate concerning this environment, among children and between children and teachers, as well as community relations, form part of a broadening of the ethical circle (Alvarado, et al.). This process involves, as was found in the present study, care and interest, not only for the family, but for others who are not so close, in places such as the child care center and the community.

Also revealed in the dialogues were strong desires for alternative futures. We turn to possibilities for peace-building in the next chapter.

36 Broadening the ethical circle as proposed by Alvarado et al. (2012) consists of increasing the circle of people who are to be cared for, and are the objects of compassion, solidarity, and other ethical values. Thus, the subject is not only concerned for those who are closest, but is also moved by those who are more distant and by other matters. At this point, care for the environment appears.

Chapter 12

Counter Stories of Peace and Possible Futures³⁷

As mentioned in the previous chapter, I began this study with the idea that children who have experienced the context of armed conflict construct themselves through multiple stories, even when they have been principally viewed in terms of one sole story of shortcomings and deficit centered on the past they and their families experienced. The present research aims to contribute to everyday peace-building processes based on counter stories of futures the children, families, and relational agents could build, or futures that would be possible on assuming their agency.

A Multiplicity of Counter Stories as Future Visioning

Multiple counter stories show the richness of the children's lives and families' biographies, and enable them to break away from a deterministic vision centered on reproduction of the violence experienced by families in the past, opening diverse future possibilities.

Next in this chapter, we set out the results with my interpretation of the voices of the participants on a multiplicity of possible futures gathered in four themes and their six emergent subthemes: 1. The theme of future possibilities in children's education and agency, with the two subthemes of children's education as a means toward peaceful futures, which includes absence of violence in future educational environments, and parent education at school for an alternative future; and children's agency in building their futures; 2. The theme of building peace through family relations with the four subthemes of dreams of return to rural territory with security, building a future away from the armed conflict, talking about past violence to avoid repetition, and work and economic opportunities as a future away from violence; 3. The theme of role of the state in building alternative futures; and 4. The theme of uncertainty and inaction – remnants of the dominant story. Subsequently, my reflections and the discussion involving the results contained in the chapter and previous literature are presented.

The following accounts demonstrate how questions about future resources for defense from violence enable children and their relational agents to position themselves with regard to future possibilities in their lives, family and community relations, government actions, and changes in both legal and illegal armed groups.

37 Some of the results, interpretations, and the dialogue with literature contained in this chapter are to be presented as an article in the *Journal of Family Therapy*.

Future Possibilities in Children's Education and Agency

Both families and educational agents identify the possibility of constructing futures of peace through their own agency and children's education.

Children's Education as a Means Toward Peaceful Futures

One way of building peaceful futures includes bringing children up with values, and also educating them so they can get ahead. These two areas of education take place both in the family and in educational institutions.

A mother refers to bringing up her children with values and giving them formal education, and the importance of both these factors in building a future in which the violence experienced in the armed conflict is not repeated:

Researcher: So, in order that these events are not repeated, the ones you lived through, what could you do so they are not repeated?

Mother 2: Eh, well, I don't know. Teach the children to live. That.

Researcher: Good, and, so this is not repeated: What would be within your possibilities? Teaching your children. Anything else?

Mother 2: Yes, that.

Researcher: And, what would other people have to do so that it is not repeated?

Mother 2: Hmmm, what would that be? I don't know. Offer new education, it would be. For the family.

The two mothers whose narratives appear below describe themselves as being involved in constructing their children's futures:

Mother 2: I wouldn't want violence in the future. I want, and I try to find, a way to avoid it, and accompany them in the various daily activities. They have to study and prepare themselves to get ahead.

Mother 8: To live in another city: to be far away. Working. To see other opportunities. To grow up studying. Help them to get ahead by studying.

Some of the teachers emphasize that education should not only be the responsibility of the school, but should involve the family, in order that violence is less present in the lives of children:

Teacher 11: It is important that the children's parents participate in the education and learning process, because in this way true meaningful learning can be achieved.

Teacher 2: Direct linking [of the school] with the people that surround children, with meetings, and with the work the families carry out with teachers.

Some mothers emphasize the education of their children as a way of building alternatives for a life in which violence would not be present:

Mother 8: I don't know. Maybe that they study and get ahead. Get them to

progress because, I, at least, didn't have the opportunity to study. So, at least, that they study.

...

Mother 1: I wouldn't want violence in the future, because I want, and try to find, the way to avoid it in the various daily activities. They have to go out and study to prepare themselves to get ahead. Well, about the future, in truth, I would not want to know practically anything about violence, because it isn't good, either for my children or for me. So, to try to have them concentrated on some activities, set them studying, so they move forward and leave the life of violence behind.

...

Mother 2: Well, for my children's future, I think that they will get ahead by studying, with a career, supporting them in what they decide, in what is good. In what is bad, obviously not, and with regard to violence, I believe that it will always be present because, well, I can't overprotect them. They have to confront it someday, until they know how to confront problems, and they know how to endure them.

On being asked about alternative futures in which contributions to peace-building are made, a mother mentions that both her own and her son's education are important:

Mother 1: Well, what I think is that, well, educating oneself. . . . One has good things, and I know that, with these, he will grow and begin to move forward. Well, I believe that educating them.

When asked about the strengths in her family, a mother mentions study as an option for building a different future:

Researcher: And, for example, what strengths are there in the present? What strengths are there within the family that will enable them to have a different future? What good things are there within the family to enable your thinking about a different future?

Mother 2: Hmm, the security that my mother, my sisters, have now for the future. For them, for my children, I want to finish studying, to continue studying.

Some families and teachers identify education as an important means to ending violence. This is so in several ways.

Absence of violence in future educational environments

Seeing the present as a beginning for future possibilities, the mothers' stories demonstrate that families consider violence will not appear in the future in the educational institution their children attend, because the teachers provide a good education, there is good administration, and the institution is in a safe place:

Mother 2: In the kindergarten it's possible that violence will not occur, because the teachers are people who educate for a better future.

Mother 1: I don't believe it [violence] will appear because the kindergarten is a

well administered place, and the neighborhood where it is situated is very peaceful.

Thus, families express confidence in the teachers and administration of the child care center in that violence will not occur there. Furthermore, they see an absence of violence in the future educational context as being related to possibilities for education.

Parent education at school for an alternative future

Teachers identify the importance of educating parents, through the educational institution, to form non-violent relations with their children. As a teacher emphasizes:

Teacher 2: But, for example, I believe that one [idea] could be to give workshops for parents who are suffering [the effects of] this conflict, but they [workshops] would be also about good treatment of the children, because, well, analyzing this situation is when one notices. Also, maybe they [parents] were treated like that [maltreated], and because it stems from that. Well, if one is maltreated, that will always produce a person who maltreats. So, it's that. Like, to make the parents aware that what they are doing is bad, but to make them realize, because . . . Show them the law. Show them, I don't know, videos, things like that.

In this way, children's relational agents highlight the importance of educating children, as well as their families, for a more peaceful future. Educational institutions may thus contribute to peace-building processes. In addition to the education of children, some families and teachers identify children's own agency in building future peace.

Children's Agency in Building Their Futures

With regard to orientation towards possible futures, both families and teachers point out the agency of children in building their own futures from early childhood. The agency identified among children includes their motivation to get ahead and enables them to build a future that is worthy of what they are at present.

A mother's account shows her confidence that her children, although small, are the ones who have to have the strength to deal with conflicts when they are older. The account shows how, from their early childhood, children need to learn to transform conflicts and contribute to peace-building without adults having to provide answers and show the way:

Mother 1: Regarding the future of my children, I wouldn't know whether to say if they are present among violence or not, because you can't pretend something is not there. Nor can I, as their mother, be over-protecting them in their future lives. I know they have to face up to problems, and to know how to endure the conflicts that arise.

Similarly, the narrative of one of the teachers shows her interest in identifying the children's potentials and resources for contributing to coexistence in the future:

Teacher 4: We need to relate to each other [referring to her relation with the children], emphasizing the positive aspects in our acts, to try to minimize negative acts or behaviors, and, thus, be able to create a transformation in coexistence.

While indicating the relevance of opportunities for building children’s futures, a mother says it is also important that children move forward through their own motivation and in accordance with their present selves:

Mother 2: That my children are full of blessings. That they are interested in their lives, and in moving ahead. That they don’t stop for anything or anyone, so that their future is worthy of each one of them.

In addition to the future possibilities for peace that arise through education and the children’s own agency, in the present study, future possibilities for peace emerged through family relations.

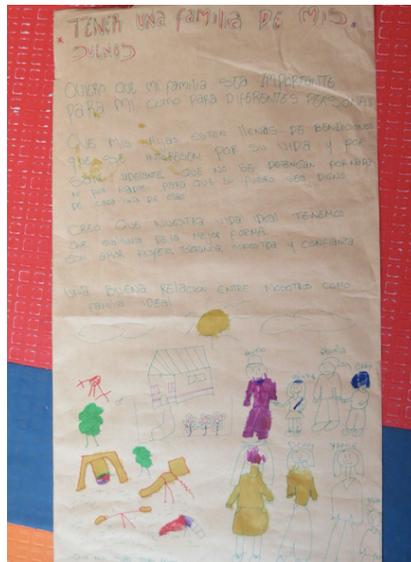


Figure 30: A narrative and image of a dream family proposed by one of the mothers.

Building Peace Through Family Relations

Some families identify alternatives in which violence will not be present in their future relations. They mention their desire to return to the rural context with security, to build new lives away from the context of armed conflict and violence within the family, and to have opportunities for education, work, and economic improvement. They also identify the potential of sharing their experiences with others to guarantee non-repetition.

Dreams of Return to Rural Territory With Security

Some families say that they would have liked their children to have been born in a

rural context, whose tranquility they value. They mention their dream of having a house in a rural area, a job, and being near their relatives:

Mother 2: I dream of a house in a peaceful small town where we can live happily with my children, where we can be near our relatives.

However, this positioning through dreams may become something utopian. Although the mother desires it, it is not within her power to make it happen, because it would require structural changes, not just relational changes as proposed in the present study.

A mother mentions her interest in her son being able to live an experience similar to her own and her partner's, that of growing up in rural territory. She points out factors such as peace and tranquility:

Mother 5: Well, in part, one thinks that it would be good, for example, to bring him up on a farm and not in a place like this. That he should have been born on a farm where we came from, so that all this does not affect him, because I think that, here, there are a lot of opportunities both for them and us, but there is not, like, this tranquility, this peace that one experienced on the farm.

A mother talks about her interest in building a different future in which it would be possible to live with her family in rural territory, close to her original family, with housing and work. For this mother, the rural territory evokes contact with nature:

Mother 1: Well, I, for my future, dream of a house where all four of us would be able to live, and having a job in a nearby town there, to be near my family. Yes, because, in a small town, one can go to the river, to the countryside, but here there's nothing. That's why I think about a house in a small town. And, one's relatives could come, if only for a visit. I, personally, haven't seen them for a long time, because I can't go there.

Some families mention their interest in returning to rural territory, evoking peace, tranquility, contact with nature, and the extended family. Others identify that the way to build future possibilities for peace in their family lies in keeping away from the context of armed conflict.

Building a Future Away From the Armed Conflict

For some families, building a future implies leaving behind past experiences, trying to forget, and making a "new life," in which the family settles in a place different from the one where the armed conflict was experienced directly. On being asked about possible futures for the family, a father expresses his interest in forgetting what has been experienced and building new opportunities far from the context of armed conflict:

Father 6: Violence is in the past, but we will let everything that happened to us be forgotten, and we will start a new life far away from so much evil. We are happy here, but we still lack the ingredient to achieve a hundred per cent [happiness].

A mother talks about being far from the armed conflict so her son can have a future other than one of violence:

Researcher: What, according to what your son is like, do you believe would be future options in which violence would not be present?

Mother 8: Well, it would be being far away from all these things, far away from all that. Not being back there where one was, at those times when one grew up, and to begin anew again here, where those things don't happen.

Researcher: And what do we do in order to be far away from those things?

Mother 8: Well, I, at least, came away from there to here, because one tries to leave all the past behind, leave everything far away.

A mother says that, to maintain peaceful relations in the future, they must leave the place where armed conflict is taking place directly and settle in another place. According to this family, leaving the place of origin involves obstacles that can be overcome with the help of God, which shows that their faith enables them to go on in spite of difficulties:

Mother 17: Not to go back to the place. Look for, or settle in, another place.

Going to another place, and thinking it may be hard, but God doesn't abandon anyone.

After expressing their dismay about knowing what to do, two mothers realize that what they can do in their families is to move far away from that former context and live in a city distant from it such as Bogotá:

Researcher: Let's say, that [events experienced are not repeated] is the desire, but what do you think you could do so that it is not repeated?

Mother 2: To be far away, to be here.

...

Researcher: And, according to your relations as a family, what do you believe would be future options for you, as a family, in which violence would not be present?

Mother 8: Moving away from those places where there is violence.

Other mothers express similar views:

Mother 8: Moving away from those places and beginning anew, with new opportunities.

...

Mother 1: In the future, there will be no violence, because if one doesn't go back to the past and stir up what happened, I believe that we will be at peace today, tomorrow, and always. I hope my daughters and family do not have to experience what happened, because that would be terrible.

In this way, some families consider that, in order to build a new life, a good way to protect their children from armed conflict is to stay away from it. Families also talk about the importance of sharing one's experiences with others, in an effort to contribute to future peace, so that others do not repeat their stories.

Talking About Past Violence to Avoid Repetition

When asked about orientation to futures, some families say that talking about what happened can be a contribution towards non-repetition of the past. Family members maintain that talking brings a possibility of action for change, even though at times others may not listen.

Father 5: Well, the experiences one had before, one can tell other people about them and share them, so that what happened isn't repeated, but people today are very skeptical, so they don't believe things. This in itself causes things to happen, because people don't learn from something that really happened.

The former demonstrates how this father sees sharing experiences with others in similar conditions as a potential.

In addition to children's relationships with families, which are linked to territory and sharing experiences and knowledge with others in similar situations, the fact of having work and being able to satisfy basic economic needs constitutes an opportunity for families to build peace as a desired future.

Work and Economic Opportunities as a Future Away From Violence

According to some families, building a future away from the armed conflict invites work, as a way of creating a life that does not involve violence. Work is a way of joining together the present and the future. It enables people to orient their lives towards human dignity. Some families highlight the importance of economic conditions necessary to contribute to peace. They maintain that, for example, without food, building peace is impossible.

A mother talks about work as a way to get ahead in the future:

Mother 8: Getting ahead by working and living new experiences, trying to move forward with the opportunities.

A father emphasizes the importance of having a decent steady job as a way to get ahead and build a future other than one involving violence. The father also mentions unity, friendship, and living life to the full:

Researcher: What is there in family life that will allow you a different future?

Father 5: Good, no, well it's important to be, to have a stable job, and, well, then there is time for the family, to share. But the important thing is to have a decent job, and to be able to survive, because this is a city that absorbs you. The short

time we have been here, the city is, well, always different from the country, and, well, you have to have a stable job to be able to survive in such a big city, no? And also, to live life to the full, to be united, always united, and have friends, because that is important.

A father talks about work as a way to build a different future, as an option in the face of a lack of action on the part of the government:

Researcher: What strengths do you see in the family? What good things do you see that may be potentials among the family so that you can have a different future?

Father 6: Work, and try to get ahead. Work hard, because one has to work to have anything. I don't believe the government helps with anything.

As families say, having work – related to material opportunities – enables them to build a future away from violence in which they can get ahead with dignity.

When asked about the peaceful futures they want, some mothers and fathers express their desire for a family situation with economic possibilities, such as access to housing and a pension. These kinds of replies can be related to peace in structural terms: peace oriented to ending practices of exclusion and inequality present in macro spheres, which affect families and their conditions of survival and existence.

A mother mentions her interest in having a future with housing for her family, and a pension to maintain the family:

Mother 2: For my future, I think similarly to Mother 1. I also want that [a house and a pension], both for myself and my children. It is good to have a house for oneself for old age, to have one's life insurance or a pension, because one gets to a certain age when one can no longer work, because age prevents it. And that my daughters study and progress.

Families' stories about desired futures incorporate various elements. A father emphasizes the importance of having material opportunities such as one's own house, and at the same time mentions the children's studies and family values as key elements in building the desired family:

Father 6: A dream family would be one in which we had our own house. That our children had education to become professionals. A united family with a lot of values.

Thus, economic opportunities linked to work as a guarantee of basic necessities, such as housing, contribute conditions for families to build their desired futures.

Families thus constitute a key context in building future possibilities for peace in several ways: through their dreams of returning to live in a rural setting; through building new lives away from the armed conflict; through the opportunity of sharing their experiences with others; and through having a decent job and the necessary economic conditions. As we saw in the previous section about children, families also contribute to the construction of peace through their interest in eliminating maltreatment in the family,

and through their own education.

Macro spheres such as the State also play a fundamental role in building possibilities for peace.

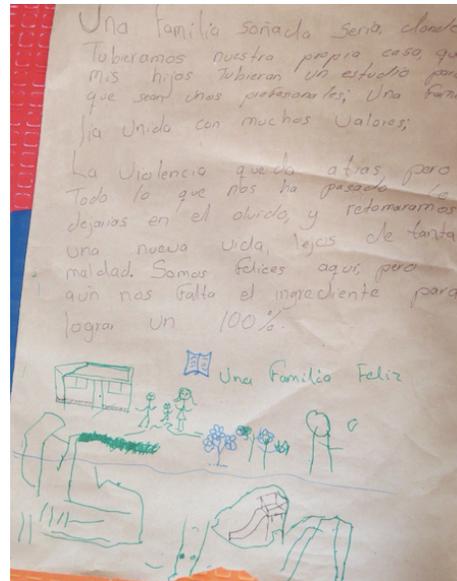


Figure 31: A narrative and image of a dream family proposed by a father.

Role of the State in Building Alternative Futures

Some families emphasize that building a peaceful future requires the State to play a role in providing alternatives through structural changes. As well, political participation in civil society is needed. According to these families, there is a need for the government to identify persons who are genuinely in a situation of displacement and provide them with help. Among the help needed, families mention that of housing. They cite the importance of governmental actions, including educating children, and creating conditions of security in which the authorities act lawfully. However, families also doubt the likelihood of the government assuming such action. Thus, in order to build alternative futures, they say that political action and protest are needed to press the government to assume its proper functions.

A mother says it is important that government organizations identify people truly in a condition of displacement and help them, adding that some people falsely claim they have been displaced:

Researcher: What could other entities do so that what you experienced in the armed conflict isn't repeated? How a government entity or some organization . . . How could the entities or people organize so this does not happen again?

Mother 2: Giving more attention to those who are really displaced.

Researcher: That is, how to identify them properly?

Mother 2: Yes, because those same people [false claimants] say it's very smart and all [to claim subsidy when one is not displaced].

Researcher: And that would be a way that these entities would be able to help, wouldn't it?

Mother 2: Yes, that they [the State] help the brothers and sisters who are affected [by the armed conflict], who are affected through the disintegration of their families. They are killed and all, and there are people who have experienced this.

A father mentions the importance of the government supporting families with help in housing. The father also says that the government should help the people and do what is needed to bring about peace. On being asked about the possibilities for action by families, this father points out the importance of protest and revolution, mentioning a coup d'état as an alternative.

Father 6: What could we do? No, well, in that case, we can't do anything. The government should take more interest in people, in society, because, anyway, the government doesn't help much, let's say. So it's that.

Researcher: Maybe you can contribute with your opinion, so that the government does things that are more relevant.

Father 6: For example, what one wishes for here is to obtain a house. So that's it... The government preferably [should] help people that don't have a house and don't have, let's say, where to go – people that have lived in the conflict – and well, that they could help you. So, it wouldn't be anything more than, let's say, that they give you the opportunity to have a house.

Researcher: Within your possibilities, what could you do so that this is not repeated? Within the possibilities of the family?

Father 6: So that what we lived through isn't repeated?

Researcher: Yes, like, what possibilities do you have within yourselves? What could you do? Because, well, let's say, the government has a role there, but what could you yourselves do? What would be within your possibilities?

Father 6: Hmm, I would think that something good they could do [is] that there would be peace. That both sides understand each other. What happens is that the government is very capitalist, so because of that, the other group is the opposite. That's why they don't understand each other there. What the other group wants is to fight for the people, and the government doesn't. The government takes a lot of tax. Didn't you see what the coffee growers had to do just now? They had to go on strike again because the government didn't listen to them. So, you can see that the government doesn't want to make peace or anything. What the government wants is the rich to get richer and the poor to get poorer.

Researcher: So, what should families do so that this changes?

Father 6: Well, as the [armed] groups say, there has to be a revolution, like a coup d'état.

A father says that government action is necessary so that events related to the armed conflict are not repeated. The father places a particular emphasis on government responsibility in assisting children's education, as a way of building a different future:

Researcher: OK. And what would, let's say, other people have to do? What would other institutions, for example the government or other people, have to do so that these violent events are not repeated?

Father 5: Eh. Well. There are many things that they could do, that they don't do, no? There are a lot of things. For example, more care for children, so they don't get so lost [ethically], because, from there, everything is formed really. Because, if children are educated from the beginning, there wouldn't be what you see now . . . because a man, as an adult, you can't educate him, because he is already formed, and where attention should be paid is to children, and the government should begin there, with the children, to educate them, so that war does not exist. Well, that's where it all starts. Everything begins from there.

A mother says that to contribute to peace-building, State action is needed to guarantee security, along with law-abiding action on the part of both the authorities and the people. The mother says specifically that she is able to keep away from people with whom problems may arise:

Mother 2: One hears about such terrible things, and, above all, violence begins with the authorities. Violence creates more violence in countries today and in the future. Like more security, like [one] not getting involved with people who look for conflicts, to keep away from people who you see are problematic, and above all, I say, to be correct and cultured, more than anything, I say. Because the authorities and the police are neither very cultured nor very correct.

As may be understood from the conversation below, when asked about the role of the family in building alternative futures, a father identifies protest among possible actions oriented to transformation. This includes protest aimed at pressing the government to take action on rights such as health. According to this father, families should demand their rights by protesting.

Father 6: The health service is very bad here. Or rather, everything is bad here.

Researcher: And yourselves, what could you do about this, so it would be better?

Father 6: Well, a lot of things have been done. People have protested. Didn't you see the strike that took place? In the strike, the milk producers protested, the potato producers protested, the health service workers protested. Or rather, everything is protest, because the government doesn't honor its promises. That is, not at all. That is, everything is bad, bad, because, also, they signed the Free Trade Agreement, so that affected small businesses. Even I was affected, because I have a small business, so it affects me a lot, because they bring in cheaper goods from abroad, worse quality, but cheaper. So, there is no competition for that.

Hence, families consider the State a key actor in creating the conditions for future

peace-building, by guaranteeing security and providing opportunities for housing and education. As well as macro actions such as those of the State, families emphasize the importance of armed groups in contributing to peace-building.

With regard to future possibilities, some families refer to the importance of armed groups in guaranteeing non-repetition of violence, especially in relation to a lack of action on the part of the State.

After emphasizing that there is nothing her family can possibly do to prevent repeated violence, a mother says that the State could do something. However, the mother doubts that the government will take corrective action, a reason why possibilities for change might be found among armed actors:

Researcher: So, we continue with Mother 7 in the conversation. So, well, you told me that you can't do much yourselves. There's not much you can do so that violence experienced in the context of armed conflict is not reproduced in new relational environments. Is there anything that institutions or other people could do so that it is not repeated?

Mother 7: Well, I think there is, but it is very difficult. I think there is.

Researcher: What comes to mind?

Mother 7: I don't know. As I say, it's very difficult, because I think that the [armed] groups that are formed there, well, it's difficult that they would cease to exist or there wouldn't be any. There may be a chance, but it's only a possibility.

The hopeful responses were the more numerous and most valuable to the present study. However, although I inquired about future possibilities, some families do not see such possibilities and remain inactive or maintain a dominant narrative based on violence and violation.

Uncertainty and Inaction: Remnants of the Dominant Story

Some families said they had done a lot without results, lacked motivation, and did not know what more to do so that violence is not repeated. Others thought that there was nothing they could do, because neither violence nor war can be avoided.

With regard to family relations, some families mention uncertainty and inaction, not knowing what to do to avoid repetition of a violent past:

Researcher: And what could you do as a family so that you don't experience the violence you went through again. You told me, "We wanted to change this life that we had, so as not to have to live this life again." If you changed to a new life, what would you do so as not to change back again?

Mother 2: To the other one? I don't know, in truth. I haven't yet thought about how not to return to that.

Uncertainty about what to do in the present to build a different future, or about not having done anything yet to avoid the reproduction of violence, is shown in the following

conversation fragment:

Researcher: Good, and what can you do [as a family] so that this isn't repeated?

Mother 7: Well, I don't know, I don't know. About that, I don't know what I would do.

Researcher: Or, what are you doing already so that this is not repeated?

Mother 7: Well the truth is, nothing. Let's say, we are here in Bogotá, and well, displacement makes things difficult. But, by that in itself [coming to Bogotá], we are doing something, no?

A mother mentions having done everything as a family so that violence related to the conflict is not repeated, and not knowing what more to do:

Researcher: Well. And what do you think the family could do so that these events are not repeated?

Mother 2: Mmm. What haven't we done?

...

Researcher: And what do you think other members of the family could do so that this is not repeated?

Mother 2: I don't know. Nothing.

In answer to a question about future resources of defense from violence, a mother says that there will always be violence and persons who do harm to others:

Mother 2: In the neighborhood, I believe there will always be violence. I hope that, in the future, there won't be as much as there is now. Hmm, in the children's centers. At school. In schools today, one hears of a lot of violence but, well, I think that today it depends a lot on the school because, well, there are schools that don't apply discipline and all. Because there are older children and others that are younger. So, like, they get the young ones in a corner, then they hit them. They maltreat them. So that is like, when there isn't so much education for the older ones. They don't pay attention to them. Neither the teachers nor the parents reprimand them, because, I say that, education begins at home, because that is where they see tolerance. And in the future I believe that violence will always be there, because, well, to have a world full of peace is a lie. It will never be, because however much they do, there will always be people who do harm.

One mother's account shows her fear that violence will always be present in the community where she lives. The mother maintains that she cannot find the means to fight it, given that, in her view, violence is nurtured by the authorities, with whom she is not able to interfere:

Mother 1: And in the neighborhood I think there will always be violence. I hope that, at least, in the future there won't be so much as there is today. You hear such terrible things, and, above all, that violence begins with the authorities. Violence causes more violence in countries, today, and in the future.

A mother says that, in order that what she lived through is not repeated, war must

be avoided or stopped, and that she does not see any possibility that this will happen.

Researcher: And let's say, how do you believe that they can avoid what you went through? How to prevent it so that it is not repeated?

Mother 2: Maybe not. That is, nothing [you can do]. . . because there would be no war. But since there is war. How are you going to avoid that? Isn't that true?

Thus, some families refer to being unable to find alternatives to avoid repetition of the past, or maintain that they have done everything towards this without the expected results. However, many others, as well as some children and educational agents, position themselves actively with regard to building alternative futures.

Reflections on Counter Stories of Peace and Possible Futures

Families who have lived in the context of armed conflict cannot always create or imagine possible alternatives to violence, are sometimes uncertain about the future, and some of them say they do not know what to do so that a past of violence related to armed conflict is not repeated. Notwithstanding, many families and some teachers identify possibilities for action among children, families, the educational environment, the government, and armed groups. Voicing these possibilities is a contribution to acknowledging agency in peace-building.

Future possibilities for peace identified in the present study are multiple and include those involving the children's education and their capacity for agency. Education means an absence of violence in educational environments and the education of parents in the educational institutions of their children. Multiplicity also involves the possibilities for peace-building that emerge in family relations by means of families' dreams of return to rural territory with security, their building a future away from the armed conflict, talking about past violence to avoid repetition, and having work and economic opportunities for a future away from violence. Lastly, multiplicity includes the role of the State in building alternative futures, as well as uncertainty and inaction, remnants of the dominant story of violence and violation.

In this sense, many of the families participating in this study imagine alternative futures and stories of peace for their children. Some of the children's teachers share these dreams. They identify education in children's first years as fundamental in constructing possible futures. The families and some of the teachers recognize the importance of their roles as educators of children in early childhood. Educating themselves provides a possibility for families to construct alternatives to violence. The educational system is also identified as contributing to peace-building. Both families and teachers point out possibilities for keeping violence away and creating suitable conditions for peace in educational environments. Previous literature has also shown the importance of heterarchical education that transcends closed curricula to enter into human education in terms of its transforming potential (Gergen, 2007), and in terms of its contribution to

peace-building and political socialization (Alvarado, Ospina-Alvarado, & Sánchez, 2015; Alvarado, et al., 2012).

As well as the children's intergenerational relations with adults (families and teachers), the children's own capacity for agency in contributing to peace-building and non-violent transformation of conflicts is noteworthy as results of the present study in terms of peace-building as a future horizon. Some previous studies have also recognized the capacity for agency among children from their early years (Alvarado, Ospina-Alvarado, & Gómez, 2014; Ávila, Martínez, & Ospina-Alvarado, 2013; Ospina-Alvarado, Alvarado-Salgado, & Fajardo-Mayo, 2018).

Education is complemented by work, which is also seen as an opportunity to move ahead and build family life around occupations different from those of the armed conflict. Among families, the ideal future is not alien to remembrance of the past. At times, participants dream of being able to inhabit the rural territory that marked their relations with their extended family and with nature. At other times the dream is constructed around territories far from the armed conflict, with the aim of guaranteeing non-repetition of violence by any means. In some cases, this guarantee is seen as something the family member has to act on herself or himself, and, in others, something the State or armed groups should act on. Also, among the dreams narrated by families is an interest in enjoying some minimum economic well-being. This, once again, is related to guarantees of government action. This last point, about the guarantee of basic necessities and rights, whether by means of the State, or through economic conditions obtained through work, has been identified in previous literature as fundamental to peace-building (Machel, 1996; Ospina-Alvarado, Alvarado, Carmona, & Arroyo, 2018; Villanueva O'Driscoll, 2013).

Thus, the future constitutes an opportunity for participants in this study to create stories and relations that contribute to peace-building: a future that they begin to construct from the present, but which involves remembrances of the past. Work intended to build peace also involves the participation of various sectors and groups. The role of the government and the armed groups in achieving peace is an obvious factor. Peace-building as a future horizon that we begin to construct from the present with past learning has been referred to previously (Alvarado et al., 2012; Lederach, 2014).

Thus, despite the experiences and impact of the armed conflict, stories can be constructed to provide alternatives to dominant narratives of violence that are present among children, their families, and educational environments. Voicing alternatives to violence (Chapters 8, 9, and 10) and orientating towards potentials (Chapter 11) are also routes for children and their relational agents to move away from victimization, and towards constructing effective peace-building. Change can come about by means of a commitment to future alternatives and daily participation in peace-making activities. It involves effective action on the part of families, teachers, and communities, as well as actions by the government and armed groups.

Part III

Research and the Potentials of Generative Peace

Overview of Part III

Research and the Potentials of Generative Peace

The third part of this document consists of Chapter 13, Discussion, Conclusions and Recommendations: An Invitation to Dialogue. In this chapter the conclusions of the study are set out with regard to several aspects: analysis of the results, and a discussion of results in relation to previous literature; the lessons learned by the participants, a central point in terms of the relevance of the action research; my own learning as a researcher, on being part of the action research process; a proposal for peace-building that emerged from the study; some recommendations for public policy; and some limitations of the present study and possibilities for further research.

Chapter 13

Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations: An Invitation to Dialogue

After this study was carried out, some conclusions, and recommendations were formulated, and the discussion with previous literature was expanded,³⁸ I set these elements out below as an invitation to continue conversations on the subject of early childhood and peace-building. The chapter is divided into several sections.

First, I feature the major results of the preceding chapters, including some theoretical ideas, along with the discussion of results of the research, for consideration in peace-building processes with young children. The main purpose of this first section is to summarize the research findings and set out the discussion relating to the field of knowledge.

Second, I set out some ideas that support the working proposal, involving the responses of the families and teachers to the research. The section focuses on the lessons learned, narrated in the voices of the relational agents involved in the process.

Third, I outline some reflections and my learning as a researcher. Also, in this section I put forward some ideas of a practical nature that constitute tools for working in social, community, educational, and therapeutic fields with children in early childhood whose families have lived in the context of armed conflict, the families themselves, and the children's educational and community agents. This learning is brought together in the methodological reformulation of the peace-building program titled *Convidarte para la Paz*, using some of the conclusions of the study.

Following that, I introduce a section on orientation toward the future that I call *generative peace*: peace which moves away from the linear and deficit-based determinism of the past toward what people have learned, and toward the future. This is the principal conclusion of the study and the main theoretical contribution to the field of knowledge.

I then put forward some ideas and recommendations for public policy related to children and families who have lived in the context of the armed conflict.

Lastly, I identify further options for transformational research with children under such conditions.

38 As well as the previous literature dealt with in the first part of the thesis, regarding Colombia and the theoretical bases on which the documented is centered, the databases Embase and Pubmed were reviewed, using the following search terms: Armed Conflicts, Warfare, Psychology, Warfare and Armed Conflicts. For age groups: Preschool Child (2-5 years), and Child (6-12 years). Between years 2000 y 2019.

Action Research for Building Peace: Summary and Discussion

The present study has led me to focus my research commitments on research as peace-building, rather than research about peace. This implies shifting from narrative methodology as reflecting what happened in the context of armed conflict, to an action research methodology to form new realities and possibilities for peace-building. In this sense, along with the contributions of Alvarado et al. (2012), and in accordance with the contributions of Gergen (2007; 2009), the study reconfigures narrative research in generative terms, that is, for generating meaning and practices for peace-building. These changes in direction are of interest, considering that social research in Colombia and Latin America is only pertinent if oriented towards the construction of better life conditions for social actors, because of the situations of vulnerability and violence present in our context (Alvarado, et al., 2014; Alvarado, et al., 2016). In the case of the present study, the relevance of the research is that it contributes to the agency of children in early childhood, and their families and teachers, in peace-building.

The theory in this study – social construction, systemic approaches, and narrative therapy – was interwoven with the practice. Working in this way, with both theory and practice, has taught me that there is no possible theoretical learning that would be pertinent in our Colombian context unless it contributes to practice. Thus, the theoretical contributions of particular interest to the present study were those that enabled the promotion of peace-building processes with young children from contexts of armed conflict, their families and related caregivers. In these peace-building processes, I consider it fundamental to foster the agency of the children and their relational agents. While it is important to guarantee both children's rights and the macro conditions that enable their potential to develop, fostering their agency implies, rather than building harmony from outside, strengthening the children's capacity to imagine and construct possible worlds.

As Gergen (2007; 2009) has well set out, Western culture has invited us to approach human beings from a point of view of their deficiency. This situation is worsened in the context of armed conflict, in which children in early childhood are understood as defenseless and immature, the only approach to them being through their protection as victims of the conflict. This view has enabled a commitment to their protection and the guarantee of their rights, and those of their families, as victims, but has also led to their lives being viewed from a point of view of impossibility and impotence. My proposal has been, is, and will continue to be oriented towards identifying the children's resources, potentials, and learning at individual and collective levels. In this way I hope to foster the development of the children's and families' capacity for agency, without ignoring the effects they have suffered.

Through the present study, I learned that the violence families have experienced in contexts of armed conflict affects the lives and relations of children negatively, as has

been proposed in Colombia by Ceballos and Bello (2001), Defensoría del Pueblo (2006), Niño (2012), Romero and Castañeda (2009), Torrado et al. (2009), and Torrado et al. (2002). Many studies on other populations in contexts of war reveal the negative effects of armed conflict on children and their relations, and also when they become adults: Jewish children in hiding in France during the holocaust (Feldman, Taïeb, & Moro, 2010); Jewish children who survived the Nazi holocaust of WWII (Fossion, Leys, Kempenaers, Braun, Verbanck, & Linkowski, 2013); children in early childhood who were tortured by mothers in Germany and Austria and victims of child sexual abuse, and who later led the holocaust of WWII or made up the ranks of the Nazi war machine (Demause, 2008); Finnish children displaced and separated from their families during WWII, involving the Soviet Union and Finland (Andersson, 2015); Finnish adults who were separated from their parents at an early age during WWII (Haapanen, Perälä, Salonen, Kajantie, Simonen, Pohjolainen, Pesonen, Räikkönen, Eriksson, & Von Bonsdorff, 2018); children in early childhood in armed conflicts in the Middle East (Slone & Mann, 2016); young women in Afghanistan and a refugee camp in Pakistan who experienced war as girls (Panter-Brick, Grimon, Kalin, & Eggerman, 2015); children under 18 years old affected by armed conflict in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, in particular in countries such as Uganda, Palestine, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Nepal, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Jordans, Pigott, & Tol, 2016); children in early childhood in war in Angola, or living in settlements in Kenya as migrants, and internally displaced persons, or refugees, coming mainly from Somalia, Ethiopia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan, and South Sudan (Richter, Lye, & Proulx, 2018); girls and young women refugees from Sudan and South Sudan in camps in Ethiopia, and those in communities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Sommer, Munoz-Laboy, Wilkinson Salamea, Arp, Falb, Rudahindwa, & Stark, 2018); children who had experienced multiple risks due to war, tsunami, and family violence in Sri Lanka (Catani, Gewirtz, Wieling, Schauer, Elbert, & Neuner, 2010); women and children who had been victims of domestic violence after the armed conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Timor-Leste, Burundi, and Serbia (Bradley, 2018); children and young people who were child soldiers in the civil war in Sierra Leone, lived in the period known as the Troubles in Northern Ireland, participated in the war between Israel and Palestine, or in the Second Congo War in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Cummings, Merrilees, Taylor, & Mondri, 2017); children during or after the war in Yugoslavia, Bosnia, Africa, Middle East, Asia, USA (Peltonen & Punamäki, 2010); children in early childhood, or older, whose parents were in the British Army (Pye & Simpson, 2017); Albanian Muslim children and adolescents affected psychologically by the war in Kosovo and forced emigration, living in Turkey (Yurtbay, Alyanak, Abali, Kaynak, & Durukan, 2003); Kuwaiti children and young adults exposed to the Gulf War during the Iraqi occupation (Llabre & Hadi, 2009; Llabre, Hadi, La Greca, & Lai, 2015); displaced older children or unaccompanied immigrants in the USA (Shenoda, Kadir,

Pitterman & Goldhagen, 2018); third generation Japanese Americans whose families were interned in concentration camps during WWII (Nagata, 1991). In contrast to the former studies, Boothby, Crawford, and Halperin (2006) found in Mozambique that the psychosocial damage that child soldiers experience in childhood diminishes during adulthood, although these authors do mention the case of a man who was a child soldier at the age of six and maintained difficulties all his life.

Among the effects of violence, as the present study found, there are war games, revealing the naturalization of violent death and the use of weapons. Previous studies (Alvarado et al., 2012; Bello & Ruiz, 2002; Chávez & Romero, 2008; Lozano, 2005) have also found war games, though not necessarily in relation to early childhood. Thus, there would be a contribution to the field of knowledge from the present study. Also, for older children, impacts in places of play caused by armed conflict have been found in other countries (Shenoda, et al., 2018). In the present study, the children say that violence makes them feel fear, feel attacked by others, and causes them to cry. The fear that children experience in war (Feldman, et al., 2010; Nagata, 1991; Slone & Mann, 2016; Yurtbay, et al., 2003), and the sadness or crying (Nagata; Slone & Mann) have also been identified in other countries.

The children's stories show the presence of violence in contexts traditionally marked by war, but also that it reaches everyone through the media. This is an emergent element in the present study, through the voices of the children and their families. A review of the literature shows several approaches at international level that have considered the role of media. Among these Sommer, et al. (2018) denounce that radio broadcasts in South Sudan included incitements to rape women; Rosenberg (2011) referred to the mediatic sensationalism around early childhood; Slone & Mann (2016) studied the effects of exposure in early childhood to war, armed conflict, and terrorism through the media; Boothby, et al. (2006) reveal that journalists have spoken of child soldiers as lost generations, or future barbarians; and Bradley (2018) identifies the potential of the media to bring about cultural changes in patriarchy that remain after armed conflicts.

In the present study, the children reveal the presence of violence in the everyday relations in their families and in the child care centers. In their families, they identify that they learn certain patterns that reproduce violence, even when their explanations mix reality and imagination. The patterns of violence that are reproduced within families are principally marked by hierarchical relations differentiated by gender, in which expressions of aggression are accepted between boys, but not between girls, and in which the father, on consuming alcoholic beverages, maltreats the mother, and, in this way, teaches the children the naturalization of violence. Furthermore, the hierarchies that maintain violence in the family environment, exercised by mothers and fathers against their children, are based on age. Also, in some family cases, the children identify their own aggression towards their parents. In the child care center, the negative effects of

violence can be seen when children say that the way to overcome aggression or violence is by more violence.

The everyday presence of violence occurs in different situations. Children in hiding in France during the holocaust experienced maltreatment and humiliation by host families and communities, exacerbated by the consumption of alcohol (Feldman, et al., 2010). Women and girls in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Timor-Leste were the main victims of domestic and family violence after the armed conflict, because of an attempted return to traditional gender norms, and in Timor Leste, due to the consumption of alcohol among men (Bradley, 2018). Situations of alcoholism emerged among Japanese-American families after internment in concentration camps (Nagata, 1991). Children, after experiencing the war in Afghanistan, lived with domestic violence, suffering greater distress in cases when their mothers were literate, because of the cultural shock this implies (Panter-Brick, et al., 2015). Children in early childhood after the war in Angola, or in informal resettlements in Kenya experienced family and social conflict (Richter, et al., 2018). Children in early childhood displaced in Finland during WWII experienced violence and punitive actions in which their relations with their parents were marked by vulnerability, a lack of secure attachment, and overprotection, the situation being worse for the children than for war veterans (Andersson, 2015). Children were tortured and abused by families and educational institutions, not considered human, and later participated actively in the holocaust and WWII (Demaue, 2008). There were conflictive family relations in Yugoslavia, Bosnia, Africa, the Middle East, Asia, and USA, marked by controlling and punitive parents, after experiences of armed conflicts, and child abuse and physical harm was perpetrated on Albanian children and adolescents who were forced to emigrate during the Kosovo War (Yurtbay, et al., 2003). Children that experienced war and tsunami in Sri Lanka also suffered maltreatment in their families (Catani, et al., 2010). In the Middle East, children in early childhood who experienced armed conflict, war, or terrorism sustain relations with their parents marked by separation anxiety and dependency, the youngest children suffering most impact (Slone & Mann, 2016). Negative emotions, anxiety, rage, and fear were experienced among military families deployed and reintegrated after the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and transmitted in the socialization of their children in early childhood and older (Zhang, Zhang, Gewirtz, & Piehler, 2018). English children with parents in the navy experience separation anxiety and dysfunctional alliance with parents (Pye & Simpson, 2017). In contrast to the preceding examples, Boothby, et al. (2006), after reviewing the life histories of ex-child soldiers in Mozambique, found that, in adulthood, they did not consume alcohol as a conscious strategy of leaving behind the consumption of alcohol associated with the armed group, and, furthermore, they maintained altruistic relations with their wives and children.

Previous studies in Colombia (Ceballos & Bello, 2001; Defensoría del Pueblo, 2006; Niño, 2012; Secretaría Distrital de Integración Social, 2007; Torrado et al., 2002)

have shown the naturalization of violence in families and communities. In particular, Niño (2012) has spoken of gender hierarchies present in families with somewhat older children, which leave girls in a condition of greater vulnerability. Yet, these studies have not emphasized the diversity among expressions of family violence identified in the present study, which reveals practices still present in the Colombian context such as the consumption of alcohol linked to patriarchy, and highly hierarchical relations, for example, those between generations. Neither have previous studies made reference to the violence present in child care centers.

The group of teachers in the present study said that it is not possible to generalize about the adverse effects of violence in the children's lives, and that these effects are experienced differently by each person. This is one of the contributions of the present study inasmuch as it is not possible to speak of a homogeneous identity among children in early childhood whose families come from contexts of armed conflict, an observation that is not to be found stated explicitly in other studies. There are several proposals which deal with this idea, but with reference to older children. Cummings, et al. (2017), after analyzing the development of children who experienced the wars in Sierra Leone, Northern Ireland, Israel/Palestine, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, maintained that it is not possible to arrive at universal conclusions about the effects of armed conflicts on children. Vindevogel, Coppens, Derluyna, De Schryver, Loots, and Broekaert (2011), on studying the experiences of mainly older children recruited by the Lord's Resistance Army in Northern Uganda, concluded that it is not possible to view the children homogeneously, and that individualized approaches are required for their reintegration. Nagata (1991), has maintained that there is heterogeneity among the culture of Japanese Americans interned in concentration camps with regard to unique family experiences and their own personal stories. Panter-Brick, et al. (2015) have set out heterogeneous trajectories in the mental health of children who experienced the war in Afghanistan, taking into account the subjective and social context of trauma. However, the teachers participating in the present study did refer to some effects that are quite common among the children whose families come from contexts of armed conflict. Among these are the naturalization of violence and of objects such as weapons. The teachers also use labels to refer to these children such as aggression, attention deficit, fear of others, particularly adults or strangers, timidity, passivity, and their normalization, as experienced in terms of obedience and calm.

The former relates to what Gergen (2007; 2009) refers to about how western culture has led to readings of human beings in terms of deficit and shortcomings. With regard to this, the present study reveals that these kinds of readings are exacerbated in contexts of armed conflict and violence, in which children are named as victims or as passive reproducers of the violence. These kinds of labels, for example, hyperactivity, also appear among children in other contexts and situations of war, such as the holocaust (Feldman, et al., 2010), a context in which the weakest children were labelled as "bad

children” and considered as not deserving life (Demause, 2008). There follows a long list of previous studies which have used some kind of labelling, in which it has been maintained that: children in early childhood, displaced through war in Finland have post-traumatic stress disorder, and exhibit symptoms of holocaust survivor syndrome, and child survivor syndrome (Andersson, 2015); that children, having experienced stress at an early age because of the separation of their parents, have symptoms of depression in later life and are more frail in old age, particularly males (Haapanen, et al., 2018); that Jewish children who survived the holocaust suffer from depression, anxiety disorders, loss of resilience, and limits on their development, which leaves them with greater difficulty in dealing with traumas when they are adults (Fossion, et al., 2013); that children in early childhood in the Middle East suffer the effects of war, terrorism, armed conflict and political trauma in their mental health, through symptoms of post-traumatic stress, emotional and behavioral symptoms, nervousness, aggression, bad temper, anxiety, fear, low tolerance of frustration, and attention-seeking, as well as pathologies among their families (Slone & Mann, 2016); that Afghan girls who experienced war and domestic violence show anxiety, sustained post-traumatic stress, and sustained depression (Panter-Brick, et al., 2015); that girls and young women in refuges in Ethiopia and communities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo affected by armed conflict are stigmatized, on being victims of gender-based violence such as physical, emotional, and sexual violence (Sommer, et al., 2018); that somewhat older children in contexts of armed conflict in countries with low or medium income in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East have mental health problems, such as post-traumatic stress, symptoms of depression and anxiety, and behavioral and emotional problems (Jordans, et al., 2016); that children who have experienced armed conflict, living in Yugoslavia, Bosnia, Africa, Middle East, Asia, and USA show problems in their emotional, behavioral, and cognitive development, symptoms of post-traumatic stress, symptoms of depression, anxiety, dependency, fear, and alterations in sleeping and eating (Peltonen & Punamäki, 2010); that children in early childhood after the war in Angola and in resettlements in Kenya were amidst multiple adversities such as social and individual stress, poverty, affected cognitive and socio-emotional development, caregivers’ capacities for caring for them were undermined, and the children had been stigmatized (Richter, et al., 2018); that children and young people who experienced political violence and armed conflict in Sierra Leone, Northern Ireland, Israel/Palestine, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo are affected in development, and have a high risk of trauma, and deprivation (Cummings, et al., 2017); that children in early childhood and older with parents in the British army have emotional and behavioral problems (Pye & Simpson, 2017); that Albanian Muslim children and adolescents forced to emigrate because of the Kosovo War have traces of anxiety, symptoms of depression, psychiatric symptoms, performance loss, negative self-feelings, somatic disorder, and in some cases feelings of guilt (Yurtbay, et al., 2003); that Kuwaiti children exposed to war acquire, in adulthood, post-traumatic stress, depression, anxiety, and difficulties in health

(Llabre & Hadi, 2009; Llabre, et al., 2015), there being an even greater impact in terms of psychological distress among their parents than which is transmitted to the children (Llabre, et al.); that children exposed to war, tsunami, and family violence in Sri Lanka exhibit symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, have somatic, psychosocial, and academic difficulties, which lead to problems in adaptation when faced with adversity and traumatic events (Catani, et al., 2010); that victimization, low self-esteem, irritability, depression and passivity can be transmitted to the third generation after Japanese American families' experiences in concentration camps, or that older children in a condition of displacement or immigrants in the USA exhibit physical, mental, behavioral, and developmental effects, with greater prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, and psychosomatic illness (Shenoda, et al., 2018); and that military families in the USA after the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq suffer anxiety, rage, and fear (Zhang, et al., 2018). Thus, most of the former studies have been set out in terms of truths guaranteed by means of the type of instruments and statistical analyses they use.

In contrast to the studies mentioned above, and in tune with the present study, Mayhew (2018) has proposed not referring to families who have experienced atrocities such as those in Britain's war in Afghanistan, or in WWII in Britain, by means of terms such as post-traumatic stress disorder, because they are anti-therapeutic, and, rather, to refer to the reaction to trauma; Peltonen & Punamäki (2010) have maintained that diagnoses ignore the capacity of resilience of children in contexts of armed conflict for reconstructing their lives, showing that the new generation of interventions for prevention take into account strengths and vulnerabilities, with adaptations according to age; Boothby, et al. (2006) have shown the importance, in the reintegration of children in Mozambique, of changing, from naming the children "child soldiers," and describing them in terms of mental illness, to their recognition of themselves and their being recognized by their families and communities as "others" and valuing their adaptation; Panter-Brick, et al. (2015) have shown the resilience of young people who were children in the war in Afghanistan, which emerges through unity in their families; Boothby, et al., Nagata (1991), and Yurtbay, et al. (2003) have emphasized the importance of taking cultural particularities into account in intervention and prevention programs; Bradley (2018) has pointed out the importance of avoiding the stigmatization of women and children who have been victims of family and domestic violence after armed conflicts, and of fostering cultural changes regarding patriarchy as a contribution to peace-building; Nagata has shown the importance of identifying strategies for facing up to things taught between generations; Richter, et al. (2018) has maintained that programs oriented to upbringing for peace are fundamentally important to families of children in early childhood affected by armed conflict, with the aim that they view their children positively and recognize what is positive in the child care center; Vindevogel, et al. (2011) have emphasized the importance of recognizing impacts, increasing capacities and resources, and stimulating contexts of reconciliation; and Cummings, et al. (2017) have postulated

the importance of abandoning static intervention models of risk or resilience, and of emphasizing dynamic, socio-emotional, cognitive, biological processes.

In addition to the negative effects of violence associated with the armed conflict among children, there are adverse effects that their families have to face. One of the principal effects I found was the disappearance of family members, in which the families do not know if their relative has died, or is alive somewhere, and continue waiting for the family member to appear, not knowing if this will come about at some time. In the present study, it was found that those who suffer most from the forced disappearance of family members are the youngest children. Ceballos and Bello (2001) have also reported the disappearance and loss of family members as one of the impacts among children, but have not emphasized the greater impact on early childhood, this being a contribution of the present study. Romero and Castañeda (2009) and Torrado et al. (2002) have mentioned the disappearance of children, and Torrado et al. have noted the death of family members, but have not emphasized the impact on children caused by the disappearance of family members. Correspondent with the present study, in other contexts of war, such as the holocaust, the death or disappearance of parents has been identified as triggering trauma among children (Feldman, et al., 2010; Fossion, et al., 2013); also, in cases in Kuwait during the Gulf War, older children suffered the death, disappearance, or arrest of their parents, the greatest trauma being associated with their arrest (Llabre, et al., 2015); and older children affected by war, tsunami, and family violence in Sri Lanka lost members of their families (Catani, et al., 2010).

Another ill effect of the armed conflict among families is their disintegration in exile, in which the various family members have to relocate in different places after forced displacement. While some remain in territories with a presence of armed conflict, others move to the cities. As the families' stories showed, their disintegration brings consequences, such as conflicts among family members, the reproduction of violence in territories of refuge after displacement, and difficulties in recovering family unity, after forced disintegration. Alvarado et al. (2012) have mentioned the disintegration of families in contexts of armed conflict, and Torrado et al. (2002) have maintained that children suffer because of the disintegration of their families; Feldman et al. (2010), Fossion, et al. (2013), in other contexts, such as the holocaust, have referred to the separation of families, and Yurtbay, et al. (2003), with regard to the Kosovo War and the forced emigration of Albanian Muslim children and adolescents, have shown that they suffered the disintegration of their families, and loss of their parents or separation from them. However, in a review of previous literature, the consequences of the disintegration of families referred to in the present study were not found.

A third negative effect among families is the naturalization of violence, which is not necessarily related to the armed conflict, but to environments such as the neighborhood and the historic presence of violence in Colombia at a social, cultural, and economic level. This finding is similar to that of Villanueva O'Driscoll (2013), in that the

everyday presence of violence and its effects on the lives of children cannot be separated from other social dynamics. In the present study, families consider that the way to prevent violence in the neighborhood from affecting their children is to isolate themselves. Even so, they consider that on occasions their children perceive violence as natural, and that this could be due to the fact that, although the children are isolated, they are exposed by means of the windows that connect the house with the community. Previous studies (Ceballos & Bello, 2001; Machel, 1996; Torrado et al., 2002) coincide in that children view violence as natural, but do not take into account the role of the community in that naturalization, as the families of the present study have asserted. Lugo (2017) relates the naturalization of violence to the daily presence of armed actors and the absence of the State. Bradley (2018) has shown that the naturalization of domestic and family violence is related to societies in post-conflict, as is the case in Burundi, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Timor-Leste. Panter-Brick, et al. (2015) have revealed a naturalization of violence in Afghanistan and Pakistan after the war in the former country, and Sommer, et al. (2018) emphasize the naturalization of gender-based violence at community level in refugee camps in Ethiopia, and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, showing the risk perceived by girls and young women in public spaces.

The research also enabled me to reveal the effects of violence that the teachers identify among families. Among these are emotional effects on parents caused by the armed conflict, corroborating the findings of Zhang, et al. (2018), among families of military personnel in the USA. This is similar to what White and Epston (1993), and White (1994) have set out with regard to the internalization of problems, those which are considered inherent in people. Such problems may be expressed, as the teachers of the present study have described, in aggression, bad temperedness, and violence in family relations, and in parents teaching their children violence or isolation as defense mechanisms, with the intention that the children do not have to experience situations similar to those they themselves experienced in contexts of armed conflict. While Alvarado et al. (2012) and Lozano (2005) have spoken of non-repetition of histories of violence, the desire of parents for their children not to have to experience what they went through emerged in the present study. This is similar to what Boothby, et al. (2006) report about child soldiers in Mozambique in that, on reaching adulthood, they do not want their children to go through the same experiences they had as child soldiers.

In this sense, the children and their families and teachers taught me that there are negative effects of violence in their lives, caused by violence associated with the context of armed conflict. It is important to reveal these negative effects in order to move forward and find resources for defense. The negative effects could be understood, as Gergen (2007) has proposed, as dominant discourses of deficit and shortcomings that mark the children's relational construction. The effects cannot be hidden, are interwoven into broader environments of violence in Colombia that go beyond the armed conflict, and are

linked to social, cultural, political, and economic factors that have historically marked our country, and permeate the relational environments in which children participate.

However, as shown in the first part of the thesis, many other studies have been concerned with these negative effects of violence in Colombia (Bello & Ruiz, 2002; Ceballos & Bello, 2001; Defensoría del Pueblo, 2002; Human Rights Watch, 2003; Lozano, 2005; Niño, 2012; Sierra, et al., 2009; Torrado, et al., 2002; Torrado et al., 2009; Universidad Nacional, Observatorio Sobre Infancia, 2002), or in other countries, as has been set out earlier in this section (Andersson, 2015; Bradley, 2018; Catani, et al., 2010; Cummings, et al., 2017; Demause, 2008; Feldman, et al., 2010; Fossion, et al., 2013; Haapanen, et al., 2018; Jordans, et al., 2016; Llabre & Hadi, 2009; Llabre, et al., 2015; Nagata, 1991; Peltonen & Punamäki, 2010; Pye & Simpson, 2017; Shenoda, et al., 2018; Slone & Mann, 2016; Sommer, et al., 2018; Yurtbay, et al., 2003; Zhang, et al., 2018). The studies in Colombia have mainly been carried out with regard to older children and young people who have experienced the armed conflict directly, while the present study, which covers a moment in children's life with the most potential for learning, deals with children in early childhood whose families come from contexts of armed conflict. Thus, perhaps the most interesting and novel aspects of this study are to be found in the children's and families' capacity for agency in peace-building.

In their counter narratives of peace, the children demonstrated resources for defense from the ill consequences of violence. Examples included not fighting, not spitting at others, and seeking the mediation of adults in cases where conflicts are being resolved by means of aggression. The resource of seeking the mediation of adults coincides with what Souto-Manning and Hanson Mitchell (2010) set out, with regard to education according to cultural diversities. These authors carried out action research in the USA with children in early childhood originating from different countries, and found that teachers are the principal resource when children are confronted with cultural conflicts. The present study also found resources for defense from violence among actions in play, emerging from children's imaginations, such as, for example, closing the door so that Don Violencio cannot come in, and moments in which violence is not present, such as during illness or vacations. The principal resources that the children talk about are those present in relations, such as small and concrete everyday actions, which show, as Gergen (2012) has proposed, the potential for creation present in relations. The idea of small and concrete actions involves comprehending that peace is incomplete, unfinished, and is constructed through everyday mediations (Muñoz, 2008).

Among resources, the present study identified the emergence of play with others in family and educational environments, in which the children have allies to keep violence away. Play has been mentioned in other studies, but has not been comprehended as a resource for defense against the effects of violence, a difference that is marked in the present study. The review of studies in Part I (Romero & Castañeda, 2009; Torrado et al., 2009), and of regulations, laws, and recommendations (Machel, 1996; Ministerio de la

Protección Social, 2009; UNCRC, Article 31, 1989) notes the right to play; the violation of this right with regard to early childhood in contexts of armed conflict, which limits children's socialization and development (Torrado et al.); the importance of play with purpose (Corporación Infancia y Desarrollo, 2014); play as a facilitator of transformations (Unicef, 2013); and the particular case of football for peace (Unicef, 2013).

Likewise, among the significant resources emerging from the present study, the children value being able to count on their mothers and fathers; the fact that their father does not hit either their mother or themselves; sharing moments with their parents, such as watching television; and playing with their father so he does not hit their mother. These are relational practices that take into account the possibility of resisting violence in everyday situations, and which have not been described in this way in previous studies. With reference to contexts such as the holocaust, factors protecting the children hidden in France have been mentioned, such as family ties, relations with hosts and siblings, a sense of identity coming from membership of a group, and friendship (Feldman, et al., 2010), yet in a review carried out by Slone and Mann (2016) of thirty five studies on children in early childhood affected by armed conflict, war, or terrorism, principally in the Middle East, only one study mentioned the prosocial behavior of children. In a review that Cummings, et al. (2017) carried out in Sierra Leone, Northern Ireland, Israel/Palestine, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, factors protecting the children from political violence and armed conflict were found, such as relations with secure attachment, cognitive abilities, self regulation, and self-esteem.

The teachers identify several resources for defense from the negative impacts of violence on children's lives: the children's participation in activities which involve their enjoyment, interest, and sharing with others; their respectful and cooperative relations with their peers; and their seeking the mediation of an adult in cases of conflict that otherwise could possibly be have been resolved by violent means. In the results of their action research, Souto-Manning and Hanson Mitchell (2010) mention both the mediation of adults and relations of respect between peers in early childhood, without reference to children whose families come from contexts of armed conflict.

As well as resources for defense from the ill consequences of violence, the research identified some potentials for peace-building among the children, which they, their families, and their teachers recognize: caring for themselves, their bodies, and life; active affection through tenderness and play; sharing and compassion; exploration and investigation that implies being active and constantly asking questions; intelligence as a route to understanding others; the creative transformation of conflicts, for example, giving toys to others, and physical distancing, so as not to exacerbate conflict; dialogue, physical actions and expressions; spirituality; political positioning; and children's play and enjoyment with others as an emergence of affection, sharing, and respect. These

potentials for peace-building emerged from the study and constitute a contribution from the present research to the field of knowledge.

Work on potentials for peace-building has been carried out before with older children and young people (Alvarado, et al., 2012; Ospina-Alvarado et al., 2016), but not with children in their early years. The present study found some potentials in common with those identified previously by Alvarado et al., such as affective, ethical, communicative, and political potentials, and creative potential for transforming conflicts. Yet, within these potentials, the details of their expression for children in early childhood, and for those whose families come from contexts of armed conflict, have not been previously dealt with. Richter, et al. (2018) have spoken of the importance of fostering the emotional capacities of children in early childhood, among victims of armed conflict and displacement affected by experiences in war, in order for them to live in a community. Boothby, et al. (2006), with regard to older children in the process of reincorporation, saw the importance of strengthening figures of secure attachment among adults relating to the children, and love for family and community, yet these authors did not recognize the affective potential already present in children, which can be strengthened. Souto-Manning and Hanson Mitchell (2010) have noted the respect and ethical positioning of children in early childhood with regard to cultural differences, without reference to children whose families come from contexts of armed conflict, or its contribution to peace-building. Regarding ex-child soldiers, Boothby, et al. noted the importance of strengthening their care for others, self-regulation, and social responsibility, yet these authors did not note the ethical potential for peace-building already present among children, which can be strengthened. The creativity of children in early childhood has been explored previously as a reflection of emotional and ethical wealth (Sarlé & Arnaiz, 2011), but not as a way of transforming conflicts. The communication of children in early childhood has been identified previously (Fujimoto, 2011; Sarlé & Arnaiz), but not its contribution to peace-building. With regard to children in early childhood affected by armed conflicts and displacement, Richter, et al. mentioned the importance of fostering their development of language, which had been limited by their experiences, in order for them to form part of a community. However, these authors do not mention, as does the present study, that children already count on communicative potential for peace-building, which can be strengthened. Alvarado et al., Lugo (2017), Mojica and Quintero (1993), and Unicef (2013) have all mentioned the central value of relations, dialogue, political socialization, and the constitution of subjectivities, yet without reference to early childhood. With regard to political potential, Palacios and Castañeda (2011) have pointed out the importance of moving from dependency to autonomy in early childhood, without reference to political positioning as a contribution to peace-building. Similarly, Fujimoto has spoken of citizenship, critical thinking, and leadership in early childhood, but has not shown their particularities or meanings. The closest to the present study in this regard is found in the proposals of Romero and

Castañeda (2009), who have expressed the importance, for children in early childhood in contexts of armed conflict, of their participation and positioning as political subjects. In other contexts, such as Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, Jordans, et al. (2016) documented several interventions with older children in contexts of armed conflict, and referred to strategies that include creative, psycho-educational, conflict-resolving educational, cognitive, emotionally supportive, fun-based, and interactive strategies. However, these categories refer to characteristics of the intervention strategies, rather than of the children themselves, and the above study noted the total absence of psychosocial interventions for early childhood.

In the present study, there also emerged potentials for peace-building that have not been previously identified: the potential of life and the body, the potential of exploration and investigation, cognitive potential, spiritual potential, and the potential of play and enjoyment. In relation to early childhood, authors have spoken of the body (Sarlé & Arnaiz, 2011), of exploration (Sarlé & Arnaiz), of investigation or experimentation (Sarlé & Arnaiz), of cognitive development (Acosta, 2011; Fujimoto, 2011; Marchesi, 2011; Mustard, 2006; Palacios & Castañeda, 2011), and of play (Fujimoto; Johnson, Christie, & Yawkey, 1999; Ortega, 1992; Peralta, 2011; Romero & Castañeda, 2009; Sarlé, 1999, 2006; Sarlé & Arnaiz; Sarlé & Rosas, 2005; Stephen, Brown, & Cope, 2001; Torrado et al., 2009; and Wajskop, 1997). Yet their studies have not identified the contribution of those potentials to peace-building. Alvarado et al. spoke of the importance of children's positioning as researchers of their own territories, but without specific reference to early childhood, or to exploration and investigation as a potential. Peltonen and Punamäki (2010) demonstrated the importance of cognitive development in preventive psychosocial interventions against aggression among older children, and, generally, of cognitive development as a factor of protection for children against expressions of violence emerging in armed conflicts, yet with no reference to early childhood. In contrast to the results of the present study, in relation to early childhood, Peltonen and Punamäki showed a reduction in cognitive competence due to the armed conflict. Similarly, Richter, et al. (2018) found that armed conflict and displacement limits cognitive development among children in early childhood, and thus emphasized the importance of interventions at an early age to strengthen children's cognitive capacities, and as a way to solve problems and apathy. Yurtbay, et al. (2003) noted that older children and adolescents in conditions of forced emigration have cognitive abilities and abilities for developing adaptive behaviors for self-protection. Yet the three studies immediately above made no specific reference to cognitive potential in the way the present study does. Boothby, et al. (2006) found the value of spirituality and religion among older child-soldiers, who were able to forgive themselves and to obtain pardon from their families and communities, without reference to spirituality as a potential for peace-building in early childhood. With regard to play, the proposals closest to the present research are those of Sarlé and Arnaiz, who have identified play with others in early childhood as a facilitator

of relations among equals, and of empathy and moral development. However, these authors did not analyze the transition from war games in contexts of armed conflict towards play as a facilitator of peaceful relations and a potential. Among children affected by armed conflict, war, and terrorism in the Middle East, and in contrast to the findings of the present study, Slone and Mann (2016), refer to these children's difficulties in play, in which they found aggression, little interaction, difficulties in the development of confidence, and as result in autonomy, and limits in cognitive and verbal abilities. Although these two studies have spoken of play, they have not mentioned it as a potential for peace.

My proposal for the present and the future, by means of the incorporation of these potentials for peace-building as methodological input for the educational proposal *Convidarte para la Paz*, which we presently carry out at the study center *Centro de Estudios Avanzados en Niñez y Juventud, alianza CINDE - Universidad de Manizales*, is to further strengthen these potentials (affective, life, and corporal potential; spiritual and ethical potential, and potential in care for nature; creative potential for the transformation of conflicts, cognitive and communicative potential; potential in play and exploration; and political potential) and to promote the growth of other potentials the children and their relational agents have for peace-building. This indicates that, although the research ended, its impact continues.

In addition to the children's resources, there are those of their mothers and fathers, who, by means of everyday practices, manage to resist the effects of violence on their lives and those of their children. The mothers and fathers are able to position themselves as political subjects who resist the reproduction of violence by means of their capacity for agency. There are several practices that mothers use as resources to contribute to peace-building: avoiding places where violence may be present, such as those of the armed conflict from which they have distanced themselves; working with memory by means of forgetting violent, frightening, or stressful experiences; communication as mediation in which dialogue enables comprehension of others and the transformation of conflicts by peaceful means; teaching children non-violence; and play as the children's preferred relational practice, both at home and in the park as a community play space.

Some of these resources for defense from the ill consequences of violence, such as political positioning, and communication as a way of dealing with conflicts, have been studied in relation to children and young people (Alvarado et al., 2012; Ospina-Alvarado, et al., 2016), and in relation to older children from contexts of armed conflict (Ospina-Alvarado, et al., 2018), yet with no reference to the resources in terms of their belonging to families from contexts of armed conflict. The present study noted emergent resources among families, such as the potential of memory, the potential of education, and the potential of play with their children. These resources form contributions to the reduction of the negative impact of violence associated with the armed conflict. With a certain relation to the present study, many authors have mentioned the importance of memory in

communities that have experienced situations of extreme violence: in the holocaust (Feldman, et al., 2010; Demause, 2008); in communities in contexts of armed conflict in Colombia (Alvarado et al.); in kindergartens in Afghanistan after war with Britain, also in Britain after WWII, in order to evoke memories of homes, promote hope among families, renew a connection with nature, and achieve recovery from the horrors experienced (Mayhew, 2018); among military families in the USA, who confronted memories (Zhang, et al., 2018); in Japanese American families, with communication on memories among those who lived in concentration camps and their following generations (Nagata, 1991); among young Afghans, who experienced the act of forgetting or creating benign memories as important for resilience or the malleability and social character of their memories (Panter-Brick, et al., 2015); and among Mozambican children (Boothby, et al., 2006). Other authors have revealed the role of the school as a territory of peace (Alvarado, et al.), the role of teachers with regard to cultural conflict (Souto-Manning and Hanson Mitchell, 2010), and the importance of play in early childhood (Fujimoto; Johnson, Christie & Yawkey, 1999; Ortega, 1992; Peralta, 2011; Romero & Castañeda, 2009; Sarlé, 1999, 2006; Sarlé & Arnaiz; Sarlé & Rosas, 2005; Stephen, Brown & Cope, 2001; Torrado et al., 2009; Wajskop, 1997). In terms of resources for defense from the ill consequences of violence, the former studies make no direct reference to the education of children in early childhood by families, nor to memory among families as a possibility of forgetting situations of violence, or the participation of families in play. On the contrary, studies such as that of Slone and Mann (2016) refer to a lessening of reciprocity in play among parents and children in early childhood, in this case, after trauma associated with war, armed conflict, and terrorism in the Middle East.

The teachers also recognize resources for defense from the negative impact of violence on children's relations: family practices that foster the transformation of conflicts by peaceful means within the family; the presence of affection, tenderness, and play in family relations; and the significant support that parents give to children's studies and welfare. Such relational practices emerged as part of the findings of the present study. Cummings, et al. (2017) have mentioned other protective factors among families with children and young people in contexts of armed conflict in Sierra Leone, Northern Ireland, Israel/Palestine, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, such as relations of support that are neither punitive, controlling, nor intrusive, the adequate mental health of parents, and their adjustment with regard to situations experienced.

In addition to the resources for defense from the negative impact of violence among families, both parents and teachers identify some potentials for peace-building in the family environment: life potential (the value placed on care for life); affective potential (love for children experienced as transforming, a desire that children live a different life from parents' own, and emotional and corporal expressions of tenderness); ethical potential (teaching children values, living by values such as unity, sharing, respect, trust, courage, a positive attitude, forgiveness, forgetting bad things, and a

relation with God based on moral values); relational potential (the value of building and maintaining relations, with solidarity, unity, and support, and of creating community networks); communicative potential (as a way to transform conflicts that implies being able to speak about both positive and negative experiences); creative potential (for the transformation of conflicts); and political potential (resistance that parents have with regard to the armed conflict, which takes many forms, such as silence, leaving one's territory, and struggling to get ahead in a new life).

Diverse previous studies have emphasized the importance of the family for children and young people (Alvarado et al., 2012; Boothby, et al., 2006; Catani, et al., 2010; Cummings, et al., 2017; Llabre, et al., 2015; Nagata, 1991; Panter-Brick, et al., 2015; Peltonen & Punamäki, 2010; Shenoda, et al., 2018; Sommer, et al., 2018; Unicef, 2013; Zhang, et al., 2018); the importance of the family for early childhood (Fujimoto, 2011; Marchesi, 2011; Peralta, 2011; Ramírez, 2011; Richter, et al., 2018; Romero & Castañeda, 2009; Sarlé & Arnaiz, 2011; Zhang, et al.); and also the resilience among families who have lived through war, and their capacity to move with confidence in their new lives (Mayhew, 2018).

However, all potentials for peace-building present among families from contexts of armed conflict are emergent, inasmuch as they have not been previously identified as part of family relations. Some of them have been identified among children, such as affective potential, ethical potential, communicative potential, conflict-transforming creative potential, and political potential (Alvarado et al., 2012; Ospina-Alvarado et al., 2016). Richter et al. (2018) have noted the importance of strengthening affection, care, values, and communication in child-rearing practices among families with children in early childhood in situations of armed conflict or displacement, with regard to countries other than Colombia. Zhang et al. (2018) have mentioned the importance of promoting supportive emotional socialization among mothers of North American military families, given that emotionality is not common among military fathers. Nagata (1991) mentioned establishment of family communication about the internment of Japanese Americans in concentration camps. However, the three studies mentioned immediately above have not dealt with these subjects as practices already present among families, with which they are contributing to peace-building, and the importance of strengthening them. Studies have mentioned protective factors among families in contexts of armed conflict in other latitudes, such as care, protection, and support (Peltonen & Punamäki, 2010), which are ethical practices, as well as the challenges in communication among caregivers and girls and young women about their development, sex, and sexual violence, aiming to prevent gender-based violence (Sommer, et al., 2018). However, the innovation of the present study lies in the particularities identified by families that enable detailed examination within these potentials and take into account practices already present among the families that are important to continue fostering. Additionally, the life potential and relational potential that emerged in this study have not been identified in studies with other

populations. An element of relational potential, consisting of unity for survival, has been identified among families in contexts of armed conflict in other countries, without reference to empirical evidence (Peltonen & Punamäki). This finding about relational potential coincides with what Gergen (2007; 2012) maintains about the transformational and creative potential present in relations. It is of interest that armed conflict and the violence associated with it has not managed to do away with this human potential. Silence, as one of the expressions of political potential, has been identified as a past and present practice in other contexts of war such as the holocaust (Feldman, et al., 2010). These potentials identified among families from contexts of armed conflict have also contributed to strengthening the educational proposal *Convidarte para la Paz*, specifically in the component that works with the families.

The teachers have their own resources, such as teaching the children to relate to each other peacefully, while the educational environment has resources such as play among companions, as the families recognize. The role of teachers in modelling and teaching relations of respect to children in early childhood has been identified previously in another context, by Souto-Manning and Hanson Mitchell (2010). Also, Alvarado et al. (2012), Lugo (2017), Mojica and Quintero (1993), and Unicef et al. (2013) have documented the importance of education for peace-building, and the central place of teachers and other educational staff relating to children and young people, yet without direct reference to early childhood. Shenoda, et al. (2018), in another context, have mentioned the importance of the education of older children in the reduction of political violence. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Cummings, et al. (2017) have shown the importance of work with teachers and quality education to foster psychosocial and academic results with children and young people. The importance of work with teachers and staff relating to children in early childhood in contexts of armed conflict has been emphasized by Romero and Castañeda (2009). Richter, et al. (2018) have mentioned the importance of the child care center in the human development of children who have lived through conflict and displacement in Angola and Kenya. Furthermore, Fujimoto (2011), Palacios and Castañeda (2011), Peralta (2011), and Sarlé and Arnaiz (2011) have mentioned the importance of the educators and of initial education.

The teachers also recognize practices among themselves that foster the transformation of conflicts by peaceful means in the educational environment. Among the practices that they identify as fostering peace-building in the child care center are affection, communication, and solidarity. The role of teachers in the transformation of cultural conflicts in the educational environment has been documented by Souto-Manning y Hanson Mitchell (2010). However, the present study reveals concrete and everyday actions with which the teachers contribute to the transformation of conflicts generally, not only those of a cultural nature.

The teachers also reaffirm the importance of articulation between the school and the family as a central aspect in peace-building. In relation to this finding, it should be

pointed out that Bronfenbrenner (1987) affirmed the importance of the connection between the family and the school in children's development, without an emphasis on peace-building. Furthermore, while I have referred previously to the importance of coordination between family and school, this was without direct reference to peace-building (Ospina-Alvarado, 2014). Other authors (Alba Tamayo, Álvarez, Daza Pacheco, & Ospina-Alvarado, 2018) have asked for the participation of families in peace building processes in schools, without reference to initial or pre-school education, or have spoken of the importance of involving families in the process of transformation of cultural conflicts in initial or pre-school education (Souto-Manning & Hanson Mitchell, 2010), without reference to peace-building in detail.

The main potentials for peace-building present in the educational environment are affective potential (between students and teachers, and by means of tenderness as the children's response); ethical potential (teachers' respect and kind treatment of children, the practices of apologizing, and lending toys in peer relations); and the potential of play and enjoyment with others (as a contribution to peace-building, with care, generosity, affection, and communication, as well as the pleasure in having fun and playing with others). It is worth pointing out once again that some of these potentials such as affective and ethical potential have been documented in the case of children and young people (Alvarado et al., 2012), without reference to their presence in the educational environment as potentials for peace building. Souto-Manning and Hanson Mitchell (2010) have identified practices of respect for cultural differences in initial and pre-school education, without referring to its contribution to processes of peace-building or coexistence. The potential of play and enjoyment for peace-building has not been documented, nor its presence identified in the educational environment. These potentials identified in the research have enriched the work with teachers in the program *Convidarte para la Paz*.

Additionally, the research enabled the identification, among the families' stories, of some potentials for peace-building present in the community environment: communicative potential (dialogue as a way to deal with conflicts), and ethical potential (values such as being helpful). Among the studies reviewed, no reference to these potentials for peace-building in the community environment was found. However, among the studies, there is reference to the importance of the community (Alvarado et al., 2012; Boothby, et al., 2006; Catani, et al., 2010; Cummings, et al., 2017; Feigelson, 2011; Fujimoto, 2011; Llabre, et al., 2015; Lugo, 2017; Mojica & Quintero, 1993; Panter-Brick, et al., 2015; Peltonen & Punamäki, 2010; Peralta, 2011; Richter, et al., 2018; Sarlé & Arnaiz, 2011; Sommer, et al., 2018; Unicef, 2013; Vindevogel, et al., 2011) and to the recognition of cultural diversity and the particularities of territories (Alvarado et al.; Boothby, et al., 2006; Cummings, et al.; Feigelson; Fujimoto; Lugo; Mojica & Quintero; Peralta; Sarlé & Arnaiz; Unicef), the resources of territories (Mojica & Quintero), the potential of communities to re-establish social networks (Llabre, et al., 2015; Shenoda, et

al., 2018; Vindevogel, et al.), the potential of communities to generate changes in cultural practices that maintain gender-based violence against girls and young women in communities affected by armed conflict (Sommer, et al.), and the potential of communities to pardon and accept those who have been child-soldiers and to foster the sustainability of their changes, as well as protective factors, such as cohesion, emotional security, social support, and acceptance, in communities in contexts of armed conflict (Cummings, et al.).

In this way the present study demonstrated the effects of violence as well as ways of resisting adverse effects of violence in the context of armed conflict. This is perhaps the most important part of the study, given that it enabled scaffolding an alternative narrative among participating actors. The research thus made possible the validation and recognition of the impacts suffered by the children and their relational agents and the identification of the resources these people have to help them recover from the adverse impacts of violence in their lives. The multiple alternative narratives emerged additionally through identification of the potentials that the children, their families, their teachers, and communities have for peace-building.

As well as the identification of potentials for peace-building, alternative narratives were constructed jointly with the children and their families by means of conversation open to an orientation towards future possibilities for peace, as Alvarado et al. (2012), Muñoz (2008), and Lederach (2014) have set out. In many cases, the context of armed conflict leads to a vision of there being no future. One knows one is alive at this moment, but one does not know what may happen in the near future, and much less the distant future. In the light of this, it was important to reconstruct possibilities for future horizons of peace, geared to present actions and with roots in the participant's biography. Orientation towards future possibilities was a key element of the process, because it opened the way to multiple possible outcomes, and emphasized those preferred by families.

Future possibilities for peace for the children came out of the study. Among these is their education, both at school and at home, with the co-responsibility of the government, as mentioned by their mothers, fathers, and teachers. Likewise, participants identify that the children's capacity for agency from their early years, manifest in their motivation to get ahead, enables them to construct their own futures from the present, based on the roots of what they are today. The particularities indicated with regard to possible futures for children in early childhood emerged from the present study, and have not been referred to in this way previously. In a study with Japanese American families who had been interned in concentration camps in WWII, their perception of possible future internment and the violation of their rights as American citizens was recorded, and also their studying certain professions in order to avoid future violations such as internment (Nagata, 1991). Another study on ex-child soldiers in adulthood in

Mozambique showed that they wanted a good future for their children, with better education and work than they themselves had (Boothby, et al., 2006).

In addition to the children's future possibilities, there are those of their families. The mothers and fathers consider that their access to education enables them to contribute to futures of peace. The teachers also recognize the importance of the parents' education as fundamental in the consolidation of peaceful family relations. The future possibilities for peace expressed by the mothers and fathers also include their dreams. There are dreams of return to rural territory with security, which they share for themselves and their children. They dream of building a future away from the armed conflict, which they name as a new life. They would also like to be able to discuss past violence to avoid repetition, yet with the consideration that talking implies action, and, in this case, that others are disposed to listening and learning. Their dreams also include having work and economic opportunities for a future away from violence, in which, work is conceived as a possibility of sharing and of constructing a decent life, and obtaining the economic conditions that guarantee the fulfillment of basic needs, which are considered fundamental for peace. Possible futures described by families from contexts of armed conflict, with the particularities described here, constitute a contribution to the field of knowledge, inasmuch as these details have not been reported previously. Similar to the findings of the present study, in Afghanistan and Pakistan, after the war in Afghanistan, Panter-Brick, et al. (2015) found feelings of hope among families with children and young people.

Furthermore, families in the present study discern future possibilities for educational institutions, due to the good education that the teachers offer, good administration, and the perceived security of these institutions. These future possibilities have not been indicated in previous studies in child care centers.

Lastly, participants' alternative future stories involve the need for State presence to create structural changes, promote political participation in civil society, create support for the people who are genuinely affected by the armed conflict, and guarantee rights and basic needs. Nevertheless, some families remark on a lack of certainty with regard to State action, the impotence they feel on not having the necessary guarantees, and having done all they can, yet violence remains present in Colombia as a residue of the dominant discourse. They thus identify the need for political action and protest on the part of citizens. Some previous studies (Alvarado et al., 2012; Human Rights Watch, 2003; Lugo, 2017; Mojica & Quintero, 1993; Ospina-Alvarado, et al., 2018; Romero & Castañeda, 2009; Unicef, 2013; Villanueva O'Driscoll, 2013) as well as documents with recommendations (Acosta, 2011; Defensoría del Pueblo, 2002; Feigelson, 2011; Fujimoto, 2011; Machel, 1996; Palacios & Castañeda, 2011; Romero, 2011; Rosemberg, 2011; Sarlé & Arnaiz, 2011) have emphasized the importance of the State, and the necessary guarantee of the rights of children (Acosta; Bello & Ruiz, 2002; Bula, 2011; Ceballos & Bello, 2001; Defensoría del Pueblo; Feigelson; Fujimoto; Human Rights

Watch; Lozano, 2005; Mojica & Quintero; Niño, 2012; Ospina-Alvarado, et al.; Palacios & Castañeda; Romero; Romero & Castañeda; Sierra, et al., 2009; Torrado, et al., 2002; Torrado et al., 2009; Unicef; Universidad Nacional, Observatorio Sobre Infancia, 2002; Villanueva O'Driscoll). At international level, there is also research that notes the violation of children's rights in contexts of war (Boothby, et al., 2006; Bradley, 2018; Catani, et al., 2010; Cummings, et al., 2017; Feldman, et al., 2010; Jordans, et al., 2016; Peltonen & Punamäki, 2010; Richter, et al., 2018; Shenoda, et al., 2018; Slone & Mann, 2016; Sommer, et al., 2018; Yurtbay, et al., 2003), and the importance of the role of government (Boothby, et al.; Bradley; Cummings, et al.; Richter, et al., 2018; Shenoda, et al.; Sommer, et al., 2018). The innovation of the present study in this regard lies in families recognizing the importance of their political participation to demand these rights of the State.

The above findings enable the identification of the richness of the present lives of the children and of the relational environments they participate in, and the multiplicity of future possibilities that they are beginning to develop in the present by means of deploying their individual and relational potentials as a fundamental contribution to peace-building. There is a need to think in terms of the plural construction of multiple instances of peace, similar to those proposed by Muñoz (2008), or the "margins" or "Green Zone" proposed by Lugo (2017), which counter a dominant, hegemonic, unique discourse about children's lives and relations, based only on a past that they already lived and the determination of present and future by the violence experienced.

Experiences in the context of armed conflict led in many cases to the construction of a dominant story about the lives of these children and their families. The dominant story (White & Epston, 1993) is generally based on the effects of violence as the main element present in their lives and usually leads them to repeat the story of violence as a unique possibility. My commitment has been to the construction of counter stories involving multiple ways of building peace, thus deconstructing an approach to the children based on one sole story, and promoting the emergence of instances of imperfect peace in the sense set out by Muñoz (2008), through everyday relations with conditions of solidarity, equity, and affection, by means of stories that, as Nagata (1991) has proposed, are reconstructed with interpretations that are more useful or pertinent for people.

In summary, the research showed that there are adverse effects caused by the armed conflict among the children, their families, and environments. These effects permeate everyday relational spaces. The study revealed learned violence. This was manifest in war games and the naturalization of objects of war, in the children's fear of others, and in their being labelled by their teachers as being aggressive, having attention deficit, being fearful, timid, or passive. In family relations, the findings showed the presence of gender-based violence exacerbated by the consumption of alcoholic beverages, parents teaching children isolation or aggression as a response, acceptance of

aggression among boys and not among girls, and some aggressions by children against their parents. The direct effects of the armed conflict among families include the disappearance of family members, the disintegration of the family after displacement, and the naturalization of violence. Likewise, teachers' narratives about the families may be deficit-based and framed in terms of emotional difficulties, aggression, bad temper, and violence within the family. In the child care center, there are situations which reflect the notion and practice of dealing with violence by using more violence. In some cases, it is difficult to differentiate whether violence is linked to the armed conflict or learned in community environments, and from media in a country in which the effects of social, cultural, economic, and political violence have occurred historically.

In the same way, the study made possible the co-construction of generative narratives by recognizing the children's resources for defense against the negative effects of violence: These include relating without aggression, seeking the mediation of adults, playing with others, imagination, preventing a father's aggression towards the mother by playing with him, and respectful and cooperative peer relations. In the family, there are many resources: children's being able to count on mother and father; spaces shared between parents and children; play in the family; communication; affection, tenderness, and support for the children; teaching children non-violence; the peaceful transformation of conflicts; avoidance of places where violence is present; and working with memory. In the child care center, resources include getting children to participate in activities that motivate them; teaching peaceful ways of relating; the peaceful transformation of conflicts; affection; solidarity; communication; and the necessary articulation between school and family. The multiple alternative narratives also showed the children's potentials for peace-building: affective potential; potentials of life and body; ethical potential; potential of care for nature; spiritual potential; communicative and cognitive potentials; creative potential for the transformation of conflicts; the potential of play and exploration; and political potential. Families have potentials for peace-building: life potential, affective potential, ethical potential, relational potential, creative potential for transforming conflicts, communicative potential, and political potential. The child care center staff also have important potentials: affective potential; ethical potential; and the potential of play and enjoyment with others. Community potentials are communicative and ethical.

The alternative stories enable breaking with the linear determinism of the past and outlining future horizons, to be reached by means of education and the children's capacity for agency, the education of families, and the child care center as a secure space in which teachers provide a good education. The horizons are also formulated using the families' dreams: These include returning to the rural territory with a guarantee of non-repetition; constructing a new life away from the armed conflict; telling others about experiences in order that others may learn without having to experience what they themselves went through, depending, of course, on whether others wish to listen; having decent work; and

the guarantee of conditions at least sufficient to cover basic economic needs. Families' desired futures also include State action with regard to the guarantee of their rights and those of their children, support for displaced families, and the structural transformation necessary for the total eradication of armed conflict and violence in Colombia, even when they at times feel impotent about the lack of State presence and suspect that the small amount of State action is not enough to guarantee an end to armed conflict.

The Learning of Families and Teachers From the Process

The lessons of the research process as a transformational practice are identified principally in the voices of the children's relational agents, meaning their families and teachers, as shown below.

Some families state that the research process facilitated learning with regard to the development of values, the broadening of relations with others, and a growing interest in listening to and valuing others with their differences. Within the framework of the process, the families built community networks after meeting others with similar experiences. In this way, bonds of friendship were created. Dialogue, by maintaining trust, is among the strategies that fostered these ties. Also, families state that work involving the various groups of participants enabled them to learn from the experience of the teachers.

A mother identified her awareness that there are other people who have experienced similar situations as a lesson from the research process, and also that this had fostered the creation of ties:

Mother 1: Well. What did I learn? I learnt that I really didn't have an idea, well, that here it was going to be like this, and I met other people. As I said, that before, one was practically alone, one is the only person who knows one is displaced, but one meets other people and they talk about what their lives were like, and in this way it's beautiful. Like, to know one is not alone.

This mother's narrative indicates that the research process enabled her to identify that she was not alone. This shows that the war has not been able to achieve its purpose of totally breaking social fabric. The collective presence of other families with similar experiences in the process enabled this mother to believe once again in relations, in spite of the fact that some of the families' stories about the negative effects of violence have indicated their isolation.

A father states that, since the workshop process, ties of friendship have developed between the participants, which later enable them to make contact by greeting each other or through expressions such as a smile:

Father 1: In fact, from now on, if we see each other, we greet each other, even if it's only a smile or something, which is like a friendship that one makes in a

determined place . . . Well, to feel, like, at ease, to talk, to say hello. Maybe, as they say: a smile is worth a lot.

This father's narrative about the friendship consolidated in the workshops shows the exercise of co-construction of alternative stories, in contrast to a dominant story about the negative effects caused by violence. In one of the transformations fostered by the project participants managed to let go of a dominant narrative in which families will forever reproduce the circles of violence. Ties of friendship between them were strengthened. Now, what was common to all in terms of identity, and marked a sense of belonging, ceased to be the fact that they came from contexts of armed conflict or the adverse effects of violence to become their bonds of friendship.

Two mothers and a father talk about seeking out spaces for dialogue to maintain ties of friendship and trust once the workshop process finishes:

Mother 1: To meet and sit down and talk about those things.

Researcher: So, that may be a good idea, an invitation to a coffee, to sit down and talk.

Mother 2: Of course, because the people who know that one is displaced are few.

Father 1: Or sometimes, also, this goes with personality. Some of us are, like, more sociable, more outgoing, and others, like, quieter, and one doesn't try to socialize with those around, because one says: What would they say?

In this way the alternative narratives of peace, achieved by the families by means of recognizing resources for defense from violence, potentials for peace-building, and future possibilities for peace, transcended narrative and were expressed in concrete actions. Their actions foster the maintenance of the bonds formed in the workshops, showing dialogue, sharing, and trust as fundamental elements for the consolidation of the friendships initiated.

A mother talks about learning through the research process about values, trying to improve relations, and listening to and valuing others with their differences. With regard to the joint work involving families and teachers, the mother highlights the experience of the teachers:

Mother 4: Well, I learned many good things. Maybe values, relating more to other people, listening to other people, in that each person has different ideas, but they are all valuable. And that the teachers helped us to understand things better.

The above account enables identification of learning that came out of the project in the form of the presence and daily experience of peace-building potentials. Ethical potential, relational potential, communicative potential, and creative potential for the transformation of conflicts cease to be merely narrated or remembered, and become this mother's current experiences.

In this way, some mothers and fathers value the work carried out in the workshops with the families, as well as the workshops with the three groups of actors: children, teachers, and families. They value this work mainly for its relational processes and the

ties they establish with other families; the learning they get from teachers; their learning through listening to others; valuing differences; and, generally, living by values.

In addition to the learning reported by families, some teachers also highlight the contributions of the process. Among their learning, teachers mention the importance of affection and respect, and collaborative work for the children's welfare, involving teachers, families, community, and the children themselves.

A woman teacher identifies learning, in the research process, about the importance of teaching the children in the child care center through affection and respect:

Teacher 2: That the institution should be an educational and support center for the children, that the children feel it is their second home, and if they have violence at home, well, here they don't have it. That it be with affection, with kindness, with the respect that we teach them, and not with violence.

The above account shows one of the principal lessons that the process facilitated: the establishment of new relational practices with the children in the educational environment, in which neither the labels of the dominant story concerning violence and violation, nor the negative effects of violence appear, but rather, modes of relating based on potentials for peace-building such as, affection, respect, and tenderness.

Another teacher identifies learning to put the children at the center of joint actions involving families, the community, and teachers, in order to foster the children's wellbeing:

Teacher 3: And I, well, that here the fundamental focus would be the children, but rather, not only working within the kindergarten, but it should be collective, in which the parents, the community, the teachers, the children . . . in which we all get together for one sole end, which is the good of the children.

The learning narrated in the above text shows that the teachers recognize the children's leading role in the educational process; it also shows the importance of a systemic and relational approach in which, not only the children and their teachers participate, but also the families and communities.

In the same way as the families, some teachers say that they learned the importance of joint work involving the three groups of relational agents, and of designing joint actions in favor of the children with these agents. The teachers also see their own love and respect for the children as learning.

The children and their socializing agents identified the orientation towards potentials as an element of the research process fundamental to establishing change. All of them said that their favorite stories were those in which the various actors were identified through their potentials and actions in peace-building. The photographs below show the strengthening of relations that emerged after identifying the children's resources and potentials and after the joint construction of alternative futures for the families.



Figure 32: Expressions of affection emerge in workshops after the identification of potentials among children and in their relations.



Figure 33: Expressions of affection emerge in workshops after building the family dream.

In summary, the principal lessons that emerged from the process can be identified in the accounts of the mothers and the group of teachers. One element valued by the families was the consolidation of ties of trust and friendship with other families. The families were concerned to carry out concrete actions to maintain the relations formed through the workshops. Additionally, a significant lesson learned in the workshops involved the establishment of relations founded on potentials for peace-building, by means of practices of affection, strengthening relations, ethical experiences, and the peaceful transformation of conflicts. Likewise, both the families and the group of teachers learned from the process the importance of working together in an articulated manner. This was facilitated by carrying out some of the workshops with the presence of all three groups of actors (families, teachers, and children). The principal learning for the group of teachers was their recognizing the importance of experiencing or living the

potentials for peace-building, especially by means of affection, respect, and tenderness. Similarly, the teachers identified the leading role of the children and the need for joint work to guarantee their welfare. It is worth pointing out that the lessons and transformations recounted by the children's teachers are fundamental for the children, in the light of the centrality of relations in early childhood. In the case of the children, what they most valued was the recognition of their resources and potentials by their families and teachers, and their relational expressions of affection were strengthened by talking about potentials and future possibilities.

My Reflections and Learning From the Project

Taking into account the fact that the research is not a one-way process, I add my own learning to that of families and teachers, both as a researcher and as a person. Similarly, some lessons about peace-building emerged from the process. They are worth noting.

Learning as a Researcher

As a social constructionist researcher, my main learning involved several points: first, that academic knowledge is not the only legitimate knowledge, because the stories told by the children during their games, and by the families and teachers, contain knowledge and practices that contribute to peace-building. Listening to the voices of all the actors, considering them all as pertinent and legitimate, enabled me to discover the richness of polyvocality. As can be seen throughout the previous chapters, the narratives came mainly from the group of relational agents. In the case of the children it was thus important to learn from their corporality, their gestures, and their different expressions, some of which are registered in the photographs. One could say that the fundamental value of the thesis is in the accounts of the group of participants, and in comprehending that the resources that have enabled participants to contribute and to continue contributing to peace-building processes lie in those accounts. With these ideas, I was able to comprehend the importance of incorporating dialogue among multiple expressions of knowledge and understanding in the research process.

Further, I find that research practice is more pertinent when it is participative, collaborative, and not hierarchical, it being important to understand the participants themselves as researchers. In the case of the children, the promotion of their taking on multiple roles by means of play with puppets fostered the emergence of potentials in which they positioned themselves as researchers on their own lives. They did this by not only listening to learn, but by questioning and talking among themselves, not accepting everything without understanding it, and asking multiple questions about what was new to them. The families' curiosity about their own lives and the lives of other families was

awakened, and they recognized themselves in the experiences of others. They also positioned themselves as experts, not feeling that the researcher or the group of teachers were those who had something to teach them, but rather, saying that their commitment was to teach others their experiences and the learning acquired after their experiences in contexts of armed conflict. The role of the families as co-researchers emerged out of the conversational practices that took place in the workshops, in which they did not participate in an interview replying to the researcher, but in dialogical processes in which they themselves guided the course of the conversation. In the same way, in the closing workshop, in which the understanding that came out of the process was returned to them, they mentioned some elements of it with which they agreed, further understanding about their family biographies, and lessons they had learned in the process. These outcomes could not have emerged from an individualized research approach. The role of the team of teachers as co-researchers was central, particularly in the encounters between the three groups of actors, their fostering spaces of dialogue with the families, and finding ways to involve the children in the activities of the workshops. The teachers were also interested to know and comprehend the families' biographies and they remarked on how little they had known about the families before the study.

Third, that research builds on itself, is evolving, and is a flexible, non-linear, spiral process. These lessons emerged from the methodological process, which, in the work with the children in early childhood and their relational agents, required flexibility. In the first workshop with the children, I recognized that children's groups must be small, that I had to give space for play for its own sake rather than with the aim of obtaining a research finding, that activities with children had to be short and varied, and that not all the activities planned for each workshop could be carried out in the same encounter. In the case of the families, flexibility required that I adapt myself to their hours and conditions, and understand that, as working people, they had little time for the workshops in some cases. With the group of teachers this implied understanding that they could not be present at all the workshops with the children, that they had to take turns in participating in the workshops for teachers, or for the three groups of actors, because they had responsibility for all the other children in the child care center. The non-linearity of the process and its spiral character led me into a permanent dialogue between theory and what I learned from the voices of the participants. It was not a case of theory first, then methodological design, followed by results and conclusions. Instead, the research process implied moving back and forth between these steps several times and understanding that the methodological route set out for the work with the participants was only a map or guide, and that the richness of the process was to emerge when each actor entered, removing any character of linearity that may have been foreseen.

Fourth, the research process itself is of interest, rather than just the results or findings. The importance of the process itself, and not merely of the results, showed me that the methodological process was fundamental in making possible the co-construction

of alternative narratives. The main impacts for the participants emerged in the process itself. The study was rich in research results also, as has been shown in the first section of this chapter, but the path followed with the participants was inspirational.

Fifth, research in Latin America, and particularly Colombia, should be pertinent, and oriented towards social transformation. As I mentioned in the first section of this chapter in the results of the study, I learned that the research should not be *about* peace, but rather *for* peace, not about the children in early childhood, but rather for and with the children, not about the armed conflict, but rather should serve to reveal and transform violent practices established within it.

Sixth, I reaffirmed what was at the base of the study from the beginning, concerning the idea that, in research processes for peace-building, it is important to focus on potentials and agency rather than on readings of reality based on deficit and shortcomings.

Seventh, research within a constructionist approach implies understanding that the results are interpretations of the interpretations that participating social actors make of their own lives (Riessman, 2008), as happened in the present study when constructing the findings and conclusions based on the narratives of the participants; and that, gathering the lessons mentioned above, social research makes sense because it provides socially pertinent knowledge, as proposed by Gergen (2007), for these actors. The results of the present study are not absolute truths, in the way that modern science has claimed, but they have been relevant for the participating children, families, and teachers, and thus could be relevant to other communities in similar contexts or conditions. The results, being interpretations, involved various decisions on my part, in dialogue with others: the selection of the places where I would do the field work; the selection of the group of participants, with a prioritization of multiple voices; my own ideological or ethical-political commitment, oriented to transformation; orientation to potentials and agency; the participatory and collaborative intention behind the study; the questions and actions that went through the play-oriented creative workshops; the transitions taken by the research, which is understood as a spiral that reconfigures itself; the prioritization of the narratives, which were taken into account as part of the results; and the interpretation of the results, understood in their relational and collaborative approach, with the participation of the social actors who made up the study.

My Learning as a Person

As a person, my principal learning relates to several points:

I learned the importance of solidarity, both in constructing social fabric, and in rebuilding relations broken through situations of violence, such as those of the armed conflict, and also those we experience daily in Colombia. As has been shown previously in the description of the results of the study, families who come from contexts of armed

conflict showed, among the impacts from these contexts, at least two in which they mentioned broken relations. These were the forced disappearance of family members, and the disintegration of families after displacement. Among families' potentials for peace-building, solidarity emerged as part of ethical potential and relational potential. By means of solidarity, families have learned to care for their relations. Perhaps this is why, on being asked about their learning in the process, they strongly emphasize the emerging friendship between the participating families. These are all examples of the potential of solidarity in forming relations. I might have thought that solidarity is only important among those who have experienced situations such as those that happen in contexts of armed conflict, but the time and conversations shared with the families showed me that it was important not only in those situations, and that, in my sense of humanity, I should also contribute to the consolidation of relations by means of solidary practices.

I also learned about the strength of positioning oneself through potentials and resources in order to build conditions of life and relations that promote peace, and deactivate both violence and the suppression of others and their differences. In a similar way to my learning about solidarity, I understood that I could not regard potentials for contributing to peace-building and the act of maintaining an appreciative stance in relation to life as being necessary and pertinent only among the children, their families, and teachers. From them, I learned the importance of having an appreciative viewpoint myself with regard to everyday situations that arise, and of contributing to peace-building in the relations I participate in. It is worth mentioning that, on trying to do this, I find it is not always possible to put it into practice, although I recognize the great importance of continuing trying. I once again honor the participants in the study on achieving such significant contributions to peace-building.

My learning also involved understanding the value of listening to children in early childhood in their own voices, and not obliging them to communicate and relate in terms of the adult world. I understood that the children's voices often involve their bodies. For example, I began to read from them the gesture of making eyes as a demonstration of affection. Likewise, I had to read their actions and understand what was behind them, rather than asking about them: for instance, to recognize when they were collaborating with another child, rather than ask them what collaboration meant to them. What I value in this is the importance of intergenerational relations, in which the presence of each actor is really valued. The proposal is that I should neither attempt to be like a child nor expect them to be like adults, but rather, I should recognize the importance of encounter between these two worlds, between these two cultures, two ethical frameworks, and the possibility of developing a shared world.

I learned about the potential that play and art have to foster a transformation that incorporates not only rationality but, above all, emotions and the body: the children calling our attention to this learning in their everyday actions. What is interesting about this learning has to do with viewing art and play not only as representations of the lives

of children and other social actors, but as mediations in the construction of realities. Play and art, and the body as a fundamental element in these practices, are ways in which the children appear in the encounter with others, and ways of relating with others. It is in play and art that children distance themselves from the rationality that characterizes the adult world, and actions, emotions, and modes of encounter that contribute to peace-building appear. In these activities, children experience laughter, friendship, emotions, and the enjoyment of encounter with others.

Lastly, I learned about the effectiveness of dialogue in facilitating the construction of new realities and relations and giving meaning to them, with my deep gratitude to families and teachers for their guidance on this point. In the research, this process became most visible in the relations of friendship and solidarity that developed in the workshops. In the case of the families and the group of teachers, the workshops contained a strong dialogical component. The workshops fostered the emergence of collective narratives and the recognition of each person in the light of the lives and experiences of the others. As the families indicated with regard to their learning, in the workshops they were able to develop relations, know that they could count on the others, and foster relations of trust and friendship. The teachers showed, in their accounts and general learning in the process, recognition of the importance of the relation between the family and school and of the involvement of communities. Before dialogue among families and teachers was brought about in the workshops, others had been labelled or blamed for not being present, or for the difficulties with the children, yet once spaces for conversation were established, participants were able to recognize the potentials of others and to take account of the importance of working in cooperation.

Learning From the Research Regarding Peace-Building With Children in Early Childhood

As well as lessons at personal and research levels, there are others that are relevant to the study in terms of peace-building with children in their early years. These emerged as insights while doing the research. It is worth pointing out that, in order to make possible these commitments to counter stories involving multiple ways of building peace and above all to ensure that they are lasting, it is essential to promote collaborative work among the children, their families, teachers, and other relational and community agents, as well as ourselves as researchers and educators, and, furthermore, to promote these collaborative practices among public policy decision-makers so important to such processes.

Collaborative work among children, families, educational agents, and researcher was of fundamental importance to the study, enabling the active participation of the various agents, and demonstrating their vital roles in peace-building processes. This joint work among the children and their relational agents meant that the changes achieved

during the research process, in which the children refer to themselves in terms of their potentials, could be maintained in the conversations of their most important relational agents, thus contributing to the lasting nature of these changes. Collaborative work also permits learning for the participants within and among each of the groups of actors. This was fostered through the workshops, some differentiated according to each group of actors, and others involving the three groups: children, families, and educational agents.

In addition to the importance of collaborative practices, the learning acquired during the present study includes recognizing the importance of play in fostering peace-building processes with children in early childhood. In play, children may experience peacebuilding through their own bodies and voices. Reflections about affection, respect for differences, sharing, solidarity, and putting oneself in the position of another emerge through play. In the various encounters with the children, it was essential to maintain an element of play at all times, as it is a suitable language for intergenerational relations and facilitating critical and reflexive processes that come from the children themselves and not as an imposition from an adult.

Through games, children's potentials for peacebuilding were identified, and other potentials for peacebuilding developed and broadened. At times when I did not ask them directly about potentials, but rather played with them, using the puppets or the model figures, I was able to notice a girl helping a boy to make his model figure, or a boy giving my figure a hug with his own figure. In this way, peace-building potentials became evident in play. These potentials grew through play, because relations strengthened between the children, and a relation developed between the children and myself, with the appearance of new demonstrations of affection, and ways of resolving conflicts that arose: for example, lending one's puppet to another, or agreeing turns for the use of the puppets. Games can also enable children to realize that an objective may sometimes not be reached solely by one of them completing a contribution, but that it needs collective help and work in order to complete. Below, I show some of these examples in the photographs of the workshops.



Figure 34: A game with puppets in which children can assume multiple roles as actors or spectators and can agree turns to participate in the play.



Figure 35: A human character in modeling clay built by all the children participating in one of the workshops. In activities such as rowing together in an imaginary boat, all pulling together in the same direction, or the joint construction of a human figure, the children were able to identify the importance of sharing and working together towards a goal. The games enabled children to reflect that, for example, in order to make a figure amongst all of them, each one had to take a small amount of modeling clay and not all of it.

Another lesson for peace-building with the participation of children in early childhood involved the fundamental importance of maintaining an open attitude to emerging experiences in the therapeutic, educational, and community process carried out in the present research. This openness is a key element in work with children in early childhood. As well as the previously designed activities, there were other activities and actions that were transformed in the process, and some that came out of ideas contributed by the children and their relational agents. The activities and actions that emerged enriched the methodological proposal with the participants' expertise. By complementing the methodological process, these experiences also enhanced the findings of the present research. They occurred through the children's own ways of relating. For example, in one of the encounters in which children did not respond orally regarding the ways in which they contributed to peacebuilding processes, a girl helped her companion to put together a modeling clay doll that had fallen apart, demonstrating, by her action, the value of collaboration as a key element in peace-building processes. In addition to planned actions and processes, if we listen to the children, their imaginations can take us to places and practices we never would have imagined. This involves not only their words but their bodies, expressions, drawings, and games. We will be surprised when, after some years have passed, they invite us to relations that are more peaceful than those conceived by the adult world. While this does not imply that we become like children, it does call for multiple intergenerational dialogues.

In this sense, the lessons and reflections that emerged in the research process are multiple, and include some practices that were fundamental to the research and which

would be relevant for new studies: assigning equal value to the knowledge and voices of the participants and academic knowledge; participating in collaborative, non-hierarchical practices in which participants position themselves as co-researchers; appreciating the flexibility, non-linearity, and spiral character of the research project; recognizing the importance of the process and methodology, rather than that of only the research findings; fostering research processes that are relevant and oriented to transformation; and maintaining capacity for agency and the potentials of social actors at the center of the process. The learning also includes some personal reflections that may be pertinent for others. These concern the importance of maintaining an appreciative view; the importance of the deployment of peace-building potentials by means of one's own practices such as solidarity with others; listening to the children through their own voices; understanding play with the children and art as mediations for transformation; and identifying dialogue as strengthening the relational bonds between families and teachers. Lastly, the principal lessons for peace-building with children in early childhood include fostering collaborative work that includes the children, their families, teachers, communities, and researchers; making use of play to strengthen peace-building practices; and remaining open to new and emerging experiences.

Toward Generative Peace

The present research, which sought not only to comprehend but also to transform, has enabled me to identify the importance of an orientation toward future that I call *generative peace*. By generative peace I mean to emphasize the dependency of peace on a continuous process of relating. This involves distancing oneself from the reproduction of violence, and from the rupture of relational and community ties that violence brings with it, in order to center on relational practices based on affection, play, exploration, constant inquiry into given realities, communication including corporal expressions, and acceptance of the other as the legitimate other. The commitment to maintaining and strengthening relations that is part of generative peace enables social actors to break from patterns of isolation in the community, bringing back both trust in others and an appreciation of friendship.

The importance given to peace as a continuous process of relating implies, in the adult world, a necessary reference to dialogical practices. It is through conversation that we manage to break the monologue established by a supposed absolute truth in order to enter into dialogue in which the legitimacy of others is recognized and valued as different. It is through dialogue that shared frameworks can be constructed and conflicts, always present in the world of relations, are transformed by peaceful means rather than by the suppression of others because they think differently, or because their family or cultural story is different. In this sense, generative peace takes up the approach of Gergen

(2007; 2012) with regard to the roles of relating and language as creators of possible new worlds.

Among children, the continuous process of relating involves not only orality but also actions, displays of emotions, and physical encounters. Their encounters are performative. As part of relational ties, friendship and meeting with others in play take the place of words. It is there in their corporal encounters, that, in shared actions, children create and strengthen their relations, where they share their ideas, transform conflicts that arise, and consolidate ties of friendship.

Generative peace implies contributing to the construction – in the present, with roots and historical consciousness in the past – of a future horizon in which we all have a place, although we come from different cultural, social, and political contexts, and even from historically opposed armed groups, and have different beliefs. Generative peace implies the deconstruction of the memory of events previously experienced, in a way that does not victimize, and the reconstruction of relational, social, and cultural practices that contribute to more promising futures. More than a utopian view of desired futures, which often do not correspond to the possibilities of the actors or their territories, generative peace implies a continuum between past, present, and future, in which the actors give new meaning to past experiences, identify the lessons from these experiences, and foster present practices that form part of their everyday lives and bring them nearer to possible futures of peace.

By giving new meaning to the past, generative peace enables a commitment to peace-building through relations, not only as an absence of violence, but as a relational practice in itself. Roots, cultural traditions, affinity with territory, lessons learned from experience, and the possibility of teaching this knowledge and understanding to others, including new generations, are maintained as resources of the memory. At the same time, generative peace enables social actors to manage to break with the non-future that has been assigned to them in contexts strongly marked by violence.

Furthermore, generative peace implies moving away from a dominant story of violence to the co-creation of *multiple alternative stories* with open endings. These stories incorporate ways of relating preferred by the children and their relational agents. In this sense, generative peace implies multiplicity. There is no unique path to contributing to peace, but rather, there are multiple ways of contributing to its co-construction. These reflect the richness present among the actors, their experiences, learning, and territories, and break away from a dominant discourse, created by some few, which has silenced the voices, knowledge, understanding, and wisdom of multiple social actors. In this way, generative peace enables distancing from a dominant discourse based on deficits and shortcomings, which, in contexts strongly marked by violence, is experienced as victimization, re-victimization, and the rupture of relational ties. Distancing oneself from this dominant discourse enables one to reach alternative narratives that include multiple *potentials* and *potentialities* and contribute to peace-

building. Generative peace also enables recognizing the richness present in life stories and relations. Within solely the relational framework, it will be possible to contribute to the construction of multiple alternative stories, given the richness of experience that emerges in the encounter with others, and to gather together in this encounter the actors' life stories, with the multiple voices, experiences, knowledge, emotions, ideas, and bodies that make them up. The relational framework has to be thought of increasingly as the broadening of the ethical circle (Alvarado, et al., 2012), so that relations are not only conceived as being with those who are near, but also with those who are distant, with future generations, and with nature.

Generative peace makes use of *collaborative practices* that include the various actors involved, both at micro and macro levels, in such a way that peace-building is possible, lasting, and reproduced over time. In this sense it is necessary to unite efforts, to recognize peace-building as a commitment for everyone and to foster the genuine participation and commitment of the many social actors in order to involve not only communities, but also governments and policymakers. Only a collaborative proposal that recognizes the importance of the participation of multiple actors will allow a broader conception of peace-building as a continuous process of interaction such as that proposed by generative peace.

The generative peace proposed here is more of a noun than an adjective. It is action and relation. Its generative character, instead of describing, aims to propose ways of approaching action and relation that allow the subject to move towards a possible future in which we all have a place. Generative peace learns from and transcends previous approaches to peace: negative peace, understood as an absence of direct violence; positive peace, understood as the transformation of structural violence by means of social justice (Galtung, 1969); and imperfect peace, understood as peace unfinished and in process (Muñoz, 2001). It does not aim to become a new metanarrative or a closer approach to the truth of what peace is, but rather to recover the generative character of human relations, the political potential to construct promising futures, and the ethical commitment of fostering the emergence of multiple alternative narratives that recognize the potentials and potentialities of social actors and their relations.

As a model for generative peace, I propose a spiral rather than a closed circle. The spiral model implies that the processes proposed as parts of generative peace must transform and adapt to the conditions of the context. Generative peace is neither a recipe for peace-building, nor is it an ultimate truth. It is a proposal that has resulted pertinent in the framework of the present study, and which could be employed in similar populations and other contexts. Furthermore, other communities may teach us the importance of incorporating other processes. Thus, generative peace may be understood as an open and ongoing practice of peace-building, and as a continuous process of interaction. Below, I illustrate the processes employed in the study as part of the construction of generative peace, with an emphasis on the theoretical and practical inspiration for each process:

identifying the effects of violence on the children’s lives and relations; identifying resources for defense from violence in the children’s lives and relations; orienting work towards individual and relational potentials and resources; constructing multiple future possibilities jointly in an interdependent relation between past, present, and future horizons; and orienting the work towards play and openness to new experiences. These actions help from children’s early years in building relational practices oriented towards joint transformation and possible futures of generative peace.



Figure 36: Diagram of the proposed model for generative peace, to promote the agency of children in early childhood and their families and teachers.

Recommendations for Public Policy

According to the process and results of this research, and the review of agreements, laws, and policies compiled in the first part of the thesis, some recommendations emerge for public policy. The recommendations that are detailed in this section are based on several ideas: Public policy should reflect the reality of social actors. It should reach further than the orientation towards the protection of children, by incorporating an orientation to their potentials for peace-building. Public policy should name the children and their families peace-builders and not victims. It should propose relational approaches to children in early childhood, orient peace-building processes with these children through play and art, and contribute in every possible way to end the armed conflict and the violations associated with it, as set out in detail below.

The breach between public policy and practice should be reduced. Although there have been significant advances in legislation aimed at deactivating the effects of the armed conflict, these legislative advances are sometimes not reflected in practice. As shown in the first part of the thesis, significant advances have been made through adherence to several international treaties and agreements: the Additional Protocol II of the Geneva Conventions (UN, 1977), which is oriented to those who have been victims of the armed conflict, aiming to protect their rights, among which are the right to education and the right of family members to be together; the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989), in which reference is made to the promotion, on the part of States members, of physical and psychological recovery, and social reintegration of child victims of the armed conflict, the rights to health, self-respect, and dignity, the importance of social and educational matters to protect children from violence, the protection of children, and the subject of rights; and, its Optional Protocol (UN, 2000), which is centered on the eradication of recruitment, and the demobilization and reintegration of children. Regarding compliance with the proposals of Additional Protocol II of the Geneva Conventions, in the present study it was seen that families coming from contexts of armed conflict showed the desire to study, yet they identified this as a future possibility rather than a present one. Neither has family union been guaranteed, since, among the effects of the conflict, families identify both the forced disappearance of their members and the disintegration of families through displacement. With regard to compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the present study shows that social and educational measures to prevent violence are still insufficient, because, as the children themselves demonstrate, manifestations of violence in their families, in the child care center, in the media, and in community spaces continue.

Yet, there have also been important advances in the laws, policies, and measures at national level: The Colombian Constitution (República de Colombia, 1991) orders the protection of children in the family, society, and State, and the guarantee of their rights, among which are the rights to life, health, family (including the right not to be separated from it), care, love, education, recreation, free expression of opinion, and protection against violence. There are also some laws which indicate progress (Ley 12 de 1991, Ley 418 de 1997, Ley 599 de 2000, Ley 1098 de 2006, Ley 1448 de 2011, Ley 1804 de 2016, Congreso de Colombia). As examples, I can mention one (Ley 1098, Congreso de Colombia, 2006) oriented to the comprehensive protection of children, the guarantee of their rights, and the prevention of the violation of those rights, another (Ley 1804, Congreso de Colombia, 2016) oriented to the rights of children in early childhood and the co-responsibility between family, the community, society, and the government for their guarantee, and another (Ley 1448 de 2011) oriented to attention, assistance, and comprehensive reparation of the victims. There are economic documents known as CONPES (after the initials of government committee that issues them) (CONPES 3077, DNP, 2000; CONPES 3144, DNP, 2001a; CONPES 3622, DNP, 2009; CONPES 3673,

DNP, 2010). As an example of the breach between these measures, laws, and regulations and the real lives of social actors, I can refer to the CONPES 3144 (DNP, 2001a) document, which is oriented to prevention, detection, and attention with regard to violence for families, and to CONPES 3622 (DNP, 2009) which refers to attention for children by the Colombian family welfare institution, ICBF, and the institute's support for families to guarantee their children's rights, attention for the displaced population, nutritional support, improvement of government institutional management and the comprehensive exercise of the rights of children and families. Then, there is a national plan for childhood and adolescents (Plan Nacional para la Niñez y la Adolescencia 2009-2019, Ministerio de la Protección Social, 2009), which aims, among its objectives, to prevent the deaths of children, maintain family ties, guarantee children's and families' rights to health, nutrition, quality education, play, affection, and civic participation, prevent abuse and maltreatment, eradicate victimization and the recruitment of children, take measures for protection, and promote coexistence; and a Colombian national plan for comprehensive attention and reparation of victims (Plan Nacional de Atención y Reparación Integral a las Víctimas, Presidencia de la República de Colombia, 2012b) with specific actions regarding the rights to truth, justice, and reparation, and other rights with an approach that deals with the implications of the particularities of each of its articles on children and adolescents.

One advance with regard to State support for the guarantee of children's rights is seen in the families' positive evaluation of the child care center. Parents recognize the education given to their children in these centers, and consider that they are secure environments, and that the administration is adequate. It is worth pointing out that the child care center, in their position as centers around the nucleus of the Colombian institute for child welfare, ICBF, have been strengthened by means of the dispositions of a law (Ley 1804, Congreso de Colombia, 2016) oriented to comprehensive attention for children in early childhood.

With regard to the above, namely the Colombian Constitution (República de Colombia, 1991), the economic document CONPES 3144 (DNP, 2001a), and the Colombian national plan for childhood and adolescence (Plan Nacional para la Niñez y la Adolescencia 2009-2019, Ministerio de la Protección Social, 2009): The breach between these regulations and reality is similar to that set out above with reference to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989). Similarly, when taking into account the data of a government entity responsible for the comprehensive care and reparation of victims (Unidad para la Atención y Reparación Integral a las Víctimas, 2020), there are still violations of the rights that are regulated in law (Ley 1448 de 2011, Congreso de la República), which are operationalized in the national plan for comprehensive assistance and reparation to victims (Plan Nacional de Atención y Reparación Integral a las Víctimas, Presidencia de la República de Colombia, 2012b) and those that have been agreed within the framework of the Peace Agreement (Alto Comisionado para la Paz,

2016). It is worth noting the importance of continuing to approach compliance with the objectives of the Colombian Constitution, the Convention on Rights of the Child, Colombian law (Ley 1098, Congreso de Colombia, 2006; Ley 1448 de 2011, Congreso de Colombia, 2011; Ley 1804, Congreso de Colombia, 2016), the Colombian national plan for childhood and adolescence, and the Colombian national plan for comprehensive assistance and reparation to victims (Presidencia de la República de Colombia), because of the need to guarantee the rights of children that are covered by them. Many of these rights appear in the present study as part of the potentials of children, their families, and teachers for peace-building. In particular, with regard to peace-building I can highlight the place given to co-existence in the national plan for childhood and adolescence. Likewise, with regard to one law (Ley 1804 de 2016) it is worth pointing out the urgent appeal of families for State presence, in compliance with the co-responsibility of the State, as set out in the law. Families identify, as their narratives show, that State action is insufficient to guarantee their and their children's rights.

The main breach between the dispositions of the government economic document CONPES 3622 (DNP, 2009) and the findings of the present study can be seen in terms of support for families in order to guarantee the rights of their children, a point that was also regulated in the national plan for childhood and adolescence (Plan Nacional para la Niñez y la Adolescencia 2009-2019, Ministerio de la Protección Social, 2009), and in terms of support for families coming from contexts of armed conflict. The study shows that, among their dreams for the future, families say that the government should support those who are genuinely in a state of displacement. Their dreams for the future also include being able to count on decent work that would enable them to have a house, and to obtain adequate nutrition, health, and education for themselves and their children. However, they manifest their present impotence regarding these desires as being a residue of a dominant story that involves State inaction. These facts once again show the breach between policy and the families' actual experiences.

Additionally, it is fundamentally important to go beyond public policy approaches that identify these children as defenseless and which focus only on their protection. It is worth pointing out that, in the present study, this was one of the main criticisms made with regard to the greater part of the agreements, treaties, laws, and measures that center on the protection of children and characterize them as deficient. For example, a law (Ley 12, Congreso de Colombia, 1991) refers to the need to protect children because of their mental and physical immaturity and another law (Ley 1448 de 2011, Congreso de Colombia, 2011) labels them as victims, whereas the children should be approached as political subjects capable of contributing to peace-building in the relations in which they participate. They are active agents in these relations, with great potentials. Thus, it is of key importance to strengthen the children's human potentials for peace-building. As the children themselves, their families, and teachers showed in the study, these children in early childhood contribute to peace-building by means of affection; care for their bodies

and lives; ethical positioning through relational practices such as respect, help, and compassion; spiritual relating; care for nature; communication that transcends dialogue and includes corporal expressions; understanding others who are different; the creative transformation of conflicts; play and exploration; and the political positioning expressed in their constant questions about the reasons behind everything.

On being asked about their preferred stories, future possibilities, and learning from the research process, it was evident that the children and families prefer to recognize themselves, and be named as, peace-builders rather than passive victims of the armed conflict. They have shown the great violations and impacts caused by the armed conflict that are revealed in this document and summarized in the first section of this chapter. Yet, the children and families also emphasize the relational practices they currently carry out, and their contribution both to peace-building and to the deactivation of the negative impacts of violence in their lives and relations.

Rather than studying them in isolation, it is important to propose relational approaches in which the children are understood as subjects in relation to others, and consequently to work not only with the children, but also with their families, teachers, and community agents, emphasizing the importance of the family environment in shaping them as political subjects who contribute to peace (Alvarado & Ospina-Alvarado, 2009). In the previous section, generative peace was shown as a theoretical and practical construction emerging from the present study, yet it goes beyond that to become an alternative way of conceiving peace-building. It places relational practices in central position, because only within a relational framework is it possible to construct conditions of life in which all of us have a place. This has a special significance in the case of children, and in particular those in early childhood, given that it is at this age that children's greatest potential emerges, and when the bases for their relational future are laid. This has been dealt with in detail as part of the proposal of generative peace.

Among the results of the study, it is worth pointing out the relational potential identified by families as a contribution to peace-building. The families refer to the great value of the construction and maintenance of relations, highlighting practices of solidarity, help, and unity, fostered by the consolidation of community networks. The accounts of the families, as well as those of the children show the central place of strengthening relations in peace-building. The children highlight relations that include affection, care, respect for differences, collaboration, and their dealing with conflicts that arise in play. The families mentioned the importance of communication as an alternative in the transformation of conflicts. Likewise, on being asked about their learning in the framework of the research process, both the families and the group of teachers highlighted the importance of articulation between families and the school, as well as the participation of other actors to promote the construction of conditions for the children's welfare. The families recognized the importance of strengthening relational ties and the central role of friendship. Also, peer relations were strengthened, and demonstrations of

affection and care for companions appeared among the children in the workshops. Furthermore, it is worth pointing out the ripple effects. As the families and the group of teachers began to identify their potentials for contributing to more peaceful relations with the children, demonstrations of affection towards the children began to appear in the workshops with the three groups of actors. In this way, the research demonstrates the richness of a relational approach, which although proposed in some laws, policies, and measures at national level that have regulated the co-responsibility between family, society, and the State, such as the Colombian Constitution (República de Colombia, 1991) and two laws (Ley 1098, Congreso de Colombia, 2006; and Ley 1804, Congreso de Colombia, 2016), is still insufficiently implemented, as was set out in the first point discussed in this section.

Also, in order to promote peace-building processes, it is important to strengthen the active participation of children from their early years. The research showed the great potential for peace-building present among the children, through affection; care for life and body; ethical practices such as sharing, solidarity, and help developed in relations of friendship; the capacity to comprehend others; communication that transcends orality; creativity for transforming conflicts by peaceful means; play and exploration; political positioning by inquiring into everything that is new; and achieving a balance between autonomy and heteronomy. The families showed that, often, their feelings of responsibility for their children enabled them to get ahead. The children appear in families' desires for the future, and in many cases the children also form part of the strength to move ahead in spite of experiences. Policies such as a law (Ley 1804, Congreso de Colombia, 2016) recognize the centrality of early childhood as a stage with the greatest potential for development and that the greatest rate of economic return for countries is to be found in investment in early childhood as James Heckman (2000) has proposed. It is necessary that the rest of public policy also take into account this centrality, given that in some cases policies do not even mention children, as in the cases of two examples (Ley 418, Congreso de Colombia, 1997; and Ley 599, Congreso de Colombia, 2000).

Lastly, the ratification of the peace agreement between the Colombian government and the FARC guerrilla group (Alto Comisionado para la Paz, 2016) brings hopes for the end of the armed conflict and of the violence associated with it. However, with the positioning of the new government and its stance of not negotiating and of terminating the conflict by military means, the peace process with the ELN guerrilla group has been cut off, violence has worsened, involving the latter and other dissident groups, and the violent deaths of social leaders have incremented substantially. The participants in this research project consider the termination of the armed conflict fundamental to their lives. They would be happy to celebrate the end of both the armed conflict and its impact on them and their families. Yet, the real termination of violence in Colombia requires a lot of work on deactivating violent practices established at a cultural level, and

re-activating the potentials that children have from their early years for peace-building in our country. The practical tools developed during the present study show some alternatives for work in this direction through educational, community, and therapeutic practices. Part of the objective of the generative peace proposal is that the theoretical and practical learning acquired in the research process be employed by others. It is of particular interest that this emerging model, which brings together the methodological richness of the study and has already enabled the reformulation of the educational proposal *Convidarte para la Paz*, may also be employed by others in diverse territories. It is suggested that the action research practice itself can serve as a model for others, by transcending the negative effects caused by violence, identifying resources for defense from violence, strengthening potentials for peace-building, leaving aside viewpoints of deficit and shortcomings, deconstructing memories, giving them new meaning in the present by means of practices that foster the construction of possible futures of peace, and co-constructing multiple and diverse alternative stories of peace. In the case of early childhood, this is achieved mainly through play and art, as a possibility for encounter with others. Traditional views in which children have been obliged to enter the adult world in order to relate should be left aside.

New Options for Transformational Research

Below, I describe some challenges that arise for future research, with regard to certain limitations of the present study, and to changes in the cultural context since the research began. The challenges consist mainly of incorporating other contexts, other actors, and other categories of analysis.

The present research focused on working only with the children of families from contexts of armed conflict. Yet this research uses strategies that could possibly contribute to peace-building with children from other contexts, such as child care centers, kindergartens, schools, cultural centers, community centers, and institutions for the protection of children. The research showed that there are effects from the naturalization of violence that transcend the contexts of armed conflict and are transmitted in family and educational environments and by media. Other studies (García-Calvo and García, 2000; Moreno, Rabazo, and García-Baamonde, 2006; Ospina-Alvarado and Gallo, 2011; Rey, 2004; Sierra, 2004) have shown that, as well as family, educational, and community environments, there are scenarios with manifestations of violence such as the centers for child protection, in which the aim is to simultaneously protect children from maltreatment in the family, sexual abuse, and negligence of their caregivers, but in which in many cases expressions of physical or psychological maltreatment are reproduced. The proposal of generative peace – as a relational proposal oriented to future possibilities from the present with roots in the past through the co-construction of alternative stories of

peace with a focus on potentials and potentialities – is applicable in diverse contexts and territories and recognizes the importance of peace-building in various scenarios.

Also, on having oriented the work with children towards only those whose families come from contexts of armed conflict, some of the children's significant relational processes may have been left aside, such, for example as those with a peer group whose families did not necessarily experience the armed conflict. Thus, there is an opportunity for work with peers in research processes that emphasize the inclusion of children and their families who arrive in communities of refuge after displacement. What is missing that could be useful to explore, are the children's relations with their peers, and in particular to have the voices of their peers, and also the voices of other children who have been affected, through their families by the armed conflict. It would be important to explore these relations and include the voices of the group of peers, given that in many cases, as families in the study expressed, families and children are isolated, both by seeking to protect themselves from possible new manifestations of violence and by the exclusion experienced on arrival in cities, after coming from contexts of armed conflict.

The present study took, as a starting point, the importance of the family in the child's development and the importance of the relation between the family and the school, which is why the presence of the teachers was relevant. It was thus centered principally on the family environment, and included the educational environment, with the child care center providing the space in which the fieldwork took place. Thus, the participants in the study were children whose families come from contexts of armed conflict, and the children's families and teachers. However, the analysis was not expanded to include the community as a relational environment for children in early childhood, or other agents present in the child care center, such as for example social workers, the kitchen personnel, and general services and cleaning personnel, who are also in contact with the children. The managerial staff took part at certain moments, but not in the whole process. Community agents were left out, for example, other families and children from the neighborhood, or the communities around the child care center. The importance of including community agents is related to understanding the process of inclusion in the neighborhood, the park, or other community environments of families coming from contexts of armed conflict and to strengthen these processes of inclusion. It would be important to include other staff from the child care center in addition to the group of teachers that was included. The participation of kitchen and cleaning personnel, and a more permanent presence of the managerial staff would broaden the range of peace-building as a collaborative practice, and foster peaceful relations in the child care center as a whole.

At the beginning of this research, peace talks between the government and the FARC guerrilla group had not been started. Thus, the present Colombian context opens new paths for research and categories of analysis that, instead of emphasizing the context of armed conflict, promote understanding in terms of the post-agreement and post-

conflict period, by means of categories such as memories of the conflict, peace-building processes as an alternative to the naturalization of violence, and processes of inclusion in communities of refuge. The memories of the conflict approached by means of proposals such as that of generative peace, would enable actors from contexts of armed conflict to find the roots and lessons of the past and present for the construction of a future horizon that contributes to peace-building processes. This involves work with memory oriented to the deconstruction of experiences, and giving new meaning to these experiences through present practices. In the present study the families referred to the importance of being able to tell others about their experiences, so that what they experienced is not repeated and processes of collective memory can then foster the relational reconstruction of community ties.

On another point, both the children and their families referred to the naturalization of violence outside contexts of armed conflict, in family, educational, and community environments, as well as in mass media. It would be important to approach this subject, in this case, not with the intention of revealing the results of this or other studies, but in order to foster peace-building processes that include the various actors and sectors to consolidate cultures of peace that would promote the deconstruction of violence naturalized in different relational environments. There are already some important ideas, such as those that emerge from the present study with regard to the potentials for peace building that children from their early years, their families, their teachers, and communities possess.

Lastly, it will be important to be able to continue comprehending and fostering processes of inclusion for families from contexts of armed conflict and their children, because families revealed certain patterns of exclusion and isolation. It would be relevant to propose studies on processes of the inclusion of communities which are composed of displaced people or those demobilized from armed groups, and communities of refuge. With these communities, work could be carried out to foster relational peace-building practices centered on solidarity, friendship, acceptance and appreciation of the life stories of others in their differences, practices which manage to break away from new expressions of violence such as exclusion, and which set out present and future possibilities for life together.

References

- Acosta, A. (2011). Protección de la primera infancia: abuso, violencia, abandono, niños de la calle, explotación laboral. En J. Palacios y E. Castañeda (coord.) *La primera infancia (0-6 años) y su futuro*, (pp. 27-38). Madrid: Organización de Estados Iberoamericanos para la Educación, la Ciencia y la Cultura (OEI).
- Aguilar, L. (2006). Aspectos centrales de una política pública. En T. Romero & J. Simarra, (eds.) *Movilización por la primera infancia. Memorias*, (pp. 35-41). Bogotá, D. C.: Panamericana.
- Alba Tamayo, Y. C., Álvarez, A. L., Daza Pacheco, A., y Ospina-Alvarado, M. C. (2018). Dinámica familiar y concepciones de paz y convivencia: influencia en los procesos relacionales en la escuela. *Revista Aletheia*, 10 (2), pp. 54-77.
- Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá (2004). *Política por la calidad de vida de niños, niñas y adolescentes Bogotá 2004-2008*. Bogotá, D. C.: Dabs.
- Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá (2006-2011). *Ficha técnica mapa callejero jardín infantil cupo cofinanciado C. C. La casita de los rincones*. Recuperado de: http://mapacallejero.bogota.gov.co/mad/info_sitio.php?id_sitio=434207&idioma=
- Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá (2011). *Decreto 520, "por medio del cual se adopta la Política Pública de Infancia y Adolescencia de Bogotá, D. C."* Recuperado de: <http://www.alcaldiabogota.gov.co/sisjur/normas/Norma1.jsp?i=44762>
- Alianza por la Niñez Colombiana (2020). *Informe Violencia Intrafamiliar contra Niños, Niñas y Adolescentes de 2015 a 2019*. Recuperado de: https://public.tableau.com/profile/alianza.por.la.ni.ez.colombiana#!/vizhome/Informeviolenciaintrafamiliarcontraniosniasyadolescentesde2015a2019/Historia1_1
- Alvarado, S. V. (2020). El derecho a Empezar al Derecho. *Misión de Sabios* (en prensa). Bogotá, D. C.: Vicepresidencia de la República.
- Alvarado, S. V.; Gómez, A.; Ospina-Alvarado, M. C. & Ospina, H. F. (2014). La hermenéutica ontológica política o hermenéutica performativa: una propuesta epistémica y metodológica. *Revista Nómadas*, (40), pp. 207-220.
- Alvarado, S. V. & Ospina-Alvarado, M. C. (2009). Contexto teórico para la reflexión sobre la socialización política. En G. Tonon (comp.) *Comunidad, participación y socialización política*. Buenos Aires: Espacio Editorial.
- Alvarado, S. V.; Ospina-Alvarado, M. C. & Gómez, A. (2014). Del sujeto moral al sujeto político. Algunas pistas epistemológicas y metodológicas para indagar por la constitución de subjetividades políticas en la primera infancia. En C. Piedrahita, A. Díaz & P. Vommaro (comp.) *Acercamientos metodológicos a la subjetivación política: debates latino-americanos*. Bogotá: Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas/ Buenos Aires: Clacso. Recuperado de: <http://biblioteca.clacso.edu.ar/clacso/gt/20140425024728/AcercamientosMetodologicosALaSubjetividad.pdf>

- Alvarado, S. V.; Ospina-Alvarado, M. C. & Sánchez, M. C. (2015). Construcción Social de la Subjetividad Política de Niños y Niñas en Contexto de Conflicto Armado: Acción Colectiva en la Escuela como Alternativa de Paz. En R. Unda, L. Mayer & D. Llanos (coord.) *Socialización escolar Procesos, experiencias y trayectos*. Quito: Abya Yala/Buenos Aires: Clacso/ Manizales: Cinde, Universidad de Manizales.
- Alvarado, S. V.; Ospina-Alvarado, M. C. & Sánchez-León, M. C. (2016). Hermenéutica e Investigación Social: narrativas generativas de paz, democracia y reconciliación. *Revista Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales, Niñez y Juventud*, 14 (2), pp. 987-999.
- Alvarado, S. V.; Ospina, H. F.; Quintero, M.; Luna, M. T.; Ospina-Alvarado, M. C. & Patiño, J. A. (2012). *Las escuelas como territorios de paz. Construcción social del niño y la niña como sujetos políticos en contextos de conflicto armado*. Buenos Aires: Clacso.
- Álvarez-Correa, M. & Aguirre, J. (2002). *Guerreros sin sombra: niños, niñas y jóvenes vinculados al conflicto armado*. Bogotá, D. C.: Procuraduría General de la Nación.
- Alto Comisionado para la Paz. (24 de Noviembre de 2016). Acuerdo Final para la Terminación del Conflicto y la Construcción de una Paz Estable y Duradera. https://www.cancilleria.gov.co/sites/default/files/Fotos2016/12.11_1.2016nuevoacuerdofinal.pdf
- Andersen, T. (1994). *El equipo reflexivo. Diálogos y diálogos sobre los diálogos*. Barcelona: Gedisa.
- Anderson, H. & Goolishian, H. (1998). Los sistemas humanos como sistemas lingüísticos: implicaciones para la teoría clínica y la terapia familiar. *Revista de Psicoterapia*, 2 (6), pp. 15-27.
- Andersson, P. (2015). Quality of the relationship between origin of childhood perception of attachment and outcome of attachment associated with diagnosis of PTSD in adult Finnish war children and Finnish combat veterans from World War II (1939–1945) – DSM-IV applications of the attachment theory. *International Psychogeriatrics*, 27 (6), pp. 1039–1048 C. doi:10.1017/S1041610215000101
- Andrews, M. Squire, C., & Tamboukou, M. (2013). *Doing Narrative Research. 2nd edition*. London: Sage Publications.
- Ang, L. (2015). Using Participatory Research for Early Childhood Advocacy: Reflections on Methodology. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Research*, 9 (2), pp. 1-21.
- Ardila, E. (1995). Infancia y conflicto armado en Colombia. En S. E. Durán (ed.) *Niños y jóvenes en la Colombia de hoy. Memorias del Encuentro "Niñez y Juventud. Una Mirada desde la Universidad"*, (pp. 41-59). Bogotá, D. C.: Grupo Niñez y Juventud, Priac-UN.

- Ávila, M. A.; Martínez, A. C. & Ospina-Alvarado, M. C. (2013). Proceso de inclusión educativa: "de narrativas de déficit a narrativas de las potencias sobre niños y niñas en condición de discapacidad en la primera infancia". *Revista Aletheia*, 5 (2), pp. 12-31.
- Banco Mundial (2019). *Taking on inequality*. Recuperado de: <https://datos.bancomundial.org/indicador/SI.POV.GINI?view=map>
- Barudy, J., & Marquebreucq, A. P. (2006). *Exilio, refugio y parentalidad: niños y padres agredidos y fragilizados. El dolor invisible de los niños exiliados. Los diferentes traumas de los niños exiliados. Encuentro con una familia superviviente. Hijas e hijos de madres resilientes. Traumas infantiles en situaciones extremas: violencia de género, guerra, genocidio, persecución y exilio*. Barcelona: Gedisa.
- Bello, M. N. (2001). *Desplazamiento forzado y reconstrucción de identidades*. Bogotá, D. C.: Universidad Nacional de Colombia.
- Bello, M. N. & Ruiz, S. (2002). *Conflicto armado, niñez y juventud: una perspectiva psicosocial*. Bogotá, D. C.: Universidad Nacional de Colombia.
- Berckmans, I. (2014). *Sharing stories, reflecting and creating ideas about leaving the streets: Encounters with young persons in street situations, their family members and street educators through participatory action research projects in El Alto, Bolivia*. (A dissertation submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor in Psychological Sciences). Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Brussels, Belgium.
- Beristain, M. (2000). *Justicia y reconciliación, el papel de la verdad y la justicia en la reconstrucción de sociedades fracturadas por la violencia*. Bilbao: Hegoa, Instituto Universitario, Universidad del País Vasco.
- Bitou, A. & Waller, T. (2017). Participatory Research with Very Young Children. In T. Waller, E. Årlemalm-Hagsér, E. B. Hansen Sandseter, L. Lee-Hammond, K. Lekies & S. Wyver. *The SAGE Handbook of Outdoor Play and Learning*. London: Sage Publications.
- Boothby, N., Crawford, J., & Halperin, J. (2006). Mozambique child soldier life outcome study: Lessons learned in rehabilitation and reintegration efforts. *Global Public Health*, 1 (1), pp. 87-107.
- Bradley, S. (2018). Domestic and Family Violence in Post-Conflict Communities: International Human Rights Law and the State's Obligation to Protect Women and Children. *Health and Human Rights Journal*, 20 (2), pp. 123-136.
- Brett, S. (2003). *Aprenderás a no llorar: niños combatientes en Colombia*. Bogotá, D. C.: Gente Nueva.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1987). *La ecología del desarrollo humano. Experimentos en entornos naturales y diseñados*. Barcelona: Ediciones Paidós.
- Bula, J. I. (2011). Indicadores sociales y demográficos, atención a las necesidades básicas, cohesión social, derechos de la infancia. En J. Palacios y E. Castañeda

- (coord.) *La primera infancia (0-6 años) y su futuro*, (pp. 15-26). Madrid: Organización de Estados Iberoamericanos para la Educación, la Ciencia y la Cultura (OEI).
- Burr, V. (1995) *An introduction to social constructionism*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Carcelén, M. & Martínez, P. (2008). Perspectiva temporal futura en adolescentes institucionalizados. *Revista de Psicología*, 26 (2), pp. 255-276.
- Carey, M & Russell, S. (2002). *Re-autoría: algunas respuestas a preguntas comunes*. Adelaide: Dulwich Centre Publications.
- Castellanos, J. & Torres, W. (2008). Una revisión de la producción académica sobre la violencia política en Colombia para indagar sobre el lugar de los jóvenes y las jóvenes. *Revista Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales, Niñez y Juventud* 6 (2), pp. 523-563. Recuperado de:
<http://redalyc.uaemex.mx/src/inicio/ArtPdfRed.jsp?iCve=77360204>
- Catani, C., Gewirtz, A. H., Wieling, E., Schauer, E., Elbert, T., & Neuner, F. (2010). Tsunami, war, and cumulative risk in the lives of sri lankan schoolchildren. *Child Development*, 81 (4), pp. 1176-1191, doi:10.1111/j.1467-8624.2010.01461.x.
- Ceballos, S. & Bello, M. N. (2001). *Conflicto armado, niñez y juventud: una perspectiva psicosocial*. Bogotá, D. C.: Universidad Nacional de Colombia.
- Chávez, Y. & Romero, Y. (2008). El juego de la guerra, niños, niñas y adolescentes en el conflicto armado en Colombia. *Tabula Rasa*, (8), pp. 197-210. Recuperado de:
<http://redalyc.uaemex.mx/src/inicio/ArtPdfRed.jsp?iCve=39600810>
- Clark, A. (2001). How to listen to very young children: The mosaic approach. *Child care in practice*, 7 (4), pp. 333-341.
- Clark, A. (2005). Listening to and involving young children: a review of research and practice. *Early child development and care*, 175 (6), pp. 489-505.
- Coalico (2019). Boletín 21. Recuperado de: <http://coalico.org/boletin-de-monitoreo-no-21-ninez-y-conflicto-armado-en-colombia-edicion-especial/>
- Coalico & Comisión Colombiana de Juristas (2009). *Informe Alternativo al informe del Estado colombiano sobre el cumplimiento del Protocolo Facultativo relativo a la Participación de los Niños en Conflictos Armados*. Recuperado de:
http://www.coalico.org/archivo/IA10_EspIng.pdf
- Codhes (2018). Boletín 94. Recuperado de:
<https://sisdhescodhes.wordpress.com/2018/11/09/tablero-estadistico-situacional/#jp-carousel-171>
- Comisión Andina de Juristas (1995). *Una generación bajo fuego, los niños y la violencia en Colombia*. Bogotá, D. C.: Human Rights Watch, Comisión Andina de Juristas. Recuperado de:

- http://republicana.redbiblio.net/cgi-bin/koha/opac-detail.pl?biblionumber=2190&query_desc=pb%3AComisi%C3%B3n%20Andina%20de%20Juristas
- Comisión Histórica del Conflicto y sus Víctimas (2015). *Informe de la Comisión Histórica del Conflicto y sus Víctimas: Contribución al entendimiento del conflicto armado en Colombia*. La Habana: Mesa de Conversaciones.
- Comisión Intercongregacional de Justicia y Paz de la Conferencia de Religiosos de Colombia (1995). Dialogar consigo mismo, negociar consigo mismo. *Boletín informativo de Justicia y Paz*, 8, (4), pp. 3-4.
- Comisión Intersectorial para la Primera Infancia (2011). *Estrategia de Cero a Siempre*. Bogotá, D. C.: Presidencia de la República de Colombia.
- Comisión Intersectorial para la Primera Infancia (2012). *Presentación Estrategia Nacional de Cero a Siempre*. Recuperado de: <www.deceroasiempre.gov.co>.
- Congreso de Colombia (1991). *Ley 12 de 1991, por medio de la cual se aprueba la Convención sobre los Derechos del Niño adoptada por la Asamblea General de las Naciones Unidas el 20 de noviembre de 1989*. Recuperado de: <http://www.alcaldiabogota.gov.co/sisjur/normas/Norma1.jsp?i=10579>
- Congreso de Colombia (1997). *Ley 418 de 1997, por la cual se consagran unos instrumentos para la búsqueda de la convivencia, la eficacia de la justicia y se dictan otras disposiciones*. Recuperado de: <http://www.alcaldiabogota.gov.co/sisjur/normas/Norma1.jsp?i=6372>
- Congreso de Colombia (2000). *Ley 599 de 2000, por la cual se expide el Código Penal*. Recuperado de: http://www.secretariassenado.gov.co/senado/basedoc/ley_0599_2000.html
- Congreso de Colombia (2003). *Ley 833 de 2003, por medio de la cual se aprueba el "Protocolo facultativo de la Convención sobre los Derechos del Niño relativo a la participación de niños en los conflictos armados", adoptado en Nueva York, el veinticinco (25) de mayo de dos mil (2000)*. Recuperado de: <http://www.alcaldiabogota.gov.co/sisjur/normas/Norma1.jsp?i=8817>
- Congreso de Colombia (2005). *Ley 975 de 2005, por la cual se dictan disposiciones para la reincorporación de miembros de grupos armados organizados al margen de la ley, que contribuyan de manera efectiva a la consecución de la paz nacional y se dictan otras disposiciones para acuerdos humanitarios*. Recuperado de: <http://www.alcaldiabogota.gov.co/sisjur/normas/Norma1.jsp?i=17161>
- Congreso de Colombia (2006). *Ley 1098, por la cual se expide el Código de la Infancia y la Adolescencia*. Recuperado de: <http://www.alcaldiabogota.gov.co/sisjur/normas/Norma1.jsp?i=22106>
- Congreso de Colombia (2011). *Ley 1448 DE 2011 Por la cual se dictan medidas de atención, asistencia y reparación integral a las víctimas del conflicto armado interno y se dictan otras disposiciones*. Recuperado de:

- <https://www.unidadvictimas.gov.co/sites/default/files/documentosbiblioteca/ley-1448-de-2011.pdf>
- Congreso de Colombia (2016). *Ley 1804, por la cual se establece la política de Estado para el Desarrollo Integral de la Primera Infancia de Cero a Siempre*. Recuperado de:
<http://www.suin-juriscal.gov.co/viewDocument.asp?ruta=Leyes/30021778>
- Congreso de Colombia. (2018). *Ley 1878, por medio de la cual se modifican algunos artículos de la Ley 1098 de 2006, por la cual se expide el Código de la Infancia y la Adolescencia, y se dictan otras disposiciones*. Recuperado de:
https://www.icbf.gov.co/cargues/avance/docs/ley_1878_2018.htm
- Congreso de Colombia (2019). *Ley 1948, por la cual se adoptan criterios de política pública para la promoción de la movilidad social y se regula el funcionamiento del programa familias en acción*. Recuperado de:
<https://dapre.presidencia.gov.co/normativa/normativa/LEY%201948%20DEL%208%20DE%20ENERO%20DE%202019.pdf>
- Contreras, M. H. (2003). El conflicto armado en Colombia. *Revista de Derecho*, 19, pp. 119-125.
- Corporación Infancia y Desarrollo (2014). *Centro de Desarrollo Comunitario para el apoyo a población en situación de desplazamiento*. Recuperado de:
<http://www.corporacioninfanciaydesarrollo.org/atencion-directa-a-victimas-del-desplazamiento-forzado/>
- Corporación Infancia y Desarrollo y Fundación Corona (2014). *Buenos Padres Buen Comienzo*. <http://www.corporacioninfanciaydesarrollo.org/buenos-padres-buen-comienzo/>
- Creswell, J. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design. Choosing among five approaches*. Los Ángeles: Sage Publications.
- Cummings, E. M., Merrilees, C. E., Taylor, L. K., & Mondy, C. F. (2017). Developmental and social-ecological perspectives on children, political violence, and armed conflict. *Development and Psychopathology*, 29 (1), pp. 1-10.
doi:10.1017/S0954579416001061.
- Dawani, S. (2016). *Self-Performances: Palestinian Adolescents and the Power of Collaborative and Dialogical Spaces*. (A dissertation submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor in Psychological Sciences). Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Brussels, Belgium.
- Defensoría del Pueblo (2002). *La niñez en el conflicto armado colombiano. La niñez y sus Derechos*. Bogotá, D. C.: Unicef Colombia, Defensoría del Pueblo.
Recuperado de: <http://www.unicef.org/colombia/conocimiento/boletn-8.htm>
- Defensoría del Pueblo (2006). *La niñez y sus derechos. Caracterización de las niñas, niños y adolescentes desvinculados de los grupos armados ilegales: inserción social y productiva desde un enfoque de derechos humanos*. Recuperado de:

- <http://www.publicaciones.unicefcolombia.com/wpcontent/uploads/2006/03/Boletin-defensoria.pdf>
- Demaue, L. (2008). The childhood origins of World War II and the Holocaust. *Journal of Psychohistory*, 36 (1), pp. 2-30, PubMed PMID: 19043997.
- Departamento Nacional de Planeación-DNP (2000). *Conpes 3077, Política Nacional para la Construcción de Paz y Convivencia Familiar-Haz Paz*. Recuperado de: http://www.icbf.gov.co/cargues/avance/docs/conpes_dnp_3077_2000.htm
- Departamento Nacional de Planeación-DNP (2001a). *Conpes 3144, creación del Sistema Social de Riesgo y Fondo de Protección Social*. Recuperado de: http://www.icbf.gov.co/cargues/avance/docs/conpes_dnp_3144_2001.htm
- Departamento Nacional de Planeación-DNP (2001b). *Violencia intrafamiliar a niños, niñas y adolescentes, presunto agresor y sexo de la víctima. Total Colombia (Información definitiva)*. Bogotá, D. C.: DNP.
- Departamento Nacional de Planeación-DNP (2009). *Conpes 3622, Importancia Estratégica de Proyectos de Inversión*. Recuperado de: <https://www.dnp.gov.co/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=jWMT6j4m5JM%3D&tabid=907>
- Departamento Nacional de Planeación-DNP (2010). *Conpes 3673, política de prevención del reclutamiento y utilización de niños, niñas y adolescentes por parte de los grupos armados organizados al margen de la ley y de los grupos delictivos organizados*. Recuperado de: <http://www.vicepresidencia.gov.co/Iniciativas/Documents/Conpes-3673-prevencion-reclutamiento.pdf>
- Departamento Nacional de Planeación-DNP. (2011). *Casos reportados de violencia intrafamiliar en niños, niñas y adolescentes, según departamento y sexo. Violencia intrafamiliar a niños, niñas y adolescentes, presunto agresor y sexo de la víctima*. Bogotá, D. C.: Departamento Nacional de Planeación-DNP.
- Departamento Nacional de Planeación – DNP. (2019). *Visión Colombia 2019*. Bogotá, D. C.: Departamento Nacional de Planeación-DNP.
- Departamento Administrativo para la Prosperidad Social (2017). *Más Familias en acción*. Recuperado de: <http://www.prosperidadsocial.gov.co/que/fam/famacc/Paginas/default.aspx>
- Durán, E.; Acero, A. & Torrado, M. (2003). Niñez bogotana: situación y políticas públicas 1990-2000. En Departamento Administrativo de Bienestar Social (ed.) *Estado del Arte Bogotá 1990-2000*. Bogotá, D. C.: Departamento Administrativo de Bienestar Social.
- Eckhoff, A. (ed.) (2019). *Participatory research with young children*. Switzerland: Springer.
- Elder, C. & Cobb, R. (1984). Agenda-Building and the Politics of Aging. *Policy Sciences*, 13 (1), pp. 115-129.

- Elder, C. & Cobb, R. (1993). *Problemas públicos y agenda de gobierno*. México D. F.: Grupo Editorial Miguel Ángel Porrúa.
- Erwin, E. J., Puig, V. I., Evenson, T. L. & Beresford, M. (2012). Community and Connection in Inclusive Early-Childhood Education: A Participatory Action Research Investigation. *Young exceptional children*, 15 (4), pp. 17-28.
- Fals-Borda, O. (1978). *Por la praxis: el problema de cómo investigar la realidad para transformarla*. Bogotá, D. C.: Federación para el Análisis de la Realidad Colombiana-Fundabco.
- Fals-Borda, O. & Rahman, M. A. (1991). *Action and knowledge: Breaking the monopoly with Participatory Action-Research*. New York: The Apex Press/London: Intermediate Technology Publications.
- Fals-Borda, O. (1991). Some basic ingredients. In O. Fals-Borda, & M. A. Rahman (Eds.), *Action and knowledge: Breaking the monopoly with Participatory Action-Research* (pp. 3-12). New York: The Apex Press/London: Intermediate Technology Publications.
- Feigelson, M. (2011). ¿Qué hace Blancanieves por aquí? Derechos humanos, discriminación y diversidad en la primera infancia. En J. Palacios y E. Castañeda (coord.) *La primera infancia (0-6 años) y su futuro*, (pp. 73-82). Madrid: Organización de Estados Iberoamericanos para la Educación, la Ciencia y la Cultura (OEI).
- Feldman, M., Taïeb, O., & Moro, M. R. (2010). Jewish children hidden in France between 1940 and 1944: an analysis of their narratives today. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 80 (4), pp. 547-56, doi: 10.1111/j.1939-0025.2010.01059.x, PubMed PMID: 20950295.
- Fossion, P., Leys, C., Kempnaers, C., Braun, S., Verbanck, P. & Linkowski, P. (2013). Depression, anxiety and loss of resilience after multiple traumas: an illustration of a mediated moderation model of sensitization in a group of children who survived the Nazi Holocaust. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 151(3), pp. 973-979. doi: 10.1016/j.jad.2013.08.018. PubMed PMID: 24103854.
- Foulkes, T & St John Robb, V. (2019). Transforming practice in long day care: an action research project. *International Journal of Training Research*, 17 (1), pp. 80-91, DOI: 10.1080/14480220.2019.1602141.
- Fujimoto, G. (2011). El futuro de la educación iberoamericana: ¿es la no escolarización una alternativa?. En J. Palacios y E. Castañeda (coord.) *La primera infancia (0-6 años) y su futuro*, (pp. 105-114). Madrid: Organización de Estados Iberoamericanos para la Educación, la Ciencia y la Cultura (OEI).
- Fundación Crisol (2019). *Transformaciones con AMOR, acompañamiento integral comunidad de Las Colonias en Pereira, Colombia*. <https://fundacioncrisol.wordpress.com/>

- Fundación Imaginación, Tejido Humano, Fundación Corona, Enable USA Second Chance (2007). *Jóvenes excombatientes en Colombia*. Bogotá, D. C.: Fundación Imaginación, Tejido Humano, Fundación Corona, Enable USA Second Chance.
- Freeman, J.; Epston, D. & Lobovits, D. (2001). Reducir la trama, ampliar la contratrama. En J. Freeman, D. Epston, & D. Lobovits (Eds.), *Terapia narrativa para niños*, (pp. 143-164). Barcelona: Paidós.
- Gallo, L. & Ospina-Alvarado, M. C. (2010). *Intervención sistémica dirigida al cambio interaccional a partir de la transformación de relatos de identidad de niños/as y jóvenes de un centro de protección*. Bogotá, D. C.: Universidad Javeriana.
- Galtung, J. (1969). Violence, peace and peace research. *Journal of Peace Research*, 6(3), 167-191.
- García, B. Y. (2005). *Los Núcleos de Educación Familiar: redes de apoyo social para la prevención de las violencias microsociales*. Recuperado de: http://www.tipica.org/pdf/15_i_nef_01.pdf
- García-Calvo, P. & García., B. (2000). Secuelas del maltrato en los esquemas de representación y efectos de los estilos de vida en centro de acogida. *Psicología Educativa*, 6 (1), pp. 51-74.
- Gergen, K. (1996). *Realidades y relaciones: aproximaciones a la construcción social*. Barcelona, Buenos Aires: Paidós.
- Gergen, K. (2006a). *El yo saturado. Dilemas de identidad en el mundo*. Barcelona: Paidós.
- Gergen, K. (2006b). *Construir la realidad. El futuro de la psicoterapia*. Barcelona: Paidós.
- Gergen, K. (2007). *Construccionismo social, aportes para el debate y la práctica*. Bogotá, D. C.: Universidad de los Andes, Facultad de Ciencias Sociales, Departamento de Psicología, Centro de Estudios Socioculturales e Internacionales.
- Gergen, K. (2009). *Relational Being*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Gergen, K. (2012). "Principios orientadores" del Construccionismo social. Recuperado de: <http://www.construccionismosocial.net/2012/05/taos-institute.html>
- Ghiso, A. (2000). *Potenciando la diversidad (diálogo de saberes, una práctica hermenéutica colectiva)*. Medellín: Biblioteca Digital.
- Ghiso, A. (2015). Del diálogo de saberes a la negociación cultural. *Pensamiento Popular; Aportes para una Educación Popular*, (2), pp. 28-37.
- Girón, J. (2006). *Conflicto armado, niñez, derechos, marco legal, convenciones y protocolos internacionales*. Cali: Universidad Santiago de Cali.
- González, F.; Bolívar, I. & Vásquez, T. (2002). *Violencia política en Colombia. De la Nación fragmentada a la construcción del Estado*. Bogotá, D. C.: Cinep.
- González, G. (2002). *Los niños de la guerra*. Bogotá, D. C.: Planeta.

- Grajales, C. (1999). *El dolor oculto de la infancia*. Bogotá, D. C.: Unicef. Recuperado de: <http://www.unicef.org/colombia/conocimiento/dolor.htm>
- Grellet, C. (2000). El juego entre el nacimiento y los 7 años: Un manual para ludotecarias. Investigación-acción sobre la Familia y la Primera Infancia. *UNESCO Sector de Educación Monografía N° 14*. Paris: Unesco.
- Guerra, P. & Figueroa, I. (2018). Action-research and early childhood teachers in Chile: analysis of a teacher professional development experience. *Early Years an International Research Journal*, 38 (4), pp. 396-410.
- Guerrero, R., (2006). Concepto de protección social, manejo de riesgo y generación de oportunidades. En T. Romero & J. Simarra (eds.) *Movilización por la primera infancia. Memorias*, (pp. 35-41). Bogotá, D. C.: Panamericana.
- Gutiérrez, F. (2015). ¿Una historia simple? En Comisión Histórica del Conflicto y sus Víctimas (2015). *Informe de la Comisión Histórica del Conflicto y sus Víctimas: Contribución al entendimiento del conflicto armado en Colombia*. La Habana: Mesa de Conversaciones.
- Haapanen, M. J., Perälä, M. M., Salonen, M. K., Kajantie, E., Simonen, M., Pohjolainen, P., Pesonen A. K., Räikkönen, K., Eriksson, J. G., & Von Bonsdorff, M. B. (2018). Early life stress and frailty in old age: the Helsinki birth cohort study. *BMC Geriatrics*, 18 (179), pp. 1-8, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12877-018-0873-5>.
- Hatch, A., Greer, T. & Bailey, K. (2006) Student-Produced Action Research in Early Childhood Teacher Education. *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education*, 27 (2), pp. 205-212, DOI: 10.1080/10901020600675182.
- Hecht, A. C. (2007). Reflexiones sobre una experiencia de investigación- acción con niños Indígenas. Napaxaguenaxaqui na qom llalaqpi da yiyiñi nal'aqtac. *Boletín de Linguística*, 19 (28), pp. 46-65.
- Heckman, J. (2000). *Policies to foster human capital*. Evanston: Northwestern University.
- Hernández, A. & Restrepo, M. (2011). *Salud Mental en niños en condición de desplazamiento en Colombia y su incidencia en políticas públicas*. Bogotá, D. C.: Universidad del Rosario.
- Hill, M. (2003). Participatory research with children. *Child and family social work*, 2 (3), pp. 171-183.
- Horgan, D. (2016). Child participatory research methods: Attempts to go 'deeper'. *Childhood*, 24(2), pp. 1-15.
- Human Rights Watch (2003). *Aprenderás a no llorar: niños combatientes en Colombia*. Bogotá, D. C.: Editorial Gente Nueva.
- Ila, P.; Martínez, A.; Arias, A.; Núñez, P. & Caicedo, M. (2009). Conflicto armado en la primera infancia en tres territorios colombianos: Putumayo, Magdalena Medio y Arauca. En A. Mejía (ed.) *Colombia: huellas del conflicto en la primera infancia*, (pp. 147-156). Bogotá, D. C.: Número Ediciones.

- Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar-ICBF (2018). *Lineamiento Técnico para la Atención de Niños, Niñas y Adolescentes con Sus Derechos Inobservados, Amenazados o Vulnerados por Causa de la Violencia*. Bogotá, D. C.: Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar-ICBF.
- Instituto Nacional de Medicina Legal y Ciencias Forenses, FORENSIS (2018). *2018 FORENSIS Datos para la Vida: Herramienta para la interpretación, intervención y prevención de lesiones de causa externa en Colombia*. Recuperado de: <https://www.medicinalegal.gov.co/documents/20143/386932/Forensis+2018.pdf/b4e4816a4-3da3-1ff0-2779-e7b5e3962d60>
- Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre. (2017). *Colombia*. Retrieved from: <http://www.internal-displacement.org/countries/colombia>
- Johnson, J., Christie, J. & Yawkey, T. (1999). *Play and early childhood development*. Nueva York: Longman.
- Jordans, M. J., Pigott, H. & Tol, W. A. (2016). Interventions for Children Affected by Armed Conflict: a Systematic Review of Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Low- and Middle-Income Countries. *Curr Psychiatry Rep*, 18 (1), pp. 1-15, doi: 10.1007/s11920-015-0648-z. Review. PubMed PMID: 26769198; PubMed Central PMCID: PMC4713453.
- Jiménez, F. & Ochoa, G. E. (1997). *Régimen jurídico para instituciones de protección*. Bogotá, D. C.: Fundación Antonio Restrepo Barco, Instituto SER de Investigación.
- Kumpulainen, K. & Ouakrim-Soivio, N. (2019). “My Treasure Box”: Pedagogical Documentation, Digital Portfolios, and Children’s Agency in Finnish Early Years Education. In A. Eckhoff, (Ed.), *Participatory research with young children*, (pp 105-123. Switzerland: Springer.
- Lederach, J. P. (2014). *The Little Book of Conflict Transformation: Clear Articulation of the Guiding Principles by a Pioneer in the Field*. New York: Good Books.
- Llabre, M. M. & Hadi, F. (2009). War-related exposure and psychological distress as predictors of health and sleep: a longitudinal study of Kuwaiti children. *Psychosomatic Medicine*, 71 (7), pp. 776-783, doi: 10.1097/PSY.0b013e3181ae6aee. PubMed PMID: 19592513.
- Llabre, M. M., Hadi, F., La Greca, A. M., & Lai, B. S. (2015). Psychological distress in young adults exposed to war-related trauma in childhood. *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology*, 44 (1), pp. 169-180, doi:10.1080/15374416.2013.828295.
- Loots, Coppens, and Sermijn (2013). Practising a rhizomatic perspective in narrative research. In M. Andrews, C. Squire, & M. Tamboukou. *Doing Narrative Research. 2nd edition*. London: Sage Publications.
- Lozano, P. (2005). *La guerra no es un juego de niños. Historias de una infancia quebrada por el conflicto*. Bogotá, D. C.: Intermedio.

- Lugo, V. (2017). *Disarmed warriors: Narratives with youth ex-combatants in Colombia*. Chagrin Falls: Taos Institute Publications/WorldShare Books.
- Machel, G. (1996). *Promotion and protection of the rights of children*. Retrieved from: <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/docs/51/plenary/a51-306.htm>
- MacNaughton, G. & Hughes, P. (2009). *Doing action research in early childhood studies: A step by step guide*. Berkshire: Open University Press, McGraw Hill.
- March, R. (2007). Claves para la intervención con menores acogidos en recursos residenciales que presentan conductas problemáticas. *Intervención Psicosocial*, 16 (2), pp. 213-227.
- Marchesi, A. (2011). Preámbulo. En J. Palacios y E. Castañeda (coord.) *La primera infancia (0-6 años) y su futuro*, (pp. 7-10). Madrid: Organización de Estados Iberoamericanos para la Educación, la Ciencia y la Cultura (OEI).
- Martín-Baró, I. (1998). *Hacia una psicología de la liberación*. Madrid: Trotta.
- Martínez, M.; Convers, A. & Jiménez, M. (coords.) (2004). *El conflicto armado y los Derechos Fundamentales de la niñez en Colombia*. Bogotá, D. C.: Fundación Antonio Restrepo Barco.
- Maxwell, J. (2005). *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach*. London: Sage.
- Mayhew, E. (2018). Defiant gardens: from Helmand to Headley Court. *Lancet*, 392 (10142), pp. 114-115, doi: 10.1016/S0140-6736(18)31511-3. PubMed PMID: 30017125.
- McNamee S. & Hosking, D. M. (2012). *Research and social change: A relational constructionist approach*. New York: Routledge.
- Melero-Aguilar, N. (2011). El paradigma crítico y los aportes de la Investigación Acción Participativa en la transformación de la realidad social: un análisis desde las ciencias sociales. *Cuestiones Pedagógicas*, 21, 339-355.
- Ministerio de Defensa Nacional. (2003). *Decreto 128, por el cual se reglamenta la Ley 418 de 1997, prorrogada y modificada por la Ley 548 de 1999 y la Ley 782 de 2002 en materia de reincorporación a la sociedad civil*. Recuperado de: https://www.icbf.gov.co/cargues/avance/docs/decreto_0128_2003.htm
- Ministerio de Educación Nacional. (2004). *Resolución 2620, por la cual se establecen directrices, criterios y procedimientos para la prestación del servicio educativo a niños, niñas y jóvenes desvinculados del conflicto armado y menores de edad hijos de personas desmovilizadas de grupos armados al margen de la ley*. Recuperado de: https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/1621/articulos-85862_archivo_pdf.pdf
- Ministerio de Educación Nacional (2008). *Revolución Educativa: Plan Sectorial 2006-2010*. Bogotá, D. C.: Ministerio de Educación Nacional.
- Ministerio de Educación Nacional (2010). *Revolución Educativa 2002-2010. Acciones y Lecciones*. Bogotá, D. C.: Panamericana.

- Ministerio de la Protección Social (2009). *Plan Nacional para la Niñez y la Adolescencia 2009-2019*. Bogotá, D. C.: Imprenta Nacional.
- Mojica, R. & Quintero, M. Y. (1993). *Niñez y Violencia: el caso de Colombia*. Bogotá, D. C.: Save the Children, Cinde.
- Monk, G. & Winslade, J. (2013). *When stories clash: addressing conflict with narrative mediation*. Chagrin Falls: Taos Institute.
- Montoya, A. (2008). Niños y jóvenes en la guerra, aproximación a su reclutamiento y vinculación en Colombia. *Opinión Jurídica*, 7 (13), pp. 37-51. Recuperado de: <http://redalyc.uaemex.mx/pdf/945/94571302.pdf>
- Moreno, F.; Carmona, J. & Tobón, F. (2010). ¿Por qué se vinculan las niñas a los grupos guerrilleros y paramilitares en Colombia? *Revista Latinoamericana de Psicología*, 42 (3), pp. 453-457.
- Moreno, J. M.; Rabazo, J. & García-Baamonde, M. E. (2006). Competencia lingüística y estilo cognitivo en niños institucionalizados. *Revista de Logopedia, Foniatría y Audilogía*, 26 (2), pp. 55-65.
- Muñoz, F. (2001). *La paz imperfecta*. Granada: Universidad de Granada.
- Muñoz, F. (2008). *La paz. Manual de paz y conflictos*. Instituto de la Paz y los Conflictos. Granada: Universidad de Granada.
- Mustard, F. (2006). *Desarrollo de la primera infancia y del cerebro basado en la Experiencia – Bases científicas de la importancia del desarrollo de la primera infancia en un mundo globalizado*. Toronto: Brookings Institution.
- Nagata, D. K. (1991). Transgenerational impact of the japanese-american internment: Clinical issues in working with children of former internees. *Psychotherapy*, 28 (1), pp. 121-128, doi:10.1037/0033-3204.28.1.121.
- Niño, N. (2012). *Los derechos están torcidos. Una aproximación desde el enfoque de género y generacional a la vivencia de los derechos de las niñas en zonas de conflicto (Cúcuta y Tibú)*. Recuperado de: <http://www.natsper.org/upload/Los%20derechos%20estan%20torcidos.pdf>
- Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), & Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC). (2013). *Global Overview 2012: People internally displaced by conflict and violence-Colombia*. Available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/517fb06d14.html>
- Observatorio de Territorios Étnicos (2010). *Una mirada desde la Escuela al conflicto armado en San Onofre*. Recuperado de: <http://www.etnoterritorios.org/index.shtml?apc=h1e1---&x=662>
- Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs-Ocha (2004). *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*. Retrieved from: <http://www.unhcr.org/43ce1cff2.html>. September 2013.
- Ordóñez, F. (2009). *Population Confinement: The Other Devastating Reality of the Conflict*. Retrieved from: <http://colombiasupport.net/2009/04/population->

- confinement-the-other-devastating-reality-of-the-conflict/ Accessed September 2013.
- Organización de las Naciones Unidas (2010). *Los niños y los conflictos armados. Informe del Secretario General del Consejo de Seguridad. (A-65-268-S/2011/250)*. Recuperado de: <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N11/275/36/PDF/N1127536.pdf?OpenElement>
- Ortega, R. (1992). *El juego infantil y la construcción social del conocimiento*. Sevilla: Alfar.
- Ospina-Alvarado, M. C. (2014). Las familias: Sistemas Interaccionales y Construcciones Relacionales, Dialógicas, Sociales, Culturales e Históricas. En S. V. Alvarado y H. F. Ospina (ed.). *Socialización Política y Configuración de Subjetividades. Construcción Social de Niños, Niñas y Jóvenes como Sujetos Políticos*, (pp. 225-263). Bogotá: Siglo del Hombre Editores; Manizales: Universidad de Manizales; Sabaneta: Cinde.
- Ospina-Alvarado, M. C. (2015). Construcción social de las paces desde las potencias: niños y niñas de la primera infancia y sus agentes relacionales le cierran la puerta a Don Violencio. En D. F. Schnitman (ed.) *Diálogos para la transformación: experiencias en terapia y otras intervenciones psicosociales en Iberoamérica*, (pp. 34-53). Chagrin Falls: Taos Institute, World Share Books.
- Ospina-Alvarado, M. C.; Alvarado, S. V.; Carmona, J. A. & Arroyo, A. (Comp). (2018). *Construcción Social de Niñas y Niños en Contextos de Conflicto Armado: Narrativas Generativas para la Construcción de Paz*. Manizales: Editorial Cinde, Universidad de Manizales/Bogotá, D. C.: Universidad Pedagógica Nacional, Cinde.
- Ospina-Alvarado, M. C.; Alvarado, S. V.; Carmona, J. A. & Ospina, H. F. (2017). A social constructionist approach to understanding the experiences of girls affected by armed conflict in Colombia. In M. Denov, & B. Akesson (Eds.), *Children affected by armed conflict: Theory, method, and practice*, (pp. 89-111). New York: Columbia University Press.
- Ospina-Alvarado, M. C.; Alvarado, S. V. & Fajardo, M. A. (2016). Prácticas de transformación social e interculturalidad de niños y niñas en el contexto del conflicto armado colombiano: un abordaje desde la hermenéutica ontológica política. En V. Di Cauda; D. Llanos & M. C. Ospina-Alvarado (coords. acad.) *Interculturalidad y educación desde el sur: contextos, experiencias y voces*, (pp. 269-294). Cuenca: UPS- Giei, Clacso, Cinde. Recuperado de: <http://dspace.ups.edu.ec/bitstream/123456789/12775/1/Interculturalidad%20y%20educacion.pdf>
- Ospina-Alvarado, M. C.; Alvarado-Salgado, S. V. & Fajardo-Mayo, M. A. (2018). Subjetividades políticas de la primera infancia en contextos de conflicto armado:

- Narrativas colectivas de agencia. *Psicoperspectivas*, 17 (2), pp. 1-13.
<https://doi.org/10.5027/psicoperspectivas-vol17-issue2-fulltext-1186>
- Ospina-Alvarado, M. C.; Alvarado, S. V. & Ospina, H. F. (2014). Construcción social de la infancia en contextos de conflicto armado en Colombia. En V. Llobet (comp.) *Pensar la infancia desde América Latina. Un estado de la cuestión*, (pp. 35-60). Buenos Aires: Clacso.
- Ospina-Alvarado, M. C.; Carmona-Parra, J. A. & Alvarado-Salgado, S. V. (2014). Niños y niñas en contexto de conflicto armado: narrativas generativas de paz. *Revista Infancias Imágenes*, 13 (1), pp. 52-60.
- Ospina-Alvarado, M. C. & Gallo, L. (2011). Intervención sistémica: cambio de narrativas de identidad en un centro de atención infantil. *Revista Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales, Niñez y Juventud*, 9 (2), pp. 827-846.
- Ospina-Alvarado, M. C.; Loaiza, J. A. & Alvarado, S. V. (2016). Potenciales de Paz. *Revista Internacional Magisterio Educación y Pedagogía. La escuela y la paz*, (81), pp. 26-29.
- Ospina-Ramírez, D. A. & Ospina-Alvarado, M. C. (2017). Futuros Posibles, el Potencial Creativo de Niñas y Niños para la Construcción de Paz. *Revista Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales, Niñez y Juventud*, 15 (1), pp. 175-192.
- Pakman, M. (1996). *Construcciones de la experiencia humana*. Buenos Aires: Gedisa.
- Palacios, J. & Castañeda, E. (2011). Principios y retos de la educación inicial que queremos para la generación de los Bicentenarios. En J. Palacios y E. Castañeda (coord.) *La primera infancia (0-6 años) y su futuro*, (pp. 115-124). Madrid: Organización de Estados Iberoamericanos para la Educación, la Ciencia y la Cultura (OEI).
- Panter-Brick, C., Grimon, M., Kalin, M., & Eggerman, M. (2015). Trauma memories, mental health, and resilience: A prospective study of afghan youth. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, and Allied Disciplines*, 56 (7), pp. 814-825, doi:10.1111/jcpp.12350.
- Pascal, C. & Bertram, T. (2009). Listening to young citizens: the struggle to make real a participatory paradigm in research with young children. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 17 (2), pp. 249-262.
- Peltonen, K., & Punamäki, R. (2010). Preventive interventions among children exposed to trauma of armed conflict: A literature review. *Aggressive Behavior*, 36 (2), pp. 95-116, doi:10.1002/ab.20334
- Peralta, M. V. (2011). El futuro de la educación inicial iberoamericana: calidad desde la construcción de currículos en una perspectiva de posmodernidad. En J. Palacios y E. Castañeda (coord.) *La primera infancia (0-6 años) y su futuro*, (pp. 83-90). Madrid: Organización de Estados Iberoamericanos para la Educación, la Ciencia y la Cultura (OEI).
- Pérez-Sales, P. (2004). El concepto de trauma y de respuesta al trauma en psicoterapia.

- Norte de Salud Mental*, (20), pp. 29-36.
- Phoenix, A. (2013). Analysing narrative contexts. In M. Andrews, C. Squire, & M. Tamboukou. *Doing Narrative Research. 2nd edition*. London: Sage Publications.
- Presidencia de la República de Colombia. (2004). *Decreto 2767 de 2004, por el cual se reglamenta la Ley 418 de 1997, prorrogada y modificada por la Ley 548 de 1999 y la Ley 782 de 2002 en materia de reincorporación a la vida civil*. Recuperado de: <http://wp.presidencia.gov.co/sitios/normativa/leyes/Documents/Juridica/DECR ETO%202767%20DE%202004.pdf>
- Presidencia de la República de Colombia. (2012a). Decreto 1725 de 2012, Por el cual se adopta el Plan Nacional de Atención y Reparación Integral a las Víctimas de que trata la Ley 1448 de 2011. Recuperado de: <https://www.unidadvictimas.gov.co/sites/default/files/documentosbiblioteca/decreto-1725-de-2012.pdf>
- Presidencia de la República de Colombia. (2012b). Plan Nacional de Atención y Reparación Integral a Víctimas. Recuperado de: <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/5b6844464.pdf>
- Pye, R. E. & Simpson, L. K. (2017). Family Functioning Differences Across the Deployment Cycle in British Army Families: The Perceptions of Wives and Children. *Military Medicine*, 182 (9), pp. e1856-e1863, doi: 10.7205/MILMED-D-16-00317. PubMed PMID: 28885947.
- Rahman, M. A. (1991). The theoretical standpoint of PAR. In O. Fals-Borda, & M. A. Rahman (Ed.), *Action and knowledge: Breaking the monopoly with Participatory Action-Research* (pp. 13-23). New York: The Apex Press/London: Intermediate Technology Publications.
- Ramírez, N. (2011). Primera infancia: una agenda pendiente de derechos. En J. Palacios y E. Castañeda (coord.) *La primera infancia (0-6 años) y su futuro*, (pp. 63-72). Madrid: Organización de Estados Iberoamericanos para la Educación, la Ciencia y la Cultura (OEI).
- Ramírez-Ocampo, A. (2008). Latinoamérica y los Derechos Humanos. *Revista Javeriana*, 744 (144), pp. 25-31.
- República de Colombia (1991). *Constitución Política de Colombia*. Bogotá, D. C.: Panamericana.
- Rey, C. (2004). Respuestas sociales ante situaciones hipotéticas de tensión interpersonal de un grupo de niños y niñas institucionalizados por maltrato físico y de un grupo de niños y niñas no maltratados. *Universitas Psychologica*, 3 (2), pp. 165-178.
- Richter, L. M., Lye, S. J., & Proulx, K. (2018). Nurturing care for young children under conditions of fragility and conflict. In J. F. Leckman & P. R. Britto (Eds.), *Towards a More Peaceful World: The Promise of Early Child Development Programmes. New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development*, 159, pp. 13-26, doi:10.1002/cad.20232.

- Ricoeur, P. (2006). *Caminos del reconocimiento. Tres estudios*. Trad. Agustín Neira. México D. F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica.
- Riessman, C. K. (2008). *Narrative Methods for the Human Sciences*. Thousand Oaks CA: Sage Publications.
- Romero, T. (2011). Políticas de primera infancia en Iberoamérica: avances y desafíos en el siglo xxi. En J. Palacios y E. Castañeda (coord.) *La primera infancia (0-6 años) y su futuro*, (pp. 39-48). Madrid: Organización de Estados Iberoamericanos para la Educación, la Ciencia y la Cultura (OEI).
- Romero, T. & Castañeda, E. (2009). El conflicto armado colombiano y la primera infancia. En A. Mejía (ed.) *Colombia: huellas del conflicto en la primera infancia*, (pp. 31-53). Bogotá, D. C.: Número Ediciones.
- Rosemberg, F. (2011). Niños pequeños en la agenda de políticas para la infancia: representaciones sociales y tensiones. En J. Palacios y E. Castañeda (coord.) *La primera infancia (0-6 años) y su futuro*, (pp. 49-62). Madrid: Organización de Estados Iberoamericanos para la Educación, la Ciencia y la Cultura (OEI).
- Ross, L. & Arsenault, S. (2018). Problem Analysis in Community Violence Assessment: Revealing Early Childhood Trauma as a Driver of Youth and Gang Violence. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 62 (9), pp. 2726-2741.
- Roth, A. N. (2006). *Políticas públicas. Formulación, implementación y evaluación*. Bogotá D. C.: Aurora.
- Rust, F. (2007). Action Research in Early Childhood Contexts. In J. Amos (ed.) *Early childhood. Qualitative research*, (pp. 95-108). New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group.
- Salmon, P. & Riessman, C. K. (2013). Looking back on narrative research: An exchange. In M. Andrews, C. Squire, & M. Tamboukou. *Doing Narrative Research. 2nd edition*. London: Sage Publications.
- Sánchez, A. (2005). Derechos Humanos y Psicología. *Cuadernos de Psicología*, 1 (1), pp. 17-23.
- Santos, B. de S. (2009). *Reinventando la Emancipación Social*. La Paz: Clacso.
- Santos, B. de S. (2011). Epistemologías del sur. *Utopía y Praxis Latinoamericana*, 16(54), 17-39.
- Sarlé, P. (1999). *El lugar del juego en el nivel inicial*. (Tesis para acceder al grado de magíster en Didáctica). Universidad de Buenos Aires, Buenos Aires, Argentina.
- Sarlé, P. (2006). *Enseñar el juego y jugar la enseñanza*. Buenos Aires: Paidós.
- Sarlé, P. M. & Arnaiz, V. (2011). Juego y estética en educación infantil. En J. Palacios y E. Castañeda (coord.) *La primera infancia (0-6 años) y su futuro*, (pp. 91-104). Madrid: Organización de Estados Iberoamericanos para la Educación, la Ciencia y la Cultura (OEI).

- Sarlé, P. y Rosas, R. (2005). *Juegos de construcción y construcción del conocimiento*. Buenos Aires: Miño y Dávila.
- Save the Children. (2018). *Análisis del Rol de la Niñez en los Acuerdos de Paz*. Bogotá: Save the Children.
- Schnitman, D. F. & Schnitman, J. (2002). *New paradigms, culture and subjectivity. Advances in systems theory, complexity and the human sciences*. Michigan: Hampton Press.
- Schnitman, D. (2006). *Diálogos Generativos*. Madrid: Instituto Internacional de Sociología Jurídica Oñati, Editorial Dykinson.
- Secretaría de Educación del Distrito (2014). *Reencantar la educación, ¿cómo la escuela desarrolla estrategias de inclusión para personas víctimas de conflicto armado?* Bogotá, D. C.: Secretaría de Educación del Distrito, Cinep, Programa por la Paz.
- Secretaría Distrital de Integración Social (2007). *Política pública por la garantía de los derechos, el reconocimiento de la diversidad y la democracia en las familias. Política pública para las familias en Bogotá, Alcaldía Mayor. Bogotá sin Indiferencia: un compromiso social contra la pobreza y la exclusión*. Bogotá, D. C.: Secretaría Distrital de Integración Social.
- Serra, M. (2010). Hacia una protección efectiva de los derechos humanos de los niños y niñas en el conflicto armado. *Revista de Filosofía, Derecho y Política*, (11), pp. 79-91. Recuperado de: <http://universitas.idhbc.es/numero11.htm>
- Shenoda, S., Kadir, A., Pitterman, S. & Goldhagen, J. (2018). The Effects of Armed Conflict on Children. *Pediatrics*, 142 (6), pp. 1-9, pii: e20182585, doi: 10.1542/peds.2018-2585, PubMed PMID: 30397166.
- Sierra, A.; Lozano, P.; Guerrero, A. & Salamanca, N. (2009). *Niños vinculados al conflicto, cubrimiento periodístico responsable*. Bogotá, D. C.: Medios para la Paz-MPP, Unión Europea, Fundación Colombia Multicolor.
- Sierra, C. (2004). *Procesos de socialización en niños abandonados e institucionalizados: un estudio de caso*. Tesis de maestría no publicada. Universidad de Los Andes, Bogotá, Colombia.
- Slone, M. & Mann, S. (2016). Effects of War, Terrorism and Armed Conflict on Young Children: A Systematic Review. *Child Psychiatry Hum Dev*. 47 (6), pp. 950-965, PubMed PMID: 26781095.
- Sommer, M., Munoz-Laboy, M., Wilkinson Salamea, E., Arp, J., Falb, K. L., Rudahindwa, N., & Stark, L. (2018). How narratives of fear shape girls' participation in community life in two conflict-affected populations. *Violence Against Women*, 24 (5), pp. 565-585, doi:10.1177/1077801217710000.
- Souto-Manning, M. & Hanson Mitchell, C. (2010). The Role of Action Research in Fostering Culturally-Responsive Practices in a Preschool Classroom. *Early Childhood Educ J*, 37, pp. 269-277, DOI 10.1007/s10643-009-0345-9.

- Springer, N. (2008). *Prisioneros combatientes. Datos del primer informe exploratorio sobre el uso de niños, niñas y adolescentes para los propósitos del conflicto armado en Colombia*. Recuperado de:
http://www.colombiasoyyo.org/docs/resumen_informe_Mayanasa.pdf
- Stamopoulos, E. (2015). The Professional Leadership and Action Research Training Model: Supporting early childhood leadership. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, 40 (4), pp. 39-48.
- Stephen, C., Brown, S. & Cope, P. (2001). Alternative perspectives on playroom practice. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 9, pp. 193-205.
- Tamboukou, M. (2010). *Nomadic Narratives, Visual Forces*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing.
- Tamboukou, M. (2013). A Foucauldian approach to narratives. In M. Andrews, C. Squire, & M. Tamboukou. (2013). *Doing Narrative Research. 2nd edition*. London: Sage Publications.
- Torres, A. (2006). *El sujeto de la política de atención a menores de edad desvinculados de los grupos armados irregulares: un análisis de los discursos y juegos de verdad que lo constituyen como objeto de atención de la política*. Bogotá, D. C.: Universidad Javeriana.
- Torrado, M. C.; Camargo, M.; Pineda, N. & Bejarano, D. (2009). *Estado del arte sobre primera infancia en el conflicto*. En A. Mejía (ed.) *Colombia: huellas del conflicto en la primera infancia*, (pp. 31-53). Bogotá, D. C.: Número Ediciones.
- Torrado, M. C.; Durán, E.; Serrato, L.; Del Castillo, M.; Buitrago, L. & Acero, G. A. (2002). *Niños, niñas y conflicto armado en Colombia: una aproximación al estado del arte 1990-2001*. Bogotá, D. C.: Convenio del Buen Trato.
- Unicef (1998). *Unicef felicita a los ganadores del Premio Nobel de la Paz de 1998*. Recuperado de: <https://www.unicef.org/spanish/newslines/pr/1998/98pr95sp.htm>
- Unicef (2000). *Colombia y las minas antipersonal. Sembrando minas, cosechando muerte*. Bogotá, D. C.: Unicef.
- Unicef (2009). *Machel Study, Ten-Year Strategic Review: Children and Conflict in a Changing World*. Retrieved from:
http://www.unicef.org/publications/index_49985.html
- Unicef, Presidencia de la República de Colombia, Vicepresidencia de la República de Colombia, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de la República de Colombia, ICBF (2013). *Entornos protectores para prevenir el reclutamiento de niñas, niños y adolescentes en Colombia. Acciones relevantes y fortalecimiento de capacidades para la protección integral de la niñez y la adolescencia*. Bogotá, D. C.: Unicef, Presidencia de la República de Colombia, Vicepresidencia de la República de Colombia, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de la República de Colombia, ICBF.

- Unidad para la Atención y Reparación Integral a las Víctimas (2020). Registro Único de Víctimas. Recuperado de: <https://www.unidadvictimas.gov.co/es/registro-unico-de-victimas-ruv/37394>
- Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Observatorio sobre Infancia (2002). *Niños, niñas y conflicto armado en Colombia: una aproximación al estado del arte, 1990-2001*. Bogotá, D. C.: Convenio del Buen Trato, Fundación Antonio Restrepo Barco.
- United Nations (1977). *Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and Relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts (Protocol II)*. Retrieved from: <http://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%201125/volume-1125-I-17513-English.pdf>.
- United Nations (1989). *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Retrieved from: <http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>
- United Nations (2000). *Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflicts*. Retrieved from: https://www.unicef.org/gambia/Optional_Protocol_to_the_Convention_on_the_Rights_of_the_Child_on_the_involvement_of_children_in_armed_conflicts.pdf
- Vicepresidencia de la República de Colombia (2014). *Comisión intersectorial para la prevención del reclutamiento, la utilización y la violencia sexual contra niños, niñas, y adolescentes por grupos organizados al margen de la ley y grupos delictivos organizados, Decreto 0552 de 2012*. Recuperado de: <http://historico.vicepresidencia.gov.co/Iniciativas/Paginas/PrevencionReclutamiento.aspx>
- Villanueva O'Driscoll, J. (2013). *If you prepare the garden, the plants will take care of themselves. Insertion processes of children disengaged from armed groups in Colombia*. (A dissertation submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor in Psychological Sciences as a Joint PhD). Vrije Universiteit Brussel-Universidad Católica Boliviana "San Pablo", La Paz, Bolivia.
- Villanueva O'Driscoll, J. & Loots, G. (2014). Tracing subjective drives: A narrative approach to study youth's engagement with and disengagement from armed groups in Colombia. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 11(4), 365-383.
- Villanueva, J.; Loots, G.; Losantos, M.; Exeni, S.; Berckmans, I. & Derluyn, I. (2017). Reinsertion processes of children disengaged from armed groups in Colombia: what is the problem represented to be? *Revista Eleuthera*, 16, 85-100. DOI: 10.17151/eleu.2017.16.6.
- Vindevogel, S., Coppens, K., Derluyna, I., De Schryver, M., Loots, G., & Broekaert, E. (2011). Forced conscription of children during armed conflict: Experiences of former child soldiers in northern Uganda. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 35, pp. 551-562.
- Wajskop, G. (1997). *Brincar na pre-escola*. Sao Paulo: Cortez Editora.

- Waller, T. & Bitou, A. (2011). Research with children: three challenges for participatory research in early childhood. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 19 (1), pp. 5-20.
- Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict (2004). *Colombia: la guerra en los niños y las niñas*. Recuperado de:
<http://www.watchlist.org/reports/pdf/colombia.report.es.pdf>.
- White, M. & Epston, D. (1993). *Medios narrativos para fines terapéuticos*. Barcelona: Paidós.
- White, M. (1994). Introducción. En M. White (ed.) *Guías para una terapia familiar sistémica*, (pp. 9-17). Barcelona: Gedisa.
- White, M. (2007). *Maps of narrative practice*. New York, London: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Yurtbay, T., Alyanak, B., Abali, O., Kaynak, N., & Durukan, M. (2003). The psychological effects of forced emigration on muslim albanian children and adolescents. *Community Mental Health Journal*, 39 (3), pp. 203-212, doi:10.23386122344.
- Zhang, C. (2016). Parenting stress and mother– child playful interaction: the role of emotional support. *Journal of Family Studies*, 23(1), 19-37. doi:10.1080/13229400.2016.1176593
- Zhang, N., Zhang, J., Gewirtz, A. H., & Piehler, T. F. (2018). Improving parental emotion socialization in military families: Results of a randomized controlled trial. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 32 (8), pp. 1046–1056, doi:10.1037/fam0000461.

Appendixes

Appendix 1

Letter of Invitation, Informed Consent, Informed Assent

Information Sheet

Greetings:

This circular aims to inform the recipient that, in the coming days, research titled **Children in the Context of Armed Conflict: From Victimization to Peace Promoting Narratives** is to begin. The research will be carried out by a team from the Centro Internacional de Educación y Desarrollo Humano – CINDE and Universidad de Manizales, within the framework of a programme sponsored by COLCIENCIAS.

The research aims to: “comprehend the effects of the armed conflict suffered by the children, their families, and their teachers; comprehend their resources for defense from those effects, and their potentials for contributing to peace-building; and provide an educational proposal that, based on potentials and future possibilities, contributes to peace-building from children’s early years.”

It is important to point out that all the information obtained and provided is of a confidential nature, for academic purposes, and that anonymity and the absence of collateral consequences are guaranteed. Furthermore, participation is voluntary and the participant may withdraw at any time.

If you agree, we invite you to fill out the informed consent below.

Thank you

Signature researcher

Informed Consent for Adults

I (name) _____

Identity document number _____

DECLARE:

1. That a representative of the research team invited me to be part of this project and that I have decided to participate voluntarily.
2. That the gathering of data will be carried out by interviews, encounters (workshops), and other social research techniques, to be documented and used in a way that the researchers deem convenient for academic ends, that is, data will only be communicated in scientific or institutional publications and academic events.
3. That the results of the research will be communicated to me and will not affect in any way my performance within the institution, nor commit me to any process.
4. That I have been informed that, at any time, I may retire from the group and revoke this consent. However, I undertake to inform the researcher in a timely manner, if I make this decision.
5. That I accept that participation in the aforementioned study will not bring me any benefit of a material or economic type, nor will I acquire any contractual relationship.

I bear witness that, to obtain this consent, the information pertaining to the research, its scope and limitations have been explained to me in clear and simple language; furthermore, that personally and without external pressure, I have been able to make all observations, and that the doubts and uncertainties I have expressed have been clarified, also that I will have a copy of this consent should I require it. Given the above, I declare that I am satisfied with the information received, and that I understand the scope of the research, as well as my rights and responsibilities in participating in it.

I agree that photographs be taken and used in academic publications and events.

Yes No

I sign in agreement with the above:

Signature

Date

Informed Consent for Parents or Legal Guardians Who Authorize the Participation of Children

I (adult's name) _____, identified by identity document (adult's document) number _____, act in the capacity of guardian of (child's name) _____ with identity card number _____

DECLARE

1. That a representative of the research team invited the child of whom I am the legal representative to be part of this project and I have decided to authorize her/his participation voluntarily.
2. That the gathering of data will be carried out by interviews, encounters (workshops), and other social research techniques, which will be documented and used in a way that the researchers deem convenient for academic ends, that is, data will only be communicated in scientific or institutional publications and academic events.
3. That the results of the research will be communicated to us and will not affect in any way the child's performance within the institution, nor commit us to any process.
4. That we have been informed that at any time we may retire from the group and revoke this consent. However, I undertake to inform the researcher in a timely manner if I make this decision.
5. That I accept that the child's participation in the aforementioned study will not bring any benefit of a material or economic type, nor acquire any contractual relationship.

I bear witness that, to obtain this consent, the information pertaining to the research, its scope and limitations have been explained to me in clear and simple language; furthermore, that personally and without external pressure, I have been able to make all observations, and that the doubts and uncertainties I have expressed have been clarified, also that I will have a copy of this consent should I require it. Given the above, I declare that I am satisfied with the information received, and that I understand the scope of the research, as well as my rights and responsibilities on authorizing the child's participation in it.

I agree that photographs of the child be taken and used in academic publications and events

Yes No

I sign in agreement with the above:

Signature

Date

Appendix 2

Workshops for Families, Children, School and Child Care Center Staff, and Community Actors

Programme: Meanings and Political Practices of Children in Contexts of Vulnerability in the Colombian Coffee Growing Region, Antioquia, and Bogotá: a Possible Route to the Consolidation of Democracy, Peace, and Reconciliation by Means of Citizen Education Processes

Research: Children in the Context of Armed Conflict: From Victimization to Peace Promoting Narratives³⁹

Objectives

- Comprehend the effects of the armed conflict suffered by the children, their families, and their teachers
- Comprehend their resources for defense from those effects, and their potentials for contributing to peace-building.
- Provide an educational proposal that, based on potentials and future possibilities, contributes to peace-building from children's early years.
- Strengthen the creation of bonds within relational contexts involving children, and between different contexts, which enable the emergence of peaceful relations.

Population

- Approximately 15 children of between 3 and 6 years of age, accompanied by a family member or, if not possible, an educational staff member. Work is carried out with half the number of children at a time, in sessions of one hour.
- Families (as many family members as possible, intentionally all family members, yet in some cases only one). Mothers, fathers, grandparents, uncles, aunts, older brothers and sisters participate.
- Educational staff (as many as possible, intentionally all those who relate to the 15 children participating in the study).

Duration of the Encounters

- Workshops with children (accompanied by a family member, or, if not possible, an educational staff member): one hour. In the case of children in early childhood, short working sessions are recommended, working only one hour at a time. Consequently, the children are divided into two smaller groups and the same

39 Doctoral thesis, María Camila Ospina Alvarado, for a PhD in Media and Communication Studies VUB – Taos Institute. The research was carried out within the framework of a programme endorsed by Colciencias, the entity charged with science, technology, and innovation in Colombia, and implemented by a consortium (Consortio Niños, Niñas y Jóvenes Constructores de Paz) of CINDE, Universidad de Manizales, and Universidad Pedagógica Nacional.

workshop carried out with each of these groups. The first workshop of the series is somewhat longer, at an hour and a half.

- Workshops with educational staff: two hours.
- Workshops with families: two and a half hours, excepting the first encounter, which is proposed at three hours.
- Workshops with all actors (children, families, educational staff): two and a half hours.

Notes

- All sessions are to be recorded (audio) and later transcribed by the research team assistants. Among materials, although a camera is not on the list, given that it could not be bought by the project, a visual memory of the participation of the children and the people accompanying them at different moments is valuable. It is important to be aware of who, among the participants, may have photographs of their faces taken and who may not, according to the consents signed by the families. If no camera is available, the photos can be taken with a mobile phone camera with good resolution, or a camera belonging to one of the researchers.
- In the case of the teachers and educational staff, although the work is to be carried out in workshops, at certain times a technique similar to that of focus groups will be used.
- In order to keep the families in the process, it is important to send their invitation to the encounters by means of their children's school agenda. Furthermore, each family is called to remind them of the workshops. A model for the invitation is attached. It is important to make the invitation interesting.
- In the workshops with the children, the activities and questions will be part of play with puppets, modeling clay, and other elements. Both "Don Violencio" and the children's allies in keeping him away are personified. It is very important to maintain the voices and dialogue within the sphere of play, without allowing them to become an interview.

Workshop 0. Presentation of the Project to the Participants

Objectives

- Present the research project to the various participants and foster their permanence in the process.
- Identify narratives elicited from the children and the various actors in their lives (families, educational staff, and / or community actors).
- Understand the children's relational construction.
- Begin to build bonds within the relational contexts involving the children (e.g. children to children, families to families, etc.) to facilitate the emergence of peaceful relations.

Workshop 0. Presentation of the Project to Children

Participatory environment	Materials	Brief description of the activity	Time
<p>First moment: The children are seated in front of the puppet theatre or in a half-circle (in one single row, so they can see well) to watch the play. It is important that they have an individual space (a seat, a cushion, or cardboard, according to resources) in which to sit, to guarantee better organization and their attention. The family member (or, if not possible, the educational staff member) accompanies the children from behind, or holding the child. Half the researchers accompany the audience, to encourage their participation and to facilitate organization. The other half of the researchers will be in the theatre. If there is an uneven number of researchers, they will</p>	<p>seats, cushions, or pieces of cardboard, one for each participant (these elements should be facilitated by the educational institution); puppets for each facilitator in the puppet theatre (if the educational institution has puppets, they will be used for the workshops, if not, the puppets will be made by the facilitators with cheap materials such as socks and buttons); a small puppet theatre (which hopefully will be provided by the educational institution, if not, the theatre will be made previously with cheap materials such as boxes and paints).</p>	<p>Begin with a short play for the children, to motivate them, to get to know each other, to present the project, and to gain the children's attention from the first moment. The play may be framed within the idea of some values of friendship or respect, to support the approach set out in the project, which involves ties of affection, respect, justice, and peace-building.</p> <p>Put on a short play, by which children understand the game that the puppets act out. It is important to make the children laugh, and to get them to participate by answering simple and short questions, in order to maintain their attention. It is suggested, for example, that the facilitator assume the role of two characters with the puppets and recreate a scene from the school or child care center:</p> <p><i>Anita:</i> Hello Juanito. We are going to study. Today is a beautiful sunny day. <i>Juanito:</i> Hello Anita. I'm so happy to see you. How are you? <i>(The characters go chasing each other and playing to the school. They run after each other, tickle each other, help to carry a school bag, and engage in activity that exemplifies a life with cordiality and friendship. This makes the children laugh: for example, at the comments, or the faces of the puppets as they are being chased.)</i> <i>Anita:</i> Well, thank you Juanito. Have you heard? They are inviting us to some meetings at the school. <i>Juanito:</i> Yes, but I don't understand very well what they are for. Do you? <i>Anita:</i> My mother told me to go to the</p>	<p>10 minutes</p>

<p>previously define where they can contribute most.</p>		<p>meetings. That we were going to play with puppets and modeling clay, to become more friends with each other, and to build peace. But I didn't understand very well what peace is. Do you know what it is?</p> <p><i>Juanito:</i> Mmm. The teacher said the other day that it was to love each other, listen to each other, and respect each other.</p> <p><i>Anita:</i> I like that. Would you like to come with me to the meetings?</p> <p><i>Juanito:</i> Of course, Anita. (to the children) And you, little friends: Will you accompany us as well?</p> <p>The principal objective of the little play is to present the research and gain the attention of the children for the second moment.</p>	
<p>Second moment: Integration of the facilitators with the children.</p>	<p>adhesive labels and stickers with figures, to write names on the blank labels, and decorate; colored permanent markers; 7 puppets</p>	<p>The facilitators come out of the theatre and introduce themselves, approaching each of the children, bending down to be at the same height as the children, looking at the children, holding out their hands, saying their names, and asking each child's name. Another facilitator gives out stickers with the participants' names for them to wear, in order to remember each other's names and provide a memento of the day. Care is taken to make only comments that are appreciative of the children while the activity with the stickers takes place.</p> <p>At the end, all the children, accompanying persons, and facilitators should be wearing stickers with their names.</p> <p>Subsequently, explain to the children what one is going to do: "Do you like to play with puppets? We are going to play with some puppets that we have in this box, and each one of you will have the opportunity to play in the little theatre. On each puppet we are</p>	<p>15 minutes</p>

		going to put someone's name. For example, this is my puppet and it's called (researcher's name) because I'm called (researcher's name)."	
Third moment: Presentation by the children and their companions about themselves and their relations	seats, cushions or cardboard, one for each participant; puppets for each facilitator in the puppet theatre; another four puppets (two female and two male), which will be rotated among the children and their companions; a puppet theatre; and an audio recording device	<p>The participation of both the facilitator and the children will be by means of the puppets. All the children will have puppets with their names. Through play with the puppets, the proposed topics (shown below) will be worked with in the following manner:</p> <p>The facilitators behind the theatre invite a child with a family or teaching staff member to come behind the theatre with them. The other participants are asked to remain seated, and told they will be asked to come by in turn, according to the way they are seated.</p> <p>It is possible that, while one child is taking a turn in the theatre, the facilitator may call another child to participate at the same time.</p> <p>Depending on the number of children in the workshop, each facilitator may work with a group of children and their family or teaching staff companions. In this case, the theatre space may include seats and tables.</p> <p>The facilitator who is in dialogue with the children should have an audio recording device at hand to record the dialogues.</p> <p>Once the child is ready behind the theatre, one of the facilitators with a puppet will begin to greet:</p> <p>Hello, (child's name). How have you been? Hello (companion's name). Then, by means of play, the children and the family or teaching companions</p>	40 minutes

		<p>are asked (the facilitator speaking directly through her puppet to the participants' puppets) about the subjects listed below.</p> <p>After carrying out the activity with one child, all the others are invited in turn to participate in the theatre.</p> <p>It is important that the dialogue be a game, be represented by the puppets, and not be an interview.</p>	
--	--	--	--

Children's stories

Ask the child's companion:

- What is (*name of child*) like?
- What do you like most about him or her?

Ask the child:

- What do you like most about yourself?
- What do you like to do?

Stories on family relationships

Ask the child:

- (Name of child), tell us about your family.
- What do you like most about your family?

Stories on relations in the community or child care center

Ask the child:

- What is your kindergarten like? Who are your best friends? What do you like to do with them?
- What is your neighborhood like? Who do you meet?
- What is the park like? Who do you play with?

Participatory environment	Materials	Brief description of activity	Time
Fourth moment: Joint construction of memory of the workshop	sheets of paper; colored modeling clay; crayons; boards for working with modeling clay, preferably provided by the institution	<p>An artistic product which helps as a memory will be constructed out of various materials. Children, families, and school staff will work together making a portrait or figure of a boy and a girl, in the form of a drawing, or a figure in modeling clay, etc.</p> <p>First the children, and then their companions, will be asked what was</p>	15 minutes

	for the workshops, if not, they are to be made of a cheap material such as cardboard; and, an audio recording device	needed to jointly construct the images or figures. Make a brief reflection going over what the question brought out. This will emphasize on participants agreeing among each other, making different parts of the body, taking care of their work and the work of others, and helping their companions where needed.	
Fifth moment: Close		Begin to teach the children the song: “Wherever you go, give away lots of smiles, look around you, you will easily find, smiles of joy, the smile of a brother, if you try, wherever you go there will be peace, peace, peace, peace, (Repeat).” [<i>Donde quiera que tú vayas, regala muchas sonrisas, mira a tu alrededor, fácilmente encontrarás, solecitos de alegría, la sonrisa del hermano, si te esfuerzas por lograrlo, donde vayas habrá paz paz paz paz (Bis).</i>]	10 minutes

Note: It is important that, after the activity, the facilitators take photographs of the artistic products. The puppets will be used again.

Workshop 0. Presentation of the Project to Families

Participatory environment	Materials	Brief description of the activity	Time
First moment: Presentation of the project	posters in bright colors	At the beginning of the workshop, the families will be greeted and thanked for their attendance. They will then be invited to participate in the project, and the subject matter, approach, and schedule will be agreed using key words and images on brightly colored posters (shown below). It will be very important to use clear language without technical expressions (e.g. systemic approach, appreciative social constructionist approach, names of potentials). At the end, a space is to be opened for questions.	30 minutes

1. Subject matter: Work with children of three to six years old whose families have lived directly or indirectly in a context of armed conflict, with their families and teachers, in order that they participate from their early years in peace-building processes. Without re-victimizing the families and children, the interest is in identifying each person's strengths, as well as those of the families and the school or child care center, and in fostering relations in which violence is not present or less present.
2. Systemic approach: The children are comprehended in this research within relations such as those in their family, school, or child care center. Furthermore, the children, families, and school form part of another context, for example, the neighborhood, park, or street. They are also constantly aware of media, form part of a society or country such as Colombia, belong to a religion, and are affected by what happens in politics.
3. Constructionist and appreciative approach, and the learning from two peace-building projects with children (Niños, Niñas y Jóvenes Constructores de Paz; and Convidarte para la Paz): In this study, human potential for peace-building is promoted by fostering self-esteem, esteem for others, and care for nature (affective potential); ethical decision making, in which not only one's own good but the good of others is important (ethical potential); creativity as a key element in the transformation of conflicts away from violent ends (creative potential for the transformation of conflicts); communication, in which others are accepted in spite of differences (communicative potential); and the possibility of constructing with others and bringing about change (political potential).
4. The encounters aim to: 1. Identify adverse effects of violence on participants and their relations, and their resources for defense that contribute to peace-building; 2. Identify the strengths and abilities of the children, their families, and of the school or child care center; 3. Comprehend the potentials for peace-building present in the participants; 4. Find out what future of peace the families, children, and teachers want to construct; 5. Co-construct alternative narratives of peace-building; 6. Maintain the advances achieved in the encounters; and 7. Share what we have found in the study, in such a way as to find out if the participants agree with us.

Participatory environment	Materials	Brief description of the activity	Time
Second moment: Signing an informed consent	sufficient copies of the informed consent, and informative letters	The informative letter and the consent will be read, giving space for resolving the doubts that arise. Forms will then be signed.	20 minutes
Third moment:	blank adhesive	Participants are asked to greet the	20 minutes

Introduction of the participants	labels; permanent markers in different colors	<p>person at their side, tell that person their name, their favorite food, and what they like to do.</p> <p>Then, the second person takes a turn giving the same information. The facilitators pass around the pairs, writing the name of each participant on the blank label and giving it to the participant to wear it where it can be seen.</p> <p>If there is enough time, two pairs of participants come together, and each person tells the other pair their partner's name, favorite food, and favorite activity.</p>	
Fourth moment: Stories and tales	audio recording device; seats for the number of participants in the workshop	<p>Now, we are going to tell stories or tales. Groups are formed depending on the number of facilitators and recording devices available. Each group sits in a circle and hears the stories of each of its participants. First, everyone will speak about their sons or daughters (A), then everyone will speak about their family (B), and lastly everyone will speak about their school or child care center (C).</p> <p>The person accompanying the workshop will facilitate the narration of the stories by means of some guiding questions, that may or may not be posed, according to how the conversation develops.</p> <p>However, it will be important that the topics set out below be expanded on by means of the stories (remembering that the topics are for the facilitators, and not to be shared with the families).</p>	50 minutes

A) Children's stories

- How would you describe your daughter or son?
- Can you tell a story about your daughter or son to enable us to understand her or him a little better?

- If anyone else heard the story: What do you think they would think about your child? How would the other person describe your child according to what happened in the story? (Here we aim to comprehend what the person believes the story says about who their child is. Only ask the second question if this objective is not fulfilled with the first).

B) Stories on family relationships

- How would you describe your family relationships?
- Could you tell me a story about your family to enable us to understand more about the relationships between you?
- If anyone else heard the story: What do you think they would think about your child? How would the other person describe your child according to what happened in the story? (Here we aim to find out what the person believes the story says about who their child is).
- If anyone else heard the story: What do you believe they would think about your family? What would that person say about you as a family, according to what happened in the story? (Here we aim to comprehend what the participant believes the story says about their family relations. Only ask the second question if the first is not answered).
- What do you believe the other person would think about your son or daughter on hearing this second story?

C) Narrative on relations in the community and school (or child care center)

- How would you describe relations in the neighborhood?
- How would you describe relations in the school (or child care center)?
- Could you tell me a story about your neighborhood or school (or child care center) to enable me to learn more about the relationships between you?
- How do you see the relations in the neighborhood, school, (or child care center, according to the story chosen by the family)?
- If another person heard this story and knows that your child studies at the school (or child care center, or lives in the neighborhood, according to the story chosen by the family), what do you believe that person would think about your child? How would the other person describe your child, according to what happened in the story? (Here we aim to comprehend what the person believes the story says about their child. Only ask the second question if this intention is not achieved with the first).

Participatory environment	Materials	Brief description of the activity	Time
Fifth moment: Joint construction of memory of the workshop	audio recording device; a camera, if possible (optional according to the researcher's	An artistic product that helps memory will be made. This may take the form of a sculpture, a painting or drawing, a model, a video, etc., which puts together a collective story of the group, composed from the individual stories that were told.	30 minutes

	possibilities); recyclable material such as dry leaves, boxes, magazines, and cans; other materials, such as pencils, markers, modeling clay, paints, brushes etc.		
Sixth moment: Reflecting team	audio recording device	<p>The members of the research team comment among themselves without looking at the participants, in the style of the reflecting team, as proposed by Tom Andersen. They talk about what happened in the encounter, highlighting in an appreciative way those resources and potentials that they begin to identify among the participants, and contribute to the consolidation of bonds among the participants by pointing out some common elements among them.</p> <p>This activity stems from the narrative view, from which the aim is to describe the participants appreciatively. It is important not to look at the participants, because the activity fulfills the objective of their hearing from others what is valuable in themselves and their relations, and it is also important not to engage in conversation about this, as may be done in other types of activities proposed for the workshops. Social construction occurs not only in conversations but in listening to what other people say to each other.</p> <p>After the activity, the participants are not asked for their opinion about the activity or what was said, given that</p>	15 minutes

		this would lose the effect of its not being part of a conversation, while it should simply be heard from others.	
Seventh moment: Close	audio recording device	We will ask each person how they felt, and what stood out for them, or what learning they would take away with them from the encounter. This activity may be carried out with the whole group or in smaller groups led by a research team member, taking into account the number of participants in the encounter.	15 minutes

Note: The proposed questions will be expanded on with some families in the form of an interview in the case that the information about them does not emerge in the workshop.

Workshop 0: Presentation of the Project to Staff of the School or Child Care Center and/or Community Agents

Participatory environment	Materials	Brief description of the activity	Time
First moment: Presentation of the project	video beam, and other necessary elements for projection, to be solicited from the educational institution (if not available, the researchers will take printed copies of the slides for the presentation)	At the beginning of the workshop, the educational staff will be greeted and thanked for their attendance. They will then be invited to participate in the project. The programme in which they have enrolled will be shared, along with the co-construction of the objective and the different stages. The names and email addresses of the people carrying out the workshops in the institution are to be added. At the end, a space will be left for questions.	30 minutes Initial greetings and introductions. Presentation of Program.
Second moment: Signing of the informed consent	sufficient copies of informed consent and information letters	The information letter and informed consent will be read, giving time for resolving doubts that arise. Subsequently, the forms will be signed.	20 minutes
Third moment: Introduction of participants	audio recording device	Depending on the number of teachers, the participants and researchers introduce themselves as one group, or divided into smaller groups, each accompanied by a researcher.	20 minutes

		The participants will introduce themselves and say how they relate to the subject of peace-building or the presentation of the research.	
Fourth moment: Stories	audio recording device; seats for the number of participants	In the same way as the one carried out with the families, this workshop will consist of a space to tell stories. Various groups will be formed according to the number of facilitators and audio recording devices available. Each group will sit in a circle and hear the stories of its participants. First, participants, one by one, will talk about the children (A), then they will talk about the children's families (B), and lastly each will talk about the school or child care center (C). The researcher accompanying the workshop will facilitate the narration of the stories by means of some guiding questions, which may or may not be asked according to how the conversation develops. However, it will be important to expand, by means of the stories, on the topics that appear below (remembering that the topics are for the facilitators, and not to be shared with the teachers or community agents).	50 minutes

A) Children's stories

- How would you describe the youngest children (early childhood) with whom you work whose families have been in a context of armed conflict?
- Can you tell me a story about these children, so I could get to know them a little better?
- What do you believe this story says about these children?

B) Narrative about family relations

- How would you describe the relations among the families of these children?
- Can you tell me a story about these families that would enable me to get to know a little more about the relations among them?
- What do you believe this story says about the relations among these families?
- What do you believe that this second story says about the children that are part of the family?

- Do you find any connection between what you have mentioned to me about the family's relations and what you told me a moment ago about the children? What would the connection be?

C) Narrative about relations in the community or school/child care center

- How would you describe relations in your community or school (or child care center)?
- Could you tell me a story about your community or school (or child care center) that would enable me to get to know a little more about the relations among you?
- What do you believe this story says about the relations in your community or school?
- What do you believe this second story says about the children?
- Do you find any connection between what you have mentioned to me about relations in your community or school (or child care center) and what you told me a moment ago about the children? What would that connection be?

Participatory environment	Materials	Brief description of the activity	Time
Fifth moment: Joint construction of memory	audio recording device; camera, optional according to the researcher's resources; recyclable material, such as dry leaves, boxes, magazines, and cans; pencils; markers; modeling clay; paints; brushes; etc.	An artistic product that helps as memory will be constructed from different materials. This may take the form of a sculpture, a painting or drawing, a model, a video, etc., that puts together a collective story of the group, composed from the individual stories that were told.	30 minutes
Sixth moment: Reflecting team	audio recording device	The members of the research team comment among themselves without looking at the participants, in the style of a reflecting team, as proposed by Tom Andersen. They talk about what happened in the encounter, highlighting in an appreciative way those resources and potentials that they begin to identify, and contribute to the consolidation of bonds among the participants by pointing out some	15 minutes

		<p>of the common elements among them.</p> <p>This activity stems from the narrative view, from which the aim is to describe the participants appreciatively. It is important not to look at the participants, as the activity fulfills the objective of their hearing from others what is valuable in themselves and their relations. It is also important not to engage in conversation about this, as may be done in other types of activities proposed for the workshops.</p> <p>Social construction occurs not only in conversations, but in listening to what other people say to each other.</p> <p>After the activity, the participants are not asked for their opinion about the activity or what was said, given that this would lose the effect of its not being part of a conversation, while it should simply be heard from others.</p>	
Seventh moment: Close	audio recording device	We will ask each person how they felt, and what stood out for them or what learning they would take away from the encounter. This activity may be carried out with the whole group or in smaller groups led by a research team member, taking into account the number of participants in the encounter.	15 minutes

Note: The questions proposed will be expanded on with some of the teaching staff or community actors by way of an interview, in case the information about them does not emerge from the workshop.

Workshop: Impact of Violence Among Children and Their Relations

Objectives

- Identify the impact of armed conflict and the violence associated with it in the lives and relations of children.
- Begin the process of differentiating the children and family and community relationships from the negative impact of violence associated with armed conflict.

- Start forming bonds, within the relational contexts involving the children, that facilitate the emergence of peaceful relations.

Workshop 1: Impact of Violence Among Children and Their Relations, With Children

Participatory environment	Materials	Brief description of the activity	Time
First moment: Greetings	name tags in colored card, in the form of a heart, with a woolen string	<p>Each facilitator should greet each and every one of the girls and boys personally, telling the child that she is very happy to be with her or him again, and that it gives her pleasure to see them, approaching at the same height as the children and showing natural affection, greeting them individually and inviting them to come in.</p> <p>Subsequently, the facilitators teach the children a song, and the whole group, both facilitators and children, sing to each child individually: “Waves come, waves come, waves go, Hello (name of child), How are you? We are very happy, we are very happy with you here, with you here.”</p> <p><i>[Olas vienen, olas vienen, olas van, hola (nombre del niño o niña) ¿cómo estás? Estamos muy contentos, estamos muy contentas contigo acá, contigo acá.]</i></p> <p>Whilst the facilitators sing to each child, they hang the name tag in the form of a heart round the child’s neck so participants can identify each other, and to provide the children with a reminder of the workshop. The children are asked for name tags at the end of each workshop and told that they will be given them again at the beginning of the next workshop.</p>	15 minutes
Second moment: Negative impact of violence on	seats; tables; colored modeling clay;	Previous to each workshop, we will talk with some of the teachers and families, telling them that, as a	30 minutes

<p>children and their relations</p>	<p>boards for working with modeling clay, preferably provided by the institution for the workshops, if not, they are to be made of a cheap material such as cardboard; audio recording device</p>	<p>preparation for the workshop with the children, we would like to know about some examples from their lives in which violence is present. This may be a situation in the school (or child care center) in which a conflict has ended by violent means.</p> <p>In the activity, we take up, in the manner of a tale, one of the stories that we have been told. It will be important to bring the story in written form and reviewed by the research team, given that we must be careful to use play as a mediation, and language that does not pathologize, in which Don Violencio, or another character, representing violence as an entity distinct from the children's lives and relations, at times comes and obliges them to act in certain ways. We must take care not to say, "the child is aggressive" or "gets mad when Don Violencio arrives, as may be the usual way of narrating, but rather, narrate the situation in the following manner: "Don Violencio comes into the life of the child and makes her hit others and doesn't let her talk to them. If the child doesn't like what his companion says, Don Violencio makes the child look angrily at him and pinch him.</p> <p>After telling the story, the children and their companions will organize themselves into groups, accompanied by a facilitator, who will be recording (audio) the game.</p> <p>In the groups, we will play a while with the modeling clay and ask each child to knead, part, and roll the clay etc.</p> <p>Later, we will invite each group of children, with the help of family</p>	
-------------------------------------	---	--	--

		<p>members or companions, to mold with the clay “Don Violencio” (or another name that occurs to the children or their family members). Each child is asked, with the help of her or his family member, to mold a figure with her or his own name, other figures that represent the closest people in the child’s family, people from the school or child care center, and people from the neighborhood, if present in the child’s life.</p> <p>Collectively, through the voice of another modeling clay figure, the facilitator accompanying each group will continue going over and adding to the story about how Don Violencio arrives in the lives of the children, their families, and communities and obliges them to do things that they perhaps would not do if they closed the door to him (closing the door implies not allowing violence to come to the school or family although there may be differences and conflicts).</p> <p>As part of the story they are narrating, the facilitators ask some of the figures (with the names of the children, family members, educational staff, community agents) what Don Violencio obliges them to do and what happens in their relations when they let him in.</p> <p>In the same way, the facilitators ask the participants to describe what this character, Don Violencio or another representing violence, is like, what forms he takes, at what times does he appear, and when they remember he first became present in their lives or relations.</p>	
Third moment: Socialization	audio recording	One of the groups tells some of the stories its participants have	10 minutes

	device	constructed to the other groups, who are invited to approach the group telling the stories. This group, or its facilitator, speaks through the modeling clay figure, inviting the children and their companions to speak through their modeling clay figures. This part should be very short so that everyone has a chance to share something.	
Fourth moment: Close		The facilitators sing the following song with the participants: “Wherever you go, give away lots of smiles, look around you, you will easily find, smiles of joy, the smile of a brother, if you try, wherever you go there will be peace, peace, peace, peace (Repeat).” [<i>Donde quiera que tú vayas, regala muchas sonrisas, mira a tu alrededor, fácilmente encontrarás, solecitos de alegría, la sonrisa del hermano, si te esfuerzas por lograrlo, donde vayas habrá paz paz paz paz (Bis).</i>]	5 minutes

Nota: Some photos will be taken of the modeling clay figures made as a memory of the impact of violence related to the armed conflict on the lives and relations of the children. The figures of modeling clay will be kept, taking care not to damage them between the workshops. They should be marked with the names of the children who made them.

Workshop 2: Impact of Violence Among Children and Their Relations, With Families

Participatory environment	Materials	Brief description of the activity	Time
First: Greetings		Each participant is asked to share with the person at their side the best of what happened the day (workshop) before. There will be time for each of the pair to share this. Then two pairs of participants come together and, one by one, share what surprised them in a positive way about what they heard from their first partner.	20 minutes
Second moment: network	wool; audio recording device	A network is created among the families by passing a ball of wool. The workshop is guided using the	40 minutes

		questions below. When one of the participants considers that what another has expressed connects with her or his own experience, that person asks for the ball of wool. This process is carried out until all participants are connected in the network and all the questions have been answered.	
--	--	---	--

Impact of violence on the children

- How do you think the various expressions of violence (armed conflict, maltreatment, abuse) have affected your child?

Negative impact of violence on the family and family relations

- How do you think the various expressions of violence (armed conflict, maltreatment, abuse) have affected your family? How do you think they have affected relationships between you?

Negative impact of violence on the school or child care center and student relations

- How do you think the various expressions of violence (armed conflict, maltreatment, abuse) have affected the school or child care center? How do you think they have affected relations among the people in the school?

Negative impact of violence on the community and community relations

- How do you think the various expressions of violence (armed conflict, maltreatment, abuse) have affected your community? How do you think they have affected relationships between you?

Note: The questions posed will be addressed in the form of an interview with some families, if the information sought does not come to light in the workshop.

Participatory environment	Materials	Brief description of the activity	Time
Third moment: Reflection and memory of the encounter	audio recording device; newsprint or other cheap paper	The workshop facilitators guide a reflection about how it is normal that violence would have affected people and their relations, and how there are connections between each other, common experiences, points of encounter and points of difference. This enables the participants to understand they are not alone, that others have been through similar situations, although the impacts may not be the same.	30 minutes

		<p>Each person is asked to summarize, in a phrase, what they learned from listening to others. This activity may be carried out in groups according to the number of facilitators, with space for each person to participate. Each group makes up a poster showing the learning of its members. The posters are quickly presented to all the participants in the workshop.</p>	
Fourth moment: Reflecting team	audio recording device	<p>The members of the research team comment among themselves without looking at the participants, in the style of a reflecting team, as proposed by Tom Andersen. They talk about what happened in the encounter, highlighting in an appreciative way those resources and potentials that they begin to identify, thus contributing to the consolidation of bonds among the participants by pointing out some of the common elements among them.</p> <p>This activity stems from the narrative view, from which the aim is to describe the participants appreciatively. It is important not to look at the participants, as the activity fulfills the objective of hearing from others what is valuable in oneself and one's relations, and it is important not to engage in conversation about this, as may be done in other types of activities proposed for the workshops. Social construction occurs not only in conversations, but in listening to what other people say to each other.</p> <p>After the activity, the participants are not asked for their opinion about it or about what was said, given that this would lose the effect of its not being part of a conversation, while it should simply be heard from others.</p>	15 minutes

Fifth moment: Close	audio recording device	We will ask each person how they felt, and what stood out for them, or what learning they would take away from the encounter. This activity may be carried out with the whole group or in smaller groups led by a research team member, taking into account the number of participants in the encounter.	15 minutes
------------------------	------------------------	--	------------

Note: The questions proposed will be expanded on with some family members by way of an interview, in case the information does not emerge from the workshop. The posters will be kept by the facilitators. Photos will be taken of the posters.

Workshop 3: Impact of Violence Among Children and Their Relations, With School or Child Care Center Staff and/or Community Actors

Participatory environment	Materials	Brief description of the activity	Time
First moment: Greetings	audio recording device	In groups, according to the number of facilitators, each participant is asked to share what changes oriented towards peace-building its members have begun to notice among the children and families participating in the study.	20 minutes
Second moment: Network	wool, audio recording device	A network is created among the educational staff and community agents by passing around an unwinding ball of wool. The workshop is guided using the questions below. When participants consider that what another has expressed connects with their own experience, they ask for the ball of wool. This process is carried out until all participants are connected in the network and all the questions set out below have been answered.	40 minutes

Impact of violence on the children

- How do you think the various expressions of violence (armed conflict, maltreatment, abuse) have affected children who have lived in contexts of armed conflict or whose families come from those contexts?

Impact of violence on the family and family relations

- How do you think the various expressions of violence (armed conflict, maltreatment, abuse) have affected the families of these children? How do you think they have affected family relationships?

Impact of violence on the school or child care center and student relations

- How do you think the various expressions of violence (armed conflict, maltreatment, abuse) have affected the school or child care center and yourselves as staff? How do you think they have affected relations among you? How do you think they have affected relations among yourselves and the children?

Impact of violence on the community (or neighborhood) and community relations

- How do you think the various expressions of violence (armed conflict, maltreatment, abuse) have affected the community or the neighborhood? How do you think these expressions of violence have affected relationships between people who live in the neighborhood? How do you think they have affected relations between people of the neighborhood and the children?

Participatory environment	Materials	Brief description of the activity	Time
Third moment: Reflection and memory of the encounter	colored paper; markers; audio recording device	<p>The workshop facilitators guide a reflection, using language that does not pathologize, about how violence affects people and their relations, on occasions in a similar way and on other occasions in a different way.</p> <p>Groups, formed according to the number of facilitators, are asked to write a message for the families. This may be on a large poster and addressed to all the families, or in individual messages that are handed over to the families in the next workshop.</p> <p>The facilitators accompanying the workshop should make sure the messages promote learning and potentials and do not re-victimize the participants.</p>	30 minutes
Fourth moment: Reflecting team	audio recording device	The members of the research team comment among themselves without looking at the participants, in the style of a reflecting team, as proposed by	15 minutes

		<p>Tom Andersen. They talk about what happened in the encounter, highlighting in an appreciative way those resources and potentials that they begin to identify, and contribute to the consolidation of bonds among the participants by pointing out some of the common elements among them.</p> <p>This activity stems from the narrative view, from which the aim is to describe the participants appreciatively. It is important not to look at the participants, as the activity fulfills the objective of hearing from others what is valuable in oneself and one's relations, and it is important not to engage in conversation about this, as may be done in other types of activities proposed for the workshops.</p> <p>Social construction occurs not only in conversations, but in listening to what other people say to each other.</p> <p>After the activity, the participants are not asked for their opinion about the activity or what was said, given that this would lose the effect of its not being part of a conversation: it should simply be heard from others.</p>	
Fifth moment: Close	audio recording device	We will ask each person how they felt, and what stood out for them, or what learning they would take with them from the encounter. This activity may be carried out with the whole group or in smaller groups led by a research team member, taking into account the number of participants in the encounter.	15 minutes

Note: The proposed questions will be addressed by way of an interview with some of the educational staff, if the information about them does not emerge in the workshop. Their messages will be kept. Photos of the messages will be taken.

Workshop: Resources for Defense From the Effects of Violence

Objectives

- Facilitate the identification of past, present, and future moments in which the ill effects of violence have not been present or have been less present in the lives of children and in the relational contexts in which they participate.
- Continue the process of creating bonds that facilitate the emergence of peaceful relations within relational contexts involving children.
- Encourage each participant’s learning through the experiences narrated by their peers in each relational context.

Workshop 4: Resources for Defense From the Effects of Violence, With Children

Participatory environment	Materials	Brief description of activity	Time
First moment: Greetings	name tags in colored card in the form of a heart; woolen thread	<p>Each facilitator should greet each and every one of the girls and boys personally, telling the children that she is very happy to be with them again, that it gives her pleasure to see them, approaching at the same height as the children and showing natural affection, greeting them individually and inviting them to come in.</p> <p>Everyone sings to each child individually: “Waves come, waves come, waves go, Hello (name of child). How are you? We are very happy, we are very happy with you here, with you here.”</p> <p>Whilst the participants sing to each child, they hang the name tag in the form of a heart round the child’s neck, to be able to identify them and to provide the children with a reminder of the workshop. The children are asked for the name tags at the end of each workshop and told that they will be given them again at the beginning of the next workshop.</p>	15 minutes
Second moment: Resources for defense from the	seats; tables; figures constructed in	Jointly, we remember the story told in workshop 1 about Don Violencio (it will be told again by the facilitators in	30 minutes

effects of violence	workshop one by the children and their companions; colored modeling clay; boards for working with the modeling clay, which hopefully can be lent by the institution for the duration of the workshops, if not, it will be necessary to make them of a cheap material such as cardboard and take them; audio recording device	<p>the manner of a tale). Then the same groups as in workshop 1 are reformed.</p> <p>A facilitator in each group will quickly share, through the voice of her puppet of modeling clay, the ways in which Don Violencio has affected the lives and relations of the children.</p> <p>Hand out to the children the modeling clay figures they made in workshop 1. By means of play, ask the children and their families about when they managed to keep Don Violencio away, and how they managed to do it.</p> <p>In the same manner, they are asked about other ways in which they could keep Don Violencio out and not let him in. They are asked about any friends who may be allies in keeping him out. Where identified, these allies are then molded in modeling clay to be used in workshop 11.</p>	
Third moment: Socialization	audio recording device	<p>The other groups are invited to gather around one of the groups, while the group tells some of the stories its members have constructed. This group, or its facilitator, will speak through modeling clay figures and invite the other children and their companions to speak through their own modeling clay figures. This part should be very short, so that everyone has a chance to share something.</p> <p>On finishing the activity, the group of children and families are asked what they have learnt from the experiences of others.</p>	10 minutes
Fifth moment: Close		The facilitators sing the following song with the participants: “Wherever you go, give away lots of smiles, look around you, you will easily find, smiles of joy, the smile of a brother, if	5 minutes

		you try, wherever you go there will be peace, peace, peace, peace (Repeat).” [<i>Donde quiera que tú vayas, regala muchas sonrisas, mira a tu alrededor, fácilmente encontrarás, solecitos de alegría, la sonrisa del hermano, si te esfuerzas por lograrlo, donde vayas habrá paz, paz, paz, paz.</i>]	
--	--	--	--

Workshop 5: Resources for Defense From the Effects of Violence, With Families

Participatory environment	Materials	Brief description of activity	Time
First moment: The things we share		Together, in groups of no more than three or four members, participants are given three minutes to find three things that its members have in common (they are asked that these not be obvious things such, for example, as the color of their clothes, their gender, or skin color). Once the group has found three things in common, they are asked to join together with another group to find three things in common among the two groups, now with six or eight participants. Subsequently, each group shares with all those present the three common elements they found and comments on the common features of its members.	20 minutes
Second moment: Collective book	sheets of colored paper with questions printed and perforated; colored markers; ballpoint pens	Families will collectively draft a book on the lessons they learned. Each family will be given a sheet of paper to write or draw in response to the questions below.	50 minutes

Exploring resources for defense (past, present, and future) from effects of violence that have become naturalized among the children

- At what moments in your son or daughter’s life have the ill effects of violence not been present, or been present less than at other times?
- Could you tell us a story about your son or daughter in the present, in which there are either no ill effects of violence or less of them than at other times?

- Taking into consideration what your son or daughter is like, what possible future options would not involve ill effects of violence or involve less than are present at other times?

Exploring resources for defense (past, present, and future) from the effects of violence in family relationships

- In what family interactions have the ill effects of violence not been present, or been present less than at other times?
- Could you tell me a story about your current family relationships in which the ill effects of violence have not been present or been less present than at other times?
- Taking into consideration your family relationships, what do you believe would be some possible future options in which those ill effects would not be present or be less present than at other times?

Exploring resources for defense (past, present, and future) from the ill effects of violence in relationships in the community or child care center

- In which community or children’s center interactions have there been no ill effects of violence or less of them than at other times?
- Could you tell me a current story about the community, school or child care center in which there are no ill effects of violence or less effects than at other times?
- Taking into consideration previous experiences with the community school or child care center, what would be possible future options in which there would be no ill effects of violence or less than at other times?

Participatory environment	Materials	Brief description of the activity	Time
Third moment: Socialization	audio recording device; wool.	Participants will be asked to present what is expressed on the sheets of paper, and to expand on it where necessary. The sheets are compiled and a book is made up using woolen thread to bind it.	20 minutes
Fourth moment: Reflecting team	audio recording device	The members of the research team comment among themselves without looking at the participants, in the style of a reflecting team, as proposed by Tom Andersen. They talk about what happened in the encounter, highlighting in an appreciative way those resources and potentials that they begin to identify, and contribute to the consolidation of bonds among the participants by pointing out some of the common elements among them.	15 minutes

		<p>This activity stems from the narrative view, from which the aim is to describe the participants appreciatively. It is important not to look at the participants, as the activity fulfills the objective of hearing from others what is valuable in oneself and one's relations, and it is important not to engage in conversation about this, as may be done in other types of activities proposed for the workshops.</p> <p>Social construction occurs not only in conversations, but also in listening to what other people say to each other.</p> <p>After the activity, the participants are not asked for their opinion about the activity or what was said, given that this would lose the effect of its not being part of a conversation. It should simply be heard from others.</p>	
Fifth moment: Close	audio recording device	We will ask each person how they felt, and what stood out for them or what learning they would take away from the encounter. This activity may be carried out with the whole group or in smaller groups led by a research team member, taking into account the number of participants in the encounter.	15 minutes

Note: The workbook will be saved as a memory of the stories, to be used later in workshop 11. The questions posed will be expanded with some families through an interview in cases where the information sought does not emerge in the workshop.

Workshop 6: Resources for Defense From the Effects of Violence, With School or Child Care Center Staff and/or Community Agents

Participatory environment	Materials	Brief description of activity	Time
First moment: Greetings	audio recording device	In groups according to the number of facilitators, each participant is asked to share what changes oriented to peace-building they have continued to note	20 minutes

		among the children and families participating in the study, as well as among the teachers themselves.	
Second moment: Collective book	sheets of colored paper with questions printed and perforated; colored markers; ballpoint pens.	The school or child care center staff or community agents will collectively draft a book on the lessons they learned. Each person will be given a sheet of paper to write or draw something in response to each of the questions below.	50 minutes

Exploring children’s resources for defense (past, present, and future) from the ill effects of violence

- What moments in the lives of children do you know about in which there have been no ill effects of violence or less of them than at other times?
- Could you tell me a story about the children in which ill effects of violence are not present or less present than at other times?
- Taking into consideration what the children are like, what do you believe would be possible future options in which ill effects of violence would not be present or be less present than at other times?

Exploring resources for defense (past, present, and future) from the ill effects of violence in family relationships

- What interactions among the families of children do you know of in which the ill effects of violence have not been present or have been less present than at other times?
- Could you tell us a story about the current relationships of the families in which ill effects of violence have not been present or been less present than at other times?
- According to what you have seen among the relationships in the children’s families, what would be possible future options in which the ill effects of violence would not be present or be less present than at other times?

Exploring resources for defense (past, present, and future) from the ill effects of violence in relationships in the community or child care center

- In what interactions in the community, school, or child care center have the ill effects of violence not been present or been less present than at other times?
- Could you tell us a story about the community in which the ill effects of violence have not been present or been less present than at other times?
- According to your previous experiences in the community, school, or child care center, what would be possible future options in which the ill effects of violence would not be present or be less present than at other times?

Participatory environment	Materials	Brief description of the activity	Time
Third moment: Socialization	audio recording device; wool	The group is asked to present what they set out on the sheets of paper, and to expand where necessary. The sheets of paper are compiled into a book, and bound together with the wool.	20 minutes
Fourth moment: Reflecting team	audio recording device	<p>The members of the research team comment among themselves without looking at the participants, in the style of a reflecting team, as proposed by Tom Andersen. They talk about what happened in the encounter, highlighting in an appreciative way those resources and potentials that they begin to identify, and contribute to the consolidation of bonds among the participants by pointing out some of the common elements among them.</p> <p>This activity stems from the narrative view, from which the aim is to describe the participants appreciatively. It is important not to look at the participants, as the activity fulfills the objective of hearing from others what is valuable in oneself and one's relations, and it is important not to engage in conversation about this, as may be done in other types of activities proposed for the workshops.</p> <p>Social construction occurs not only in conversations, but in listening to what other people say to each other.</p> <p>After the activity, the participants are not asked for their opinion about the activity or what was said, given that this would lose the effect of its not being part of a conversation. It should simply be heard from others.</p>	15 minutes
Fifth moment: Close	audio recording device	We will ask each person how they felt, and what stood out for them, or what learning they would take away from the encounter. This activity may be	15 minutes

		carried out with the whole group or in smaller groups led by a research team member, taking into account the number of participants in the encounter.	
--	--	---	--

Note: The book will be saved as a memory of the stories, and used later in workshop 11. The questions posed will be expanded on with some professional or community actors by means of interviews, in cases where the information about them does not emerge in the workshop.

Workshop: Recognition of Resources and Potentials

Objectives

- Promote the recognition of resources, strengths, and individual and collective potential present among the children, their families, professionals interacting with them, and community actors, as well as others present in significant relationships in which the children participate.
- Continue the process of forming bonds that facilitate the emergence of peaceful relations within the relational contexts involving the children.
- Encourage learning by means of the resources identified by other actors in each relational context in which children participate.

Workshop 7: Recognition of Resources and Potentials, With Children

Participatory environment	Materials	Brief description of activity	Time
First moment: Greetings	name tags in the form of a heart in different colors of card, woolen necklace for the name tag	Each facilitator should greet each and every one of the girls and boys personally, telling the children that she is very happy to be with them again, that it gives her pleasure to see them, approaching at the same height as the children and showing natural affection, greeting them individually and inviting them to come in. Everyone sings to each child individually: “Waves come, waves come, waves go, Hello (name of child). How are you? We are very happy, we are very happy with you here, with you here.” Whilst the others in the workshop sing	15 minutes

		to each child, they hang the name tag in the form of a heart round the child's neck for identification and to provide the children with a reminder of the workshop. The children are asked for the name tags at the end of each workshop and told that they will be given them again at the beginning of the next workshop.	
Second moment: Individual and collective potentials for peace-building	seats; puppets; puppet theatre; puppet representing Don Violencio; puppets to represent the children's allies in keeping Don Violencio away (the puppets are to be made by the facilitators); audio recording device	<p>Together, participants will remember the story, narrated in workshop 1, and expanded on in workshop 4, about Don Violencio (told in the manner of a puppet play by the facilitators).</p> <p>The participation of both facilitators and children will be through the puppets. Each child will use the puppet from workshop 0, bearing her or his name.</p> <p>Through play with the puppets, the proposed topics will be worked with in the following manner:</p> <p>The facilitators who are behind the puppet theatre invite a child with a family member or teaching staff companion to come behind the theatre with them. The other participants are asked to remain seated, and told that they will each be called to take a turn in the order in which they are seated.</p> <p>It is possible that, while one child is taking a turn in the theatre, the facilitator may call another child and companion to participate.</p> <p>Depending on the number of children, each facilitator may work with a group of child participants and their family members or educational staff companions. In this case, more puppet theatres may be made with seats and tables, or made up from cardboard.</p>	40 minutes

		<p>The facilitator in dialogue with the children should be holding a device for recording audio.</p> <p>Once the child and companion are behind the theatre, one of the facilitators will begin to greet them:</p> <p>“Hello (name of child), How have you been?” “Hello (name of companion).”</p> <p>Subsequently, by means of play, the children, and their family member companions are asked about the subjects listed below (talking directly to the puppet with the child’s name or to the puppet with the companion’s name).</p> <p>After carrying out the activity with one child, another child and companion are called, until all have had a turn. It is important that the dialogue be a game and represented by the puppets, and not an interview.</p>	
--	--	---	--

Identification of individual resources

- What do you most like to do?
- If a friend were asked what he likes about you, what would she or he say?
- (To a family member with another puppet) What do you like best about (name of child)?
- (To other children about a companion, through the puppets) What do you like best about (name of child)?
- (The facilitator represents the arrival of Don Violencio). What do you do to keep Don Violencio away? (Here the aim is to find out the child’s potentials for peace-building.)
- (To a family member with another puppet) What is it about (name of child) that enables her or him to keep Don Violencio away?
- (To other children about a companion, through puppets) What is it about (name of child) that enables her or him to keep Don Violencio away?

Identification of collective resources

- What is it about the people who go to the park that keeps (has kept, or could keep) Don Violencio away, so that the people can play?
- What do you like most about your family?
- What has your family done to close the door to Don Violencio?

- (To the family member companion) What is it about your family that enables (has enabled, or may enable) you to close the door to Don Violencio?
- What do you like most about the school or child care center, or the people you meet in the park, or on the street?
- (Don Violencio is represented arriving at the school.) What can people do in the school or child care center so that Don Violencio does not come in?
- (To the family member or companion) What is there in the children’s center that keeps (has kept, or could keep) Don Violencio out?
- (Don Violencio is represented arriving at the park) What can you and your friends do so that Don Violencio does not come into the park and lets you play.
- (To the child’s companion) What is it about the people who go to the park that enables (has enabled, or could enable) them to prevent Don Violencio from coming to the park, in order to let the children play?
- (Don Violencio is represented arriving in the street or neighborhood) What can you do in the street or neighborhood so that Don Violencio goes away?
- (To the child’s companion) What is there among the people you know in the neighborhood that enables (has enabled, could enable them) to make sure Don Violencio does not arrive when you are in the street or neighborhood?

Participatory environment	Materials	Brief description of the activity	Time
Third moment: Close		Sing with the children and their companions: “Wherever you go, give away lots of smiles, look around you, you will easily find, smiles of joy, the smile of a brother, if you try, wherever you go there will be peace, peace, peace, peace (Repeat).”	5 minutes

Workshop 8: Recognition of Resources and Potentials, With Families

Participatory environment	Materials	Brief description of activity	Time
First moment: Greetings, advances in peace-building	audio recording device	In groups, according to the number of facilitators, each participant is asked to share what changes oriented to peace-building they have noted among their children and family or among other children, families, or teachers participating in the encounters.	20 minutes
Second moment: Figure of son or daughter	sheets of drawing paper or newsprint paper.	Family members are asked to draw a figure of their son or daughter on one of the sheets of paper, and to write their reflections inside the figure, or to make some images, alluding to the	50 minutes

	questions below.	
--	------------------	--

Identification of individual resources

- What do you consider it is about your daughter or son that has enabled (enables, or may enable) her or him to begin to create protection against violence?

Taking into account the peace-building potentials of the project titled *Niños, niñas y jóvenes constructores-as de paz*, [Children and young people as peace-builders], participants will be asked to include, near the heart in the drawing, the following:

Affective Potential

- What do you think it is about your daughter, or son, that enables her, or him, to love her/himself?
- What do you think it is about your daughter or son that enables her or him to love others?

Near the arms in the drawing, the following will be included:

Ethical potential

- What characteristics of your daughter or son enable her or him to make fair decisions?

Near the mouth, they write the following:

Communicative potential

- What characteristics of your daughter or son enable her or him to communicate with others respectfully?

Near the head, the participants will express the following:

Creative potential for the resolution of conflicts

- What do you think it is about your daughter or son that enables her or him to resolve conflicts as they arise?

Near the hands, the following will be included:

Political potential

- What characteristics enable your child to work with others?
- What enables your child to take democratic decisions?
- What enables your child to promote the common good?

The families will be asked to place a circle of wool representing the family around the drawing of their child. Inside the circle, they will place words or images, making reference to the following questions:

Identification of collective resources

- What is there among your family relationships that has enabled (enables, or could enable) family members to begin to form a shield against violence?

Each family will make a bigger circle that represents the community, or the child care center or school. In the circle, they will express their response to the following:

- What do you think there is among relationships in the community, or child care center or school, that has enabled (enables, or could enable) members to form a shield against violence?

Participatory environment	Materials	Brief description of the activity	Time
Third moment: Socialization	audio recording device	Each family will present the image with the circles to the other families. They will be asked to expand on the information where necessary.	20 minutes
Fourth moment: Reflecting team	audio recording device	<p>The members of the research team comment among themselves without looking at the participants, in the style of a reflecting team, as proposed by Tom Andersen. They talk about what happened in the encounter, highlighting in an appreciative way those resources and potentials that they begin to identify, and contribute to the consolidation of bonds among the participants by pointing out some of the common elements among them.</p> <p>This activity stems from the narrative view, from which the aim is to describe the participants appreciatively. It is important not to look at the participants, as the activity fulfills the objective of hearing from others what is valuable in oneself and one's relations, and it is important not to engage in conversation about this, as may be done in other types of activities proposed for the workshops.</p> <p>Social construction occurs not only in conversations, but in listening to what other people say to each other.</p>	15 minutes

		After the activity, the participants are not asked for their opinion about the activity or what was said, given that this would lose the effect of its not being part of a conversation. It should simply be heard from others.	
Fifth moment:	audio recording device.	We will ask each person how they felt, and what stood out for them, or what learning they would take away from the encounter. This activity may be carried out with the whole group or in smaller groups led by a research team member, taking into account the number of participants in the encounter.	15 minutes

Note: Some photos of the work will be taken to be used as inputs for workshops 11 and 12. The proposed questions will be gone into further with some families in the form of an interview, if the information about them does not emerge in the workshop.

Workshop 9: Recognition of Resources and Potentials, With School or Child Care Center Staff and/or Community Agents

Participatory environment	Materials	Brief description of activity	Time
First moment: Greetings	audio recording device	In groups, according to the number of facilitators, each participant is asked to share what changes oriented to peace building they have noted among their children and families, or among other children, families, and teachers participating in the encounters.	20 minutes
Second moment: maps of the community, school, or child care center	drawing paper, or flip chart paper; markers; colored paper cut into squares; masking or adhesive tape.	In two or three groups, participants will create a map of the community or child care center. They will place figures or drawings of the children, families, school or child care center staff or community agents on the map, in the spaces in which these people participate. Responses to the questions below are written on the squares of colored paper and stuck to the map next to the drawings of the corresponding actors.	50 minutes

Identification of individual resources

- What do think it is about the children that has enabled (enables, or could enable) them to create a shield against violence?

Taking into account the peace-building potentials of the project titled *Niños, niñas y jóvenes constructores-as de paz*, [Children and young people as peace-builders], participants will be asked to include the following:

Affective Potential

- What do you think it is about the children that enables them to love themselves?
- What do you think it is about the children that enables them to love others?

Ethical potential

- What characteristics of the children enable them to make fair decisions?

Communicative potential

- What characteristics of the children enable them to communicate with others respectfully?

Creative potential for the resolution of conflicts

- What do you think it is about the children that enables them to resolve conflicts as they arise?

Political potential

- What characteristics do the children have that enable them to work with others?
- What enables them to take democratic decisions?
- What enables them to promote the common good?

Near the images of families, participants will write responses to the following:

Identification of collective resources

- What is it about family relationships that has enabled (enables, or could enable) family members to form a shield against violence?

On the images of the community or the children’s center, participants will respond to the following:

- What do you think it is about relationships in the community that has enabled (enables, or could enable) its members to form a shield against violence?

Participatory environment	Materials	Brief description of the activity	Time
Third moment: Socialization	audio recording device	Each group will present the map its members made, and will be asked to expand on the information, where	20 minutes

		necessary. On finishing the activity, each group is asked what its members have learned from the experience of the other groups.	
Fourth moment: Reflecting team	audio recording device	<p>The members of the research team comment among themselves without looking at the participants, in the style of a reflecting team, as proposed by Tom Andersen. They talk about what happened in the encounter, highlighting in an appreciative way those resources and potentials that they begin to identify, and contribute to the consolidation of bonds among the participants by pointing out some of the common elements among them.</p> <p>This activity stems from the narrative view, from which the aim is to describe the participants appreciatively. It is important not to look at the participants, as the activity fulfills the objective of hearing from others what is valuable in oneself and one's relations, and it is important not to engage in conversation about this, as may be done in other types of activities proposed for the workshops.</p> <p>Social construction occurs not only in conversations, but in listening to what other people say to each other.</p> <p>After the activity, the participants are not asked for their opinion about it or about what was said, given that this would lose the effect of its not being part of a conversation. It should simply be heard from others.</p>	15 minutes
Fifth moment: Close	audio recording device	We will ask each person how they felt, and what stood out for them, or what learning they would take away from the encounter. This activity may be carried out with the whole group, or in smaller groups led by a research team member, taking into account the	15 minutes

		number of participants in the encounter.	
--	--	--	--

Note: Some photos will be taken of the work, as inputs for workshop 11. The proposed questions will be gone into further with some of the educational staff or community agents in the form of an interview, if the information about them does not emerge in the workshop.

Workshop 10: Focusing on Possible Futures, With Children, Families, School or Child Care Center Staff, and/or Community Actors

Objectives

- Promote the creation of alternative futures without violence among families and relational contexts in which children participate.
- Continue the process of creating bonds within the various relational contexts in which children participate to facilitate the emergence of peaceful relations.
- Continue to form bonds among children and the actors in the various relational contexts in which children participate in order to foster the emergence of peaceful relations.

Participatory environment	Materials	Brief description of activity	Time
First moment: Greetings, setting participants at ease	heart-shaped name tags	<p>Each facilitator should greet each and every one of the girls and boys personally, telling the child that she is very happy to be with her or him again, that it gives her pleasure to see them, approaching at the same height as the children and showing natural affection, greeting them individually and inviting them to come in.</p> <p>Song: “Pull My String” with verse “Pull my string, string, string. Pull my string. Don’t pull it any more, Hey!” [<i>Jálame la pititítá. Jálame la pititita pitita, pititá, jálame la pititítá, no me la jales más, jéi</i>]</p> <p>Sing with all participants in a circle the song “Pull my string,” asking them to move parts of the body, as if a string is pulling them, according</p>	15 minutes

		to the direction indicated by the facilitator. Repeat with different parts of the body. Remember the names of each of the children and hang the heart-shaped name tags around their necks to be able to identify them, and as a reminder and incentive for the workshop.	
Second moment: Dreams	newsprint or flip chart paper; paint; brushes; markers; pencils; audio recording device	Each family is asked, with the participation of the children, some groups of community actors and school or child care center staff, to set out on paper, or in another kind of artistic expression, their vision of how they would like their family, or group context (school, child care center, community, or neighborhood) to be, and how they would like their relations to be.	45 minutes
Third moment: Journalist type interview		The groups present their artistic expressions. The facilitators accompanying the workshop assume the role of journalists, and guide the discussion by means of the questions below.	30 minutes

Future Dreams

- What is that dream family or group like? What are the relations in that dream family or group like?

Identification of Resources or Potentials

- What part of that family or group of your dreams is already present in your family or group?
- What individual or collective potentials and strengths enable you to get closer to that future?

Strategies in Progress

- What are you doing now to get closer to that future?

Transformation Through Action

- What are some small, concrete actions that could bring you closer to that family or group of your dreams?

Participatory environment	Materials	Brief description of the activity	Time
Fourth moment: Reflecting team	audio recording device	<p>The members of the research team comment among themselves without looking at the participants, in the style of a reflecting team, as proposed by Tom Andersen. They talk about what happened in the encounter, highlighting in an appreciative way those resources and potentials that they begin to identify, and contribute to the consolidation of bonds among the participants by pointing out some of the common elements among them.</p> <p>This activity stems from the narrative view, from which the aim is to describe the participants appreciatively. It is important not to look at the participants, as the activity fulfills the objective of hearing from others what is valuable in oneself and one's relations, and it is important not to engage in conversation about this, as may be done in other types of activities proposed for the workshops.</p> <p>Social construction occurs not only in conversations, but in listening to what other people say to each other.</p> <p>After the activity, the participants are not asked for their opinion about the activity or about what was said, given that this would lose the effect of its not being part of a conversation. It should simply be heard from others.</p>	15 minutes
Fifth moment: Close	audio recording device	We will ask each person how they felt, and what stood out for them, or what learning they would take away from the encounter. This activity may be carried out with the whole group or in smaller groups led by a research team	15 minutes

		member, taking into account the number of participants in the encounter.	
--	--	--	--

Note: The proposed questions will be gone into further with some families and educational staff members or community actors in the form of an interview, if the information about them does not emerge in the workshop. Some photos will be taken of the work to be inputs for workshop 11.

Workshop 11: Counter Stories That Enable Peace-Building, With Children, Families, School or Child Care Center Staff, and Community Actors

Objectives

- Foster the creation of alternative stories to those involving violence, to empower collective processes of peace-building with the participation of children in early childhood, their families, professionals, and community actors.
- Strengthen the bonds between the children and other actors in the various relational contexts in which the children are involved in order to foster the emergence of peaceful relations.

Participatory environment	Materials	Brief description of activity	Time
First moment: Setting participants at ease		In turn, the children and facilitators accompany each child and family member, educational staff, or community companion, singing the song: “Waves come, waves come, waves go, Hello (name of child), How are you? We are very happy, we are very happy with you here, with you here.”	15 minutes
Second moment: A play (drama)	Bring the friends and allies made by the children in modeling clay, and the photos and artistic products made in previous workshops as reminders; drawing paper or flipchart paper;	The facilitators accompanying the workshop will promote a reflection on the importance of not forgetting the histories experienced, with the aim of not repeating them, or, of constructing other possibilities. In groups made up of the three sets of participants, children, families, and educational or community actors, the following items are reviewed: the friends and allies created by the children in workshop 4; the books created by families and educational staff in workshop 5; photos of the	40 minutes

	adhesive or masking tape	<p>figures made by the families, and maps of the community, school or child care center created in workshops 8 and 9; and photos from previous workshops.</p> <p>Each group selects one of the stories narrated in the previous workshops, and, by means of what they identified in the various workshops, creates a representation or play about the preferred outcome of the story.</p>	
Third moment: Presentation of the plays		<p>The plays will be presented to the other groups in the workshop.</p> <p>Together, the participants will discuss the plays presented, with reference to the questions below.</p>	35 minutes

- What motives did the characters have to act as they did?
- How was respect and forgiveness achieved in each story?
- Who else should be part of the story?
- How could you invite those people to participate in it?
- What new outcomes could be thought of for each story?
- How could these stories contribute to peace-building in the context of the Colombian armed conflict?

Participatory environment	Materials	Brief description of the activity	Time
Fourth moment: Reflecting team	audio recording device	<p>The members of the research team comment among themselves without looking at the participants, in the style of a reflecting team, as proposed by Tom Andersen. They talk about what happened in the encounter, highlighting in an appreciative way those resources and potentials that they begin to identify, and contribute to the consolidation of bonds among the participants by pointing out some of the common elements among them.</p> <p>This activity stems from the narrative view, from which the aim is to describe the participants</p>	15 minutes

		<p>appreciatively. It is important not to look at the participants, as the activity fulfills the objective of hearing from others what is valuable in oneself and one's relations, and it is important not to engage in conversation about this, as may be done in other types of activities proposed for the workshops.</p> <p>Social construction occurs not only in conversations, but in listening to what other people say to each other. After the activity, the participants are not asked for their opinion about the activity or what was said, given that this would lose the effect of its not being part of a conversation. It should simply be heard from others.</p>	
Fifth moment: Close	audio recording device	We will ask each person how they felt, and what stood out for them, or what learning they would take away from the encounter. This activity may be carried out with the whole group or in smaller groups led by a research team member, taking into account the number of participants in the encounter.	15 minutes

Note: The proposed questions will be gone into further with some participants in the form of an interview, if the information about them does not emerge in the workshop.

Workshop 12: Maintaining Both the Alternative Stories and the Changes Achieved, With Children, Families, School or Child Care Center Staff, and Community Actors

Objectives

- Promote the maintenance of alternative stories to those involving violence, and the sustainability of the changes achieved, in order to strengthen collective peace-building processes, with the participation of children in early childhood, their families, educational staff, and community actors.
- Strengthen the bonds between children and the actors in the various relational contexts in which the children participate, in order to maintain the peaceful relations that have been formed.

Participatory environment	Materials	Brief description of activity	Time
First moment: Greetings, setting participants at their ease		In turn, the other children and facilitators sing to each child with their family, educational or community companions: “Wherever you go, give away lots of smiles, look around you, you will easily find, smiles of joy, the smile of a brother, if you try, wherever you go, there will be peace, peace, peace, peace, (Repeat)” [<i>Donde quiera que tú vayas, regala muchas sonrisas, mira a tu alrededor, fácilmente encontrarás, solecitos de alegría, la sonrisa del hermano, si te esfuerzas por lograrlo, donde vayas habrá paz paz paz paz</i>]. Subsequently, the whole group is asked to sing the song.	15 minutes
Second moment: Collective mural	colored paper cut into squares; colored markers; pencils.	In groups, the three sets of participants (children, families, and school or child care center staff and community actors) will create pictures on the colored paper squares that include words and drawings. A mural will be created collectively by all the groups, using the pictures made by the groups. The mural will then be decorated by the children, with the help of the other participants. The creation of the mural will be guided by the questions below, which each group will receive in the form of a brightly colored poster. The questions take up the subjects worked on in the previous workshops.	40 minutes

Group A

- In the various workshops, we have identified what you value in your children, yourselves, and your families (mention some of the potentials or strengths that have emerged in the previous workshops). Looking to the future, in what

situations will it be important to use these strengths, and others, to resolve conflicts?

- How can you continue using these strengths from now on?
- There are moments in which you have shared with other people and accepted them, although they are different from yourselves. How can these experiences serve in the future to accept and share with others?
- In previous workshops, we talked about happy outcomes in your lives, and about the stories you would prefer to live, as a family. What have you done to attain these preferred stories (with happy outcomes), and what would you have to do to make them reality?
- What could you do to remember among yourselves these preferred stories (with happy outcomes)?

Group B

- In places where armed conflict exists, there are things that cannot be talked about in order to protect oneself and family. Sometimes, the things we haven't talked about may do us harm. How will you be able to talk about the things you experienced without them doing you harm?
- How will you forgive those who have harmed you, without this implying the repetition of experiences?
- How will you ask for forgiveness from those you have harmed or caused suffering to?
- What will you need to learn from others in order to maintain peaceful relations?
- What will the children, families, and teachers need to do in order to maintain peaceful relations?

Group C

- How will you maintain the bonds of friendship and trust that you have been creating among yourselves?
- For those who have experienced displacement: How could you feel that you belong to this city?
- How can you protect yourselves and your families, if violence returns?
- What experiences will be important in order to protect yourself from violence, if it returns?
- Normally, in armed conflict, courage, fearlessness, wearing a uniform, and carrying a weapon, etc., are among the things that are valued. What, other than those things that are valued in armed conflict, makes you and your children courageous?
- In armed conflict, many relationships are based on a few people commanding all the others. How will you maintain relations in which all can participate in equal conditions (in the family, neighborhood, and school or child care center)?

Participatory environment	Materials	Brief description of the activity	Time
Third moment: Creation and presentation of the mural	drawing or flipchart paper, adhesive or masking tape.	<p>A large audience will be invited. A paper background will be put up. Each group will share their responses and the pictures created in response to the questions. The pictures will be stuck to the mural.</p> <p>The facilitators will find a way to keep the mural and to display it in a prominent place in the next workshop, so it can be seen by the various actors who have participated in the workshops. Another option is to take a good quality photograph and have it printed out in a large durable format as cheaply as possible.</p>	35 minutes
Fourth moment: Reflecting team	audio recording device	<p>The members of the research team comment among themselves without looking at the participants, in the style of a reflecting team, as proposed by Tom Andersen. They talk about what happened in the encounter, highlighting in an appreciative way those resources and potentials that they begin to identify, and contribute to the consolidation of bonds among the participants by pointing out some of the common elements among them.</p> <p>This activity stems from the narrative view, from which the aim is to describe the participants appreciatively. It is important not to look at the participants, as the activity fulfills the objective of hearing from others what is valuable in oneself and one's relations, and it is important not to engage in conversation about this, as may be done in other types of activities proposed for the workshops.</p>	15 minutes

		<p>Social construction occurs not only in conversations, but in listening to what other people say to each other.</p> <p>After the activity, the participants are not asked for their opinion about the activity or what was said, given that this would lose the effect of its not being part of a conversation. It should simply be heard from others.</p>	
Fifth moment: Close	audio recording device	We will ask each person how they felt and what stood out for them, or what learning they would take away from the encounter. This activity may be carried out with the whole group or in smaller groups led by a research team member, taking into account the number of participants in the encounter.	15 minutes

Note: The proposed questions will be gone into further with some participants in the form of an interview, if the information about them does not emerge in the workshop.

Workshop 13: Sharing Results and Closure, With Children, Families, School or Child Care Center Staff, and Community Actors

Objectives

- Share with the various actors (children in early childhood, their families, educational staff, and /or community agents) what was found throughout the workshops.
- Review if and how the meanings constructed by the researchers coincide with those of the various actors (children in early childhood, their families, educational staff, and/or community agents).
- Close the process in the manner of a ritual, aiming to consolidate the changes achieved in the various encounters.
- Consolidate the bonds formed among the children and the other actors present in the various relational contexts in which the children participate, aiming to maintain the peaceful relations that have been constructed.

Participatory environment	Materials	Brief description of activity	Time
First moment: Greetings, setting		The other participants sing to each child individually: “Waves come,	15 minutes

participants at their ease		waves come, waves go, Hello (name of child), How are you? We are very happy, we are very happy with you here, with you here.”	
Second moment: Game with different bases	Images, according to the findings of the researchers, relating to the four topics proposed in the description of the activity. Sheets of paper, pencils, markers, crayons, recording device	Groups, with the participation of the three sets of actors (children, families, educational staff and/or community agents), visit the bases of the facilitators, who, with the help of the images, present findings relating to the following topics: 1. Impacts on the various actors in the face of violence. 2. Resources for defense against the presence of violence in the participants' lives and relations. 3. Individual and relational resources for peace-building 4. Possibilities for peace (desired futures, alternatives stories, ways of maintaining the changes achieved). Each group is asked to review the spare images to see if those images would complement the images proposed by the facilitators, or if group members would replace any of the facilitators' images with the spare images. The groups are asked to visit all the bases.	1 hour
Third moment: Presentation of the final images at each base	Audio recording device	After the groups have visited all the bases, the facilitator in charge of each base quickly presents the images selected for that topic to everyone in the workshop, with a short explanation.	20 minutes
Fourth moment: Presentation of diplomas (appreciative) and collage	Diplomas and reproductions (printed economically) of the collage	A large public will be invited for the presentation of diplomas to each participating person, family, or group. It will be important to create a solemn space of recognition for each person. The diplomas are to be read out loud. Examples of diplomas and collage are annexed (Appendix 3).	25 minutes

Appendix 3

Diploma of Recognition



Recognition of

For having contributed to peace-building in the research “Children in the Context of Armed Conflict: From Victimization to Peace Promoting Narratives” from

*Whoever reads this certificate will note that _____
is an excellent peace-builder and an exceptional human being because of
her*

Congratulations!

Granted 20th of March 2014 in Bogotá

Signature _____