THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

CONCEPTUALIZED PEACE: A STUDY OF COLOMBIAN ADOLESCENTS' MEANING MAKING AND CIVIC DEVELOPMENT

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO

THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF COMPARATIVE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

BY

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CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

JUNE 2019

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Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank my wonderful wife, Catherine Curley, and the newest member of our family, Ian. This process–with its challenges, successes, and journey of self-reflection–would not have been possible without Catherine's support, and I feel incredibly blessed to share in its ending with Ian. It has been said about raising children that it takes a village, and as I learn this lesson as a new father, I recognize a project as extensive as a dissertation also takes a wide range of close support. To this end, I would like to thank my mother for always expressing her pride in me, my brother, and the entire Curley clan.

I am deeply indebted to Dr. Margaret Beale Spencer and her assistant Oliver Garland. I left my first conversation with Dr. Spencer over five years ago energized and filled with a sense of purpose. Throughout my graduate studies, I have been motivated by her support, encouragement, and reflections on the necessity of the work we do. I am forever grateful for all her efforts to support my pursuits, as well as her care and consideration of me and my family. I extend this thanks to Oliver, who has always been attentive to my requests both large and small.

I am grateful to my other committee members not just for their academic guidance, but for their investment in me as a person. They have taught me about mentorship and interpersonal care in higher education. I am particularly thankful to Dr. Micere Keels for all I have learned from her about conducting and publishing research as part of a team, but also the care and interest she expressed in reflecting on and balancing these career pressures with personal life. I am thankful to Dr. Fathali Moghaddam for his constant openness to support my development as a scholar. He has always said yes to my requests, and has given his time and energy to me without hesitation. Lastly, I appreciate the similar willingness that Dr. Enrique Chaux has had in supporting me and sharing his knowledge on and connections to civic and peace education in Colombia. Without his support, the breadth and scope of this dissertation would not have been possible.

This dissertation project required the support of so many in Colombia, but I would like to highlight those without whom it would not have been possible. First, thank you to Dr. Ariel Sanchéz Meertens. Amid a busy time in his own life, he was not only open and enthusiastic about my work, but integrated me into his impressive research project. I am also deeply grateful to Dr. Fabio Idrobo, despite his affinity for a certain northeastern baseball team. His concern for me as a person was equally matched by his inspiring commitment to supporting the psychosocial health of ex-combatants, victims, and many others in Colombia. I am also thankful to Dr. María Cecilia Dedios for sharing our interests, her thinking about these questions, and her collaboration in investigating government discourses. I would also like to thank Luisa Pizano and the Alianza Educativa network, including its schools and administrators who so warmly received me. Luisa has shaped the lives of so many students and educators in Colombia. I would like to thank those at the National Ministry of Education, as well as various Secretaries of Education, for their help

in connecting me with schools. Finding research sites was equally supported by the Fundación Compartir, and particularly Luisa Gómez Guzman and Gustavo Alvira Gómez. I am grateful for their enthusiasm for peace education and efforts to support my research.

I am immensely appreciative of the Pizano family´s seemingly unending generosity. MY dissertation would simply not have been possible without Julia Elvira, Diego, Pedro, Fernando, and Isabel opening up their home and family to me. They cared for, encouraged, and nourished me—physically and mentally—and I will forever be grateful to all of them. I would also be remiss not to mention Flor Veloza and Guillermina del Socorro, who did so much for me from providing good laughs to helping me through complicated phone calls in Spanish.

I would also like to recognize various organizations and people within them. First, the Pozen Family Center for Human Rights has been a second home for me during my graduate career and has supported my work and personal development. The Center and its staff—Susan Gzesh, Mark Bradley, Tara Peters, Ashley Pierce, Kirsten Gindler, and the lovely Kathy Scott—have been a true community, along with providing critical financial and administrative aid. I also would like to thank the Center for Latin American Studies, and especially Jamie Gentry and Natalie Arsenault, as well as the Pearson Institute for the Study and Resolution of Global Conflict for grant and special event funding. The most extensive financial support came from the National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship. In obtaining and managing this fellowship, I am deeply thankful to Jessica Smith, Karen Rosenthall, and Dr. Fred Stafford of UChicago Grad.

I also owe so much to those in Comparative Human Development who supported me along the journey. I am particularly appreciative of my fellow graduate students who taught me about research, being a graduate student, and life in general, and who have always been so willing to be supportive and collaborative. First, I would like to thank Dr. Seamus Power, who has profoundly shaped my work and identity through being a great colleague, insightful psychologist, supportive collaborator, inspiring instructor, and good mate. I would also be remiss not to thank Carly Bertrand, Dr. Rebecca Frausel, Dr. Keshia Harris, Dr. Tasneem Mandviwala, Coltan Scrivner, and Dr. Erin McFee. Beyond these student colleagues, CHD is a unique department held together by its devoted administrators and faculty. I thank Janie Lardner for her tireless efforts on behalf of the students and faculty, Dr. Rick Shweder for his support of me personally and of the program, and Dr. Anna Mueller for her true commitment to student growth and development.

Finally, I must thank the adolescent research participants. Early on in my graduate career, Dr. Spencer encouraged me to recognize that research participants are holistic, complicated people with rich lives and embedded in systems and histories. This humanity often gets lost, cannot be fully detailed, or is utilized for the benefits of others. As I finish this project, I think about each and every one of these young people, wonder about their futures, and am deeply thankful for their time and openness that has allowed me to put this forth. In many ways, this text is theirs.

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Introduction

I need all of you young people to become energized by this process—to become vocal actors and agitators. There is no higher cause for anyone in any situation in any war-torn country than striving for peace.

August 15, 2015

Young people will lead the construction of peace, and our education system will provide them with the tools to do it.

February 12, 2016
Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos

Can I support peace? Yeah. We all can. I think that we all by adding our little grain of sand, we build something. Building peace doesn't have to come from a politician, the president of the country—no. Because remember, we live in a democracy and we all have the right to participate in politics. And well, we all have the right to participate, to express our opinions. For example, maybe I go out to a non-violent protest to express my opinions. I am adding my *granito de arena* because our government has to listen to my opinion—or not my opinion, but the opinion of the people in general as it carries out a peace process.

August, 2017
Andres, 18 years old, Bogotá, Colombia

Over the last few decades, research on young people as social and political actors has blossomed (e.g., Haste, 2004; Sherrod, Torney-Purta, & Flanagan, 2010; Youniss et al., 2002). There has been increasing attention to the roles that young people[1] play in conflict and post-conflict settings, while the social power and influence of youth mobilization has been evident in such movements as the Arab Spring, Black Lives Matter, Occupy Wall Street, and others (Hoffman & Jamal, 2012; Honwana, 2019; Pickard & Bessant, 2018; Reimer, 2012). In conflict and post-conflict contexts, younger generations can be influential as propagators of political violence (Urdal, 2006), agents of change (S. Schwartz, 2010), peace builders (Del Felice & Wisler, 2007; Siobhan McEvoy-Levy, 2006), cultural innovators (Bucholtz, 2002), and economic forces (Del Castillo, 2008; Urdal, 2004). Young people can shape national trajectories both through action in the present (S. Schwartz, 2010) and as they become societies' leaders, decision makers, and adult citizens in the future (Lerner, Dowling, & Anderson, 2003). This potential is often acknowledged—explicitly or implicitly—by transitional and post-conflict governments and civil societies.[2] School systems, speeches, laws, NGO programs, and media abound with references to the need to form youth as active and productive citizens (Davies, 2004; Siobhan McEvoy-Levy, 2006).

These goals for young people's civic development are often integrated into educational settings and curriculum. Education for citizenship may serve as a link between the construction of a thriving democratic civic culture with building peace and a harmonious society (e.g., Bickmore, 2008; Davies, 2004). In transitional societies, peace education has been used to

[1] Throughout this dissertation, I employ the terms "children," "adolescents," "young people," and "youth." I use the first to refer to individuals who are under the age of 12, and then "adolescents" and "young people" to refer to those between ages 12 and 18. "Youth" is used more generally for younger generations.

[2] I use "transitional societies" to refer to societies trying to end internal armed political conflict through peace processes or peace building initiatives (Philpott, 2010).

integrate these two goals. It serves as an approach to building social fabric and teaching about historical knowledge and citizenship in societies embroiled in or transitioning out of conflict (McGlynn, Zembylas, Bekerman, & Gallagher, 2009). Peace education is based in the perspective that achieving a stable, peaceful democracy necessitates coordinated government and civil society efforts to address the root causes of conflict through promoting "cultures of peace." Though it is an expansive category that can encompass a wide range of approaches and content, it is primarily used in reference to instruction to prevent conflict: teaching about conflict resolution skills, group dynamics, emotional regulation, and civic and political participation (Harris & Morrison, 2013). To this end, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization defines it as promoting respect and skills that are enacted in interactions with others: "Respect refers to the development of respect for self and for others; skills refer to specific communication, cooperation and behavioral skills used in conflict situations" (2008, p. 3). All in all, a growing expansion of peace education is indicative of increasing recognition of the importance of younger generations' skills and education in relation to societal peace, as well as the connection between their actions, attitudes, and orientations as peace builders and as members of their community.

The desired outcomes young people are inherently linked to their development. Development, importantly, is neither an entirely top-down nor bottom-up process. In relation to societal peace, individual and collective outcomes are not determined by environmental factors, but are influenced by these contexts. In other words, children and young people are active agents as they interpret, make meaning, and respond in relation to discourses, events, people, and experiences of their peers, families, communities, and societies (Haste, 2004; Spencer, Dupree, & Hartmann, 1997). With the goal of supporting effective and participatory democracies, a rich

literature demonstrates that young people's emerging citizenship is based in these psychological processes (see Haste, 2004; Hess & Torney, 1968; Hope & Spencer, 2017; Sherrod, Flanagan, & Youniss, 2002). To this end, if conflict and post-conflict societies seek to promote participatory and active peace building identities, peace education and other efforts to energize and incorporate younger generations in societal processes of change vis-a-vis violence must draw on developmental frameworks. Policies and programs, however, tend to focus not on the underlying psychological processes, but rather the external factors or interventions associated with pro or anti-peace outcomes for youth (Berents & McEvoy-Levy, 2015; S. Schwartz, 2010). Less attention has been paid to the ways that these potential peace builders interpret, make meaning, and respond to programs, socialization, and lived experiences.

While there have been a few studies about of children and adolescents' ideas about peace (see Hakvoort & Oppenheimer, 1998; Hashemi & Shahraray, 2009; Sarrica, 2007), there is still a need for a framework that can situate this work within broader identity processes and civic development. The study of ideas about peace could be more robust and theoretically grounded by further articulating how developmental processes underlie the ways that individuals think, relate to, and act. This understanding, in turn, would provide a critical foundation for creating more effective policy and programming, like peace education, to encourage young people's active role in societal peace. For example, greater attention to young people's understandings of conflict and peace could advance programming that engages them in peace in ways more connected to their experiences and understandings (Bellino, 2017; Sánchez Meertens, 2017).

The Current Project

In this dissertation, I outline a framework for understanding the role of psychological interpretation in the development of peacebuilding identities, and then demonstrate its utility

through an investigation of how Colombian adolescents make meaning of peace within a transitional context. Throughout the text, I use meaning making to refer to how individuals interpret discourses, experiences, and other elements from their social contexts in understanding salient concepts, social worlds, and themselves (Bruner, 1990; Hammack & Pilecki, 2012; Spencer, 2006). Meaning making is linked to individuals' identities, future trajectories, and citizenship, which then can influence societal level peace and conflict. Peacebuilding can then be advanced by supporting individuals' belief in peace and their own abilities to act as peace builders. Importantly, peacebuilding in this usage does not only refer to national and international strategies "to lay the foundations for sustainable peace and sustainable development" (United Nations Peacebuilding Fund, 2013), but rather in a more inclusive manner that refers to multifaceted processed across multiple levels of society, including possible individual contributions of individuals to the broader project of addressing violence in all its forms (Berents, 2018; Boulding, 2000; Charbonneau & Parent, 2013).

I argue for this connection between individuals' engagement in peacebuilding and meaning making by outlining a new theoretical concept: *conceptualized peace*. This term represents how individuals' understand peace, the degree to which they believe in the possibility of a peaceful future for their society, and their understanding of their own efficacy in relation to peace building. This theoretical work extends the fields of peace studies and peace education by integrating developmental theory on meaning making, while linking both into current understandings in civic development. Specifically, *conceptualized peace* can contribute to these literatures by framing the role of psychological interpretation and response in orientations toward peace: each person draws on social discourses and personal experiences to create understandings of what peace and one's role in it could entail. These orientations may not be positive or

prosocial. Individuals may feel that peace is utopic, reject any notion of peace, or even actively engage in violence. Nevertheless, building on developmental literature, *conceptualized peace* offers a frame for the bidirectional interaction between ecological factors and individuals and argues that meaning making processes underlie such outcomes, whether the outcomes are prosocial and engaged or disillusioned and disconnected. Understanding these processes can then offer possible areas for intervention in policy and peace education—like how to support self-efficacy as peacebuilders—with the ultimate goal of progress toward societal peace.

Defining *conceptualized peace* is a first aim of this dissertation. A second entails the empirical investigation of Colombian adolescents' *conceptualized peace* within the context of a national peace process.[3] To this end, I first employ developmental and social psychological theories to guide the formulation of *conceptualized peace*. I then explore *conceptualized peace* for a specific group through a multi-part study of Colombian adolescents' understandings of peace. Specifically, I analyze and discuss these young people's perspectives on peace as a concept, their roles in building it, as well as their own and their country's futures. This approach recognizes the inherent contextualized nature of development as I consider their *conceptualized peace* in relation to the developmental, historical, and social contexts in which they are embedded.

The dissertation is organized around these two aims as I first articulate what *conceptualized peace* is, then apply it in the study of Colombian adolescents, and finally attempt to demonstrates its implications for societal projects of peace in Colombia and more broadly.

[3] It is important to acknowledge the future of peace is still undetermined in Colombian society. Since the signing of the accords in 2016, violence has still persisted in certain areas the long-term stability of what was agreed upon in the pact may be in jeopardy. Additionally, dissident members of demobilized groups and other armed actors continue to operate and engage in violent activity (LeGrand, van Isschot, & Riaño-Alcalá, 2017; Peñaranda & Bermudez, 2017).

Chapter 1 lays a foundation for the dissertation through four interconnected sections: the empirical background and literature upon which I develop *conceptualized peace*; the definition of this concept in relation to existing theoretical frameworks; a potted history to provide background on youth, peace, and education in Colombia; and my research questions as motivated and based in the previous three sections of the chapter.

First, I detail the relevant literature in youth civic development and peace studies. This review is meant to provide a foundation for the development of *conceptualized peace* and for the study of Colombian adolescents. With this goal in mind, I begin with how peace has been defined and thought about within the field of peace studies. I then discuss the theoretical and empirical links between civic development and peacebuilding. This bridge then serves as an entry into the rich literature on young people's meaning making and agency in constructing civic identities.[4] I end this section with a discussion of young people's meaning making of peace by demonstrating why a focus on individuals' psychological processing matters for peace studies. I also review available research on children and adolescents' conceptualizations of peace.

The second section of the first chapter moves from this literature to an articulation of the dissertation's theoretical orientation. Specifically, I knead Moscovici's Social Representations Theory (SRT; Moscovici, 1981) and Spencer's Phenomenological Variant of the Ecological Systems Theory (PVEST; Spencer et al., 1997) to define *conceptualized peace*. These two theories effectively model how meaning making and identity development relate to ecological

[4] In this manuscript, I use civic identity in reference to the aspect of individuals' sense of self that relates to "the extent of their agency, their social responsibility to others, their part in the political process, and their commitment to moral principles" (Youniss, McLellan, & Yates, 1997, p. 625-626). Civic identity can thus be understood as a process by which an individual "actively constructs—and co-constructs with others—explanations and stories that make sense of experience, to develop an identity that locates her or him in a social, cultural, and historical context. Self and group identity, negotiated through narrative and dialogue as well as through trying to make sense of social structures and representations, are crucial to understanding the construction of the citizen" (Haste, 2004, p. 420).

and developmental context. I first employ Moscovici's SRT to situate individuals' conceptions of peace in relation to socially-constructed discourses about peace (i.e., social representation of peace constructed through government speeches, policy, and educational materials). SRT provides a framework for understanding how individuals internalize and adapt social discourses about key concepts for themselves. I then integrate this dynamic between social discourses and the individual into developmental psychological processes through Spencer's PVEST. PVEST is fundamentally based in an understanding that ecological context (i.e. risk and protective factors) may not be experienced as such by individuals. It models how individuals, as part of developmental processes, make meaning out of ecological context. Together, these theories offer an effective approach for studying how youth think about salient concepts in their societies in relation to their own identities. As adolescents form understandings of ideas like peace, they also connect these concepts to the emerging ways that they think about themselves, their social positions, and their futures (e.g., careers, civic involvement). The dynamic and contextualized meaning they create—interrelating peace, their understandings and interpretations of society, their identities, and their future orientations—is their *conceptualized peace*.

After this theoretical definition, I then move into contextualizing the research project through a brief history of conflict, peace processes, and youth in Colombia. Admittedly, this section cannot detail the full complexity of the sociopolitical environment in which these young people are embedded. Instead, my aim is to demonstrate how this study is epistemologically rooted in the lived reality of the participants, as well as to orient the reader to the dynamic and nuanced history of violence, the salience of discourses on peace, and the current socio-political moment as young Colombians come of age and define their own personal and civic identities.

After formulating *conceptualized peace* and detailing the historical and sociopolitical context of the study, I end Chapter 1 by applying the theoretical framework to a set of research questions related to adolescents' meaning making of peace within the Colombian context. The four questions are all sub-parts of the broader research objective: to define and explore how youth meaning making of peace occurs and relates to potential identity development as peace builders.

Chapter 2 presents the multiple methods and datasets I employ in this investigation of Colombian adolescents, meaning making, and peace. In this chapter, I situate each of the three datasets within the broader study and detail the procedures and methods used in data collection and analysis for each. The first part of the empirical portion of the dissertation is a discourse analysis of 41 speeches, press releases, and curricular documents in order to identify and deconstruct government descriptions of how youth should be oriented in relation to peace. While the impact of these discourses inevitably varies for individual youth, the analysis of this data provides a better understanding of the broader discursive environment within which young Colombians are embedded. The findings accentuate and contextualize the following two datasets addressing adolescents' own reported ideas, beliefs, and attitudes.

The second dataset encompasses semistructured interviews with Colombian adolescents concerning their opinions about the peace process, peace as an abstract concept and part of their daily lives, their roles as peace builders, and the future (both personal and of Colombia). These interviews were collected over two periods of time. From June to September of 2016, I interviewed 96 adolescents between fifteen and eighteen years old who lived in various areas of the capital, Bogota. From June to September of 2017, I collected interviews with 233 additional adolescents from 36 schools across Colombia.

The third dataset draws on questionnaires administered to a diverse group of Colombian adolescents. Specifically, a Colombian colleague at *La Universidad Nacional*, Ariel Sánchez Meertens, visited 40 schools in 2016 and collected close to 1,500 questionnaires from Colombian students in their final two years of high school. The questionnaire asked students to write their responses to 25 open-ended questions, which included how and what the students had learned about Colombia's history of conflict, their opinions about the peace process, and their imaginings of Colombia's future. I analyze this data and identify themes specifically in visions of the future and peace in order to provide greater validity and to complement the interview data.

After detailing each of the datasets, methods, and analytic procedures, I present my findings in Chapter 3. The chapter includes multiple analyses that address the breadth of the research questions related to these Colombian adolescents' *conceptualized peace*. I begin the results by detailing the official discourse on peace and youth constructed through government speeches and documents. As a whole, these documents situate young people as those ultimately responsible for the success of the peace project in Colombia through how they act toward others in their immediate surroundings (i.e., their interpersonal relations) and as political actors. Civil society and the government are depicted as having provided the necessary foundations and tools for youth, and now it is up to them as individuals to become engaged and contribute to peace.

This element of the predominant social representation provides ecological context for adolescents' meaning making of peace as presented in the semi-structured interviews. Analyses of this second dataset demonstrate that the adolescent participants tended to focus on peace as beginning in the individual (that is, with internal states and attitudes). Constructing a peaceful society was presented by many as the responsibility of each community member by fostering inner peace and then enacting it through interpersonal relations and community level actions.

This focus on individual, rather than structural, factors was also related to expressed feelings of self-efficacy and active participation as peace builders. In relation to the future, many noted significant obstacles to peace, but did express feeling that their own futures were related to that of the country. Participants referred to issues of corruption, lack of funding for education, and street violence (i.e., robberies, micro-level drug trade) as particular areas of concern. Overall, these results indicate that when aspects of identity and concrete social context are activated, these young people may shift their thinking about peace in ways that reflect their understanding of their social positions and efficacy.

Finally, the questionnaire data offers a complement to these findings from the interviews. In articulating their visions of the future, many more students were optimistic than pessimistic about the possibility of greater peace in Colombian society. Few of the respondents mentioned themselves as active in building a peaceful future, though among the optimistic group the descriptions of the future provided space for individuals to act as agents. Those who were disillusioned with the possibility of peace frequently noted corruption, economic inequality, physical security, and the problematic current state of Colombian society in their visions of the future. To this end, their understanding and experience of their more proximal ecological contexts (i.e., neighborhood violence and security) and distal sociopolitical systems (which, like economic inequality, may have effects on their lives and future possibilities) may relate to how they understand the applicability and possibility of peace.

The end of the dissertation, Chapter 4, brings the different analyses together. This chapter begins with a summary of the key findings, and then an integration of the different analyses in order to address my research questions more holistically. In this discussion, I use an adapted triangulation—that is, bring the different datasets into discussion—to provide greater validity

and find convergence (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). Specifically, I use the analysis of government discourses to provide a frame for and comparison for youth's own meaning making through the interviews. Then, I compare findings on their ideas about their efficacy, their own roles in peace building, and the future with the analyses from the questionnaires. Through this process, I comment on what *conceptualized peace* for these youth as they develop as citizens within a transitional period in Colombia. The results demonstrate that youth integrate understandings of their societies, expectations and norms related to peacebuilding, and their experiences in families, schools, and communities.

I conclude this dissertation by presenting the implications of the empirical investigation and broader theoretical project. The study has two goals that are addressed in this final section. The first is to detail what *conceptualized peace* is theoretically and then demonstrate how it can be understood with Colombian adolescents. To this end, in Chapter 4, I discuss and integrate the different analyses not only in relation to each other, but also as demonstrating *conceptualized peace*. I argue that *conceptualized peace* offers a conceptual framework for understanding the findings within developmental and ecological context.

The second goal of the dissertation is to support the applied context of peace and civic education in transitional contexts. To address this aim, I first detail the implications of my findings for peace education and peace building in Colombia. While a main focus of the Colombian National Ministry of Education in the 2000s was to strengthen civic education across the country's schools, this shifted to peace education with the beginning of the peace process in the early 2010s (Chaux & Velásquez, 2016). These initiatives involved changing national standardized tests, mandating teaching about these topics, and curricular resources. The ultimate

implementation, however, depended on each individual educational institution because of the decentralized nature of the Colombian school system.

I argue that while some schools created effective programing, the structure of the current peace education law meant that these supports were highly dependent on the will and decision of principals and teachers. This local level decision-making was not problematic in and of itself; these adults were likely to understand local contexts that influence students. Nevertheless, more effective broad support for prosocial and engaged *conceptualized peace* could come from increased focus on promoting efficacy and concrete pathways for youth to support peace. Specifically, I articulate how a critical peace education approach could more effectively promote engaged outcomes as peacebuilders. If active and prosocial civic outcomes are indeed goals of policy and programming in these settings, young people's critical awareness and engagement should be supported by focusing on salient developmental challenges, youth's perspectives, and their lived social realities. Young people should be provided with opportunities for engaged peace building and concrete demonstrations of the possibilities for individual action and structural change. Critical peace education offers policymakers and educators strategies for thinking about these strategies, and effectively meshes with *conceptualized peace* as an underlying framework.

Finally, I recognize several of the study's limitations and, in conjunction with the findings and implications, argue for a more extensive research program and further investigation based on *conceptualized peace*. Future directions include exploring how to develop this formulation of *conceptualized peace*, applying a theoretical framework of *conceptualized peace* to studies of diverse young people across the world, and exploring broader developmental processes in relation to peace and identity by studying *conceptualized peace* with older

generations. These extensions hold great potential for furthering efforts to understand how individual psychological processes can be harnessed to build more peaceful societies.

CHAPTER 1

MAKING MEANING OF PEACE: ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT, CIVIC IDENTITY, AND THE COLOMBIAN CONTEXT

Human development is inherently embedded in context (Bronfenbrenner, 2009; Havighurst, 1948, 1953). While our physical and psychological traits have bases in genetic makeup, we are also constantly involved in a co-construction of self and society as we make meaning, build identities, and act within social, political, and historical systems (Bronfenbrenner, 2009; Vygotsky, 1980).[5] In this dissertation, I employ an ecological perspective in studying young people's meaning making as part of their development. The dissertation aims to address a need not only for further integration of developmental theories into peace studies, but also for more work on psychological processes and influences underlying young people's engagement in peacebuilding (Berents, 2018; Siobhan McEvoy-Levy, 2011). I thus both present a conceptualization of the relationship between meaning making of peace and identity, as well as a study of this *conceptualized peace* in adolescent Colombians. To investigate these psychological processes, the research project draws on a rich literature about adolescence, identity formation, and citizenship. A synthesis of previous relevant work provides a foundation to advance theory (through the articulation of *conceptualized peace*) and research (through the study of Colombian adolescents). Integrating these fields into peace studies offers insights in working toward an often-stated goal of achieving peaceful and democratic societies: the development and support of future generations as active, peaceful citizens.

[5] I situate this dissertation project within a psychological tradition focused on the exploration of the co-creation of individuals and social worlds (Shweder, 1991). I acknowledge that ontological development is influenced by biological factors, including genetic makeup, but my developmental approach focuses on exploring the interaction between social context and psychological processing in driving identity outcomes (Coll, Bearer, & Lerner, 2014).

This research project is situated at the intersection of developmental psychology, citizenship, identity formation, and peace studies. In this chapter, I first detail the relevant insights from each of these literatures and demonstrate the connections between them. Once I have laid this groundwork, I then outline the theoretical orientation of *conceptualized peace,* and argue that it provides an effective framework for understanding how people construct identities as peace builders. I draw on and knead together Moscovici's SRT and Spencer's PVEST to situate societal discourses in relation to individuals' meaning making (an agentic process of interpretation and response). Building on these theories, *conceptualized peace* is a conceptual framework for the psychological meaning individuals give to peace, which is inherently a response to ecological contexts and discourses and in turn influences the possible formation of peace building identities. In the rest of the dissertation, I deepen the articulation of *conceptualized peace* by applying this theoretical framework to the study of Colombian adolescents. Before detailing the research questions at the end of this chapter, I describe the historical trajectory and current moment in Colombia. Throughout the dissertation, I aim to maintain a theoretical and explicit focus on context. Thus, I present this brief historical, political, and social orientation to Colombia to situate the research questions, as well as demonstrate how the research and analysis are oriented toward ecological context. Finally, the chapter ends with four research questions that guide this study of *conceptualized peace* in Colombian adolescents.

Literature Review

As a broad goal with this dissertation, I aim to contribute to literatures on peace and youth by extending understandings of young people's meaning making amid societal changes and discourses. I begin to build a foundation for this by detailing prevailing orientations in peace studies. I then articulate the links between peace and citizenship, before surveying developmental

frameworks and previous research on meaning making in relation to peace. At the start of this review, it is important to acknowledge that peace as a concept is not apolitical. That is, the international promotion of peace and its operationalization in contexts of conflict has been integrally linked to liberal, state-building programs. These discourses and their application have been criticized by scholars on a number of levels, including as de-localizing peacebuilding, ignoring grassroots efforts (Mac Ginty, 2008), and "represent[ing] the ways donors, governments and institutions produce political subjects or citizens best suited to fulfill their policies, agendas, interests and ideologies" (Richmond & Mitchell, 2011, p. 12). While *conceptualized peace* ultimately focuses on how individuals interpret and make meaning for themselves of these discourses and ideas, peace is both practically and conceptually linked into international sociopolitical dynamics. Much of the field of peace studies assumes peace as a positive goal for societies, but the means and forms it takes are contested.

Peace Studies

Theorizing on peace is most commonly guided by a dual approach to ending physical forms of violence (negative peace) and addressing the root causes of violence (i.e., establishing systems and conditions that promote justice, equality, and harmony; positive peace). Johan Galtung (1969) first proposed this two-pronged approach to peace building in the 1960s, and it has become the foundation for much of peace studies. Galtung and others have added further nuance and developed the dual aspects of peace into a broader matrix that addresses multiple forms of violence (Galtung & Fischer, 2013; see Figure 1). This framework details three types of violence, which offer six areas for peacebuilding (one negative and one positive peace response for each of the three). The six higher-level categories draw attention to varied forms of violence and responses, but also leave many unanswered theoretical and empirical questions. That is,

applying this framework to everyday lives and contexts is not always straightforward: for example, how are cooperation, equity, equality attained, and what does a "culture of peace" concretely entail? Scholars and international organizations have looked to address some of this ambiguity by offering concrete applications and further definition. For example, the United Nations has laid out eight elements to a culture of peace: education (with a particular focus on conflict resolution); sustainable development; respect for human rights; gender equality; democratic participation; understanding, tolerance, and solidarity; participatory communication; and international peace and security (e.g., disarmament, de-escalation; General Assembly resolution 53/24, 1999). Furthermore, within the peacebuilding literature, there are specific paths and strategies to promoting the six aspects of peace. Peace education, for example, often centers on promoting cultures of peace (i.e., positive peace in response to cultural violence) through curricula, interventions, and supports for young people to promote greater cooperation, tolerance, harmony, and dialogue among members of a society (Deutsch, 2015; Harris & Morrison, 2013).

Type of Peace	**Type of Violence**		
	Direct Violence: Intended harming, hurting	Structural violence: Unintended harming, hurting	Cultural Violence: Intended or unintended justifying violence
Negative peace	Ceasefire	Absence of Exploitation	Absence of Justification or Culture for Peace
Positive Peace	Presence of Cooperation	Presence of Equity, Equality	Presence of culture of peace, and dialogue

Figure 1. Peace Theory, adapted from Galtung & Fischer (2013)

Peace and Citizenship

At an individual level, peace and citizenship are connected because individuals can support both negative and positive peace through citizenship competencies and interpersonal relations in their communities (Fratczak-Rudnicka & Torney-Purta, 2003). Broadly, prosocial, active citizenship involves attitudes and behaviors that demonstrate having concern, feeling connected, and being committed to a group (e.g., family, community, country) and its interests, as well as concern for other individuals of different groups (see Chaux, 2007; Sherrod, Flanagan, & Youniss, 2002; Torney-Purta & Amadeo, 2003). With this in mind, civic attitudes and behaviors have been associated with peaceful societies, such as respect for others and their human rights, mutual understanding, conflict resolution, and acceptance of difference (Carter, 2013; Davies, 2006; UNESCO, 2014).

The relationship between peace and citizenship is especially strong in conflict and post-conflict countries as societies attempt to rebuild social fabric and stable democratic systems (Ben-Porath, 2006; Bickmore, 2008). Peacemaking may involve addressing structural roots of conflict by reshaping and rebuilding relationships between institutions, citizens, and the state (Galtung, 1969). To this end, civil society and government initiatives often target the intersection of citizenship and peace. For example, demobilization programs and reparations may be structured to build stable bonds between different groups within the society and between citizens and the state (de Rivera, 2010). Education is one area where peace and citizenship are particularly linked in transitional and post-conflict settings because implicit and explicit socialization about citizenship and peace serves to promote certain civic ideals and expectations (Davies, 2004, 2010).[6]

[6] Though the focus of this dissertation is not on education models, it is important also to note the connection between peace and civic education. Theory and policy on peace education often explicitly builds on civic education.

At the same time, peacebuilding is not simply about societal efforts, institutional reform, or education. Some work and theory in peace studies highlights the nature of peace in the everyday lives, choices, and actions that individuals take as members of social groups. Elise Boulding's work (e.g., 2000) advocates for greater attention to building cultures of peace by promoting harmony, conflict resolution, and respect in work, social life, and other daily interactions. John Paul Lederach (1995), a foundational scholar in peace building research, similarly situates peace in dialogue and interpersonal relations. He roots peace in "ordinary language" and "everyday understandings." More recently, the anthropologist Helen Berents (2018) has argued for attention to "embodied everyday peace," a term which situates peace within local context, everyday lives, in small daily actions, and through processes of resilience and resistance. Across these theorists, peace emerges from individuals' everyday membership as part of social groups and communities. This individual and interpersonal focus for peacebuilding closely mirrors literature on citizenship and civic engagement; following Adler and Goggin's (2005) definition of civic engagement, peace can be understood as emerging from "how active citizen[s participate] in the life of a community in order to improve conditions for others or to help shape the community's future" (p. 241). The end goal is a harmonious society with peace in all its forms, but the primary focus is similarly on individual's engagement in these processes at a local level.

Based in this connection between peace and citizenship, I draw on understandings and research in civic development to frame this dissertation and the articulation of *conceptualized*

As an extension of the latter, peace education does not only focus on teaching civic knowledge, how governments work, and one's role as a citizen in the nation-state, but also "incorporate[s] issues of human security, equity, justice and intercultural understanding through the promotion of global citizenship, planetary stewardship and humane relationship" (Ardizzone, 2001, p.16). The end goal is thus to develop universal values and interpersonal behaviors necessary to be an active member of local, national, and international cultures of peace (Kester, 2009).

peace. First, however, it is important to acknowledge that some peace studies scholars have employed developmental theory. Galtung's theorizing about peace has been applied to studying children, adolescents, and young adults by drawing on Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). An ecological approach is used to highlight that different levels of influence—from intimate family interactions to broader societal events and cultural norms—impact individuals. The developing human is situated within multiple contexts that interact and effect each other (e.g., school, family, parent's work, national politics; Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The theory draws attention to how and in what ways children and young people are influenced both directly and indirectly by discourses, events, information, and experiences of their environments.

Ecological systems theories have been used in peace studies as a basis for peace education curriculum (Harris & Morrison, 2013), theorizing about risk and resilience (Masten, 2014), and investigating the psychosocial trajectories of young people in conflict areas (Tol, Song, & Jordans, 2013; Wessells, 2002). As one example, Cummings and colleagues (Cummings, Merrilees, Taylor, & Mondi, 2016) argue for studying the impact of political violence and armed conflict on children as age-related socioemotional, cognitive, and biological processes with social and environmental factors. They argue for a need to study the effects of political violence and armed conflict across the multiple levels in which children are embedded (e.g., national contexts, schools, families). Cummings and colleagues, as well as others, thus link developmental theory with peace studies.

Overall, the current literature is particularly rich for theorizing and explaining mental health impacts, risk, and resilience, but there is critical room to build this foundation as a basis for policy and programming that more effectively supports engaged peacebuilding outcomes.

Specifically, peace and citizenship are clearly related, and yet peace studies in general has not been thoroughly linked to civic development and meaning making. In order to deepen this integration, it is worthwhile to focus on adolescence both because conflict and post-conflict societies place much hope in future generations and questions of identity, citizenship, and meaning making are particularly salient during this time in the life course.

Adolescence and Civic Identity Development

Over the course of the history of psychology, psychologists have spent much time studying and theorizing about adolescence. They have described it in many ways: a time of storm and stress, a life stage, critically important for ideology, the climax for rebellion against societal and familial norms, a key time of social development, an exploratory phase, driven by hormonal changes, culturally scripted, and ritualistic (see Smith, 2016). No doubt, adolescence is a developmental time of particular complexity as individuals physically and sexually mature, interact with broader social networks, develop cognitive abilities to think more abstractly, and more clearly define who they are (Keating, 2004). Across adolescence, individuals also increasingly understand and think of themselves as members in social groups and systems (Arnett, 2004). Importantly, youth may not hold significant resources in society—such as political or social capital—but their mobilization and trajectories as a collective expressing dissonance or disagreement can shape broader processes. Recently, this has been evident in diverse movements across the world—such as the Arab Spring, Black Lives Matter, and Occupy Wall Street—as well as in transitional contexts like Northern Ireland, Palestine, and South Africa, where younger generations have pushed back on peace agreements or turned to criminal activity (Berents & McEvoy-Levy, 2015; Hoffman & Jamal, 2012; Honwana, 2019; Pickard & Bessant, 2018; Reimer, 2012).

Within the context of these developmental processes, adolescents can be understood to be "emergent participatory citizens." They are forming civic identities that involve knowledge, skills, efficacy, and beliefs about society and themselves. These orientations in turn influence their civic and political engagement both in the present and into the future (Torney-Purta & Amadeo, 2011; Torney-Purta, Lehmann, Oswald, & Schulz, 2001). There are many reasons why adolescence is critical for this civic development. During these years, individuals begin to construct more concrete senses of self as they also begin to situate themselves as members of social systems (Erikson, 1968; Youniss, McLellan, & Yates, 1997). They also form more concrete understandings of their efficacy and agency, including in political and civic realms. Increasingly in these formative years, they evaluate their social positioning, their abilities, and the avenues available to them to influence the social groups and systems to which they belong. Based on these understandings, young people form conceptions of themselves as citizens and enact these in schools, families, peers groups, and communities (Haste, 2004; Torney-Purta, 2013). Ultimately, their emerging self-concept is linked to the kind of society that they feel they are constituting and constructing. These dynamics influence the attitudes, thoughts, and choices they make (Flanagan, 2004; Flanagan, Gallay, Gill, Gallay, & Nti, 2005).

These are not just internal cognitive processes, but involve bidirectional and iterative interaction with others and ecological contexts. Already as children, citizenship is forming, being enacted, and shaping collectives in schools, playgrounds, organizations, and neighborhoods (Astuto & Ruck, 2010; Flanagan, 2013). These spaces involve social groups where young people learn about, test out, and form identities in relation to politics, social roles, norms, and expectations (Hope & Spencer, 2017; Torney-Purta, 2002). These experiences motivate civic trajectories and serve as antecedents to adult citizenship. To this end, pro-social behaviors in

young people have been linked to civic engagement and social responsibility as adults (Astuto & Ruck, 2010; Metzger & Smetana, 2010). More generally, engaged civic orientations influence both the individuals themselves, as well as the social group within which they are acting. For example, participatory individuals may experience positive mental and physical health outcomes, while societies with robust and active citizenry can become more vibrant democracies or more successfully rebuild democratic institutions after war or dictatorship (Checkoway & Aldana, 2013; Cheung, Lee, Chan, Liu, & Leung, 2004; Putnam, 1993b; Torney-Purta & Amadeo, 2011).

Civic development, or "construction of the citizen" as termed by Helen Haste (2004), is an active psychological process of interpretation and response to experiences, discourses, and social trends, institutions, and values. A wealth of research demonstrates that while socialization—that is, how norms and expectations are conveyed to young people through families, schools, and peers (Jennings, 2007)—matters, it is not deterministic. For example, adolescents are more knowledgeable about and interested in politics when these topics are discussed in their families, and they participate more in conventional politics when peers, schools, and media model such behavior (Jennings, 2002; Quintelier, 2015). At the same time, young people do not simply internalize dominant discourses in society, but rather create meaning in a constructive process of interpreting factors of cultural relevancy (i.e., ideas, themes and schema present in society) and understandings of self and social context (Hope & Spencer, 2017). Though particular discourses may be most prevalent in schools, homes, media and other civic socialization spaces, young people actively internalize, adapt and recreate meaning for themselves (Jovchelovitch & Gervais, 1999).

In summary, young people are active social participants as they interpret and respond to cultural meanings, dominant discourses, and norms (Daiute, 2010; Jovchelovitch, 2007). A

primary developmental task in adolescence is to begin to ask and define, "who am I," which can be understood in the context of civic identity formation as, "how do I feel about my society, my connection to it and my roles in it?" (Suad Nasir & Kirshner, 2003). As Helen Haste (2004) notes, civic development is inherently connected to the agentic construction of identity:

> Rather than being regarded as passively "socialized," the individual actively constructs—and co-constructs with others—explanations and stories that make sense of experience, to develop an identity that locates her or him in a social, cultural, and historical context. Self and group identity, negotiated through narrative and dialogue as well as through trying to make sense of social structures and representations, are crucial to understanding the construction of the citizen. (p. 420)

Understanding prosocial civic outcomes for youth thus begins with exploring how individuals understand their social worlds and the salient concepts in these contexts (Haste, 2004).

This same framework can be applied to more effectively understanding young people's development as peacebuilders. Based in the connections between peace and citizenship, a similar approach would entail framing young people's outcomes in relation to peace as emerging from their interpretations and response to events, experiences, and discourses in their social worlds. In the next section, I further elucidate this connection by articulating what a young people's psychological processing entails.

Meaning Making and Young People: Potential for Peace

Meaning making is central to how context is processed and responded to as part of the formation of attitudes, ideas, and orientations as citizens. Biological, social, and cognitive changes guide the process of grappling with who one is and what one's role in society is as individuals mature from childhood to adulthood. The intersection of biological, social, and cognitive development underlies how individuals interpret ecological context, specifically in conceptualizing key social concepts, contexts, and their own social positioning (Bruner, 1990; Hammack & Pilecki, 2012). This meaning is central in development because ecological context

is not deterministic; individual's outcomes are not simply driven by risk and protective factors in social environments, but rather how they make meaning over time and from these understandings construct identities (Spencer, 2006; Spencer et al., 1997). By focusing on the process, I also draw on literature in social psychology that demonstrates the importance of attention to procedural justice—that is, the process itself, not just the outcomes—in identity and interpersonal behavior (e.g., Tyler & Blader, 2003).

I draw on this foundation to theorize about identity development as peacebuilders. I base this approach in studying citizenship, peace, and war as social constructions—or in other words, meanings made from and within ecological context. Understandings of these ideas are formed through individual responses in relation to collective processes and social systems. These concepts are value laden and neither monolithic nor clearly defined; for instance, they can encompass egalitarian ideological beliefs, international harmony and equality, and empathic concern for others and tendency to engage in pro-social activities (Van der Linden, Bizumic, Stubager, & Mellon, 2011). No matter the specific elements that are ascribed to these ideas by individuals or in social representations, the meaning is important in conflict, transitional, and post-conflict societies because of it underlies individuals' orientations and actions.

Understanding how peace is interpreted can provide concrete insights into how to bridge these theoretical frameworks with lived realities and promote the development of potential peace builders (Hakvoort & Oppenheimer, 1998; Sarrica, 2007). Building positive peace entails transforming civic and political norms and relations in order to promote a culture of peace (Gawerc, 2006). To this end, a successful transition from conflict to peace necessitates changing meanings that are a part of the established political culture (Lederach, 1995; Sacipa, Ballesteros,

Cardozo, Novoa, & Tovar, 2006). As Lederach succinctly frames this relationship, "Conflict is connected to meaning, meaning to knowledge, and knowledge is rooted in culture" (1995, p. 8).

Efforts to understand and promote young people's engagement in peacebuilding could benefit from stronger foundations in meaning making as articulated in civic development literature. Little attention has been paid in peace studies to the ways that meaning making intersects with ecological context as part of identity development.[7] As noted above, peace studies research on young people has employed ecological models. In relation to peace education, Bronfenbrenner's theory has been utilized to study the effects of particular initiatives and to model how various contexts may influence young people's development as peacebuilders (Hakvoort, 2002; Tomovska, 2009). Yet, there has less attention to how these individuals construct meaning as part of their identity formation (Bar-Tal, Oren, & Nets-Zehngut, 2014; Hammack, 2010). A focus on young people's perspectives "points to ways in which resiliencies and resistances are perceived and supported" (Berents, 2018, p. 154). In other words, attention to their contextualized meaning making can highlight challenges and opportunities to their inclusion in peacebuilding. It also brings to the forefront young people's active responses to marginalization, violence, and discourses about them as they define their attitudes and orientations as members of communities and societies (Berents, 2018).

In the existing literature, developmental psychology has been employed in studying how children and adolescents think about peace and war, but this work has not richly integrated ecological theories or civic development literature. In a survey of available studies on conceptions of war and peace at different ages, Hakvoort and Oppenheimer (1998) found that

[7] There have been some important efforts to link identity development and peace building, but the literature that situates these processes in meaning making is much smaller. Key studies to this end are listed below, but I would like to recognize that the literature on peace, young people, and identity is much broader than the focus of this review (e.g., Bekerman, 2009; Bellino, 2017; Parker, 2016; Visoka, 2018).

developmentally appropriate concerns and challenges could be linked to salient themes in research on children and adolescents' thinking about peace. For example, while young children (ages five to nine) talked mostly about peace as the absence of quarrels between them and their friends or a lack of war between countries (i.e., concrete negative peace), older adolescents invoked the importance of more abstract ideals or systems, like tolerance, equality, democracy and human rights. There is also evidence that conceptions of peace vary more among young people of different socioeconomic backgrounds and contexts within a population than across cultural contexts (Oppenheimer, 2012).

Since Hakvoort and Oppenheimer's review, there have been a only a few studies focused specifically on meaning making of peace. Importantly, other work has addressed ideas about community and peacebuilding in relation to political events (McEvoy, 2000), how perceptions of peace change in relation to participation in a peace education program (Biton & Salomon, 2006), and narratives connected to identity and peace (Hammack, 2011). Specifically focused on ideas about peace, one study employed semi-structured interviews with 18 Iranian adolescents to investigate their ideas about peace as a problem-solving endeavor. The researchers found that participants' conceptions of peace were mainly related to serenity, security, and solidarity, and that these ideas related to how they reasoned and thought about solutions to societal conflict (Hashemi & Shahraray, 2009). A second study drew on social representations theory in exploring the key words in definitions of peace for a broad sample of Italian university students. These authors found that serenity, harmony, respect, and friendship were common elements in how peace was defined, but did not include discussion of a developmental perspective or how intrapersonal and interpersonal were understood or connected by these participants. The study also supported previous findings in relation to gender: female adolescents tended to focus on

peace as between friends and the absence of interpersonal arguments, while males emphasized the absence of armed conflict and war at national and international levels (Sarrica, 2007).

Studies in Colombia. In Colombia, one psychological study from before the current peace process investigated understandings of peace, while another anthropological project explored the meaning of peace for a particular, marginalized group of young people (Berents, 2018; Sacipa et al., 2006). Others have studied moral development in relation to peacebuilding (Posada & Wainryb, 2008) and how adults interpret sustainable peace (Taylor, Nilsson, & Amezquita-Castro, 2016). In the first of the two studies on young Colombians' conceptions of peace, Sacipa and colleagues (2006) asked a small number of participants from different demographic groups what they thought about peace during the early 2000s (a time of intense violence in the armed conflict). For the 19 youth group members they interviewed, peace was multifaceted and related to personal and social wellbeing. For their sample of respondents more generally, peace meant reconciliation and forgiveness at different levels, including in the community, the family, social organizations, institutions and at a national political level. Peace also implied societal order based on tolerance, respect for difference and diversity, and constructive dialogue.

More recently, Berents (2018) spent extended time in 2010 and 2016 with young people in a low-resource area just outside of Bogotá. The neighborhood is often denigrated for its high rates of violence and poverty and is situated within a municipality that has received many internally displaced Colombians (Human Rights Watch, 2011). Berents highlighted that young people's marginalized perspectives matter particularly because they develop embodied notions of everyday peace in their resistance and resilience to violence. She highlighted seven key elements of how these adolescents thought about peace. They first stated that they held unique perspectives as young people because of their deep stake in the future of peace and conflict.

Second, they saw peace as requiring collective responsibility and action to strengthen community ties, but also described that is was difficult to actually accomplish this. Third, negative peace was necessary as many of these young people detailed the lack of violence of absence of armed groups as a key component to peace. Fourth, peace was often linked to issues of social justice and corruption within a more structural focus. Fifth, many participants referred to the illusive nature of peace as a concept. They explicitly noted that peace was difficult to define, unknowable, or simply unattainable. Sixth, dialogue—that is, actively speaking with others and truly engaging in listening to them—was needed to maintain peaceful interpersonal relations. Finally, these young people situated peace both within local contexts and in relation to systems: peace entailed collective action and interpersonal relations within communities, but also required the state to be accountable and guarantee its citizens' rights.

These studies are distinctively different than the current project, but offer greater context and provide comparison for the results. Sacipa and colleagues sampled a small group of older youth during a time when the concrete application of peace (i.e., through a peace process) was less salient in Colombia. Their analysis, however, serves as a basis that the current study extends. They describe their study as a first step in understanding how different groups of Colombians conceptualize peace by studying these ideas as socially constructed. Berents' approach is anthropological and focuses deeply and across time with a specific group of young Colombians. Her analysis provides evidence that young people link their understandings about peace to understandings about their everyday lives and contexts. Additionally, her work effectively draws attention to young people's agency, resilience, and resistance in the face of societal conflict and marginalization. She effectively argues that meaning making is intertwined with identities and actions as peacebuilders. In this dissertation, I seek to build upon these previous studies by

drawing on similar orientations: peace is socially constructed, and young people actively interpret what peace means with reference to understandings of themselves and their social contexts.

Summary

The literature on the development of ideas about peace suggests that there are differences based on age, local context, and demographics. Though these studies offer insights into young people's ideas about peace, this work is still underdeveloped (Bekerman, 2009; Berents & McEvoy-Levy, 2015). In particular, these studies lack a conceptual framework that links discourses and socialization about peace, sociopolitical histories, developmental identity processes, and meaning making. Some scholars have drawn attention to how peace is built in everyday actions as citizens and that youth are influential actors in peacebuilding (e.g. Berents, 2018; McEvoy-Levy, 2006; Schwartz, 2010). These efforts to better understand and support young people's development as peacebuilders would be bolstered by an underlying theoretical framework for these psychological processes. In the next section, I offer such a framework by delineating *conceptualized peace* as drawing on Moscovici's Social Representations Theory (SRT) and Spencer's Phenomenological Variant of the Ecological Systems Theory (PVEST).

Theoretical Frame

In this dissertation, I present *conceptualized peace* as a framework for linking individuals' meaning making of peace with their personal identities and development as potential peacebuilders. *Conceptualized peace* details developmental processes underlying how individuals understand the possibility and meaning of peace, as well as their own role in peacebuilding across multiple ecological contexts. As the literature review demonstrates, meaning making is a valuable area of research because it can provide insight into how

psychological processing occurring within the individual links environmental and social contexts with civic outcomes, which in turn influence social trajectories. Peace must be conceived before it can be built, and the process of forming these ideas is integrally linked to identity development (Cairns, 1996; McEvoy, 2000). "For peace to be created it has to be first imagined" (Boulding, 2000, p. 89), but it must be imagined as part of the self, one's role in society, and one's future. This focus on the process, as opposed to limiting the scope to outcomes, situates meaning making as a socially-embedded endeavor with individual and collective implications (Tyler & Blader, 2003).

Conceptualized peace is a framework that situates the individual within context and draws attention to meaning making of specific concepts (i.e., peace) as part of identity development. While in this study I emphasize the importance of *conceptualized peace* in youth, it also more generally frames how ideas about peace relate to orientations toward peace. C*onceptualized peace* is based in understanding human development as a process that occurs throughout the life course; individuals continually and iteratively make meaning of context and (re)shape their identities (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Spencer, 2006). As individuals construct meaning in relation to discourses, experiences, and understandings, they also act in and alter the ecologies in which they are embedded. This process underlies identity-based outcomes, but also broader transformational changes (Kuczynski & Parkin, 2007; Sameroff, 1994). I focus in this dissertation on adolescents' *conceptualized peace* because identity formation is a salient developmental task during adolescence and young people's civic outcomes are particularly important in transitional societies. Therefore, a theoretical framework for development in relation to peace could be an instrumental support for peacebuilding, especially initiatives to bolster young people's active involvement.

In theorizing about meaning making, there are two interrelated levels that must be addressed: predominant discourses, conceptions, and norms in society and the internal psychological meaning that individuals construct. *Conceptualized peace* addresses these two areas by integrating social psychological theory on culturally-mediated meanings (Moscovici's SRT) and developmental psychological theory on individual, contextually-situated, and identity-based responses (Spencer's PVEST). To my knowledge, the two theories have not been previously brought together. In the next section, I describe the utility of each and integrate them as a foundation for *conceptualized peace*. I then demonstrate the applicability of this framework to the study of how young people conceive of peace and their roles in it.

Social Representations Theory (SRT)

First, Moscovici's SRT provides a theoretical model for the relationship between individual meaning making and discourses in society. Individuals' understandings of concepts are inherently interconnected with how these are discussed and presented in social contexts. This relationship is bidirectional; culture and mind are engaged in a dynamic process of co-creation (Shweder, 1991). Individuals draw on and respond to culturally-relevant content within their groups to make meaning of abstract notions and ideas, which then influences how these are discussed and understood within the group.

Social representations specifically refer to the values, ideas, and beliefs that are shared amongst a group through this collective production of meaning (Jovchelovitch & Gervais, 1999). These mental models, however, are not necessarily uniform across all members of a group, but social affiliations and knowledge introduce regularities into meaning through patterns of social interactions, life experiences, values, and beliefs usually shared by in-group members. Importantly, individuals are embedded within these patterns and also active agents and

producers, as their individual interpretations recreate the meaning socially attributed to concepts (Esterberg, 2002; Gubrium & Holstein, 2001). At the same time, power differentials exist between individuals and across individuals and institutions. Social representations may thus be influenced or anchored by salient discourses promulgated by influential social actors, like the state (Howarth, 2006; Moscovici, 1981; Van Dijk, 2006).

I utilize SRT in delineating *conceptualized peace* as a frame for the social element of meaning making of peace. As an abstract term, peace is neither neutral nor monolithically defined, but is very much defined and situated in public discourse. It can be understood, for example, as a utopic ideal, a political goal, based in conflict resolution, emerging from inclusive political participation, the end of warfare, the absence of homicide and crime, or composed by subelements like liberty and freedom. There are many ways to understand it, and its meaning can be contest. Politically and socially powerful segments of society (such as the government) not only have interests in how it might take shape concretely, but also how it is discussed and the expectations attached to it (Jabri, 2010; Pugh, Cooper, & Turner, 2016). To understand how individuals interpret and reshape social representations, meaning making must be contextualized within predominant and socially-salient conceptualizations of it (Jaspars & Fraser, 1984). Therefore, it is important in conflict, transitional, and post-conflict settings that the collective production of meaning—particularly in relation to official discourses—is identified and deconstructed in studying the dominant representation of peace and the content that is represented (Jovchelovitch, 2007; Jovchelovitch & Gervais, 1999).

SRT frames meaning making within social context and in reference to power dynamics and existent discourses. Importantly, this theory has been used to study individuals' attitudes about peace by analyzing individuals' definitions of peace (Sarrica, 2007; Sarrica & Wachelke,

2010; Velez & Dedios, 2018). These studies, however, have not been theoretically situated in identity formation. The next step is to integrate this meaning making into identity development. C*onceptualized peace* addresses this social process of understanding peace, but also links it to the influence of these processes on outcomes as peace builders. In this sense, peace—as with democracy or civil society—is built not just through attitudes and ideas, but more importantly through the actions and orientations (i.e., identities) that form from these attitudes and ideas.

Phenomenological Variant of the Ecological Systems Theory (PVEST)

To make this link, I employ Spencer's PVEST as a developmental theory of contextualized identity formation (Spencer, 2006; Spencer et al., 1997). It is important to clarify that while identity is a theoretical concept employed in a variety of ways, I invoke identity to describe how people understand themselves (answering, what sort of person am I) and their roles in a broader group of people (answering, what is my connection to and place in society; Suad Nasir & Kirshner, 2003). One's efficacy and engagement as an individual and a citizen—and, I argue, a peacebuilder—is deeply rooted in the sense of self that is constructed from the meaning one gives to salient social concepts (Bruner, 1990; Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995). Predominant social representations are internalized and readapted by individuals, and for young people, the results serve as "the building blocks for how youngsters eventually position themselves in the world, become citizens and understand their relation to the larger society" (Jovchelovitch, Priego-Hernández, & Glăveanu, 2013, p. 341).

This perspective from scholars of SRT employs a developmental framework in that meaning making is a first step in how young people position themselves as citizens. Nevertheless, it does not detail the psychological processes involved in this development. Spencer's PVEST articulates a bidirectional and iterative interaction between the individual and

their ecologies that drives identity-based outcomes. Therefore, while Moscovici's SRT illuminates individual meaning making in relation to official social representations, I utilize Spencer's PVEST to situate the conceptualization of peace as part of civic identity development. PVEST is based in the assertion that risk and protective factors in the environment (in Figure 2 below, see Component 1) are not deterministic of outcomes. Rather, they are perceived, interpreted, and responded to via reactive coping attitudes and behaviors (see Components 2 and 3). Importantly, a reactive coping strategy may be adaptive for a given individual in a given context, even if society judges that response to be maladaptive. As individuals enact these coping strategies, they also experience others' responses to these attitudes and behaviors. Over time, reactive coping mechanisms develop and eventually become internalized as part of emergent identities (see Component 4). Finally, these identities are connected to behavioral and health outcomes that can be productive or unproductive, depending on their relation to external contexts (see Component 5; Spencer, 2006; Spencer, Dupree, & Hartmann, 1997). Overall, PVEST outlines identity development processes within the individual's experience and interpretation of different levels of their social environments.

Conceptualized Peace

In conflict, transitional, and post-conflict societies, productive and prosocial outcomes for individuals matter for creating lasting stable, peaceful, democratic societies (Siobhan McEvoy-Levy, 2001; S. Schwartz, 2010). Yet, much of the focus is on creating environmental conditions (e.g., at macro levels through peace processes, disarmament, etc., and at intimate levels through peace education) that lead to these outcomes. How individuals, and especially youth, understand and make meaning is often overlooked or even marginalized (Berents, 2018). Yet, psychological processing—Components 2 through 4 as theorized by PVEST—must also be considered to

provide better supports for desired outcomes in relation to peace. *Conceptualized peace* aims to fill this void by extending the field of peace studies more deeply into meaning making and identity development. Considering and studying *conceptualized peace* requires attentiveness to how individuals co-create meanings about peace and related concepts in their societies (drawing on SRT), as well as how these meanings then shape both identity processes and outcomes (drawing on PVEST).

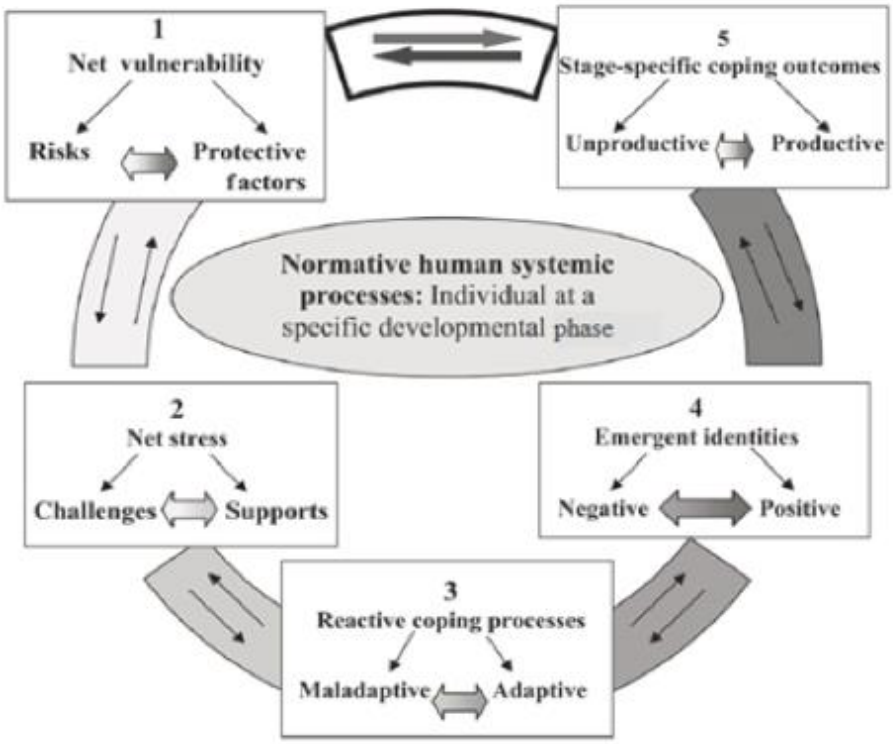

Figure 2. Spencer's Phenomenological Variant of the Ecological Systems Theory (Spencer, 2006)

Conceptualized peace draws attention to the discursive, sociopolitical, and historical context as well as the individual meaning making and development. First, ecological factors provide norms and established frameworks about peace and individuals' roles in building it. These prevailing ways of thinking reach individuals through socialization, programs and policies, and media. Second, people actively construct their own meanings by processing these

influences in relation to their understandings of their social positions, broader social dynamics, historical and political opportunities and challenges, and themselves. For example, experiences of violence at local levels or beliefs in whether or not citizens can effect change may shape beliefs about the very possibility of peace. Third, as this meaning is being created and recreated, people express these ideas and act on them. For example, an individual who believes that peace is possible and requires the government to provide greater security for its citizens may join anti-violence gatherings or lobby with local police forces. Finally, based on the effect and response from others to these actions and attitudes, individuals further define their understandings of and orientations toward peace as they more concretely form understandings of themselves in relation to societal peace. This step may involve various possibilities that can also be antisocial—such as rejecting peace, using violence to achieve desired goals, or detaching from social involvement—but may be experienced by individuals as coping and appropriate given their understanding of their ecological context.

The process articulated here by *conceptualized peace* is, like Spencer's PVEST, neither unidirectional nor finite; instead these elements are dynamic and iterative. Identity-based outcomes link back to context by affecting society and the discussions and initiatives involving peace politically and at local and societal levels. The process of *conceptualized peace* occurs from the development of cognitive abilities to process broader social systems, but is particularly salient in adolescence due to the specific developmental tasks that emerge from biological and social changes in these years.

To more clearly define *conceptualized peace*, it is useful to apply it abstractly to societies striving to build more peaceful and stable futures. In these transitional settings, governments and civil society may promote discourses about the possibility of peace and the opportunities that a

peaceful future will bring. Attempts at peace processes may be accompanied by concerted efforts to convince the populace that accords will bring a more stable, democratic future. At the same time, many citizens may live in neighborhoods where homicide, robberies, and lack of state presence are everyday realities. For some in those areas, peace and hope for a different future may be dissonant with their experiences of the state and their own power as citizens. For some, this may motivate acting to build peace in ways that resonate with their understanding of it (e.g., resolving conflicts between neighbors, educating others about peaceful co-existence, etc.). For others, the contextual factors may foster feelings of peace as a utopia or impossibility, and their own involvement in it may feel like a waste of time, an unsafe endeavor, or minimal in comparison to what others can do. Across these possibilities and others, however, understandings of peace shape whether and to what extent they think it is possible. This is interwoven with how individuals think about their agency and efficacy as members of various social groups, and thus whether and how they act in trying to make their idea of peace a reality.

Much theoretical development and empirical research on peace has juxtaposed this concept with war or violence (i.e., Galtung, 1969; Hakvoort & Oppenheimer, 1998). Focusing on peace and the meaning made of it raises a question of relative to what? Within a *conceptualized peace* framework, this is addressed both implicitly and in terms of outcomes. First, previous experiences of violence and the understanding of war or conflict is incorporated into the meaning making process as individuals construct conceptions of peace. In this way, the framework is also flexible given the varied experiences of violence that individuals have faced throughout their lives. Peace is the focus of this developmental theory because it is an often referred to, underlying goal of communities, societies, countries, and international organizations (Berents, 2018 Boulding, 2000; Deutsch, 2015; Harris & Morrison, 2013; Lederach 1995). Second, as

articulated by PVEST, the outcomes of meaning making processes may be pro or antisocial. That is, based on interpretation and reactive coping processes in thinking about ecological context and the self, individuals may choose to engage with peace building endeavors, involve themselves in violence groups or actions, or any range of outcomes in between. Therefore, while *conceptualized peace* focuses on peace, it is still the case that experiences, understandings, and outcomes related to violence, war, and conflict are incorporated into this framework.

The Current Study

There is a myriad of possible pathways of *conceptualized peace;* these contextual and personal dynamics can provide for various ideas about peace, with consequences for individuals' identities and outcomes as peacebuilders. Theoretical development and research are needed to better understand these pathways, which can support outcomes that are positive for individuals and societies. Therefore, in this dissertation, I have first argued for the importance and innovation of *conceptualized peace* and will demonstrate its application through the study of Colombian adolescents.

These young people form understandings of themselves as members of Colombian society through how they understand concepts like citizenship and peace. Colombian adolescents may be influenced by socialization in intimate spheres (i.e., family, peers, and school), but they are also actively processing and responding to these norms and discourses. School, family, and friend influences have been shown to be important spaces of civic socialization (Sherrod et al., 2002; Torney-Purta et al., 2001). They are incorporated not be studying them directly, but rather by focusing on how individuals interpret and respond to these factors.

The current study explores peacebuilding identities by investigating how these individuals make meaning and develop responses to peace in relation to the Colombian civic

discourse. Therefore, applying *conceptualized peace* to this context, I situate the construction of meaning about peace as part of identity formation embedded within context (i.e. Colombia's historical development, current peace process, and the salient discourses about peace). The results of these processes are theorized as individual civic outcomes, which can impact the broader societal trajectory. By studying the Colombian context, I am also applying *conceptualized peace* to the study of how individual change (i.e., development) interacts with meso-level changes (i.e., peace and violence). This endeavor involves many challenges due to the dynamic nature of the population, phenomenon of interest, and context. I thus employ multiple datasets and methods, and triangulate findings from them, in this investigation.

The articulation of *conceptualized peace* and demonstration of its applicability is valuable for peace and civic education ore generally in the shifting context of societal transitions contexts because social environments and group membership are not deterministic. On the one hand, experiencing warfare, poverty or social marginalization does not dictate antisocial or violent outcomes for individuals. On the other, implementing peace education programs does not simply result in young people becoming peacebuilders. The subjective understandings individuals create as they make this meaning play a role, particularly for young people: "In terms of peace building potential and ability, young people's interpretations of, or the meaning they give to, the peace process will be immensely clarifying for those concerned to deliver a peace that is genuine and multigenerational. Yet, the child/youth perspective, how and what they think about peace processes and the task of reconstructing their societies after war, remains almost completely unstudied" (McEvoy-Levy, 2001, p. 32). A theoretical framework for the meaning making of peace and its relation to identity formation (i.e., *conceptualized peace*) can inform

attempts to support youth development as peace builders, while also acknowledging their agency and citizenship in these societies.

Conceptualized peace focuses on dynamics at the individual, collective, and societal levels. Macro-level processes shape and influence social ecologies and collective meaning making process, with individuals internalizing and reinterpreting these ideas that ultimately link into their identity development. At the same time, an application of *conceptualized peace* to empirical research may not always be fluid as the processes across these different levels are not always seamless. Studying individuals to illuminate collective processes is a complicated endeavor, and as developmental and historical time (i.e., the progression of societal change) is also considered, this becomes even more complex. Furthermore, a researcher must additionally consider intra and inter-individual differences among a sample. *Conceptualized peace*, therefore, must be applied with attentiveness to many possible perspectives, but also with an acknowledgement of the necessity and challenges of bringing together individual development with broader collective meanings.

This area of focus is especially fruitful for informing education in conflict, transitional, and post-conflict settings. To this end, Galtung (2008) defines a primary challenge for peace building as understanding and supporting through peace education the transition from the current state of affairs to a preferred idyllic (i.e., peaceful) world. I argue that in order for peace education—and education policy in transitional settings more generally—to support this connection, there must be a clearer focus on how individuals' ideas about peace and beliefs about themselves become active involvement in peacebuilding.

Historical Context

Conceptualized peace is rooted in contextualized meaning making and identity development. In this section I offer a brief potted history of the Colombian conflict before detailing in the next one the research questions that apply *conceptualized peace* to the study of Colombian adolescents. These young Colombians developed as citizens and potential peace builders within a sociohistorical context marked by decades of conflict. By 2017, the country had eight million registered victims and over seven million internally displaced peoples, one of the highest rates in the world (UNHCR, 2017). The roots of this armed conflict extend far back into the colonial era and are connected to social, economic, geographic, racial, and political factors. A main element across the last half-century has been the internal warfare between the Marxist *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia- Ejercito Popular* (the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-Popular Army, or FARC-EP) and the state. It is also important to note that peace has been a salient part of political discourse since the end of the 1980s. Colombian adolescents are embedded within the dynamic and nuanced complexity of violence in the country's recent history, past attempts at peace, and the current socio-political moment as they come of age and construct identities.

The Conflict's Roots into the Recent Peace Process

The modern era of violence in Colombia is often denoted as beginning with the murder of the populist presidential candidate Jorge Eliécer Gaitán in 1948. His death marked the beginning of the period known as *La Violencia* when long-standing tensions between the two main political parties—the Liberals and the Conservatives—boiled over and motivated partisan-based assassinations, displacement, and intimidation across the countryside (Roldán, 2002). This period came to an end about a decade later when General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla (who assumed the presidency after leading a coup d'état) was forced to resign due to large scale national protests in

1957. His presidency was followed by a power-sharing agreement in which the Liberals and the Conservatives rotated the presidency between 1958 and 1974. During this time, several armed groups, including the FARC-EP, formed in opposition to the government. While the arrangement quelled the explicit violence between the Conservatives and Liberals, it also alienated other political actors like the communist left. These guerilla groups were also motivated by the historical absence of the state from many rural areas of the country; the FARC-EP and others described their mission as advocating and serving the interests of these "abandoned" citizens (Osterling, 1989).

Armed conflict intensified in the 1980s as guerrilla groups became increasingly involved in the lucrative and violent illegal narcotics industry. This also coincided with a change in strategy for many revolutionaries. Some of these groups moved into cities and assumed more violent tactics to spark change in Colombian politics. In the face of this rising violence in the late 1980s, the government and FARC-EP attempted to negotiate a ceasefire and peace. The process quickly fell apart, mainly due to a third armed actor that had recently emerged and grown in influence: right-wing paramilitary groups. The paramilitaries targeted, intimidated, and assassinated members of the political party that the FARC-EP had created. They drew on anti-communist discourses and resources by claiming that their purpose was to combat leftist revolutionaries and provide order where the state was ineffective or absent (Ronderos, 2014).

Despite the failure of peace with the FARC-EP, however, other revolutionary groups successfully demobilized and reintegrated into society and politics in the late 1980s. One prominent example was the M-19. A former M-19 combatant who demobilized during that time, Gustavo Petro, even became mayor of Bogota and was one of two presidential finalists in 2018. Another significant political change in the early 1990s was the rewriting of the Colombian

constitution, which created a more inclusive and participatory framework for Colombian politics. Youth mobilization and organizations played a significant role in this process, such as via the organized *La Septima Papeleta* movement that helped push through progressive reforms.

Even as some armed groups successfully demobilized, and the constitution became more progressive, violence in Colombia increased in the 1990s and early 2000s. In this context, President Andrés Pastrana attempted another peace process with the FARC-EP. He began these negotiations in 1999 with a controversial move by granting the FARC-EP demilitarized safe zones in different areas of Colombia. These efforts were largely seen as lacking popular participation and support, without international oversight, and poorly executed (Bergquist, Peñaranda, & Sánchez, 2001). The collapse of the talks led to a spike in urban attacks and kidnappings by the FARC-EP just before the new millennium. Violence was further propelled by Plan Colombia as the United States provided Colombia with almost 8 billion dollars over the first decade of the 2000s. The majority of this aid, almost 80%, was for military equipment and training to bolster capabilities against drug traffickers and revolutionary groups (Shifter, 2012).

In 2002, Álvaro Uribe became president of Colombia. With the support of Plan Colombia, his militaristic approach immediately changed the nature of the conflict. Uribe used strong-arm tactics and financial support from the United States to weaken the guerrillas. These targeted attacks killed a number of key leaders of the FARC-EP and decimated their numbers. Estimates of the size of the FARC-EP went from close to 20,000 in the early 2000s to under 10,000 by the end of the decade (Renwick & Felter, 2017). Uribe also oversaw the demobilization of paramilitary forces across the country, though his government has been accused of human rights abuses, corruption, and illegal associations with these groups (Renwick & Felter, 2017). Others have also argued that though these groups may have officially turned in

their weapons, they simply changed in nature; violent militias are still a significant aspect of life in many areas of Colombia (Kaplan & Nussio, 2018).

In 2010, Uribe anointed Juan Manuel Santos his successor and the former Minister of Defense became president. Almost immediately, Santos broke ranks with his predecessor's stance toward the FARC-EP. After secretive discussions for almost a year, his government openly began peace talks with the FARC-EP in late 2012, while enlisting support from powerful business leaders, civil society, foreign governments, and international organizations to legitimize these efforts. Four years of negotiations led to comprehensive and extensive accords. The process was not without its obstacles and precarious moments, but was largely seen by the international community as adhering to human rights and legal standards (Pachon, 2017). Over the four years of negotiations, homicides, kidnappings, and displacement dropped to levels that had not been seen in decades (Presidencia de la República, 2016A). While the original set of accords that were announced in August of 2016 were voted down in a popular plebiscite (by a slim 50.2 to 49.8 % margin), the government and the FARC-EP renegotiated a number of the points and an updated agreement was implemented through congressional and presidential actions in a piecemeal fashion (Renwick & Felter, 2017).

Within this historical context, the most recent peace process was marked not only by the successful demobilization of the FARC-EP, but also by its historical relation to previous processes. The last several decades have seen several attempts to end armed political conflict in Colombia. These antecedents created popular skepticism toward the potential of these negotiations, even as they also shaped the ways that the government and the FARC-EP approached the process. One particular lesson drawn from previous failures was the need for the process to encompass a broader array of voices and issues. Santos' government made a concerted

effort, with the collaboration of international NGOs and Colombian civil society, to promote broader political participation and ownership of creating a more peaceful Colombia. This discourse and the connected policies included a focus on youth as critical in creating a different future. For example, the government passed a peace education law in 2015 mandating that all primary, secondary, and post-secondary schools include at least two of 12 broad, peace-related themes in their curricula. These topics ranged from Justice and Human Rights, to Conflict Resolution, Historical Memory, and Protection of the Nation's Cultural and Natural Resources. While the law mandated that schools address at least two of these areas, the decentralized nature of the Colombian school system meant that the implementation varied significantly (Chaux & Velásquez, 2016; Presidencia de la República, 2016a).

Current Context

This historical summary only hints at the complexity of violence and armed conflict in Colombia, but provides pertinent context. The peace process permeated civic and political discourses, as well as entered into schools and education more generally (Sánchez Meertens, 2017; Valencia Álvarez, Corredor, Jiménez Coronado, de los Ríos Castiblanco, & Salcedo Díaz, 2016). Conversations and discourses about peace were also inherently rooted in the country's recent history with the numerous previous peace processes. Importantly, just as the broader national conflict disproportionately affects Colombian citizens depending on geography, class, and ethnicity, the continued impact of gangs, paramilitaries, and the narcotics trade differentially affects the lives of youth across these different categories. The complexity of armed conflict and its history in Colombia is thus an important factor in young people's understandings of their social positions, their experiences of citizenship, and their ideas about peace.

Research Questions

This history and more recent developments made Colombia a prime setting to study *conceptualized peace.* Broad efforts were made to engage young people to be peacebuilders, but these initiatives cannot be disconnected from troubling historical precedents, continuing local violence in many areas of the country, inequality in Colombian society, and other historical social and political legacies. By investigating how young people make meaning of peace within this context, the study of *conceptualized peace* for Colombian adolescents can provide insights for peacebuilding efforts within Colombia, as well as more generally add to literature on youth and peace. To the first point, this dissertation can support peace education in Colombia by raising awareness of adolescents' perspectives and developmental trajectories in relation to peace. To the second, the dissertation expands peace theory by defining *conceptualized peace* as a framework for young people's identity-based outcomes in relation to peacebuilding. I also offer an empirical basis by analyzing what *conceptualized peace* entails for a sample population in a transitional context. As noted, youth civic outcomes in these settings can influence the trajectory of society, but to date, there is still much to be learned about and modeled as to how young people make meaning and form identities in relation to peace

Investigating Colombian adolescents' *conceptualized peace* concretely entails exploring how they think about peace in relation to prominent discourses, as well as how they envision peace as connected to themselves and their futures. This endeavor is complicated by the nature of adolescent development and societal transitions. Young people and transitioning societies are dynamic, with the flux of psychological, social, and biological development on one hand, and the changing social and political contexts on the other. It can be difficult to empirically study the bidirectional relationship between them. I address this challenge by applying the framework I

have detailed above to guide analysis of young people's meaning making of peace as embedded within development and ecological context.

The four research questions focus on different aspects of *conceptualized peace*, but come together as a whole to illuminate the complexity of meaning making and development. In order to study *conceptualized peace*, I investigate how a range of Colombian adolescents understand peace, their role in it, and its connection to their futures in relation to salient discourse on these topics. First, *conceptualized peace* situates meaning making and identity development in relation to prevalent ideas, norms, and expectations about peace. These social discourses serve as a basis for individual's interpretation. Within the Colombian context, the government specifically emphasized the role of young people in the peace building process. My first research question thus asks about these discourses that permeate the broad national context and influence the creation of social representations.

1) *What are the discourses about youth and peace that are being broadcasted to adolescents by the Colombian government through speeches, curricular materials, and press releases?*

Second, I move from predominant social discourses to individuals' responses and meaning. In a *conceptualized peace* framework, these discourses are interpreted and incorporated into personal meaning making. To this end, I aim to build from the ground up an understanding of the themes and narratives in young Colombians' own ideas about peace and their roles in the peace process. Therefore, I examine the individual meaning making of peace. The second research question asks:

2) *How do Colombian adolescents understand concepts of peace amid this broader societal transition?*

Third, peace is an abstract notion that can be defined academically (e.g., Galtung, 1969; Royce, 2004) or by individuals as part of meaning making (e.g., Hakvoort & Oppenheimer, 1998; Sarrica, 2007). For this reason, it is important to compare peace as an abstract idea and as a concrete state or process in society. The comparison of these elements may demonstrate differing levels of consonance or dissonance, as well as processing of social positioning and context, that influence individuals' coping responses and orientations toward peace. Within a *conceptualized peace* frame, conceptual ideas about peace interconnect with understandings of society, social relations, and ones' own efficacy as a citizen in shaping how people act. This relationship thus provides insights into the key link in *conceptualized peace* between meaning making and identities as peacebuilders. To explore this aspect of these Colombian adolescents' *conceptualized peace*, I next ask:

3) *What do Colombian adolescents think about the possibility of peace and how it is built?*

Finally, I explore how these ideas and conceptions are integrated into emerging identities as citizens. Internal meaning making links environmental context and individual outcomes, and influences both individual and societal trajectories. An implication of *conceptualized peace* is that meaning making shapes the construction of peace in a society by driving future individual outcomes. For this reason, I explore participants' future orientations and senses of self that are formed in relation to their thinking about peace. This last step is crucial in completing the formulation of *conceptualized peace* and providing a complete picture of how youth integrate these conceptions of peace and the peace process into their visions of themselves, their futures, and their possible involvement in societal peace. Therefore, as a last question, I ask:

4) *How do they relate these discussions of peace to themselves, their own futures, their roles as peace builders, and their visions of their country's future?*

These four questions motivate a multifaceted research project. In the next chapter, I detail the approach taken to address these four questions. I describe the three distinct datasets and methods that I employ. Then, in Chapter 3, I address these research questions by presenting the findings from each dataset and bringing them together as a whole through an adapted triangulation and integrated discussion.

CHAPTER 2

CONTEXTUALIZING MEANING MAKING OF PEACE THROUGH DISCOURSES, INTERVIEWS, AND QUESTIONNAIRES

Human development occurs within multiple, connected ecologies. Individuals are influenced by direct interaction with others in their everyday lives (such as family members, friends, neighbors), but are also impacted by distal influences from historical, political, and social contexts (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Spencer et al., 1997). Integral to identity formation—a salient challenge in adolescence—is the interpretation of and response to one's position within a broader social context shaped by history and politics (Haste, 2004; Spencer, 2006). One element of this process is meaning making of salient and pertinent discourses and norms; for example, social expectations of young people, racial/ethnic labels, abstract political ideas like democracy, human rights, and citizenship (Berents, 2018; Velez & Spencer, 2018). As has been noted, this process is not unidirectional or deterministic. That is, young people also actively contribute to the co-construction of discourses and collectives as they make meaning. Overall, then, young people's development involves a contextualized process of interpretation and response, which is linked to identity formation and outcomes. C*onceptualized peace* brings this understanding to the field of peace studies by situating meaning making of peace as a critical link between context and identities in relation to peace and conflict (i.e., as peacebuilders).

Applying this framework to the Colombian context, the four research questions guide my investigation of Colombian adolescents' *conceptualized peace*. Based on the phenomenon of interest and the dynamic context, a mixed methodology must be employed to understand the actual meaning making and lived experiences of young people as they develop in a changing

societal context. Multiple datasets and methodologies are employed to bolster ecological validity and to be able to study meaning making and identity development as actually experienced by individuals in complex, shifting ecologies. In order, the research questions address the government's discourse, these adolescents' definitions of peace as a concept, their ideas about how peace is built and the possibility of it, and how they describe their own involvement in or connection to societal peace. To answer these research questions, I employ a multifaceted research project that involves various datasets and analytic strategies. Each one of these aids in addressing aspects of the questions posed and is first treated as a distinct analytic process. I then triangulate and bring the findings into dialogue in order to articulate more holistically what the analyses illuminate about participants' *conceptualized peace*.

Since this approach involves three distinct datasets, I provide a roadmap and overview for how the varied analyses address the research questions before detailing each one. The first dataset encompasses government documents and speeches, with a particular focus on those that discuss peace and young people from 2014 to 2017. I use discourse analysis with this corpus to investigate the influential representations of peace that permeate the ecological contexts in which Colombian adolescents are embedded. With this dataset and analysis, I focus on addressing the first research question. Next, my second dataset is composed of semi-structured interviews conducted between June and September of 2016 and 2017. In total, three hundred and twenty-nine Colombian adolescents were interviewed about their thinking about peace, the peace process, their own and their country's futures, and their roles as peace builders. This data was coded via an adapted grounded approach and thematic content analysis was used to identify salient ideas about peace, the future, and their own contributions to building peace (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Therefore, this analysis targets specifically questions 2, 3, and 4 to look at the

meaning these adolescents give to peace as a concept, their depictions of how and where it can be achieved, and how they apply it within the context of their understandings of themselves and their country. Next, the final dataset comes from a Colombian colleague, Dr. Ariel Sánchez Meertens, and provides greater insight into these last two areas. Dr. Sánchez Meertens and a team of investigators administered a questionnaire to 1,492 adolescents. In relation to this study, the protocol asked about perceptions of the future. I analyzed the responses to this part using a thematic approach to identify broad trends in how respondents depicted the possibility of peace and both individual and societal futures. It complements the interview data in addressing how ideas about peace relate to their identities and ideas about the future (question 4), and provides greater insight into thoughts about the possibility of peace and how it is built (question 3).

In the rest of this chapter, I describe these three datasets and the accompanying methods I used in analyzing each. In the next chapter, I present the results from each analysis. Then, in Chapter 4, I triangulate the various datasets to bolster the validity and reliability of the findings and provide richer insights into the research questions. With this approach, I seek convergence across the multiple datasets and analyses to more holistically and richly understand Colombian adolescents' *conceptualized peace* (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Golafshani, 2003). I relate the discourses from the government to themes in young people's own stated understandings of peace, and then link the interview sample with the questionnaires in relation to their ideas of their futures. My final insights about Colombian adolescents' *conceptualized peace* thus emerge from this integration and validation across the three datasets (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007).

Dataset 1: Government Speeches, Documents, and Press Releases

I began my study with a thorough review of government sources that mention youth and peace. While I recognize that individuals are differentially exposed to various discourses based

on their local contexts and social positions (Fairclough, 1992), my articulation of *conceptualized peace* focuses on how youth meaning making in relation to official discourses. The research focus is not on the explicit messages and norms that they are socialized with in their intimate contexts, but rather their understanding and interpretation in relation to social representations. The analysis of this process emerges from the SRT framework that *conceptualized peace* builds on: as social representations emerge from a process of co-construction linked to social power dynamics. Through the media, schools, and other means, governments are able to propagate and permeate its messages to society and drive social expectations and norms (Van Dijk, 1997, 2006). I consider the government's formulation of the relationship between youth and peace to be a discursive construction, which can be analyzed and provide context for the ideas about peace of young people. I use discourse analysis to investigate the embedded messages and rhetorical tools employed by the government to socially enact particular ideas about youth's role in peace building (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). I then later compare these findings to themes identified from interviews with adolescents across Colombia to better understand young people's processing of these messages. To this end, I position Colombian adolescents' *conceptualized peace* to involve individual meaning making in relation to government rhetoric and messages.

Methods

While youth in Colombia have influenced political processes throughout the country's recent history (e.g., the constitutional assembly in 1991), the most recent peace process involved a particular focus on young people, peace, education, and political mobilization (López-López, Sabucedo-Cameselle, Barreto, Borja, & Serrano, 2014; Sánchez Meertens, 2017). Colombian civil society took up this charge through initiatives like peace education certificate programs, afterschool activities, peace building conferences targeting young people, and an increasing use

of students as conflict mediators in schools. The driving force, however, came from Santos' government. His administration used legal mandates, rhetorical devices, and programming to promote peace among younger generations in Colombia (Chaux & Velásquez, 2016; Velásquez, Jaramillo, Mesa, & Ferráns, 2017). A critical part of these efforts was a peace education mandate—*Ley 1732*—which Santos signed in law in 2015. Beyond this piece of legislation, there were also documents and curriculum supporting the implementation of peace education, numerous speeches both referring to and directly addressing young people, and various publications and press releases from government offices like *Colombia Joven* (Young Colombia) and the Ministry of Education.

Data. The analysis of the government discourse about youth and peace involved a systematic collection and investigation of a range of sources (a complete list is available in Appendix A). Along with Dr. Maria Cecilia Dedios, a colleague also studying social representations of peace in Colombia, I first conducted a search of documents, websites, popular media, and other sources for government descriptions of how youth should think of themselves in relation to peace in Colombia. Our focus in this data collection was gathering sources that would indicate what messages about peace and youth the government was disseminating publicly. Before beginning the search, we met with several officials, teachers, and NGO workers in the field of education or peace education in Colombia. Through these informal interviews, we gathered lists of possible sources, as well as names of government offices and specific documents related to education, youth, and peace. This process helped us identify sources to include in our analysis. We also drew on these discussions in the analytic process as further contextualization.

We then compiled a list of documents that spanned from 2014, the year before the peace education law, to 2017, just after the first interview collection. We chose this time frame to

provide a breadth of different sources ranging temporarily from Santos' re-election (a campaign based on the peace process), to the peace education law, to its implementation, and through the settling of the accords. Based on our informal interviews and preliminary search, it was clear that during this time the Colombian government increasingly promoted youth as peacebuilders, including through the educational system (Chaux & Velásquez, 2016; Sánchez Meertens, 2017; Velásquez et al., 2017). This period also included the months before the popular plebiscite on the peace accords (in October 2016) when the government was committed to "peace pedagogy"—talking about and promoting peace. During this time, peace was deeply permeated Colombian society (Jiménez, 2016; Pérez, 2016).

In addition to sources mentioned to us in the informal interviews, we also searched the archives of major media outlets and government websites for speeches by the president and the Minister of Education at the time, Gina Parody. As we searched, we evaluated whether each text explicitly discussed youth and peace, and if it presented words or texts from the administration or government institutions. For example, we included peace education curriculum that was written by individuals who are not government officials or employees because it was published and disseminated by the Ministry of Education. We excluded peace education resources created by universities and media articles that only reported on events or speeches without including significant portions of the speeches themselves. As a note, several texts in the final sample related to the 2015 peace education law. These were either speeches around time of its passage into law or government-produced documents as part of its implementation.

To address the first research question of this dissertation, I included in the analyses 41 total documents from early 2014 to the middle of 2017. These sources encompass 24 speeches by president Santos and his Minister of Education; 10 press releases by the government, the

Ministry of Education, and the office charged with youth affairs (*Colombia Jovén*); five official curriculum materials on peace produced by the Ministry of Education and the National Center for Historic Memory; and two documents that include the content of the peace education law (see Appendix A).

Analytic Procedure. After the sources were collected, the documents were analyzed using discourse analysis (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Discourse is not an objective statement of beliefs, fact, or perception, but is rather an attempt at constructing a reality in relation to a specific context. Discourse analysis centers on the interaction between speaker and addressee as conveyed through contextualized messages, situational dynamics, and rhetoric. It is a tool to deconstruct documents and speeches with an attentiveness to the underlying purposes and dynamics (Fairclough, 1992). In the case of politics and government messages, a critical approach designates these discourses as "a special case of political action, and as functional or strategic part of the political process" (Van Dijk, 1997, p. 18). The analysis of this political action directly acknowledges and addresses political dynamics related to power differentials in society (Phillips & Hardy, 2002). I draw on this methodology in analyzing the Colombian government's discourse on youth's role in peace in order to identify what is emphasized and what is left out in the political action of circumscribing young people's formation. In other words, I seek to highlight the "dialogical struggle (or struggles) as reflected in the privileging of a particular discourse and the marginalization of others" (Keenoy, Oswick, & Grant, 1997, p. 150).

I employ discourse analysis to position the Colombian government's articulation of youth's role in peace as an attempt to embed these ideas in society (and specifically in young people). I thus draw attention to the political and social power the government has in promoting

certain ideas about peace and youth. Yet, this discourse is not deterministic. As detailed in Chapter 1, the theoretical framework (i.e., *conceptualized peace*) for this study highlights individuals' agency in meaning making processes. Discourse analysis is an apt methodology to study social representations because it acknowledges the performative nature of social "speech", particularly that of official or powerful actors in society (McKinlay, Potter, & Wetherell, 1993), 1993). Other scholars have also explored the co-creation of social representations by using discourse analysis to illuminate the meaning and purpose of socially salient conceptualizations that individuals interpret and respond to (e.g., McFee, 2016; Potter & Wetherell, 1998). In this way, discourse analysis can be successfully used to identify key themes in government ideology and messages, but also incorporates an attentiveness to power relations and individual agency that is critical for studying meaning making.

In the first section of Chapter 3, I draw on this methodological approach to analyze part of the discursive environment in which meaning is constructed by individuals. I present the results of a discourse analysis of the government's speeches, documents, and texts. Dr. Dedios and I read the sources individually and then together discussed each in relation to the context of the text (i.e., who it was produced by, when it was produced, and in what setting was it presented or published). We identified elements across the different sources and then interpreted these in relation to broader themes about youth and peace in Colombia. Specifically, our analysis focused on contents being mediated (i.e., discussion of youth and peace), as well as what rhetoric used to discuss these topics (Billing, 1987). The articulation and interpretation of the results in the next chapter is my own, though the analysis does draw on the collaborative work with Dr. Dedios. In outlining these findings, I present quotes in English translated by myself, thought at times I use Spanish phrases when the meaning or rhetoric is more aptly conveyed in the original language.

Dataset 2: Interviews

Over two time periods, I interviewed Colombian adolescents to explore how they discuss their understanding of peace and their own roles in it. This second dataset and the accompanying analyses demonstrate what *conceptualized peace* looks like in a transitional setting (where peace is salient in social discourses). I use thematic analysis to identify how these young people described peace and related it to themselves and their futures. Therefore, these interviews address the second, third, and fourth research questions: *How do Colombian adolescents understand concepts of peace amid this broader societal transition; what do Colombian adolescents think about the possibility of peace and how it is built*; and, *how do they relate these discussions of peace to themselves, their own futures, their roles as peace builders, and their visions of their country's future?*

Methods

The interview data comes from two time periods of collection. First, I conducted semi-structured interviews with adolescents across Bogotá from June to September of 2016. Second, along with a Colombian research assistant, Carolina Pedroza,[8] I then expanded the sample to include a greater diversity of young people in Bogotá and across the country from June to September of 2017. During the first period, the peace accords were a salient part of public discourse because they had recently been finalized and signed by the government and the FARC-EP. Additionally, the Colombian electorate was preparing to vote to approve or reject the text in a plebiscite on October 2nd, 2016. Campaigns for and against the accords were highly active in traditional and social media. The second period for data collection came after the plebiscite, though the peace accords were still a prominent in Colombian politics and society. Only months

[8] Carolina Pedroza was an undergraduate psychology student at the Universidad de los Andes, with previous experience as a research assistant conducting psychological fieldwork.

before, the legislature had passed many parts of the accords, and political polarization was increasing. In particular, the future of the peace process became a contentious topic in debates and conversations as candidates for the 2018 presidential elections began their campaigns (Guzmán, 2017; Sonneland, 2017).

Procedures. All interview procedures and materials were approved by the University of Chicago Institutional Review Board, and then discussed and agreed upon by individual schools where data was collected. Sites were chosen in conjunction with Colombian colleagues and researchers using maximum variation sampling to include the greatest possible diversity of local contexts (Patton, 1999; Suri, 2011). This process began by drawing on my connections to educators and administrators in Bogotá, and then expanded by working with the Colombian Ministry of Education, regional Secretaries of Education, and non-governmental organizations involved in education. For the areas outside of Bogotá, this process involved connecting with regional Secretaries of Education to explain the project and goals for diversity in the sample. Officials from the Secretaries of Education contacted schools to coordinate data collection. For schools that were reached via other methods, administrators were contacted, and the study was described to them after the decision was made to include them in the sample. For example, I worked closely with Fundación Compartir to choose additional sites. They provided a list of schools and connected me with administrators once I decided to include specific ones in the sample.

For all schools, after administrators assented to their institutions' participation, consent forms were sent to a sample of high school students and their parents who were chosen by the administrators. The researcher requested a diverse group of students, specifically with variance by academic achievement, involvement in the school, and demographic characteristics. Once consent was obtained from students, the researcher interviewed participants individually in

private spaces within the institutions. Interviews lasted between 30 and 60 minutes and covered multiple topics. Participants were asked about their opinions on the peace process, what peace meant, whether or not they believed that they lived in peace, whether and in what ways they thought that they could contribute to peace, their possible contributions to peace, and their visions of their own and their country's future. The interview protocol included, among other questions, "what does peace mean to you," "do you think you can contribute to peace at a community level," "how or why not," and "will the country's future affect you achieving the future that you want for yourself?" (see Appendix B for complete protocol). After the interview, students also filled out a demographic questionnaire and adaptation of the 2009 International Civic and Citizenship Education Survey (ICCS) by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (Schulz, Ainley, Fraillon, Kerr, & Losito, 2010). The quantitative data was not used for this study, as it measured civic attitudes rather than conceptualizations of peace and identity as peacebuilders.

Sample. In line with the two time points of data collection, the final sample includes two complementary groups. For the 2016 data collection, the ninety-six participants ranged from 15- to 18-years old and were from a diversity of local contexts and backgrounds (for full demographics, see Table 1). They attended 16 different schools (five private and 11 public institutions) covering all six socioeconomic (SES) strata in Colombia.[9] The SES breakdown of the sample was determined by assigning a stratum to each school based on the neighborhood designation or the population it served. Schools were then grouped into 3 categories for analyses: 51 % of students were from schools designated as strata 1 and 2; 24 % from strata 3 and 4; and

[9] Social strata are an official designation by the Colombian state. These strata number 1-6 and labeled in the following way: 1 as "low-low," 2 as "low," 3 as "low-medium," 4 as "medium," 5 as "medium-high," and 6 as "high" (Bushnell et al., 2010).

24 % from strata 5 and 6. The average age of the interviewees was 16.34 years old. Eighty-one interviews were with youth in Bogotá, and these were supplemented by a small sample of seven students in La Palma and eight in Cucunubá (two rural municipalities close to Bogotá). The Bogotá sample had 42 male and 39 female respondents, while in the other two areas, nine males and six females participated. Overall, the 2016 sample was 47 % female. Bogotá was chosen as a primary focus because it is the country's geographical, political, and social center. Furthermore, though it has not experienced the armed conflict as directly, it has high numbers of displaced persons and victims (Giménez-Santana, Caplan, & Drawve, 2018; Thibert & Osorio, 2014). Nineteen participants self-identified as victims of the armed conflict, with the majority saying that someone in their family had been directly impacted (e.g., was killed, kidnapped, displaced).

Table 1

Demographics of 2016 Interview Sample

Overall N = 96

By location

Location	Strata 1, 2	Strata 3, 4	Strata 5, 6	Male	Female
Bogotá	41 (51%)	20 (24%)	20 (24%)	42 (53%)	39 (47%)
La Palma & Cucunubá	4 (27%)	8 (54%)	3 (19%)	9 (60%)	6 (40%)

By age (years old)

	15	16	17	18
N	15 (16%)	45 (47%)	24 (25%)	12 (12%)

The 2017 sample was broader in terms of geography and demographic characteristics (see Table 2). Along with my research assistant, I interviewed 233 students from 36 educational institutions in nine areas. These young people ranged from 14 to 19-years old (average age was 16.47 years old). Over half were from lower SES strata, while about 30 % was from the middle SES group and just over eleven percent came from the upper two strata. Fifty-two percent of the interviewees were female. Of the 233 students, just under half identified as affected by the conflict in some way (48.6%) and over two-thirds came from urban areas (69.1%).

Table 2

Demographics of 2017 Interview Sample

Overall N = 233

By location

Location	Strata 1, 2	Strata 3, 4	Strata 5, 6	Male	Female
Bogotá	36 (60 %)	16 (27 %)	8 (13 %)	31 (52 %)	29 (48%)
Cali	31 (79 %)	8 (21 %)	0 (0 %)	17 (44 %)	22 (56%)
Cucuta	18 (53 %)	12 (35 %)	4 (12 %)	16 (47 %)	18 (53 %)
Medellin	18 (38 %)	16 (34 %)	13 (28 %)	24 (51 %)	23 (49 %)
Rural[10]	32 (60 %)	21 (40 %)	0 (0 %)	24 (45 %)	29 (55 %)

By age (years old of those who noted age)

	15	16	17	18
N	33 (15 %)	85 (39 %)	68 (31 %)	31 (14 %)

[10] I use "rural" because of the striking urban and rural divides in Colombian society (in relation to economics, politics, etc.), and the different ways these populations have experienced the armed conflict (Flores & Vargas, 2018; Richani, 2013). At the same time, I acknowledge there is diversity within rural. This category breaks down to the following areas: Cundinamarca (N = 21), Valle (N = 11), Sucre (N = 5), Boyacá (N = 5), Cauca (N = 11).

Analytic Procedure. Interviews were recorded and then transcribed in Spanish. I transcribed all 2016 interviews and a random segment of 2017 interviews, while the rest were completed by a team of Peruvian psychology students. This group had previous experience transcribing interviews with Colombian youth and was provided with an explanation and contextualization of the project.

Transcriptions were coded using thematic analysis. Sections of the interviews that were relevant to the dissertation's research questions were identified, and then coded using an open procedure to allow the participants' ideas and explanations to emerge in the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). First the interviews were identified by general topics (e.g., "conceptual meaning of peace," "role as a peacebuilder"). Then, specific categories pertaining to this study's research questions were coded with initial descriptive labels. At this point in the analysis, coding was checked for reliability, though the 2016 and 2017 datasets involved different collaborators in this process. For each, a second Colombian researcher or assistant provided a reliability check. Dr. Dedios served this role for the first and Carolina Pedroza for the second. In both cases, the same procedure was followed: the collaborator coded a random selection of the excerpts (20 %) using the same set of codes. In both time points, there was at least 80% agreement in coding frequency, while there was 77 % agreement across codes between myself and Dr. Dedios for the first time point and a 75 % agreement between myself and Carolina Pedroza for the second (Yardley, 2007). The addition of extra codes was also discussed, and for the 2016 dataset two codes were added to the framework based on this conversation.

The codes were analyzed inductively to focus on how participants described peace as being built and their possible connections to it. Individual codes were grouped into broader

themes. While this approach did not use hypothesis testing, the analysis drew on previous literature and theoretical framework in focusing on how these participants described elements of negative peace, interpersonal relationships, social injustice, and broader systems (O'Dwyer, Lyons, & Cohrs, 2016). Since the 2016 and 2017 datasets were situated in different sociohistorical contexts, each was analyzed separately, and then key themes were compared. When differences arose, these were noted and explored in greater depth.

Finally, excerpts were grouped by key demographic differences (i.e., gender, geography, and SES) and analyzed for thematic differences. These analyses were conducted because of the salience in the literature of gender and SES, as well as the theoretical focus on context. In Colombia, geographic location (both across the country and neighborhood within urban centers) is strongly related to class, violence, and number of people who have directly experienced the armed conflict (Thibert & Osorio, 2014). Analyses were thus conducted based on these categories to explore possible connections between differing experiences of conflict, social positioning, and these young people's *conceptualized peace*.

Dataset 3: Questionnaires

A third dataset came from an extensive investigation by Dr. Sánchez Meertens (Sánchez Meertens, 2017). In 2015 and 2016, Dr. Sánchez Meertens and his team of investigators visited schools in over two-thirds of Colombian departments. Using interviews, ethnography, and open-ended questionnaires, these researchers studied how knowledge about the armed conflict was produced and understood by adolescents. In particular, they were interested in intergenerational transfer of knowledge and how school instruction shaped understandings of the conflict. The research project was designed to explore these issues in a wide range of contexts and with diverse populations. This meant including indigenous and Afro-Colombian adolescents in the

sample and collecting data from young people living in areas heavily affected by the conflict, as well as those in contexts not directly affected by day-to-day impact of violence.

Methods

Dr. Sánchez Meertens' study was supported by *Colciencias* and the *Universidad Nacional.* From the research, Dr. Sánchez Meertens published *Los saberes de la guerra* (2017), which touches on memory, the armed conflict in Colombia, and young people's historical knowledge and learning. The book includes a brief mention of respondents' perceptions of the future and ideas about the peace process, but the analysis there mainly addresses general levels of pessimism and optimism about peace and the future.

For this dissertation project, I have been working with Dr. Sánchez Meertens to conduct secondary data analysis on this particular part of the questionnaire data in order to delve further into these adolescents' ideas about peace and the peace process. I was interested in this data because it offers the opportunity to complement the second dataset and explore how a different and broader group of Colombian adolescents describe the possibility of peace and their future orientations (research questions 3 and 4). As articulated in the previous chapter, an individual's *conceptualized peace* is rooted in how they interpret and respond to ecological context, understand peace, and think about their own connection to peace. Therefore, while the interview data provides insight into how a sample of Colombian adolescents understand peace and relate it to their lives, this third dataset allows for a complementary analysis of how other Colombian adolescents are thinking about the peace process, as well as how they relate it to their visions of the future. The questionnaires do not offer a complete picture of the participants' *conceptualized peace* because the protocol does not address the meaning making of peace itself. Therefore, this data is analyzed and then triangulated to more richly understand the context and future

orientations of Colombian adolescents. Below I outline the methods for the collection and analysis of this dataset, and in the next chapter, I present the findings and use them to enrich the investigation of the third and fourth research questions.

Procedure. This data was collected in 2015 and 2016 using a purposive sampling design to maintain a broad sample. Dr. Sánchez Meertens and his research assistants recruited schools across the country and used networks of educators to reach adolescents in various geographies, socioeconomic contexts, and race/ethnic backgrounds. Once permission was obtained from administrators, the investigators visited schools and administered the questionnaires to 9th, 10th, and 11th grade students.[11] During the school day, participants were given detailed instructions by investigators on the project and then provided an hour to an hour and a half to write their responses. In some schools, this data collection was also complemented by interviews with selected students and teachers, as well as ethnographic observation of classrooms and peace-related activities.

The questionnaires included 25 open-ended questions and nine items to collect background information on the students. The twenty-five questions were broken up into two parts: "Sources of Information" and "Your Understanding of the Armed Conflict." "Sources of Information" included items asking about when respondents first learned about the conflict, if they visit museums, read books, or watch television about it, and who is their favorite figure in the conflict's history. "Your Understanding of the Armed Conflict" focused on how they knew about the conflict, about particular events they remember, and their opinions on it. Within this second part, the final questions asked what respondents thought about the peace process and how

[11] 11th grade is the last year of secondary schooling in Colombia.

they envisioned their own, their communities', and Colombia's futures. After the questionnaires were collected, the research team recorded them into a digital system for analysis.

Sample. Overall, the final sample included 1492 high school students from 40 schools in 37 municipalities. These areas covered 23 of Colombia's 32 regional departments, spanning the Caribbean and Pacific coasts, the Amazon jungle and the various highlands across Colombia's four mountain ranges. These sites included schools in urban centers (such as the capital) and more isolated rural parts of the country. Most students were in their last year of secondary school (59.2 %), with another third in 10^{th} grade (34.2 %) and less than five percent in 9^{th} grade. Almost all participants were between the ages of 15 and 20 (90 %), with over half being 16 or 17 years old (33 and 23.8 % respectively). Even numbers of respondents marked male and female on their questionnaires (about 47 % for each). In terms of race/ethnicity, the research sites were specifically chosen to include a balanced mix that represented Colombia's cultural and racial/ethnic diversity. Students were asked to self-identify by writing their race/ethnicity, and given the following examples: Afrocolombian, Indigenous, Mestizo (i.e., mixed European and Indigenous backgrounds), Mulato (i.e. mixed African and Indigenous backgrounds), White, Other, and three other indigenous groups. Overall, the most frequent response was Mestizo (26.1 %), though an equal number did not respond at all to the question. The next largest percent of the sample wrote Afrocolombian (15.3 %), followed by White (11.3 %) and Indigenous (10.9 %). In response to being asked about their religion, just over half of the sample identified as Catholic (56.5 %), which mirrors the Colombian populace. Finally, in addition to this demographic data, one question in the second section of the questionnaire directly asked if the student's life or that of a family member had been affected by the conflict. In total, forty-five percent responded

affirmatively, though the proportion varied significantly by region (e.g., in Bogotá 54 % of participants said yes to this question).

Analytic Procedure. The questionnaire data was analyzed to identify themes and trends in the participants' conceptions of the future and the possibility of peace. To this end, the data that is used in this study comes from responses to the final question: "How do you envision your, your community's and Colombia's futures?" The answers were originally grouped by Dr. Sánchez Meertens' research team into broad categories; each response was either marked as "Depends," "I don't know, I don't think about it, or I'm unsure," "My own future good, that of my community and/or country bad," "Optimist: in peace and/or better socially and economically," "Pessimist: bad, worse, and/or with conflicts, wars, and violence," "Other," or "No Response."

This first coding was verified by applying the same codes to the data myself. After verifying these codes and adjusting a small selection, I also conducted a thematic content analysis similar to the open coding procedure used with the interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Fairclough, 1992). Each response was coded for whether or not the possibility of peace was mentioned, whether the participant described the future as better or worse, and the reasons or content of these future visions. Examples of codes included "politics" for mentions of corruption, change in government, or political culture, "more just/equal society" for mentions of a more equitable or fairer society, "security" for mentions of being able to walk safely in the streets or without fear of assault, and "education" for mentions of educational opportunities, studies, or systems. In total, this procedure led to thirty-four distinct codes. Multiple codes could be assigned to a given response. For example, a response that in Colombia's future there would be more opportunities for all, including in higher education, would have been coded as "education" and "more just/equal society."

The codes were then used to identify themes in the data, specifically by broader response category. That is, a first analysis was done of overall attitudes toward the possibility of peace with the basic codes applied by Dr. Sánchez Meertens' research team. Then, the coding categories from my second round of coding were considered by each of these groupings. Using an inductive approach, I identified themes and trends in responses by those who expressed pessimism, optimism, and ambivalence. Finally, drawing on the demographic data collected by Dr. Sánchez Meertens and colleagues, I also considered if there were differences by geographic location, gender, and age. Like the analytic procedure used for the interviews, this analysis was driven both by previous literature on ideas about peace and the ways that these characteristics relate to experiences of conflict and the state in Colombian society. The sample for this dataset also included greater diversity by race/ethnicity of participants, and so I additionally considered this in my analyses.

Importantly, the questionnaire responses were less detailed and shorter than the interviews. Part of the triangulation process involved interpreting these in relation to findings from the interview data. For this reason, I also rely more on the quantitative numbers of codes to demonstrate salience in reporting the findings from these questionnaires.

Summary

In the previous chapter, I drew on Moscovici's SRT and Spencer's PVEST to outline a new framework for the field of peace studies: *conceptualized peace*. *Conceptualized peace* outlines meaning making as individuals interpret and respond to ecological context in defining for themselves what peace entails and what their role in it could be. This process is particularly significant in transitional societies because *conceptualized peace* is linked to individual outcomes related to peacebuilding (i.e., identities as peacebuilders) that, in turn, influence

broader societal peace. Furthermore, adolescence is a time in the life course when identity (both personal and civic) and interpreting one's place in social systems are developmentally salient tasks. For this reason, *conceptualized peace* offers an important framework for understanding young people's development in these settings.

Studying *conceptualized peace* involves investigation of ecological context (including discourses in society), individual's meaning making, and identity formation. In this study, I aim to provide greater clarity to *conceptualized peace* and demonstrate its relevance through an empirical study of Colombian adolescents. The four research questions frame this project, and in this chapter, I have detailed how the three datasets and accompanying methods will address these questions.

In the next chapter, I will present results from each analysis to address parts of this overall investigation. First, I will use a discourse analysis of government speeches, curricular documents, and press releases to answer: *What are the official discourses about youth and peace that are being broadcasted to adolescents by the Colombian government and civil society through speeches, curricular materials, and press releases?* Next, I will use thematic analysis of interviews with adolescents to address the second, third, fourth research questions: *How do Colombian adolescents understand concepts of peace amid this broader societal transition; what do Colombian adolescents think about the possibility of peace and how it is built*; and, *how do they relate these discussions of peace to themselves, their own futures, their roles as peace builders, and their visions of their country's future?* Questionnaire data from Dr. Sánchez Meertens' investigation will be analyzed using thematic analysis to provide greater insight into Colombian adolescents' ideas about the possibility of peace and how they relate it to themselves and the future. After detailing these results in Chapter 3, in Chapter 4, I will discuss and

triangulate these different analyses by integrating the findings from each analysis and more holistically interpreting Colombian adolescents' *conceptualized peace*.

CHAPTER 3

GOVERNMENT DISCOURSES AND ADOLESCENT VOICES ABOUT PEACE AND YOUTH IN COLOMBIA

The four research questions of this dissertation structure an investigation of Colombian adolescents' *conceptualized peace*. I use the three datasets and connected analyses in order to more richly understand this psychological phenomenon within the lived context of these young people. In this chapter, I present the analyses of each dataset in turn, before integrating them in the next chapter.

Dataset 1: Government Speeches, Documents, and Press Releases

Across the variety of government sources collected, patterns emerged in the defining and describing the role of young people in the peace process and peacebuilding more generally. The discussion of younger generations and peace explicitly focused on internal states and individuals' actions within their immediate contexts. Peace in Colombia is presented as arising from the choices and actions of young people because the government, through peace education, has provided skills and tools to promote individuals' contributions to *convivencia*, or harmonious living. Another pattern in the discourse arose within the context of a looming referendum on the accords with the FARC-EP. During this time, Santos' government emphasized young people's responsibility to become politically involved and further the peace process. Finally, many of the sources relate to the peace education law or emerged in educational contexts (e.g., speeches with university scholarship students), and this discursive construction is consistent in positioning education in young people's engagement in peace. The role of education in forming youth to

support peace is presented as both through the development of interpersonal skills and the provision of tools to be a political force.

Overall, the discourse analysis highlighted three prominent patterns in how young people were situated in reference to peace: individual responsibility in peace building; supporting peace through *convivencia*; and acting as political agents for peace. These patterns are reflected in interconnected discursive elements, what is highlighted and discussed and what is left out, and how peacebuilding is defined. Across and through these themes, the Colombian government places a particular responsibility on young people as individuals by linking their actions and feelings to societal peace. Schools and curriculum are described as spaces for promoting young people enacting this conception of peace.

Young People's Individual Responsibility in Peace Building

First, through various sources, the Colombian government calls for young people to be active agents in peace building. This discourse roots the building of peace in Colombia in the behaviors and orientations of younger generations. Since young people carry the onus for a peaceful societal future, it is their moral responsibility is to be involved and motivated.

Across the press releases and speeches, young people and peace are explicitly connected. The success of peace is rhetorically constructed as depending on younger generations. One of many examples appeared in the Ministry of Education's press release announcing the signing of the peace education law in 2015: "[Santos explained] that the implementation of this law will create in classrooms the spaces for dialogue and discussions about how children and youth should help support the joint construction of peace. This will be a determining factor in making Colombia the country that we all dream about" (Ministerio de Educación, 2015). The use of the imperative tense ("should help") creates a normative expectation for young people's orientation

toward peace. The expectation is then solidified in calling such active involvement a "determining factor"; the government created educational supports for young people's involvement in peace, but its ultimate success is dependent on them as individuals taking action.

The government's call for young people's involvement places this responsibility for a broader peace on each individual. Rather than broad referring to younger generations as a collective, the call identifies each and every young person as integral to building peace. It is also important to note that such a framework excludes other possible elements in peace, such as a structural focus (e.g., on the need for economic opportunity, political efficacy, etc.) or an emphasis on negative peace (i.e., the peace accords between the FARC-EP and the government). In fact, at times there is an explicit rejection of these other elements in the relationship of young people and peace. To this end, Santos affirmed, while signing the peace education law, that, "we should turn our schools into places that support social harmony, camaraderie, and begin the process of building peace with our children and youth because they are the future of our country. This peace is not being negotiated in La Habana, but rather should begin in the interior of each Colombian in their everyday lives" (Ministerio de Educación, 2015). In this example, Santos explicitly separates the peace that is the end of armed conflict with a distinct effort being made in society. This second peace is situated in the "interior of each Colombian"—at an individual level—and specifically focused on children and youth.

Peace as a collective societal endeavor thus not only requires young people to be involved, but begins with each individual person. Acts of peace building fall on the shoulders of young people, while the government and society is responsible for providing them with the appropriate formation. Santos articulated this relationship between the government's responsibility and youth's role in peacebuilding at a meeting of university students with

government scholarships: “young people will lead the construction of peace, and our education system will provide them with the tools to do it” (Colprensa, 2016). Santos did not simply call on young people to be active citizens or peace builders, but moreover placed the onus of a future Colombia in peace on them. The government was presented as providing students with what was necessary to assume this role through the education system. Young people must then enact the formation they have received. This construction of how peace is built placed the responsibility squarely on their shoulders.

The individual focus and responsibility are also discursively constructed with a trope that appears throughout Santos’ speeches and in government documents: the need for young Colombians to give their *granito de arena*, or grain of sand. The phrase is a Spanish trope referring to small individual contributions building to something much larger, just as many individual grains of sand make vast deserts or beaches. In his re-election campaign in 2014, Santos often described how each Colombians can support peace with their *granito de arena*. This phrase then became a part of other speeches, while the underlying implication of the trope was often present even when the specific phrase was not used. One explicit example can be seen in a presentation of a national prize to youth volunteers. In this speech Santos emphasized the individual responsibility of young people:

> You all have more time in life than the members of my generation. It is a country with many problems but we have wanted to fix these problems and we have made steps. We have given our *granito de arena* so that you all can have a better country. We leave you fertile ground so that you can live a little better and help build this peace. Because the truth is that peace is built, as I have said many times, like a cathedral with a solid foundation and then brick by brick. (Presidencia de la República, 2017).

As in previous quotes cited, Santos depicted the government as having provided a foundation for peace. Based on this, young people must each contribute to make a “better country” and finish the project to “build this peace.” Since the groundwork has been laid, the onus is no longer on

the government or its institutions. It is on individuals to give their own *granito de arena*—to act in support of peace. Future generations specifically must harness this "fertile ground": youth must now build the peaceful Colombia, and this will happen bit by bit, person by person through small contributions from all. The final product was described as a cathedral, which has religious implications (linking engagement in peace to morality) and reinforced the need for individual contributions: the foundation--in the case of peace provided by the government—is hidden, while the bricks laid by each person actually compose the majesty of the final construction.

Though without explicit reference to *granito de arena,* the same discursive construction can be identified in other government texts. The Orientation guide for peace education curriculum, for example, includes a discussion of the need for opportunities in schools for young people to resolve conflicts and promote social harmony. The section ends with the assertion that, "Participating in these actions can support the belief that it is possible to have a positive impact (even if it is small) on the world, and this motivates new actions reflecting social responsibility, which can become a virtuous cycle" (Chaux & Velásquez, 2016, p. 19). The same implication as with *granito de arena* is drawn: by providing young people with opportunities to take action in their schools, homes, and neighborhoods (i.e., on a small scale), these contributions motivate further action on a small, local scale. In this case, the link between the small and individual action to the broader social trajectory is implied through "a virtuous cycle" whereby small actions motivate more small actions and thus grow in scope. This document included numerous examples like this that focus on the contribution of each individual, which was described as then expanding outward.

The use of "virtuous" reflects a moral element in the discourse on youth's role in peace involving self-control and regulation. Specifically, individuals contribute to peace through

internal states that they must manage and harness. Once again, peace is not situated in structural change, absence of violence, or a communal effort. Instead, it is discursively defined as emerging from within persons. One way this focus arose was through the emphasis on "emotional competences" underlying peace: "Another important emotional competence for cultures of peace is the capacity to identify and manage one's own emotions. In particular, peaceful *convivencia* requires the capacity to recognize and manage strong emotions like anger. Managing emotions is also central to ethics, care, and decision-making. Care for oneself and for others frequently requires the capacity to self-regulate and manage impulses and strong emotions" (Chaux & Velásquez, 2016, p. 52). Self-control is portrayed as a foundation for peaceful harmony between people. Individuals contribute to peace not only in actions, but also in internal states of mind ("emotional competencies"). Care for oneself and others is important but not enough, since it should be undergirded by identifying, managing, and at times curbing one's emotions. This formulation also linked internal regulation to ethics and decision making. Self-control is thus part of a moral framework for how young people should promote peace.

Broadly, morality is interwoven into the individual's role in peacebuilding through explicit references and more subtle references to responsibility. Santos drew these connections frequently, such as in a speech with university students at the end of 2015:

> I assure you that if you get energized a little bit by this process and you help us—and this process is not mine, it's not Juan Manuel Santos' process, it is not some whim of mine nor of my government. It is of all of you. It is the peace of all of you, which is what you must understand. So, if we all unite, like we are coming together this afternoon, to push forward with the process and take advantage of this moment of change to help Colombia take a leap forward in its development—so that we reconcile, so that we reconstruct this moral fiber that we have been destroying for fifty years of war. (Radio Santa Fe, 2015)

Santos separated societal peace from the government and a political focus. He specifically denied that it was his peace, and instead asserted that it is the peace of each of the audience members (in

this case, Colombian youth). The success of peace—a change that is based in Colombia's "moral fiber"—relies on the uniting of individuals. Again, the onus is on each person to "take advantage of this moment," a rhetorical reference to the foundation that the government has laid.

As the examples demonstrate, across a number of speeches and other documents, Santos and his government build an image of peace in Colombia as dependent on the involvement of youth as individuals. This individual responsibility was also grounded in internal states; the possible change young people can bring and their own roles in it are linked to a deeper sense of morality (including self-control) that should compel them to harness their internal and personal feelings and be active as peacebuilders.

Peaceful *Convivencia*

In discursively constructing a role for Colombian youth in peace, the government sources situate the construction of peace in interpersonal relations—that is, in *convivencia*. The onus for societal peace begins within each individual young person, but it takes shape in how they act in local contexts like their schools, families, and communities. Put another way, these individuals must foster within themselves a particular orientation and then their actions are the embodiment of peace. Peace emerges in how citizens treat each other, with young people's actions taking on the most importance.

Building on the focus on individual responsibility, the government discourse directly linked internal states and actions in social contexts. This connection imbues the suggested curriculum to fulfill the peace education mandate. In the section on young children, the text offers activities that promote self-regulation because they provide a foundation for peaceful actions. "In this grade students develop the regulation of their behavior in relation to themselves and others. Self-regulation is defined as the capacity to manage one's emotions and impulses in

order to act in an appropriate manner in a specific time and place" (Chaux et al., 2016, p. 7). Self-regulation is prioritized as a foundational component of individual's contributions to peace, but this regulation is not peace in and of itself; rather, it influences how the individual treats peers and others in the school context. Therefore, the internal foundation is necessary as a basis for driving action in an intimate social setting: the *convivencia* of their lived everyday interpersonal relations. The link between interior mental states and the treatment of others is further situated within a discourse of morality, as referenced by individuals acting in an "appropriate manner." Though not explicitly defined, the phrase suggests a normative expectation.

This connection between interior states and interpersonal actions extends across many of the documents analyzed. When the peace education law was in development in early 2015, a press release quoted one senator stating that peace education would show "how to plant the seeds for a range of values and principals so that Colombians can live together in a true culture of peace, so that this isn't just a passing moment, but rather that peace becomes fixed in the soul of each Colombian. This will take shape through how we form our future citizens" (Caicedo, 2014). "Planting" and "fixing" peace discursively rooted the very concept of peace in the interior of each individual. The government and its institutions were presented as providing a foundation upon which individuals are responsible for developing themselves ethically and then enacting these values in their social worlds. This example also invoked internal states in describing this process as occurring in "how we form our future citizens." Importantly, the peace education law explicitly built on the Colombian government's efforts in the 2000s to strengthen civic education in developing stronger supports for young people's formation as citizens (Chaux & Velásquez, 2016; Velásquez, Jaramillo, Mesa, & Ferráns, 2017). In the quote above, actions as a citizen

were explicitly connected to peace; the senator outlined lasting peace as dependent on young people's civic development. This civic-peace connection was further rhetorically rooted using "live together" (in Spanish, *convivir*, which is the verb form of *convivencia*) to describe what a peaceful Colombia would be. Exemplifying a broader patter, young people were not portrayed as economic actors, a political bloc, or possible members of armed groups, but instead potential peacebuilders in their actions and attitudes as everyday citizens living together in *convivencia*.

The discursive positioning of peace as interpersonal harmony also permeates Santos and the Ministry of Education's discussions of youth. Multiple times, the government sources referred to five distinct purposes of the peace education law, with the primary and first one being *convivencia*. For example, describing the law, the Ministry of Education's press release stated that, "It contributes to the reestablishment of a culture of peace, which is defined as the use of knowledge and civic competencies to promote peaceful *convivencia*, democratic participation, equality, plurality, and respect for Human Rights" (Ministerio de Educación, 2016). Santos himself identified peaceful *convivencia* as a first goal of peace education in multiple speeches, while also highlighting political (democratic participation), social (equality and plurality), and attitudinal (respect for Human Rights) outcomes. This list, ordered the same way, appears in other Ministry documents. The consistency indicates a prioritization of harmonious interpersonal relations.

The rooting of peace in *convivencia* is reinforced by other texts related to the government's peace education initiative as well. Santos' rhetoric around the law demonstrate a similar primary focus on interpersonal relations. In one speech, he asserted, "Through our schools, we must foster environments of *convivencia*, harmony, and companionship. We must begin this process with our children and youth because the future of the country lies in them"

(Ministerio de Educación, 2015). Here, Santos defined an explicit goal as harmonious interpersonal relations, which he situated as developed within young people in their educational contexts. A peaceful future emerges through this *convivencia* in intimate, everyday contexts. On the whole, multiple texts and speeches about the peace education law clearly demonstrate an explicit positioning of peace as *convivencia*, built through how young people act and treat others.

As evident in these examples, the discourse across these documents directly situated young people's contribution to peace in actions towards others within their educational contexts. This link is further deepened in the curriculum resources developed after the peace education law, which explicitly defined their purpose as fostering values within the individual. With this formational support, young people were then discursively imparted with the responsibility to enact peace through how they treated others and managed interpersonal conflict in school settings. To this end, government-produced guidelines for peace education emphasized the identification and management of emotions, active listening, and other competences to undertake civic actions that contribute to peace. For example, the Orientation guide situated peace in interpersonal competencies, with a particular focus on conflict resolution and management:

> The constructive management of conflict can be considered an integral competency that encompasses more basic competencies like anger management (to achieve a certain level of calm during conflicts), active listening and perspective taking (to understand how others may be interpreting the conflict and help them understand they are being listened to), creative problem solving (to identify diverse possible solutions and one all sides can agree to), the consideration of consequences (to identify the consequences of the possible solutions for all those involved), and assertiveness. (Chaux & Velásquez, 2016, p. 55)

Within the clear emphasis on interpersonal *convivencia*, social dynamics were not entirely ignored. This broader perspective did not incorporate structural inequalities or injustices, but rather questions of social power and their relation to conflict and peace. Young people were presented as able to address power imbalances in society (which are tied to conflict) by fostering

harmonious interpersonal relations in their schools. This formulation of peacebuilding took concrete shape in young people's management and resolution of conflict. As an example, the Orientations guide to peace education established this role for young people in its introduction:

> Building cultures of peace in these contexts implies changing how conflicts are managed, how power is obtained, and how power imbalances are addressed. The conflicts and power imbalances that occur in schools present consistent opportunities for students, and the educational community in general, to practice relating to each other in ways that are true to a pacifist *convivencia*, which we want in our society. (Chaux & Velásquez, 2016, p. 16)

The reference to "these contexts" in the first sentence roots this discussion within schools, as the text is oriented toward these settings. Power is defined as an inherent aspect of conflict, but not in reference to structures (i.e., oppressive or unjust systems) or physical force. Rather, power is a part of social interaction and is inherently linked to interpersonal conflict. Young people can thus promote peace by addressing power imbalances: acting to mitigate and address attempts to assert control or dominance over others. Schools provide a testing ground to "practice" these abilities, so the government's efforts in education (such as peace education) is structured to provide the necessary formation and opportunities. Again, this articulation presented the government and its institutions as laying groundwork that young people must embrace and employ.

Within this framework, a fundamental purpose of peace education is providing tools for dealing with interpersonal conflicts. The proposed curriculum included the following assertion as part of the requirements for a successful implementation of peace education:

> In peace education, it is necessary that teachers and students feel invested in the search for alternative resolutions to conflict other than violence, and in the construction of relations that are just, pacific, and inclusive within their intimate contexts (family, friend groups, classroom, school, community, neighborhood, and city). (Chaux et al., 2016, p. 182)

This phrasing again placed the onus on individuals by asserting that teachers and students must "feel" invested. Further supporting the analysis above, the use of "feel" (*sentir*, a direct translation from the Spanish) emphasizes the rooting of peace first in internal states, which then can lead to a broader peace defined by relations between families, friends, groups, etc. Peace education provided strategies for treating each other justly and handling conflict pacifically, but the promise for peace can only be fulfilled by individuals' emotional and mental investment.

Within this framework, internal attitudes and orientations are depicted as impacting interpersonal relations. For example, in the Orientation guide, conflict resolution and problem solving were highlighted as critical goals that emerge from individuals' skills and attitudes:

> Another important cognitive competency for a culture of peace is creative problem solving. There are many situations related to peace in which it is particularly important for people to find alternatives that all parties can agree to. This requires the capacity to creatively generate many options. In situations of interpersonal or intergroup conflict, it is more likely that an agreement will be reached that favors everyone if the different parties are capable of imagining many possible resolutions. In contrast, if they can only focus on their positions or initial demands, it is likely that the conflicts will become power struggles, escalate, and lead to aggression. (Chaux & Velásquez, 2016, p.44)

Tension and conflict between people were defined as salient cause of violence and power imbalances. Individuals act as peacebuilders by offering possibilities to de-escalate these situations. This skill set must come from students' own investment and mental processes: a willingness to "imagine many possible resolutions" and not "only focus on their positions or initial demands." To this end, peace in interpersonal relations depended on and emerged from individuals' internal states over which they have control.

Overall, through these various documents, the government discursively established young people's role as based on creating peaceful *convivencia*. Peace was harmonious interpersonal relations, which emerged from the ways that individuals think and feel (i.e., their internal mental states and orientations). This framework was deepened in discussions of peace education: the

government and schools were described as providing concrete tools and spaces for young people to contribute to peace in this way. In this sense, the word "peace" was not simply a vague placeholder or a referent to the end of armed conflict. Instead, these texts offered a definition and positioning of peace as *convivencia*, with young people's having to treat others pacifically and to manage conflict. The relationship between youth and peace was situated in individuals controlling and managing their attitudes and behaviors in social spheres, with education supporting and providing opportunities to develop the necessary skills to resolve conflicts and manage interpersonal relations.

Youth as Political Actors for Peace

A third element in the discourse, Santos' government also defines youth's role in the Colombian peace-building project as political. This a broader discursive construction integrates national processes into the intersection of young people and peace, but is still grounded in affirming their responsibility as individuals. The political focus is intricately connected to the historical moment: from early on in the peace process, Santos made clear that any peace accords would have to be approved in a vote by the Colombian populace. With the accords nearing finalization and a plebiscite looming in 2015 and 2016, Santos and his government called on young people to be political actors promoting the peace process.

Importantly, the articulation of young people as political actors differed within the sources. The pattern mentioned above was identified in speeches and press releases, whereas within the curricular documents, there was a more general depiction of young people as citizens. In other words, the peace education guidelines and supports referred to young people's concrete capacities as a proactive, prosocial civic actors: internal states of efficacy, acting in ways that support harmonious interpersonal relations, and developing appropriate decision-making skills.

The abstract nature of references to youth as "political actors" or "political participants" leaves open the question of what type of political action is actually referred to. This can be seen in the Orientation guide for peace education, which at numerous points specifies that the classroom offers a possibility for the development of active political engagement. A clear example came at the end of the introduction: "Peace education can contribute to this goal [of political participation], supporting the formation of active citizens who can understand themselves as political subjects, whose actions and lack of action can generate positive changes in the society" (Chaux & Velásquez, 2016, p. 18-19). Developing as a political actor was described as an indelible part of being young. Both inaction and action have political repercussions, and thus the goal of education is to raise awareness of this unavoidable part of the self as a citizen. In line with the patterns detailed in the previous two sections, education was presented as providing tools, while the individual had to adopt these and assume the responsibility to create a peaceful Colombia.

In the curricular documents, "political subjects" generally referred to young people being aware of themselves as citizens within a polity. In contrast to this more abstract use of "political," Santos directly invokes young people as political actors who must promote the peace process. This formulation does not simply refer to general participation, but more specifically concrete politicized action. At the time that this discursive element is most prevalent—late 2015 through 2016—the peace negotiations were in their latter stages. The peace process was increasingly controversial and divisive in Colombia (Pachon, 2017). With final accords and a plebiscite looming, Santos presented young people's role in peace as explicitly political. He called on them to learn more about the process and energize others to support it. To this end, at a gathering of youth at the National University, Santos said:

> What are the benefits of this peace? This is something that people have yet to think about or has been explained well enough. They still don't understand the immense opportunity that Colombia has to end a war that has cost the Colombian people so much and that the end of this war will create many opportunities. There are many examples. And we all have to begin to contribute our own *granito de arena*. All of you here have to begin to try to understand a bit more what this process is about, in order to excite others and say, look, this is the path we need to take. (Radio Santa Fe, 2015)

In line with the discursive patterns noted previously, Santos again focused on individuals as the ultimate determining factor for a long-lasting peace in Colombia. With *granito de arena,* peace is defined as requiring contributions from all, linking this speech in with the broader discourse about youth and peace. In this case, however, the individual contribution is political: youth must motivate themselves to be interested (i.e., work to understand the process and its benefits) and then use this foundation to change the minds of others. They must first assume the responsibility to take on this role (becoming motivated and learning more about the process) and then enact it with others (convincing them of the value of the peace accords). In this sense, young people become the bearers of the government's political agenda.

As the plebiscite approached, Santos' rhetoric included a clear political aim: calling on youth to actively convince others to vote in favor of the peace accords. In February of 2016, Santos spoke in front of youth at a gathering honoring those who had earned college scholarships. At multiple points during the speech, he implored young people to become active in supporting the peace process. After saying to them "I beg you to defend peace," he continued:

> I am going to ask all of the young people of this country that they do me an immense favor…you all will be of special importance for the Colombian people. We are counting on the youth to legitimize the peace. You should take your mothers, families, and friends to vote for peace. (Colprensa, 2016)

Drawing a personal connection between his audience and himself, Santos placed the success of peace on young people's action to inspire others to support the peace process. This responsibility

is framed as a personal request— "do me an immense favor" —yet also as a collective duty in that is essential to fulfill the promise of the peace process. While those under 18 years old could not vote in the plebiscite on the accords, this formulation still gives them political agency. In these texts, youth were not described as building peace through promoting harmonious *convivencia*, but their role was similarly as social agents in their local contexts. Additionally, the positioning of the state and its institutions mirrored other elements of the government's discourse. Santos implied that the government and its institutions have laid the necessary groundwork; in this case through the peace accords, and in other texts through providing young people with the necessary tools through education. With this foundation, young people must then make peace concrete and lasting; here by motivating others to vote in favor of the accords, and in the previous sections, through interpersonal relations and supporting peaceful *convivencia*.

Furthermore, in the few instances when Santos acknowledged that peace included a need to address structural conditions, he defined these changes as outcomes of a successful political effort propelled by young people. The peace accords were presented as the framework for a future where inequality, poverty, and other social challenges were to be addressed. The ultimate fulfillment of this promise, however, depended on how youth responded to their roles as political actors. For example, in another speech to scholarship recipients, Santos clearly articulated this perspective when invoking structural conditions:

> If we are able to sign these accords and we succeed in the referendum with the support of all of you, then we will have a country that will be different and better, with many more opportunities, with an economy that is much more solid, growing faster, with more employment, with more progress. For this reason, I also ask all of you, to defend this program and to defend peace. This program and peace are like an unbreakable marriage and you are the most appropriately situated to push them forward. (Presidencia de la República, 2016b)

This excerpt began with a reference to the accords and the coming plebiscite. Santos then defined these outcomes as dependent on the support (in the context of the vote, the political support) of these young people. Peace may imply a "better" Colombia in reference to structural conditions (i.e., economic opportunity), but this definition of peace is still abstract and only possible if young people "defend" peace. The broad benefits mentioned would only be fulfilled with the advocacy and political support of these young people. The use of "defend" pointed to the tenuous nature of the peace process and incorporated young people (the audience) into the discussion as necessary political actors with agency. Additionally, "unbreakable marriage" further positioned these beneficiaries of the scholarship program as being involved in a moral and social pact, which can be understood as investment in societal peacebuilding.

This third element of the government's discourse situated individuals as critical to peace through action to support the political process. The curricular documents focused on young people's general development as active political participants. Santos, however, specifically entreated young people to be political actors in the context of the looming plebiscite. He called on them—and described it as their responsibility—to become involved in supporting and furthering the peace process. This articulation of youth's role in peace contrasts with other possibilities for their political orientation toward peace; for example, as individuals who can critically evaluate current events and to make informed decisions based on their own beliefs about what a better future entails.

Discursive Diversity

To this point, I have detailed three prominent patterns that emerged from the discourse analysis and situated them in relevant contexts (i.e., the peace education law, signing of the accords and looming plebiscite). I acknowledge, however, there are also variations and other foci

within these texts. As with many constructions, the discourse analyzed do not reveal a uniform and singular representation of youth and peace (Potter & Wetherell, 1987).

One aspect of the discursive diversity has already been noted. Santos' call for young people to motivate political action on the accords differed from the formulation of their role as fostering peaceful *convivencia*. Situating youth as peacebuilders promoting harmonious interpersonal relations de-emphasizes the possible political nature of peace. Moreover, Santos himself often suggested that peace in Colombia is not political; he asserted in some instances that peace is not Santos' peace or not the peace process, but rather a broader civic endeavor. In contrast, the third element I detailed identified young people's political actions as critical to the success of peace. Youth were called on not just to vote in favor of peace, but to become advocates by spreading understanding of the accords and convincing others to likewise join the pro-peace process movement. This discursive construction is explicitly political: to garner support for a victory at the ballot box.

These discrepancies illuminate the ways that the government's rhetoric about youth and peace is used as social action, while also highlighting underlying themes that link the various elements. First, the political focus emerged most acutely as the peace negotiations came to an end. A primary aim of the government may have been to convince citizens of the utility of the peace process and motivate them to approve the accords. It is thus fitting that the government's discourse within this historical moment would center on political support. This discursive diversity can then be understood as a shift in the social action goal because of the dynamic context within which the discourse is embedded. Second, despite the differing realms in which young people's role in peace is situated (i.e. political, internal and interpersonal), the underlying construction is similar. The government and its institutions are presented as having done part in

laying a foundation for a peaceful future (through the peace process, peace education law, etc.). The burden is then placed on young people to turn that potential into a lasting and stable reality. Additionally, this responsibility is not just collective (i.e., as a generation), but rather based in the need for individual action. Whether as conflict mediators or motivators of votes, young people must manage and draw on internal states (e.g., self-control or understanding and support for the accords) and act upon that with others.

Throughout these results, I have positioned the constructions in this discourse in relation to other possibilities that are left out or minimized. I have mentioned some of these alternatives to situate the identified elements in relation to other possible ideological discourses (van Dijk, 2003). These include young people critically assessing and making their own choices about the role in peace, societal peace being rooted in structural changes, or prioritizing the absence of violence in various forms and across multiple levels of society (i.e., negative peace). While the analysis has focused on prevalent and transversal aspects of the discourse, it is important to recognize that these documents at times include other connections between youth and peace.

Returning to the discursive diversity, one alternative possibility was present in a text citing Gina Parody, the Minister of Education. This example of diversity within the documents is noteworthy not because it was a widespread counter construction, but rather to acknowledge the alternative it offered and highlight the scarcity of this formulation within the corpus. In a government-produced poster entitled "Why Believe in Youth?," Gina Parody answered:

> Youth are not only the future of Colombia, but also the present. One of our great goals is that rural youth will stay or even return to the countryside. For this, we have to bring them living conditions that are true to their human dignity, that allow them to prosper and have access to education. What they do for this country down the road depends on what they think, feel, and do today with their lives, and this is why we will continue to support them along this path toward a live of prosperity and equity. (Cartel Urbano, 2015)

Parody directly acknowledged structural inequalities and obstacles (e.g., unjust living and educational conditions) to young people thriving. This structural focus is deepened by using the phrase "human dignity", a reference to discourses of human rights. Furthermore, Parody identified these conditions as issues the government ("we") must address. In contrast to the previous examples, Parody's answer did not place the onus for peace on young people. In this articulation youth act and develop in relation to the conditions around them. The government is then responsible to reform those conditions, since "we have to bring" these changes.

While this quote offered a different construction of youth's role in peace, these words were not directly addressed to young people. The info graphic was produced by a private company to highlight the success and cross sector (i.e., business, government, education) collaboration of a recent exposition to targeting youth development. Other documents in the corpus analyzed directly target educators (i.e., the curricular resources) or young people themselves (i.e., the citations from Santos' speeches). The different context for Parody's comments may be important for two reasons. First, it offers a possible rationale for the differing discursive construction. Much like the way that Santos' call on youth to be political actors was rooted in the historical context just before the plebiscite, this context shifted the purpose of the speech act. Second, since young people or educators were not being directly addressed, there may have been less reason to focus on their ownership and responsibility for peace in Colombia. If youth were related to peace differently when they were the audience, the government's discourse in these contexts could be understood as social action meant to convey a particular message. To this end, the discourses in these documents were political acts with explicit purposes in defining a relationship between youth and peace (van Dijk, 1997).

Conclusion

Across the variety of sources analyzed, Santos' government offered a conceptualization of peace in which its construction depends on young people's individual action. Youth were not only called to be active participants in society, but also identified as the critical social actors responsible for peace in Colombia. The outcome of societal peace was described as dependent on how young people treat others and develop specific skills enacted in interpersonal relations. This positioning played out within Santos' speeches to young people, as well as in curricular documents related to peace education. Within the context of the plebiscite on the peace accords, the government's call became political: advocating that young people actively convince and motivate others about the peace process. Across these patterns in the government's discourse, peace was situated as beginning within individual youth and taking shape in interpersonal relations. Whether through self-control of emotions or becoming knowledgeable and motivated, young people were called on to first take internal steps and then draw on this to act in their social contexts. Individuals' actions eventually build to a broader peace.

These insights into the government's discourse help situate adolescent Colombian's *conceptualized peace.* The analysis establishes the influential official discourses that permeate social representations about young people and peace. Though individual young people differentially experience or interpret this specific conceptualization, it presents a socially influential frame for how youth should think about and build peace. Through these various sources, Santos' government constructed youth's role in peace as a particular type of active civic and political involvement: young people must assume build peace either through interactions with others in their intimate spheres (i.e., families, schools, neighborhoods) or by promoting a specific political purpose within these contexts. This prioritization makes individual citizens—particularly young people—responsible for peacebuilding.

This discourse permeates the social context within which young Colombians developed their own *conceptualized peace.* The results will be used to situate adolescents' own meaning making about peace. In the next sections I present analyses of young Colombian's ideas about peace, which will be integrated with the results of this section in Chapter 4.

Dataset 2: Interviews

As detailed in the literature review, meaning making of peace involves interpretation and response. Peace is not one-dimensional or uniformly defined. It can, for instance, refer to a concept, to a feeling, to a concrete political situation, to positive elements (e.g. cultures of peace), or to negative ones (e.g. absence of violence). To address this complexity, the analytic approach and interview protocol were designed to be multifaceted. The results presented in this section involve three concrete subsections (which are laid out in Table 3 below). First, I present the key places and people these Colombian adolescents identify as influencing how they think about peace. Second, I detail prevalent themes in how they describe peace abstractly, and then compare these to how participants answered whether they live in peace. Finally, I describe the themes in how these adolescents connect peace to their lives. This third part includes data from three different parts of the interviews: their descriptions of possible contributions to peace, concrete actions they have taken to this effect, and their future orientations.

Where and How Adolescents Describe Learning about Peace

These Colombian adolescents primarily identified schools and homes as spaces where they learned about peace, with teachers and parents often mentioned as key influences. Overall, there was both recognition of direct learning about peace and having connected values modeled or instilled in them. Those who mentioned their schools tended to describe talking about peace or the peace process in different classes, while those who referred to their homes and families more

generally invoked lived experience and values in their households. A smaller group of students said that they did not think that they learned or talked about peace in any particular context.

Table 3

Structure of Dataset 2 Results

Section Heading	Section Subparts	Research Objective	Interview Protocol Questions
Where and How Adolescents Describe Learning about Peace		Salient influences on ideas about peace	Where do you talk about or learn about peace; how did you form your ideas about peace?
Ideas about Peace	Defining Peace	How respondents understand peace	In general, outside of the context of the peace process, what does peace mean to you; do you feel like you live in peace; why or why not?
	Living In Peace		
Understanding of Role in Peace	How they feel they can support peace	What respondents have done in last year to support peace, and ways that they think they can be involved in building peace	Do you think that you are able to support peace in Colombia; why or why not; in your community; what have you done in the last year to support peace?
	Future Orientations	How they understand their own futures and that of their country	How do you see yourself in fifteen years; what do you want to be and what do you want to do; do you think that the country's future will affect yours; will it affect you achieving your dream?

In reference to school contexts, many interviewees noted both learning about and actively engaging with peace as a concept or with the peace process. Teachers provided important information and spaces in relation to peace. In their classes these adolescents debated the peace process, participated in activities having to do with the coming plebiscite, or talked about what peace meant within the academic perspective of a particular course. Activities and discussions were often mentioned as taking place in philosophy, social studies, and ethics classes, though some students also noted specific *Catédra de la Paz* (the Spanish name for the peace education law) courses. Touching on these various themes, Fernando[12], a respondent from Cucuta, offered a prime example of how experiences in the school were discussed by many respondents:

> My ideas [about peace] began last year when we studied peace processes in the past, the options that were being considered in this process. And well, that information helped me to think about what is going in our country, what the advantages and disadvantages could be in the present and in the future. Many things from school have helped me. The work they have made us do, the projects—they had us do group projects so that we could communicate and learn more about peace and post conflict. (2017)[13]

Fernando mentions group projects specifically, but across the sample there was a wide range of activities, such as all-school gatherings (e.g., assemblies, peace-themed days), extracurricular activities (e.g., peer mediation), curriculum changes (e.g., *Catédra de la Paz* courses), and in-class debates. A small group of respondents noted that these topics arose in conversations with their friends, such as informally during recess or lunch periods.

In addition to mentioning schools, interviewees also focused on the home and family as key spaces for discussion and being taught values related to peace. Some referred to talking about concrete political issues related to peace (e.g., the plebiscite, the accords) in their families, especially while watching or discussing the news. Other respondents described the influence of

[12] All names used are pseudonyms.

[13] Throughout this chapter, I will designate when the participant was interviewed by following their quote with the year in parentheses.

one's home as more internal: their concept and embodiment of peace was defined by the home and family environment. For both ways that home and family influenced ideas about peace, respondents depicted learning about peace as a process of personal formation. They came to understand peace from experiences in their homes and from internalizing and extending how they experience being a family and community member. In this sense, for many, forming an understanding about peace was a personal process of integrating and responding to ideas, feelings, and environments to which they are exposed. For example, Omar, from a low SES school in Bogotá, asserted that, "even though you have a personal element to your formation, your parents—or well, the people who raise you—are significant influences in what this concept of peace is for you" (2017). While recognizing personal agency, Omar's statement reflected a broader trend among participants to not that parents and family "taught" about peace by shaping one's formation.

This process also linked school and home as contexts of learning; what began as teaching and formation at home extended into their learning and actions in classrooms. To this effect, Umberto, a student from a middle SES school in Medellin, noted that "Peace is learned at home because everything—values and things like that—begins from home. What you learn at home then becomes reinforced in school" (2017). Similarly, Felix, who attended a lower resource school in Cali, said, "Education always begins at home. If at home there is respect, and everything, then there will be peace. And then this is built upon with the projects that we do here in school. Little by little we have done this by getting to know new students, new people, creating bonds and building respect" (2017). Broadly, Umberto and Felix's responses both reflected the perspective of home and school learning about peace as linked.

Connecting home, school, and neighborhood contexts, other interviewees described everyday experiences as influencing their understanding of peace. For example, Emilia, a female student from Cucuta, said that she learned about peace "from my experiences, everything that has happened to me. From this I have formed my concept of what peace is. Experiences in my home, in school—everything that surrounds me. I have had various experiences, and now I have a clear idea of what peace is" (2017). While Emilia invoked everyday life as an important part of how she understood peace, others specifically referred to feeling calm or tranquil in a similar way. Alejandro, a participant from Medellin, noted his understanding of peace was based on "my tranquility. I feel calm where I live—truthfully, where I live and in my experience, from time to time I realize that I am not living in a war zone" (2017). Alejandro reflected that feeling tranquility allowed him to experientially understand peace. In this way, his description of peace paralleled that of Emilia and others who talked about learning about peace through daily life.

Finally, many participants also noted actively trying to learn about peace. This proactive approach involved activities like following the news, looking online, and reading philosophical texts. An example of the first of these, María, who attended a middle SES school in Medellin, talked about her own motivations and information-seeking as underlying an active process of forming an understanding of peace: "I like to watch the news and that way, I keep myself up to date on these topics. These topics interest me a lot, and so I have been creating my own definition of peace according to what I see and what I feel" (2017). Both implicitly and explicitly, María asserted her agency in learning about peace; her ideas came from her own motivation and processing of her experiences. While others may not have been as explicit, like María they emphasized their interest and action in learning about peace.

Overall, participants' descriptions of how and where they learned about peace revealed that many situated this process within personal formation. Some highlighted contextual influences—like the school and home—and others focused on personal motivation. Throughout these various responses, there was recognition—at times explicit, but often implied—that they were processing and connecting across various influences, sources, and experiences.

Ideas about Peace

The range of ideas about peace mirrored the diversity in the interviewees themselves. Nevertheless, across their responses, broader themes emerged about what peace entailed, how it was built, and what role individuals could play in it. Many participants talked about peace as beginning with individuals who then build peace through how they treat others, linked the possibility of supporting peace to whether or not they thought peace was even possible, and defined peace as based in social interaction. Some themes spanned individuals across different subgroups (i.e., by location or SES), while others varied by these analytic categories.

From the Individual Outward. As a first salient theme, many respondents—across gender, location, and SES groups—described peace as a process that began within individuals. This perspective involved two parts: each person fostering conditions within themselves to be at peace, and then drawing on this internal state in acting toward others. Peace thus bridges the individual and the collective: the individual's own feelings and thoughts are the first step in peace, and this personal peace serves as a necessary foundation for harmonious social environments and relations. The inner part involved various elements, like holding certain values, being calm, self-control, and accepting what one has and who one is.

One internal element across many responses was tranquility. It was not only used in reference to a positive feeling (i.e., being calm or exercising self-control), but also as the absence

of fear or worry. The latter entailed physical concerns (i.e. of persecution and harm), as well as mental and emotional stressors (like school demands, home environments, and future opportunities). These two uses of tranquility arose in the responses of Ivan and Marta, both from a low SES school in a rural area. While Ivan noted that peace is, "being calm, with love, in harmony, and without any ill will in your mind or in your heart," Marta described it as, "all of us living in an area where we feel at ease, without fear or worry that something is going to happen and force us to leave or do something we don't want to." Ivan's response reflected those who talked about tranquility in reference to a general mental state, while Marta's entailed freedom from concern over physical harm.

Many interviewees highlighted that inner dimensions to peace provided a critical basis for acting in daily social contexts. Peace "should be born from within and move outward, not from the outward in," as one noted. In other words, internal states should guide thoughts and behaviors toward others. Some invoked this idea in knowing ones' limits: people had liberty, but only until their personal freedom encroached on others. Other interviewees went further to say that peace necessitated supporting or helping people (i.e., concrete action toward others). In both cases, inner calm was necessary for being a peacebuilder in one's family, community, and society. Peace began internally through how a person felt, thought, and then acted.

Juan, a Bogotá male from the middle SES group, demonstrated this perspective. He stated, "I think that peace also comes from one's self. Like, there can be conflicts and dilemmas in your life, but also you feel good about what you do. You yourself construct peace. You forge it through who you are" (2016). In his response, Juan situated a broader peace in who each individual is and how they feel about themselves. That is, peace is having a positive self-concept and then drawing on this self-acceptance to construct peace with others. Embracing and feeling

good about one's self drives peace building actions, even amid conflicts or issues that may arise in daily life.

These peaceful relations between people are rooted in individual's internal mindset and self-control, and so peace forms through how individuals interact. While Jesus attended a high SES school in Bogotá, similar to Juan he described peace as beginning with how individuals think about themselves and others and then translating into action toward others.

> Peace has to develop from within. It is an understanding that you must tolerate others and act towards them as you would want them to act towards you. You must interiorize this, overcome your impulsivity and always forgive. For me, peace is this idea that begins inside of you and then you must act on it toward others. (2016)

Jesus situated peacebuilding at an interpersonal level (how people act toward each other is ultimately what peace is), but also noted that this begins with the ideas and perspectives individuals foster in themselves. Like Juan, Jesus placed the agency and onus on the individual, though peace forms at an interpersonal level. When individuals achieve the internal states and orientations necessary, they can then act in ways that lead to a broader societal peace.

***Convivencia* as Peace Enacted.** Many of these young people identified peace as involving social relations; peace was built by the ways people treat each other and handle differences, tension, and conflict, and experienced as safety and security in local contexts. Through each of these elements, there was recognition that interpersonal issues arise, and so peace was both creating a positive and open atmosphere and being able to effectively solve problems and disputes.

The experience of peace was defined as *convivencia*, or a sense of harmony among members of a group, community, or society. Conflict unavoidably occurs because of differences and disagreements, but individuals can minimize and address these tensions. Peace, therefore, is tranquility and interpersonal harmony in society. Differences are accepted, acknowledged, and managed without violence or intense conflict. In the words of Adriana, a student at a low SES

school in the capital, "peace is being able to *convivir* in a place with others. It is accepting differences and tolerating them. And accept and respect that each person has a different perspective" (2017). As Adriana's response demonstrated, peace for these respondents involved respect, tolerance, and rejection of discrimination. While some interviewees mentioned lifestyles—that is, beliefs, sexualities, racial-ethnic backgrounds—many more focused on peace as respect for diverse viewpoints and opinions.

Some respondents went further to define peace as union and solidarity among a diverse group of individuals. To this end, peace involves collaboration, working toward a common good, and helping others. It also requires mutuality in social relations; that people treat each other as they would like to be treated. Luis, a rural student from a low SES school, demonstrated this perspective in stating, "Peace is living in a harmonious community, helping others. Not just thinking about yourself, which is what we are doing right now. For me, peace is seeing everyone in communion, harmony, helping each other and working and living for a united future" (2017). As Luis' response showed, this perspective implied an active intent to work together, rather than simply creating conditions to minimize conflict and effectively manage it.

Connected to these perspectives on peace as *convivencia,* a number of adolescents referred to physical safety and a lack of interpersonal violence. This perspective involved negative peace (e.g., the absence of war, violent crime), but focused on the ways that individuals treat each other as necessary antecedents. Insecurity arose when people were neither respectful nor respected, whereas peace—as Estefania, a participant from a low SES school in Bogotá noted—came from "ourselves, from our interactions with those in our daily lives when we work on living in harmony and as a community, there will be no need to hurt each other" (2017). In this response. Estefania described individuals and their actions in daily life as creating conditions

for hurting each other. Similarly, Juan Diego, a student from a low SES school in Bogotá, described the consequences of a lack of acceptance and tolerance: "Peace is accepting others as they are and addressing the ways that they are harmed. Because if you don't accept the opinion, and perhaps the advice of others who are different, there will never be peace because all of the world will be in discord and conflict" (2017). Here, Juan Diego more generally linked how people handle tension and interpersonal relations as directly resulting in chaos and insecurity.

Finally, some interviewees identified the government as an important actor in peace as *convivencia*. Specifically, the provision of fundamental rights and provisions were critical bases of peace by guaranteeing expression and the right to an opinion. This included references to "both parties being tranquil and trusting because our rights are upheld," "not being persecuted because the state defends our rights," and "a civil concept, the fulfillment of democracy that brings about a certain personal and moral control between people." In these responses, participants identified that the government had to both be responsive to its citizens and provide for all the necessary guarantees in order to facilitate harmonious interpersonal relations.

The Possibility of Peace and Efficacy. A focus on the individual permeated a theme related to the possibility of peace. Importantly, whether peace was possible was not directly asked; however, many respondents explicitly or implicitly took a stance on this question when defining peace. This aspect was associated with how they talked about the efficacy of individuals to promote and build peace. In this sense, peace depended on one's understanding of individuals' abilities to shape their social worlds.

Whether respondents talked about peace as possible or utopic was related to SES group. Respondents from the middle SES strata demonstrated high levels of self-efficacy toward peacebuilding, particularly at individual and interpersonal levels. In connection to the first

theme, these participants described feeling able to contribute to peace by being calm people who could build peace in their interactions with others. In this vein, Jorge, a seventeen-year old male in Bogotá, talked about feeling like he lived in peace:

> I consider myself to be a very open, very calm person. It's like, I don't see the need to hurt others. And if someone doesn't like what I do, I try to respect that. As in, I say to myself, well, okay. You don't like what I do, how I talk, who I am, well I'm not going to bother you or be bothered by that. (2016)

Jorge noted that his internal state facilitated taking action in promoting peace, specifically by offering a foundation to de-escalate problematic situations. His sense of calm allowed him to avoid conflict between himself and others, and thus effectively contribute to a broader peace.

For respondents demonstrating self-efficacy as peacebuilders, contributing to peace was possible, but required work. In their responses, this process necessitated each person to recognize their responsibility and be willing to put in the necessary effort mentally and in acting toward others. For example, Jorge's classmate Roberto laid out this path to peace:

> I think that you have to work at it through your self. Work at peace and shape it in order to make it a reality. Simply, I am the one who can contribute to it. I am the one who causes harm to me or who doesn't. That is where peace comes in. To know oneself, and from that to work toward peace. You also benefit if you think like that. (2016)

Like Jorge, Roberto stated that a broader peace began first in the individual. He went further, however, to also assert that the necessary internal peace involved self-control and the realization of agency in reference to one's emotions and sense of self. He described seeing himself as able to contribute to peace by self-awareness and keeping a sense of control over his thoughts and emotions. Through this inner calm, Roberto detailed, he could then build peace more broadly.

Unlike Jorge, Roberto and others like them, some respondents (mainly from the low and high SES groups) discussed peace as utopian or difficult to obtain. These participants also noted struggling to feel that individuals could contribute to peace. Peace as they conceived of it was

not possible and—though this connection was not explicitly made by them—they described not feeling that they could contribute to peace. For example, Alicia, who attended a high SES school in Bogotá, stated, "Colombia that is trying to unite as a society. And if we can't all be a bit conscientious about ourselves and about peace, it's bad. It affects all of society, and then we are not building peace more generally. This is what bothers me—to see our society like this" (2016). Alicia and others like her detailed struggling to believe that peace was possible because of their experiences of —and thus what they believed about—society: others would not adopt the necessary attitudes, beliefs, and actions for peace. In turn, these thoughts related to expressed ideas about whether and how they themselves could affect change or support peace.

Equality. While some respondents discussed equality as necessary for peace, there were differences by SES in how this concept was employed. Many high SES respondents described peace as requiring equal regard for all people as members of societies; all had to be tolerated, treated with dignity, and had freedom to express their ideas and who they were. In contrast, participants from low SES schools who mentioned equality often noted social, political, and economic issues in Colombia.

The interviewees from high SES schools discussed equality in reference to tolerance and respect for different perspectives and lifestyles. Individuals must accept others even when they do not agree with their beliefs, choices, or identities. Demonstrating this conceptualization, Andrea, a 17-year-old from an elite private school in Bogotá, defined peace as each person being allowed to be themselves, to express their own identity, and to be accepted as such.

> I think that peace is everything that John Lennon talks about in *Imagine*. Peace is literally that song. It's like, a bit of equality, a bit of respect for others, and I accept like your religion, your sexual orientation, and all those things that make people kill each other. So, I think peace is all this. Accept a human being as they are. (2016)

Andrea stated that people hold different beliefs and identities, but should be accepted and able to share these parts of themselves. Another respondent from a high SES private school in Bogotá, Julieta, defined peace similarly, saying it was, "about arriving at a certain equality. Not that everyone thinks the same, but that each one—it's like tolerance. That's the word. It's not that I have to totally support everyone, but I respect what they think and feel." Julieta linked a broader peace, and her own role in it, to each person being allowed to express their thoughts and feelings without discrimination or persecution. Julieta, Andrea, and other high SES respondents did not assert a need for agreement or harmony, but emphasized equal tolerance and acceptance of others. Furthermore, their descriptions demonstrated the salience of the individual root of peacebuilding. This equality of treatment was inclusive of how they themselves act—indicated by using the first person—rather than the state or only a specific group in society.

In contrast to Andrea and Julieta, respondents from low SES contexts who mentioned equality referred to economic or social conditions. Importantly, however, this was a small group of respondents; most from this group did not talk about systemic or structural issues like poverty. The ones who mentioned equality noted that peace in Colombian society was not possible or difficult because of inequalities in material resources and political power. Peace involved equality in society, but in this case the obstacles were poverty, starvation, and the state's failings. An example of this perspective, Maribel, a 16-year-old from a low SES school in Bogotá, stated that to her peace was utopic. She concretely rooted this pessimism in various issues, including material inequality and injustice, in Colombia society. Maribel described what peace would mean in Colombia, which she later said was an unachievable ideal:

> We will have peace when in the cities and countryside there is real respect for citizen's rights and they don't simply say there is a ceasefire. Right now there isn't a peace like that in Colombia because there will still be people starving, people violating human

> rights, and that isn't a country in real peace. Where all this happens, there is no peace. (2016)

Maribel asserted that peace necessitated basic rights and needs met for all. She went beyond the absence of conflict or interpersonal harmony to focus on structural issues. Further, there was no peace without dealing with the extreme social and economic imbalance that left many without basic needs like food or safety.

Others in this group explicitly linked inequality to violence and insecurity. Mateo, a 16-year-old from a different low SES school, defined peace as the absence of violence, while also talking about these issues in relation to class stratification: "Peace is something perfect in which there is no insecurity, where there are no social classes. I believe this is a mechanism of peace. It reflects peace. An ideal peace would be a society without social classes, where we all have the same opportunities." Though Mateo made a direct link to security and fear, like Maribel, he defined peace in relation to a greater equality of resources and possibilities. As demonstrated these two examples, this small group of respondents from low SES schools directly linked material conditions and structural issues to peace. They, however, were a small minority overall.

Comparison with Living in Peace. Interviewees were also asked whether or not they felt that they lived in peace and to explain their answers. The most prevalent response was that they did (37 % overall, with the highest levels in the large urban center of Medellin and a rural area outside of Bogotá), though there were also significant numbers who said that they did not (24 %), that it was always changing (15.5 %), and that it depended on the context (24.5 %). More central to the research questions of this dissertation, the reasoning provided for these answers demonstrated noteworthy similarities and differences with themes in the definitions of peace. There was a similar differentiation of internal and interpersonal peace, with social relations playing a pivotal role in defining peace. For many, living in peace required personal self-

awareness and regulation. While almost no mention was made of equality or fair treatment, respondents often referred to local level violence and insecurity, the armed conflict's effects in other areas of the country, and worries and stress related to their daily lives as adolescents.

Crime and violence in their local contexts were mentioned most by those who said they did not live in peace or that it was always changing. These issues were described as generating a fear that encroached on their liberty; restricting where they could go and what they could do. This description of peace implied that respondents had different feelings of living in peace within different contexts (i.e., schools, neighborhoods, cities). For example, many noted that despite issues of security in the broader community, they lived in peace in their school or family. This perspective is shown by the response of Magdalena, who lived in a lower SES urban area:

> Because in my neighborhood, there is a lot of delinquency. They kill our friends on the street corner, they rob you even if you don't have a cell phone, and they kill you even if you don't have money. If you want to start a business, then they extort you. I think it's just horrible. So, I can say that we don't live in peace, even though in my house I feel very calm and happy with my family. In my family then, yes, but the community is dangerous. In the street, the criminals, those that rob, and the drugs and all of that. (2017)

Even though Magdalena described feeling at peace within her home (based in emotions like tranquility and happiness) at a broader level she did not because of concerns over physical safety.

While Magdalena was from a lower SES school, there was a divide by SES in how physical safety was discussed: those from lower SES schools tended to describe this violence as actively present in their neighborhoods, while others mentioned it as an issue in their city or in other parts of the country. This contrast is demonstrated in responses from Sofía, from an elite private school in Medellin, and Hugo, from a large public school in a low SES area of Cali. Sofía noted that "personally, yes [I live in peace], but maybe as a country we still have some way to go. I'm very financially stable, I got to a great school, I have lots of benefits and opportunities and I don't live in a community which makes me feel like in danger. So, I am not affected by it,

but I know that lots of people are affected by the violence and problems we have in this country" (2017). In contrast, Hugo situated this violence directly in the community: "In the street, no [I don't live in peace]. Why? There is a lot of violence, robbery, and sometimes you go out into the street and all of a sudden there is a shootout. You could be shot. Living like this is not living in peace" (2017). Sofia distinguished herself and her security from others in Colombia, whereas Hugo depicted violence as permeating his local context and preventing peace more intimately.

Direct reference to the armed conflict in Colombia was a second, related difference between participants' discussion of living in peace and general definitions of peace. The armed conflict and peace process were not salient in how these adolescents described peace, but were invoked in talking about living in peace. This difference may have been influenced by the questioning itself; the first question asked for general meaning of peace (as an idea or concept), while this second focused on concrete feelings of peace in their lives. At the same time, the difference is noteworthy as it highlights how context may influence what peace means to a given individual. For some respondents, talking about peace concretely in daily life brought to mind the armed conflict because it prevented feeling at peace. For others, this framework served to highlight that a peace accord between two groups did not actually bring daily peace. Carla, who was from Bogotá, demonstrated how the armed conflict linked broader conditions to living at peace personally: "No [I don't live in peace] because external things really affect me. The environment matters a lot to me and the paramilitaries are exploiting it and illegally extracting the natural resources of Colombia. The truth is I can't be tranquil and at peace allowing this and seeing so many bad things in this country" (2017). Much like those who described violence and insecurity in the streets, Carla's response represented how those who mentioned the armed conflict similarly detailed a broader external context as an obstacle to feeling of peace.

The mention of the armed conflict reflected a broader inversion of the inward-out directionality in how peace was built. In this section on living in peace, external conditions negatively affected individuals' senses of peace. These forces could be the armed conflict as noted above or interpersonal relations. For the latter, living in peace entailed interacting with others who listen, resolve problems, think about other people's perspectives and feelings, and respect differences. This framing can be seen in the response of Luz from Cucuta. She described living in peace as "complicated," saying, "there are always going to be circumstances that destroy this peace, and these are the moments when we have to focus on personal peace. It can be affected by external things. Sometimes we place a lot of value on what we shouldn't, like a destructive comment or negative people" (2017). Luz explicitly noted that interacting with others—their "destructive comment" or negativity—affected her feeling of peace.

Other respondents did not focus specifically on this negativity, but noted the importance of dealing with the disagreements and differences in opinion that inevitably arise in social groups. Some stated that these issues meant they did not always live in peace, while others suggested it just required problem solving and compromise. For example, Germán, from a low SES school in Bogotá, noted that at home and school, "there are different situations that bring about feelings of resentment and anger. In these cases, there isn't peace. But most of the time, I feel tranquil because I get along with those around me and we can solve our conflicts" (2017). Like other respondents, Germán acknowledged that peace can be disrupted by social tension and emotions it elicits, but also indicated that this can be managed effectively.

Interpersonal relations were important to living in peace not simply at a social level, but also because they influenced internal states and feelings. Yet, some respondents related how personal mental resilience allowed them to still live in peace despite these conditions. They

noted trying to stay positive and happy, resolving major issues with others through compromise, and generally not permitting external influences to affect them. To provide one example, Alicia, who was from Bogotá, noted, "I always try to put aside negative things and focus on positives," while Eugenia, who was from Cali, talked about herself as "a person who rarely gets angry because everything for me is smiles and I look on the bright side of things" (2017). Others similarly situated living in peace as an internal perspective, but focused more on self-control. For them, living in peace was tied to making the choice to avoid conflict, managing effectively or letting go of emotions like anger, and preventing small issues from growing into larger conflicts. These adolescents' responses included that they "aren't a person who holds grudges," "try to forget and see the positive side of things," "don't like problems and consider [themselves] to be a pacifist," and "strive to not be egotistical, fickle, and not behave right."

Overall, tranquility in social contexts was a key element across various responses in this part of the interview. Some participants said they did not live in peace, but, like those described in the previous two paragraphs, identified the idea of living in peace to tranquility. For them, worries and stress impeded an internal sense of calm. Various adolescents described these concerns as coming from tensions related to fighting with others, fear over physical safety, or being an adolescent. When not related to direct interactions with others (i.e., peers, family, or possible dangerous strangers in the streets), this lack of peace was described as an anxiety about the future: concerns about school (i.e., tests, upcoming graduation, postsecondary opportunities), their future plans, and the direction of their country. In this vein, Sandra, a middle SES school student in Bogotá, stated that her worries about the future affected her peace, "because there are many things that make me tense or stressed, like the fact that I am graduating from school soon

and I don't know what I am going to do. When I have a clearer idea of my life plan and I see that it is working out like I want, then I will probably feel more in peace" (2017).

The analysis of how respondents described living in peace demonstrated connections between how they articulated experiencing peace and their abstract definitions. Nevertheless, as highlighted above, there were also differences with regards to the influence of external contexts on internal states and the importance of physical safety (i.e., negative peace in public spaces).

Understanding of Role in Peace

Conceptualized peace entails both the contextualized understanding that individuals have of peace and how they see themselves in relation to its realization. Therefore, I also analyzed how these adolescents understood their role in the project of societal peace in Colombia. This analysis drew from three parts of the interviews: a direct question asking students what they had done to contribute to peace in the last year, two questions about if and how they thought that they could contribute to peace at a national level and in their communities, and a prompt on whether and in what ways they connected their futures to that of Colombia. In this section, I present the analysis of each part in turn.

What They Had Done in the Last Year. Among the responses of adolescents who felt they had contributed to peace, two main themes emerged: the school as a conduit for peacebuilding and contributing through actions toward others. For the first, many noted activities or roles that they had taken on within their schools. Some described being a mediator or part of student representation to the administration, while others noted more generally sharing ideas and information in class or organized activities through their schools. The second salient theme was that they contributed to peace by how they acted toward others in everyday social situations. This perspective included greater self-awareness and control as well as role modeling for others.

Schools primarily provided opportunities to contribute to peace by students acting as mediators (formally or informally) or serving in official positions like class representative and *personero* (a student representative to the administration). Within these roles, interviewees described calming others, solving problems, and preventing conflicts from becoming bigger. For example, Xavier, a student in Bogotá, talked about his contribution to peace being a process of maturing and behaving better toward others because "being the class representative, many people are going to look at me as an example. So, if I do things right, many others are going to start doing things right" (2017).

Respondents also described engaging in conversations in which they shared ideas and information related to peace. A subset of this group noted participating in organized talks or events that helped inform others about the peace process, and these students tended to be in schools in rural areas. One of these students was Cecilia, who responded that she had been involved in talks in her school and town "about information having to do with the peace process and why we have to support it and why it is fundamental to live all together in tranquility as a community" (2017). Cecilia's description of her activities implied another element that other respondents more explicitly asserted: these activities promoted dialogue about the peace process, with a purpose of motivating others to support it. These participants may not have explicitly mention convincing others, but talked about motivating, incentivizing, and promoting different opinions and orientations toward the peace process. The response of Josefina, a student from Cauca, further demonstrated this perspective:

> Here at school we have done a lot of campaigns. I have gone out and participated trying to incentivize others. For example, in my community, I have tried to talk about how peace is good. Some people agree, but others are like, what is peace for? I have talked to them about how it is better to live in peace than war. (2017)

A second theme in this section was enacting peace in interpersonal relations in daily life. This role in building peace encompassed demonstrating respect and being a good citizen. It was presented as contributing to peace directly, but also as a model and inspiration for others. This theme could be seen in how Tomás, a high SES student in Cali, responded that in contributing to peace, "you have to treat people with respect because that is what they are teaching us and it begins with us. If there is a handicapped person on a bus and all the seats are taken, you give up the seat. Because that is an act of generosity and then people see you being kind and considerate, and this causes them to become more sensitive and aware" (2017). While Tomás focused on these actions themselves, others situated their contribution as emerging from personal growth and self-awareness: becoming more open to other viewpoints, being calmer and in control of emotions, and learning to minimize conflict. Their maturation contributed to a more harmonious *convivencia* with those around them. For example, Diego, who attended a middle SES school in Bogotá, said that his perspective and way of treating others had changed: "When I don't agree with them, I have a different way of expressing myself. I don't try to impose on them, but rather to be conciliatory, see things from other points of view, and analyze and draw a conclusion that helps everyone. This supports peace in my country and in my surroundings" (2017).

Overall, those adolescents who expressed they had contributed to peace described their impact as either through actions in school to build or inspiring peaceful *convivencia* in immediate context. Examples included getting along with others, respecting them, promoting union and solidarity, being a role model, and mediation. It is important to note that just under a third of the sample stated that they either had not done anything or had done very little to support peace in the last year. A high percentage of these respondents attended lower SES schools: seventy-six percent of those who said they had done nothing or very little came from strata 1 and

2 schools (a group that overall encompassed 58 % of the entire sample). Overall, this group tended to focus on certain substantial obstacles, such as the lack of attention to young people. A few more generally noted they did not believe peaceful change was possible, while a smaller group stated they were focused elsewhere (e.g., on school work, career trajectories).

Possible Contributions. These adolescents were also asked to answer whether and how they felt they could contribute to peace at different levels. The main theme in their responses when focused on the community mirrored their descriptions of what they had done in the last year: promoting peaceful *convivencia* through dialogue, listening, respect, and problem solving, and explicitly teaching or informing others. These responses also revealed perceived barriers, including a lack of openness in the community and concerns over safety. Only seven respondents (3 % of the sample) said that they could not contribute to peace at this level, and all were from the lower SES schools. In addition to community contexts, participants were also asked if they could contribute to peace at a national level. Just under a fifth expressed that they could not. Those who felt that they could described peace as beginning within themselves and spreading to wider social contexts. Importantly, there was more variation by SES and gender in these responses.

A broad majority of interviewees expressed being able to contribute to peace at a community level through enacting and promoting positive interpersonal relations. They described using particular skills like problem solving, compromising, and dialogue, as well as by showing respect and being inclusive. Some drew a direct connection, such as by saying that in a society where dialogue and respect were present, "we will always have peace and tranquility" (2017). Other adolescents explained the connection in more detail. For instance, Guillermo, who was from a rural area outside Bogotá, noted: "First, by being conciliatory and respecting others.

When others have a problem, some issue, we try to find a solution that is the best possible one by talking, by dialoguing. Or by we ourselves trying to be passive in our relations with others, understanding and supporting them however we can" (2017). While Guillermo did not explicitly state that these actions contributed to a broader peace beyond those he interacted with, other adolescents, like Juanita who was from Cali, described their actions as part of a chain reaction:

> In school there are often disputes that are like, "no, I don't agree with you" or "I don't like that girl," or other things like that. Then prejudices come out and there are pressures and everything. So, we as students simply need to negate that. We have to say, I can listen to you, let's talk, what's up, why did that happen, what is bothering you. Then we can arrive at an agreement and say, well I don't share your ideas, and you don't share mine, but we are going to respect each other, and we aren't going to continue in this conflict. We are going to live in peace. And from this it spreads to the school, and then to the community, the home, and in this way, we can end up fomenting peace. (2017)

Juanita's response exemplified the perspective that personal change and action inspire others in the school, the community, and beyond.

The analysis of responses in this section also revealed noteworthy differences by gender. Female interviewees tended to focus on direct action with others. They were more likely to suggest that they contributed to peace by listening to others, teaching and informing them, and motivating them to be involved, whereas both males and females referred to general impacts like promoting unity and solidarity and treating others with respect. Males more often mentioned voicing their own ideas and opinions as a contribution they could make to peace.

As a final element within this focus on the community, many respondents said they could teach or inform others (such as younger kids in their schools). This response was most prevalent among the middle SES group, which was also less likely to refer more generally to peace and instead talked about contributions in relation to the peace process (e.g., describing the possibility of giving talks to teach people about the accords). More middle SES respondents answered like

Joaquín, from Medellin, who said he could support peace in his community by "talking with other people, convincing them that the peace process is a good thing" (2017).

Moving from community to country, across all groups the main theme in contributions to peace in Colombia was that national peace began with individuals and how they acted. To this end, respondents tended to discuss how little changes that one made within themselves or their local contexts could cause a chain reaction and grow to a broader level. It was important to first inform oneself about the peace process or to live out key values (i.e., respect, tolerance), which would then cause a ripple effect. This expansion could take place through inspiring others or raising awareness (about peace generally or the peace process). Some respondents used the trope of *granito de arena* to convey this idea. Miguel, from Bogotá, invoked this phrase in situating his role in national peace within everyday actions:

> Peace is contagious. If you can give your *granito de arena*, and for example tell others to calm down, chill out, then that person will start to see things better and without violence. They will use that same framework with others, and those others with even more other people. Just through telling them to be calm, just through intervening with someone close to you, just telling them that violence isn't worth it, through advising them. I think that in that way you can—even if it's in the smallest way—support peace. (2017)

While others did not explicitly invoke *granito de arena*, the main theme across these responses similarly entailed national peace as built through small, everyday actions toward others.

Differences by region and SES were more prevalent in how interviewees described their possible contributions to peace at a national level. The positioning of national peace as beginning with individuals was more likely in adolescents from Bogotá. This group also tended to invoke being a good citizen as a contribution to national peace. In contrast, adolescents from Cali often noted challenges individuals faced in contributing to such a broad peace and expressed that one person alone would struggle to make broader change. Overall, they were less likely to say that national peace began with small works or within individuals. As an example of Cali adolescents'

responses, Fabio, from a low SES school there, differentiated supporting peace and feeling like he could make an impact: "Supporting peace? I support peace, but it takes a substantial segment of citizens to make it happen because only one person can't change things that the government has done" (2017). For Fabio and others, individual citizens could not build peace because the efficacy of single individuals was muted in the face of powerful institutions and social realities.

In general, while only a small proportion talked about these challenges (10 % of the sample), those who did also tended to be in the lower SES group and male. With direct mention of politics, adolescents from the higher SES group were more likely to discuss voting as a contribution to national peace. Other differences reflected those identified in the community level responses. That is, across both levels, interviewees who explicitly used the phrase *granito de arena* tended to be in the middle SES group, while lower SES and female respondents were more likely to specifically mention direct action with others like teaching them.

Future Orientations. Across the entire sample, over two thirds of these adolescents (68 %) said they thought their futures would be influenced by that of the country. Those from the lower SES group, however, were less likely to espouse this view.[14] Similar to other results, the main themes in discussions about the future centered on discussions of individual efficacy in relation to broader social developments. If respondents expressed feeling that individuals make their own path, they also tended to describe their future as disconnected from that of the country. Those who said the two were connected most often cited educational and economic opportunities as aspects of the country's future that could impact them. Finally, whether these adolescents were optimistic or pessimistic about the future, if they said it was connected to their own, they

[14] Only sixty-three percent of respondents from the low SES group expressed this sentiment, while for the middle SES group it was 71 % and for the high SES group 77 %.

discussed opportunities for advanced study or employment, changing economic trends, or motivations to stay or leave Colombia.

For interviewees who said their futures were connected, personal opportunities were affected by economic and political conditions. The specific perspectives on what this implied varied, however, and the different opinions can be seen in how the peace process was discussed. Some said the process would make more resources available to them, and others that the government would have less because of what they were giving to the demobilized FARC-EP. These contrasting positions can be seen in the responses of José, who attended a middle SES school in Cucuta, and Yanilda, from a low SES school in Cali. José said:

> Before, they were saying that they were going to give scholarships, but now they are saying that there isn't enough for these. That the government has no money. And this is going to affect me a lot because my goal is to earn a scholarship and go to another country. But now this is ruining my dreams because there isn't money and all that for what I want to study. Yes, there is money for the *guerrilleros*—yes there is money for them, but not for the students. (2017)

Whereas José stated that government funds going to the FARC-EP preclude support for educational opportunities that he desired, Yanilda affirmed that the move toward disarmament can lead to structural changes that will benefit her:

> The FARC could have made a less intelligent decision after the plebiscite and decided to bomb the country—could have decided, "Well, let's kill all those who said no"—but they didn't. They made a different decision and continued with the process. They made some changes, and well—I say that as the war ends there will be more resources for education and we can have a better future. It will be different than now, when we have to wait to see if we can work, if we can study and if we don't focus only on ourselves, we can't get ahead. (2017)

This divergence between José and Yanilda (and others who expressed similar ideas) also arose more broadly in relation to economic impacts and career trajectories: some asserted that peace created conditions for more opportunities, others that it shrank those already available.

With respect to SES group, interviewees expressed varied understandings of the resources they had access to, which in turn was connected to their future possibilities. Higher SES interviewees more often mentioned desires to work on or contribute to peace in Colombia as part of their dreams and goals, while many of the low SES group respondents focused on making a sustainable living and depending on the government to provide opportunities. Often implicit in the responses of the former was security in having access to broad educational and economic resources. For some of these high SES adolescents, their envisioned future included possible roles in generating broader changes. For example, Jayson discussed his future as one in which he would become a political leader who changed the country:

> I want to be a leader in Colombia, but a good one. Like, one that makes people remember there are good people in Colombia because the politicians in Colombia—I don't believe in any of them. Yeah, my future depends on the future of the country. For example, the change that is needed in Colombia must be made without war. End corruption, get the country to make progress, and turn it into an international power. (2016)

Jayson described himself as able to be part of a change that is needed and as contributing to a more peaceful future for Colombia. Yet, Jayson and others did not discuss resources or opportunities that may be needed to accomplish these goals; they did not appear to struggle to envision themselves working toward needed structural changes and supporting peace at a broader societal level. In contrast, though the goals and trajectories for low SES respondents varied widely, many, like Anibal, focused on structural challenges and the lack of opportunities. Anibal expressed concern about how the government would impact his future:

> I don't know if I will be able to get ahead, if I will have what I need to be stable. If things get worse or something, then my future wouldn't be the same because with the corruption and everything—like, universities are very expensive. Or, it's like the government is immoral and it wants, and wants, and wants more. So, well, the people who have less resources can't find opportunities for higher education. (2016)

As he described the future, Anibal expressed feeling that the priority was figuring out how to continue his education because of the obstacles to doing this.

A separate group of respondents stated that they felt that Colombia's future would not affect their own. Their goals and dreams depended on what they did, not on how the country moved forward (especially in relation to the peace process). These respondents, who made up just under a third of the sample, were across SES groups and presented their futures as reflections of individual action and attitudes. Enrique, from the upper SES strata in Bogotá, expressed one version of this response in stating, "My dream is to be a football player, and this is clear to me. I am going to do it. Basically, the main thing now is to move forward toward my dream and that is what I am doing" (2016). As another example, Lina, from a low SES school in the same city, expressed similar sentiments: "And it doesn't matter to me that others say there are limits. I always have known that I will accomplish [my dreams] and if I want it, then I will do it" (2016). This theme included an element of self-control; in order to achieve their dreams, they had to remain disciplined and focused. Leonardo, from a low SES school in Medellin, demonstrated this element by asserting the importance of personal focus and responsibility for his future: "if I put in a lot of effort and fight for what I want, then—it's on me if I get ahead or not. I can't offer excuses that it's because the country is bad or because the government is bad. If I want to get ahead, it doesn't matter what the government is doing" (2017).

Overall, two prevalent, and contrasting, themes emerged in this analysis: the importance of individuals' actions and attitudes and the role of opportunities and government. Understandings of opportunities permeated responses of adolescents who described their own futures as connected to that of Colombia. These responses were tailored to understandings of the opportunities already available: adolescents from the higher SES group discussed concerns with

being able to affect the change that they wanted or to have to adjust their trajectory, whereas those from lower SES strata focused on the education system and employment opportunities. This contrast can be seen in the different responses of Orlando, who attended an elite private school, and Carlos, from a low SES public school. Whereas Orlando stated that, "If we continue as we are going, then it is going to be more difficult to reach the public position that I want because I would like to improve the country" (2016), Carlos said that Colombia's future would primarily affect him "in my economic situation because I am from a lower strata and well, my family doesn't have the sufficient resources to pay for my studies, which are getting more and more expensive without government support" (2016). These divergence in Orlando and Carlos' answers were indicative of the broader trend: understandings of society and their place in it were connected to how adolescents described envisioning their futures.

Dataset 3: Questionnaires

Despite the richness of the data, there were limitations to the interview sample, such as the absence of indigenous young people's voices. A third dataset, the questionnaires administered by Dr. Sánchez Meertens and colleagues, deepens this study by offering insights into perspectives of other Colombian adolescents. While questionnaire participants were not asked about peace conceptually, their visions of the future were solicited. This third and final analysis thus addressed if and how in this section of the questionnaire, respondents described the possibility of peace and their own role in it. The results provided young people's perspectives without explicitly asking about peace (as was the case with the interviews). In their responses, many of these Colombian adolescents were generally optimistic about personal and collective possibilities for a better future (economic, political, etc.), but also noted structural and systemic

challenges. Additionally, without direct prompting, few explicitly linked their own future to that of their country or described how they could contribute to building peace.

Results

Overall, the majority of those who gave a clear response about how they envisioned the future presented an optimistic perspective. This group composed 47 % of the total sample and said they envisioned the future as full of positive emotions (such as greater happiness, love, and hope), with an increase in peace, and/or with greater *convivencia* and physical security. For example, one male respondent from an urban public school exemplified the responses of many when he stated that, "we will live in a country in peace and harmony, where there are no wars, attacks, or violent deaths." Others, particularly those in urban contexts, expressed these sentiments, but also mentioned the absence of fear or uncertainty related to physical security. To this end, one female respondent stated that in the future, "we will all share and be with our families without any negative consequences or threats," while another said she envisioned a future for Colombia where "there is peace, tranquility, and where people can walk calmly through the streets." Generally, these respondents noted envisioning a future with greater prosocial relations (such as greater solidarity, respect, responsibility, and collaboration) between people. Overall, optimistic responses about the future came from participants across geographical locations and demographic backgrounds.

Optimism was the most prevalent response, but not the only one. About a quarter of the respondents said they were not sure about the future or put no response, while an even smaller number conveyed negative feelings. The latter, composing 16 % of the sample, often noted that the current state of politics and society offered little hope for a different, harmonious future. Of this group, most discussed corruption and ineptitude in politics; noting, for example, that only "if

corruption is ended, things will be good, and Colombia will get better," or that "my own future and that of my community are going to be difficult because there are so many corrupt politicians." A smaller subgroup of those expressing pessimism about the future cited general discord between people in Colombian society. Some explicitly mentioned this; for example, one female from an urban public school said that "in the future there will be thousands of armed conflicts that affect the whole world, and across the world there will be anger between people." Others more subtly referred to the impossibility of peace and harmony. In general, across these respondents, a consistent sentiment was that with "how we are going," the future would be problematic. The current political and social dynamics would not be fertile ground for a more positive future and so change was needed.

Pessimistic and optimistic respondents often referred to structural conditions or issues in the future. To this extent, a cross-cutting theme was that the future depended on Colombia's economic, political, and social development. Linking with the greater prevalence of optimism toward the future, many of the positive adolescents depicted a future in which these systems worked more effectively and were more just. These responses focused almost exclusively on broader systems, with statements like Colombia "will be rich in exports and only depend on itself rather than other powerful countries," "an egotistical society with slow economic development," and "a developed country where the *campesinos*[15] will have more possibilities for work, study, and in general a better education because right now it's a mess." These discussions of social and economic change were also often tied to peace and the peace process. Some respondents presented an optimistic view of the future that was dependent on the peace process: "If they

[15] Rural farmers.

agree to an accord, the future will be full of prosperity" or "If they sign the peace accord, then great, we will be free and without threats to our safety or murders."

Importantly, these references to broader systems and structures did not preclude mention of *convivencia*. Many respondents specifically related visions of the future to peace through interpersonal relations. These statements included one male respondent from an urban private school who envisioned the future as "a country that is more developed and with greater equality and peace, where people are more cordial and considerate not only with each other, but also with their use of natural resources and the environment," and a female from a public school in a rural setting who wrote, "I hope that the economy, justice, truth, and hope improve. I want a country in peace and for us to live in harmony with each other." *Convivencia* permeated these visions of the future, but were not a sole focus as broader systems also by questionnaire respondents.

The descriptions of the future were also analyzed for differences by key demographic characteristics, such as geography, gender, and whether or not the respondent identified as affected by the conflict. The sample was heavily weighted toward urban participants (just under 90 %), and there were differences by geography in the most prevalent ideas. Rural participants more often stated that they thought the future would be a peaceful one (40 % to 30 % of urban respondents), though equal percentages of both groups expressed that the future would be better than the present. In general, rural participants focused more on economics and feelings of security or insecurity in their descriptions of the future. An example of this sentiment, one female simply stated that she envisioned the future as "without violence, and with a stronger economy and more prosperity," while a male said, "that we all live in peace and tranquility and that everything changes along with the political situation and improvement in the quality of life." Rural respondents often noted as well that the future entailed less fear of physical safety because

of a greater peace. This included a female participant who said, “In peace, without *guerrillas*, without murders every day, without an army, and without fear to just walk around” and an indigenous female participant who stated, “I imagine us in peace, where we can all have tranquility and not live in fear that anything could happen to us in any moment.”

In contrast, the urban sample tended to focus on political questions and on changes in government. While the issue of corruption arose in responses of rural adolescents, it was more present in those of urban participants. Like the following two examples, urban adolescents explicitly mentioned politics and corruption as obstacles to better futures, though not necessarily to peace. To this end, one differentiated interpersonal peace from other issues caused by the government: “I see problems for my future and that of the community because of all the corrupt politicians. But in general, I envision the future without violence and with respect for each other.” Another focused on politics as underwriting inequality and injustice: “How we are going, I imagine a horrible future. With so much corruption and political injustice, only the rich people will be able to get ahead. The poor will be stuck and bit by bit we will be devalued.”

There was less differentiation in visions of the future in relation to gender, identification as affected by the conflict, and type of school (e.g. public, private). Female respondents more often stated that the future would be more peaceful (35 % to 28 %), but males were slightly more likely to explicitly express that they envisioned the future as better than the present (12 % to 8 %). Otherwise, males and females tended to express similar levels of other factors (e.g., security, *convivencia*). More variation by gender emerged when considered in relation to geography. When compared to their female counterparts, males from urban schools were less likely to invoke positive emotions (e.g., happiness, love). Rural males, however, more often talked about positive emotions than female participants from the same areas. Unlike males on the whole, this

subgroup was less likely than their female peers to say that the future would be better and talk about physical safety and security, and more likely to talk about the future in relation to justice, equality, and *convivencia*. In fact, rural males most often described better *convivencia* as part of their visions of the future. For the analyses of identification as a conflict victim, there were no significant differences. In relation to type of school, it is important to note that the sample was heavily weighted toward public-school students, who composed 87 percent of the sample. Thus, it was difficult to assess any differences by this demographic characteristic.

Summary

In conclusion, the adolescents who participated in the questionnaire offered a wide variety of responses in their visions of the future. Many discussed peace or the peace process, including stating that other hopes or ideas they had about what the future could be like depended on the success of these two endeavors. Also, these adolescents often mentioned structural or systemic conditions; politics and corruption, economic conditions, inequality, and insecurity. At the same time, these factors did not preclude a focus on interpersonal relations and *convivencia*. There was, however, very little mention of internal change or development across the sample. Personal futures tended to center on job opportunities and education, with a few respondents noting seeing themselves as having a broader impact (i.e., on peace) in Colombia. When the analysis was broken down by key demographic factors, the most differences were found by geography as rural participants more often noted the future as peaceful and focused on security and economic concerns. Urban participants were more likely to discuss political considerations. When gender was considered, rural males were less likely to mention the future as better or as peaceful, but most likely to refer to *convivencia* in their responses.

Overall Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented the results of three separate analyses: the government's discourse on youth and peace, the different meanings and understandings of peace of a sample of adolescent interviewees, and visions of the future in relation to peace for a broader sample of young people across Colombia. These datasets provide insight into multiple aspects of Colombian adolescents' *conceptualized peace*. The first deconstructed a socially influential discourse in social representations about youth and peace. The second highlighted prevalent themes in conceptual understandings of peace, as well as how these young people related peace to themselves and their identities. Lastly, the questionnaire data offered insights into how other Colombian adolescents think about the future and themselves without explicitly being asked about peace. In the next and last chapter, the findings from these three analyses will be interwoven and discussed in relation to the theoretical framework. Finally, I will end by outlining the implications of this study as an integrated whole, the limitations of the chosen approach, and directions for future research.

CHAPTER 4

FROM THE INDIVIDUAL OUTWARD: TRIANGULATING CONCEPTUALIZED PEACE AS A FRAMEWORK FOR COLOMBIA AND BEYOND

My goal with this dissertation study is to outline a developmental and contextualized framework for how individuals think about peace and relate it to their understandings of themselves and their futures. To this end, *conceptualized peace* frames meaning making about peace as part of identity processes. In this dissertation, I have applied this framework to investigate Colombian adolescents' thinking about peace because adolescence is a key time in the life course for identity development, including as a citizen. Additionally, Colombia's historical trajectory and recent sociopolitical period presented an opportunity to better understand developmental processes related to peace. Findings from this study can be applied to develop curriculum and theoretical underpinnings to guide peace education, apply to other efforts to promote peace, and better support young people in their engagement in peace as a societal project.

In Chapter 1, I detailed literatures in peace studies, adolescent development, civic identity, and meaning making as a foundation for c*onceptualized peace*. I then articulated how *conceptualized peace* offers a developmental, socially-based, and contextualized framework that draws on Moscovici's Social Representations Theory and Spencer's PVEST. The former is used to articulate the social contextualization (including in relation to influential discourses) of individual meaning making. Spencer's PVEST then details how individuals actively process and respond to these notions as they make meaning for themselves. The results of this interpretation and integration—within social groups—involve identity processes. Building on these

foundations, I define *conceptualized peace* to be the meaning making of peace as individuals respond to ecological contexts and discourses and form identities in relation to these understandings. These identities are linked to a spectrum of action and engagement in relation to peace; from pessimistic, disinterested, and even antagonistic orientations toward societal peacebuilding to efficacious and optimistic participation.

I have sought to deepen and clarify the formulation of *conceptualized peace* through an empirical study of Colombian adolescents. This investigation encompassed four research questions: 1) *What are the discourses about youth and peace that are being broadcasted to adolescents by the Colombian government through speeches, curricular materials, and press releases; 2) How do Colombian adolescents understand concepts of peace amid this broader societal transition; 3) What do Colombian adolescents think about the possibility of peace and how it is built; 4) How do they relate these discussions of peace to themselves, their own futures, their roles as peace builders, and their visions of their country's future?* To answer these questions, I drew on three datasets: documents, speeches, and press releases from the Colombian government during the last years of the peace process; semistructured interviews with Colombian adolescents in 2016 and 2017; and questionnaires administered to an expansive sample of high school students across the country.

In Chapter 3, I presented analyses of each these datasets individually. In this chapter, I summarize the results for each before presenting an integrated discussion of these findings. I then bring the different analyses into dialogue and, when the data and analyses allow, triangulate how Colombian adolescents were thinking about peace. This section also includes a more general interpretation of these results with regard to the theoretical framework. Finally, I end by articulating the implications of these findings, the study limitations, and areas for future research.

Summary of Findings

First, the analysis of the government's discourse revealed an emphasis on the role and responsibility of individual young people in building a peaceful Colombia. The various speeches and documents do not entirely circumvent political or systemic change. Nevertheless, several rhetorical devices and explicit statements demonstrate that then-President Santos and his government situated peace as dependent on young people's internal states and how they drew on these in acting toward others. Specifically, three main elements emerged from the analysis: individual responsibility in peace building; supporting peace through *convivencia*; and acting as political agents for peace. Across these elements, the discourse presented the government as having fulfilled its obligation via the peace process and education system (i.e., the peace education law, curriculum, and scholarship programs). Now the onus was on young people to motivate themselves, change who they were, and then enact this in interpersonal contexts. The phrase *granito de arena* encapsulates this meaning as it implies that only through small contributions by individual young people can a broader peace be built.

This formulation also appeared in the thematic content analysis of how young people themselves described peace. Three main themes emerged in these results: peace as rooted in the individual and building outward, peace as built in *convivencia,* and the possibility of peace as shaping the ability of individuals to contribute to it. In the interviews, Colombian adolescents tended to root peace in internal processes and feelings, which would then expand outward and affect change in their immediate contexts (i.e., schools and neighborhoods) and eventually build to a societal peace. Peace thus relied on individuals to harness internal states (through self-control, maturation, and calm) in interpersonal contexts by demonstrating respect, resolving conflicts, and promoting acceptance and harmonious *convivencia*. Importantly, few interviewees

mentioned structural or systemic issues related to peace. At times, even terminology that could refer to broader structures was not used to that end; for example, some high SES respondents stated that equality was an element of peace, but invoked it in reference to all people deserving acceptance, respect, and free expression. Only a few adolescents from low SES schools mentioned issues with poverty and extreme social inequity. Abstract definitions of peace were also compared with how participants answered whether or not they lived in peace. Within these responses, many of the adolescent interviewees discussed the impact of external contexts. They noted that neighborhood conditions and attitudes prevalent in their communities prevented them from feeling at peace. In this portion of the interview, respondents also often noted stressors of being adolescents, and pressures on them that caused worries or anxiety.

Identity was examined by analyzing how participants described their futures and contributions to peace. The majority of the sample said that they thought their futures were connected to that of the country. These participants cited their personal educational and economic opportunities as ways that the trajectory of Colombia could affect their lives. Importantly, adolescents from lower SES strata were more likely to say that they determined their futures; it depended on their own motivation and actions. In terms of contributions to peace, about a third of the sample said that they had done nothing to contribute to peace, with a higher proportion of these respondents coming from strata 1 and 2. For others who answered affirmatively, the main themes in their responses were the school as a conduit for peacebuilding and contributing through actions toward others in everyday contexts. When asked about possible ways they could support peace in the community and at a national level, these adolescents tended to similarly focus on harmonious *convivencia* and teaching or informing others. They also noted specific obstacles like lack of openness and tolerance in the community and physical insecurity.

Finally, the questionnaire data provided insight into an extensive sample of Colombian adolescents' visions of the future. These respondents often referred to societal processes, systems, and structural change that was needed or they saw as happening in the future. For some, an optimistic or pessimistic outlook depended on how they viewed the possibility of peace or the result of the peace process. Others noted concerns with the current state of politics. Their outlooks about the future were rooted in change in corruption, economic conditions, inequality, and insecurity more broadly. Interpersonal relations and *convivencia* were mentioned, though there was minimal reference to internal states or maturation. The personal focus in these responses tended to be on job and education trajectories; very few explicitly linked their futures to Colombia's or detailed contributing to societal peace. Finally, females were less likely to mention the future as better, but more often described it as peaceful. Breaking down the responses by both geography and gender, rural males were most likely to talk about issues of justice, equality, and *convivencia* in the future, but least likely to be optimistic about it.

Discussion

Conceptualized peace roots meaning making of peace in context and in socially prevalent discourses. To this end, it is important to first consider what discourses influence the creation of social representations that may permeate these young people's lives. At the same time, they are not passive receptacles of socialization, but rather engage with, adapt, and respond to these discourses with regards to understandings of self, society, and their place in it. Importantly, this process is not unidirectional or singular; that is, individuals do not simply hold monolithic and clearly delineated definitions of peace and identity in relation to this, but rather develop and employ understandings based on their experiences of contextual expectations and opportunities. This discussion, therefore, incorporates attention to how and in what setting the respondents

provided their thoughts, as well as the multiple understandings that they may have concurrently held. To integrate the findings and address the research questions, I first discuss influences on their thinking, and then move into abstract ideas about peace before addressing how they describe relate it to themselves and their futures. Throughout, I demonstrate how these findings illuminate Colombian adolescents' *conceptualized peace* and further its theoretical development. I acknowledge that the complexity of intra and inter individual differences complicates any effort to study both personal interpretive process and the collective construction of social representations. As the theoretical framework continues to be developed in further study, this effort to not reduce group processes to individual level thinking will continue to be developed and explored.

Sources and Influences

Interviewees clearly focused on homes and schools as primary influences on their understanding of peace. Family members and teachers were identified as providing spaces to learn and talk about peace (as a concept and in reference to the peace process). Furthermore, home and school were where respondents felt that they learned the values that made up what peace meant to them. Many of these adolescents acknowledged that how they were raised and what they were taught about being a good person and citizen served as foundations for an understanding of peace. Their responses demonstrated reflection on this formation as a process of learning about peace. Peers were not mentioned explicitly in this part, but more generally were portrayed as those with whom peace was enacted, such as through conflict management, being an example, and *convivencia*.

These findings arose in various areas of the interviews. For example, when respondents mentioned schools as where they contributed to peace, it often involved interpersonal relations.

There was little mention of the home; actions with one's family were not often described as a way to build peace. At the same time, the role of formation in the home was implicitly reflected in what peace involved. This connection was not named by many participants, but was evident in how they articulated that peace built from internal states and was enacted through respect, tolerance, and other values underlying harmonious *convivencia*—elements of the very formation that some participants explicitly acknowledged as coming from home and school. The theoretical frame of *conceptualized peace* helps clarify how to understand the importance of this recognition by participants. Socialization in home and schools are not simply a passive process, but rather these young people are internalizing and adapting their own meaning to peace in relation to the collective processes as young people embedded within schools and homes. In line with social representations, these young people's individual meaning is consciously part of a collective process (Jovchelovitch, Priego-Hernández, & Glăveanu, 2013). At the same time, this process involves an interpretative, reactive coping as these young people face the developmental challenges of defining who they are in relation to the values and messages in these salient social ecologies (Spencer, 2006).

The formulation of peace in the interviews mirrored the government's construction of young people's agency in becoming peacebuilders, though the latter focused primarily on the school. Santos and his government articulated a vision in which the education system—such as through peace education curriculum and opportunities—provided the "tools" for young people to learn about and support peace. This discourse implicitly acknowledged young people's agency; the government's impact was limited as individual youth needed to become invested in supporting peace and using these opportunities and lessons to do it. There is thus a similar

recognition of adolescents' agency in their learning and understanding of peace and their own role in it.

While the government primarily centered on school settings and education, the political element in the discourse extended to the home and family. Santos called on young people to motivate others, specifically family members of voting age, to support the peace process and vote for the accords. In this way, family was not portrayed as a place to learn about peace, but rather another critical sphere for peacebuilding action. Again, however, young people were agentic and responsible because they had to actively embrace this role.

Admittedly, these participants were not specifically responding to the discourse that was perpetuated in the speeches and documents. Nevertheless, the connections provide a foundation for adolescent Colombians' meaning making about peace as a socially embedded process. Young people were portrayed and defined themselves as having agency, influence, and responsibility in relation to peace. Their processing involved personal choice and was valued. The individual focus is interesting within the Colombian context. In Western societies, adolescence often entails greater independence, more complex responsibility for one's actions, and increasing recognition of personal choices as shaping citizenship and community membership (Amna, Ekström, Kerr, & Stattin, 2009; McLean, 2005; Putnam, 1993a). This individualistic focus may not be universal and instead based in cultural norms and expectations (Arnett, 2014; Gibbons, Stiles, & Shkodriani, 1991; Jensen, 2003). While both Colombia and Latin America have often been described as collectivist (Hofstede Insights, n.d.; Hofsteds, 1980; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Mesurado et al., 2014), some psychologists argue that a globalizing world and the power dynamics within it have spread individualism, including in relation to young people's identity development (Arnett, 2002, 2015).

In this study, interviewees and the government located the roots of societal peace in each individual and their understanding of themselves and their abilities. The locus of control is thus within young people, though such an interpretation does not ignore the collective elements of peace. The individual is the root, main actor, and guarantor of peace, but peace still forms between people. This discussion speaks to focus on greater nuance than simply individual and collective dichotomies in peace studies (see Basabe & Valencia, 2007; Schwartz, 1994), as well as the complexity of identity processes and will be developed in more detail later.

Returning to the literature, these findings connect to debates on socialization. While a *conceptual peace* framework does not negate the role of socialization, it situates orientations toward peace as the outcomes of active meaning making and processing. For many decades, scholarship on young people's ideas and actions as citizens heavily focused on schools, homes, and media as spaces of socialization (Hess & Torney, 1968; Jennings, 2007). This literature often employed a unidirectional and deterministic framework: parents ingrained values into children, schools provided knowledge and skills, and media shaped expectations, ideas, and knowledge of current events and popular culture. More recently, there has been more movement toward understanding young people as active agents in their development (see Amna, Ekström, Kerr, & Stattin, 2009; Crocetti, Jahromi, & Meeus, 2012; Torney-Purta, Amadeo, & Andolina, 2010). Linking the current study's findings to this more recent literature, these Colombian adolescents are portrayed by the government and portray themselves as responsible agents, including actively searching out other sources, initiating conversations, integrating different ideas, and motivating themselves (Kiousis, McDevitt, & Wu, 2005). Furthermore, demonstrating reactive coping processes, many were reflective and articulate how these sources have influenced them. Their acceptance of certain discourses and ideas is both conscious and involves active choices. Across

various questions there was widespread awareness of these process, even though not all participants demonstrated it.

One explanation may be tied to age: the interview sample was mainly comprised of older adolescents. Their cognitive and social development might make them more likely to be consciously engaging with questions of identity: who they are, what their ideologies are, and what motivates them (Hammack, 2010; Hope & Spencer, 2017; Meeus, 2011). Adolescence is a time of identity exploration, which entails testing and forming ideological commitments (Erikson, 1968; Haste, 2004). This process may not always be conscious—in the sense of intentional and imbued with self-awareness—but involves growing awareness and managing the complexities of one's society, realization of social and moral ideals, and preparation for adulthood (Crocetti et al., 2012; Yates & Youniss, 1999). Older adolescents are looking ahead to futures as adult citizens, and face multiple identifications, and yet may not have fully developed coherent senses of self as they manage this developmental challenge and possible dissonance (Spencer, 2006). In discussing influences and contexts of learning about peace, the Colombian adolescents in this sample demonstrated the developmental salience of actively interpreting and responding to various aspects of socialization. Interestingly, few of these adolescents describe pushing back or reacting strongly to expectations and discussions of peace in their schools and homes. The absence of this dissonance may indicate that affirming their agency does not necessitate rejecting messages and ideas in their schools and homes. This interpretation has implications for their ideas about peace and where they situate their relationship to it, as will be discussed in the next section.

Peace as an Abstract Idea and Lived Reality

Much as the government and the interviewees' discussions similarly situated young people as agents at the center of learning about peace, the two datasets converged in constructing understandings of peace as being rooted in the individual. At the same time, other elements of Colombian adolescents' *conceptualized peace* emerge by delving deeper into the differences between the adolescents' descriptions of peace and the relationship between youth and peace laid out by the government. Santos discussed the peace process as integrally related to peace at a local level, while prioritizing young people's responsibility to be active contributors. The interviewees' responses, in contrast, revealed that for them, the context in which they were asked to talk about peace may have influenced their thinking about peace. When asked to define peace, many adolescents depicted a process that began within the individual, was enacted in interpersonal relations, and then spread outward. When responding to whether or not they lived in peace, however, they detailed how aspects of their neighborhoods, school settings, and general life trajectory—that is, external factors—were challenges that exerted pressure on their internal states. Overall, the analyses suggested that these adolescents may hold multiple ideas about peace that reflect context, development, and efficacy.

Abstractly, their definitions of peace were rooted in tranquility and self-control. Peace was then forged through actions in social settings and promoting harmonious *convivencia*. The government's discourse presented a similar formulation, though with scant recognition of the obstacles that such an internal outward process might face. The speeches and documents, in fact, emphasized that the government had laid a necessary foundation through the peace process and peace education law. Young people had been provided with "tools" and fertile ground for peace, and now had to motivate themselves to take personal action (i.e., learning more, convincing

others, treating others with respect). Together, these descriptions provide evidence of influential discourses and young people themselves centering the locus of control within the individual.

Similar to interviewees' responses about influences on their understandings of peace, these themes in the definitions can be linked to salient concerns in adolescence, particularly in relation to identity development. As noted above and further detail below, one possible explanation is the social schema of individualism and collectivism. Another possible explanation, however, incorporates processes in adolescence regarding consolidating ideas about who one is (i.e., sense of self and value systems) and interpreting one's social position based on expanding social interactions (Flanagan, 2013; Sherrod et al., 2002). Concurrently, young people are developing cognitive capacities to think about systems (e.g., structural inequality, democratic ideals) and one's place within them (Blakemore & Choudhury, 2006; Watts, Williams, & Jagers, 2003). Driven by these changes, a main developmental task in adolescence is understanding and defining one's identity and place within society and social groups (Arnett, 2015; Erikson, 1968). Some scholars even argue that these processes underlie the strong influence of egocentrism—exclusive attention to one's uniqueness and individuality—during adolescence (Elkind, 1967; Greene, Krcmar, Walters, Rubin, & Hale, 2000). This developmental context may reflect interviewees' descriptions of peace. As these young Colombians form understandings of themselves and their roles in society, the inward focus of these processes may also drive a focus on the individual's role in peacebuilding. In other words, the salience of the individual may reflect of grappling with the self as an agent in social contexts.

Drawing on a PVEST theoretical framework, rooting peace in the individual may also facilitate efficacy, and in this way be understood as a coping mechanism. Whereas broader systems and structures may appear beyond young people's control—especially if they have not

been provided with adequate supports to deconstruct and combat injustice, inequity, and marginalization (Hope & Spencer, 2017)—this conceptualization of peace makes individual action possible. There is still recognition of the social element of peace—that it takes shape through interpersonal interactions—but an inward out directionality gives the individual agency and control.

This interpretation adds to the current understandings about young people's meaning making of peace. Previous studies have highlighted the presence of intra and interpersonal dimensions of peace in adolescents and youths' definitions (Hakvoort & Oppenheimer, 1998; Sarrica, 2007). Yet, the two aspects—the internal and the social—are not explicitly connected with a directionality in this literature. In the current study, interviewees described respect, tolerance, and other interpersonal elements of peace as emerging from internal states. Each person is ultimately an agent responsible for peace and change must begin within the individual, rather than with society, leaders, or institutions. The individual has the efficacy and control.

At the same time, the directionality of this formulation of peace is contested by evidence from other parts of the interviews and the questionnaires. For some interviewees, peace was not possible, or they did not live in peace because of their understanding of society. They noted obstacles like the attitudes of those they saw around them, the lack of attention or respect they received as young people, and, for a smaller group, injustice or lack of basic rights. Furthermore, there was evidence that the inward-out directionality shifted when interviewees were asked about if they lived in peace. In abstract definitions, peace was built interpersonally on a local level through *convivencia* in neighborhoods, communities, and schools. The external context, however, became a primary focus impacting personal peace in discussing living in peace. When asked more concretely about peace, many expressed that other people, interpersonal tension, and

local factors (i.e., insecurity in their neighborhood or city) produced fears, concerns, and worries that negatively impacted their sense of peace. A few still placed the agency within themselves as individuals, emphasizing that personal choice and perspective facilitated them maintaining a personal peace. For these respondents, external influences were negative, but their sense of self facilitated managing these worries or conflict.

The visions of the future in the questionnaires further indicated that respondents did not consistently maintain an inward-out focus for peacebuilding. Across the participants, there was little direct mention of their own role in building peace in Colombia. Many wrote that they envisioned a more peaceful future for Colombia, and often noted structural and macro-level factors (e.g., corruption, economic conditions). It is important that they were not directly ask about peace, but the questionnaire may have prompted concrete reflection on the future. Therefore, the trends in the responses may support the interpretation that when asked to think about peace as actually enacted, Colombian adolescents attended to broader external conditions.

Relating back to the theoretical framework, *conceptualized peace* accommodates this difference between peace as an idea and as a lived reality or concrete possibility in the future. As noted previously, *conceptualized peace* is based in an understanding that peace is not a monolithic or static ideal that people hold. Rather, peace and its relation to one's identity is a continual process and involves understandings (i.e., plural) as individuals interpret, act, reinterpret, and form identities embedded within dynamic developmental and social contexts. It is important to note that this process of identity formation, in line with PVEST, first involves unconscious coping. To this end, few participants explicitly identified as peacebuilders, but talked about who people are as the foundation of peace. Then, these understandings shifted as they considered stressors and dissonance beyond individuals and interpersonal relations. A

conceptualized peace framework demonstrates how individuals might hold ideas about peace abstractly that involve unconscious coping in relation to perceived challenges and supports in their social ecologies, and yet alter these understandings when thinking in reference to themselves and their understanding of their contexts.

First, socially influential discourses may create foundations for thinking about peace. To this end, the complex meaning making may include elements that mirror dominant discourses and others that build off social representations. Social representations are fluid because they can be influenced from the bottom up, but socially powerful discourses may still present frameworks that individuals interpret and make sense of (Moscovici, 1984). This is especially true when influential actors like the government are motivated by political and social goals (Molinari, 2001). For example, this dynamic has been highlighted in the Colombian case by demonstrating how individuals respond to and adapt to the government's rhetorical construction of peace in making their own meaning (McFee, 2016). In the case of youth and peace, Santos' government consistently presented a relationship in which societal peace depended on individual young people assuming a primary and active role. This framework is linked to political goals: winning the plebiscite, garnering popular support, and shifting responsibility for violence and other issues in Colombian society away from the state.

In their definitions of peace, the interviewees similarly highlighted an individualistic and internal focus: each person is the root of societal peace. This crosscutting theme stands in contrast to the literature on cultural schema in Colombian society. Surveys and other research have often identified Colombia as a collectivist country (e.g. Hofstede Insights, n.d.; Mesurado et al., 2014; Triandis, 1988). Yet, the current findings indicate that many of these Colombian adolescents prioritize the role of the individual in defining peace. One possible interpretation is

the presence of cultural schema or discourses about peace placing responsibility on the individual as a citizen and peacebuilder. Whether from the Colombian government or in broader society, social representations offer prevalent conceptualizations which young people may form their own ideas in response to. In other words, discourses like that of the government may provide salient conceptualizations that these participants internalize, adapt, and reshape in making meaning for themselves (Jovchelovitch, 2007). The resulting meaning making may reflect or respond to the frameworks and foci of influential discourses, even if individual young people are not simply passively internalizing these ideas.

At the same time, there is evidence that these youth hold multiple conceptions of peace dependent on the framing and context. Their abstract concepts may reflect similar frameworks as used by government, media, and other influential social actors in youth's contexts. However, when peace is considered as a more concrete application, these conceptualizations may be altered or adapted to fit individuals' experiences and understandings of their social worlds. This complexity and multiplicity are not addressed either in previous studies on meaning making of peace or studies on identity in relation to peacebuilding. For this study, these adolescents shift their descriptions of peace when asked to concretely talk about their lives or about the future. One explanation is that this focus may activate understandings of themselves and their social positioning. The data seems to indicate that peace as lived or with regard to the future involves thinking about communities, societies, and other external factors, as well as their own lived experiences and self-efficacy (or lack thereof).

A *conceptualized peace* framework can effectively address this complexity because it is a process-focused framework of meaning making as multifaceted and contextual. Individuals balance and manage multiple ideas based on perceived challenges and supports given their

contexts and their interpretation of risk and supports. In theory, peace may involve small actions in intimate contexts based on their responses to salient discourses on youth and peace. In practice, peace may activate lived experience, understandings of broader structures and systems, and other developmental tasks. In respect to a developmental element, as older adolescents, the participants may be increasingly grappling with effects and consequences of the ecologies they are embedded in (Blakemore & Choudhury, 2006; Watts et al., 2003). This could be particularly true as they think more tangibly about their futures and the opportunities and trajectories possible for them. In summary, invoking their identities—in this case by considering peace or the lack of it as lived reality—may shift orientations toward peace. This connection is furthered bolstered by the interview and questionnaire data on how Colombian adolescents describe their possible contributions to peace and future orientations, which will be discussed in the next section.

Peace and Identities: Future Orientations and Contributions

The complexity and identity-based processes of *conceptualized peace* were further illuminated in these Colombian adolescents' visions of the future and descriptions of possible contributions to peace. When directly asked about their futures in relation to that of their country, many interviewees responded that the two were linked. In the interviews and questionnaires, these responses more often involved education, employment, and physical security (e.g., walking the streets without fear) than involvement in contributing to peace. By creating space for multiple conceptualizations of peace and incorporating a developmental lens, *conceptualized peace* can guide an interpretation of these results. Across cultural contexts, future education, career trajectory, and familial aspirations are salient identity questions for adolescents as they near the end of the secondary schooling and are faced with soon becoming adult members of their societies (Seginer, 2003). This literature fits with Colombian adolescents' areas of focus in

discussing their futures. They invoked structural issues and attention to elements of their societies that influence their educational and economic opportunities.

Developmentally-salient concerns do not manifest uniformly across all young people, and this diversity was apparent within the study findings. For example, lower SES respondents were more likely to say that their futures depended on themselves. They also more often noted concerns with making a living, rather than how they could contribute to change in their country. This finding may be linked to the fact that young people process the economic demands and opportunities available to them based on how they evaluate their social positioning and personal abilities. Those who focused on making a living may be reflecting this perspective as they think concretely about the opportunities available to them and what challenges they face. The need to define a career may be a primary focus that takes priority over considerations of engagement in social endeavors like peacebuilding. At the same time, adolescents also face psychosocial pressures to maintain a sense of self that is developing, and individuals may employ coping strategies to this effect (Spencer et al., 1997, 2006). In this case, the lower SES respondents who said their future depended on just themselves may focus internally to maintain a sense of self-efficacy amid external conditions perceived as challenging. All in all, these future orientations can be understood as demonstrating developmental tasks and processes because they differentially reflect understandings of themselves, as well as societal options and cultural values that are related to class and gender (Destin & Oyserman, 2009; Nurmi, Poole, & Kalakoski, 1994).

This discussion of demographic differences must acknowledge the complexity of intra and interindividual variation even as all adolescents face similar developmental challenges. For example, in relation to experience of violence—related to various levels, like the armed conflict

or local level community crime—the analytic categories and demographics do not always capture the full nuance of the participants experiences. Within the sample in Cali, some low SES urban youth had been displaced from rural areas near the Pacific Coast by the armed conflict. In their newer neighborhoods in Cali, they now experienced a different sense of conflict in relation to local drug trafficking. Yet, using characteristics like victim, SES, and urbanicity are not always attentive to this nuance.

Yet, considering these youth on the whole, prevalent discourses and narratives in society may also have played a role in influencing these understandings of the future. For example, many of the questionnaire respondents simply noted that their visions of the future involved a Colombia in peace. The prevalence and widespread mention of this could reflect how debate and discussion of a peaceful Colombia imbued media, politics, school contexts, and society at the time. Similarly, respondents in both the interviews and questionnaires often mentioned corruption, which similarly had come to the forefront of the popular mindset at this time because of a number of scandals (see Marcos, 2017; Transparency International, 2017). The analyses in this study indicate that these sociopolitical factors arose in how adolescents were thinking about peace.

Within a *conceptualized peace* framework, ecological context—such as sociohistorical developments and discourses—provide a foundation upon which individuals respond to and construct their own meaning. This influence can be seen in the reverberation of societal factors, discourses, and developmental processes in these Colombian adolescents' discussion of peace in relation to themselves. Yet, *conceptualized peace* also involves understandings of the self as a possible agent in peacebuilding. The analyses of visions of the future indicated that there might be a gap for these young people in linking themselves to a broader societal peace. That is, while

abstractly they may understand their internal states and interpersonal actions as building peace, when asked about the future, there is less indication that they view themselves as having this impact and bringing about change. One explanation could be the cognitive leap in moving from concrete experiences in school and community in the present to a peaceful society in the future. The expansive nature of this peace may combine with the salience of challenges and personal hopes to complicate a direct link between themselves and peace.

Such an interpretation also illuminates how interviewees discussed their possible contributions to peace across various levels. When asked about supporting peace locally, interviewees' responses mirrored what they had said about peace itself. They noted acting in ways that supported harmonious *convivencia* through dialogue, showing respect, listening, setting an example, and teaching others. As in their definitions of peace, the interviewees discussed these smaller contributions as building to something larger. Some participants even explicitly described peace as the amalgamation of small and local contributions by employing the phrase *granito de arena*. Others detailed a process by which their actions caused a chain reaction that led to increasing numbers of people supporting peace.

When asked about contributions to a national peace, the same perspective appeared most often in the responses of those who thought it was possible. Few participants noted political action or becoming a leader, though more echoed again that small personal changes could have broader effects. Importantly, however, most respondents said that they were unable to support peace at a national level. Almost 60 interviewees expressed this feeling, whereas only seven said that they could not at a community level. Few came from the capital and the majority were from low SES schools. They were less likely to root national peace in individual acts, while often stating that a single individual could not change a whole country. This perspective could be

interpreted as speaking to an attentiveness—possibly even unrecognized by the adolescents themselves—to social structures and limitations. Colombia is a country where political and social power have historically been highly centralized in the capital. Political reform has brought some change over the last few decades, and other cities are certainly economic and social centers (Palacios, 2006; Thibert & Osorio, 2014). Nevertheless, Colombia still faces substantial challenges, imbalances and injustices. It could be that the legacies and continued reality of social and geographical stratification imbued understandings of efficacy to contribute to national peace. Within this interpretation, some interviewees may have maintained a focus on intimate social contexts because it served as a response to the difficult challenge of envisioning individual action shaping national peace. The emphasis on giving a *granito de arena* (both when used literally and when implied) could be a coping mechanism for some in maintaining a sense of efficacy and identity as a potential peacebuilder facing considerable sociopolitical challenges in Colombia. This interpretation builds off of literature on civic engagement arguing that these local levels experiences and focus can provide "a form of resistance for the sake of the positive development of self and community" (Hope and Spencer, p. 425).

Delving more deeply into this interpretation, analyses by demographic characters provide evidence that identity-based processes may have activated different understandings of peace. First, across geography, gender, and SES, there was little difference in abstract definitions of peace except for the previously-mentioned use of equality. Previous research, however, has found that female adolescents tend define peace as between friends and the absence of interpersonal arguments, while males emphasize the absence of armed conflict nationally and internationally (Hakvoort & Oppenheimer, 1998; Sarrica, 2007). The lack of a difference in this study may complicate these understandings by revealing how these Colombian adolescents are

adapting and responding to specific discourses in their society. In other words, both males and females are anchoring their abstract understanding of peace in conceptualizations that permeate discussion of youth and peace in Colombia (i.e., beginning with internally, spreading outward, individual responsibility). Such an interpretation is bolstered by the congruity with the government discourse, which consistently referenced "youth" as a homogenous category, without differentiation by gender, race, or class.

The discussion of peace in lived realities and concrete contexts, however, may involve elements of their understanding of self and position in social context, which would relate to gender and other salient identities. In the interviews, there were equivalent percentages of males and females who expressed feeling that they could or could not contribute to peace. Both groups also generally maintained an inward-out focus. Female interviewees, however, were more likely to say that they contributed to peace by listening to, teaching, informing, and motivating others to be involved, whereas both males and females referred to general impacts like promoting unity and solidarity and treating others with respect. Males more often mentioned voicing their own ideas and opinions as a contribution they could make to peace. While both groups invoked ideas of *convivencia*, females listed direct contact with others (particularly in terms of helping behaviors) and males described self-expression and opinionating. Though the questionnaire data did not reveal this same exact difference, it is noteworthy that females more often said that the future would involve peace, whereas males more often implied the future would be better (i.e., including improve more broadly in politics, economics, and other ways beyond peace).

These patterns may reflect gendered social roles and expectations in Colombia. Women's experiences in Colombia have historically been marked by patterns of social and political exclusion, with continued impacts today on women's roles in public and Colombian young

people (Bouvier, 2016; Sani & Quaranta, 2017). More broadly, research on South American youth (including Colombians) has also demonstrated that female adolescents are more empathetic and demonstrate higher levels of prosocial behavior (Mesurado et al., 2014; Schulz, Ainley, Cox, & Friedman, 2018). Within these contexts, it is possible that the responses of the female interviewees to possible contributions reflect a process of interpreting these expectations and avenues available to them. Their understandings of themselves and their contextual supports and challenges may provide specific outlets for how they can contribute to peace. For the male respondents, men have most often been the combatants and victims of homicide in Colombia. Importantly, these types of violence have been rooted in political disagreement; males historically and in the more recent phases of the armed conflict face violence that is tie to expressing political viewpoints (Bouvier, 2016; Palacios, 2006; Richani, 2013). For the interview findings, this sociohistorical context and the connected discourses and expectations could explain a focus on free political expression among the male interviewees. Bringing together these explanations related to gender, differences may not have arisen in their definitions of peace because such a broad, abstract focus did not activate lived experiences and processing of concrete realities around gender.

Differences in the questionnaires were more nuanced: whereas males from urban schools were less likely to invoke positive emotions (e.g., happiness, love), rural males often referred to these as well as issues of justice, equality, and *convivencia*. These findings may point to the particular challenges for peace in rural Colombia. While major urban areas are sociopolitical hubs with high rates of interpersonal and gang violence, the countryside has been particularly marked by the violence related to the armed conflict between the government and the FARC. The armed conflict has partly centered on issues of land reform, underdevelopment, lack of state

presence, and political alienation. In recognition of these factors in the conflict, rural development was a main focus of the peace process, and in fact, the talks were seen as more favorable on the whole by rural Colombians (Flores & Vargas, 2018; Liendo & Braithwaite, 2018). Young rural males at the time of data collection faced a historical legacy as primary targets for recruitment and involvement in the armed conflict, but also the possibility for a different future through the peace accords. It is possible that they were more likely to internalize a perspective on the future that involved positive emotions and improved structural conditions as a reflection of this broader hope in rural areas for change and a better future.

Overall, differences by demographic characteristics could be understood as reflecting the ways that identity is incorporated into thinking about peace. As adolescents, these young people manage multiple identities—and for some intersections of multiple forms of marginalization because of these in Colombian society—in understanding the expectations, possibilities, and agency they have in their social contexts (Velez & Spencer, 2018). When considering peace as enacted, they may be drawing on these embedded understandings of self. They are no longer making meaning just in response to influential discourses and social representations, but their thinking about what peace is expands to include their experiences of peace as a possibility, their expectations of themselves and what are their capabilities, and their processing of contextual supports and challenges. These are important considerations to acknowledge in conceptualizing how people think about and develop orientations toward peace. Decontextualized meaning can offer insightful clues, but may miss these identity processes. *Conceptualized peace* presents a framework by which discourses and ideas about peace are experienced by individuals, who then integrate them with understandings of themselves and their contexts in forming identities in

relation to peace. To this end, it encompasses both an abstract meaning making as well as its relation to identity development in order to effectively frame these various elements.

Summary and Takeaways

Both government discourses and analyses of the interviews revealed a dominant conceptualization of peace as rooted internally and then spread to a broader level through how people treat and act toward each other. This framework emphasized the role and responsibility of individual young people in building peace in Colombia and can be understood as echoing developmentally salient concerns and questions. At the same time, external conditions mattered in understandings of peace when considered as applied. There was greater recognition of obstacles and challenges beyond individuals' control, which for some presented a different directionality where these factors influenced internal states. Individuals and their internal processes were still important for peace, but there was greater integration and recognition of context. *Conceptualized peace* frames these findings as related to active processes of interpretation and response in relation to these adolescents' understandings of themselves and their social positioning. There was also evidence that thinking about peace as applied and on broader, national levels may have activated considerations that challenged the inward-out abstract conception of peace. Envisioning peace as a personal endeavor that spread outward may have been complicated by identities of the participants, including factors like gender and class, as well as personal efficacy built from experiences of their social roles and possibilities.

Connecting back to *conceptualized peace,* these findings demonstrate the utility of this conceptual framework. Thinking about peace is not straightforward or unidimensional. Rather, it is a multifaceted, dynamic process that plays off discourses and interacts with meaning making process involving understandings and beliefs about the self as embedded in ecological context.

Socially influential discourses may offer foundations or key points of departure for individual interpretation. These abstract ideas are further altered and adapted when considered in relation to identities as individuals think about the concrete application of peace. Holistically, then, individual's thinking about peace involves an integration of socializing experiences (including both those formally structured, like peace education curriculum, and more indirect, like being raised with certain values), experiences of society (and understandings of how people interact and if peace is possible), and beliefs about the self. The results of these processes are fluid and theorized to be directly linked to both efficacy and personal outcomes (i.e., running a spectrum from engaging in peacebuilding activities to disengaging from this societal project). In this way, *conceptualized peace* framework frames the development of peacebuilding identities and possible areas for intervention to promote peacebuilding through a greater awareness and recognition of individual's processing and perspectives.

Implications

This study offers several concrete implications for research, theory, and application involving youth and peace. Broadly, these findings validate considering young people to be active agents embedded in developmental and ecological contexts. Top-down pressures and passive socialization are not effective strategies for trying to promote peaceful societies by engaging young people. Instead, policies and programming should strive to provide supports that meet young people where they are; that is, that acknowledge young people's perspectives, identities, and experiences of communities and societies (and the obstacles within them). At a general level, this approach requires attentiveness to young people and resources devoted to collecting data on their understandings. Adolescents, as minors, are not of voting age, and so they are often overlooked in polling or asked about their civic attitudes as predictors of later

political action (e.g., Cohen & Chaffee, 2013; Hooghe & Wilkenfeld, 2008; Torney-Purta, Barber, & Richardson, 2004). Adolescent Colombians were treated similarly during much of the peace process. For example, there was minimal attention paid by the government or media to how they felt about peace and few attempts to systematically collect their perspectives (Sánchez Meertens, 2017; Velez, 2016; Velez & Ballesteros, 2016).[16] This study demonstrated, however, that adolescents have complex understandings of peace that may be linked to identity processes. Based on this, supporting their engagement should be based first in a sincere effort to understand their perspective and what they view as possible obstacles.

The study's findings can also inform the structuring of programming and curriculum with the intended purpose of promoting adolescents' active orientations toward peace. The findings demonstrated a divide between how these young people described what peace meant and their consideration of it as applied. Framed by *conceptual peace,* however, both are part of an underlying, complex meaning making process. Individuals do not simply maintain one notion of peace as a static definition, but rather are adapting and shifting dependent on sense of self and context. This framework does not imply that peace is amorphous, pluralistic, and constantly changing. Its meaning to individuals can be systematically studied, understood, and employed to provide more effective and consonant supports to individuals to engage in promoting it, but researchers and policymakers should be attentive to what about the idea of peace changes, how it changes, and what this might reflect about individuals' identities and contexts.

[16] I acknowledge that within some schools and local contexts, there was attention to what young people were thinking and feeling about peace and the peace process. This was evident in my own experiences visiting schools across the country, speaking with peace education leaders and organizations, and participating in various events. At the same time, this attention was not systematic, not true of the media and popular discourse in general, and often depended on the initiative of individuals, such as teachers, school administrators, or youth group leaders.

In the case of Colombia, young people may need supports to help bridge internal change and interpersonal action with external conditions and broader processes. There may be a disconnect between, on the one hand, the conceptualization that small-scale action initiated by motivated individuals leads to national change, and, on the other, how these young people actually experience their local contexts and their country. Other young Colombians may not experience this dissonance, like those in the interviews who maintained throughout that peace was built through small actions. This response may have helped maintain a sense of personal efficacy in relation to peace. Nevertheless, this perspective may lead to similar issues as those faced by the participants who struggled to envision their actions as causing broader change. An internal focus may promote a sense of efficacy and action in the short term, but what will the outcomes be like for these young people if structural or broader changes do not happen? How will they respond to the dissonance between continued individual action and lack of broader change? These questions point toward an overarching challenge for policy and programming: promoting engagement in peacebuilding in the face of local contextual obstacles and national sociopolitical processes. Stated another way, these initiatives must support self-efficacy by concretely linking individual action to broader change and promoting agency. Youth must feel and link both internal efficacy—feeling able to understand and act as a citizen—and external efficacy—that sociopolitical systems and histories can change (Balch, 1974; Lane, 1959).

Returning to the literature on meaning making, identity, and citizenship offers insight into how this challenge could be addressed. A plethora of research indicates that civic attitudes and institutional trust are not alone deterministic of civic outcomes. Experiences of agency—of affecting change in one's school, family, friend groups or community—are also influential in promoting motivation, efficacy, and action (Colby & Damon, 2010; Ginwright & Cammarota,

2007; Haste, 2004; Watts & Flanagan, 2007). Efforts to promote peace need to provide concrete experiences of agency in relation to peace. As seemingly underlying the Colombian government's discourse, youth people simply understanding peace as beginning in the individual may not be enough for sustained efficacy and action. These frameworks could be bolstered by resources and programming could that specifically offers opportunities to learn, engage, and reflect on local action. Such opportunities could serve young people who asserted that peace begins internally in individuals and builds outwards, as well as those who focused on external conditions and challenges. For the former, these experiences can deepen and affirm the understandings that they already have, and in turn support their sense of self efficacy and identity as peacebuilders. For the latter, this engagement could foster an understanding that obstacles in their communities and country are not insurmountable, while also demonstrating possibilities for action in the face of these inequities, injustices, and issues (Hope & Spencer, 2017). For both groups of young people, this "praxis" model moves beyond abstract ideas and the classroom to root thinking about peace in lived experiences; that is, in the development of practical knowledge and direct engagement with everyday life (Haste, 2004).

Importantly, some educational settings in Colombia offer such experiences. This study did not directly involve data collection on teaching and support for peacebuilding in schools, but these topics inevitably arose in visits to schools, conversations with local and national government officials, and to a degree in the young people's own words. Across these sources, the most prevalent structured opportunities were peer mediation programs where students are trained in conflict resolution, participating in local events informing others about the peace process, and service trips in the community. Within the government's peace education documents, lessons and activities incorporate difficult situations that young people often face, such as tension or discord

with partners in intimate relationships or disputes between friends. More generally, service learning, in which students are active and reflective as they play leading roles in all phases of community projects, may help maintain self-efficacy (e.g., Wade, 2008).

At the same time, these active experiences were not available to many young Colombians. Commitment to peace education varied from school to school. Some only incorporated theoretical discussions about peace (e.g., talking about it in philosophy classes). Others limited curriculum to just within classrooms (e.g., holding debates in social studies classes on the peace process). Yet other schools did not offer opportunities for reflection on impacts or outcomes of what students were doing (e.g., putting up signs about peace around the school with no follow up).

Even when initiatives engaged students in action or attempted to connect peace with their everyday lives, these efforts often missed a crucial component. The benefit of a "praxis" model is not simply that it involves action, but also that it can effectively bridge individual action and broader change. This bridge can support young people's motivation and feelings of efficacy in addressing the challenges they experience in their everyday social contexts (Bajaj, 2008; Watts, Diemer, & Voight, 2011; Watts & Flanagan, 2007). The critical component is not simply action, but a reflective action as individuals become more aware and build deeper understandings of social problems, begin to form strategies to address these, and develop a sense of efficacy that is rooted in both the realities of local and broader social contexts and the actual possibilities to effect change (Haste, 2004; Hope & Spencer, 2017; Yates & Youniss, 1999).

Focusing on peace, this approach has been incorporated into the theorization and articulation of critical peace education. It builds on the goals of peace education more broadly by encompassing critical consciousness, praxis, social justice, and broader structural change (Bajaj,

2008; Freire, 1970). Critical peace education involves specific attention not simply to violence and promoting interpersonal peace, but also to deconstructing power dynamics and promoting the voice, participation, and agency of all peoples (Brantmeier, 2011; Hantzopoulos, 2011). In the area of peace education, this orientation uniquely prioritizes local meanings and realities as critical to engaging students as actors in social justice and democratic action (Bajaj, 2015). To this end, critical consciousness—the perception and understanding of root causes of unjust and systematic political, social, and cultural conditions in individuals' everyday lives (Freire, 1970; Watts & Abdul-Adil, 1998)—is fostered in conjunction with opportunities for collective action and thinking to address these issues. This orientation necessarily pushes students and teachers to discuss and grapple with obstacles in schools and societies, while providing space for ongoing reflection, movement building, and community engagement (Bajaj, 2008). An end goal is building a sense of "transformative agency" to combat structural and cultural forms of violence (Brantmeier & Bajaj, 2013); in other words, striving to understand and support "how moral and political agency come together to inspire both a discourse of hope and a political project that take seriously what it means to envision a better life and society" (Giroux, 1988, p. 38). The challenge in developing this transformative agency is the tension between the complexity and deep-rooted nature of structures and individual action.

Applied to the findings of this study, critical peace education offers an orientation for policy and programming that can support Colombian adolescents in fostering active and engaged peacebuilding identities. These young people might doubt their abilities to contribute to peace in Colombia for many reasons, including the prevalence and historical roots of direct, structural, and cultural violence in Colombia. This violence is also intimately connected to social structures, injustices, and inequities perpetuated across time (Flores & Vargas, 2018; Palacios, 2006;

Richani, 2013). Given the history and modern context, Colombian youth must develop coping strategies to process and make sense of this marginalization (Diemer & Li, 2011; Watts & Flanagan, 2007). Through critical peace education, these young people may encounter supports to understand the dynamics, marginalization, and perpetuation in society that is linked to violence, as well as to reflect on the experience of deconstructing these problematic systems (Watts et al., 2003). Supported in this way, young Colombians—whether optimistic or pessimistic about the possibility of peace—may develop critical consciousness that would both raise their awareness and provide avenues for action in building a peace that address the structural roots of violence. Their engagement in peacebuilding could thus serve as a positive coping mechanisms as they understand and experience the transformative agency of their contributions to peace (Hope & Spencer, 2017).

Beyond the Colombian context, critical peace education provides an applied approach for employing understandings driven by *conceptualized peace*. *Conceptualized peace* is a conceptual framework that is process-oriented, grounded in the dynamic interaction of the individual and ecological context in meaning making processes, and related to identity outcomes. It provides a frame for understanding how meanings of peace change and that young people develop orientations toward peace based on their interpretation of ecological context and understandings of self. The theorized outcomes are levels of psychological and physical engagement in peace-making processes. While this framework centers on individuals, their contexts, and peace, it is ultimately about responses to violence—a consistent, cross-cultural, and traumatic part of human relations (Fiske & Rai, 2014; Pinker, 2011). Addressing violence requires change and action at multiple levels, from macro-level adjustments like disarmament and political participation, to micro-level elements like effective conflict resolution and tolerance, to values that cut across

these levels like respect for human rights (Galtung, 1990; Lederach, 1995; Lederach & Appleby, 2010). Within this larger endeavor, the applied utility of *conceptualized peace* can be promoting individuals in engaging in peacebuilding projects; that is, it can be used to design interventions, policy, and programs that can support individual action. In violence-ridden societies like Colombia, this micro-level focus involves identity, understanding of peace, and efficacy within ecological contexts where histories, political structures, and social systems have bred violent conflict (Bar-Tal, 2007; Berents, 2018; Kriesberg, 1993). Critical peace education provides an effective strategy to support individuals' engagement in peacebuilding within the broader goal of societal change. It addresses structural issues, raises awareness to the roots of violence, supports efficacy and individual action, and is based in local realities and understandings (Bajaj, 2008; Hantzopoulos, 2011).

In integration with the framework of *conceptualized peace*, critical peace education can also address different socialization influences and the varying degrees of power they have across individuals. Family, home, peer groups, media, schools, workplaces, and other social contexts offer ways of thinking about peace, its possibility, and one's possible contributions to it, but these influences are not in isolation (Amna et al., 2009). *Conceptualized peace* acknowledges this complexity by focusing on individual agency, processing, and meaning making as ecologically embedded. This framework effectively engages with critical peace education because the latter acknowledges—and in fact emphasizes raising awareness about—how micro-level experiences are embedded within broader systems and structures. It is situated in bridging multiple levels of ecological context and individuals, while integrating this perspective into educational contexts. A better understanding of how individuals make these links—such as

through further elaboration and study of *conceptualized peace*—would provide critical information for achieving this purpose of critical peace education.

Finally, a critical peace education built on *conceptualized peace* can also address developmental context and tasks that are important in how people build proactive orientations toward peace. This study has focused on adolescents, who are experiencing biological, cognitive, and social changes that bring to the forefront forming identities, thinking about social positions and broader systems, and envisioning future trajectories. The findings of this study demonstrated that these developmental processes can shift young people's thinking about peace and illuminate the obstacles to their involvement. For example, these adolescents, particularly those from low SES backgrounds, talked about economic and educational opportunities and political challenges (such as corruption) in their visions of the future. These issues directly impact personal hopes and understandings of their future selves. Critical peace education is an approach that focuses on localized meaning about peace but could serve to help young people cope with these challenges to engagement when linked with *conceptualized peace*. Specifically, c*onceptualized peace* in adolescents draws attention to role of future thinking in the sense of self and one's trajectory. Young people like those in the study should not only be guided in becoming more aware of structural issues—and strategies to changes these—related to peace and violence, but also how promoting peace can concretely contribute to their own future growth and aspirations. Such an integration of personal and societal goals could defuse the possible dissonance, cynicism, and disengagement that challenges education focused on linking structures and systems with personal action (Beaumont, 2010; Kassimir & Flanagan, 2010; Levy, 2013; Metzger & Smetana, 2010).

Summary

The current study demonstrates the efficacy of critical peace education as an approach to bolstering young people's involvement in peace. This implication emerges from both the empirical investigation of Colombian adolescents and the articulation of *conceptualized peace* as a framework for the development of orientations toward peace. The study's findings suggest that young people would benefit from supports that acknowledge contextual and structural obstacles to peace, provide them clear examples of action to promote their efficacy, and incorporate attentiveness to their own developing identities. Critical peace education provides a theoretical orientation, as well as definite strategies to activate young people's potential in peacebuilding.

Specifically, the study highlights a space for intervention to promote peacebuilding identities in Colombia: providing greater opportunities for young people to personally experience peace enacted internally and interpersonally. While the implementation of peace education has been varied and unevaluated (Sánchez Meertens, 2018), the mandate still presents an important opportunity. Curriculum, guidelines, and resources could be developed that foster self-efficacy and promote orientations toward peacebuilding both by providing opportunities to experience the possibility of change from conflict and violence. Research on civic development demonstrates that practicing democratic citizenship and participation in classrooms and schools can promote proactive and prosocial civic outcomes (Torney-Purta, 2002). But a further step may also be needed: activating understandings, experiences, and efficacy in relation to the root causes of violence across many levels of Colombian society. Inequality, inequity, and marginalization may create challenges for young Colombians' efficacy or political participation, but these contexts are not deterministic of negative outcomes and, in fact, can engender motivation for change (Hope & Spencer, 2017; Kahne & Westheimer, 2006; Watts et al., 2011). Critical peace education provides applicable policy and programming strategies to support young Colombians to this end.

More broadly, critical peace education is an effective approach for using *conceptualized peace* to promote engaged orientations to peace. *Conceptualized peace* highlights the role of identity processes, including interpretation and response to ecological context, as individuals make meaning of peace. This conceptual framework also integrates developmental tasks as influences on this process. Critical peace education focuses educational initiatives on directly engaging with challenges in social and political systems and bridging individual action with broader change. Therefore, it can be used to help individuals effectively cope with experiences and understandings of social injustices linked to violence, while also promoting their sense of efficacy in acting to change systems and promote peace holistically across multiple ecologies.

Limitations and Future Directions

Before concluding, I acknowledge some limitations of the study and suggest future directions for research to address them. In this section, I address possible concerns related to the sample, methodologies, and interpretation of findings. In doing so, I hope to recognize gaps and point toward how to deepen and enrich the framework of *conceptualized peace* for application in supporting individual development of engaged orientations toward peace.

First, it is important to acknowledge the particular nature of the adolescent samples for the interviews and questionnaires. I recruited for the interviews in conjunction with the regional Secretaries of Education, school administrators, and non-profit organizations. Both the school sites and the student participants were neither randomly selected nor entirely comprehensive. Schools in the sample might have tended to be more interested in engaging deeply with peace education or generally questions of peace because these dynamics might have made them more open and willing to be a research site. Similarly, it is possible that the students selected were more active in peace or chosen as positive representatives of the institution. I sought to address

this issue from early in the process by recruiting actively and broadly, while making clear to officials, administrators, and teachers that my goal was to interview a broad range of young people. Nevertheless, I acknowledge that this may not have been the case.

I also recognize that there were groups of young people that I did not reach. Most importantly, while many participants self-identified as victims of the armed conflict, the areas where they currently lived are not where the armed conflict between the FARC and the government has been the most intense. Therefore, the most salient violence for many of the sample would have been related to local level crime or drug trafficking. For youth from more heavily conflict-affected zones, the meaning of peace may have looked different, in line with this different nature of violence in their local social ecology. Additionally, I did not interview any young people who had left school or who openly discussed being a part of an armed group (including gang). Also, the sample did not include adolescents who identified as belonging to indigenous groups due to logistical restrictions and choices. While I did speak with a number of Afro-Colombian youth, these participants had been displaced. They lived in the outskirts of the major cities, rather than in the areas of the country where Afro-Colombian culture and people are rooted. As a complement to the interviews, the questionnaires were administered to a substantial number of Colombian adolescents, but there were also noteworthy biases in the sample. The vast majority of respondents were from urban settings and attended public schools. These numbers mirror the country's demographics: about eighty percent of the Colombian populace lives in urban areas and an equivalent percentage of secondary students are enrolled in public schools (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2019; United Nations, 2018). Nevertheless, the weighted nature of the sample makes it difficult to break down analyses by multiple categories (i.e., gender

and school) and could be a challenge to the findings of differences and lack of differences by demographic characteristics and lack of differences.

It is also possible that limitations of the sample related to the lack of expected findings. No differences were found by age, despite indications that this might be the case from developmental theory and the previous literature. Older adolescents have been found to hold more complex ideas about peace involving abstract ideals like democracy and human rights than young adolescents (Hakvoort & Oppenheimer, 1998). The consistency across age in this study could be explained by sample selection. As noted above, school administrators chose the interviewees and may have tended to select students who were more engaged in their schools or in peace. Participants may then have been more likely, whether 15 or 18 and identified as male or female, to talk about peace as being constructed at the individual and interpersonal levels in which they themselves are active. Additionally, both the interview and questionnaire samples were heavily weighted toward students in the final two years of secondary school, and so there might have simply been not enough variation by age to identify differences.

These concerns about the sample could be addressed through future research that continues to consider adolescent voices. During the peace process, there were minimal broad attempts in Colombia to collect these perspectives and ideas (Sánchez Meertens, 2017; Velez, 2016). The interviews and questionnaires provide glimpses into the thinking of a diverse, but not all inclusive, segment of younger generations in Colombia at the time. As the project of peace develops and changes with political and social dynamics, it is important that these pre-voting young Colombians are considered, and that more extensive and systematic efforts be made to understand their thinking about peace and their roles in it. Recently, one research initiative explored perspectives and thoughts of young Colombians from age 14 to 28. The project, led by

a team of researchers at la Universidad de los Andres and la Universidad del Rosario, considered themes obliquely related to peace (i.e., social trust, political participation, and dreams and expectations), but did not address peace or young people's understanding of its connection to their own lives (Maldonado et al., 2018). Nevertheless, it serves as a template for expanding understandings of how Colombian youth think about peace.

A second limitation of this study centers on the research methodology and datasets. Building on a *conceptualized peace* framework, the analyses of the three datasets were understood as theoretically connected. Although interviewees were not specifically asked about the government discourse, the framework articulated a connection between the two based on the governments' social power, influence on schools and educators, and media coverage. The individual participants, however, would have experienced these ideas to varying degrees, and some possibly not directly at all. This issue was partially addressed by studying what they noted as the most salient influences on their thinking about peace. None of these adolescents explicitly referred to government discourses, but socialization and responses to it may not be conscious (Arnett, 2002; Doise & Staerklé, 2002; Eder & Nenga, 2006). Still, to address this question, future research could explicitly ask young people or involve observations in classrooms and interviews with teachers and administrators in order to better understand how and to what extent government discourse might be reaching adolescents.

The research approach also integrated and triangulated the three datasets to study young people's thinking about themselves in relation to societal peace. The discussion drew on the fact that each involved a different sample and framing. Nevertheless, bridging datasets can be challenging and requires interpretive leaps (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). For example, while the questionnaires offered visions of the future without specific prompting about peace, there

were also no follow up prompts or details. Many respondents provided short, indistinct answers like “peace” or “be worse.” On one level, this result demonstrates the ambiguity of peace and is evidence that some respondents may not have nuanced, developed ideas of how peace relates to their lives. On another, the lack of clarity could challenge the links drawn to the interview data. With this in mind, I employed a number of different strategies to bolster the validity of the analyses and interpretations. I not only used these multiple datasets, but also spoke with and discussed results in various settings, such as reports to schools, meetings with organizations involved in peace education, and presentations to the government officials in Bogotá and at a national conference of Colombian educators. Also, Dr. Sánchez Meertens and I have maintained contact throughout the process. I have shared findings with him and worked on co-authored publications integrating our results (Velez, Sánchez Meertens, & Ballesteros, Forthcoming).

Furthermore, in future research, I am planning on addressing the limitations discussed. Following an integrative, iterative approach to psychological research, I am planning a number of steps to deepen and expand the current study (Power, Velez, Qadafi, & Tennant, 2018). First, with a subset of participants, I have conducted follow up interviews after a year and aim to conduct another round after a second year. This longitudinal exploration of their thinking about peace will expand on the cross-sectional nature of the current study and further clarify the role of development in *conceptualized peace.* Second, I will explore in greater detail both the dynamics within classrooms in which peace is discussed and taught. This will include classroom observations, as well a semi-experimental approach to study how adolescents respond to specific lessons and theory in peace education curriculum employed in Colombian schools.

Finally, an important future direction of research would be to expand empirical investigations of *conceptualized peace* to different contexts and in relation to concrete action.

The current study focused on Colombia and asked participants about how they understood their involvement in peace. To further define *conceptualized peace*, it is important to consider contexts where peace is not as salient a social discourse (such as, in certain areas of the United States), where peace has recently been obtained (such as Northern Ireland or Rwanda), and in societies with distinct geopolitical histories. In this expanded research, individual outcomes could also be better understood through external reports of young people's contributions to peace. As noted above, it is theorized that the interpretive processes and understandings that these young Colombians were forming about peace will impact their actions as potential peacebuilders. Yet, these outcomes were not directly tested in the current study. Future studies could employ teacher or parent reports, as well as quantitative measures of involvement in non-traditional civic activities that they may understand as related to peace (e.g., social service, participation in peer mediation).

Conclusion

Peace is a multifaceted idea, bridges multiple ecological levels, and is a societal goal internationally and across varied societies (Galtung, 1990; Harris & Morrison, 2013; Lederach, 1995). Individuals, as members of communities and polities, are important actors in these broader processes. Yet they may hold differing understandings of peace, of the possibility of it, and of their involvement in it. These meanings underlie the ways that individuals orient themselves toward peace as a societal project, and can be understood as actively, though not necessarily consciously, constructed. That is, meaning making of peace is a dynamic, multifaceted, and agentic process. Much like the development of attitudes and identities about citizenship, understandings and identities in relation to peace emerge from interpretation and response to many influences, including social discourses, lived experiences, understandings of

supports and challenges, and beliefs about the self. These processes, like individuals themselves, are inherently embedded in ecological context and social positionalities. Social and individual factors are deeply interwoven and interconnected as meaning is formed and reformed. All in all, meaning making matters in human development, and understanding how people develop orientations toward peace requires studying and framing this process. In, these richer empirical and theoretical bases are important as they can inform efforts to foster positive peace (Galtung, 1996; Sarrica, 2007).

In this dissertation, I have outlined a framework articulating an iterative and bidirectional relationship between peace as an abstract and discursive social construction, and individual outcomes toward peace (as a spectrum from embracing and being involved to rejecting or even active violence). *Conceptualized peace* first draws on social psychological theory—Moscovici's SRT—to frame the dynamic between individuals and discourses as meaning is made of socially salient, abstract concepts. It is important to not only focus on individuals and their internal processes, but also to capture social discourses and influences that they are interpreting and responding to. The study of Colombian adolescents thus included an analysis of government discourses, as well as attention to where and how participants described learning about peace. Moving to the individual, *conceptualized peace* also employs Spencer's PVEST to situate meaning making as embedded in ecological and developmental context and involving identity processes. Abstract ideas and social representations may shift and split as individuals also integrate understandings of supports and challenges across various ecologies, as well as beliefs about their own capabilities and selves. For this reason, I explored how Colombian adolescents described living in peace, their possible contributions across various levels, and their visions of the future. Finally, as detailed by Spencer's PVEST, these processes are also related to outcomes

as individuals and members of society. As a whole, *conceptualized peace* has applied utility because individuals' eventual actions and orientations toward peace can strongly influence broader societal trajectories in relation to violence and harmony (Bekerman, 2009; Lederach, 1997; Siobhán McEvoy-Levy, 2001; Salomon, 2004).

In this dissertation, I investigated *conceptualized peace* in Colombian adolescents because of the particular nature of the context (i.e., the peace process) and the salience of identity during this time in the life course. At the start of data collection, the Colombian government was in the final stages of negotiations with the FARC-EP to end over fifty years of armed conflict. The peace process had also expanded to include broader efforts to change Colombian society; to build a peaceful future after a history marked by bloodshed, terrorism, international infamy, deep inequities, political alienation, and fear for personal security. Young people were especially highlighted as key actors in this movement. I focused on adolescents in Colombia in order to understand how these discourses and ideas were being internalized and processed by the very individuals situated as central to peace. In this sense, I chose to situate a study of *conceptualized peace* within a context where peace was salient, and its meaning was being actively negotiated. *Conceptualized peace* is also rooted in the role of identity in moving from meaning to action around peace. Therefore, I was interested in studying adolescents because of the salience of identity formation during this time in the life course. This developmental lens was also appropriate because of the focus in Colombia on young people's role in peace. While *conceptualized peace* speaks more broadly to human development in relation to peace, it holds utility and may be more clearly applied with adolescents because of the corresponding developmental tasks and challenges.

Also underlying these choices was the goal of bolstering peacebuilding policy and programming through studying young people's conceptions of peace (Berents, 2018; Berents & McEvoy-Levy, 2015; Hammack, 2006). To this end, a first application of the study is to efforts in Colombia to promote youth engagement in peacebuilding. The analyses revealed that many interviewees employed an inside-out directionality in describing peace abstractly. Individuals—particularly young people—were first responsible to motivate themselves, use self-control to manage their emotions, and develop conflict management skills. This focus on the self then provided a foundation to build peace interpersonally. This understanding, however, shifted when the interview moved to peace as enacted and concretely related to the future. External obstacles and challenges became more prevalent in interviewees' responses. This change can be interpreted as emerging from processing of ecological context and their positionality within it. Colombia's recent history and its current sociopolitical dynamics are deeply marked by multiple forms of violence, structural inequalities, and challenges to democracy. The varied forms of violence have undermined democratic practice and impacted faith in the democratic system itself (Gallego, 2018; Steele & Schubiger, 2018). In this vein, there is evidence of Colombian adolescents demonstrating declining institutional trust (Velez & Knowles, 2019). Given this sociopolitical and historical context and evidence for its impact on young people, it is not surprising that these factors may be interwoven into Colombian adolescents' discussions of their own lives and future trajectories. Efforts to bolster their engagement in peacebuilding should then directly engage with how they are processing various levels of their social ecosystems, as well as how they understand themselves as actors within these contexts.

In this chapter, I have argued critical peace education can provide these supports. Amid deep-rooted structural issues in Colombia and adolescents' declining institutional trust, young

people may need specific opportunities not only to act in efficacious ways, but also to reflect on how these small contributions—these *granitos de arena*—truly work toward broader change. The connection cannot simply be discursive, but must be experienced and understood as effective in response to marginalization and inequality (Hope & Spencer, 2017; Watts & Flanagan, 2007; Watts et al., 2003). Efforts to promote their engaged outcomes must thus center on both praxis and critical consciousness. Critical peace education can achieve these goals because it calls for education to be rooted in young people's lived experience of local contexts and employs reflective action to bridge their classrooms and communities with the broader society. Young Colombians may feel more efficacious and engaged as peacebuilders when they believe peace is possible and can be built in ways that are consonant with their daily experiences.

More broadly, this study provides evidence that rhetoric about the importance of youth for peace may not be enough. Instead, a more effective approach would be supporting young people in clear connecting their actions with societal attempts to build peace. Official discourses, course curriculum, and school activities could be structured to support these connections. For example, young people could be given opportunities to actively engage with local problems related to violence or be provided space in classes to discuss and reflect on the ways that inequality, marginalization, and injustice influence conflict and tension in local, regional, and national settings. As agentic individuals, young people may reject, adopt, or adapt lessons and discourses they are presented with; they are not simply passively socialized into salient civic ideals (Haste, 2004). Still, focusing discourses and efforts on locally-based strategies and reflective engagement can provide young generations with a concrete basis to interpret and respond to the peace-related issues in their everyday lives.

Critical peace education also addresses broader developmental processes related to identity. Youth engagement with and reflection on social issues in their local contexts can provide a foundation for critical civic engagement. Critical civic engagement is based on Freire's (1970) articulation of how disenfranchised peoples can become active in their own liberation. It refers to how young people's direct action in social and community issues can develop efficacy and identities as active citizens deconstructing structural inequality and marginalization. As adolescents form more concrete senses of themselves, critical civic engagement can offer them a productive coping strategy, and thus promote feelings of efficacy and prosocial outcomes, in the face of these issues (Hope & Spencer, 2017). In reference to peace, critical peace education directly engages with this same framework in relation to the structural roots of violence.

With these implications in mind, this dissertation of course is not a definitive end to discussions about meaning making or the best ways across varied contexts to support peace through identity development. Violence is omnipresent and nuanced across many human societies and historical eras. The forms it takes are complexly intertwined across ecological levels: from macro-level elements (like structural inequalities and cultural schema about in and outgroups) to micro-level ones (like intimate experiences in the family that range from witnessing domestic violence to losing family members to close kin joining armed groups). As both a response to violence and proactive endeavor to prevent it, peace must also be malleable to various contexts and the cultural, political, social, and personal dynamics inherent in each. *Conceptualized peace*, as presented in this dissertation, is the beginning of an attempt to bring a clearer developmental framework to one applied goal within peace studies: individual engagement in building peace. *Conceptualized peace* thus contributes to peacebuilding policy and programming, though it generally models a process that can lead to a spectrum of possible

outcomes resulting from contextually-embedded meaning making and identity development. As with any model, *conceptualized peace* requires engagement with diverse perspectives and constructive critiques, application to empirical research, and further adaptation.

As one final point, I would like to note a significant challenge that faces research applying *conceptualized peace* like this dissertation study: the temporality of constantly changing contexts, human development, and lived experiences of psychological phenomena. With this study, I refer to how in just two short years since the data was collected, the landscape in Colombia has shifted dramatically. In the 2018 presidential elections, the Colombian electorate chose Ivan Duque to replace Santos. Duque had been vehemently against the peace process and had positioned himself as the appointed candidate of former president Uribe, the leading figure for the "No" vote in the plebiscite on the peace accords. Added to these changing political winds, there have been issues with the logistics, dissention of some former FARC-EP combatants, and implementing the comprehensive accords (Johnson, 2019; Verdad Abierta, 2018). This already tenuous situation recently faced another significant obstacle as the *Ejército de Liberación Nacional* (the ELN)—the most significant remaining armed group who has also begun a peace process with the government—set off a bomb inside a military base in Bogotá. The attack killed 21 police officers and was the clearest evidence that a negative peace is still far from a reality in Colombia. On the whole, these events have most likely influenced how the participants in this study think about peace, as well as the meaning making of the next generation of adolescents.

While the changing nature of the peace process in Colombia may impact, it bolsters the need for a framework that is attentive to context and development. As articulated in *conceptual peace*, individuals' meaning making and identity in relation to peace must be understood as a

dynamic and iterative process. The challenge then is how to study them and how to apply findings to policy and practice quick enough to be relevant. Studying psychological phenomena amid dynamic social contexts is difficult, but cannot be ignored to richly comprehend and describe human development (Power & Velez, 2019).

Within this document, my attempts to address change and complexity have remained largely hidden in the analysis and discussion. Yet, the project has itself developed, changed, and involved iterative research efforts and changing positionality of myself as the researcher. I first began imagining this project as a high school teacher in Bogotá, Colombia. Sharing with students during classes, excursions, and social service trips, I witnessed how these young people were striving to make sense of all that was going on in their society and what it meant for their futures and the future of Colombia. From this foundation, both I and my thinking have changed. This personal development has played out in the research itself. I strove not only to be flexible and attentive to local contexts—talking informally with teachers, policymakers, students, and others, and collaborating with educational nonprofits and think tanks—but also to support others who, like myself when I was a teacher, sought to more effectively guide, encourage, and engage young Colombians. What I present in this dissertation is structured in a linear and progressive fashion; each part builds from the last in a forward development of the *conceptualized peace* framework and empirical study of Colombian adolescents. Nevertheless, the research process itself has been iterative. The analyses involved a continual dialogue with various actors in Colombia (students, policy makers, educators, colleagues) and close partnership with multiple Colombian scholars grappling with similar questions.

I end the dissertation with this reflection because I believe that just as *conceptualized peace* draws attention to the internal processes linking context and individuals' orientations

toward peace, I must draw attention to the process of the research itself. *Conceptualized peace* is an attempt to frame how people develop orientations toward peace because this understanding can be applied to prosocial ends, as I have tried to lay out in this chapter. Such a purpose requires nuance and recognition of one's goal and place as a researcher exploring the lived realities, experiences, and psychologies of human beings. To this end, my purpose with this is as a first step with what I hope will be continued development, as well as practical implications for peace studies, peace education, peaceful individuals, and peaceful societies.

APPENDIX A

LIST OF DISCOURSE SOURCES

Document Number	Source	Document Description	Date of Publication /Release
1	Colombian Senate (Press Release)	"Efforts to develop peace education law take root"	3/14/2014
2	AFP (News Org.)	"Santos announces his strategy to fulfill his promise of Peace in Colombia"	6/17/2014
3	Office of the President (Law)	"Cátedra de la Paz Law"	9/1/2014
4	Colombia Joven (Government Office Press Release)	"'The youth of today are going to be the true builders of peace': President Santos"	2/7/15
5	Colombia Joven (Government Office Press Release)	"President Santos puts forth plan for a law to make the 'Ser Pilo Paga' program permanent"	2/7/2015
6	Ministry of Education (Press Release)	"President Santos solidifies implementation of Cátedra de la Paz"	5/25/2015
7	Office of the President (Decree)	"Decree 1038: Implementation of Cátedra de la Paz"	5/25/2015
8	Editorial Santillana (Text of speech)	"Santos' speech at signing of the Cátedra de la Paz"	5/26/15
9	La Nacion (Newspaper)	"Youth should be protagonists in peace: Santos"	8/12/2015
10	Minuto de Dios (Press Release)	"Youth should energize themselves about the peace process, said President Santos"	8/12/2015

11	Office of the President (Text of Speech)	“Address of President Juan Manuel Santos about Ser Pilo Paga 2.0 and Ser Pilo Paga teacher programs”	8/17/15
12	Cartel Urbano (Media Org.)	"Why believe in the youth?"	10/2015
13	Office of the President (Text of Speech)	“Words of the President Juan Manuel Santos in the National Meeting of Youth for Peace: ‘Looking toward the postconflict era’”	11/12/2015
14	Radio Santa Fe (Media)	“Santos gives a class to Colombian youth about the Peace Process”	11/13/2015
15	RCN Radio (Media)	“Government awarded the best teachers and schools in the country”	11/24/15
16	Ministry of Education (Press release)	“Educating for Peace"	2016
17	Ministry of Education (Curriculum, Resource)	“General Orientations for the implementation of the Cátedra de la Paz”	1/2016
18	Ministry of Education (Curriculum, Resource)	“Proposal for achievements for peace to be enriched by Colombian Teachers”	1/2016
19	Ministry of Education (Curriculum, Resource)	“Didactic sequences for peace education to be enriched by Colombian teachers”	1/2016
20	El País (Newspaper)	“‘We are counting on youth to legitimize peace’: President Santos”	2/12/2016
21	Office of the President (Press Release)	“President Santos invites Colombian youth to defend peace”	2/20/16
22	Ministry of Education (Press Release)	Minister Gina Parody launches collection ‘Reading is the story of the peace generation’ and ‘Narrated territories”	3/21/16

23	Compartir Palabra Maestra (Nonprofit Press Release)	"'With peace in Colombia, we have more resources for education': Gina Parody"	3/31/16
24	Office of the President (Text of Speech)	"President Juan Manuel Santos' welcoming words to students in Ser Pilo Paga 2 program"	4/1/16
25	Colombia Joven (Government Office Press Release)	"Colombia Joven says Yes to the participation of youth in the peace plebiscite"	5/18/2016
26	Ministry of Education (Press Release)	"Minister Gina Parody invited the Secretaries of Education to be decisive actors in consolidating a Colombia in peace and with quality education"	6/29/16
27	Ministry of Education (Press Release)	"Ministry of Education began the second International Summer School"	07/12/2016
28	Office of the President (Text of Speech)	"President Juan Manuel Santos' words at the inauguration of the Educational Institution Villa Olimpica"	07/28/2016
29	Colombia Joven (Government Office Press Release)	"Message of the Director of Colombia Joven on International Youth Day"	8/12/2016
30	La Semana (Magazine Article)	"Children will paint peace in Colombia"	8/24/16
31	Office of the President (Text of Speech)	"President Juan Manuel Santos' words at the launching of the 'Paint a Colombia in peace' contest"	8/24/16
32	W Radio (Media)	"With peace there will be more money for education: Gina Parody"	8/25/16
33	Defensoría del Pueblo (Pamphlet)	"Questions and Answers about Peace and Human Rights (for Peace Education Law)"	10/2016

34	Colombia Joven (Government Office Press Release)	"'The objective should be the same: a Colombia in peace': Reyes Canon"	10/3/2016
35	Efe (Newspaper)	"Santos asks youth of Iberoamerica to take a role in peace"	10/28/2016
36	Office of the President (Text of Speech)	"President Juan Manuel Santos' words during the prize ceremony for the 'Paint a Colombia in Peace' contest"	11/10/16
37	El Espectador (Newspaper Article)	"'I hope you defend vigorously the resources for education': Santos to Minister Yaneth Giha"	11/16/16
38	Office of the President (Test of Speech)	"President Juan Manuel Santos' words during the bestowing of the National Award of Youth Service 2017"	6/28/17
39	El Nuevo Diario (Newspaper Article)	"Santos energizes youth to change the world with peace and without hate"	10/4/17

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

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

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

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

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

Section 1: Peace Process

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

Section 2: The Future

2) *The second part is about your future and that of your country.*

a. *How do you see the country in the future? For example, in fifteen years, what will the country be like?*
b. *Changing to the personal, how do you see yourself in fifteen years? What do you want to be and what do you want to do?*
c. *What is your dream?*

3) *Do you think that the country's future will affect yours? Will it affect you achieving your dream?*

Section 3: General Ideas

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

Section 4: Own Role in Peace building

5) *The fourth part is about how you see your own role in peace building in Colombia.*
    a. *Do you think that you are able to support peace in Colombia? Why or why not?*
    b. *In your community?*
    c. *What have you done in the last year to support peace?*

Thank you for participating in this interview.

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