

# NARRATIVES OF STUDENTS ABOUT VIOLENCE AND ARMED CONFLICT IN COLOMBIA TOOLS TO ASSESS THE DEVELOPMENT OF HISTORICAL THINKING

## NARRATIVAS DE ESTUDIANTES ACERCA DEL CONFLICTO ARMADO EN COLOMBIA. HERRAMIENTAS PARA EVALUAR EL DESARROLLO DEL PENSAMIENTO HISTÓRICO

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### Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to evaluate secondary school students' historical thinking abilities through their narratives about violence and armed conflict in Colombia. Two hundred and forty students wrote a narrative about violence and armed conflict in Colombia. A statistical analysis was carried out in three stages: a descriptive one to prepare a detailed account of the data, an analysis of Pearson correlations to establish distributions between the variances and significant relations between the variables, and an ordered Logit model to obtain probability estimates between the variables and identify the influence or relative effect of the factors on them. The results emphasize the importance of the teaching of history, mainly because the diverse views of historical processes have been a source of social division between groups and individuals with different historical experiences that have triggered confrontations when trying to impose a vision of the conflict as the only true one.

**Key words:** Teaching of history, secondary education, historical thinking and narratives.

### Resumen

*El propósito de este trabajo es evaluar las habilidades de pensamiento histórico de los estudiantes de secundaria a través de sus narraciones sobre la violencia y el conflicto armado en Colombia. Doscientos cuarenta estudiantes escribieron una narrativa sobre la violencia y el conflicto armado en Colombia. Se realizó un análisis estadístico en tres etapas: una descriptiva para elaborar un recuento detallado de los datos, un análisis de correlaciones de Pearson para establecer distribuciones entre las varianzas y relaciones significativas entre las variables, y un Modelo Logit ordenado para obtener estimaciones de probabilidad entre las variables e identificar la influencia o efecto relativo de los factores sobre ellas. Los resultados destacan la importancia de la enseñanza de la historia, principalmente porque las diversas visiones de los procesos históricos han sido fuente de división social entre grupos e individuos con experiencias históricas diferentes que han desencadenado enfrentamientos al tratar de imponer una visión del conflicto como la única verdadera.*

**Palabras claves:** Enseñanza de la historia, educación secundaria, pensamiento histórico y narrativas.

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This paper aims to answer two questions: How do secondary school students in Colombia narrate violence and armed conflict? What evidence of the development of historical thinking is there in these narratives? The purpose is to evaluate secondary school students' historical thinking abilities through their narratives about violence and armed conflict in Colombia.

We are mainly interested in establishing a dialogue with theoretical and methodological proposals that are being used in other contexts to evaluate the development of historical and narrative thinking and to identify categories of

analysis that may be useful to determine the use of historical concepts through narratives. Works by Rüsen (1992, 2006); Bage (1999); Barton (1996); VanSledright (2008); Sáiz and Gómez (2016) that follow this same direction are among the references that we used.

As indicated by Carr (1986); Carretero and Van Alphen (2014); and Ankersmith (2001), logical reasoning and narrative representation of the past have become key topics in works in which the development of historical thinking and historiographical discussions on the significance of the narrative in the historical discipline are being analysed.

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According to Cooper (2014) and Saíz and Gómez (2016), among others, there is an intimate relationship between historical knowledge and the construction of narratives.

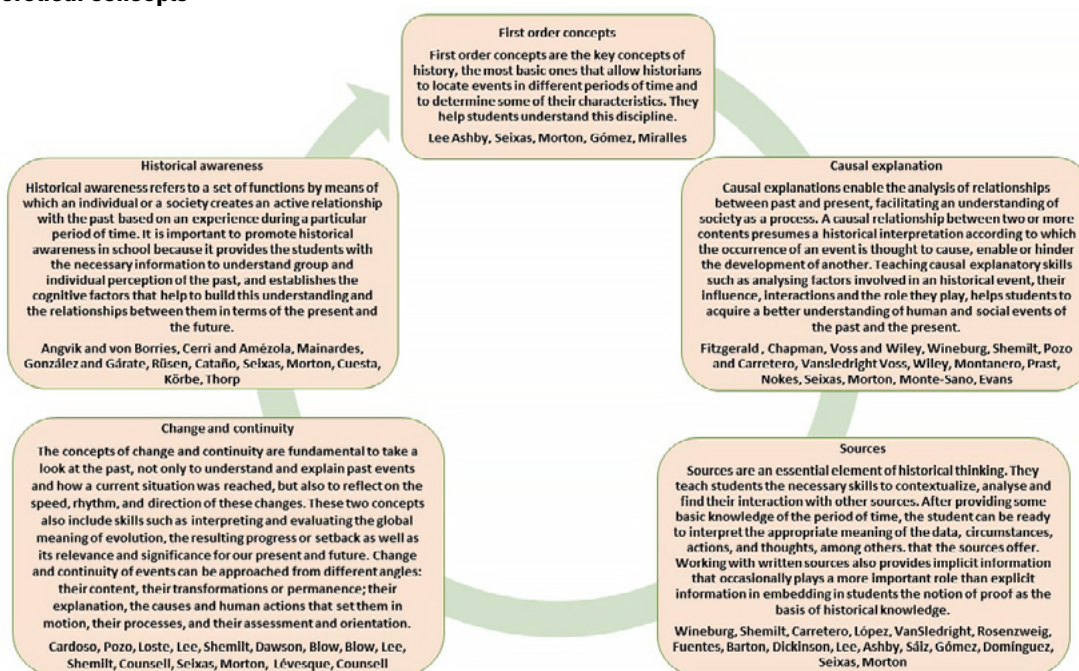
### Theoretical foundation: Narrative thinking and the teaching of history

The use of narratives has become an important instrument in the construction of temporality because in its structure and construction students must order and classify events temporally (Santisteban 1999, 2009, 2017; Pagès 2009). Rösen (2006, 2007) considers the narrative as a skill articulated with temporal experiences; he also defines narrative competence as the ability of human awareness to carry out procedures that give meaning to the past.

This work is part of the studies on the didactics of history focused on historical thinking. Although the approach is not new (Barton and Levstik 2004), it is undeniable that in recent years it has been revitalized and materialized thanks

to researchers who deal with this topic. As a result, the following conceptualization has been reached: the development of historical thinking is understood as a process that leads students to understand history by investigating and processing information from the past (Osborne 2003; Seixas 2011; González and Gárate 2017). One of the lines of work of researchers who have addressed historical thinking is the need for the teaching of history to advance from first order concepts to second order concepts. The former are the traditional ones that include dates and concepts; the latter are strategic contents that organize and explain those of the first order and that are related to the tools required to analyse the past and construct historical explanations (VanSledright 2011; Clark 2011; VanSledright and Limón 2006; Stearns, Seixas and Wineburg 2000; Lee 2005; Seixas and Morton 2013, Gómez and Miralles, 2017). In Figure 1 some of these concepts are defined theoretically and some authors who have addressed them are named.

Figure 1.  
Theoretical concepts



Narrative competence fulfils a function of orientation in today's life, since it provides the means to represent the past in a more understandable way and to acquire a perspective of a more solid future. In addition to the social representation of the past, it is important to remember that a narrative discourse implies the use of the temporal dimension, the establishment of causal links and a moral perspective. Therefore, narratives allow us to reflect on history as a construction (Barton and Levstik 2004; Bage 1999; Topolsky 2004). For Saíz and Gómez (2016), the analysis

of student narratives can allow us to assess the internal processes of historical knowledge. In addition, the stories provide information on the students' progression in learning and their ability to organize and understand the past. As established by McAdams (2006), structure of the narrative, substantiation, causality and paradoxes reflected in the composition are clear indicators of maturity of thought; as Bruner says (1997), we live most of our lives in a world built according to the rules and mechanisms of the narrative.

Narration is the most common form of representation of history; it is also an interpretation that confers temporal order, hierarchy, and ultimately, a meaning to historical facts. It has an evident value in the teaching of history since it is a representation of events, organized in a plot that corresponds to a real problem which involves human experience and not only abstract concepts (Salazar 2006; Plá 2005; Santisteban 2017; Lautier 1997). From Levstik's and Barton's (2008); Barton's and Levstik's (2004) perspective, history is essentially a narrative, and its teaching must begin with the most elementary forms of representation. They believe narratives promote the search for meaning by finding causal connections and examining relationships between historical facts.

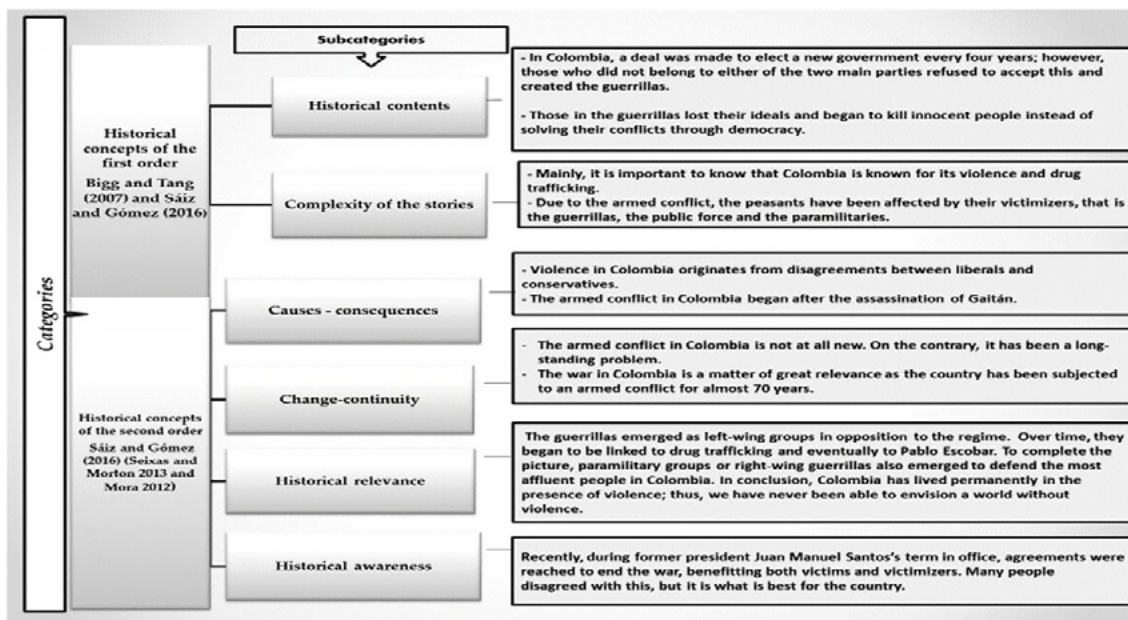
According to Hawking (1988); Santisteban and Pagès (2010); Rüsen (1992), narratives are a form of representation of history that help to understand the past, differentiate the past from the present, relate past, present and future as a creative activity of historical awareness through the notion of temporal change, and connect human activity. In this same train of thought, it can be stated that narrative thinking is the mental operation that allows us to organize and give meaning to the historical past. The analysis of social representations through narratives is fundamental to determine stereotyped social representations, to improve the teaching of history and the understanding of social phenomena (Klein 2013; Carretero & Atorresi 2008; Souto 2014; Rüsen 2006; Pavié 2011; Ricoeur 1995).

As part of their research Carretero and Bermúdez (2012); Wertsch (2004); Gunn (2011); González and Carretero (2013); Carretero and López (2010); Barton and Levstik (2004); Barton (2010), have emphasized that the analysis of narratives in the didactics of history is becoming increasingly important. The development of narrative competence is an indicator of the level of learning achieved by students. The influence of the cultural theory and the linguistic turn in history has led to increase the attention given to discourse analysis. In this context, the concept of master narrative schemes raised by Wertsch (2004), has also gained importance. These national narratives constitute a cultural mediation tool created and distributed among the members of a social group. According to Carretero and López (2010); Carretero and Bermúdez (2012); González and Carretero (2013), a powerful narrative mediation from the curriculum, textbooks, and non-formal educational spheres exists. Since it conditions the contents of historical discourse, an analysis of narrative production cannot be separated from these "mediating" elements. At the same time, the stories provide information on the progression in the students' learning process and their ability to organize and understand the past.

**Methodology**

Historical thinking skills were evaluated by means of three analysis categories: the pattern of argumentation and constituent elements of the narratives, substantive or first-order concepts, and second-order concepts or meta-concepts. Each one was subdivided in different subcategories as can be seen in the figure 2.

Figure 2. Categories and Subcategories Analysed.



## Context and Participants

### Context

In order to give context to the teaching of history in Colombia, it should be noted that history, geography and the Political Constitution are part of the social sciences field of study and must be taught integrally and not as separate subjects, as established in the General Law of Education published in 1994. Since then, curricular guidance documents have been published such as guidelines and standards, curricular objectives, and basic learning rights. All these documents suggest that the social sciences currently face the challenge of incorporating new dimensions of human life such as violence and environmental and cultural problems that go beyond the interpretative frameworks of the disciplines. Thus, they require the integration of knowledge, of transdisciplinary views that offer contextualized response to the problems and demands of society (Ministry of National Education 2002).

From the State's perspective, the aforementioned curricular guidance documents contain the parameters of what every Colombian child and youth should know and do to achieve the level of quality expected during his/her passage through primary and secondary education in the social sciences field (Ministry of National Education 2004). Additionally, it must be noted that the Colombian educational system consists of early childhood education, pre-school education, basic education (five grades of primary and four grades of secondary), high school education (2 years, earning a high school degree), and higher education. This work was carried out with 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade students (the last 2 grades of secondary education).

The time period selected for this article corresponds to the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the first decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, which according to authors like Arias (2015) begins in the 1920s and continues to this day. The importance of investigating what and how three historical events of this period—violence, drug trafficking and the armed conflict—are taught in Colombian schools lies in the fact that knowledge of these events is essential to understand what has been, not infrequently, a traumatic and violent historical process.

The armed conflict refers to confrontations that have taken place from the 1940s to the present day, as a result of the intimate relationship between social conflict and political violence. According to Torrijos (2015) it is an irregular conflict, a confrontation that does not arise in a conventional manner between several States but occurs asymmetrically between the Colombian State, the guerrilla and the paramilitary groups. Concern about the Colombian armed conflict

has been largely activated not only by the great number of human victims but also by the confrontations concerning social projects linked to the conflict in which there are profound discrepancies regarding access and land use (Fajardo & Pizarro 2015).

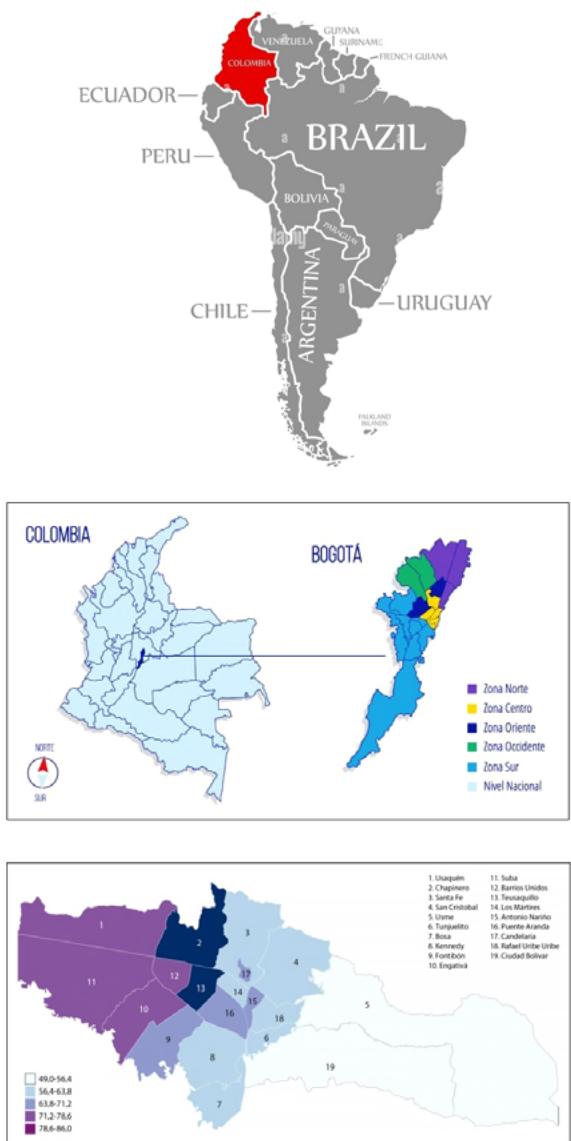
### Participants

The selection of the educational institutions whose students wrote the narratives was divided into two stages: First, from a list available on the District Board of Education website, a random selection of educational institutions in Bogotá was carried out. An invitation to participate in the research project following an explanation of its objectives and scopes was sent to these institutions. Secondly, the institutions that expressed their interest in participating in the research were contacted and professors were randomly chosen. The 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade students who study the topics of the narratives were briefed about the purpose of the project and the structure of the narratives. Subsequently, questions and concerns were answered, and once the students showed interest in participating in the narrative construction exercise, consents were signed by students and parents, thus complying with the ethical requirements and procedures of an academic investigation.

In order to verify the reliability of our analysis, a statistical power test was conducted for the calculation of the sample. The results indicated that with a statistical power of 95%, an error rate of 5%, an average in the correlations of 0.3, a lower critical value  $r$  of 0.1541491, an upper critical value  $r$  of 0.1541491, and a critical value  $r$  of 0.1541491, a sample of 115 participants was needed. The work was carried out with 240 narratives of 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grades students of three coed public educational institutions in Bogota, Colombia.

A non-stratified probabilistic sampling was implemented since all 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grades groups of all schools had the possibility of being chosen. A random selection of ten secondary schools in Bogota was made from a list of 383. These ten schools were invited to be part of the research. Once three of them accepted, prior commitment of socializing the results obtained by the students, a group from the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grades from each school was chosen at random. These educational institutions are located in the Ciudad Bolivar, Tunjuelito and Santa Fe neighborhoods. (see maps 1, 2, and 3) The students who wrote the narratives are between 15 and 17 years old, and their families belong to strata 1, 2 and 3. Socioeconomic strata are mentioned in the context of the article as information to help to describe them. However, this stratification was taken as a reference for the evaluation of the narratives that were focused on historical thinking skills.





Socioeconomic stratification is a classification by strata of residential real estate that receives public services. It is mainly carried out to charge differentially, by strata, domiciliary public services to allow for the allocation of subsidies and the collection of taxes in this area. In this way, those who have a greater economic capacity pay more for public services so that those in lower strata can pay their bills. Social stratification is also used to plan public investment and implement social programs such as expansion and improvement of public infrastructure services, roads, health and sanitation, education and recreation in the areas that require them the most. In addition, property tax rates are charged differentially by stratum and land use planning is encouraged (DANE 2006).

**Instrument and information collection**

To collect information on the development of historical and narrative thinking skills of students in the last two grades of secondary school, a written exercise was required. Students were asked to hand in a historical narrative on violence and armed conflict in Colombia. The sentence was taken as the unit of analysis of the narratives, and a coding procedure of each sentence was carried out. A sentence could be encoded in several categories. The students had approximately 75 minutes of a class session to write the narratives. The historical contents requested in the narrative were fundamental to understand the perceptions and knowledge that these students have about the recent history of Colombia (Arias 2018). In order to carry out a systematic analysis of the aforementioned categories, a rubric was drawn up containing the categories, subcategories and the evaluation criteria.

In order to determine the reliability of the instrument in the evaluation of narratives, 10% of these were chosen at random (24). Student responses were rated from 0 to 3, by three qualified researchers (two history teachers and a qualitative researcher with experience in educational settings). The inter-class coefficient (ICC) was used to determine the inter-rater reliability, which was of 0,707 (CI 0,632 - 0.769).

The validity of the instrument for collecting information was based on the work of (Sáiz 2016; Monte-sano 2010; VanSledright 2008; Cooper 2014, Carretero & Bermúdez 2012; Barton & Levstik 2004). Additionally, two researchers, one from Colombia and one from Spain, evaluated the data collection instrument, giving each category an average of 3 on a scale from 1 to 4. They also made some qualitative suggestions to be applied before the final implementation.

**Systematization and information analysis**

The systematization and statistical analysis of the information is divided into three parts: the first refers to a detailed description of the data from which frequencies and percentages were obtained. The second uses Pearson correlations which allowed to establish distributions between the variances and significant relationships between the categories being studied. The third is a more forceful interpretation of the students' probability of attaining a higher level in the argumentation pattern and constituent elements of a narrative based on a better performance in meta-concepts. For this purpose, an ordered logit model was created, as shown in equation 1, where  $Y_{ij}$  represents the probability that the student will reach level  $j$  in the response subcategory  $Y$ , which as mentioned above, will be the argumentation pattern and constituent elements of a narrative. These are "Clarity in terminology", "Treatment of concepts", and

“Historical contents”, as applicable. The *j* ordered levels will be: 0, 1, 2 and 3. The explanatory subcategories will be: Causes-consequences, Change-continuity, Historical relevance and Historical awareness. In this way, the coefficients  $\beta_1$ ,  $\beta_2$ ,  $\beta_3$  and  $\beta_4$  estimate the change in the ordered probability of the response subcategory given an increase in one level of each subcategory. Finally,  $\epsilon_{(i,j)}$  corresponds to the error term.

$$(Y_{ij}) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{ Causes}_{i,j} + \beta_2 \text{ Change}_{i,j} + \beta_3 \text{ Relevance}_{i,j} + \beta_4 \text{ Awareness}_{i,j} + \epsilon_{(i,j)}$$

A qualitative analysis of the students’ narratives was carried out to complement and give more meaning to the quantitative results. For this analysis, a matrix was designed that included the skills that were evaluated in the narrative (see Figure 1); the values ranged from 0 to 3, depending on the performance level (see Appendix 1, 2 and 3). The qualitative data analysis was based on research related to the development of narrative skills in historical

education (Barca and Schmidt 2013; Barton 1996, Carretero and Van Alphen 2014; Barca 2005, 2010; Sáiz and López -Facal, 2014; Rösen 2006). To analyse the coding, the methodology described by Saldaña (2009), which consists of two research cycles, was used. In the first one, a descriptive coding was performed since the information with comparable elements between both schools and a coding of processes when performing an analysis of the activity were available. In the second cycle, a theoretical coding was implemented to analyse the classification of the first cycle.

**Results**

**Descriptive.**

The Evidence of Historical Thinking sample analysed indicates that in 94% of the narratives there were no references. Only 5% of the narratives used a sentence for references such as author, title, and number of materials to corroborate the central arguments of the narratives. Only 1% of the sample used two sentences to make historical references.

Table 1.  
**Evidence of historical thinking in narratives.**

Number of sentences	Clarity in Terminology		Causes Consequences		Change-Continuity		Historical Relevance		Historical Awareness	
0	225	94%	114	47,50%	124	51,70%	44	18,30%	45	18,80%
1	12	5%	83	34,60%	87	36,30%	88	36,70%	101	42,10%
2	2	1%	35	14,60%	24	10,00%	58	24,20%	60	25,00%
3	1	0%	5	2,10%	5	2,10%	27	11,30%	25	10,40%
4	0	0%	2	0,80%	0	0,00%	17	7,10%	7	2,90%
More than 4	0	0%	1	0,40%	0	0,00%	6	2,50%	2	0,80%
Total number of text	240		240		240		240		240	

Own elaboration.

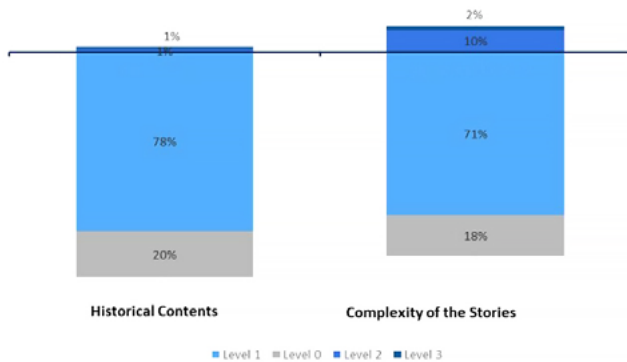
At least 21%, three sentences record causes and consequences in an integrative way; 0.8% uses three sentences comprehensively and hierarchically and 0.4% more than four for a network of multiple causes and consequences.

In 51% of the narratives there are no sentences mentioning the Changes and Continuities that the historical process brought about in society. 36% use one sentence to indicate change and continuity; 10% use at least two sentences to explain these processes, and only 2.1% use three sentences with temporalities of changes and continuities. In 18% of the narratives, there is no reference of the Historical Relevance phenomenon. Only 36% includes at least one sentence mentioning this phenomenon. 24 % include at least two sentences. In 11.3%, at least three sentences have elements regarding transcendence of historical relevance.

7.1% report in at least four sentences about the relevance of this phenomenon, and only in 2.5%, more than four sentences are used to indicate historical relevance.

Additionally, in 18.8% of the narratives no value judgment is made on Historical Awareness. 42.1% of the sample includes only one sentence that alludes to historical awareness. 25% of the narratives mention in at least two sentences implicit judgment of historical awareness. In 10.4%, there are at least three sentences that determine characteristics of historical awareness. Only 2.9% use four and 0.8% use more than four sentences to indicate explicit ethical value judgments about this historical phenomenon. Two subcategories were used to evaluate the first-order historical concepts category: Historical Contents and Complexity of the Stories, as can be seen in Figure 3.

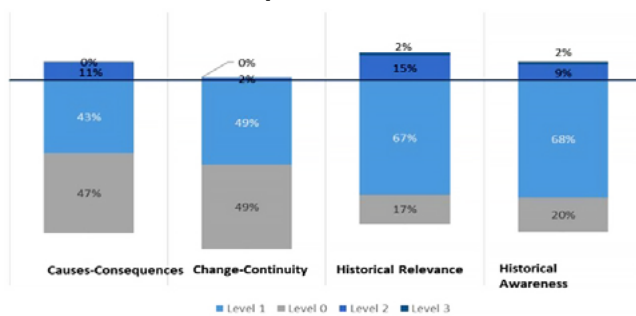
**Figure 3.**  
**Historical concepts of the first order.**



Own elaboration.

The results for Historical Contents indicate that 78% of the students have a level zero; 20% a level one, 1% a level two and 1% a level three. For Complexity of the Stories, 71% have a level zero; 18% a level one, 10% a level two, and only 2% a level three.

**Figure 4.**  
**Historical concepts of the second order.**

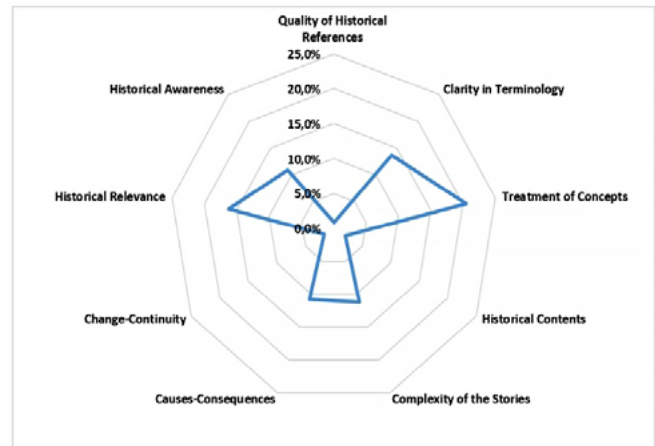


Own elaboration

From the second-order concepts category, four subcategories were evaluated. In the first one, Causes and Consequences, 43% of the students have a level zero, 47% a level one, 11% a level two, and 0% a level three. The second, Change and Continuity indicates that 49% of the students have a level zero and 49% a level one; 2% have a level two, and no students have a level three. In the third, Historical Relevance, the results are lower than the previous two: 67% of the students have a level zero; 17%, a level one; 15% a level two, and 2% a level three. In the last subcategory, Historical Awareness, the results indicate that 68%

of the students have a level zero; 20% a level one; 9% a level two, and 2% a level three. Figure 5 is the result of an exercise in which the number of students in the two highest levels of all categories was added up. It corroborates the trends presented in Figures 3 and 4, regarding the participants' low level of historical knowledge.

**Figure 5.**  
**Students' level of knowledge and construction of historical narratives**



According to the data, the subcategories with fewer students with a satisfactory performance are: Quality of Historical References with 0.8%, Change and Continuity with 1.7%, and Historical Contents with 2.1%. These are followed by Causes and Consequences and Historical Awareness with a 10% and an 8% respectively, Complexity of the Stories with 11.3%, and Clarity in Terminology with 13.8%. The two subcategories with the highest number of students with satisfactory results are: Historical Relevance with 16.3% and Treatment of Concepts with 20.4%.

**Analysis of correlations.**

In order to determine the possible influence between knowledge learning and skills development of one subcategory with other subcategories, a Pearson correlation analysis was performed. Table 2 (below) shows the correlation matrix. The correlation coefficient oscillates between -1 and 1, where -1 is a perfect negative correlation and 1 a perfect positive correlation. The confidence levels used are of 95% (\*) and 99% (\*\*). In both cases, there is a significant correlation.

Table 2.  
Correlations between analysis categories. Own elaboration

	Media and standard Deviation ( )	Min.	Max.	Quality of historical references	Clarity in Terminology	Treatment of Concepts	Historical Contents	Complexity of the Stories	Causes-Consequences	Change-Continuity	Historical Relevance
Quality of historical references	0.06(0.31)	0	3	1							
Clarity in Terminology	1.05(0.615)	0	3	0.1637*	1						
Treatment of concepts	1.12(0.66)	0	3	0.1523*	0.8579**	1					
Historical Contents	0.82(0.46)	0	3	0.0757	0.6105**	0.6127**	1				
Complexity of the Stories	0.95(0.58)	0	3	0.1357*	0.8103**	0.7917**	0.7217**	1			
Causes-Consequences	0.64 (0.67)	0	2	-0.0745	0.4056**	0.4482**	0.2988**	0.4357*	1		
Change-Continuity	0.52 (0.53)	0	2	0.0032	0.4495**	0.5067**	0.4634**	0.4615*	0.3535**	1	
Historical Relevance	1.01 (0.62)	0	3	0.2414**	0.6018**	0.5737**	0.4532**	0.6137*	0.2590**	0.3032**	1
Historical Awareness	0.924 (0.56)	0	3	0.0706	0.3793**	0.3443**	0.1305*	0.3294*	0.0302	0.1804**	0.1724**

Pearson correlation  $r$   $p < 0,05$  \*  $p < 0,01$  \*\*



Table 2 indicates that the creation of a high Complexity of the Stories is significantly related to the appropriation of terms, the Treatment of Concepts, and the knowledge of Historical Contents. Strong correlations are also identified between the subcategory of Historical Relevance and the subcategories of Clarity of Terminology and Complexity of the Stories. The subcategories Causes-Consequences and Change-Continuity have a significant correlation, although of a lesser magnitude with those of Treatment of Contents, Clarity in Terminology, Treatment of Concepts and Complexity of the Stories. Low, although significant correlations can be found between the subcategories Quality of Historical References and Historical Awareness with respect to the rest of the subcategories analysed.

**Ordered Logit Model**

In order to simplify the interpretation, the marginal effects of second-order concepts on each of the first-order concepts, as described in the methodology, are presented below. Table 3 shows that a change in any first order concept decreases the probability of being at the lowest level in terms of terminology and increases the probability of being at level two. Specifically, the most relevant subcategory of second order concepts, due to the magnitude of the change in probability is Historical Relevance. An increase of level one of this subcategory decreases 7.72 percentage points (pp) the probability of being at level zero of Clarity in Terminology and increases 7.68 pp the probability of being at level two. No change of level in second order concepts is related to a higher probability of reaching the highest level (three).

**Table 3.**  
**Marginal effects of the second order concepts on Clarity in terminology.**

Clarity in terminology	Level 0	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Causes-Consequences	-0.0357** (0.0133)	-0.00178 (0.0127)	0.0355** (0.0135)	0.00199 (0.00123)
Historical Relevance	-0.0772*** (0.0212)	-0.00384 (0.0275)	0.0768*** (0.0232)	0.00431 (0.00267)
Historical Awareness	-0.0428** (0.0150)	-0.00213 (0.0152)	0.0425** (0.0160)	0.00239 (0.00144)
N	240	240	240	240

Standard errors in parentheses  
\*\* p<0.01 \*\* p<0.05 \* p<0.1

Own elaboration.

Treatment of Concepts is the second first order concept analysed. As Table 4 indicates, an increase in the level of any of the second order concepts decreases the probability of being at the lower levels (0 and 1) and increases the probability of being at the expected level (2). Historical Relevance is the subcategory with the greatest influence since a positive change in the level is reflected in a decrease of 6.10 pp on the probability of being at level zero and an increase of 15.8 pp on the probability of being at level two. However, no change is significantly associated with an increase in the probability of being at level three.

**Table 4.**  
**Marginal effects of second order concepts on Treatment of Concepts.**

Treatment of concepts	Level 0	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Causes-Consequences	-0.0359** (0.0127)	-0.0594* (0.0233)	0.0928*** (0.0274)	0.00242 (0.00149)
Change-Continuity	-0.0583*** (0.0168)	-0.0965** (0.0357)	0.151*** (0.0365)	0.00394 (0.00248)
Historical Relevance	-0.0610*** (0.0173)	-0.101** (0.0364)	0.158*** (0.0365)	0.00413 (0.00254)
Historical Awareness	-0.0337** (0.0126)	-0.0557* (0.0239)	0.0871** (0.0291)	0.00227 (0.00138)
N	240	240	240	240

Standard errors in parentheses  
\*\*\* p<0.01 \*\* p<0.05 \* p<0.1

Own elaboration.

Finally, the changes in the subcategory of Historical Contents, as a result of changes in the level of second order concepts were analysed. Table 5 indicates, on the one hand, that a change in Historical Awareness has no relation to the subcategory analysed, and also, that no change in the other subcategories is associated with a greater probability of being at the expected levels (2 and 3). On the other hand, the subcategory with the highest association is Change-Continuity. An increase of a level in Change-Continuity is associated both with a decrease of 16.2 pp on the probability of being at the lowest level as with an increase of 15.7 pp in the probability of being at level one. Causes-Consequences and Historical Relevance show a similar behaviour, although the correlation is lower.

**Table 5.**  
**Marginal effects of the second-order concepts on Historical Contents.**

Historical contents	Level 0	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Change-Continuity	-0.162*** (0.0374)	0.157*** (0.0363)	0.00333 (0.00265)	0.00158 (0.00147)
Change-Continuity	-0.162*** (0.0374)	0.157*** (0.0363)	0.00333 (0.00265)	0.00158 (0.00147)
Historical Relevance	-0.139*** (0.0366)	0.135*** (0.0358)	0.00286 (0.00223)	0.00135 (0.00126)
Historical Awareness	-0.0325 (0.0234)	0.0315 (0.0229)	0.000667 (0.000609)	0.000316 (0.000313)
N	240	240	240	240

Standard errors in parentheses

\*\*\* p<0.01 \*\* p<0.05 \* p<0.1

Own elaboration.

As a conclusion of the results, we can state that the marginal effects of second order concepts on first order concepts are aligned with the correlation analysis previously exposed. Hence, Historical relevance is the subcategory with the greatest influence on the others. According to Cosme and Millares (2017), historical relevance implies the ability to decide who or what is worth being remembered and studied, to understand the social impact of the process or historical event, and its particular importance in the context where it is being taught. These are the links between the past, the present, and the students' interest in historical knowledge.

**Discussion and Conclusion**

We believe that narrative thinking is a way of understanding the social and historical reality (Carretero et al. 2013; Barton 1996), and also that narrative competence implies an ability to have temporary experiences and a skill to learn and understand the past according to the present (Rüsen 1992). With this in mind, the contents of the narratives evaluated in Table 1 suggest that a large number of students have not acquired elements to help them orient their actions vis-à-vis current events. This indicates that their stance on social, political, and economic conditions might be more influenced by information from the television and social networks than by a construction of historical sense and reflections from the history or social science class.

As Barton and Levstik (2004), Alridge (2006); Ricoeur (1995); Vanslrdrigh (2008) have pointed out, the development of narrative skills is important as a powerful tool to understand history. In the context of this article, fragments of the students' narratives were analysed according to the methodology

(Figure 2), and a global reading of these narratives was also performed. This global reading reveals the importance of strengthening the development of historical thinking.

This narrative uses descriptive information with a linear arrangement; it highlights the effects of violent conflict, acknowledges the presence of political actors in the war and uses various terms to describe violent events. It not only discloses topics usually seen in the classrooms such as the Bananeras Massacre of 1928, but also other acts of violence widely reported by the media. The student concludes by revealing the government's involvement in crimes and acts of violence.

The student in this narrative uses terms and concepts from the social sciences to describe the historical phenomenon. He makes a simple description of the chronology of the subject, periodizing various events, and presents some motivations that drove actors to get involved in the armed conflict. The narrative also highlights some elements relevant to the historical process: *drug trafficking, displacement, and demobilization*.

In this order of ideas, the same difficulties in the construction of causal explanations of a structural nature based on social, political and economic factors that have been identified in American and Spanish students are present in the narratives of their peers in Colombia. It is also noteworthy that these students ignore the impact of collective action on historical facts. They seem to have the unfounded idea that processes of change may be the result of deliberate acts by single individuals. Examples of this are the multiple allusions to the importance and significance that political leaders Jorge Eliecer Gaitán and Álvaro Uribe Vélez have in the country's recent history, as evidenced in the following fragments of students' narratives:

"At a time of great violence, a man named Gaitán was running for president; it was around 1948 and there were many riots. One day, in the Plaza de Bolívar, Gaitán was shot in the chest because they did not want him to be president. But with Gaitán's death, violence was unleashed throughout the country." Narrative code 1040

"I can tell you about the famous bogotazo in 1948 when the best of men was killed. He had the best ideas and proposals for us the people, and they killed Gaitán. Then there was chaos, which is still present today. For example, there is the case of the "false positives" when a few years ago Uribe killed many innocent young people in the municipality of Soacha." Narrative code 1051

It is important to add that the recent polarized environment between Colombian left and right factions regarding the armed conflict and the peace process expressed in politics, institutions, media and daily life activities, have also permeated the perceptions of the students that participated in the research. The influence of this polarization is evident in the narratives of these 15 to 17 year-old teenagers who, true to their age, manifest radical postures favouring one or the other side, as can be seen in the following fragments:

"The increase in violence and illegality are due to governments like Álvaro Uribe Velez's and his "false positives". Groups of underprivileged young men from Soacha, a neighboring municipality of Bogotá, were promised jobs and income and instead they were taken to the mountains where the armed forces killed and dressed them as guerrillas to present them as combat kills to the media. Drugs, corruption, violence, and lack of work, education and investment, lack of attention to the rural sectors...these are some of the reasons of the violence and sadness that make up the history of Colombia." Narrative cod 3025

"The guerrilla is guilty of my country's conflict. The paramilitaries were created so that the people would stop paying for extortions and would feel more secure. The guerrillas were the ones who recruited children, forced women to abort, kidnapped people and put them in cages like animals; they committed massacres and they attacked the police and the army. They are the ones responsible for the war. They are the violent ones." Narrative code 4014

Few students maintain a moderate position in debates. Most of them are in either one of the extremes. According to VanSledright (2008); Carretero and González (2008), the biases in historical understanding, in this case, ideological biases of the students, are clearly manifested in their difficulty to consider points of view from other perspectives. These authors believe that assuming a discourse, expressing and defending it as unique and true, indicates deficiency in the development of historical thinking. Students have not developed the capacity to take into account different versions of a fact, which is a fundamental component of historical literacy.

The empirical work allows us to infer that the difficulties encountered by the students when constructing a historical narrative (Table 1) seem to be related to the difficulties that they have in both first and second order concepts (Figures 2 and 3). The difficulties mentioned seem to be related to the prevalence of traditional expository methods, to an abuse in the use of the textbook, and to an insufficient presence of procedural contents and application of skills using a variety of resources, materials and evaluation instruments in history and social sciences classes (Palacios 2018; Gómez 2014).

The difficulties in developing complex causal explanations, determining the existence and impact of historical changes, constructing arguments about the relevance of phenomena, and making value judgments about these phenomena, evidenced in the students' narratives, can be determined by a traditional way of teaching history in which historical knowledge is linked to the memorization of facts, concepts, data, and past events. This allows us to suggest that there is a need, also expressed by the Colombian students with whom we worked, to learn in history and social sciences class, relevant strategies to build knowledge and skills, in order to answer historical questions and have a more comprehensive understanding of the past (Barton 2008; Lee 2005; VanSledright 2014).

To achieve the aforementioned statement, we must be aware that to develop historical thinking skills a change in strategies and skills is required. Tables 2, 3, 4, and 5 in which correlations were made of Pearson and Logit Models, reveal the need for a parallel and articulated development of the skills as Stearns, Seixas and Wineburg 2000; Monte-Sano 2010; Lévesque 2008; Gómez, and Millares 2017; Bel, Colomer and Valls 2018; Wineburg, Martin, and Montesano 2013; Seixas and Morton 2013; Henríquez y Muñoz 2017; Wineburg 2001 and Lopez -Facal 2013, indicate. The skills for historical thinking imply knowing how to interpret, how to put forward and how to debate historical facts. These require a solid understanding of what society is and how it works, how human relationships were generated and have been modified over the years, and what the consequences of individual or collective actions are and have been.

The low levels of learning of most of the students that participated in the research, as shown by the extension of the narratives and mainly by the scarce historical thinking skills, indicate, as Arias suggests (2018). The need for outlining proposals on how to address in Colombian classrooms the teaching of the recent troubled past, its dynamics, wars, victims and victimizers. This topic is fundamental because, as Arias (2018) emphasizes, there are only a few studies on what really happens in Colombian classrooms regarding the handling of issues about violence in the country. Nor are there many studies on how to assume the pedagogical issue of transmitting contents about war in contexts in which violence is experienced directly or indirectly.

Toledo, Magendzo and Gazmuri 2011; Moncada, Rivera and Aguirre 2013; Barton and McCully 2012; McCully and Clarke 2016; McCully and Emerson 2014; Toledo, Magendzo, Gutiérrez, Iglesias, López-Facal 2015, and Montañares 2017) have worked on the role of teaching history in other contexts in which there have been situations of conflict and violence, for example in Northern Ireland and Chile. They have emphasized the important role played by schools

especially when the opinions on historical processes are a source of social division between groups and individuals with different historical experiences that force them into confrontations when trying to impose a vision of the conflict as the only true one.

Although much of the reasoning of this article is focused on assessing the role of the school in the teaching of history, this does not mean that the influence that other media and forms of socialization have on the students' perceptions and therefore on their narratives is ignored or goes unnoticed. Authors such as Bolufer, Gomis and Hernández (2015) have studied both the impact of media such as the cinema, television and the internet on the social construction of a story about the past as well as the use of audio-visual products as a strategy to approach native receivers immersed in a culture of the image.

Both in Colombia as in many other countries, an increasing number of series, films, soap operas and documentaries focusing on historical events are being produced. Although it has generally been considered that these audio-visual productions lack rigor, mix fiction with reality, provide solutions to the problems that arise through love stories, and are based on fictional characters, there are people who have stated that these productions contribute to the historical account through a more vivid and effective representation of the everyday reality in which the action takes place (Montero and Paz 2013).

In the Colombian context, Jiménez, Infante and Cortés (2012) emphasize that social science school textbooks are not the sole carriers of the official memory and the country's painful past. There are other sources that the teacher can use to sensitize both the memory and the conflict, such as movies, films, television, journalistic documentaries, and organizations defending Human Rights, through which situations from the past are relived. The creative use of these sources can sensitize memory, facilitate analysis and generate a type of critical narrative regarding the painful national experience.

We must add that in the intensified political polarization that has taken place in the country in recent years regarding those involved in the armed conflict and the peace process, the media have intervened very actively. The influence it exerts, like that of other means of socialization such as the family, religious and peer groups may have much to do with the polarization present in the country as well as in the narratives of some of the students. In this regard, Villa et al. (2020) claims that in Colombia, the media impact the construction of social beliefs, narratives about the past, and collective emotional orientations about the enemy that exacerbate the political polarization and legitimize armed

solutions to the social and political conflict that has existed in Colombia for over five decades.

After a reflexive reading of the data analysed in this paper, we can state that a deficient teaching of history can lead to fuel the armed conflict by betting on silence about the events that have occurred, hiding different truths, and imposing one vision as the only true one.

Consequently, it is important to highlight the importance of training history and social science teachers in didactic and pedagogical strategies so that they can teach about topics related to political violence, armed conflict, historical awareness and long-term processes as classroom topics. (Arias 2018; Pantoja 2017; Álvarez & Coudannes 2017). It would be very useful for Colombian teachers to be actively involved in the use of materials such as "Daños" ("Damage") or "La Caja de Herramientas" ("The Toolbox") and in the training sponsored by the National Center for Historical Memory.

The objective of both "Daños" and "La Caja de Herramientas", published by the National Center of Historical Memory of Colombia in 2015 and 2018, is to have schools analysing the impacts of the Colombian armed conflict. They intend for students to learn peace and unlearn war based on the archives of human rights and historical memory and conflict, with a personal commitment, dialogue and reflection by the young children and adults who participate in educational activities. This material, made available to Colombian history and social science teachers, aims to provide tools for students to understand the complexity and magnitude of the damages and impacts of the Colombian armed conflict.

It is pertinent to state that research results such as those presented here show the need to establish a dialogue between the research field of memory pedagogies and that of history teaching. A constructive dialogue between these two fields of knowledge can contribute a lot to the teaching of social sciences in Colombia because it can favor a better approach to controversial and painful topics around facts of violence which students could reflect on both the uses and the construction of memory and history from the individual and the collective (Miguel and Sanchez 2018). In this order of ideas, the importance of the relationship history memory the school environment is not limited to a reflection, the challenge of the work of the school is to move from such reflection to the orientation of daily practice. For history gives reality a temporal direction, an orientation that can intentionally guide action through the agency of historical memory, thus favoring the expansion of the frame of reference of individuals and encompassing a broader temporal and social plane (Rüsen 2005, 2015).

In congruence with the above, and in line with the perspective of Siciliani and Barrios (2019) according to which the pedagogy of memory becomes a politically committed action in favor of a model of society that does justice to the victims and the forgotten of the history of progress. It is worth highlighting this contextual aspect of memory because it turns the pedagogy of memory into a political action that returns to the educational act its political dimension Siciliani and Barrios (2019). Therefore, teachers who dabble in memory pedagogy, do not remain entrenched in a neutral stance, they engage in an ethical and political stance around issues such as violence, war and the historical causes that have provoked and perpetuated them (Palacios et al. 2022; Zamora et al. 2016; Siciliani and Barrios 2019). Consequently, the work of teachers from the pedagogy of memory leads to an awareness of the harsh reality of the Colombian armed conflict, which prevents both teachers and students from remaining indifferent to the challenge posed to the country by a teaching of the memory of the armed conflict that also contributes to education for peace and social justice (Palacios and Rodríguez 2023).

Thus, the results of the dialogue study with the proposals of Benítez and Mora (2021) on the need that from the school, but mainly, from the reflection and action of teachers, we understand the need for a public policy of teaching about the memory of the victims and the armed conflict. Therefore, the articulation between the pedagogies of memory and the teaching of history is a matter that touches different instances, social organizations, public and private entities that must converge in a critical and analytical environment. In other words, teaching a fluid and constructive dialogue between the teaching of history and the pedagogies of memory would contribute to strengthen reconciliation processes that also promote justice and that, instead of leading to definitive, total and final truths, encourage reflection, study and analysis (Benítez and Mora 2021).

Likewise, the use of information sources such as the report of the Comisión de la Verdad (2022) could also be part of the materials to be worked on in the classroom; this report could be an aid to identify contexts, actors and damages caused by the conflict. In the same line, proposed activities such as the days called: "The school embraces the truth", could be oriented to the development of historical thinking skills and the understanding of the present time, so that both substantive and methodological knowledge (Gómez & Millares 2017), have a place to understand what has happened with the historical process of the Colombian armed conflict.

However, it is necessary that these proposals and initiatives dialogue with the curricular guidelines issued by the Ministerio de Educación Nacional (2002, 2006), with a view to the

construction or strengthening of guidelines for the coming decades, which guide the pedagogical practices of primary and secondary school teachers, as well as the learning and reflections that children and young people build in their passage through primary and secondary education, where controversial and long-lasting topics such as the historical process of the Colombian armed conflict are present in the official curriculum.

The narratives analysed in this article can also be approached from different research angles, such as the political anthropology of remembering and forgetting proposed by Riaño (2006) in his work on youth and violence in Medellín, Colombia. According to Riaño, memory is a place from which the cultural dimensions of violence can be examined; the practices of memory amongst the youth provide a privileged perspective from which reflections on more encompassing issues regarding struggles of memory and violence in Colombian society can be made. Thus, for Riaño (2006), through the exploration of the practices of memory, the contradictory and changing positions from which the youth give meaning to violence can be made visible. In this order of ideas, as emphasized by Riaño (2006), analysing youth narratives can show some of the connections between macro and microprocesses, culture and politics, while revealing the paradoxes and complexities faced by those who live in the midst of violence.

Riaño's (2006) approach with which we can address youth's narratives such as those presented in this work, also intends to make visible problems and fissures in the fabric of memory in a country that has not resolved properly its relationship with the past. It also explains that it is in the field of memory that the youth can dialogue with the dominant narratives of the past and give meaning to the impact of armed violence on their lives. These memory practices offer an alternative way of thinking about remembering in Colombia. According to Riaño (2006), in the search of guidelines that could explain how young people give meaning to violence and manage its presence in their daily lives, this anthropology of remembering and forgetting provides revealing clues to examine how violence is or is not modifying the ways in which the youth define themselves as members of communities, as inhabitants of a neighbourhood, a city and a nation. It is important to highlight the polarized opinions that the youth of Bogotá express in their narratives, such as the following about the peace process in Colombia:

Recently, during former President Juan Manuel Santos's term in office, certain agreements were reached to stop the war; however, these benefitted the victimizers and the guerrillas. This is why many people do not support this agreement and do not believe that it is the best for the country.



In the midst of all this, there was hope that the peace dialogues would reduce crime; this is why the lack of compliance with the agreements can lead to war again. Those who want to damage the agreements are the ones who love war; they don't understand that we need peace at any cost.

Students have opposite views on the agreements. They do not identify an intermediate position that would recognize the importance of these, and they believe that some things could have been done better. These polarized opinions have also been identified in young people from other Latin American countries such as Chile and Argentina. According to Rosa (2006), these opinions can be explained by the dialogue that exists between broader political affiliations with the various ways in which young people make sense of the violent past.

According to Rosa (2006), harmonizing the dialogues between the different media that deliver information and the didactics of history can help recover the teaching of the past and represents a social, cultural, and political challenge. According to Rosa, Bellelli and Bakhurst, the attempt to impose mandatory memories or forgetfulness is not tolerable: "Since a shared future in peace is only possible from a

consensual collective memory, it is essential to negotiate common interpretations of the past based on the will of a reconciliation in the present" (2008:194). In accordance with the aforementioned statement, we agree with Rosa (2006) on the importance of establishing the need for the teaching of history to contribute to an education in civic values, addressing a critical and reflective knowledge aimed at improving democracy, a diverse and changing history written to create citizenship education with social responsibility.

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