Reimagining Sexuality Education: Transforming Everyday Sexual and Gender Dynamics as a Peace-building Strategy to Address Colombia's Gender-based Violence Continuum

By

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of original research; it contains no materials accepted for any other degree in any other institution and no materials previously written and/or published by another person, except where appropriate acknowledgment is made in the form of bibliographical reference.

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Abstract

This study explores the relationship between Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) and peacebuilding, arguing that CSE addresses and responds to the continuum of gender-based violence (GBV) and conflict in Colombia. The existing literature on gender, war, and peace has overlooked the critical role of sexuality in peacebuilding practices. By emphasizing gender and sexuality through a community-based approach, CSE promotes feminist, queer, and decolonial understandings of peace. From my engagement with ethnographic research, including participant observation and semi-structured interviews with three CSE organizations in Colombia – *Jóvenes sin Tabú*, *Niñas sin Miedo,* and *Poderosas* – my findings suggest that CSE practitioners perceive GBV as institutionalized within everyday behaviors and subjectivities, perpetuated by social institutions and dynamics of relationality. They assert that incorporating sexuality in social transformation processes is crucial, as CSE encourages teenagers to reconfigure sexual and gender power relations, mitigating violent patterns of behavior exacerbate by war and rooted in colonial legacies. This bottom-up approach to social change, in which horizontal and critical pedagogies are utilized, aims to create a domino effect within communities. By recognizing youth agency, CSE expects teenagers to embody feminist and queer forms of solidarity in their everyday lives, despite the social, political, and cultural resistance against CSE and the monetary challenges faced by organizations. From my engagement with all three groups, I identified that their implementation strategies and institutional models are distinct, resulting in different yet similar pedagogical approaches to comprehensive sexuality education. Regardless of their organizational differences, all the CSE that inform this study, strive for justice of women and feminized populations, taking an intersectional approach that acknowledges overlapping systems of oppression based on class, race, ethnicity, and ability in the Colombian context.

Keywords: Comprehensive sexuality education, gender-based violence, war and masculinity, critical pedagogies, Colombian peacebuilding, social transformation, feminist solidarity, community-based change.

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List of Abbreviations

CPE – Critical Peace Education

CSE – Comprehensive Sexuality Education

CRIC – Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca (Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca)

FARC-EP – Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – Ejército del Pueblo

(Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People's Army)

GBV – Gender-based Violence

HR – Human Rights

HRE – Human Rights Education

JST – Jóvenes sin Tabú (Youth's without Taboos)

LGBTQIA+ – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Aro/Ace people, etc.

NSM – Niñas sin Miedo (Girls without Fear)

SE – Sexuality Education

STDs – Sexually Transmitted Diseases

SV – Sexual Violence

VAW – Violence Against Women

Introduction

Comprehensive Sex Education (CSE) is a pedagogical approach to Sexuality Education (SE) that has significantly gained popularity in Colombia as traditional conceptions of sexuality education have been categorized by feminist, queer, and pro-abortion movements as restrictive and non-informative (Correa, 2017; Zemaitis, 2016). Given that conventional SE promotes paradigms of abstinence and fear that antagonize sex, sexual diversity, and non-normative gender identities, while enabling the perpetuation of violent sexual and gender dynamics embedded in heteropatriarchal structures, CSE originates from the need to reduce sexual and gender-based violence (GBV) in Colombia. CSE practitioners achieve this goal by embracing a holistic approach to SE that considers the social, cultural, political, physical and emotional dimensions of sexuality. CSE implements communal educational spaces, developing based on contextualized interpretations of violence, gender, and sexuality. This comprehensive approach aims to prevent GBV through situated knowledge and horizontal community-based pedagogies that in Colombia respond to specific forms of sexual and GBV. Given that Colombia exists in a continuum of war that exacerbated and institutionalized GBV (Sachseder, 2023), CSE cannot ignore the effects of war in its efforts to change sexual and gender dynamics of power that manifest in everyday interactions. Since CSE intends to deconstruct hegemonic GBV, social transformation is the goal of CSE, which is facilitated through youth-centered pedagogies that account for a continuum of violence shaped by conflict and coloniality. As war and violence is the context navigated by CSE practitioners in Colombia, social change becomes a demonstration of peace creation. Given that the connection between CSE and peacebuilding has not been explored, I argue that CSE can essentially serve as a peacebuilding pedagogy that aims to deconstruct and reshape everyday

sexual and gender relations, emphasizing the relevance of a gender and sexuality focus in taking further feminist, queer, and decolonial projects.

This thesis takes on an ethnographic approach to delve into the ways three different comprehensive sexuality education groups carry out projects in Colombia, answering the following research question: *How are comprehensive sex education groups advancing peacebuilding within the continuum of gender-based violence in Colombia?* Drawing on my personal interactions with *Jóvenes sin Tabú* (JST), *Niñas sin Miedo* (NSM), and *Poderosas*, I analyze how these organizations conceptualize CSE theoretically and practically, how they make sense of Colombia's war context and GBV, how they engage in similar yet different critical pedagogies that are community-centered, and how they contribute to Colombia's peace building efforts by making sexuality and gender the focus of social transformation processes. Scrutinizing these connections is crucial because notions of liberal peace often ignore gender and sexuality as meaningful categories of peacebuilding. Additionally, even though post-liberal peace conceptions (Lemaitre, 2020) incorporate perspectives on gender, they tend to instrumentalize the role of women and feminized peoples by virtue of their gender social roles and ignore the role of sexuality in peace-making processes. This approach pushes community-based peacebuilding from understandings of gender shaped from above, ignoring how gender and sexual dynamics of change emerge from the ground. Hence, CSE's communal focus regards peacebuilding as a bottom-up approach, in which sexuality is centered through youth-oriented processes, challenging liberal ideas of top-down peacebuilding.

By engaging in qualitative exploratory research, I demonstrate that the three CSE organizations that I researched push a feminist, queer, and decolonial agenda. I show that these perspectives shape the ways CSE conceptualizes a continuum of GBV influenced by structural and

colonial violence, pushing for the transformation of everyday behaviors, relationalities, and subjectivities to build feminist bonds rooted on solidarity and community. This goal is attained in the ways CSE groups advocate for the justice of marginalized communities such as women, children, and LGBTQI+ individuals, who have been victimized and instrumentalized by virtue of their feminization during the Colombian armed conflict. These populations are recognized by CSE groups in relation to overlapping systems of oppression that constitute Colombian society, pushing an intersectional approach that considers the ways GBV and war have impacted black, indigenous, and underprivileged communities distinctively (Collins, 2015). CSE practitioners acknowledge intricate class divisions presupposed in the urban/rural dichotomy of Colombia, recognizing how this gap has been a driving force of the Colombian conflict.

This research is structured into five main sections: an overview of the literature on peacebuilding, gender and war, masculinity, education, and comprehensive sexuality education, in which I show the need to scrutinize the connection between CSE and peacebuilding as it has not yet been explored; a description of the qualitative methods that I engaged with to arrive at my conclusions; a chapter describing the ways CSE organizations understand and implement their projects, where I show the institutional and pedagogical differences and similarities advanced among three CSE groups; an analysis of the ways GBV and war are conceived, witnessed, and experienced in the context of CSE, revealing how CSE reacts and responds to GBV perpetuated during the Colombian conflict; and an examination of how notions of peace are advanced by CSE practitioners pushing a bottom-up understanding of social transformation, where I exhibit CSE's decolonial, feminist, queer, and intersectional approach to peacebuilding. From my engagement with CSE throughout these chapters, I conclude that CSE is a peacebuilding pedagogy that raises the need to center sexuality and gender in the everyday transformation of social interactions,

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deconstructing and reshaping systems of violence perpetuated by Colombia's GBV continuum. To better understand the context in which this thesis is situated, and in which CSE is consequently located, I will now explain what the Colombian armed conflict was and continues to be in relation to the forms of GBV perpetuated and aggravated during this period.

A Historical Overview of the Colombian Armed Conflict, Gender-based Violence, and Peace Attempts

The Colombian Armed Conflict was a 52-year-long military confrontation between the Colombian government and the rural guerilla FARC-EP (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia - Ejército del Pueblo) from 1964 until 2016. This conflict resulted from a continuum of violence that still impacts Colombian society. This civil war has been categorized as the longest conflict in Latin America, tracing back to a dispute between liberals and conservatives in the 40s and 50s called "La Violencia" (Giraldo & Montes, 2022, p. 2). The FARC-EP emerged as a Marxist-Leninist guerilla group that advocated against the government's neglect of rural areas. Multiple actors were involved in this conflict, including the military, the FARC-EP, guerillas such as the ELN (Ejército de Liberación Nacional), drug cartels, and paramilitary groups. After numerous attempts to negotiate a peace treaty, the end of this war materialized with an agreement signed in 2016 under Juan Manuel Santos' government. This treaty promoted combatants' demobilization, the implementation of land-focused programs, victims' reparations, institutional changes to protect women and marginalized communities, and no repetition of violence (Sisma Mujer, 2016, p. 8). However, as of today, less than 50% of the agreement has been executed (Giraldo & Montes, 2022), leading to the persecution of ex-combatants and popular leaders, and aggravating gender-based violence against women, children, and the LGBTQI+ community.

Based on a report by the Kroc Institute published in 2023, from the 578 provisions expected to be implemented in a period of 15 years since the peace accords, only 28% of them were fully implemented, 18% are in intermediate stage, 35% are poorly implemented, and 19% of them have not been started (Quinn, 2023). According to Sisma Mujer, regarding the gender equality goals, only 20% of them were completed by 2021, 50% are partially implemented, and 30% are not yet started (p. 3). Measurements of gender equality have an *enfoque familista* (family focus) which considers women's participation in peace programs by virtue of belonging to a family. So, for instance, if a male member of a family is part of a land restitution program, a woman in the same family is counted as a beneficiary of the same program. This kind of measurement implies that only women who are in a heterosexual marriage or are mothers are accounted for in the statistics provided, showing how access to peacebuilding programs has been limited for women (Sisma Mujer, 4). The effect of this regulation is substantiated in how only 36.72% of beneficiaries of land restitution programs are women, which also reflected in how illicit crop removal programs only had 36% of female recipients. These examples show how women and feminized populations (children, LGBTQI+ individuals, disabled, and racialized peoples) have been reckoned as part of peacebuilding processes in Colombia upon their symbolic values as gendered subjects, enabling the reduction of feminized peoples in peacebuilding to fixed categories of victims, mothers, or caregivers (Sisma Mujer, p. 5-8; Lemaitre, 2020, p. 7).

The peace agreements included a sub-commission on gender to incorporate into all the main outcomes of the agreement a gender perspective, situating the accords in a post-liberal framework as gender had not been considered before in other peace processes. This sub-commission had 5 members of each commission and female leaders from both sides. This transversal focus entailed that 60% of the victims who participated in the talks were women, and

18 organizations working on issues related to women and the LGBTQ+ community were invited, as well as female ex-combatants from conflicts in El Salvador, Guatemala, Uruguay, South Africa, and Indonesia also attended the talks (Sisma Mujer, p. 6). Proceeding the signature of the accords, this gender lens was carried into *La Comisión de la Verdad* (The Truth Commission) in 2017. This commission dedicated a division to the research, documentation, and recognition of violence against women (VAW) and gender-based violence (GBV) against sexual and gender dissidences. Violence against these populations was acknowledged as expressions of power over life, where intentions of marking, possessing, submitting, and controlling were identified as its main motivations (Mi Cuerpo es la Verdad, p. 152). To discern this conclusion, the commission specifically conceptualized sexual violence as situations of sexual slavery, threat of rape, sexual assault, sexual humiliation, and forced nakedness as patterns of victimization and analysis (Mi Cuerpo es la Verdad, p. 152).

La Comisión de la Verdad (2022) identified that around 40,000 people were victimized, in which women and girls constituted 92%. A report from Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica concluded that VAW and GBV were utilized by armed groups to gain control over populations and territories (p. 24), advancing national political projects through dehumanization, silencing, and imparting fear (p. 33). Sexual and GBV were perpetrated by all stakeholders involved in the conflict and their patterns of victimization differed (Mi Cuerpo es la Verdad, 152). The Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica states that female combatants or community members with symbolic roles such as mothers, teachers, or spiritual leaders, along with people perceived as a threat to armed group's ideologies, were frequently displaced and silenced as a means of population control (p. 25-26). Sexual violence was used against individuals whose labor benefited a particular armed group, including young girls and adolescents, and against people who

transgressed social norms, including the LGBTQI+ community, people with disabilities, and mothers who opposed child recruitment. Victimization against these groups was often part of 'purification' agendas promoted by paramilitary groups (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, p. 27-30). Sexual and GBV also affected marginalized communities disproportionately, as their bodies were perceived by virtue of belonging to African-Colombian or indigenous populations (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, p. 31-32).

Understanding Colombia's context of war and its impact on women and feminized populations illustrates the importance for comprehensive sexuality education as a peacebuilding strategy. Given that CSE aims at transforming violent sexual and gender behaviors that have been perpetuated during Colombia's war, CSE as a pedagogy reacts to contextualized forms of violence aggravated during conflict. SE allows for the possibility of reshaping violence rooted on sexuality and gender relations, attacking institutionalized GBV enabled in an everyday continuum of GBV. The situations identified by the Colombian Truth Commission, or the Center for Historical Memory have also been witnessed and experienced by practitioners of CSE, pushing them to believe that CSE's focus on GBV prevention is crucial for social transformation and peacebuilding. The subsequent chapters of this thesis will develop around the pedagogies implemented by CSE activists as I intended to unpack the way CSE produces meaning and bring about change on the ground. By engaging with CSE groups, I was able to recognize CSE's feminist, decolonial, and queer peacebuilding efforts, where the youth become meaningful agents to seed the reproduction of just sexual and gender dynamics.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

This thesis scrutinizes the connection between comprehensive sex education and peacebuilding in Colombia, making pertinent to split the state of the art in four sections: peace conceptualizations; education and peacebuilding; the link between war, gender-based violence, and masculinity, and peace; and comprehensive sex education. I will explore different conceptions of peacebuilding, how education has been conceptualized as a peace-making mechanism, how masculinity matter in the context of war, the role of gender-based violence (GBV) and violence against women (VAW) during conflict, gender perspectives in the transition from war into peace, and how CSE has been theorized to ultimately explore its connection to peacebuilding. Since this study is situated in Colombia, I take the definitions used by the Colombian Truth Commission, in which GBV is understood as any form of violence committed against a group of people by virtue of their gender or sexuality. VAW is encompassed by the ways GBV is conceptualized by the commission, as they recognize that women are victimized disproportionately on account of their gender and sex. The commission also suggests that GBV and VAW comprise forms of sexual violence (SV), including "sexual slavery, threat of rape, sexual assault, sexual humiliation, and forced nakedness" (Mi Cuerpo es la Verdad, p. 152). Hence, when I refer to GBV, I also include forms of VAW and SV in this account (McKay, 2009; Russo et. Al, 2006). I take on Colombia's Truth Commission understanding of GBV as their definition is constructed from individual testimonies that have been systematized and used to document Colombia's historical memory.

Scrutinizing the link between war, gender-based violence, and masculinity, peace conceptualizations, education and peacebuilding, and comprehensive sex education will highlight the need to contemplate the connection between CSE and peacebuilding in the Colombian context. While scholars have elaborated on the relationship between education and peacebuilding, the state

of the art indicates that the link between CSE and peace has not been yet explored, as the literature in peacebuilding and education has overlooked the role of sexuality in peacebuilding. Therefore, I contend that incorporating gender and sexuality into peacebuilding frameworks is crucial for the literature, as CSE has not been analyzed in the context of war and peacebuilding. Given that CSE in Colombia is increasingly becoming more notable (Correa, 2017), it is imperative to contextualize CSE in the country's socio-political background in which war is unavoidably present, justifying the need to theorize CSE as a peacebuilding pedagogy. CSE takes further decolonial, feminist, and queer approaches to peace, questioning GBV from a decolonial standpoint and advancing community-based forms of feminist and queer solidarities. It responds to liberal peace notions that employ a top-down approach to peacebuilding (Lemaitre, 2020), which often disregards the agency of communities and individuals in peacebuilding processes. Moreover, CSE challenges post-liberal ideas of peacebuilding, as this framework "remains committed to liberalism" (Day et al., 2023; FitzGerald, 2023), suggesting that a focus on everyday sexual and gender relations would bring post-liberal peace further. Although CSE constantly negotiates local and liberal peace frameworks, situating it to an extent as a post-liberal pedagogy, by adopting a youth-centered approach, where social transformation arises from reshaping everyday sexuality and gender, CSE challenges liberal top-down approaches to peacebuilding and fixed gender roles facilitated in post-liberal peace, in which western and neoliberal understandings of democracy, development, human rights, and equality are furthered.

Gender-Based Violence, War, and Masculinity

Literature on gender and war has attempted to understand the roles of women and men during conflict, showing the need to first grasp the connection between war and masculinity, as violence and conflict are often associated with hegemonic masculine traits. Hutchings (2008)

asserts that theorists of gender and war argue that masculinity is intrinsically linked to war, though academics perceive this connection in various ways. For some like Hartsock (1989), argues that the war-masculinity connection results from psychological processes rooted on sexual differences that make men more inclined towards violent behaviors (Hutchings, 2008, p.391). Unlikely, theories like Goldstein (2001) contend that gender is socially and culturally constructed, suggesting that men are socialized into violent behaviors under the premise that they need to prepare for potential war (p. 411). These ideas are contested by some, such as Elshtain (1995) and Barrett (2001), who argue that the link between gender and war is discursively created, influencing material conditions of war and its gendered organizations (Hutchings, 2008, p.391). The last two approaches mentioned to explain the war-masculinity connection emphasize the role of social structures and socializing process in shaping gender expectations around war. This idea foregrounds the need to unpack how masculinity is constructed as inherently linked to violence, conflict, militarization, and consequently war, which is a connection that will later expose the link between war, GBV, and masculinity.

Connell (1995) revises the concept of "hegemonic masculinity" and defines it as "a particular idealized image of masculinity in relation to which images of femininity and other masculinities are marginalized and subordinated" (Hutchings, 2008, p. 392; Barrett 2001, p. 79). This idea is complemented by Basham (2016) who delineates the concept as a "gender practice that exemplifies currently accepted legitimations of unequal social relations sustained through corresponding cultural ideals and institutional expressions of power" (Basham, 2016, p. 32; Connell, 1995; Hooper, 1999). These conceptions of hegemonic masculinity exhibit that the term is thought in relation to femininity and ideas of 'the ideal man,' pushing scholars to associate hegemonic masculinity with being independent, risk-taking, aggressive, violent, macho,

heterosexual and rational (Hutchings, 2008, p. 392; Basham, 2016, p.30). This definition alludes to what is conceived as hegemonic and consequently idealized. Connell (2005) reviewed hegemonic masculinity and acknowledged that "masculinity is not a fixed entity embedded in the body or personality traits of individuals" (p. 836). She argues that "masculinities" are shaped in practice and social action, suggesting that gender dynamics differ contextually (Connell, 2005, p. 836). For this study, I take on Connell's understanding of hegemonic masculinity to explore in depth its relation to violence. As this research aims to understand CSE and GBV in the context of war, I will move into exploring how everyday gender behaviors are formed through the idealized masculine image of men perpetuated by hegemonic masculinity during war.

Hegemonic masculinity in contexts of war has been scrutinized under the notion of militarized masculinity. Hegemonic and militarized masculinities intertwine as both inform each other during social and cultural processes that construct masculine gender traits. Hutchings (2008) argues that military culture plays a meaningful role in producing masculine subjects, as disciplinary power shapes gender values and expectations that get materialized through military power (p. 395). This idea was further explored by Basham (2016) who contends that hegemonic masculinity is achieved through military discipline, as boys are believed to become men through military service, where the dream of going to war is seeded and projected through "the image of the soldier hero (as) a robust and highly influential form of idealized masculinity" (p. 30). As Barett (2001) analyzes in the context of the U.S. Navy, militarized masculinity is constituted by ideals of risk taking, discipline, excitement for guns, stoicism under hardship, absence of emotion, endurance, and rationality. These value systems overlap with hegemonic masculinity and consequently guide gender divisions of labor, institutions, and individual subjectivities (Hutchings, 2008, p. 393).

Basham (2016), Elshtain (1995), and Goldstein (2001) suggest that gender and war roles are intricately connected (p. 31). As Basham (2016) argues, men are motivated into combat as manhood and heroism are culturally equalized, leaving women with the role of supporting war "as witnesses, mothers, sweethearts, and nurses" (p. 30). These social roles granted to women in war are situated by Connell (1987) into what she calls the "gender order," advanced by Lorber (1994) who suggests that the "gendered social order" (p. 4) is a human social institution that creates "divisions of labor" (p. 41) in which social gendered dynamics, under hegemonic gender relations," or what I will also refer to as "hegemonic gender roles" justify that men are treated differently to women (Meadow, 2010, p. 831). Bringing this idea into the context of idealized masculinity, comprised of hegemonic and militarized masculinities, sexual and gender divisions of labor take forward the argument of how hegemonic masculinity in war reproduces and reworks gender divisions. These social differentiations account for women and feminized individuals' subordination, fostering their positions of vulnerability. Building on this idea, I will now discuss how gender-based violence is enabled and reproduced within these gender divisions, which specifically aggravate during war.

Eriksson-Baaz (2013) argues that SV and GBV during war are viewed as a weapon or a strategy of control to evict or cleanse a group of people perceived as an 'enemy' (p. 42). Eriksson-Baaz (2013) contends that these forms of violence instrumentalize women and feminized peoples' symbolic value in society, often associated with reproduction, social connections to nature and land, and related to men within a certain group (p. 48). Given the associations with these symbolic meanings, it has been argued that GBV is used to tear apart communities and to indirectly attack men (Eriksson-Baaz, 2013, p. 48). Building on Cockburn's (2010) "gender-based violence continuum," scholars suggest that GBV does not only occur during war, but instead exacerbates

during conflict. Giraldo & Montes (2022) argue that a GBV continuum implies that violence existed "before, during, and after conflict" (p. 3), revealing how GBV is not unique to periods of conflict. Cockburn (2010) further contends that the GBV continuum is enabled under patriarchal relations of gender that predispose societies to war (p. 140). This idea emphasizes that GBV is institutionalized within social structures that become such from hegemonic ideas of masculinity and gender norms. In this study, I build on Cockburn's' GBV continuum and institutionalization of GBV to analyze the ways CSE responds to idealized and militarized masculinities that perpetuate GBV during war.

Given that it is evident that war is intrinsically gendered, I will now scrutinize the link between gender and peace as I will be showing how peacebuilding is gendered process in which sexuality should be considered. I will explore the literature on liberal, post-liberal, feminist, and decolonial peacebuilding, to further explore the connection between education and peace.

Peacebuilding: A Decolonial, Feminist, and Queer Approach

Zarkov (2001) shows how women and feminized individuals are usually portrayed as the victims of war and GBV (p. 79), pushing forward a victim narrative in which the role of these populations is reduced to their relations to men. This victim narrative is also taken into peacebuilding and transitional justice processes, as women and feminized populations are considered by virtue of their gender social roles. O'Sullivan (2019) explores in the context of Ukraine how women are perceived as crucial in alleviating the effects of conflict in communities, suggesting that feminine gender roles are associated with peacebuilding as they are perceived as caring, understandable, and nurturing (p. 2). Scholars such as Gómez and Montealgre (2021) challenge this victim and peacemaker accounts arguing that they oversimplify the role of women

in peacebuilding, ignoring the possibility of feminized individuals to be active participants in conflict and of men as being victims of it. These ideas of how women and feminized populations are theorized in peacebuilding are relevant to this research, as I suggest that CSE proposes to recognize the role of marginalized communities in peacebuilding processes from decolonial, feminist, and queer perspectives on peace, justifying the need to explore the literature on these frameworks.

Galtung (1969) defined peace in two main categories of analysis: negative and positive (p. 170). He explains negative peace as the absence of conflict, and positive peace as that which overcomes direct violence and establishes institutional changes to surpass structural violence through political and socioeconomic restorations or transformations (p. 171). This distinction between positive and negative peace has been further explored by academics such as Davies (2004), Smith (2014), and Gómez (2017) who suggest that peace conceptions should go beyond achieving a state of no conflict, and instead push for social transformation and emancipation. The question for scholars has consequently been centered on analyzing how this process of institutional and social change materializes in the context of peacebuilding. Notions of what a nation-state must do to attain peace, the concept of peace, and the role of communities in achieving peace vary among academics. For this study, I will build on these critiques to negative peace and understandings of positive peacebuilding, to explore how CSE materializes social transformation through an educational approach. I frame this outcome of CSE as part of a decolonial, feminist, and queer understanding of peace, challenging notions of liberal peace that take social transformation from above.

The debate among academics has pivoted on whether values posed by hegemonic ideas of liberal peace enable positive peacebuilding. Liberal peace promotes democracy, strong state-based

institutions, and participation in the free-market economy, focusing on building institutions, advocating for good governance, and economic development to prevent the repetition of conflict (Paris, 2010; Chesterman, Ignatieff, & Thakur, 2004). Scholars like Paris (2010) expound the concept of liberal peacebuilding as that which "promote(s) liberal democratic governing systems and market-oriented economic growth" (p. 337), to argue that "liberally-oriented peacebuilding" can fundamentally bring about peace even if in practice there are limitations in establishing the right institutions that enable liberal (p. 361). Ideas of liberal peacebuilding are embraced by organizations such as the UN, the European Union, and nation-states like the United States, and tend to inform processes of transitional justice, as stated by Arriaza (2008), that focus on victim-oriented practices to transition into democracy, continuing the rationale implied in ideals of liberal peacebuilding (p. 153). This idea also raises how liberal peace, as opposed to conceptions of decolonial and liberal peacebuilding, does not take into account notions of intersectionality, as communities are homogenized by its bottom-down implementation. I understand intersectionality as overlapping systems of oppression (Collins, 2015) that account for the interactions between categories of class, race, gender, sexuality, ability, or ethnicity. This approach to understanding violence and oppression is furthered by feminist and decolonial peace conceptions, as I will now examine.

Decolonial and feminist understandings of peacebuilding criticize academics like Paris, arguing that liberal peace concepts promote the expansion of globalization by advancing neoliberal and hegemonic western ideals and militarization (Day et al., 2023; FitzGerald, 2023). These ideologies reduce welfare and economic practices to governmental institutions, limiting social and structural transformations within peacebuilding processes. Gómez & Montealegre (2021) argue that liberal peace is constructed under paradigms of capitalism, in which dominant models of

development are intrinsically connected to neoliberal and colonial systems that do not account for social inequalities that overlap with class, race, gender identity, geographic origin, or ethnicity (p. 456). This critique shows how liberal peace, equated with positive peace under western paradigms, overlooks social change at individual and community levels. Liberal peace ignores intersectional understandings of oppression and patterns of victimization that occur during war, minimizing bottom-up approaches to peacebuilding. Day et al. (2023) brings into the conversation a feminist and decolonial approach to peace by highlighting how liberal peacebuilding diminishes the autonomy of 'feminized subjects' as they are accounted by peace programs under fixed identifications such as victim, mother, sister, or carer (p. 7). This critique also applies to notions of post-liberal peacebuilding, as women and feminized populations are still reduced to these categories. Post-liberal peacebuilding proposes to focus on localized approaches to peace, where the local and liberal frameworks are renegotiated on the ground (Finkenbusch, 2016). Even though gender and communities are accounted as meaningful peacemaking actors by post-liberal peace theorists, Lemaitre (2020) suggests that women and feminized individuals are instrumentalized by liberal and post-liberal peace creation processes in their role as gender subjects (p.10).

These critiques by Gómez & Montealegre (2021), Day et al. (2023), and Lemaitre (2020) move conceptualizations of peacebuilding towards a feminist and decolonial understanding of peace, in which peacebuilding is centered on everyday experiences within communities. Day et al. (2023) argues that decolonial peace takes on different forms, highlighting the decolonial approaches that "can encompass quotidian, routine approaches to living that are so ubiquitous they tend to operate invisibly" (p. 8). For Day et al. (2023), decolonial peacebuilding recognizes "the way violences reproduce and transmute in everyday lives, as well as the ontological (re)production of racial, gender and other differences in the construction of relations of domination and

subjugation" (p.8). This idea is also defended by Lemaitre (2020) who builds on Lugones (2011) by arguing that colonial violence is embedded into the everyday, pushing a decolonial and feminist framework to peace into the everyday as she argues that "being-in-solidarity" for women was restricted by colonial powers that rely on gender to exert control over labor, movement, subjectivity, expression, being, and possibility (p. 11).

In this study, I take decolonial peacebuilding as a practice that challenges "intersubjectivity, consciousness, context, and societal structures" (Day et al., 2023, p. 12) by transforming everyday relations of power. I analyze CSE's efforts through this lens by exploring how its youth-centered pedagogies encourage students to envision new forms of relating, interacting, and critically thinking. These practices foster an understanding of GBV that accounts for colonial violence and marginalization as a continuum. I also build on this idea by pushing a feminist understanding of peace in which the everyday is a space to build solidarity among feminized and oppressed subjects. The focus on feminized populations also takes on a queer approach to peacebuilding, as I also recognize the importance of reshaping violent behaviors that target the LGBTQI+ community in everyday interactions. Since I argue that CSE adopts a community-based approach to peace by reshaping everyday sexual relations, I challenge liberal and post-liberal perspectives on peace that ignore the role of sexuality in peacebuilding processes, and that reduce the role of women and feminized populations to their gender qualities. I suggest that the participation of these communities and a sexuality focus are crucial, as these populations are the focus of CSE's sexual and gender justice projects. I will now move into exploring the literature on peacebuilding and education, the ways CSE has been theorized, to later scrutinize how CSE connects to peacebuilding.

Human Rights Education, Comprehensive sexuality Education, and Peacebuilding

Since the focus of this study is on the connection between peacebuilding and CSE, I will now explore how education has been theorized in the context of peacebuilding. Smith (2014) argues that education plays five key roles in peacebuilding processes: providing alternative routes to violence, protecting children, re-establishing a sense of "normality," and contributing to social transformation (p. 187). All five roles described by Smith (2014) align with Day et al. and Lemaitre's approach to peace, as well as Galtung's concept of positive peace. These ideas enable Smith to argue that conflict transformation involves "an ongoing process of changing relationships, behavior, attitudes and structures from negative to positive" (p. 190). This change from negative to positive peace is specifically enabled by education, as Smith (2014) also argues that group inequalities can be addressed through pedagogies that encourage new power relations (p. 187). This idea suggests that peace-centered pedagogies have the potentiality of reshaping dynamics of power, resonating with ideas of decolonial peace that focus on everyday behaviors. This idea is furthered by Bramwell (2017) and Márquez-Cárdenas et. al (2020) who inquire about the kind of education that is suitable to address social inequity, bringing into the conversation Human Rights Education (HRE) programs since they take on community-based approaches and work with marginalized communities (Bramwell, p. 139).

Márquez-Cárdenas et. al (2020) and Soler (2015) understand HRE as all the different learnings that develop Human Rights (HR) values, knowledge, and skills to challenge poverty and historical social exclusion (p. 2). This definition goes hand in hand with the United Nation's conceptualization of HRE (1994) that perceives HRE as a comprehensive process that accounts for the development of individual's affective, social, and political competences (Márquez-

Cárdenas et. al, 2020, p.3). The UN perceives HRE as that which strengthens respect for HR, fosters the development of individual personalities, advances gender equality, and enables relationships among all nations, racialized and ethnic groups, and religions (Márquez-Cárdenas et. al, 2020, p.3). This approach to HRE presupposes ideas of liberal peace as HR discourse is rooted on homogenic ideas of liberalism, which is a discussion outside of the scope of this thesis. However, I want to highlight that HRE programs suggest the incorporation of pedagogies that are accessible, inclusive, and that prompt critical thinking to challenge normative structures of power. This aspect of HRE takes on Paulo Freire's (2000) notion of critical pedagogies that proposes democratic participation as a "means by which the oppressed can overcome self-hatred, epistemic injustice, and oppression, and thus achieve freedom" (p. 1). Cowden & Singh (2013) take Freire's argument forward by suggesting that critical pedagogies incorporate engaging processes in the teacher-student dualism, pushing a humanistic view of human worth and values, while being situated in the exchange between people rather than in a monetary relation implied in neoliberal educational models (p.2).

Freire's notion of critical pedagogies is useful for this study, as it views education as a horizontal process that promotes youth empowerment, the emancipation and participation of marginalized communities, and the potential for creating more equitable societies. I contend that understanding education in this way takes further notions of HRE as critical pedagogies raise questions about the role of teachers, students, and minoritized populations. This pedagogy also questions the teacher-student dynamic, pushing the debate of what education in rights and HRE should look like. Building on Bramwell (2017) and Márquez-Cárdenas et. al (2020), who propose HRE as a pedagogy addressing social inequity through community-based approaches, I suggest that implementing critical pedagogies in HRE can address power dynamics that regard students

merely as recipients of peace education. By taking HRE and critical pedagogies as categories of analysis, I will evaluate the work of CSE and its relation to peace education. Given that CSE cannot be thought of as essentially Human Rights Education, as CSE addresses dynamics of power rooted on gender and sexual relations that are often ignored by HRE programs, the need to scrutinize the literature on gender and peacebuilding becomes relevant. Before moving towards this analysis, as peace becomes a meaningful category in the context of war, I will first explore the literature on the intersection between gender and war, as this research is situated in Colombia's war and GBV continuum.

The literature suggests that discourses on SE originated from the Western interests to 'modernize' populations, promoting Catholic values on sexuality (Seoane, 2012; Romer, 2021; Iosa, 2013). Zimmerman (2015) indicates that this 'modernizing project' was rooted in beliefs that advocated for a universal standard for hygiene. This project also promoted notions of 'appropriate sexuality,' aiming to eradicate STDs and sex work, since sex outside of marriage was considered promiscuous (Felitti, 2009). Consequently, public health discourses were established upon conceptions of hygienism, prophylaxis, and eugenics (Zemaitis, 2016), allocating issues related to sexuality to private spheres as sex was limited to reproduction and to a matter of the 'nuclear family' (Felitti, 2009). Correa (2017) argues that these discourses shaped sexuality education in the Colombian, where paradigms of abstinence and biological essentialism were established through colonial powers that regulated sexuality in relation to racial, gender, and class-based structures (p. 76). Zemaitis (2016) contends that the concept of CSE appeared in response to the lack of attention to social dimensions of sexuality in traditional SE (p. 53), stressing the importance of going beyond organic, genital, and biological focuses.

Comprehensive Sex Education originated then as a pedagogical approach conceives students as rights subjects in which sexuality, pleasure, decision-making, and emotions are talked about from social perspectives (Escapil, 2017, p. 4). Roa-Garca and Osorio-Gonzáles (2016) argue that CSE challenges hegemonic perceptions of gender and sexuality discursively (p. 72), suggesting that CSE challenges formal and informal norms around gender, sexuality, and ways of relating. Building on this characteristic, Farieta (2015) argues that CSE takes a holistic approach to sexual and reproductive health from a differential focus where inequalities rooted on race, gender, and class are considered. Haberland & Rogow (2015) and Rincón & López (2011) present that this understanding of CSE has met resisted by advocates of traditional SE programs, as CSE is categorized under the so called 'gender ideology' and thus as a threat to society's moral codes (Haberland & Rogow, 2015, p. 16; Rincón & López, 2011, p. 47). Haberland and Rogow (2015) argue that one of CSE's challenges is that its effectiveness relies on cultural changes (p. 17) that question systems of inequity, exclusion, gender, and social stereotypes (Farieta, 2015, p. 14). Hence, CSE has been theorized as contingent to socio-cultural backgrounds given that hegemonic normativities vary by context (Farieta, 2015, p. 13; Mkumbo, 2012, p. 150). Mkumbo (2012) further suggest that resistance to SE programs also comes from schools and families (p. 149; Ahmed et al., 2006, p. 628) whose organizations are influenced by hegemonic discourses that shape daily gender and sexuality interactions (Roa-García & Osorio-González, 2016, p. 71).

The contextualized quality of CSE demonstrated by Farieta highlights the importance of analyzing CSE programs within their specific context. Since norms around gender and sexuality vary culturally and socially, the approaches to CSE taken by practitioners differ accordingly. In the following chapters of this thesis, I will build on this idea to examine how three CSE organizations understand and implement this pedagogy contextually. This study is situated in

Cockburn's GBV continuum as CSE responds to Colombia's ongoing conditions of war and attempts at peace. By building on the literature on education and peacebuilding, and acknowledging the various forms of GBV that impact Colombian society, I will show from qualitative data how CSE in Colombian can be translated as a peacebuilding practice, as it advances social and cultural transformations through its focus on sexuality and gender from a decolonial, feminist, and queer approach to peace.

Research Methodology

A personal immersion into Comprehensive Sexuality Education

This thesis emerges from my continuing interest in Comprehensive Sex Education activism in Colombia since 2021, when I first engaged with this pedagogical approach by co-founding a collective called *Jóvenes sin Tabú* with a friend from Bogotá, Jesús Pinzón Ulloa. Ever since, my engagement with CSE has taken on multiple shapes - as an organizer, facilitator, researcher, content developer, and participant - leading me to question how the work done by CSE is situated in the context of Colombia in general and in war in particular. CSE pushed me to reflect on how I related to Colombia and its history, leading me to question my positionality in Colombian society as I engaged in rethinking the ways I related to others and collectively envisioned the future of my country. Being part of the team of organizers and educators that carried out *Entretejiendo Juventudes* - a summer camp arranged by JST in Jambaló, El Cauca, Colombia, in 2022 - led me to realize that CSE was setting up the stage for peacemaking subjectivities and practices, as students were questioning how violence was perpetuated on their daily lives, deconstructing normalized behaviors that contribute to the reproduction of GBV. This experience made evident to me that CSE in Colombia was furthering peace efforts given its focus on working with youth to imagine a future without gender-based violence through an understanding of Colombia's ongoing context of war and victimization. This is the context in which this research comes into existence, as the need to situate comprehensive sex education's efforts in the overall context of Colombia becomes relevant to understand its impacts and contributions to the country's enduring desire for peace.

Research Methods and Positionality

This study takes on an ethnographic approach rooted on two exploratory qualitative methods: participant observation and in-depth semi-structured interviews. I conducted fifteen interviews with members of three different CSE groups: *Poderosas*, *Niñas sin Miedo* (NSM), and *Jóvenes sin Tabú* (JST). I chose these organizations to get a general overview of CSE in the country. Poderosas is an institutionalized non-profit that operates at a national level, NSM is a local NGO based in Soacha, Cundinamarca, and JST is a non-institutionalized collective that works on a volunteer basis on community-based projects. Out of the fifteen interviews that I conducted, six were with Poderosas' staff, six with members NSM, and the remaining with volunteers from JST. Six interviews were done in-person and nine online, to which I received oral consent before recording each. All interlocutors were given the possibility to withdraw their consent by May 2024 or request to have specific parts of their interview not be used for this thesis. In addition, I engaged with participant observation with NSM from mid-September through the end of November of 2023, and attended two panels where Poderosas' founder spoke about the NGO: *Women in Business Panel on Peacebuilding* (August 26th of 2023) and *Weavers of Feminism: A Colombian Overview* (September 20th of 2023). I also went to one of Poderosas fundraising events in Bogotá called *Pizza Poderosas* on the 24th of August of 2023. Besides, my observations are also informed and influenced by my personal experience working with and being part of JST since 2021.

My insider positionality with JST led me to meet and work with multiple CSE practitioners since 2021, making this research possible as I had access to Colombia's CSE activism scene. Throughout my engagement with JST, I learned about Poderosas and NSM, enabling me to have common ground when connecting with them to conduct interviews, as I had friends from JST who

introduced me to activists within these groups. Given that there are not so many other organizations led by civil society groups working on CSE, and I already knew people who are part of the two most known NGOs advancing CSE: Poderosas and NSM, I had the advantage of being able to connect with these organizations for interviews and fieldwork. In the case of Poderosas, attending their *Pizza Poderosas* event was crucial as I got to meet Mariana, Poderosas' founder, who connected me with all the interlocutors that I interviewed from this NGO. Regarding NSM, I got in touch with the organization directly and went through their regular volunteer application process, in which I was interviewed by the NGO's volunteer program coordinator, and ultimately was offered a volunteering position and consent to conduct this research simultaneously. Having access to JST, NSM, and Poderosas provided me with the opportunity to contrast these three organizations. Since they operate in different regions of Colombia and have distinct institutional arrangements, I was able to analyze the overall picture of how CSE is implemented across the country.

After conducting all interviews, I used PremierePro auto-transcribing feature to transcribe interviews from Spanish into Spanish, which I later reviewed and corrected myself. For data analysis, I synthesized and interpreted interviews after identifying four main categories of analysis which I also broke down into multiple classifications, described as follows: CSE conceptualizations: themes, goals, pedagogies; CSE's connection to peacebuilding: direct connections, indirect connections, allusions to theory; challenges of CSE: outcomes, expectations, current challenges, social reactions, resistance to CSE; and Colombia context and connections to peace: peace conceptions, Colombia context, CSE and peace relation. These categories later became codes which I inserted into an NVIVO file for further codification and analysis, from where I chose specific interview sections that I consequently translated into English and utilized

in the analytical chapters of this thesis. Additionally, since not all members of the three organizations that I worked with were comfortable with having their names mentioned throughout this research, I used pseudonyms for all interlocutors. These pseudonyms were chosen by interviewers or decided on by me in relation to how they introduced themselves during interviews, informal conversations, and interactions during fieldwork. Hence, I respected people's gender identities and expressions by choosing names that are conventionally associated with a particular gender in Colombia.

I decided to engage with exploratory qualitative methods because I wanted to understand CSE's practice on the ground, highlighting and recognizing how knowledge is produced during the implementation of CSE workshops and through the interactions between organizers, facilitators, mentors, students, and participants. Through ethnographic research, I intended to unpack how all three CSE groups operate and organize themselves, how they produce knowledge, how they implement their work, and how they get involved with the communities whom they work with. Having this empirical data enabled my understanding of how CSE is conceptualized and put into practice at different community levels, facilitating the analysis of how CSE practitioners situate their efforts within Colombia's context of war and ongoing attempts at peace. Moreover, by focusing on underlining the everyday experiences of those involved in CSE processes, I embraced Stacey's (1998) decolonial and feminist research approach, where I emphasize personal and collective interpretations of human relationships, processes of engagement, and modes of attachment (p. 22-23). These frameworks allowed for spaces where I engaged in dialogic, horizontal, collaborative, and affective relationships (Nencel, 2014, p. 78), while acknowledging hierarchical dynamics inherent to academic and ethnographic research. This feminist and decolonial stance were further facilitated by my preexisting relationship with JST and volunteer

position at NSM, as I had an active role with them which allowed me to meet interlocutors at personal levels before and after interviews.

To balance unequal power dynamics presupposed in ethnographic and qualitative research, I critically reflected on my engagement with all three CSE organizations. I ensured ongoing communication and active involvement with members of each organization throughout the research. Building relationships with all three groups and their members allowed me to reduce potential risks of manipulation and betrayal. As suggested by Stacey (1998), these contingencies are inherent in ethnographic practice (p. 23), thus I made sure that meanings were defined and interpreted together with everyone involved in CSE. To achieve this goal, I engaged with Nencel's (2014) self-reflective practices (p.77) by asking questions and follow-up clarifications, writing accurate fieldnotes, and being mindful of my positionality and dynamics of power when interpreting situations and everyday relations. Given that my positionality differed among each organization and, to a certain extent, from interaction to interaction, I also took Sultana's (2007) proposition of "writing 'with' rather than writing 'about'" (p. 375) by inviting interpretations and opinions on my research during moments when I socialized my personal ideas and perceptions with other CSE practitioners. I will now explore the work done by each organization while reflecting on the different positionalities that I had with each of them. It is also relevant to point out that they also talk about CSE activism as *Education in Sexual and Reproductive Rights*, *Education in Rights*, and *Comprehensive Sexuality Education*, given its youth and rights-oriented focus, which are terminologies that I will be using interchangeably throughout the remaining sections of this research.

1. **Poderosas**

Poderosas emerged in 2018 in Isla Barú, Colombia, when its founder, Mariana Saenz de Santa María, participated in *Enseña por Colombia* (Teach for Colombia) where she identified that cultural stigmas around menstruation, contraceptives, and sex led female students to skip school or become pregnant before graduating high school. This teacher started organizing 'circles,' which is now Poderosas' main pedagogical proposition, where she brought female students together to talk about menstruation and contraception, while creating a safe environment for them to ask questions related to sexuality. These circles evolved into a space for teenagers to learn and inquire about sex and gender, revealing the student's interest in wider themes that touched on social, cultural, and political aspects around sexuality. Questions about sexual diversity, gender-based violence, abortion, intimate partner violence, romantic love, rape culture, consent, healthy love, and violence prevention surfaced during circles, pushing Mariana to expand her teachings and solidify her pedagogical approach. Since then, Poderosas grew into organizing spaces to talk about sexual and reproductive rights, facilitating community-based 'circles.' The organization has been growing since 2018, currently operating in ten regions of Colombia and offering online workshops and meaningful social media coverage.

My positionality with Poderosas shifted around different interactions and settings since its members come from diverse contexts. During in-person events, most people came from upper-middle to upper class backgrounds as these events took place for fundraising purposes or were tailored to universities. Fundraising events usually had an attendance fee and academic events attracted students and professors. In these settings, I was read as middle-upper class or as a student, which made me mostly an insider to these spaces. Growing in a middle-class family in Colombia and having had the opportunity to finish high school and obtain my bachelor's degree outside of

Colombia, enabled me to connect to people during events as I had common experiences to set up a common ground for creating connections. This positionality allowed me to sympathize with them when explaining my research, which was often well received as people were also related to academic institutions. This class-based positionality was strengthened by being connected to La Universidad de los Andes in Colombia, which is an elite university and where I was an exchange student during my fieldwork. Being a student at a European university was also associated with prestige and credibility, which furthered my ability to connect with Bogotá's elite during events. This situation was also possible as I am read as a white Colombian, exposing how class and race categories overlap in Colombian society.

Even though I was able to access certain spaces organized by Poderosas due to class privilege and my student status, I was also perceived as an outsider since I did not have any direct connection with the NGO and thus passed as an intruder in spaces where people did not know me. This outsider positionality during in-person events was partly linked to class and age categories, as I was not acknowledged as a potential donor and was not related to a family that is recognized as part of Colombia's elite circles. My outsider positionality became more apparent during online interviews since interlocutors were in different regions of Colombia. When speaking with people from Cali, Barú, Urabá, and Isla Barú, being recognized as someone from the capital was inevitable, as my accent, level of education, and institutional associations carried interpretations of regionality, class, and race. Although this perception brought up limitations as the urban/rural dichotomy influenced my ability to relate to the contexts where interlocutors were from and worked in, I was also able to connect at personal levels to certain situations of violence that they described, as I had witnessed them while facilitating CSE workshops with JST, by having lived in different regions of Colombia when growing up, and by being a queer woman in the country. Being

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read as a Colombian woman also facilitated my interactions with Poderosas as most people identified as female, allowing me to relate to common experiences of gender-based violence.

2. Niñas sin Miedo (NSM)

Niñas sin Miedo emerged in Soacha, Cundinamarca, Colombia, after its founder, Natalia Espitia, biked around Bogotá D.C. during the International Women's Day with a sign that stated: "I want a country with girls without fear." For Natalia, learning how to ride a bike after surviving a situation of sexual violence in Buenos Aires became a symbol of freedom. Natalia started to perceive biking as a form of reclaiming public spaces and becoming more confident and autonomous under situations of fear in the streets. This symbolic meaning attached to biking led Natalia to found NSM in 2016 to support women in becoming self-assertive with themselves and in public spheres. Since then, NSM has empowered young girls through sports, specifically biking, while teaching sexual and reproductive rights and violence prevention. NSM's pedagogies combine interactive workshops with sport sessions, which are planned by volunteers and staff members and adapted to two main groups: "Edu Peques" (Young girls aging from 5 to 11 years-old) and "Edu Grandes" (Teenage girls aging from 12 to 18 years-old).

I engaged in participant observation with NSM between August and November of 2023 where I was a volunteer in the *Edu Grandes* team. During this 4-month period, I attended planning meetings for the "Inspiración" group every other week prior to biweekly CSE workshops. Planning sessions happened via Google Meets and they were each facilitated by a different member of the team and scheduled through a WhatsApp group chat, where most planning took place after activities were brainstormed and duties assigned. The overall themes of sessions followed NSM curricula, however, we decided collectively on pedagogical approaches which enabled us to explore volunteer's ideas and interests. We also had to plan around the days that were designated

for biking, orienting the activities planned for certain days. Exercises with the bike took place once a month in the "Inspiración" team, however, students also used the bike during other sessions throughout the week, not only on Saturdays when we facilitated our workshops.

My positionality with NSM differed from Poderosas as I was volunteering in-person for them and consequently interacted on a weekly basis with other volunteers, staff members, and the Soacha community. Members of NSM perceived me as a student which gave me an insider positionality as most volunteers are also students, but also an outsider positionality as coming from a foreign university positioned me as someone who was short-term at the NGO. Community members and NGO's recipients perceived me as an insider as I came to their community representing NSM. However, I was also recognized as privileged given that I was coming from Bogotá and was also read as white. Soacha is known for being an underprivileged area on the outskirts of Bogotá and thus living in Bogotá is already associated with class privilege. In relation to students, volunteering in the quality of teacher presupposed hierarchies of power in my interactions with them since I was a figure of authority in educational spaces. Although being recognized as a teacher gave me insider and outsider positionalities, I connected with students by virtue of being a woman as they all were female, which also shaped how some of them perceived me as a role model. Being a woman allowed me to engage with students at personal levels as they also felt comfortable talking with me about gender and sexuality, as I was not read as a man. Although this gender-based connection was useful to engage with girls, it might have also limited the ways they talked to me about topics related to sexuality, taking for granted my knowledge of some of their experiences.

3. Jóvenes sin Tabú (JST)

Jóvenes sin Tabú was founded in 2021 after Jesús Pinzón Ulloa and myself were awarded a *Davis Projects for Peace[1]* grant to organize a summer camp on comprehensive sex education with high school students in Colombia. The application to this grant emerged from Jesús and I personal interests in preventing gender-based violence. These motivations were prompted by how we witnessed rape culture in our schools when growing up, and the increasing suicide rates among LGBTQI+ teenagers in Colombian schools during that year. To achieve these goals, JST connected a group of 35 volunteers, developing into the creation of a collective of young activists who believed in the importance of promoting sexual diversity and gender justice in Colombian schools. Ever since, JST embraced a horizontal organizational structure that operated on a volunteer basis for the design, planning, and execution of projects. People got involved either as content developers, graphic designers, pedagogical content creators, facilitators, or managing logistics. JST's educational approach initially piloted the pedagogical materials developed by *Cuerpxs, Identidades & Discriminación* (Bodies, Identities, & Discrimination), which gave grounds to JST's model of cooperation with different collectives and nonprofits. Since its creation, JST has supported pedagogical processes through workshops, school visits, and intense community-based spaces such as summer camps.

My positionality in JST is unique as I co-founded the collective and thus have been engaged with all its activities since its formation. Having this insider perspective has provided me with an outlook on how pedagogical processes come into existence from within the organization, the motivations behind the collective's activities, and the limitations and challenges faced during

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[1] The Davis Projects for Peace is a global program that funds community-centered projects carried out by young adults, and that respond to the world's most pressing issues.

workshops. Although Jesús and I had the role of coordinators, a sense of horizontality was often encouraged as each member had a different expertise and thus contributed to the collective accordingly. This position enabled me to strengthen and build personal relationships with members of the collective, making fieldwork and interviews smoother as I knew all interlocutors in the quality of friends. Since we also spent time together outside of the setup of JST, including during my fieldwork in Bogotá, I had a preliminary idea of their understanding of CSE and how they perceived it in relation to peacebuilding. Even though this insider positionality facilitated my interactions and conversations with interlocutors, members of the collective also come from different socioeconomic backgrounds which shaped relations of power and interpersonal dynamics as different members identified as indigenous, trans, working class, middle class, or male. These identity categories did not matter so much when working together towards a common goal, but they became more apparent when I interacted with them individually and during interviews as I adapted to the spaces in which each of them felt comfortable inhabiting. Therefore, conversation settings varied from going to coffee shops in privileged areas of Bogotá, to sitting in a park and grabbing a beer, getting lunch at a "corrientazo" restaurant, attending a public library in the center of the city, or getting an "arepa" while walking around the city. These environments were limited to interlocutor's class positionalities as they always proposed where meetings would take place. Most times I offered to pay; however, this dynamic was also shaped by gender and class structures. Usually, male interlocutors would not allow me to pay as culturally it is not perceived as polite, whereas in relation to class, friends who struggled more financially would ask me if I could invite them lunch or pay for their coffee.

Even though my fieldwork was not focused on JST's activities during the time that I was in Bogotá in 2023, I still want to reflect on my positionality while facilitating pedagogical spaces

as a member of JST since I will be reflecting on these experiences in following chapters. This positionality also oriented how I related to and interpreted Poderosas and NSM's work as I had a preliminary idea of CSE's work from my engagement with JST. Jóvenes sin Tabú has organized two main pedagogical spaces: school visits in cooperation with a collective called *Empoderhadas* in Urabá during 2021, and a summer camp on CSE and peacebuilding named *Entretejiendo Juventudes* with students from Jamabaló and Pitayó, El Cauca, in 2022. I was an outsider to the regions where JST traveled for these pedagogical spaces as I did not belong to any of the communities where workshops were facilitated. Even though other members of the collective were part of these communities, which enabled the group to access these spaces, my positionality was determined by the urban/rural division inside of Colombia which comes with associations of race and class privilege. Since I am from Colombia's capital city and are read as white in Colombian society, I was an outsider to rural areas in which predominantly indigenous and afro-Colombian populations live. Dynamics of power implied in the urban/rural dichotomy were strengthened because I was coming into these regions as a facilitator and consequently as a figure of authority. Nevertheless, although these unequal structures were present in most contexts, I was also perceived as a figure of trust, specially by female-identified students who connected with me during workshops and activities given that in most spaces I was the only cis-gender woman facilitator. This gender-based positionality was close to how I was perceived in NSM sessions, however, not having a continuous role for a long period of time, as it was the case in NSM, restricted my ability to develop connections further. I also experienced this constraint with Poderosas, as I was mostly able to talk to interlocutors one time, limiting how much I got to know them at a personal level.

Research Limitations

The findings of this research are limited to the interpretations that I gathered from interviews and fieldnotes, narrowing the scope of this thesis to the spaces and information that each organization enabled me to access. Since I only had the opportunity to engage with three groups working on comprehensive sexuality education in Colombia, and even though these groups are key actors in the country's CSE's scene, these organizations are not exhaustive. Therefore, there are other groups advancing CSE in Colombia at different levels and thus the overall picture of how CSE is conceptualized, practiced, embraced, and received, as well as how CSE collectives perceive their work as a peacebuilding effort, is restricted and cannot be homogenized to the whole country. This non-generalizing quality is also justified in how all three organizations work in different regions of Colombia. Hence, it is important to recognize that each region is unique, showing the need to contextualize findings to different relations of race, class, gender, and sexuality. This process is done by CSE groups in relation to each region's culture, religion, sets of values, and cosmological perspectives, which shapes the standpoints from which interlocutors interpret CSE and reflect about it.

Additionally, as qualitative work is always influenced by the perspective and positionality of the researcher, this study is consequently (inter)subjective and confined to the interpretations of those in the field and interlocutors, and to my personal analysis and expositions. Given that I only held one in-depth interview with each interlocutor, a lot of the data comes from the interviewer's personal reflections and memories. Findings are also shaped by my personal engagement with CSE throughout the past years, which guides the ways I am looking at interlocutor's reflections. Furthermore, given that the focus of this research is on the experiences of CSE practitioners working on the ground, the scope of this thesis is constrained to personal anecdotes from CSE

workshops, which sometimes ignores the role of institutional and governmental frameworks in which education in sexual and reproductive rights takes place. Thus, the overall institutional context of sexuality education in Colombia and how it is approached by governments comes up during interviews, but it is not pondered in depth in this research, leaving this analysis for future studies.

Chapter 1: CSE in Practice - Conceptualizations, Pedagogies, and meaning-making Processes

This chapter will focus on understanding how education in sexual and reproductive rights in Colombia is interpreted and conceptualized, taking the efforts of Poderosas, Niñas sin Miedo (NSM), and Jóvenes sin Tabú (JST) as meaning-making experiences that define CSE by doing it. I will begin by examining the conceptual and practical understanding of CSE, demonstrating that in Colombia, CSE emerges in response to the gaps within traditional SE programs that have restricted curricula and hierarchical teaching methods. I will also highlight how CSE is contextually interpreted, which manifests in how each CSE group makes sense of its efforts. For this purpose, I will describe what CSE means to each organization and explore their definitions both relate to and differ from each other, accounting that in practice CSE takes on various shapes, leading to diverse interpretations of the definition of CSE. Therefore, in this chapter I argue that there is not a fixed definition for education in sexual and reproductive rights, even though there is a common ground regarding the essential components of comprehensive sexuality education to which CSE practitioners agree upon. To demonstrate this, I will analyze CSE's pedagogies, themes, and implementation as outlined by CSE activists during fieldwork and interviews.

What Comprehensive Sex Education isn't - Redefining Sexuality Education

Given that comprehensive sexuality education positions itself differently from traditional SE, I will now explore how CSE practitioners perceive their efforts as different in theory and practice. CSE embraces horizontal pedagogies in the creation of safe spaces where youth's agency and critical thinking is fostered as students are expected to become agents of social transformation. As evidenced by Escapil (2017) and Roa-Garca et.al. (2016), comprehensive sex education

originated as a response to conventional sexuality education programs that discussed sexuality from strictly anatomical viewpoints. Since SE was rooted on catholic beliefs that promoted moralizing agendas that reinforced heteropatriarchal norms through the ideal 'nuclear family' (Seoane, 2012), CSE in Colombia has surged as feminist activists advocated against perpetuating conventional paradigms of sexuality, as stated by Correa (2017). From my qualitative research, I observed that practitioners of CSE promote an understanding of sex education that recognizes sexuality as an experience that encompasses physical, emotional, social, cultural, and relational aspects. This holistic approach challenges traditional pedagogies used in SE as they fail to incorporate the integral perspective taken further by CSE, leading Poderosas, NSM, and JST to develop their own pedagogies. This evolution in SE and expansion of the meaning of sexuality has provided a common foundation for the progression of CSE both conceptually and practically. All three organizations that I interviewed perceived CSE as comprehensive insofar as it is 'holistic' and thus involves all aspects that surround individuals.

All members of JST, NSM, and Poderosas agreed that traditional SE, mainstream in Colombian schools, is restricted to only discussions on contraceptives, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), and teenage pregnancy. This limitation is strengthened by the absence of consideration for the social, emotional, and cultural qualities that influence these topics. In contrast, CSE practitioners regard these angles as crucial to understanding how sexuality and gender are shaped by social and cultural paradigms, inevitably impacting teenagers' life experiences. As expressed by a member of Poderosas:

> There are a lot of lessons that are chained. So, we as Poderosas who work sexual and reproductive rights with a gender focus, also work with socioemotional skills. That is to say, these things (sexuality and socioemotional skills) go together, they are not separate from one another, especially because Poderosas is comprehensive sexuality education, it has that comprehensive part. I cannot teach sexuality education without teaching

socioemotional skills because otherwise that wouldn't be comprehensive (Daniela, Poderosas).

This interpretation of what constitutes comprehensiveness in CSE demonstrates its concern with all aspects surrounding individuals. It acknowledges that while the anatomical component embedded in conventional SE is still addressed, this perspective should be embraced also from social, emotional, political, and cultural perspectives. This idea recognizes that human development occurs within intricate social, political, and cultural systems, implying that sexuality cannot be conceived in isolation of these structures. Therefore, education in rights must be situated and practiced contextually as people's sexuality is influenced by external paradigms that orient their ways of relating, sexual expressions, gender identities, and what they expect from others. As Daniela from Poderosas stated, conventional SE only encompasses "how to put a condom, what STDs are, and how pregnancy happens." Hence, CSE diverges from traditional SE by adopting a holistic approach that incorporates themes that recognize the psychological, interpersonal, relational, institutional, historical, and cultural aspects of sexuality.

While all interviewees agreed on CSE's holistic approach as pivotal in making SE comprehensive, there were differing ideas about how CSE addresses its social, emotional, and cultural qualities of CSE. The interviews indicated that individual experiences and engagement processes of CSE practitioners influence their interpretations of CSE. It seems that the roles held by each member within their respective organization shape their understanding of why CSE is necessary in a given context, how they perceive the work advanced by CSE and their organization's purpose, and the impacts that they believe CSE achieves at individual, community, and national levels. This idea proposes that the positionality of group members, not only as individuals but also within organizations, orients their interpretations of CSE. For instance, a member of JST who a teacher at a public school in Bogotá D.C. is also and has been an active

member of JST since its creation, emphasized that CSE is comprehensive because it considers all surrounding factors that enable people to access sexual and reproductive rights education. According to him, offering comprehensive education entails "to guarantee the conditions so that any person can access, and more than accessing, learn that they can live their own sexuality and develop within the conditions that any other person would do" (Javier, JST). This member of JST comes from an indigenous community in El Cauca, Colombia, where he has experienced and witnessed the effects of structural oppression. He has also seen how governmental neglect limits student's access to proper sexuality education, or even the access to it at all, which, leading to high rates of teenage pregnancy in his community and hindering teenagers' ability to envision themselves outside of heteropatriarchal expectations of the nuclear family. Therefore, for this CSE practitioner, addressing structural, economic, and sociopolitical conditions is crucial in assuring healthy environments where CSE can thrive.

In contrast, a co-mentor of Poderosas viewed CSE's comprehensiveness from a less structural viewpoint, highlighting its impact on individuals and communities. As previously mentioned, some practitioners believe that education in rights cannot be comprehensive without also teaching socio-emotional skills. This emphasis on individual and community dimensions of CSE was strengthened by Poderosas' co-mentor when she stated: "We (Poderosas) are not guarantors of rights. We are not an EPS [2], we are not a Fiscalía [3]… we also do not do accompaniment in guaranteeing rights, we are education" (Daniela, Poderosas). This view underlines how comprehensive sex education does not necessarily aim to reshape social and political institutions, although practitioners recognize the potential domino effect that could

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[2] EPS (Entidades Promotoras de Salud) refers to Colombia's public health insurance system.
[3] Fiscalía refers to the office of the attorney general of Colombia that is in charge of Colombia's judicial branch.

eventually influence institutional spaces in which rights are upheld. For this interlocutor, given that changing contexts of poverty, lack of accessibility, or legal procedures takes time and is beyond not the scope of CSE practitioners, focusing more on individual and communal levels where personal and interpersonal relations are impacted through education appears to have a greater short-term impact. This idea remarks how CSE activism cannot control all the conditions in which its efforts take place, limiting the breadth of engagement for CSE practitioners and organizations. It is also important to highlight that all CSE groups acknowledge that socio-economic conditions in Colombia reproduce systems of violence that CSE aims to address, making structural changes imperative for educational processes to be more efficient. However, since socio-economic and political conditions are not easily permutable, CSE's focus on the individual and communal levels allows for the possibility of social and cultural change through its youth-center approach, even in contexts where students are affected by violence and oppression that target their sexuality and gender expressions.

The integral quality of CSE also goes beyond its understanding of sexuality from social, cultural, historical, physical and psychological dimensions, as CSE's comprehensiveness is also interpreted in its pedagogical proposition. Given that students are the center of CSE's pedagogical efforts, teachings are organized around the needs of students and the contexts that they navigate. Therefore, education in sexual and reproductive rights embraces engaging and horizontal pedagogies that make students active participants in knowledge production processes, pushing Freire's (2000) critical pedagogies by challenging conventional teaching strategies that regard students as 'empty vessels' whose opinions, experiences, and contributions are not meaningful. During my engagement with all three organizations, I recognized how CSE's emphasis on youth

agency promotes student's reflections through horizontal learning spaces where opinions and ideas are shared in constructive ways. For instance:

> During the *Entretejiendo Juventudes* camp, carried out by JST in 2022, I co-facilitated a workshop on sexual violence identification and prevention with two other members of the collective. This session started with an activity that JST piloted from CID called *Violentómetro*, which is a concept first developed by the IPN (Instituto Politécnico Nacional) in Mexico City, and that was combined by JST with a four-corner exercise. Each corner represented a degree of severity, from lowest to highest, and students were asked to pick a corner that represented how serious they perceived different scenarios of violence that were read out loud. Consequently, we asked students why they picked a corner, facilitating discussions as they reflected about how normalized violence was in their communities. I witnessed how giving the space to students to justify their choices enabled a nonhierarchical learning environment, which became more evident when different participants changed from one corner to another after hearing their peers' thoughts.

This example illustrates how CSE's pedagogies ensure students' participation in knowledge production processes by acknowledging and validating their experiences and reflections. Consequently, CSE is not solely about delivering sexuality education curricula; it also involves including students in identifying needs, questioning normative beliefs, and devising solutions to patterns of control over experiences of sexuality and gender. As mentioned by David from JST, this aspect of CSE was evident when JST conducted surveys with students from Jambaló and Pitayó before the camp, as they helped JST identify students' needs to shape the program's curricula accordingly.

All interviewees agreed on the restrictive nature of conventional SE in Colombia, which typically relies on lectures and presentations that disregard student's opinions and engagement. This traditional approach does not recognize students as agential subjects capable of forming opinions and making decisions over their bodies. Karen from JST emphasized that these conventional pedagogies operate under the assumption that teenagers lack an understanding of how to navigate their sexualities, justifying the need to shape their behaviors to align with normative expectations surrounding sex and gender. Interviewees perceived that these unengaging

educational approaches happened because the end goal of traditional SE has been restricted to reducing teenage pregnancy rates in schools. This educational approach is thus perceived as avoiding the inclusion of students in conversations around sex, employing prohibition as a tool to perpetuate hegemonic sexuality and gender expressions through regulatory techniques such as fear and interdiction. A member of Poderosas, who used to be part of a sexuality education program at a school in Carepa, Urabá, before joining the NGO expressed:

> Before, the project (SE project in school at Carepa) was more like on paper, but it used visual stimuli, for example, posters about promotion and prevention. That is to say, like the stuff that they usually make in schools, when they come and bring a nurse and then talk about contraceptive methods and how to put on a condom, am I making sense? But alway, always on the surface, like we never deepened on these topics that nobody ever talks about (Viviana, Poderosas).

Consequently, CSE pedagogies go beyond having a one-time lecture on sexuality education that restrict stimulating environments for students to reflect on how they relate to their sexual and gender identities. CSE thus incorporates dynamic, interactive, contextualized, nurturing, horizontal, intersectional, and adaptable pedagogies. This idea resonates with Pherali's (2016) appraoch to education in peace as he believes that "the curriculum for peacebuilding should combine classroom-based interactions with practical activities that relate to social, cultural and political issues and are based in the local communities" (p. 199). Since CSE pushes a pedagogical approach that is contextualized and youth-centered, challenging everyday social, cultural, and political dynamics surrounding sexuality and gender through community-based pedagogies, I argue that CSE encompasses an education in peace model that incorporate sexuality and gender into bottom-up efforts of social transformation. This idea aligns with Pherali's understanding of education in peace as CSE's it was demonstrated that its pedagogies and curricula propose continuous and engaging learning spaces to delve with students into the social, cultural, emotional, physical, and political aspects of gender and sexuality.

Therefore, it becomes clear that comprehensive sex education programs are such by virtue of their broad thematic scope and interactive pedagogical methods, in contrast to conventional sexuality education initiatives. These differences delineate CSE as a contextualized project that encompasses the social, cultural, political, physical, and emotional dimensions of sexuality and gender. Moreover, CSE invites its recipients to become active subjects through horizontal and engaging pedagogies that foster discussions and reflections, thereby shaping the discourse surrounding CSE's themes. Taking this definition as the basis to understanding what CSE means and what it is doing in Colombia, I will now move into describing how NSM, JST, and Poderosas' approach sexuality education, highlighting their differences and commonalities, before situating CSE as a peacebuilding pedagogy in the subsequent chapters of this study. The contextual nature of CSE suggests that this pedagogy cannot be implemented universally and thus it requires situational grounding. Through the ethnographic research I conducted, I observed how differences and similarities among Poderosas, JST, and NSM become more apparent in their implementation processes and organizational structures, expanding the understanding of what CSE entails through their engagement in each context.

The following section of this chapter will delve into unpacking the different pedagogies utilized by CSE practitioners to draw out how goals are established and materialized, how they are shaped and reshaped, and how meaning is constructed through community-based practices that are both similar and distinct among all three CSE collectives. Examining CSE in real-world contexts is crucial, as I will demonstrate in the following sections how peacebuilding is fostered through the deconstruction of everyday interactions related to sexuality and gender. Hence, exploring the implementations of CSE is essential for understanding how peace is conceptualized and practiced by CSE activists.

Exploring Pedagogies and Themes in Sexual and Reproductive Rights Education - A Comparative Analysis

All organizations perceived CSE's interactive pedagogies as meaningful to encourage students' participation during workshops, strengthening youth's agency in their capacity to replicate CSE values within their communities (families, peers, friends, and other community members). This youth-oriented focus stems from how CSE practitioners believe that teenagers are society's future, shaping their pedagogies around the intention to guide students into developing critical thinking skills to become agents of social transformation. This "domino effect," as Davidfrom JST called it, is one of CSE's main goals and contributions to peacebuilding on the ground. CSE works towards re-configuring norms around sexuality and gender that determine everyday relations, making its youth focus an opportunity to seed new forms of relationality that are critical of patterns of victimization embedded in gender-based violent behaviors. To foster this social change process, CSE practitioners create 'safe spaces' for teenagers where they can share ideas, express feelings, ask questions, and be vulnerable. However, the ways these spaces are organized by JST, Poderosas, and NSM differ. Interviews suggested that these groups interpret and promote social change distinctively, which was also evident in how their workshops are facilitated when shaping processes of replicability. This section will unpack the differences and similarities among CSE pedagogies and curricula to exhibit how social transformation takes on different shapes.

Pedagogical approaches are influenced by the organizational models that orient the implementation of CSE workshops and how communities are involved by CSE practitioners. While NSM has a physical location in Soacha, ensuring accessibility to CSE workshops throughout years, JST organizes intense short-term educational spaces, and Poderosas instructs

activists, professionals, and students into becoming CSE agents in their communities. These three organizational models impact students differently as, for instance, Poderosas and JST rely on community leaders for continuity, while NSM is able to sustain the interest of community members through its physical location. Regardless of the institutional model, interlocutors identified that access to funding was the primary challenge to follow up on community-based projects, limiting their ability to guarantee replicability. Moreover, all CSE organizations adapt their curricula distinctively since they work with different populations. NSM adjusts curricula based on volunteer availability and students' trajectory, while JST and Poderosas adapt it upon demographic considerations. Between JST and Poderosas, the latter has a more fixed and established curriculum, enabling the NGO to have consistent goals in practice. Another significant difference is the ability to compensate staff members. NSM and JST are dependent on volunteers' work, while Poderosas' continuity, replicability, and impact is ensured from their capacity to have permanent employees who are remunerated. In the following, I will scrutinize in depth CSE's institutional arrangements and how it shapes their work, knowledge production, curricula, and replicability processes.

1. Institutional Frameworks among Comprehensive Sex Education Groups

Since Poderosas, NSM, and JST organize themselves differently, their ability to access certain communities, availability of facilitators, funding opportunities, and impact capacity vary. These differences are relevant because they determine how each CSE group engages at practical levels, shaping their impacts and ability to foster social transformation processes. While Poderosas is formally constituted as a non-profit that operates national wise, NSM and JST are more informal as the former is a localized NGO in Soacha and the latter is not institutionalized as they are a collective. This distinction is evident in Poderosas ability to have full-time employees, while NSM only has four full-time workers and JST operates solely on a volunteer basis. The capacity to

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remunerate people within organizations influences facilitation arrangements as, for instance, Poderosas has a selective selection process for mentors and volunteers, while NSM and JST rely on peoples' availability and interest. For example, when I connected with NSM in September of 2023 to become a volunteer, I was interviewed by the organization's volunteer coordinator, which gave me the impression that NSM had clear expectations from volunteers, as I was asked about my past experiences working with teenagers and my views on feminism and CSE. However, when I started volunteering with them, I realized that the NGO was struggling with receiving volunteer applications. From conversations with other volunteers, I noticed that NSM was grappling with attracting volunteers which pushed them to accept all volunteer applications, even if they did not have experience with CSE related pedagogies and curricula or came from unrelated academic backgrounds and levels of education.

In contrast, Poderosas requires a university degree for people to be considered for their mentorship training to become a mentor, which exhibits how they have the option to be more selective. Multiple interlocutors expressed how NSM's inability to remunerate volunteers impacts their workshops as changing facilitators frequently jeopardized the consistency and continuity of pedagogical processes. Struggling with access to funding was also an issue for JST, leading the collective to have a limited number of pedagogical spaces as they rely on volunteers for project planning and facilitation. From my personal experience in JST, it was evident that their work was contingent on grant applications, enabling the collective to compensate symbolic financial support, besides what grants often covered, which was transportation, food, and accommodation during pedagogical processes. NSM and JST's experiences indicate the importance of funding in ensuring the continuity of CSE processes, which Poderosas did not struggle with as they have access to an extensive number of private donors. Poderosas' financial stability was visible in their events, such

as their *Pizza Poderosas* fundraising event, in which I observed that the NGO's donors came from privileged backgrounds, since its founder seemed to have access to a network of people who belong to the country's elite.

Funding impacted JST and NSM distinctively as the former came into existence from a group of people who knew each other, enabling them to contact volunteers when funding became available; while the latter required constant support as their physical location needs volunteers to continue running. This sustained need of volunteers interrupted NSM's pedagogical spaces since changing facilitators influenced curricula implementation and students' response to pedagogical materials. During my fieldwork with NSM, I witnessed that participants complained when topics were repeated, decreasing their motivation during workshops. At the end of every session, we had a team meeting to reflect on what went well and what did not. During one of these meetings, other volunteers expressed that it was common for volunteers to not comply with NSM requirement of a six-month commitment, as they left the NGO before, leaving pedagogical processes incomplete. Furthermore, since NSM has one volunteer coordinator, the NGO was not able to follow up on all its activities, making it harder to give continuity to pedagogical processes that had started when incorporating new volunteers into the team. This situation led NSM to repeat pedagogical materials, which interrupted student's learning development.

As for pedagogical facilitation, Poderosas is constituted of mentors and co-mentors, where the former are more experienced since they are trained by the NGO, whereas the latter are workshop recipients who are motivated into being formed to become mentors in the future. Both mentors and co-mentors are compensated by Poderosas, and mentors are chosen through a virtual open call that prerequisites to hold a university degree and that charges a participation fee after being selected by the NGO. As stated by Daniela, Poderosas' education coordinator, once aspiring

mentors complete their training, they enter the NGO's database to be considered to facilitate future projects when they become available. The fact that mentors should have the capacity to cover training fees and be professional presupposes certain class privilege among Colombian society, as otherwise they would not be able to be mentors unless they go through the co-mentorship process. This quality of Poderosas is distinctive to JST and NSM as Poderosas' mentorship program ensures the availability of facilitators, the credibility of NGO's pedagogies, and consistency in their teaching approaches as all mentors are formed on the same materials.

The role of co-mentors in Poderosas also enforces CSE's 'domino effect,' which is addressed by NSM and JST differently. NSM's physical location allows the NGO to hold weekly activities, in which the NGO splits recipients into *Edu grandes* (girls from 12 to 18 years old) and *Edu Peques* (girls from 5 to 11 years old) after they sign up at the beginning to commit to attend the NGO's workshops. This registration is done with parent's consent, and it requires students to live in one of the ten neighborhoods inside of Soacha's *Comuna 4*[3]. Once students join the NGO, they are given the option to stay connected for as long as they want to, forging community relationships as students usually stay longer than a year. This way NSM ensures continuity, allowing the NGO to expect young women to replicate learnings within the Soacha community by orienting their everyday interactions and relations as they grow up. Conversely, JST's replicability is contingent to their ability to stay connected with communities since their pedagogical spaces are limited to short periods of time. This mode of engagement restricts the collective to foster long-term impacts as pedagogical processes are intense but temporary, leaving replicability as an expected outcome that is not measured over time.

JST's and NSM replicability goals rely on individual student's growth, aiming for teenagers to drive social transformation by sharing CSE learnings within their communities.

Although Poderosas shares the same goal, its institutional arrangement enables the NGO to materialize replicability more efficiently as they train community members to become mentors in their own communities. As Paula from Poderosas stated, the last stage of the NGO's mentorship consists in putting into practice pedagogical materials in the community spaces accessible to them. Viviana expressed that before becoming a mentor, she oversaw the sexuality education program at the school where she is a psychologist in Carepa, Urabá. During her training, Viviana started to incorporate into the school's SE program Poderosas educational materials. Having the opportunity to apply her learnings enabled Viviana to later establish the school's CSE platform. Students voluntarily register for this program or are invited to join if they are in vulnerable situations or demonstrate leadership qualities that can further promote CSE values within the school. The agential power of mentors and the ability of Poderosas to motivate students into becoming co-mentors after attending CSE processes is a way for Poderosas to strengthen its domino effect. Daniela mentions how co-mentorships become job opportunities in communities, enabling their goal of supporting students in building a "life project." Daniela reflected on how Poderosas believes that gender-based violence is reproduced in cycles of violence and poverty that hinder teenager's ability to envision their futures outside of war logics and heteropatriarchal expectations of marriage. Therefore, making mentorships a life prospect for students also attempts to address cycles of poverty by ensuring the presence of community leaders that give continuity to CSE's social transformation processes.

2. **Curricula, Knowledge Production, and Implementation Processes of Comprehensive Sexuality Education**

In this section, I will first outline the curricula utilized by each CSE organization, followed by an analysis of how these materials are influenced by factors such as age, gender, and

locality. This examination will demonstrate how CSE practitioners contribute to knowledge production and how external conditions impact the epistemic development of CSE. While Poderosas relies on a fixed teaching handbook adapted for representation purposes, JST's curriculum comprises workshops divided into modules, and NSM's curriculum is less detailed, allowing for changes by the NGOs volunteers. JST's workshops offer the flexibility to be taught within various timeframes, allowing the collective to adapt materials to different sociocultural backgrounds and time availability. Workshops are structured around the following subjects: ~~on~~ violence in sexo-affective relationships that includes topics of self-recognition and discrimination, sex/gender/pleasure systems, and romantic love myths; gender-based and sexual violence that comprises modules on GBV, violence against women, gender roles and patriarchy, heteronormativity, violence naming and identification, consent and its myths, rape and victimizing culture, and violence prevention and intervention; sexual and reproductive rights that incorporate themes of feminicide and romantic love, violence escalation, violence perpetuation, gender identity, sexual diversity, sexual health, reproductive rights, contraceptives and STD transmission, and voluntary interruption of pregnancy. Some of these topics are also included in NSM curricula that comprises the following ten modules: introduction to NSM, women in history, rights, gender, myths and realities of our bodies, sexual and reproductive rights, consent, violence, change leadership, and building future goals. These units are not followed linearly as volunteers choose how contents are implemented, which is informed by students' interests and trajectories.

Conversely to JST and NSM, Poderosas follows a clear curriculum that is taught in linear modules and constituted by three main sections: "Yo" (*Me*), "Yo y otrxs" (*Me and others*), and "La Sociedad y Yo" (*Society and myself*). The first module encompasses 5 sessions: "Somos mujeres, somos Poderosas" (*We are women, we are Poderosas*), on sorority; "Florecer y no

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desaparecer" (*To flourish and not to disappear*), on self-knowledge, recognizing emotions, and the dimensions of identity; "Mi cuerpo, mi territorio" (*My body, my territory*), on human rights and social/corporeal cartographies; "El poder de mi sangre" (*The power of my blood*), on female anatomy and menstruation; and "Más de 2000 días" (*More than 2000 days*), on menstrual self-care, menstrual health, and menstrual rights. The second module comprises six sessions: "Más hombres que machos" (*More men than macho*), on men's anatomy, positive masculinities, and relationality with men; "Más que sexo" (*More tha sex*), on virginity, desire, pleasure and erotism, puberty, and hormones; "Sí es sí, no es no" (*Yes is yes, no is no*), on sexual and reproductive rights with a consent focus; "Cuidar para disfrutar" (*Caring for enjoying*), on contraception and STDs transmission; "Derecho a decicir" (*The right to choose*), on the voluntary interruption of pregnancy (abortion), C-055 declaration of 2022[4], and desired maternities; and "Amor bonito" (*Beautiful love*), on healthy relationships and affective responsibility. The last module has five sessions: "Ni mi culpa, ni sin culpa" (*Not my fault and without guilt*), on gender-based violence and attention routes; "Juntos y revueltos" (*Together and scrambled*), on sexual orientation, gender identity, and LGBTQI+ history; "Quiero, puedo y no me da miedo" (*I want, I can and I am not afraid*), on feminism and gender equity activism; "Síganme las buenas" (*Follow me the good ones*), on leadership and future steps; "Mi primera aliada" (*My first ally*), carried out with student's mothers on topics of female anatomy, menstruation, gender roles, emotions, intimacy in the mother-daughter relationship, sexuality, and support systems.

CSE curricula is also tailored to participants' gender identities, as CSE practitioners address certain topics differently based on gender. While NSM exclusively works with young girls,

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[4] The C-055 declaration of 2022 states that women, girls, non-binary people, and trans men can voluntarily interrupt pregnancy in Colombia throughout the first 24 weeks of gestation.

as the NGO believes that most spaces in Soacha are male dominated and see the need to provide a space for girls, JST and Poderosas divide students into female and male groups depending on the workshops. Both Poderosas and JST recognize the importance of addressing topics such as menstruation and masculinities separately in groups with men and women. This approach aims to minimize the potential for discomfort or resistance to engaging with pedagogical materials. Andrés, a co-mentor at Poderosas who identifies as a man and participated in the organization's project on new masculinities, highlighted the relevance of providing men spaces to discuss and ask questions about masculinity. He emphasized that, pedagogically speaking, it can be challenging for teenagers to engage in conversations about "what being a man" entails with individuals who do not identify as men themselves. Andrés stated that discussing topics like masculinity with women, as teenage boys are still in the process of maturing, can make them feel attacked, leading to a loss of interest in workshops. David from JST, who identifies as a man, supported this idea when talking about the importance of including men in conversations about sexual and gender-based violence, while creating safe spaces for them to participate without feeling judged for how they articulate ideas. Interlocutors also highlighted the significance of having facilitators from different gender identities in these spaces, even if sessions were specifically tailored for men or women. These examples exhibit that both organizations take a binary understanding of gender when splitting groups. However, as Daniela from Poderosas explained, they allow students to choose groups based on the gender identity they relate to the most, even if they identify as non-binary.

Demographic qualities also play a significant role in shaping workshops, as CSE practitioners adapt their curricula to the populations they work with. Whereas NSM has a fixed approach since they only operate in Soacha, JTS and Poderosas customize educational materials

to different communities. This adaptability requires a unique knowledge production process as communities are involved in shaping organizations' pre-existing curricula. This process involves members from these communities who are part of facilitation teams, which is crucial because most CSE practitioners are from Colombia's capital and are unfamiliar with certain regions of the country, especially rural areas where racialized minorities are concentrate. For example, before the *Entretejiendo Juventudes* camp organized in 2022 by JST, the collective undertook a 'mapping' of El Cauca, the region where the camp took place. JST conducted surveys among high school students and teachers to identify their needs and interests, enabling the planning of pedagogical themes and activities tailored to what students deemed important. Topics such as school dropout, university access, involvement in coca plantations, and affiliation with armed groups and other illicit organizations surfaced from these surveys. This situation prompted JST to integrate these themes into the summer camp, maintaining its focus on CSE while connecting them to subjects like violence prevention and accessibility. To ensure a holistic approach, different NGOs and indigenous student activists were invited to lead workshops on topics beyond the collective's expertise. This mapping process is also done by Poderosas before they go to a new region, as mentioned by Daniela, to mitigate power imbalances inherent in the rural-urban dichotomy and class and racial hierarchies.

Consequently, all CSE organizations recognize the importance of engaging with communities by inviting team members from them to guide knowledge production processes, in addition to having representative pedagogical materials. However, despite efforts to adapt and contextualize CSE processes, hierarchies of power persist within CSE organizations. These groups operate within frameworks informed by urban politics, where western feminist and pedagogical paradigms influence the subjectivities of CSE practitioners and their expectations of workshops.

Poderosas, JST, NSM are constituted by members who are professionals, have been educated in prestigious Colombian universities, or attended universities outside of the country. Considering that Poderosas requires mentors to hold a university degree, NSM recruits student volunteers, and JST originated from university students, it is evident that pedagogical materials utilized by all three organizations stem from CSE practitioners' interactions with academia and thus western ideas. Moreover, most interlocutors also expressed that their interest in CSE activism resulted from their involvement with feminist, abortion rights, and LGBTQI+ organizations, prompting them to join CSE collectives as they resonated with their previous activism. This idea presupposes that CSE practitioners take further feminist, queer, and reproductive rights perspective that orient the epistemic grounds of CSE's curricula, implementations, and goals. Hence, CSE is situated in broader political projects, advocating for CSE from feminist, pro-abortion, and LGBTQI+ rights standpoints in Colombia.

JST claims in their mission to adopt a decolonial, anti-ableist, anti-capitalist, feminist, and queer approach to CSE, which contrasts Poderosas and NSM missions that align more with institutionalized expectations of liberal feminism. JST's political stance is visible in their workshops, which attempt to normalize queer and feminist struggles in intersection with race, gender, sexuality, and ability as overlapping systems of oppression. JST achieves this goal by conducting community-based workshops with marginalized populations affected by these oppressions and by including team members that embody these positionalities, allowing them to advocate for justice from their personal experiences. Karen from JST reflected on how her positionality as a transgender 'mestiza' woman who is visually impaired enables her own political stance during workshops. She takes forward a trans feminist, anti-racist, and anti-ableist agenda as she herself has experienced the forms of violence that she seeks to prevent. This idea was also the

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case of Juan and Sara, who identify as black, trans, and queer, when incorporating anti-racist and queer perspectives during reflections with students, who also belonged to populations that have been subjected to racial, sexual, and gender-based discriminations.

In contrast, Poderosas and NSM appear to be more influenced by western and liberal feminist perspectives, employing frameworks of empowerment and gender equality that align with discourses of liberal development and capitalism. This situation may result from how both organizations secure funding through grants sponsored by western institutions, which come with donors' expectations of promoting gender equality and peace under liberal ideals. For instance, during my time volunteering with NSM, Nike sponsored an event in where students were taken to a sports center, as the corporation was promoting a gender equality campaign that advertised that 'girls can also become sportsmen/women.' Although NSM was willing to participate in the event, they also did not have much of a choice as their funding and visibility relied on such collaborations. This example illustrates how NSM and Poderosas are embedded in transnational systems that influence their pedagogies, even if they are critical of the power dynamics within these interactions. Both NGOs incorporate decolonial approaches and criticize liberal feminist frameworks throughout their workshops, even if they navigate structures that push them to embrace liberal feminist ideals.

3. Pedagogies of Comprehensive Sexuality Education in Practice

Moreover, CSE takes on horizontal pedagogical spaces by making students active participants during workshops, applying Freire's critical pedagogies by fostering democratic spaces where students are recognized as knowledge holders. This approach is the common ground for NSM, JST, and Poderosas' educational strategies, but they also facilitate workshops differently. While Poderosas replicates what they call *education in sexual and reproductive rights*

circles, NSM accustoms sessions to *Edu Peques* and *Edu Grandes* on a weekly basis, and JST organizes school visits, online workshops, and intense short-term pedagogical spaces such as summer camps or weekend-long activities. As Andrés asserts, in Poderosas' circles everyone sits together on the floor, which is a structure followed in all workshops and locations. Circles last for two or three months, and they are usually three times a week, each session lasting three hours. He describes circles as:

> First, we do a warm-up activity, something recreational, where everyone can get involved to start building trust and break the ice. From here, we continue with a moment for meditation, to call it somehow, of complete attention, so that (participants) are focused on the topic that we are going to talk about… this helps everyone calm down the anxiety that we might be feeling. And then you could see more interaction among girls and boys and everyone. Throughout time, we all integrated more with one another.

Poderosas' circles are similar to how JST organizes its workshops, as both organizations minimize unequal power dynamics in the teacher-student relations by having engaging physical environments, encouraging community bonds, and promoting safety and openness. NSM achieves this goal through its continuous presence in Soacha; however, this setup poses a challenge to NGO as they struggle to maintained students' interest and engagement over time. I observed this when in workshops volunteers spoke more than students since they did not participate as they had been attending the NGO for long periods of time and consequently felt obliged to be there. Nevertheless, NSM physical continuity also promoted community bonds between older and younger students, fostering a sense of sorority to prevent violence as older girls were perceived as safe space and role models by younger students.

Conversely to JST and Poderosas, NSM's horizontality and sisterhood was also strengthened through their symbolic and practical meaning attached to biking. While I volunteered with NSM, some sessions were planned around learning and practicing biking, in relation to CSE topics. The bike was perceived by NSM as an opportunity to empower young girls as they could

transport themselves without depending on others. Moreover, CSE practitioners also utilize online resources to host events, trainings, panels, and workshops. For example, JST has organized multiple free online events, inviting students, activists, and young professionals to participate and learn about CSE. These workshops adapted modules created by Cuerpxs, Identidades & Discriminación CID to online platforms, enabling JST to pilot pedagogical materials and connect with activists from Colombia and Latin America. The possibility of sharing online spaces was perceived by Poderosas and JST as an opportunity to sustain ongoing efforts and make CSE materials accessible (Javier, JST).

Lastly, in contrast to Poderosas and NSM, JST organizes intense short-term CSE spaces materialized through the implementation of summer camps. This educational approach encapsulates the goal of fostering a collective identification and understanding of how violence, sexuality, and gender are deeply entrenched in Colombian society. For instance, the *Entretejiendo Juventudes* camp was piloted by JST to explore how collective meaning and solutions could materialize. The collective invited 27 high school students from Jambaló and Pitayò to stay at *Fundación Cultural Madre Tierra*[5] in El Cauca, Colombia, in 2022. This 10-day encounter explored themes of the body as a territory, violence conceptualization, historical memory and indigeneity, sexual violence, gender-based violence, menstruation, spirituality and pleasure, in relation to vocational opportunities, community-based projects, and the Colombian armed conflict. Through activities ranging from ceramics, movie screenings, hiking, theater, dancing, poetry, cartographies, and visitor presentations, participants got to meet students from different schools

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[5] Fundación Cultural Madre Tierra is a cultural center used for pedagogical, cultural, and recreational events that promote the reconstruction on El Cauca's social fabric and cultural development. White

which fostered a sense of community. This goal was attained as students collaborated in identifying shared experiences of violence and reflecting on their roles in responding to them.

Conclusion

This chapter explored the differences between comprehensive sexuality education and traditional approaches to SE, arguing that CSE's comprehensiveness entails the incorporation of a holistic approach to sexuality and gender, in which social, political, cultural, emotional, and physical dimensions are considered. This holistic quality implies that CSE is contextualized to the environments where it develops, given that social and cultural paradigms around sexuality and gender vary among communities. Therefore, CSE practitioners believe that involving communities in knowledge production processes and curricula development is crucial, as the goal of CSE is to transform violent behaviors that perpetuate normalized gender-based violence, making the need to understand violence in context crucial. To achieve this goal, CSE practitioners embrace horizonal spaces that are influenced by Freire's critical pedagogies, in which students are regarded as active participants in discussions and reflections, minimizing hierarchies of power implied in the teacher-student relation. Although CSE curricula is influenced by western paradigms of sexual diversity and gender justice, as its practitioners are immersed in academic environments where western knowledge is promoted, CSE still pushes a decolonial, feminist, and queer approach in its community-based focus on changing everyday behaviors. I argue that in these spaces is where peace is constructed, especially as CSE addresses violence reproduction rooted on sexual and gender power dynamics that impact the everyday lives of people and marginalized communities. That said, I will now move into scrutinizing how CSE practitioners recognize gender-based violence in the communities where they work, making evident the need of CSE as a peacebuilding practice in Colombia.

Chapter 2: Navigating Colombia's Conflict through the Lens of CSE and Gender-Based Violence

> This was the first time we conducted a workshop with a mixed group of students, having both boys and girls present, whose ages ranged from fourteen to seventeen years of age. From the beginning of the sessions, it was hard for the team to get the attention of teenage boys. When we got to the activity that I had to facilitate, in which we did a four-corner exercise and students had to categorize the degree of severity they perceived for different forms of violence. I remember reading "killing a woman (femicide)" and seeing how all girls went to the corner with the highest level of seriousness, whereas most boys were in less severe categories. Two of them stood next to the corner that read "it's normal, it happens." I was not personally prepared for this scenario. I didn't think that this could happen, and so I went ahead with the activity and asked them why they thought that. Their reply led me to question the values systems in the society where they lived in, and how normalized femicide was in Colombia. One of them replied: "I have killed a cow, I think killing a woman would be the same, I wouldn't find it so hard" while the other one said: "Sometimes conflict escalates because women are stubborn, so you get no other option." I couldn't respond. My colleagues jumped into the activity as I was astonished in the moment and did not know how to move the conversation forward. The girls in the room started to argue with these two boys, but it became apparent that girls who were white and seemed to come from privileged classes were the ones arguing, which also led me to question how much class was connected to normalized violence. After the workshop, we were all wondering if these two boys just tried to boycott the activity, or if they were being serious. The allegory of the cow and the woman did not leave my head ever since (JST, 2021).

I wrote this journal entry in 2021 while being a facilitator for JST when we went to Carepa, Urabá, Colombia. JST was collaborating with a small CSE group from Urabá called *Empoderhadas*, who invited us to implement multiple workshops at two schools in the region. Facilitating these spaces led me to realize that the entry described in my entry was not exclusive. During my interviews with Poderosas, NSM, and JST, I learned that other CSE practitioners related to this experience, as many of them worked with underprivileged communities that have been disproportionately impacted by the war in Colombia. Urabá is a region controlled by paramilitary groups whose right-wing politics shape cultural and social expectations of sexuality, especially through impositions of the hegemonic nuclear family. Situating the comments of the two boys in my journal entry in the context of Urabá helps to male sense of their comments on femicide, as these groups push forward

patriarchal moralizing projects through violent means. This situation has also been recognized by Colombian's Truth commission and the Center for Historic Memory, who argue that violence against women and sexual and gender dissidences was used and normalized as a correcting measure by paramilitaries (Correa, 2017).

Growing up in Colombia and in the capital city, I always thought perceived the war in my country as something alien to me, as it was talked about as a conflict that was happening only in rural areas. Reflecting on this time, the conflict with the FARC-EP was something that also traversed me and my family in multiple ways. I remember that my family traveled by car often, and every time we crossed a checkpoint, I would look out the window to see the boots of the person with the military uniform who stopped us. This was so intrinsic to me as rubber meant being part of the guerrillas and leather of the military, as I had been told since I was young. If the boots were rubber, I was instructed to hide in the back of the car with my sister, as during that time the FARC was forcefully recruiting children and my parents feared that they would take me or my sister. This memory leads me to question how Colombian society is characterized by a culture of fear that has impacted all Colombian households, regardless of class, race, gender, or urban/rural divisions. This idea is concluded int the Truth Commission reports, where it is stated that Colombians have been affected by war throughout generations, suggesting that everything that is studied about Colombia cannot be scrutinized without considering the country's condition of war, as conflict is not alien to Colombian society.

To understand how CSE emerges as a response to contextualized forms of GBV shaped by war dynamics in Colombia, this chapter will explore how CSE practitioners experience, witness, and make sense of situations of GBV that arise during workshops. These reflections come about from their engagement in different regions of Colombia, where each CSE collective implemented

distinct pedagogical approaches. As suggested by Cockburn's GBV continuum, GBV is deepened, (re)produced, perpetuated, and institutionalized during conflict (Giraldo & Montes, 2022, p.3). Given Colombia's continuum of war, GBV is understood by CSE practitioners in relation to this context. I will unpack this connection by looking at the following aspects in detail: the forms of GBV identified by CSE practitioners during workshops; the violence experienced by practitioners in the communities where they work, which speaks to the context's value systems; the ways in which CSE collectives interpret GBV; and how GBV in Colombia aligns with gender and war literature. This analysis will justify the need to scrutinize CSE as a practice that responds to a continuum of GBV shaped by war.

Gender-Based Violence in Colombia: Making Sense of Student's Contexts of Violence

CSE's goal is to reshape interpersonal and social dynamics of power around gender and sexuality, orienting its efforts to address the progression of GBV in Colombia's continuum of war. Based on the interviews and observations, I identified four main scenarios in which CSE develops: the context of internal displacement and migration, which impacts minoritized communities disproportionately; having family members who are part of armed groups, which rearranges family expectations and gender roles; structural inequality that prompts teenagers to participate in war dynamics; and direct violence carried out as a moralizing processes and regional control. I will now move to reflecting upon each of these scenarios to argue that CSE responds and reacts to these forms of GBV that were perpetuated and deepened during the Colombian conflict.

1. **Internal Displacement, Gender-Based Violence, and CSE**

Based on reports from the Colombian Truth Commission and the Center for Historical Memory (2022), around 26% of the Colombian population has been internally displaced during the conflict. Internal migration has predominantly occurred from rural areas into urban ones, often into biggest cities such as Bogotá, Medellín, and Cali. Most of the people who are forcefully pushed to flee are racialized communities such as indigenous and Afro-Colombian, as well as feminized populations such as women, children, and the LGBTQ+ identified. Both Poderosas and JST have worked with individuals who are victims of displacement, emphasizing during interviews how GBV is perpetuated across generations. This continuation occurs because processes of education and healing are not available to these individuals as they navigate the challenges of incorporating into a new society. Lorena from Poderosas stated:

> If I think of my family, all of them come from El Cauca. It is to say, I am "Caleña" (a person from Cali), but all my family is "Caucana" (People from El Cauca) and they came displaced from El Cauca… and I believe that most people in Cali are not from here, they are not from Cali, they come from other places, or at least my family. So, I think that that affects, because the same way our parents and our grandparents come from those kinds of violence that are performed because of the armed conflict, they are also replicated during children's upbringing because of that surviving instinct. So yes, I do think that the armed conflict has to do with that… because these forms of violence are also charged with many myths and I believe that regarding sexuality, it is important to also break those myths that come with the body and with our ways of relating to others.

For Lorena, internal displacement was perceived as something so common that it prompted questions about how individuals cope with this process. As dynamics of survival seem to be passed down throughout generations, Lorena highlights how violence is embodied, enabling the reproduction of GBV through interpersonal relations and social processes. The embodiment of violence was also identified by JST as they emphasize during workshops the importance of recognizing the "body as a first territory," which is an idea also used by Poderosas during decision-making workshops. During the *Entretejiendo Juventudes* camp, JST facilitated a cartography of

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the body activity. During this workshop, students were asked to draw their own silhouette and reflect on how their bodies became what they are materially and symbolically. This exercise prompted a conversation on the role of experiences shaping the body, which brought up themes of nurturing and violence. This reflection was taken further by students when they recognized that the situations of violence experienced by them took place within their close circles, especially within their families.

Lorena's contemplation and JST's cartography exercise reveal how violence is not only embodied, but also enabled in contexts where violence becomes the norm. As many communities in Colombia have been and continue to be affected by war, violence has become the norm for many families. This proposition is also explained by Cockburn (2010) as she argues that violence is institutionalized, shaping gender dynamics in the daily lives of people (p. 141). These behaviors are learned and embodied by individuals and enforced by institutions like the family. This argument helps grasp how violence travels as bodies move, showing how even if CSE takes place in communities that have not been directly impacted by war, violent patterns of behavior and relationality are passed down, as María suggested. This idea is important for this research as CSE intends to reshape sexual and gender relationships that guide everyday interactions. As GBV becomes embodied and reproduced through mundane interactions, violent forms of relating need to be unlearned and deconstructed, which is the goal of CSE.

2. **Family Relations in the context of War and CSE**

Taking forward the example presented by L,rena interlocutors also stressed how dynamics of war reconfigured family structures perpetuated through heteropatriarchal organizations of social life. Andrés from Poderosas shed light on the implications of men being expected to join an armed groups and the consequences this held for young boys within families. He said:

If one thinks about it and what happens with the victims of the armed conflict and as a result of displacement, for example, a family that is victimized by the armed conflict, they kill the father, and then the mother is left alone with the children. Boys are automatically expected to take on the role of the "caregiver," which is something that he shouldn't be doing, but because of how marked beliefs are, the boy only believes that it's his duty to protect all his family, his mother, his sisters, or whatever. So there is a continuous thought in these vulnerable areas in which, for example, men do not have the belief that they can be taken cared of or of, for instance, of saying that "I will go to university" or "I want to study" or "I want to do that," but instead it is a mentality directly of "I will grow up, I will be strong, I will provide for my family, I will take care of it, I will work." So yes… the armed conflict, I feel, has triggered that "machismo" and all those believes are perpetuated even more, it hinders that people, in this came talking about men, can broaden their panorama of how to look at the future, or about how they think things could improve.

While Andrés's description care work ignores the historical role of women's involvement in/relegated to care work, it is important to acknowledge his recognition of the role of men as 'providers' and 'safeguards' of the family. This reflection suggests a different dimension to care work that is important to consider. Andrés reflects on how the social and cultural expectations of men materialize in how boys are expected to become "the man of the family" in the absence of other male figures. This situation pushes boys to adopt masculine roles characterized by physical strength, financial provision, resorting to violence, and authority. These qualities persist because when fathers and other male figures join different armed groups, and when they are killed in combat, boys are pressured to assume their father's responsibilities, including caring of the family. This circumstance results in boys embodying macho behaviors or engaging in combat, as they are socially conditioned to believe that being a 'good man' involves these actions.

The example described by Andrés also impacts the nuclear family further, as suggested by Karen from poderosas who expressed that women are left with the responsibility of taking care of children when men go to combat, even if boys are forced into embracing cultural male roles of 'protecting' mothers and siblings (McKay, 2009). Although the Center for Historical Memory recognizes that a significant number of women joined guerilla groups in the Colombian conflict,

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this phenomenon described by Andrés highlights how the absence of men within families was normalized. André's reflection reveals that family dynamics feed ideas of militarized masculinity, as the idea of the 'army man' is promoted in social the institution of the family, its divisions of labor, and individual's subjectivity (Hutchings, 2008, p. 393). In this context, constructions of hegemonic masculinity are advanced by masculine expectations of behavior for boys, and in how war is portrayed as appealing to children by their parents. The impact of these situations is scrutinized further by Andrés when he mentions that social expectations of masculinity hamper children's possibilities to envision themselves outside of war dynamics. As Andrés stated, boys during workshops often express that they do not see the possibility for them to continue studying, as they either need to take care of their families or find violence more attractive. This situation exposes how war structures orient men's social roles, shaped within family organizations that establish fixed gender dynamics.

3. Structural Violence, GBV, and CSE

The imposition and perpetuation of hegemonic gender roles was associated with prominent structural violence in regions, primarily rural, that experience governmental neglect. This idea suggests a correlation between increased GBV and structural inequality. Andrés stressed how his example of boys fulfilling men's roles within the family was distinguishable in vulnerable communities, as he believes that 'machismo' behaviors are deepened by conditions of poverty. He asserted:

> Something that we need to contemplate is that clearly in the area where we are, in the Distrito de Aguablanca (District of Aguablanca), I mean, in that area specifically in which there is so much vulnerability, it is where machismo is more visible. And these behaviors harm everyone. This I got to think about. Let's say in regard to the social, in areas where there is more economic vulnerability and in terms of security, is where these (machismo behaviors) are replicated the most, this problem of machismo and where it is harder to

eradicate, of not being able to change this concept that we have. This I actually noticed when I was there.

This argument exposes how poverty, deeply intertwined with war and one of the main catalysts for the Colombian conflict, as guerilla groups emerged in response to governmental neglect and social inequality, is linked to situations of GBV. For Andrés, conditions of poverty perpetuate GBV through machismo relations. This idea was also raised by Paula from Poderosas who reflected on the connection between poverty and GBV. Paula described how teenage girls' life project in Isla Barú, located in the south of Cartagena de Indias, is to become pregnant before finishing high school, leading them to drop out of school and got married, and eventually dedicating their lives to having and raising kids. She stated that this situation was common given the extreme conditions of poverty in Barú, where there is limited access to contraceptives and only one medical center. This situation pressures families to encourage daughters to marry, shifting financial responsibilities onto husbands. Paula thus acknowledges that poverty makes women more vulnerable to experiencing sexual and domestic violence, as they are also economically dependent on husbands.

Structural inequality consequently perpetuates hegemonic gender roles, leading teenagers to embody social and cultural behaviors that normalize GBV. Whereas this cycle happens when boys take on men's positions or by girls attaining expectations of reproduction and marriage, the family appears as a common space where GBV is socially enabled in Colombia. David from JST pondered on this idea when talking about the connection between GBV and the Colombian conflict, where he argued that GBV instigates students to leave their homes and join armed groups to escape violence in their families. David stated:

There are types of violence that are very normalized and well, let's say that this is something that is very prevalent in rural communities, more than anything, let's say, where children are violated by their fathers, by relatives, but as it is something that generally is

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not recognized as violence in general as part of the overall violence of the armed conflict, like it does not receive much attention. And for example, because many times these things are overlooked, they are not paid much attention to, sometimes they are even triggers for a child, let's say, for a child, girl or young lady, to end up in the ranks of, let's say, the armed groups. For example, many times in their families, they do not find anyone to talk to, not with their parents, nor at school, and because it is something that is not given much attention, one does not know how to have that kind of conversation.

David shows how GBV in El Cauca was magnified by expectations around gender performance and a trigger to perpetuate the conflict in Colombia. This information is validated by Colombia's Truth Commission who recognized that women joined the FARC-EP because this groups provided them with a sense of freedom and equality, as participating in combat placed women as equal to men, demonstrating how women saw the FARC-EP to escape heteropatriarchal life. The commission concluded that ex-combatant women who reincorporated into society after the peace accords expressed how they had to re-adapt to feminine gender norms that presuppose marriage, reproduction, and care work. Nevertheless, although the FARC-EP symbolized freedom for some women, it was also concluded by the commission that GBV also took place within the FARC, suggesting that heteropatriarchal norms persisted within this guerilla group, but they took on different forms. Moreover, Cristian added that years ago in El Cauca, teenagers were forcefully recruited by armed groups; however, during recent years, students voluntarily dropped out of school and joined guerilla groups to escape violent family situations. These situations are encompassed by CSE's curricula as GBV prevention is crucial to the project of understanding sexuality and gender as social, cultural, and political experiences. Since CSE aims to reconfigure interpersonal dynamics that are sexual and gendered, rethinking the role of the family is important to envision new ways of relationality.

4. The Instrumentalization of GBV for Moralizing and Correcting Purposes

The Colombian Truth Commission acknowledged that GBV, especially against the LGBTQ+ community, was part of moralizing agendas that sought to impose norms around gender and sexuality. These correcting measures were defended on the grounds of protecting the heteropatriarchal nuclear family, categorizing anything outside of it as deviant. During the *Entretejiendo Juventudes* camp, themes of sexual diversity and gender identity were discussed in the context of rurality with the assistance of *Colectivo Viraje*, a collective that documents experiences of LGBTIQ+ individuals in El Cauca. During workshops, Juan, a facilitator of JST, shared his personal story as a gay man growing up in a small town in the Colombian Pacific that has been impacted by paramilitary control. He talked about how he was forced to flee his town and move to Cali as paramilitary groups used to distribute pamphlets stating that 'gay people' had to leave the town otherwise they would be violently treated. Juan shared that paramilitary groups performed public displays of violence, where people read as being part of the LGBTQI+ community were terrorized in public squares to set up an example to others about what would happen to them if they 'were gay.' Paula from Poderosas also reflected on this moralizing agenda, sharing that paramilitary groups used to show up during workshops in Urabá to ensure the topics did not promote 'deviant' sexualities and gender expressions.

Paula talked about her personal engagement with Poderosas as a workshop participant during school, expressing that Poderosas' educational spaces led her to realize her pansexual and polyamorous identities. She reflected on how Poderosas guided her into coming to terms with her sexuality, as the NGO did not stigmatize forms of relating romantically and sexually outside of heteropatriarchal arrangements. She consequently stated that given the violent conditions in Urabá against women and LGBTQI+ individuals by paramilitary groups, she decided to move to

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Medellin where she can live these parts of her identity more freely. This process of accepting one's sexual orientation and gender identity after attending CSE workshops was also shared by Andrés from Poderosas, who stated that during workshops he started to explore his bisexuality. Andrés expressed that before engaging with Poderosas, he did not have the space to discuss topics related to sexual orientation, as masculinity and heteronormativity are deeply enforced in Cali's society.

The four examples outlined in the preceding sections align with scholar's proposition regarding the direct connection between war and GBV in Colombia, adding into the conversation how CSE emphasizes the importance of examining sexuality and SE within a continuum of conflict and normalized GBV. Whereas in the context of internal displacement, reconfigurations of the nuclear family and gender roles, structural inequality, or moralizing agendas, it appears that GBV was deepened during the war, as concluded by Truth Commission and the Center for Historical Memory of Colombia. For this study, it is relevant to recognize that CSE practitioners work in this context of a continuum of violence and navigate power dynamics that affect directly workshop participants. These conditions make CSE crucial to diminish violent gender and sexual norms imposed on teenagers. Before expanding on this argument, I will first move into scrutinizing how CSE practitioners are also met with social resistance, as these experiences also speak to the contexts where CSE develops.

Resistance to Comprehensive Sex Education: Cultural and Social Responses to CSE and its Practitioners

> I felt really alarmed, like with people. Do you remember when we went to print some copies and I said "marica" Manu isn't such a panther? Manu, I'm telling you, because I felt like I was saying that in case there's more direct violence. Well, it's going to happen. Well, I said I'll react anyways, I'll let myself be killed, if necessary, but if one can avoid those insecurities, it's better. And well, because besides being a teacher with all the intention,

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cool, but it doesn't save us, one doesn't stop being the transgender teacher, so one cannot escape from those violences that exist in those contexts (Karen, JST).

This story was shared by one of JST's facilitators when reflecting on how she felt when JST went to Urabá in 2021 as transgender woman who is visually impaired. She talked about her feelings of insecurity while walking around the streets of Apartadó, which is a region controlled by paramilitary groups, as her presence raised questions about what the collective was doing in the region. I was present during this pedagogical process, which enabled me to witness how alarming our presence in Urabá was for different sectors of the population. When we arrived at Carepa, JST rented a car to travel across different towns in Urabá. I remember that we had complications with communicating with the person who rented us the car, as he seemed suspicious of our presence. Every time we talked to him, the paramilitary atmosphere of Apartadó felt very vivid, as we felt that someone was watching us from different corners as we walked. This social resistance to our presence became even more visible when the director of the school where we implemented workshops came to check our curricula. He said that he wanted to ensure that we were only talking about menstruation and that nothing 'too radical' was going to be taught. This idea of radicality is perceived as either talking about abortion rights, LGBTQI+ related topics, or violence prevention, as it is culturally believed that having conversations on these themes 'turn teenagers gay' or 'pushes them to have sex,' as Paula from Poderosas suggested.

Social and institutional resistance to CSE workshops experienced by CSE practitioners in taught in spaces like Urabá or El Cauca were linked to the Colombian conflict as norms around sexuality and gender are regulated by armed groups. Paula stated that paramilitary groups often inspected what they were doing, leading Poderosas to frame and mask their work in socially accepted frameworks such as menstruation education. Given that paramilitary groups are also in contact with schools, as Viviana from Poderosas and Karen from JST alluded to, academic

institutions were not perceived as safe spaces for CSE practitioners. Vivivana shared that when she started to incorporate Poderosas' curricula in the SE program at the school in Carepa where she works as a psychologist, the institution decided to stop the program as they did not agree with the curricula. Although this interlocutor found a way to continue facilitating CSE workshops at the school, she started minding how topics were introduced to community members, as families also expressed disagreement. Viviana further reflected that pedagogical processes are often constrained when families challenge students' learnings by invalidating CSE through arguments that take further violent paradigms of sexuality.

The institutional connection between armed groups and schools, as a form of social control over populations, exposed how CSE practitioners and academic institutions are restricted in their response to situations of violence. Interlocutors from JST, NMS, and Poderosas talked about how students often share personal experiences of abuse during workshops. Given that these groups work in predominantly violent contexts, often times, practitioners were not able to respond to specific situations, as doing something could threaten internal power dynamics that involved armed groups. For example, when JST was in Urabá in 2021, a case of sexual abuse was shared by a student, in which the town's priest was implicated. We decided to navigate this situation by having the school's psychologist activate the regular procedure for sexual violence at the school. However, the school's psychologist and the student's mother received different threats from paramilitary members, as they were connected to the church, leading them to stop any process that could result in some sort of justice for the student. This situation resonates with Paula's proposition of how paramilitary groups regulate all aspects of social and political life in Urabá, as she states "the paracos (paramilitaries) are and make the law," limiting the scope of CSE in certain contexts.

This form of control is exacerbated by expectations on teenagers by paramilitary groups, as teenage boys are perceived as potential future members while teenage girls are seen as potential partners. Paula from poderosas stated that in Urabá it was common for fifteen-year-old girls to marry sixty-year-old men. It was also known to teenage girls that they could sell their virginity before turning fifteen, as paramilitary members would pay for it. These cultural and social conditions become a challenge for CSE practitioners to work, as breaking these paradigms around sexuality and marriage challenged social and cultural beliefs established throughout years. Paula also reflected on how normalized GBV became more apparent to her when she first attended Poderosas's workshops as a participant, as all girls raised their hands when someone asked if any of them had ever experienced a situation of sexual abuse. Furthermore, resistance towards CSE is also visible in areas where guerillas and the military are present. David and Javier from JST expressed that during the *Entretejiendo Juventudes* camp, JST had to be careful with how they advertised the program, as the possibility of having armed groups intervening was conceivable. Since guerillas' future is contingent on teenagers joining their groups, they perceive educational projects as a threat as they do not want teenagers to conceive their lives outside of guerilla life or as part of the drug trafficking structure in El Cauca. In contrast to paramilitary groups, whose right-wing politics promote heteropatriarchal moralizing projects, guerilla groups regulate territories as they benefit from teenagers' engagement in coca plantations, hindering change in youth's subjectivity.

Conclusion

The ways gender-based violence has been witnessed and experienced by practitioners of CSE in the context of Colombia reveal the inherent connection between GBV and conflict. They also show the need for CSE and its role in the socio-political context of Colombia as a pedagogy

that reacts to and addresses normalized GBV that aggravates during war. As I showed throughout the chapter, different armed groups replicate GBV through cultural and social institutions that replicate violent behaviors that are embodied and enacted. This is the context in which CSE practitioners are operating. Given CSE's situated approach, CSE responds to the needs of a society that has been deeply wounded by the effects of conflict. To address these needs, CSE collectives navigate power structures of war that have existed throughout generations in Colombia. CSE is thus a pedagogy that reacts to the forms of GBV perpetuated during the Colombian armed conflict, raising now the question of how CSE contributes to peacebuilding. The following chapter will delve around the relation between CSE and peacebuilding, arguing that CSE takes forward Colombia's peacebuilding efforts from a feminist, queer, and decolonial approach to peace, while challenging notions of liberal and post-liberal peacebuilding.

Chapter 3: Comprehensive Sexuality Education as a Peacebuilding pedagogy - A Decolonial, Feminist, and Queer Approach

On the "Día del amor y la Amistad" (Valentine's Day) celebrated in September in Colombia, NSM organized an event on the topic of sorority. Edu Peques and Edu Grandes were brought together, and each girl was asked to write a letter to another young woman, without knowing who they would give it to. During the event, we sat down in a circle and one of the volunteers facilitated a conversation on the meaning of sorority and feminist solidarity. When students were asked about what they understood by sorority, one girl raised her hand and shared that one day at school, a group of boys were mocking a group of girls by lifting their skirts and touching them in a "joky" way. This girl said that she felt uncomfortable seeing the situation, especially because at the NGO they learned about consent, and it was clear to her that these girls were not consenting to what they boys were doing. This girl decided to intervene in the situation by going and telling the boy that what they were doing was not ok. She shared how the boys continued mocking them, but that to her sorority was what she did at that moment. She stood with her female friends against something she perceived as wrong, putting her body to defend her classmates. This story prompted other girls in the activity to share similar stories, leading them to talk about experiences of sexual assault and violence and how feeling that they had friends at the NGO with who they could rely on and talk about these situations was the meaning of feminist solidarity and sorority. Not feeling alone. Young girls expressed that feeling that older girls from NSM protected them from experiencing violence, or that hearing their stories was a learning opportunity for them as they did not want to experience the same, was a bond enabled through the kind of space that we were sharing while having this discussion.

I wrote this journal entry while I was volunteering for NSM in September of 2023 as part of my fieldwork. Being part of the space that I describe in this story prompted me to question how peacebuilding was promoted by CSE organizations. At that time, I realized that NSM aimed to change everyday dynamics of fear experienced by girls, transforming the ways they respond to GBV by equipping them with tools to identify it. I recognized that reshaping girls' subjectivities and daily behaviors was the outcome of CSE workshops, which resulted in fostering bonds rooted in sorority and feminist solidarity. Witnessing this dynamic during my time at NSM reminded me of the time that I went to Urabá with JST in 2021, where we organized a workshop for young girls where they made vulvas with plasticine. This activity promoted subjective changes in students to address the perpetuation of everyday violent behaviors, as the workshop prompted students to learn

about female anatomy to deconstruct social and cultural stigmas around female body parts. In Colombia vulvas are called things like "la cosita," "cuca," "ahí," "chocha," etc, which often impedes girls from naming forms of violence as they do not know their bodies and where people should not touch them without consent. This idea was also shared by Daniela's from Poderosas who reflected on how students need to learn about how to call body parts by their actual name, as she stated that "we cannot protect what we don't know," pushing students to change the ways they relate to others and society.

This goal of reshaping everyday interactions, behaviors, and subjectivities while building community-based bonds and feminist solidarity brought forward by JST, NSM, and JST is the focus of this chapter. Since my overall argument is that CSE as a pedagogy essentially promotes peace, I will move into unpacking CSE's connection to peacebuilding. I suggest that this link is possible as CSE practitioners advance a bottom-up feminist, queer, and decolonial approach to peace through social transformation processes that come about on the ground. By scrutinizing CSE in relation to peacebuilding, I will also explore the tensions navigated by practitioners of CSE as they negotiate structures of power imposed by liberal peace projects. By looking at how CSE is situated in relation to peace, I will show how peacebuilding is promoted by CSE as they react to institutionalized GBV, aggravated by war, that manifests at individual and communal levels.

In the following sections, I first analyze CSE's approach to peacebuilding, suggesting that a community-based focus on everyday relations and a decolonial lens to understanding GBV promote frameworks of decolonial peace. I then complement this perspective by introducing CSE's feminist and queer standpoints, where its focus on sexual diversity and gender justice advances projects of feminist solidarity. Lastly, I problematize these frameworks by discussing how notions of liberal and post-liberal peacebuilding are navigated by CSE organizations,

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suggesting that there is a tension between CSE's ideological project and its implementation on the ground.

Comprehensive Sex Education: Advancing Bottom-up Peacebuilding and Decoloniality

Interlocutors from all organizations shared that CSE supports teenagers into starting to perceive themselves as the owners of their bodies and as capable of making decisions. This decision-making quality is implemented transversally during workshops, as practitioners of CSE guide students into learning about themselves. This goal is achieved in how teenagers are prompted to reflect on their feelings, the things they like and do not, and the ways they are affected by others, to further question their identities and boundaries. This idea came up in the notion of "cuerpo-territorio" (body-territory) brought up by interlocutors from Poderosas and JST. Karen explained the 'body-territory' to reflect on how peace emerges from the self. She stated: "we begin from there, from one's body, from emotions… We talk about how peace is built from the body, from the same territory." This understanding of the "cuerpo-territorio" pushes a feminist understanding of how the body is a space for resistance and a territory that is inhabited, affected, and consequently transformed (Caretta, 2023; Cabnal, 2019). This idea further suggests that the body is always in relation to other bodies as it can impact and be impacted.

The "cuerpo-territorio" is utilized by CSE practitioners to orient students into reflecting on how they become themselves from interactions with others and their communities, pushing them to realize that as ways they are affected, they also affect others. In the *Entretejiendo Juventudes* camp, we explored this idea through a cartography activity, in which teenagers reflected on the material and subjective dimensions of their bodies. They were pushed to think about the collective

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quality of the body-territory to start perceiving themselves and others as such. Doing this was an opportunity for them to reflect on their individual sense of self, on how they enable others to affect them, and how they interact with one another. From this understanding, CSE practitioners lead workshops on sexual and gender-based violence, allowing them to discuss topics of gender roles, consent, violence prevention, and sorority. As expressed by Javierand Karen from JST, and Vane and Catalina from NSM, they approached these themes from the standpoint in which teenagers start recognizing themselves in relation to a collective, enabling them to question their role in society and social transformation.

In the context of peacebuilding, the idea of community for CSE practitioners was reflected under notions of "Paz integral" (Integral peace). Peace was perceived by practitioners relative to CSE's holistic pedagogical approach, defining peace as social change that is transversal to all dimensions of the individual and social life. For instance, David from JST stated:

> I would say that when we speak of peace, we speak of integral peace…something that we've learned from the peace accords, including its shortcomings, is the concept of integral peace. When we speak of peace, it does not mean that, for example, the FARC or ELN demobilize and leave the arms behind, it also comes with a process of reconstructing the social fabric that has been broken, let's say, because of the multiple forms of violence that the conflict has led to… so there has to be a scope that is integral to the wellbeing of all people, in regards to physical but also psychological aspects. So, I believe that in that sense, in the specific work with young people in JST, the *Entretejiendo Juventudes* camp has committed to that construction of peace, as I said, which is comprehensive. It's not just about an armed group laying down their weapons. Comprehensive peace, a big part of that key component is having safe environments for children and youth. These environments should allow for their free development in terms of belonging, personality, and interests. And, as a step that can't be missed for this to happen, they need spaces where they can express themselves and be who they want to be. I think this is where the connection with the work of "Jóvenes Sin Tabú" comes in, in creating these important spaces…

David's understanding of 'comprehensive peace' aligns with notions of positive peace (Galtung, 1969; Davies, 2004; Smith, 2014; & Gómez, 2017), centering peace creation on all the spheres in which individuals develop. The emphasis on how young students should be supported in becoming

who they want to be by strengthening their personalities, belongings, and interests also resonate

with Day et al. (2023) argument of situating decolonial peace on everyday experiences (p. 12).

Daniela from Poderosas pushed this idea further by contending:

> In building peace, comprehensive sexuality education is essential. Without this type of education, certain invisible forms of violence will continue to be perpetuated. So, if we are going to build peace, we need to do so not only in the typical or most literal sense of the word, like when we say, "Let's stop this war." The lack of comprehensive sexuality education is causing invisible forms of violence to continue. If we are working for peace, we need to address both visible and evident forms of violence as well as invisible and hidden forms, so we can talk about peace at every level—a true peace, so to speak. There are visible, evident, and extremely serious forms of violence that we want to stop to achieve a state of peace. And there are invisible and completely hidden forms of violence that are sometimes much harder to combat. It is much more difficult to tackle invisible and implicit forms of violence than the explicit and visible ones.

The focus on addressing 'invisible forms of violence' through CSE presupposes an understanding

of violence that includes behaviors taken for granted because they are normalized in daily

interactions. Since violence is usually acknowledged by its direct and visible forms, as was the

case in the Colombian Peace Accords, CSE attempts to push for the recognition of violence is not

even perceived as such. That is not to say that CSE does not engage in preventing direct forms of

violence, instead, but its focus is primarily on addressing violent sexual and gender behaviors

embedded in everyday interactions and assumed to be normal. Under this idea, peacebuilding

comes into existence as the everyday at its center, as it is transformed through the role of youth in

deconstructing violent norms of sexuality and gender. As youth are perceived as active participants

in seeding new ways of relating and reconstructing the social fabric of communities, CSE prompts

them to unlearn violent behaviors and envision less violent forms of interaction that are mindful

of gender and sexual power dynamics.

CSE's peacebuilding as transforming daily ways of being and relating is perceived as a

way to address the effects of generational violence in Colombia. Javierfrom JST stated that

peacebuilding entails creating spaces for people to share internal struggles, where they can reflect on how visible and invisible violence has affected their communities for decades. Lorena from Poderosas alluded to this idea of generational trauma by arguing that violence is passed down and embodied, emphasizing the need to reflect on internalized violence. CSE incorporates themes of violence recognition, explored at social, cultural, and individual levels. This aspect of CSE was identified by Lorena as a meaningful peacebuilding effort, as she believes that structures of violence start on the individual and reproduce within systems that normalize it. This individual-collective characteristic of violence influences CSE's approach to GBV at individual, interpersonal, and social dimensions. Consequently, CSE practitioners push an intersectional understanding of violence, as JST, NSM, and Poderosas work with communities that are racialized, underprivileged, and feminized. I will now explore how CSE practitioners navigate the social and cultural aspects of violence, where their intersectional standpoint becomes more visible.

Comprehensive Sex Education: A Decolonial Approach to Peacebuilding Through an Intersectional Lens

CSE's focus on everyday interactions and situated relationality highlights its connection to GBV prevention in Colombia, as daily relations have been shaped by violent sexual and gender norms. Since these relations are constituted by unequal structures guided by hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1987), women and feminized individuals have been positioned as inferior, justifying their sexual and gender oppression and victimization. Catalina from NSM reflected on this matter by arguing that GBV against marginalized communities (indigenous, black, migrant, women, children, and the LGBTQI+ identified) falls under constructed ideas of availability, attached to notions of autonomy. For Catalina, given that the right to land and other material conditions was taken away from these populations during the Colombian conflict, the idea of

ownership shifted to the body, making them "available," as supported by the Colombian Truth Commission in "The Truth is Rainbow " chapter. This notion of availability is targeted by CSE practitioners as they focus on addressing and preventing the forms of GBV that are perpetuated against marginalized and feminized communities. This intersectional approach, taken forward in CSE's consideration of how sexuality and gender-based oppression and victimization overlap with class and race, is embraced in CSE's thematic and demographic focuses.

CSE's intersectional approach materializes in how CSE workshops orient students to recognize different forms of violence, understand their origins, identify how they disproportionately affect populations, and question how they are perpetuated. Daniela from Poderosas stated:

> So, let's say that these processes (combating invisible violence) are vital and very important steps, and implementing comprehensive sexuality education to recognize other forms of violence is also crucial. Within the armed conflict, it has been acknowledged that the LGBTQ+ community were special victims; they experienced more violent and targeted treatment. This has been recognized, as well as the fact that women were similarly affected. Integrating this understanding is important because it makes us realize that at every level, these vulnerable groups — women, girls, and the LGBTQ+ community — have always borne the impact of violence. Recognizing this within the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP) and throughout the entire process highlights the importance of comprehensive sexuality education. It is vital. In any conflict, these groups are always the most adversely affected. Therefore, to ensure that our approach is truly comprehensive and holistic, we must also focus on sexuality education.

Daniela's reflection illustrates how CSE recognizes that GBV has affected marginalized populations unequally, guiding their efforts towards preventing and eradicating GBV against minoritized and feminized groups such as women, children, African Colombians, indigenous populations, and the LGBTQI+ community. CSE takes a decolonial approach in their understanding of sexual and gender-based violence as they believe these structures overlap with systems of oppression such as racism, classism, or ableism, which are informed by coloniality.

Vane from NSM expressed how this process is done by prompting teenagers to reflect on their environments, prompting them to identify violence personally in sentences such as "I have perpetuated X form of violence," while also questioning the structural dimensions of violence.

CSE's decolonial and intersectional approach became visible to me when JST carried out an activity called "the bus of discrimination" when I went to Urabá in 2021 with them. In this activity, we simulated a bus with empty chairs to which we sticked names of different social categories such as "black person," "pregnant woman," "indigenous person," "white person," "woman with tattoos," "blind person," or "gay presenting man." We then asked students to choose their seats, taking note of the chairs where they would not sit, which guided a conversation that followed the activity. During the activity, in Urabá one student said that she would not sit next to a black person and preferred to sit next to the white one. I was surprised when this student said this, especially because she herself was black. A college of mine went ahead and asked her why she thought this. She replied that "black people usually smell bad, and they are dangerous." I saw how other students in the room nodded in agreement, which was even more shocking as most students were black. My colleague asked why she thought that and if she believed she fit those stereotypes. She replied that she had been told this since she was a kid and did not think she represented any of those associations, but that she still preferred to sit next to a white person. This comment prompted my colleagues to facilitate a conversation on how the stereotypes mentioned by the student were embedded in society because of the ways colonialism has structurally normalized the marginalization of black, indigenous, and feminized bodies. This conversation encouraged students to reflect on the origin of their personal prejudices and how they participated in replicating them.

Activities such as "the bus of discrimination" enable CSE practitioners to ground decolonial and feminist theories of oppression and GBV with everyday examples that cross students in their personal lives. Conversations on violence are also carried out by CSE practitioners in relation to ideas of privilege, enabling them to explore structural inequality in relation to GBV. For instance, in 2021, JST was invited to facilitate a school visit at a school in Urabá with teenagers who came from different gender identities, socioeconomic backgrounds, and racial groups. One of the activities that we implemented consisted of asking students to stand up in a line with their eyes covered, and to take a step back if the answer to a statement that was read was "no," a step forward if it was "yes," and not to move if their answer was neutral. Example of situations that we read were: "I feel safe walking alone in the streets," "I work after attending school," "I know I will go to university after graduating high school," "I don't feel welcome in certain spaces," or "I have been questioned on my capacity to do something." After reading these statements, we asked students to uncover their eyes and see where everyone was standing. They recognized how some people were more ahead in the line, while others were far behind. When asking students why they thought this was the case, someone said "it is obvious how some people have it easier." This comment illustrated how students were pushed to question how categories or race, gender, ability, and class intersect and orient peoples' life experience, leading them to reflect on notions of privilege and vulnerability at personal and social dimensions.

Therefore, GBV is explored by CSE practitioners in relation to systems of oppression and privilege, utilizing an intersectional understanding of violence that recognizes how marginalized and feminized groups have been disproportionately victimized upon historical legacies of colonialism in Colombia. This goal of recognizing violence against women, children, the

LGBTQI+ community, in intersection with categories of class, race, and ability, is facilitated through CSE's curricula.

Comprehensive Sex Education: Advancing Queer and Feminist peacebuilding Efforts:

CSE advocates for the revindication of women and the recognition of the LGBTQI+ community, challenging conventional understanding of sexuality and SE that are shaped by hetero cis patriarchal norms. Given that sexuality and SE used to be approached from strictly biological terms (Seoane, 2012; Romer, 2021; Iosa, 2013; & Zimmerman, 2015), women's bodies were reduced to ideas of reproduction and LGBTQI+ individuals were categorized as deviant. Interlocutors expressed how CSE's incorporation of themes like pleasure, gender roles, sexual orientation, virginity, abortion, beauty standards, sexual and reproductive rights, diversity, consent, masculinities, emotions, or sexual and intimate-partner violence, into its curricula enables them to question the normalized social positions granted to women and LGBTQ+ individuals in Colombia. Including these themes into CSE is perceived by practitioners as advancing feminist and queer projects, as sexual and reproductive rights of women and feminized peoples and gender justice are pushed forward. For instance, interlocutors from all organizations talked about the concept of "sentipensar" (feeling-thinking), a term coined by Fals-Borda to challenge the separation between emotions and reasoning. Karen from JST expressed the importance of this concept when talking about decision-making with youth, as developing socio-emotional skills is perceived by CSE practitioners as crucial to learn about boundaries when relating to others physically and emotionally. Karen stated that the notion of "sentipensar" pushed CSE's feminist grounds, as emotions are traditionally perceived as weak and consequently feminine. Therefore, reclaiming the role of emotions in sexual and gender relations was considered a way to challenge

anatomical understanding of the body, and the stigmatization of emotions by paradigms of hegemonic gender roles that reduce emotions to femininity.

CSE pushes for sexual diversity and gender justice by including LGBTQI+ related topics into its curricula, challenging patterns of hegemonic gender performance and anatomical understandings of SE. This queer framework in CSE pedagogies aims at promoting LGBTQI+ rights, reducing school violence against this community, and supporting teenagers in the process of coming to terms with their sexual preferences and gender identities. Besides orienting curricula around LGBTQI+ oriented topics, CSE practitioners attain these goals by having a diverse team that represents multiple identities, including those socially perceived as deviant. For example, Karen from JST reflected on experiences in Urabá and El Cauca, where multiple facilitators were associated with constructed ideas of 'queerness,' as many of us in the collective do not present with heteronormative expectations of appearance. Karen stated that this diversity within the collective was important because it demonstrates to students that diverse forms of being exist, normalizing sexual and gender diversity to them. This interlocutor shared how as a transgender woman her presence in workshops is already a political statement, given that students recognize her as trans, pushing them to question ideas of gender identity. I remember how Karen's participation in the *Entretejiendo Juventudes* camp instigated questions for students, as they seemed curious about what being a transgender person meant or how she realized her gender identity, leading them to question their own sexual and gender expressions.

CSE's queer framework enables practitioners to normalize 'deviant identities' to combat violent structures that contribute to the discrimination of the LGBTQI+ community. Andrés from Poderosas stated that asking students to recognize a person's pronouns, and asking their pronouns, prompts them to normalize diverse expressions of gender. This frame was combined with

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intersectional and feminist perspectives, explained in how CSE collectives ensure to portray different representations of sexual, gender, racial, and ethnic diversity in pedagogical materials. Daniela from Poderosas stated that all visuals utilized during workshops should be representative of Colombia and its diversity. Poderosas makes sure that the populations with whom they work feel appealed by visuals, and that they incorporate forms of relating outside of heteropatriarchal norms. Daniela shared that when Poderosas went to Isla Barú, where most students were from African descent, the organization adapted images so that they represented the racial and ethnic community of Isla Barú. For their workshop on vulvas, Daniela talked about how Poderosas included a black vulva in the visuals, as having a white vulva would not be coherent to ensure that students felt connected to pedagogical materials. Instead, she thought that not adapting visuals could result in perpetuating oppressive racial hierarchies and hegemonic beauty standards, leading students to feel alienated. This idea suggests that contextualizing processes from an intersectional, feminist, and queer standpoint enables CSE practitioners to reach multiple populations and deconstruct patterns of violence that continue marginalizing 'deviant' individuals.

The incorporation of feminist and queer approaches into CSE advances peacebuilding by fostering sexual diversity and gender justice, recognizing GBV against women and feminized individuals, and employing community-based approaches centered on everyday transformations. Lemaitre (2020) argues that although the Colombian peace accords incorporated a gender lens by acknowledging violence against women, feminist peace was not constructed in the agreement as it was promoted in a top-down approach. Lemaitre suggests that feminist and decolonial peacebuilding is built in what she calls the "feminist-every-day" (p.10), in which colonial violence is addressed in the reconfiguration "labour, movement, subjectivity, expression, being, and possibility" processes (p. 11). The examples in this section demonstrate how CSE transcends the

everyday of youth, advocating for feminist and queer peace where solidarity and justice reshape sexual and gender daily interactions. CSE as a pedagogy, practice, and set of ideas reshape violent paradigms around gender and sexuality. By producing and reproducing new ways of relationality, CSE challenges colonial violence through feminist and queer agreements. This goal is attained in the recognition of the continuum of sexual and GBV that has persisted in Colombia since colonial times and aggravated during war, taking an intersectional stance on sexual and gender justice by considering oppressions of class, race, ethnicity, and ability. Nevertheless, achieving this goal is challenging as social and cultural resistance to CSE play out in practice, limiting peacebuilding efforts to come about. I will now explore these limitations as experienced by CSE practitioners and in relation to expectations of liberal peace.

Practical and Theoretical Limitations to the Implementation of Comprehensive Sexuality Education

CSE advances a feminist, queer, and decolonial approach to peacebuilding in its bottom-up model to social transformation centered on youth to end direct and indirect GBV towards minoritized communities. All three organizations agreed on the role of CSE in breaking "cycles of violence" against women, children, teenagers, and the LGBTQI+ community. These populations are CSE's demographical focus when it comes to violence prevention and rights advocacy, exhibiting its feminist and queer standpoints. CSE's model of "educación popular" (community-based education) also pushes a decolonial approach to social transformation where colonial violence is addressed by reshaping everyday relations. These three frameworks - feminist, queer, and decolonial - shape CSE, going beyond conventional understandings of gender and sexuality and transgressing SE into social, cultural, emotional, and political realms. However, although CSE contributes to peacebuilding, its practitioners navigate social, political, and cultural resistance.

This opposition interacts with liberal paradigms of development and peacebuilding, pushed by philanthropists, NGOs, and governmental institutions. I will now explore these tensions and negotiations made by CSE groups as they implement pedagogical spaces.

Given CSE's focus on reshaping the everyday, practitioners face resistance from community members who oppose changes to sexual and gender-based normativities. For instance, Viviana from Poderosas shared the story of a female student who wanted to access hormonal contraception after learning about them during a CSE workshop. Viviana described that the student's mother was against her daughter's decision, blaming the school for inciting students to engage in sexual relations. The position of this mother was identified as common among interlocutors, as discourses of the so-called "gender ideology" tend to influence how parents and community members perceive CSE. This idea prompted Viviana to reflect on how often students change their mindsets around sexuality, but they still navigate non-changing environments that continue perpetuating GBV, limiting the broader impact of CSE beyond pedagogical spaces. The tension in the mother-daughter example shared by Viviana illustrates the constraints of teenagers' agency. While they shift their perspective to see themselves as decision-making subjects, they are often immersed in societies where decisions about their bodies are limited. This tension presents a challenge for CSE in promoting social transformation, as it contends with external resistance from families, schools, armed groups, churches, and governmental institutions.

The friction experienced by CSE recipients as they embody CSE learnings and navigate violent societies that undermine CSE pedagogies takes place in subjective and practical dimensions. During the *Entretejiendo Juventudes* camp, one of the learning outcomes was to learn about the history of the Nasa community and its victimization. This component was facilitated by

a member from the CRIC[6], where he pushed students to get closer to their Nasa identity, as all students belonged to this community. Since indigenous populations have historically been marginalized by colonial powers in Colombia, making indigenous bodies perceived as 'available,' revindicating the Nasa identity by learning about their political struggle was crucial in contextualizing GBV violence for students. However, although this learning outcome was achieved during workshops, students experienced contradictions to their learnings. Karen from JST reflected on the dynamics of the physical space where the camp happened, as students we witnessed as facilitators how students faced discrimination by people who were outside of the camp. Karen stated that she perceived that students were treated differently by staff members, as for instance, they did not allow participants to use the pool and their meals were smaller, in contrast to white people from El Cauca who came for holidays to the property. This reflection shows how dynamics of race, class, and gender in El Cauca overlapped, limiting the ability of CSE practitioners to advance social transformation outside of the scope of workshops.

Although CSE's ability to foster social, cultural, and political change is restricted, CSE has tangible outcomes that take forward its social transformation goals. Paula from Poderosas shared her experience when she was part of the first cohort of students that Poderosas had in Isla Barú, before becoming a mentor. She identified that one of the material outcomes of this experience was that none of the female students became pregnant before graduating high school. Given that in prior years around thirteen students got pregnant and could not graduate, she perceived this reduction as a significant outcome of Poderosas pedagogical engagement. Paula further reflected on how Poderosas oriented her into deciding to study psychology, as the idea of the "life project"

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[6] Refers to the Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca (Indigenous Regional Council of El Cauca), which is an association of indigenous authorities and a catalyst of the vindicating and resistance process of indigenous peoples in Colombia.

pushed by the NGO motivated her into realizing that marriage was not her only option after high school. The notion of the "life project" was common across all three CSE organizations, who believe that guiding students in the process thinking about their futures can push them away from cycles of violence. This aim is furthered by Poderosas as they enable participants to become mentors and co-mentors, making mentorship a job opportunity within communities, while ensuring the continuity of CSE processes. Paula, Angie, and Andrés from Poderosas identified with this experience, as they all built their life projects around engaging with Poderosas after participating in CSE circles.

Moreover, all three organizations navigate tensions between their decolonial, queer, and feminist approach and paradigms of liberal peace and development implied in their pedagogical materials and implementations. Liberal peacebuilding ignores the role of marginalized communities in peace construction processes (Day et al., 2023; Gomez & Montealegre, 2021; Lemaitre, 2020), as they tend to drain 'feminized' subjects of autonomy, positioning them either as passive receptacles who are to receive peace from above, or as little other than a fixed set of identifications (e.g. victims, mothers, carers) whose value lies in what they are able to offer as rigidly gendered subjects" (Day et al, 2023, p. 7). While CSE advocates for a bottom-up approach to social transformation that engages underrepresented and oppressed populations, it also participates in enabling liberal peacebuilding. Since ideas around sexuality and gender travel from urban into rural regions by CSE practitioners, Colombia's internal dynamics of class and race are perpetuated in this process. Most interlocutors recognized this power structure, as they acknowledged that they come from urban backgrounds and are professionals or in the process of getting a university degree. This class privilege is perceived as a tension, given that the risk of

reproducing unequal power relations within communities and imposing sexual diversity and gender justice from above is present.

Interlocutors from JST and Poderosas reflected on the risk of perpetuating a "white savior complex,"[7] highlighting the importance of meeting community needs and interests during CSE processes. However, even if contextualizing processes are implemented with communities, unequal power relations persist in the implementation of CSE workshops. From interviews and observations, I recognized two main scenarios where the tension between CSE and liberal peace was visible. First, curricula are influenced by western paradigms of sexuality and gender, as most CSE practitioners were educated in western academic institutions. Karen from JST questioned CSE's expectation of replicability and the idea of the "life project," as she believes that these ideas require material conditions to change that promote liberal understandings of 'the good citizen.' Karenreflected on how studying and getting a job were valued as acceptable life projects for teenagers, as they are expected to serve capitalist, colonial, and neoliberal systems embraced by liberal development and peacebuilding. The influence of liberal peace in relation to notions of 'the good citizen' also shows in CSE's rights framework, since sexual and reproductive rights advocacy is one CSE's goals. Although this aim is attained with the engagement of communities, human rights education implies a top-down approach to social change as discourses of rights are framed from above (Márquez-Cárdenas et. Al, 2020).

The second scenario that I identified was in how the funding of CSE projects usually comes from western institutions. From my experience writing grant applications for JST, I realized that the organizations that support CSE initiatives in countries like Colombia aim to foster notions of

[7] Refers to a White person who is depicted as liberating, rescuing, or uplifting non-white people.

liberal peace. These grants, such as the Davis Project for Peace that financed JST over two years, support grassroot peace projects directed to feminized peoples that fit into fixed categories of victims, mothers, or carers. This idea was also raised by Daniela from Podersas, who shared that their funds come from different sources: direct contracts that pay the NGO to implement a specific educational process, local and international grants, and private donors. This interlocutor talked about how Poderosas adapts pedagogical materials to the interests of contractors and philanthropists, leading them to promote discourses of liberal peace to fulfill grant expectations. Nevertheless, this dependency is countered with the funds that Poderosas receives from private donors, which enables them to organize CSE processes under their own decolonial, feminist, and queer approaches. I was able to observe that NSM also struggled with this issue, as their inability to secure funding led them to struggle to collaborate with liberal feminist organizations that used the NGO as space to advance their agendas of development and peacebuilding.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I showed that CSE pushes a decolonial, feminist, and queer agenda through the implementation of youth-centered community processes that promote the transformation of everyday sexual and gender relations. CSE makes teenagers the center of their processes by acknowledging and valuing their needs and interests, while pushing for GBV prevention, sexual diversity, gender justice, and reproductive rights. CSE takes further the project of critical peace education (CPE) and decolonial, feminist, and queer peacebuilding by recognizing how marginalized communities have been oppressed under gendered and sexual justifications, and by recognizing youth's agency in reshaping everyday violent behaviors and subjectivities. Even though CSE is met with resistance from community members who perceive it as a threat to their social and cultural values and structures of liberal peace, CSE contributes to peacebuilding by

having a domino effect in the ways relationality around sexuality and gender are reconfigured at

individual and communal levels.

Conclusions

In this thesis, I argued that comprehensive sexuality education serves as a peacebuilding pedagogy that advances feminist, queer, and decolonial conceptions of peace, reacting to Colombia's GBV continuum. From my engagement in qualitative research, through participant observation and semi-structured interviews, I explored how three CSE organizations - *Jóvenes sin Tabú*, *Niñas sin Miedo*, and *Poderosas* - implement CSE workshops, taking an intersectional approach by recognizing overlapping systems of oppression such as class, race, ethnicity, and ability when advocating for the justice of women, children, and the LGBTQI+ community. I showed that CSE's community-based focus on youth is fostered through creating safe spaces where they can develop critical thinking skills, enabling them to become agents of social transformation in their communities. This approach generates a domino effect, turning 'the everyday' into a space for resistance, reimagination, and reshaping. My research suggests that the efforts of CSE practitioners aim to diminish violent sexual and gender structures by transforming embodied daily behaviors normalized during Colombia's continuum of war and GBV. By taking a bottom-up approach to peacebuilding, CSE orients students to envision a world where sexual diversity is acknowledged, gender relations are equal, boundaries are respected, and sexual and GBV are eradicated.

In chapter One, I explored how CSE is conceptualized by its practitioners, discovering a common understanding that defines CSE projects as holistic, horizontal, contextual, and community centered. CSE's holistic approach encompasses the recognition of sexuality as a social, cultural, political, emotional, and physical experience, challenging conventional views that consider sexuality and SE strictly from anatomical perspectives. This comprehensive approach is grounded on horizontal pedagogies that question the teacher-student dynamic, encouraging

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students to become active participants in knowledge production. They engage in contextualizing GBV, identifying community needs, and replicating CSE teachings. However, I also demonstrated that since CSE materials are tailored to specific contexts of GBV, the approaches taken by each CSE organization vary. These differences are influenced by structures of class and accessibility, as funding determines the ability of organizations to engage with communities and achieve their goals.

In chapter Two, I analyzed how CSE practitioners have witnessed and experienced GBV during pedagogical sessions, delineating how CSE addresses institutionalized GBV exacerbated during the Colombian armed conflict. I found CSE practitioners perceive GBV as being perpetuated by internal displacement, embodied violence, moralizing political agendas, the organizational arrangements of armed groups, social and cultural stigmatization of sexuality, and structural inequality. These findings are consistent with the conclusions of the Colombian Truth Commission and the Center for Historical Memory, demonstrating how GBV permeates the social, political, and cultural dimensions of daily life in Colombia. Given CSE's holistic approach, situated practices, and critical pedagogies (Freire, 2000), workshops develop within the context of GBV and war, raising the question of peacebuilding in relation to CSE.

In chapter Three, I scrutinized this connection, arguing that CSE advances decolonial, feminist, and queer understandings of peace through an intersectional recognition of GBV. CSE adopts a decolonial approach by acknowledging how coloniality shapes and justifies violent sexual and gender relations reinforced during war, leading racialized, gendered, feminized, and marginalized populations to be perceived as 'available.' This standpoint is implemented through feminist and queer frameworks that center peacebuilding on reconfiguring everyday life of youth, encouraging them to embrace feminist and queer solidarities in their daily sexual and gender

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relationships. This process of social transformation furthers sexual diversity and gender justice, as CSE aims to dismantle heteropatriarchal institutions embodied in hegemonic masculinity and gender roles.

Finally, I considered the limitations of CSE throughout this thesis, identifying that CSE practitioners navigate tensions with notions of liberal peacebuilding, cultural and social resistance, the ongoing war and GBV that continue to shape teenagers' societies, and accessibility to funding. Although CSE promotes community-based processes that engage teenagers through horizontal pedagogies, practitioners navigate the assumptions of class and race embedded in Colombia's urban/rural divide, which influence CSE curriculum and pedagogies. This challenge is furthered by CSE groups' dependency on external funding sources, which often essentialize, reduce, and instrumentalize the role of women and feminized populations to their 'gendered roles,' under premises of liberal and post-liberal peacebuilding outlined in grant expectations and top-down approaches to peace. Although CSE may be perceived as a post-liberal pedagogy, as it is in renegotiates local and liberal structures, it takes this notion further by proposing a focus on sexuality that had been overlooked. It also challenges liberal and post-liberal frameworks that limit youth's agency and the role of feminized populations into conceptualizing and promoting peace, proposing that transformation should react to visible and invisible SV and GBV. This process should acknowledge the role of marginalized and feminized communities in addressing these forms of violence, in which everyday subjective and behavioral changes push for collective, feminist, and queer solidarities. Additionally, CSE faces social resistance by communities that perceive it as against traditional social values around sexuality and gender. This resistance constrains CSE's ability to create safe environments where students can freely explore and express their sexualities and gender identities.

All said, comprehensive sexuality education offers an opportunity to rethink relational dynamics around sexuality and gender in everyday life, promoting gradual transformations that contribute to peace in a country like Colombia, where conflict and GBV have become the norm. By making sexuality the focus of peacebuilding, CSE emphasizes how sexuality has been ignored in conventional peace conceptualizations and how it shapes everyday interactions. This approach underscores the importance of integrating sexuality into peacebuilding efforts, recognizing its critical role in fostering sustainable social change. From this reflection, questions arise about the ultimate impacts that CSE can have with its bottom-up approach to peacebuilding. Given that this study focused on the perspectives and experiences of CSE practitioners on the ground, the roles of institutions such as school, medical centers, policy makers, and the government in institutionalizing CSE remain unexplored. Future research could ponder upon how these institutions approach CSE from a top-down implementation, as well as how CSE could be incorporated into these broader educational and institutional frameworks. That said, comprehensive sexuality education opens a window to start thinking about these structures towards positive peacebuilding. As Karen from JST said, "peace is constituted to the extent that people can be who they are, without restrictions," which is what ultimately CSE is doing. Creating spaces that deconstruct, de-normalize, and reconfigure gender and sexuality on a daily basis.

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