WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR
PEACE & FREEDOM
COLOMBIA

Canada

The Institutional And Cultural Militarisation Of Masculinities In Colombia, The Most War-Like Country In Latin America

01

INTRODUCTION

In 2020, an initiative convened by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF, or Limpal[1] in Spanish) and MenEngage officially launched the project, Confronting Militarised Masculinities, Mobilising Men for Feminist Peace, which involved the participation of four countries: Colombia, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Afghanistan. The links might seem remote, at least from a geographical point of view, but the experiences of these countries are not so remote. There are common vertexes in the socio-political composition of these four countries that are transversal to their experiences as inhabitants of the Global South, of those territories that from the Global North are thought of in terms of their shortages or extractive mining exploitation, which is why they are often identified as "underdeveloped" or "developing" countries.

Their histories are interwoven with colonialism, war, violence and a grey panorama for women and political minorities, who have been marginalised and whose rights have been endlessly violated in the construction of these nations.

The categories that traverse the southern countries of the world have been installed and imposed by the north and, therefore, this research enables the possibility for these countries to recognise their histories autonomously, from their local, community and collective experiences that make feminism practised in their territories, unique and characterised by resistance. Through this territorial knowledge, each country addresses one of the most violent aspects of its history: militarism.

[1] Liga Internacional de Mujeres por la Paz y la Libertad (Limpal). More information about Limpal here: https://www.limpalcolombia.org/

This system has become a permanent element in culture, socio-political construction and institutionalism.

Militarism is installed in the social imaginary, it is accepted and legitimised, even when its violent effects are increasingly tangible and cruel. In Colombia, from the anti-militarist approach, Limpal has collected evidence on the militarisation of masculinities since July 2020, through different activities designed in a particular way to respond responsibly to the context in which they are investigated, the experiences of each community, and the intersections that make each space, each knowledge and each territory, valuable and unique.

Therefore, the design of this research is born from a historical need, from dynamics and practices that have been present since colonial times, and that, today, Latin American feminisms seek to dismantle and rethink.

The violence brought about by the armed conflict does not remain only in those temporary spaces or in those territories; it extends, it spreads incessantly, to all social spheres and all people, whatever their age or social condition.

For this reason, the present research asks how the militarisation of masculinities occurs in each stage of life, and in the institutional and cultural spectrums, since Limpal recognises that the militaristic system is so corrosive that it is installed in each of the political and social spaces of Colombian society.

With this in mind, the research question designed for this project is: What are the key factors involved in the process of militarisation of masculinities in Colombia, in childhood, adolescence and adulthood?

Research Question

How are masculinities in Colombia militarised in childhood, adolescence and adulthood?

General Objective

To identify and characterise institutional and cultural practices that intervene in the processes of militarisation of masculinities in each of these three stages: childhood, adolescence and adulthood[2].

Specific Objectives

1. To design a contextual framework based on the historical roots of the research with a focus on participation and feminist analysis of the results.

2. To propose a design of methodologies and a framework of analysis that explains the impact of institutional and cultural militaristic practices on the construction of masculinities in Colombia.

3. To investigate practices and initiatives of transformation or resistance to these processes of militarisation of masculinities, in order to consider the possibilities, they offer for feminist peacebuilding.

Justification

Militarised hegemonic masculinities have a worrying impact at the global level, but for more than seven decades in Colombia specifically, they have been closely linked to the emergence, prolongation and degradation of different armed conflicts that have to date left more than 230,000 victims throughout the territory.

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[2] *A separate paper produced in the framework of this project looks into the structural dimension of militarisation, and consequently arising militarised masculinities in Colombia. See CITE COLLEEN&MIA (once ready).*

On the other hand, militarised hegemonic masculinities establish a series of practices and habits in the culture from which violent actions become part of everyday life.

In Colombia, this has meant that for generations the idea that war is something to live with, has been accepted.

This could explain why today, despite such high rates of violence, a good part of society continues to develop its life normally, without being paralysed by the number of deaths or the institutional crisis evidenced in different regions in the midst of this pandemic of violence. To give an example, according to INDEPAZ, between 2020 and 2021 there have been 179 massacres (91 in 2020 and 88 in 2021) that have left approximately 694 victims[3].

To that figure must be added the murder of 1,267 social leaders since the signing of the peace agreement in 2016, and 293 former members of the FARC guerrilla, signatories of that agreement, were also murdered. At this time, however, the issues dominating the media agenda and public opinion are the electoral campaign and the poor results of the national soccer team.

Why has Colombian society not reacted with outrage to these astonishing levels of carnage? What is the relationship between this high tolerance of violence and the militarisation of masculinities in the country? Some of these questions were presented during the design, implementation and analysis of the results of this project, whose methodological tools were applied in three regions of the country, with about 70 people who form different perspectives (community, academic, organisational, feminist) and are developing actions and initiatives to demilitarise everyday life.

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[3] INDEPAZ, 2021, Report on massacres in Colombia during 2020 and 2021, accessed at: http://www.indepaz.org.co/informe-de-masacres-en-colombia-durante-el-2020-2021/

02

ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEM

The Construction Of Militarised Masculinities In Colombia And Their Relationship To The Perpetuation Of War.

"Of all the places where masculinities are constructed, reproduced and deployed, those associated with war and the military are some of the most direct".[4]

In this section of the document, only some aspects directly involved in the analysis of the problem are touched upon, since the theoretical framework document contains an in-depth development of the concepts, debates, questions and epistemological positions linked to the development of this research project. Among the aspects that are relevant to understanding the process of constructing masculinities, and how they are disrupted and manipulated through militarisation practices or dynamics, it is necessary to start from a common ground of dialogue on which to structure the conceptual and pragmatic development that identifies the shapes, patterns, codes and figures of the problem to be analysed.

No man is born with a predefined masculinity, since masculinity is a process under permanent construction, and there is no single way of exercising or understanding the fact of "being a man".

Despite this, the patriarchy has established a model of man whose reference values have been reproduced for centuries. This archetype of masculinity can be considered hegemonic or dominant, since it is the reference that is promoted, instituted, normalised, commercialised and even ritualised. In many countries, the process of constructing masculinity inevitably involves having to demonstrate through the use of force, how much of a man one can be.

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[4] *Morgan, DHJ. Theater of War: Combat, the Military, and Masculinities, in Theorizing Masculinities (Brod, H and M Kaufman, eds) London: Sage publications, 1994, p165.*

This happens in such a way that in thousands of schools around the world, at this very moment, an indeterminate number of boys may be facing their first fight with other boys to earn the respect or fear of their other male classmates, because that is what the mandates of this dominant masculinity demand, because that is the only way to earn the respect or fear of their classmates, because they have seen it in movies, anime, comics or video games, or perhaps even because they have heard it from their father, older brother or best friend. In Colombia, the process described above becomes more complex, because the mandates of hegemonic masculinity are intertwined with the beliefs, practices and rituals of a deeply militaristic society, that is, a society that has normalised the use of force as a valid mechanism to resolve conflicts for decades, a society that (as is seen in greater detail later in this text or in the theoretical framework document) has linked its own identity with a militaristic narrative centred on the figure of the "soldier hero" and the ritual of war or combat as an emancipatory event. For that is what militarism does: it promotes values that are gradually installed in society, until the exercise of violence and the figure of the warrior become intrinsic elements of everyday life:

"Militarism can be defined as a system of values that justify the use of armed force to address or resolve conflicts by military means through deterrence, threat or, as the case may be, the elimination of those perceived as enemies. In this sense, militarism becomes an ideology that seeks to influence all areas of society, with special attention to the political regime so that military values prevail over, or at least are as relevant as, those of a civilian nature."[5]

Becoming a man in a militaristic society, therefore, becomes a journey marked mainly by violence, be it symbolic, physical, structural, institutionalised, etc. This violence leaves scars that are difficult to heal in the social fabric of a people that ends up making it part of the daily narrative and traditional orality, perhaps as a way of dealing with the burden of living in one of the most war-like countries in the world:

"It is ubiquitous and omnipresent violence constituting the word and the argument, silencing reason, creating heroes and norms, regulating times, spaces, gestures, words and ideas, destroying enjoyment, dreams and life. It is intolerance to difference and the empire of fear and impunity, it is a network sometimes invisible, but always present."[6]

As a transversal part of this research project, the intention is to analyse different ways in which the Colombian state links children, teenagers, young people and adults in the country to the exercise of violence through different institutional and cultural provisions.

With civic-military campaigns in childhood, recruitment for military service in adolescence and payment of taxes for war in adulthood, just to cite an example for each of these stages of the development of masculinity. Another aspect of crucial importance in the analysis of this problem, is the approach to the question: What is the impact of these militarised masculinities on the lives of women in the country?

In this regard, based on the research work carried out under an agreement between the Colombian Collective Action of Conscientious Objectors (Spanish acronym: ACOOC) [7] and Limpal, a series of interviews have been conducted with men who have performed compulsory military service, and so far, in 97% of the interviews conducted, the answer to the question "Did you ever compare the rifle with your girlfriend during your training process?" has been positive.

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[5] Ortega, P (2018). Economía (de Guerra), Barcelona, Editorial Icaria.

[6] Blair, E (1999). Conflicto armado y militares en Colombia. Cultos, símbolos e imaginarios, Medellín, Colombia, CINEP.

[7] Acción Colectiva de Objetores de Conciencia. More information at: https://acooc.org/

This shows how, within these masculinising institutions, through which between 45,000 and 60,000 young men in the country pass annually, guidelines based on misogynist expressions are applied, where women are reduced to the category of objects; the reason for which many of these young men end up normalising gender-based violence (GBV), under the perspective of assuming that the women with whom they interact are there to satisfy their desires as male soldiers. In some Colombian regions, due to the ongoing presence of the armed conflict and the actors involved in it, hegemonic masculinity almost unfailingly acquires an armed expression, because the weapon becomes not only an instrument of power, but also a tool for reaffirming masculinity that provides a sense of belonging to a collectivity:

"I am going to tell you the truth. Many of us didn't get into [gangs] out of necessity or anything like that, but because of our friendships, because if you have friends who are into it, then you're going to be into it too. You want to be doing what they are doing."[8]

The configuration of hegemonic militarist masculinity within a country with one of the longest armed conflicts in the world has also implied, in various senses, the creation of a dual expression of hegemonic masculinity, in which many men linked to various expressions of militarism and militarisation (soldiers, police, guerrillas, paramilitaries, gang members, private security agents, bodyguards, etc) construct a "socially accepted" masculinity in which they generally reproduce various masculine myths such as the provider, responsible, sexually active and exemplary father, while at the same time they operate in an alternative masculinity (hidden in some cases) associated with multiple practices of violence that emerge under various circumstances, which may change according to the armed group to which they belong and the function or hierarchy they have there:

"While there is no clear dichotomy between domestic and social masculinity, some of the hired killers and gang members interviewed were loving fathers, sons or brothers in their homes, while committing rape and murder in the street."[9]

The latter, making the bridge of analysis with the men who make up the public forces, makes it very difficult to calculate the percentage of women who may be being violated by the 487,000 active men who have an army or police background, or the nearly 130,000 men linked to the private security system who also have military training, since the military passbook (certificate of service) is an indispensable requirement to be hired in this sector.

Before the community (social dimension), many of these uniformed men are presented as heroes, but there is no way of knowing what happens in their homes (domestic dimension), since there is still no characterisation of the implications or manifestations that the militarisation of their masculinity has on their relationship with the women with whom they live or with whom they have some kind of affective sexual relationship.

Finally, in the analysis of the relationship between the militarisation of masculinities and the normalisation and reproduction of war, it is usually assumed that the most direct link is the participation of men in armed conflict as combatants, or the military training they receive even if they do not go into combat, but the cultural practices of militarisation also help to strengthen and prolong the war, through the public support it needs to legitimise itself among the civilian population.

[8] Baird, A (2018). Convertirse en el más malo: trayectorias masculinas de violencia en las pandillas de Medellín. Fragment of an interview with Carritas, a 19-year-old gang member.
[9] Baird, A (2018). Accessed at: https://www.redalyc.org/journal/733/73355715002/html/

"Nobody wants war, but terrorists must be fought" – these types of phrase that justify military actions have been strongly embedded into a good portion of public opinion, due to a systematic exercise in which, for more than five decades, the story of the "internal enemy" has been insistently repeated to the Colombian people as the cause of all evils.

The narrative of a historical tension between the dangerous forces of evil and the saving forces of evil, is one that both the patriarchy and Judeo-Christianity have leveraged enormous dividends for centuries. That story goes through the cultural configuration of idealised hegemonic masculinity and is socially strengthened, making possible the emergence and rise of charismatic leaders popularly elected by promoting war as a government plan. "Uribe is the man of the hard hand and character in a country surrounded by violence and with rulers seen as pusillanimous." [10]

This was said about Alvaro Uribe in 2001 before he was elected president, and unleashed a process of militarisation and degradation of the armed conflict that, after ten years, plunged the country into one of the worst humanitarian crises in its history.

According to an analysis made by Prof Mara Viveros,[11] the popular support Uribe received through the vote was largely due to the way in which he used his hegemonic white masculinity to promote a nationalist and war-like discourse, through which he often presented himself as the state embodied in the figure of a white, aggressive, infallible man, incapable of feeling fear and ready to use war whenever he deemed it necessary. "To the terrorists we have to tell them that there is a State here and that we are going to face them because I am not afraid of anyone."[12]

In conclusion, the militarisation of masculinities through institutional and cultural practices or dynamics, describes a wide range of impacts whose concrete dimension, in terms of affecting the social fabric and the lives of women, has not yet been fully studied. However, it is possible to affirm without a hint of doubt that these types of masculinity constitute a critical obstacle to feminist peacebuilding in Colombia, and therefore, considering social initiatives aimed at demilitarising masculinities and promoting peace with equity from a feminist perspective, is a fundamental part of what should be an integral and articulated strategy to put an end to the war, and build a country that contemplates wellbeing, equity and diversity as fundamental pillars for the exercise of citizenship.

[10] Semana (2001). Se escapó Serpa. Accessed at: https://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/se-escapo-serpa/47820-3/

[11] PhD in Anthropology from the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales de Paris (EHESS); Master's in Latin American Studies, Institut des Hautes Etudes sur L'Amérique Latine (IHEAL) of the University Paris III; Economist, Universidad Nacional de Colombia. Professor of the School of Gender Studies, of which she is co-founder and has been twice director, and of the Department of Anthropology of the National University of Colombia, where she has taught and developed research projects since 1998. Co-director of the Research Group, Grupo Interdisciplinario de Estudios de Género.

[12] Viveros, M (2013). Género, raza y nación. Los réditos políticos de la masculinidad blanca en Colombia. Universidad Nacional, Bogotá Colombia.

03

CONTEXT AND PARTICIPANTS

Taking into account that the purpose of this document is not to provide a detailed academic dissertation on militarised masculinities, but rather to describe the process involved in carrying out the project, its challenges, difficulties and main results, this section will include only some theoretical references to key concepts that are linked to the context and the description of the participant population.

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CONTEXT: COLOMBIA, A MILITARISTIC AND MILITARISED COUNTRY

In order to understand why Colombia is a militaristic country, it is first necessary to start from what can be understood by militarism; for the development of this project, the notion that this is a system of values linked to the military or military perspectives, practices and symbols was coined. Under this description, a society, a state, or a government model can be qualified as militaristic, as long as the priority in any of these is the subordination of the civilian dimension to the military perspective or power:

"Militarism is the invasion by military power into other spheres of society with the intention of controlling people's lives and behaviour. From a broader perspective, it is considered as a social phenomenon present in economic, political and ideological relations that has its origin in the application of the military to civilian life as a whole." [13]

Militarism as a system or phenomenon is not something that arises spontaneously; rather it is something that is built and consolidated over time, so for the Colombian case it can be said that militarism has been consolidating

for more than two centuries, as this country has the unfortunate record of being the Latin American country that has had the most internal wars in the last 200 years. In the 19th century alone, there were nine national civil wars and 14 regional wars on Colombian territory. The state of permanent disruption in which the country lived as a result of these wars, did not allow the consolidation of processes of transformation and national development, an issue that became evident in 1900, since Colombia had the highest illiteracy rate in Latin America. [14]

Another serious consequence of militarism is that culturally, a kind of cult to the figure of the warrior is developed, especially with respect to the one who is culturally and institutionally conceived as a hero, which, in the Colombian case, is embodied in the figure of the "soldier of the fatherland". The soldier in Colombia then becomes a multi-purpose tool, becoming the official who represents the state in most of the national territory, since in the absence of medical personnel, teachers, infrastructure professionals or the civil service of the justice system, the uniformed men located on a road,

[13] Peralta, A (2005). Antimilitaristas. Retrieved on 2 November 2012 in Rodríguez, A (2016). Conscientious objection to compulsory military service: A right in debt and a common struggle. Pedagogical and Technological University of Colombia, UPTC. Bogotá, Colombia.

[14] Teresa, M and J Téllez, J (2006). La educación primaria y secundaria en Colombia en el siglo XX. Accessed at: https://www.banrep.gov.co/docum/ftp/borra379.pdf

a village or a mountain, make the population feel that the territory is not abandoned. The soldier also becomes a reference of identity; later we see how the construction of the notion of identity and independence in Colombia is strongly linked to the army, thanks to a commemoration established by the military forces and the government; for now, it is enough to mention that the figure of the soldier has also been exalted as a symbol of patriotism and identity, to the point of even replacing in the cultural imaginary, crucial aspects such as ethnic diversity, landscape or natural wealth:

"The homeland is not the fence of abrupt mountain ranges that the human eye can measure and calculate. The homeland is in the resolute spirit of the soldier and only his hope can limit it."[15] This complex militaristic panorama reached a worrying boiling point, when Colombia began a process of unprecedented militarisation in 1999.

Militarisation is the result of a set of actions, this set of actions can be framed in a state dynamic, and this dynamic is evidenced in concrete and quantifiable aspects such as the increase of the military force and military spending, the extension of powers for the public force, the use of military personnel for social, medical or infrastructure tasks; the establishment of military co-operation treaties and other similar actions. The militarisation dynamics initiated by the Colombian government with the economic resources of the military technical co-operation agreement, Plan Colombia, signed with the US in 1999, not only increased the military force and military spending (currently the second highest on the continent),[16] but also increased multiple indicators of human rights violations, through problems such as forced internal displacement (with 8 million people who have had to leave their land, which makes Colombia the country in the world most affected by this phenomenon),[17] forced disappearance of approximately 87,000 people, the murder of 220,000, the assassination of 6,402 young civilians in the form of extrajudicial execution, and other actions that could also be considered state crimes. Analysed from a gender perspective, the panorama of militarisation and militarism in Colombia is closely linked to the fact that this country is especially violent and unsafe for millions of women; it currently ranks as one of the ten worst countries in the world to be a woman, with alarming statistics such as the rape of 55 under-age women per day, and the report of 502 femicides between 2020 and September 2021.[18]

These figures immediately imply a strong contradiction, since it is not assumed that in a country with nearly 487,000 uniformed personnel, with training and weapons paid for with the taxes paid by millions of citizens, criminals can operate with such freedom. However, the security forces, instead of fulfilling their constitutional function, have ended up becoming another risk factor for women, as evidenced by the fact that from 2015 to 2017 alone, the Attorney General's Office received 4,337 complaints of assaults by uniformed men against women, and in the same period 498 women were killed by members of the police or the army.[19]

This shocking reality is made worse by the impunity rates. Compared to the number of assaults and homicides mentioned above, only 34 aggressors from the public forces have been detained, which corresponds to the national average of impunity, in which less than 1% of complaints for violent carnal access[20] reach trial or are resolved, granting justice to the victims.

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[15] Excerpt from the hymn of the Colombian Army.

[16] Legal Affairs (April 2021). Colombia is the second country in Latin America with the second highest investment in military spending. Accessed at: https://www.asuntoslegales.com.co/actualidad/colombia-es-el-segundo-pais-la-nivel-latinoamerica-con-mas-inversion-en-gasto-militar-3160701

[17] El Nuevo Siglo (June 2020). Colombia, the country with the most internally displaced persons in the world. Accessed at https://www.elnuevosiglo.com.co/articulos/06-2020-colombia-es-el-pais-con-mas-desplazados-internos-en-el-mundo

[18] Peers. Fundación Paz y Reconciliación (September 2021). Alarmas encendidas por feminicidios en Colombia. Accessed at: https://www.pares.com.co/post/alarmas-encendidas-por-feminicidios-en-colombia.

[19] ACOOC, Datasketch (2020). Violencias Invisibles ejercidas por agentes de la fuerza pública. Accessed at https://datasketch.github.io/violencias-invisibles/

[20] "When the sexual assault consists of carnal access by vaginal, anal or oral means, or introduction of bodily members or objects by either of the first two means" according to the RAE 2022.

05

METHODOLOGY

The main objective of this research is to characterise the cultural and institutional practices that militarise masculinities in Colombia; however, this purpose is significantly complex, considering that many of the concepts and dynamics involved in the problem have not been studied in depth in this country, which is why the research team concluded that the intended characterisation would not be of a theoretical-academic order from the beginning, but rather dialogical and methodological; that is to say, the exercise of identifying and reviewing institutional and cultural practices would be not only the purpose of the research, but a fundamental part of its methodology.

The other aspect that posed an important challenge for the development of the methodology, was the target population. Working with teachers, members of social organisations and people linked to communities where a process is being developed from a feminist or masculinities perspective, implies considering the difficulties that many people in this country have to devote time to research or collective learning spaces. The economic model that has prevailed in Colombia for decades, has been impoverishing the work of thousands of professionals who do not have fixed contracts or salaries that correspond to their academic training or professional experience, which is why, in many cases, those who do social, academic, human rights promotion and defence, or gender

violence prevention work, often have two jobs or assume multiple tasks in the contracts they have, making it difficult to carry out processes that involve several work sessions or sessions that last more than two or three hours. With the aforementioned aspects in mind, the research team decided that instead of academically delving into all the factors that may be involved with the militarisation of masculinity in childhood, adolescence and adulthood, it would be better to use these stages as a methodological and dialogic basis, making a superficial characterisation that would also give an account (by way of diagnosis) of how developed or widespread the organisational, community or educational debate around militarisation practices is. This decision was also taken, considering that the time of implementation of the research project would allow the exploration of militarisation practices, and the collection of some questions, reflections and initiatives developed or to be developed to mitigate or transform the impact of the identified problems. The following is a step-by-step description of the methodological section of this qualitative research, from the design of the methodological work phases to the approach of the data collection tools, the data analysis techniques, and the approach of the necessary continuity scenarios in view of the contributions made by the people and organisations that participated in the research.

06

PHASE 1: TOOL DESIGN PROCESS

To explore the concrete experiences of the population participating in the project on the cultural and institutional practices of militarisation, the research team proposed three phases of work. The first phase was aimed at establishing the type and number of activities that could be carried out, taking into account the target population; the second phase was designed to carry out the implementation, making the corresponding adjustments after receiving feedback from the activities; and the third phase was designed to analyse the information gathered, including the contributions aimed at proposing continuity scenarios.

It is important to clarify in this section, that in the middle of the second phase the project had to face the conditions and limitations posed by the measures taken during the Covid-19 pandemic, which implied significant changes in the implementation of several activities, due to the impossibility of carrying out the activities in person, or even the difficulty of virtually contacting some people; however, this difficulty also opened a window of opportunity to diversify the tools to facilitate the diagnosis, conversations and articulations necessary for the project.

The first example of the above occurred with the Solidarity Dialogues, the project activity that had the most participation and on which scenarios were proposed. A detailed description of the methodological profile of the activity is given below.

Solidarity Dialogues

One of the components of the project is focused on the "construction of alliances". As part of this component, the Solidarity Dialogues activity was created. This activity was included at the time of formulation and would respond to the results of "increased collaborations between women and men working for feminist peace".

Already during the implementation of the project, in the methodological design for this activity, a first reflection was made in which it was suggested that data collection and interpretation in qualitative social research is usually done in different ways, almost always following the reference methods proposed by various manuals on techniques for this type of research. Some of these, based on multiple high-impact experiences, propose concrete activities to break with the formal structure of the "research team/research subjects", without this implying the scheme proposed by Participatory Action Research (PAR), where those who participate in the research determine, together with the research team, the methodologies, objectives and development of the research. The first methods suggested for gathering the experiences of people who have done some kind of work on masculinities, were the interview and the focus group.

At the beginning, the research team considered these as the only possibilities, but then a concern began to emerge about the type of interaction they wanted to achieve with the participants.

The interview has the limitation of the number of people to whom it can be applied, and the focus group maintains the structure of exchange centred on the answers to pre-established questions, which is not recommended for large groups. Therefore, the possibility of having a method that included aspects of the focus group and the structure of a workshop centred on the dialogue of knowledge or the collective construction of knowledge, began to be considered. Thus, the idea of adapting the Solidarity Dialogues arose, as a first activity that would generate a fluid dialogue, giving agency to those who participate in it and breaking with the stiff scheme that is often assumed between "researchers and research subjects". This was important in this case, because it was a dialogue group with some provocative questions to initiate a discussion, that from the beginning was explicitly proposed as an exchange of ideas and experiences, and not as a working session where the group of participants was limited to answering the questions posed by the research team.

With the call for participation in the Solidarity Dialogues, a short questionnaire was also sent out with two aims: the first was to give those who wanted to participate, a preliminary idea of some of the aspects that would be addressed in the working session. The second was to make it clear what the methodology referred to when talking about institutional and cultural factors.

The Solidarity Dialogues registration questionnaire

QUESTION   **RESPONSES 20**   **SETTING**

In your opinion, which of these cultural factors reproduces militarism with the greatest impact?

Domestic Violence

Normalisation of violence as a result of the armed conflict

Publicity and exaltation of war (cinema, TV, videogames, social networks)

Military-type education (punishment, threats, military, training)

In your opinion, which of these institutions is most resposible for the formation of militarised masculinities?

School

Army (Complusory)

Police

Church

All of the above

The Focus Groups

The focus groups were designed with the intention of receiving more focused and specialised information than that gathered in the Solidarity Dialogues. Although both methodological tools are useful and essential for the collection of research information, it was key to have a design through which we could access the more focused experiences of the participants. In this sense, for the focus groups we gathered people who had previous experience of the issues of masculinities and gender, whether in the professional, academic or personal sphere. Therefore, the groups were carefully chosen to ensure that the experience shared in these spaces would provide a different perspective from the one gathered in the Dialogues, taking into account the diverse and intersectional Colombian context, and the need to learn about the internal dynamics of the communities that have been most harassed by the military. The focus groups are built from the Analysis component of the project, which aims to build knowledge with stakeholders about the root causes of militarised masculinities and GBV, through evidence-based local research using a participatory approach with feminist analysis.

Thus, the focus groups were designed with this component through which the research could approach more specialised knowledge about how militarised masculinities are constructed, what effects they have on women and GBV, and what possible alternatives would there be to these types of masculinity. The questions that guided the focus groups were those mentioned above, as well as the cross-cutting focus on the construction of militarised masculinities in childhood, adolescence and adulthood; in addition, the construction of the soldier-hero archetype imposed on the development of masculinity in men.

The Interviews

Within the project Analysis component, which worked through local evidence-based research, using a participatory approach with feminist analysis, the interviews were designed in a semi-structured format, with ten questions elaborated by the researchers.

The questions were posed with the intention of approaching the specialised knowledge of the interviewees and with a more academic approach. In other words, both the Solidarity Dialogues and the focus groups were guided by more flexible questions that were open to discussion by the participants, while the interviews were structured with an academic approach that allowed a more structured analysis of the same questions that were transversal to the rest of the project activities. Namely, how militarised masculinities are constructed and what effects they have on women.

The interviews were designed as a complementary tool to both the Dialogues and the focus groups, insofar as the two aforementioned spaces gather broader experiences, while the interviews are useful to clarify the context that enables the existence of these types of masculinity and the violence they bring with them.

The interviews were composed of the following questions:

1. In your line of work or experience, what types of masculinity do you consider are produced in Colombian society?

2. What relationship do you think there is between the construction of masculinities in this context and violence against women?

3. Do you consider that militarism is related to the construction of masculinity and in what way?

4. Could you mention a concrete example of how the relationship between militarism and masculinity affects women in Colombia?

5. The concept of securitisation refers to the discursive acts of an authority considered as legitimate, where it appeals to a threat that forces society to be always on the defensive. For the securitisation process to be successful, public opinion must accept and judge as valid the discourse operated by the authority; securitisation rhetorically generates anxiety and uncertainty in relation to a security issue. Do you consider that securitisation affects women and why?

6. What alternatives to militarised securitisation would you propose?

7. Do you consider that militarism covers up the violence exercised by members of the security forces against their partners, descendants or family members?

8. What model or strategy would you propose to confront the violence against women produced by the reproduction and legitimisation of violent masculinities?

9. How are militarised masculinities legitimised in our country?

10. How could these masculinities be affected or transformed and advance towards changing this gender expression?

Symbolic Actions

Within the advocacy efforts, symbolic actions were created to ensure access and influence behaviour locally.

This project activity was more selective, since it was not carried out in all the collective spaces that were shared, nor was it based on all the contributions and experiences gathered from the Dialogues and focus groups.

Instead, the symbolic actions were designed to materialise some of the experiences and the success of the focus groups.

The actions were thought out in logistical and technical terms; that is, what type of materials would be needed, where the intervention would take place, and what type of design would be used to maximise time and space.

However, the messages that would be expressed in the symbolic action and the ways of doing so, would be decisions made collectively in the focus group spaces, based on shared learning and experiences.

Although, as is seen later in the section on adjustments, in the end the mural was chosen as the pre-established technique for these actions.

07

PHASE 2: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TOOLS

Solidarity Dialogues

In the implementation of the Solidarity Dialogues, following the premise of the exchange of ideas, a first diagnostic tool was designed that could also serve as an activity to encourage dialogue, since it was intended that any participant of the group could answer several questions, and then return to these after dialogue with other people, so that they could openly express whether their initial answers were maintained or altered as a result of the exchange.
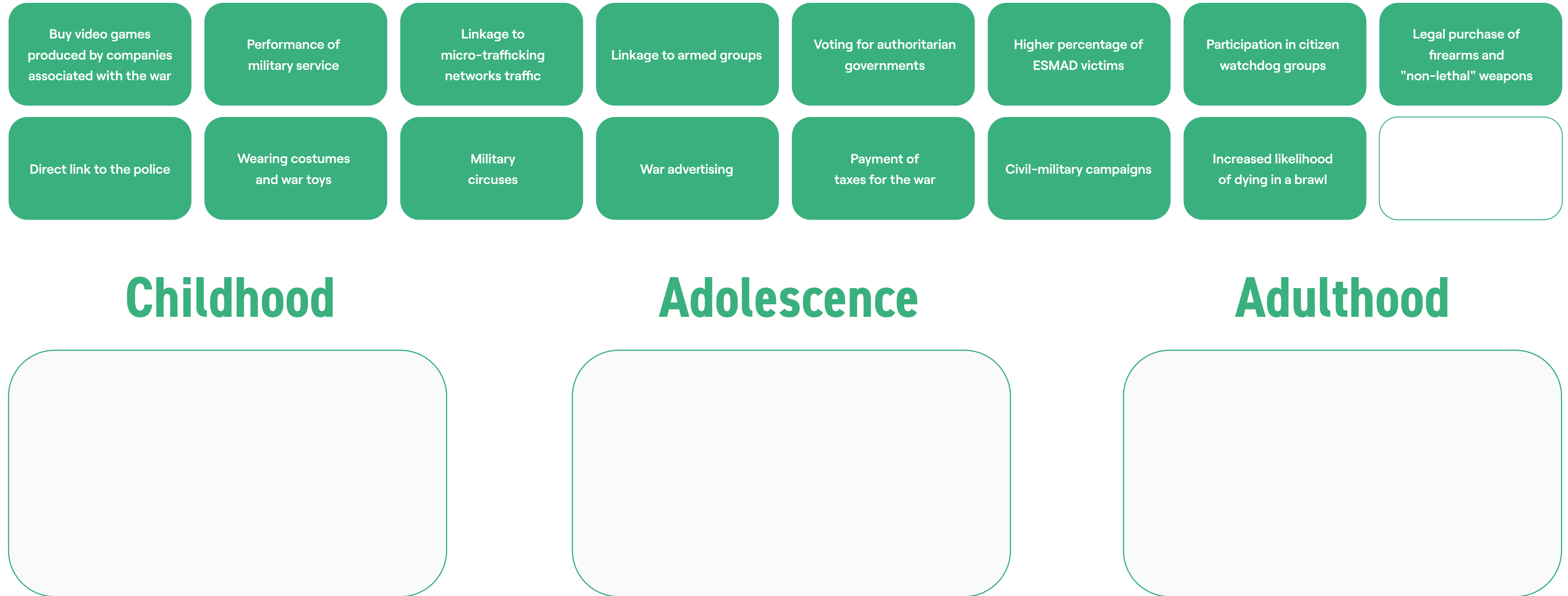
This diagnostic/characterisation tool was called Association Questionnaire on Militarisation Practices, for which the Genially[21] interactive interface was used, in a dynamic that allowed each participant to associate the text boxes with three categories, based on the question, "Through what practices is masculinity militarised in childhood, adolescence and adulthood?"

In this way, a list was drawn up with the following actions or dynamics:

1. War advertising
2. Civic-military campaigns
3. Military circuses
4. Use of disguises and war toys
5. Military service
6. Involvement in armed groups
7. Involvement in micro-trafficking networks
8. Direct involvement with the police
9. Greater probability of being a victim of ESMAD (Mobile Anti-Riot Squad)
10. Greater probability of being killed in a fight
11. Greater probability of voting for authoritarian governments
12. Participation in citizen watchdog groups
13. Legal purchase of firearms or "non-lethal" weapons.

[21] Genially is an interactive platform used to create dynamics with graphs and charts. More information here: https://genial.ly/es/

The group of participants were then asked to associate each of these practices with a stage in the formation of masculinity.

Buy video games produced by companies associated with the war	Performance of military service	Linkage to micro-trafficking networks traffic	Linkage to armed groups	Voting for authoritarian governments	Higher percentage of ESMAD victims	Participation in citizen watchdog groups	Legal purchase of firearms and "non-lethal" weapons
Direct link to the police	Wearing costumes and war toys	Military circuses	War advertising	Payment of taxes for the war	Civil-military campaigns	Increased likelihood of dying in a brawl	

Childhood

Adolescence

Adulthood

Last box (from left to right): Increased likelihood of dying for a girl. The platform used for dynamics with participants

The group of participants were then asked to associate each of these practices with a stage in the formation of masculinity.

Interface designed for the exercise: Questionnaire on Militarisation Practices

One of the main advantages of this tool designed in Genially, is that it allows quick analysis of the data resulting from the exercise in the Solidarity Dialogues. Once this tool was applied, questions were immediately asked such as: "Why do you consider that most participants failed to associate this practice with this stage of masculinity?"

To better understand how the tool was used, we can see the following image, which shows the responses of 15 participants. If we look at the upper part of the table (ordered from the most correct to the least correct answer), the association in which no-one failed was "Using costumes and war toys/childhood" because culturally, for all the groups with which we worked, it is clear that this practice is carried out in childhood. However, when looking at the last two responses (those with the least correct answers), these two answers were used to ask what happened with these two practices, and why it was complicated to associate them with some stage in the construction of masculinity.

Results by question

	Question	Correct	Incorrect
4	Wearing Costumes And War Toys	15	0
14	Paying Taxes For War	14	1
5	Performing Military Service	13	2
10	Higher Percentage of ESMAD Victims	13	2
12	Participation In Citizen Vigilante Groups	13	2
13	Voting For Authoritarian Governments	13	2
15	Legal Purchase Of Firearms And "Non-Lethal" Weapons	13	2
11	Increased Likelihood Of Being Killed In A Fight	12	3
1	War Advertising	11	4
6	Involvement In Armed Groups	11	4
7	Link To Micro-Trafficking Networks	10	5
9	Buying Video Games Produced By Companies Associated Wit XXXX	8	7
8	Direct Involvement With The Police	7	8
3	Military Circuses	6	9
2	Civic-Military Campaign	2	13

Sample results of the tool, Association Questionnaire on Militarisation Practices

Faced with the questions asked by the research team about the practices "military circuses" and "civic military campaigns", the responses stated that, in the first case, the practice of military circuses was something they did not clearly understand, so they had to associate it with something familiar and that is why they thought this referred to "military operations" that applied to the adult population, when in fact, it is a specific type of civic-military campaign that is aimed at minors. Regarding the civic-military campaigns, most of the participants associated them with adulthood or adolescence, but in practice, statistically speaking, the population that most participates in these types of activity are children, because the army has planned it in this way, as it knows that in the middle of the activities it can ask the children intelligence questions about their parents, the community or the territory. It also takes many photographs from these activities to improve its image in the community.

Civic-military campaigns carried out with children in Ituango Antioquia (images taken from the army's web page)[22]

The image contains on the left the logo of the Government of Colombia with the slogan "The future belongs to all" and on the right it has a reflective message that, "We work joining efforts for the comprehensive protection of the rights of children, teenagers and the strengthening of families."

Below this phrase, on the left is the national army's coat of arms with its words "Homeland, Honour, Loyalty" and on the right is the logo of Family Welfare, a programme of the government of Colombia.

The exchange with the participants allowed them to ask the research team questions, such as: "Is it legal to have armed military and police officers in schools?" In response, the team clarified not only the prohibition under International Humanitarian Law (IHL) for members of the security forces to enter educational institutions, but also the risk that this poses for children and educational communities in these regions, where the armed conflict is still active and, therefore, although the army acts in alliance with the Family Welfare programme (as shown in the above image), the other armed actors in the territory would interpret the presence of soldiers as a collaboration of teachers and parents with the army.

Focus groups

There were six focus groups composed of different populations with experiences close to the topic of masculinities and/or gender. On 22 September 2021, a focus group was conducted in Cartagena with ten students from the University of Cartagena, who carried out processes with gender research groups, as well as collective initiatives to confront machismo within their faculties, cases of sexual harassment and the lack of curricula with a gender focus. The focus group session was conducted in three moments: first, to trace the construction of militarised masculinities in the stages of childhood, adolescence and adulthood; then a debate was opened on the effects of this type of masculinity on women – at this point, the students shared the negative experiences they had had within their university with professors and faculties that have sexist practices. And finally, the space was opened for students to propose alternatives to these types of masculinity.

The second focus group was held on 25 September 2021, with boys, girls and teenagers from Bicentenario[23] in Cartagena.

[22] Retrieved from: https://www.aviacionejercito.mil.co/soldados-realizan-jornada-de-actividades--recreativas-para-los-ninos-del-patia/

[23] Bicentenario is a district of the city of Cartagena in Colombia.

This group was composed of about 18 people and had the objective of understanding how, within a community that has been constantly harassed by the army, the types of masculinity that this presence generates in children is understood. The session was carried out in the same three moments mentioned above, but with a community focus and more localised to the experience of the girls and boys who were participating. The discussions that took place in these spaces were also mediated by icebreaker games, in which the gender stereotypes that the people in the group have had to confront in their family life, at school and in the community in general, were identified.

The third focus group was held on 16 October 2021, with young leaders from Cartagena. The space was attended by 13 young people who, from their initiatives, collectives and social groups, have been developing social work in their communities and in the city on issues of gender and culture, among others. This space was divided into three moments guided by the aforementioned key questions on militarised masculinities, the effects on women and the possible alternatives, from their own experiences and knowledge acquired in their journey with the gender issue, which could give way to other types of masculinity.

At the beginning there was an icebreaker activity, with teamwork techniques and implementation of communication tools to take care of the spaces and encourage respect in the dialogue. There was active participation in which the effects of militarism on women and society in general were identified, as well as an analysis of how masculinity generates GBV through its hegemonic construction.

The fourth focus group was held on 23 October 2021, with university students from the University of Cartagena and the Rafael Núñez University Corporation. This was attended by 15 young people who, from their careers and faculties, have participated in training spaces on gender, human rights, GBV and social construction. The space was divided into the same three moments as the other focus groups and in the final section, a series of collective commitments were agreed upon regarding the impacts of the group. For example, it was agreed to replicate the guiding questions presented in the group in other academic spaces that students lead in their educational institutions.

The fifth focus group was held on 25 October 2021, with grade 11 students from the Manuel Atencia Ordoñez school.

This space had 17 young people who have had leadership experiences in the "personería"[24] and representation within their institution. The young people contributed their knowledge from the experiences they have had in their communities, in their families and in their schools, regarding gender and the process of building better strategies to transform the macho practices that are installed in the spaces they occupy.

This space was also divided into the three moments already mentioned, and was guided by the same questions that were designed for all the focus groups. The last focus group was held on 27 October and included the participation of the youth collective of Baru Island, in the insular zone of Cartagena, in the community of Santa Ana.

This group was made up of 15 people, who debated the questions of how militarised masculinities are constructed, what are the effects of militarised masculinities on women, and, finally, what are the forms, strategies and alternatives to confront militarised masculinities.

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[24] The figure of personería in Colombia is an office that serves as a spokesperson and defender of citizens' rights and as a vigilant of the conduct of public officials.

Interviews

The interviews were conducted virtually, due to the restrictions imposed by Covid-19 in the period between October 2020 and October 2021. The people who were interviewed were selected as information was collected from the Solidarity Dialogues and the focus groups, since, as mentioned above, these were designed as a complementary tool with an academic approach. The people selected have extensive experience in the topic of gender and/or masculinities, from a research or more collective approach, as well as in processes at the national level on the transformation of masculinities and the fight against GBV. The knowledge and information gathered from the interviews are analysed later in the Analysis of results section. Below are the profiles of the people who were interviewed.

Fernando Agudelo, sociologist and specialist in feminist and gender studies, at the National University of Colombia. He has been working on the issue of masculinities for approximately nine years in different autonomous collectives. In 2018, he began working on the issue, initially in Medellin with Corporación Amiga Joven, doing training in workshops with men, and in 2019, in charge of the strategy, Alternative Masculinities, of the District Secretariat of Women.

He is currently part of two collectives and of a district articulation platform called La Red Espiral Distrital de Masculinidades (District Spiral Network of Masculinities).

Daniela Villa Hernández, psychologist, feminist and anti-militarist. She has a Master's degree in Artistic Studies and for which she did a research process on art, militarisation and state crimes in Colombia, from the perspective of cultural criticism, cultural studies and artistic studies.

Patricia Franco Rojas, BA in Basic Education with emphasis in Social Sciences from Universidad Pedagógica Nacional. Master's in educational sciences from the Universidad de la Amazonia. She is currently pursuing a specialisation in Public Policy and Gender Justice at CLACSO. Professor at the Universidad de la Amazonia. Leader of the Gender and Peace Education Research Group, Paichajere. Facilitator of teacher and community training processes in Education and Gender Equity, Pedagogy and Culture of Peace.

Pedro Torres, research professor at the Rafael Núñez University Corporation, Cartagena branch, current co-ordinator of the Office of Women's Affairs at the university, is part of the institutional team of the Mayor's Office of Cartagena for Women's Affairs, Gender and Diversity in the Secretariat of Participation and Social Development.

Miguel Ángel Gómez Camargo, social worker with specialisation in public policy and gender justice from CLACSO, currently works on a project with UNDP and the JEP within the reparation and restoration measures unit. In 2015 he was part of the Men and Masculinities Collective, where he participated promoting pedagogical and political activities.

Hernando Muñoz Sánchez, PhD from the Complutense University of Madrid in Gender Perspective in Social Sciences, Masculinities. Master's in Co-operation and Development from the University of Barcelona. Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences at the University of Antioquia. Colombian focal point of the MenEngage Alliance and representative of the Advocacy Working Group of Latin America. Former member of the Mesa de Masculinidades Nacional de Colombia.

Jhorman Eli Cárdenas Aroca, professor and law student at Universidad Simón Bolívar. Experienced researcher on gender and masculinities at Universidad Simón Bolívar.

Mercedes Rodríguez López, professor at the University of Cartagena and social worker, with experience in family issues, and leader of the gender research group at the same university.

Symbolic actions

One of the tools chosen to demonstrate the level of impact of the focus groups, was the process of constructing symbolic actions. In the methodological design process of these actions, it was decided that the way to carry them out would be through a mural or wall, that is, a visual action that would go beyond the space and that will be accessible to the population. A total of four symbolic actions were carried out: the first was in May with women leaders in the department of Meta; the second was carried out in the framework of the national strike in an action at the Ombudsman's Office in Bogotá; the next was in Bicentenario in Cartagena on 23 September– this was the only action that was not presented as a mural; and, finally, on 25 September in Cartagena, in Bicentenario, a mural was produced after a focus group.

The action of 23 September was a play that the girls and boys, after a process of several workshops conducted by Limpal on masculinities and gender, decided to present in front of their families and the team of facilitators of Limpal Colombia. Photographic evidence of this meeting is not attached, as the parents of the children who participated in the play did not authorise the publication of photographs of their children.

Women leaders in Meta | Woman in white T-shirt painting banner with the phrase Mujeres libres (Free women) Gigantography with the phrase "Free women, safe spaces, peaceful territories"

Women painting on the runway, NO olvidamos, NO callamos (We do not forget, we do not remain silent)

National strike at the Ombudsman's Office, Bogotá

Children and teenagers painting mural with phrases such as, "I commit myself…", "not to war", "I commit myself to avoid problems", "I commit myself to respect".

Mural at Bicentenario, Cartagena

08

PHASE 3. ADJUSTMENTS, EVALUATION AND CONTINUITY OPTIONS

Among the tools applied, three of them had several adjustments that were made based on feedback from those who participated in the project activities.

In the Solidarity Dialogues, after evaluating the use of the interactive tool, Association Questionnaire on Militarisation Practices, changes were made especially in its graphic section, to make it easier to read and to introduce a previous screen that explains the mechanics of the exercise, so that it could be replicated autonomously not only for project purposes, but also as part of the training processes carried out by both Limpal and ACOOC.

In the case of the interviews, after applying the first four, the research team made some adjustments focused on reducing questions that produced similar answers, and

adjusting the wording of others that, in the development of the interviews, generated counter-questions from some interviewees, so these questions were simplified to make them simpler and shorter.

In relation to the symbolic actions, these were initially structured methodologically, so that they would be the result of a collective construction process, where the place, the content of the action and even the technique for its elaboration were agreed upon with the group or community where the action was to be carried out. However, the alteration of the timeline due to the pandemic and the reduction of time for the activities, implied that the original idea for the symbolic actions had to be simplified considerably, maintaining the methodology of collective construction of the idea, but assuming the mural as a pre-established method.

09

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

In this section, the results of the research are analysed based on four sub-headings presented in a non-hierarchical order.

These four sub-headings have been chosen based on the patterns and trends identified in the implementation of the project activities. Through the methodological tools designed and implemented, four analysis edges were identified: the militarisation of childhood, adolescence and adulthood; militarised hegemonic masculinities; the hero soldier as an archetype of patriarchy; and, finally, from the alternatives and initiatives proposed in the spaces of the project activities, non-hegemonic masculinities and feminist peace.

As these concepts were chosen based on what was identified in the preliminary results of the research, they are all transversal to each of the methodological tools that were developed within the framework of the project. In other words, these concepts are present in all the activities implemented during the research.

Militarisation of childhood, adolescence and adulthood

In the focus groups that were developed within the framework of the project, the participants addressed the issue of militarisation under the orientation that it occurs in three vital stages: childhood, adolescence and adulthood. In each of these stages, the groups identified both cultural and institutional factors involved in the militarisation process. This type of approach made it possible to recognise some patterns in the discussions of those who participated in the focus groups. On the one hand, it was identified that cultural patterns are reproduced from a very early age, supported by two fundamental nuclei in the development of male children – it was recurrent in the groups to refer mostly to boys when militarisation was addressed – which are: the family and the school. Through these two institutions, which are crucial in the insertion and socialisation of children in their communities and in society in general, the focus groups identified that the militarisation processes begin through cultural devices.

For example, a group in Cartagena, which was composed of adults, children and teenagers (nine adults, four girls, two boys and nine teenagers, aged 12 to 17) from a vulnerable community in Bicentenario, identified that in their childhood particularly, the games they were taught were strongly marked by militaristic guidelines. That is, these games were inspired by the constant presence of the military in their neighbourhoods, where order was maintained by this presence and authority was conferred directly to the figures of the soldiers. For this reason, the boys grew up replicating different characteristics they saw in the soldiers in their neighbourhoods: the way they walked, the way they treated their fellow soldiers, the way they treated the people who lived in the neighbourhood they patrolled, and their particular gestures which, for the boys, exuded authority and power. This same group in Cartagena was close in age to the time when the previous story of the soldiers who had inspired their games occurred, so their narrative was fresh; some were still living it in their daily lives. In this same group, the teenagers identified that in the vital stage they were experiencing, their families reproduced the narratives about what they saw in the soldiers: "figures of power and authority" and that everything they do should be allowed, since these two characteristics also imply that they could use their power against the community in case of disobedience. The families of the teenagers who participated

in the focus group in Cartagena, were convinced that the limits, law and order of their community were defined by the soldiers who went to their neighbourhoods to talk to their children about the military profession. For them, they told the group, it was clear that the soldiers used intimidation to approach their community, as they saw how they instilled fear in the children when they arrived and, in the teenagers, when they approached asking to talk to them. In their words, the soldiers came to their neighbourhoods to find new recruits to take with them, and to make a kind of survey for the recruitment they had in mind in that area of the city. In adolescence, they said, these kinds of approach to militarisation begin to become normalised, because while in childhood militarism can be a source of play and fun, in adolescence, through fear and the strong presence of militarism, these options of ending up in the military, being arrested for no clear reason or being the victim of some soldier who uses his power to intimidate anyone who disobeys him, become more and more real for them, because they see it in their peers taken to conscription, who are victims of crime as a result of their social status, and in those who voluntarily decide to follow the path of militarism.

On the other hand, at school, they said, they were taught that soldiers were the reason that Colombia exists today

as a republic, since they were the ones who took charge of defeating the enemies and creating a nation that is only of "us". From this, in the Bicentenario focus group, they reflected on what this meant for them, since during the whole space their contributions had been from very clear and conscious visions on how militarisation has negatively affected their lives.

However, from the reflections of the space, it was revealed that, while the militaristic patterns reproduced in the family were, for them, easier to reject, the militaristic patterns learned at school were not. In the family environment, militarisation occurred not only with the physical presence of soldiers in their neighbourhoods, but also by word of mouth; that is, it was almost like a legend that children and teenagers heard all the time and that, in addition, they could see with their own eyes that it was not always positive to have a military presence. This caused their perceptions of militarisation to be generally negative when it came to the factors that here are called "cultural", those that begin to develop from the family and the interaction within their communities.

However, narratives that glorified the soldiers were taught at school – this is further discussed in the section on the hero soldier – and these were rarely unknown or directly questioned by the focus group participants in Bicentenario.

This last statement is supported by the fact that in several comments, members of the community referred to the members of the military forces as "heroes" although not in a categorical statement, which is relevant, since there were nuances to these statements, such as "they are supposed to be the heroes" or "we are all told that they are the heroes".

The latter could be since, in this journey of militarisation through childhood, adolescence and adulthood, childhood is a stage of absorption of the information presented to them in the family, at school and in their community in general. Children tended, in this Bicentenario group, to have flexible ideas and even draw their own conclusions from what they themselves experience and see, without needing to rely on the narratives of their families or other institutions. However, in adolescence, many of the ideas that have been repeated in childhood – many of which had been celebrated by them as their source of inspiration for their games, for example – begin to be adopted by them voluntarily or rejected outright. Either way, the process of adoption or rejection, one can see in the groups, depended very much on the source from which that militarisation narrative emerged. The school tended, in this case, to be a more truthful source of information for them; this added to the fact that from an early age they saw the soldiers who roamed their neighbourhoods as figures

of authority and power. However, it is important to mention that the participants in this Bicentenario group also criticised militarisation. Many of the children who participated in the space, talked about the violence that militarism brought with it, as something that was beginning to be seen in the games they played, in the ways they treated each other and even within their families; and, for them, frequently, the strong militarisation they experienced daily in their neighbourhoods was the inspiration for that violence.

The issue of militarisation in adulthood turned out to be different from the two previous stages in the description of the participants in the focus groups. In the Cartagena group of the Bicentenario community, the people participating in the group were children and teenagers. In this sense, the vision they gave on this topic was based on how they perceived adulthood from their youth. Therefore, in these spaces it was evident that, for them, adulthood was equated with authority and power, just as the soldiers had been described throughout the session.

This was interesting, in that it is possible to observe how the narratives that are established in their perception of the world from childhood are replicated, as occurs with the militarisation that is present in their daily lives, and are

reflected in how they think about adulthood, apparently assuming that, when they are adults, they will have to be like those figures of authority and power that inflicted terror on them during their childhood.

On the other hand, in Cartagena, a focus group was conducted with students from the University of Cartagena, who are part of research groups on gender, as well as initiatives to confront the machista policies they experience within their faculties. In this group, the issue of militarisation in childhood, adolescence and adulthood was also addressed, with different results from those identified in the groups with younger people, since the participants in this particular space are already in the adulthood stage, unlike the space mentioned above.

In the childhood stage, in this group, different characteristics of the militarisation process were identified, such as, for example, the use of war toys and the reaffirmation of gender roles in which girls are given the work of care and boys are instilled with competitiveness through games and sports, as well as the violence that these present for them. There was also a space for reflection in which the participants recalled the militarisation strategies that they themselves experienced in their childhood.

At this point, they recognised that the constant exposure to violent television programmes made them normalise this type of behaviour later in their adolescence. One of the aspects most present in the discussion was violence in childhood, as it was identified that this was used as a dual tool: it was presented through fun (games, sports, etc) and also as a method of upbringing and "correction" when there was disobedience. In the discussion on childhood, an element in common with the Bicentenario group emerged, which was the figure of the soldier and his glorification. At this point, the participants identified that in their childhood it was common to see boys dressed up as policemen or soldiers, and the group equated this fact with civic-military training, since it is through these elements that the state[25] has been able to approach the civilian population to appeal for militarism, with various strategies also focused on children.

The participants identified this as a pattern of militarisation and, in this sense, it is possible to observe that this process of insertion of militarism in everyday life would not be possible without a long and deep process of normalisation. In other words, the focus on militarisation from childhood to adulthood, makes it possible to recognise that militarisation becomes possible as it begins to permeate at very everyday levels from

an early age and, over time, it becomes normal to have a certain positive and glorified perception of the militarist system.

In this group, the stage of adolescence is crossed by normalising elements of militarisation and, even, other types of strategy were recognised as the foundation of fear and threat against the civilian population. In this sense, in adolescence the constant threat of compulsory military service is present, and the military presence is increasingly constant in their lives through strategies such as literacy with police officers, in which the national police is responsible for approaching schools and educational institutions to provide literacy services in vulnerable communities. If in childhood there is an initial recognition of the military, in adolescence there is an adoption, legitimisation and linkage to militarism. This occurs with the tangible possibility for young people to join the military forces, since this decision is perceived as a viable, responsible and honourable life project. On the other hand, joining other sources of violence such as armed groups and gangs is increasingly an option for young men who have no other alternatives in their panorama, since they have been inculcated with values and behaviours that normalise violence since childhood.

Likewise, at this stage, it was observed in the focus groups, an ambivalent perception of militarism is constructed. On the one hand, it was identified that there is indeed a process of glorification of the figure of the soldier or policeman, because of either the authority or the power they carry, while at the same time, a generalised fear of the public forces is generated, for the same reasons of authority and power they have. It is not fortuitous that this occurs, since throughout the research similar patterns were recognised in that these characteristics of power and authority rarely come alone; they are always accompanied by what in many spaces the participants identified as respect at the beginning, while, as the conversation in the focus groups deepened, that word was exchanged for fear. But fear of what? Is it possible that every figure of authority and power exudes something akin to intimidation, and this is how society legitimises their presence and the hierarchical position they occupy? In principle, this is what was identified in the focus groups; the legitimacy of the security forces in Colombia is made possible by the strategies of normalisation of violence they apply on the civilian population from childhood, but also because it is accompanied by the threat of the use of their authority and power to contain, detain and repress anyone who decides to disobey the status quo they are dedicated to safeguarding.

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[25] These types of militarisation strategy are carried out through early socialisation and the normalisation of the military. It is a patriarchal strategy that is used by all armed actors claiming some territorial control.

In the University of Cartagena group, it was identified that a conflict with authority starts to emerge in adolescence, whether it is that of the family or school. This type of behaviour has a negative impact on young people when the authority they question is the security forces, who have weapons and the power to deprive them of their freedom. Therefore, the conflict with authority is also the moment when young people begin to unconsciously adopt the violence that has been instilled in them since childhood, instrumentalising it in their favour to defend themselves from authority, and end up participating in different scenarios of violence that generally also involve the security forces. It is also this process of entering into conflict with authority that generates fear of law enforcement figures, who have enough power to decide about their lives if they get into trouble with authority.
In this same focus group, it was identified that the family is the basic militarising nucleus, in that within the family system the hierarchies that also exist in militarism are reproduced.
In this sense, the family also has a hierarchical organised structure, where the head of everything is the father as a figure of authority and power who, in addition, uses violence as the prevalent method of conflict resolution. The young men and women in this focus group identified that the same structures found in the military, where the guiding principle is obedience and discipline, are found in the school and in the

family, eventually becoming replicated in civil society, where the authority figure is no longer the school principal or the father of the family, but the soldier or the policeman. Thus, militarisation penetrates all social spheres and is installed in each of them in different ways, and has clear repercussions on the lives of young people.

On the other hand, in the focus group at the University of Cartagena, it was identified that in the adulthood stage, militarisation focuses on citizenship and on a more personal level, the authoritarianism discussed in the adolescence stage becomes a way of establishing interpersonal bonds in which violent solutions are given to social conflicts. Violence begins to permeate each of the social spheres in adulthood; however, it does not emerge suddenly, but is inculcated from an early age as mentioned above. At this stage it is also common to see male adults buy weapons with the pretence of protecting what "is theirs", be it their private property or even to protect their sisters, mothers, partners and daughters, in a process of objectification (the reduction of a person to the condition of an interchangeable, usable, claimable and marketable object) of women. At this stage, the gender roles and hierarchisation also put in place through militarisation, are solidified and perceived as "true", where women are placed in the weakest and lowest link of the social hierarchy.

Everything that was learned in childhood and adopted in adolescence about the militarisation of life, is solidified and reaffirmed in adulthood.

Specific practices of militarisation of childhood and adolescence, the contribution of Solidarity Dialogues

The analysis above, is complemented in multiple ways from the inputs resulting from the Solidarity Dialogues, especially after applying the exercise, Association Questionnaire on Militarisation Practices.

Regarding the militarisation of childhood, many of the answers obtained in the questionnaire made it clear that for most of the people who carried out the exercise, childhood is outside the area of institutional militarisation, and they are only involved in this dynamic through cultural practices, as explained in the previous section.

However, when the feedback of the exercise was given and institutional dispositions were discussed, it was surprising that, among the four militarisation practices associated with children, only one of those mentioned in the activity was culturally reproduced without being promoted by the state through any institutional dynamics.

In other words, in three of the practices analysed, the state invests a considerable number of resources and generates indicators to measure the impact of these practices on the target population, in this case, specifically on children and teenagers, as can be seen in the following table:

Institutional practices of militarisation of children	Cultural practices that promote militarism in children
War advertising: The Colombian state has invested hundreds of millions of pesos in advertising in recent decades, to promote a positive image of the military forces and patriotic symbols; this advertising is shown in triple A schedules, during sporting events and on social networks.	**Using costumes and war toys:** Cultural practice centred on disguising minors as soldiers, policemen or members of an armed group, present in the Colombian conflict. This practice is not necessarily promoted by the state, but it can be considered that it is partly a consequence of war publicity and the relevant role given by the mass media to the figure of the soldier as hero and to the war narratives, of which the main protagonists are soldiers. In several countries such as the USA, Germany, Sweden, Denmark and Argentina, there are laws regulating the advertising and sale of war toys, in order to reduce their impact on children.
Military circuses: They have been operating as an army strategy for 26 years. In the first half of 2019 alone, 251 performances were held.	
Civic-military campaigns: These are activities carried out by the army that involve the civilian population through recreational exercises, workshops, fairs, film forums, talks, sports championships and even psychological operations (application of questionnaires or conducting guides and interrogations, mainly with minors).	

One of the reasons why we chose to use the Genially tool for this association exercise, is because, once carried out, the tool's interface organises the answers and allows us to see them represented in a statistical graph. For this case, it is key to analyse what happened with the association of civic-military campaigns (including military circuses) and the evident lack of knowledge about the place of children as the target of these campaigns.

Civil-military Campaigns   **Military Circuses**

■ *Childhood*   ■ *Adolescence*   ■ *Adulthood*   ■ *No Response*
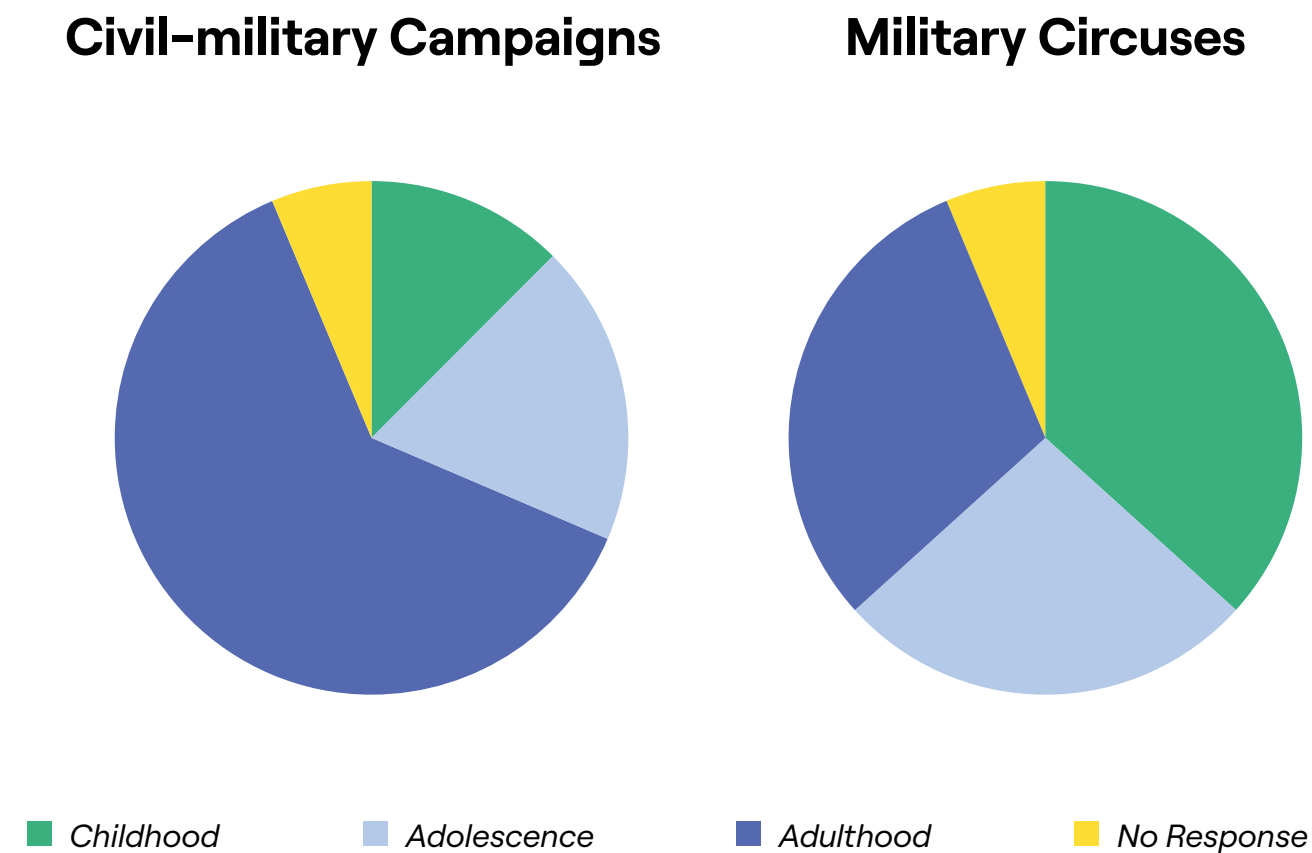
Descriptive statistical pie charts showing how the associations made, assign a low percentage of linkages between civil-military campaigns and children

"Do they really exist, circuses with soldiers disguised as clowns asking questions to children?" "I had no idea of the existence of this type of practice." "Maybe because I have lived all my life in the city, I have never seen one of these circuses."

These are some of the questions and statements collected from the people who participated in the exercise. To the surprise of those who participated, the research team provided information that exposed not only the existence of such an institutional practice of militarisation of childhood, but also the impacts they had on boys and girls, which explains why this population is the main target of these strategies of the military forces.

According to an article published by ACOOC in 2019, in one of the most widely circulated newspapers in Colombia, "These actions generate an idealisation of the armed actor that emotionally links minors to an exaltation of military values that can later become motivations to join the exercise of armed violence."[26] For this and other reasons, since 2006, the Law on Childhood and Adolescence establishes that the state must "refrain from using them in military activities, psychological operations, civic-military campaigns and the like".[27]

[26] ACOOC (2019). The risks of the Army's camouflaged clowns, El Espectador newspaper. Retrieved from: https://www.elespectador.com/colombia-20/analistas/los-riesgos-de-los-payasos-camuflados-del-ejercito-article/

[27] Law on Childhood and Adolescence 1098 of 2006, Title II, Chapter 1: Obligations of the family, society and the State, Article 40, paragraph 29. Retrieved from: https://www.oas.org/dil/esp/codigo_de_la_infancia_y_la_adolescencia_colombia.pdf

Turning now from the militarisation practices of childhood to those that operate specifically in adolescence, the ratio of correct associations achieved in the exercise by those who carried it out, grew a little in relation to the previous stage.

This, in the opinion of the research team, may be due to the direct correlation that some of these practices or institutional provisions have with the age of the young people, as in the case of compulsory military service, which is immediately associated with the fact of turning 18, since this is stipulated by law, or the possibility of being a victim of ESMAD, because the names of some of the young people killed by this police group are part of the popular historical memory, thanks to the work of their families and youth organisations demanding truth, justice and reparation.

To cite two examples, Nicolás Neira was killed when he was only 16 years old in 2005, and since that year the "Day against police brutality" is commemorated; and Dylan Cruz, 18 years old, was killed in 2019, and since then his family carries out a sit-in in his memory every year, in the place where he was killed.

Institutional practices for the militarisation of teenagers and young adults	Cultural practices that militarise teenagers and young adults
Compulsory military service: According to Article 18 of the Constitution and Law 1861 of 2017, every young Colombian upon reaching the age of 18 has the obligation to define his or her military status.	**Purchase of video games produced* by companies associated with war:** Teenagers and young adults are the main global consumers of war video games such as Call of Duty, Battlefield, Counter Strike. * We are talking about production, not marketing.
Joining the national police: Currently, the police force has 168,211 members; 140,906 are men, of whom 17,976 are between 18 and 22 years old. An average of 4,200 young people join this institution annually.[28]	**Linkage to micro-trafficking networks:** Due to the lack of educational, employment or cultural opportunities, in many regions of the country, teenagers and young adults end up being linked to drug micro-trafficking networks in various ways.
Increased likelihood of being a victim of ESMAD: Between 2005 and 2019, 43 people have been killed by ESMAD, of which 27 were aged 16 to 22.[29]	**Linkage to armed groups:** According to the United Nations, 599 minors and teenagers aged 13 to 17 were recruited or linked to different armed groups. ELN guerrillas and FARC dissidents were responsible for 70% of the recruitments.[30]
	Higher probability of dying in a fight: In Bogota alone there are an average of ten fights per day; 283 fights in 2020 had a fatal outcome.[31] Teenagers and young adults are involved in 66% of the cases.

[28] National Police, Ministry of Defence (2021). Personnel Figures. Retrieved from: https://www.policia.gov.co/talento-humano/estadistica-personal/cifras

[29] League Against Silence (2019). Las 43 muertes relacionadas con el ESMAD antes del 21N. Retrieved from: https://www.utadeo.edu.co/es/articulo/crossmedialab/277626/las-43-muertes-que-involucran-al-esmad-antes-del-21n

[30] Secretary General of the United Nations, 2019, Los niños y el conflicto armado en Colombia, retrieved from: https://www.refworld.org.es/pdfid/5e59bf4c4.pdf

[31] Infobae (2021). Brawls, the biggest trigger for homicides in Bogota in 2020, retrieved from https://www.infobae.com/america/colombia/2021/01/31/rinas-el-mayor-desencadenante-de-homicidios-el-en-bogota-durante-el-2020/

As mentioned earlier, of all the institutional practices associated with adolescence and youth, those with the lowest percentage of failure were compulsory military service and the highest probability of being a victim of ESMAD.

But at this stage in the development of masculinity, the research team was struck by what happened with some of the cultural practices of militarisation, since it was evident that those who participated in the exercise took as their main reference point their daily lives or the recognition of the socio-economic context related to drug trafficking.

In other practices, such as buying war video games, the imaginary was more important, taking into account that many of those who participated, whether because of their age, their occupation or their hobbies, are not closely related to the video game industry and consumption.

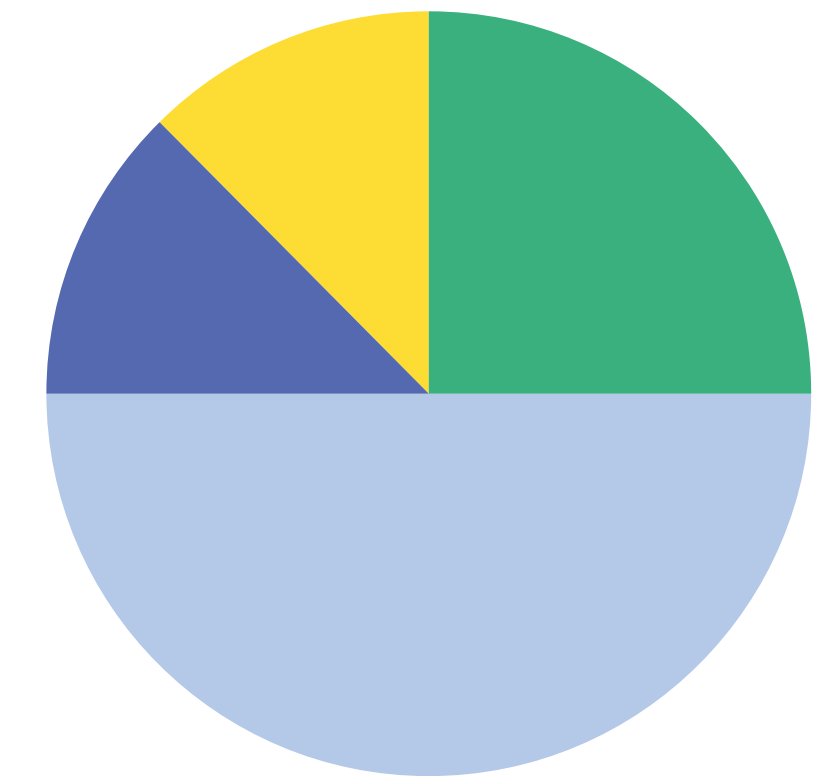The following pie charts show the analysis mentioned before.

**Linkage To
Micro-Trafficing Networks**
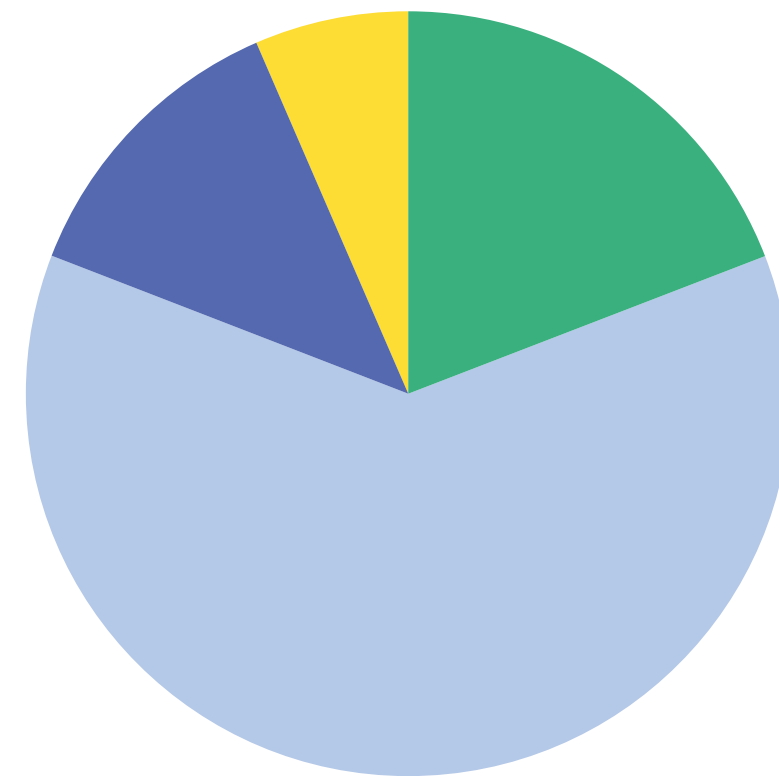
**Increased Likelihood
Of Dying In A Fight**
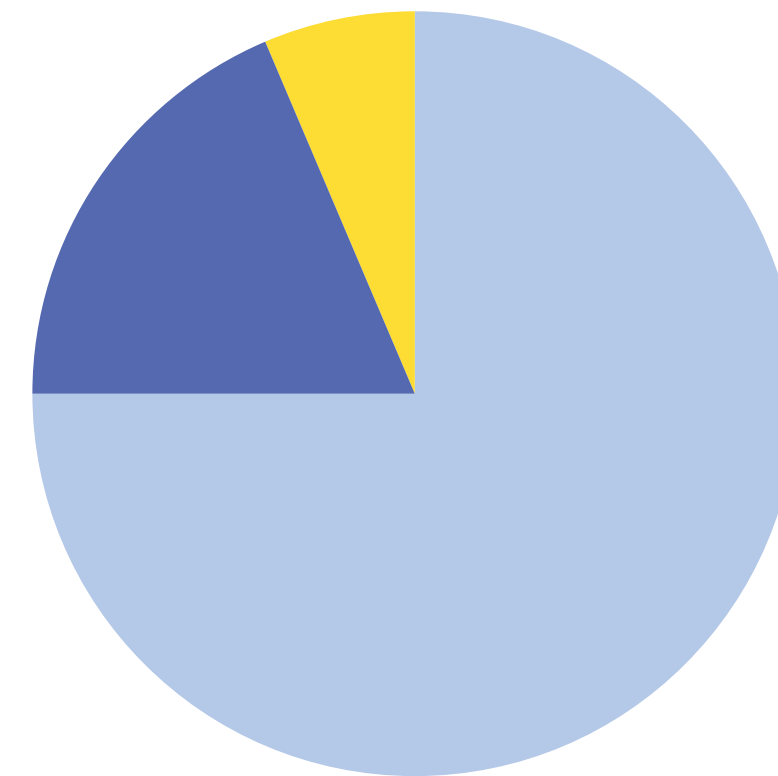
**Buy Video Games Produced By
War Partner Companies**

■ *Childhood*　■ *Adolescence*　■ *Adulthood*　■ *No Response*

Association made from an imaginary in the absence of everyday referents

It is likely that many of the people who carried out this association exercise, have witnessed a fight in the street involving a young person or adolescent. It is also likely that the teachers who participated have witnessed fights in the schools where they work, as well as situations involving micro-trafficking practices.

And if they have not witnessed it directly, there is the possibility that they have seen it in one of the dozens of news stories about violent fights and micro-trafficking that circulate frequently in the mass media, mainly in the news and print media. However, the probability that the people who carried out the exercise had played war video games, or had seen any news about the companies involved in the production of these pieces of the entertainment industry (which currently surpasses cinema in terms of profits), is quite low.

One of the concerns that the research team would like to solve in the future, using this same tool with students from educational institutions, is to know if children, teenagers and young adults (main consumers of video games) are clear about the participation of companies from the defence sector or military technology in the virtual entertainment industry. This inquiry will be the subject of another research.

Hegemonic militarised masculinity

One of the types of masculinity that is the object of interest of gender studies and some feminisms, as in Limpal Colombia, are hegemonic masculinities that are located within a system of power relations based on gender or, in other words, within patriarchy. Masculinities, being socially constructed, also take shape in the spaces that men occupy and how they occupy them. In other words, masculinities and their construction can be affected by the environment in which a man is operating. For this same reason, masculinities can also be institutionalised, especially when referring to hegemonic masculinities, which are those that it is in the interest of the state to reproduce. In this sense, hegemonic masculinities are one of the various forms of expression of masculinity; however, within this single expression there can also be other types of categorisation. For this reason, in Colombia, that is, in a context, an institution and culture that have been built on violence and war, another category of hegemony emerges for analysis: militarised masculinities. Now, how does it imply that masculinities are militarised? On the one hand, the construction of these masculinities is based on cultural and institutional factors that come together to develop patterns of behaviour and practices for men within a militarised patriarchal system.

On the other hand, the militarisation of masculinities is also related to the use of weapons, the exercise of violence, hyper-virility and performative forms of masculinity[32] that are aggressive and misogynistic.

In the focus group at the University of Cartagena, several aspects of the construction of militarised masculinity were identified, understanding from now on that this is a hegemonic expression of gender. On the one hand, the participants discussed the games that boys are taught, in which aggressiveness is celebrated as an important aspect of competitiveness that boys should apply in their games. In addition, aspects of "manliness" are emphasised from childhood to ensure that boys are manly and that they distance themselves from, or reject, any expression of femininity, as this is perceived as inferior and weak. Likewise, it was identified that one of the key aspects in the construction of militarised masculinities is the guideline given to boys regarding their emotions: these must be omitted and repressed at all costs. This aspect was recognised in the focus group as fundamental, because by not having tools and healthy ways of managing emotions, it is very likely, the young men said, that emotionality is transmitted through violence and hostility towards other people.

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[32] A The set of behaviours that characterise masculinity as a presentation to society's expectations.

Thus, boys begin to adopt emotion management measures that replicate what they see in their homes and in the entertainment, they consume: "Men are always strong, they don't cry and they defend what is theirs with fists and kicks." The violence experienced at home and in the communities, as mentioned by the young people in the focus group, begins to be reproduced in other spheres later on, in adolescence and adulthood.

In this same group, it was identified that masculinities are militarised and prioritised at the expense of other diverse gender expressions that are rejected and suppressed. The participants identified that sexual and gender dissidence is marginalised in favour of glorifying the hyper-masculine and hyper-virile figure of male duty-being in a militarised society. This type of marginalisation can easily lead to violence, as it begins to replicate what was identified in the previous section about the figure of authority and power that, through intimidation, maintains the status quo. These types of hierarchy, which in addition to being tacitly accepted by the culture, are also present in all spheres of social life, invite violence as a method of disciplining diverse bodies under the same norms of cis-heterosexual and militarised masculinities. Likewise, the University of Cartagena group identified that masculinity is also constructed through the conditioning

of sexuality; that is, the prioritisation and glorification of heterosexuality as a method of validating and reaffirming a masculinity worthy of replication. By reaffirming traditional and patriarchal gender roles, militarised masculinity is taking shape in Colombian culture. This was one of the assertions of the group from the University of Cartagena that, through practices of domination and violence in sexuality, or the strengthening of men as providers and protectors (or, even, the hierarchisation of gender roles within family structures), masculinities become militarised by taking on specific patterns of the military system, governed by hierarchy, obedience, rigidity of ideologies and traditionally patriarchal values. The militarisation of masculinities is both a cultural and an institutional process, since it is not only the state that ensures that men follow a strict idea of what it is their duty to be, but also the family, educational and social nuclei replicate these norms and guidelines of how a man should be and what role he should occupy in his environment. It is clear that these types of role are governed in a context-specific manner, since the construction of masculinity is a deeply contextual and intersectional experience.

In the focus group of young male and female leaders in the city of Cartagena, it was identified that militarised masculinities are constructed through the representation

of authority, through the media, through hegemonic culture and patriarchal discourse, and through access to weapons. In addition, this group also identified that the military education that men receive in Colombia is traversed by discourses of hate and the creation of enemies to be "defeated", thus enacting violent methods to deal with the "other", the one who is different from the imposed social norm of patriarchy, that is, different from white cis-heterosexual men. This focus group also argued that this type of masculinity is constructed as a search for identity, social acceptance and the ability to intimidate others in order to position oneself as the "strong one in the pack". All this produces a context, as identified in other spaces, in which violence is normalised to such an extent that everything that must be solved to suppress what is different is done through this mechanism.

In another focus group of students from the University of Cartagena and the Rafael Núñez University Corporation, it was identified that militarised masculinities are constructed in the state spheres, based on the concepts reinforced in hate speeches. The socio-cultural constructions that were forged during the internal armed conflict were also discussed, since this is one of the main reasons for the militarisation of masculinities, insofar as it generated the increased presence of the military in different regions of the country, which saw

entire generations of boys and girls grow up seeing the army or an armed group as the only referent of authority, masculinity and power. From this, patterns and life projects begin to be forged that are aligned with the presence of soldiers in different regions of the country, where the actions of men are influenced by this figure.

In Cartagena, another focus group was conducted with 11th grade students from the Manuel Atencia Ordoñez school, in which it was concluded that militarised masculinities are constructed through the patriarchal doctrine that is present in family learning, from childhood to adulthood, and that is reaffirmed with the political and hate speeches of the spaces occupied mostly by men. In this group, the debate also focused on how inequality between men and women in the home, in the workplace, in schools and in universities, leads to the continued reproduction of hegemonic masculinity, which survives on the basis of patriarchal hierarchies and the submission of women. Among others, it is for this reason that militarised masculinities are still in force today, even after having signed a Peace Agreement in 2016: the patriarchal values that sustain them continue to be taught in families and educational institutions. In addition, having these types of masculinity means that the state can continue with its military efforts with a minimum level of criticism from the population,

since within these spheres, facts such as the use of weapons and violence to ensure security and defence are also justified. On the other hand, a focus group was conducted with a group of young adults in the insular zone of Cartagena, Baru Island, in the community of Santa Ana. In this space, the construction of militarised masculinities was equated with the education received within the families and, in general, with the education received on the island, which reproduces socio-cultural constructions about masculinity and what it means to be a man. In addition, in this space the young men identified that their culture had been based on the principle of non-dialogue, and that violence had been prioritised as a tool for interaction and conflict resolution. In this sense, militarised masculinities are also sustained through the silence that surrounds them, since there is seldom a real dialogue and renegotiation about the guidelines for being a man, since they are preconceived ideas that are not open to debate and that must be accepted by the population. These types of masculinity survive because there is an internal pact of non-questioning and non-dialogue, as occurs with the acceptance of militarism in Colombian society: no questions are asked, it is like that and that's it.

This same group also identified, as did the two previous ones, that hate speech is a source that contributes to the

construction of militarised masculinities, since it is common that for a patriarchal principle to survive, one must first create "enemies" or the figure of the "other" to have reasons to reaffirm all the time what one is and reject what one is not – and should not – be. In Baru, as the focus group identified, there is a high level of arms purchases, as well as a large market for handmade weapons and discourses on security that are propagated in all communities with the message that "everyone must protect what is theirs" and the way to protect what is theirs is by acquiring weapons.

The young men of this collective also spoke from their personal experiences, and recognised that one of the reasons why this type of masculinity is so common, is because of the obligatory military service, since this limits the options that young men have for their life projects. In addition, it is considered a viable profession for many young men in their families and communities. In the interviews that were conducted in the framework of the research, the question: How are militarised masculinities constructed in the Colombian context? Hernando Muñoz in 2021 clarified that the masculinities that are produced are, apparently, like an achievement, but inside they carry the suffering of not being able to be what some men want to express, since it is difficult to do so when that which one wishes to be is completely out of the mould.

The mould Muñoz refers to is hegemonic masculinity, which represents the stereotype of a deeply patriarchal culture. In this same interview, it was clarified that violence has been endorsed by the patriarchal system that allows men to feel superior and to see women only as inferior subjects as a result of their authority and, what Muñoz calls, the "right to be violent" that men have within the patriarchy.

For the interviewee, these types of masculinity dynamic are constructed from the upbringing guidelines, where the "other" is identified as someone who is lacking. For him this does not occur only in the family, but also in school, in the ways in which men and women are talked about, the games that are promoted, the readings, competitiveness and exclusion. In some games, especially those that are physically demanding, girls are excluded because of the idea that they are weaker and will not be able to catch up with boys.

For Muñoz (2021), the conflict that has continued through the history of Colombia has left a deeply violent society, and this is expressed not only with the armed conflict itself, but any type of conflict that exists (for example, someone cutting someone else up while driving carries the real possibility of an extremely violent altercation). In this sense, it was identified that masculinity is militarised not only because of the history

that has led to this type of conflict, but also because of the adoption of the military mind within cultural norms and dynamics. The military mind or mentality replicates the values that soldiers are taught in other social spheres; for example, soldiers must learn that the goal of their training is to learn to defend themselves through the use of force and weapons. When this mentality begins to emerge in civilian spheres, people adopt the need to defend themselves – one is on the defensive all the time – and this causes conflicts to escalate easily. This kind of alertness to defend oneself, says Muñoz, is not put into practice to protect oneself per se, but rather to do harm and demonstrate, above all, that one has more power and authority than the other:

"The way of becoming men and telling us that we are men in Colombian culture is absolutely violent. In games it is seen in simpler ways, with piñatas, toy guns, even if they are water guns, etc, they are ways of telling the child, in this case, that he has to defend himself, that men have the duty to defend themselves and defend, and for that he needs weapons." Even so, the interviewee clarified that militarism goes beyond a weapon, but is linked to the idea of hierarchy within society, that there are people who are superior to others and that this superiority calls for the need to exercise power over those who differ from what has been hegemonically established as acceptable.

This type of power is also exercised to ensure, based on the military mentality, that women remain in the place that was assigned to them by the patriarchy; that is, the weakest, the submissive. As a result of this, it could be argued that military culture teaches, mainly, besides defending oneself, to obey, to organise the bodies using the discipline that is instilled in them in training. The hierarchy of bodies is made possible when those bodies are obedient and, when they are not, they are punished by means of violence. The same happens with women's bodies. Feminism has analysed that if women are not obedient or if they talk about the violence inflicted on them, then the punishment is worse and worse, from beatings to femicide. This is a reliable representation of how the military system operates outside the context of war, and even outside the context of the army itself, as it begins to be adopted as a pattern of organisation and government over lives whose objective is to hierarchise the bodies in society.

On the other hand, in the interview conducted with the teacher Mercedes Rodriguez in 2021, it was identified that the ways in which hegemonic masculinities are constructed are based on a traditional, patriarchal and heteronormative model; where the masculine is associated with virility, figures of power and domination of women.

According to Rodriguez, masculinities are multiple, as they are always intertwined by sexual, class, socio-cultural, regional, ethno-racial and other intersecting differences. According to studies that Rodríguez has conducted in Cartagena, male aggressors in cases of domestic and GBV have been socialised from masculinities associated with strength, virility, domination and appropriation of women's bodies, thus configuring histories marked by a continuum of violence in their homes of origin and in their contexts of interaction. On the other hand, Rodriguez links the militarisation of masculinities with the training that soldiers receive, since it is based on armament, on the destruction of human life – and not its protection – through the discourse of the defeat of the enemy, of the other. This force is masculinised and potentiated by responding to the regime of gender, of men, which places them in the socio-cultural and institutional imaginary of power and domination. These two are the guiding characteristics of the role given to men by the patriarchy, and this is one of the aspects that resonated most in the focus groups and in the interviews carried out as part of the research project.

Along the same lines, Rodriguez clarified that the context of war in Colombia has been a scenario where armed actors (in all their classifications) have used women's bodies to exercise multiple forms of violence, where sexual violence, for example, has been instrumentalised to make the body an objective of conquest, as a pawn in territorial disputes, and as a mechanism of domination to exercise authority through the imposition and terror of the population; this has been demonstrated by the studies conducted by the National Centre of Historical Memory, according to Rodriguez.

The hero soldier as an unrealisable archetype of patriarchy

In the focus group conducted in Bicentenario, Cartagena, it was identified that the concept of the soldier as a hero continues to be one of the main reasons why men are called upon to join the public forces. This was evidenced from two fundamental aspects: the family and the school. On the one hand, the communities, according to the participant group, were constantly exposed to the military presence in their neighbourhoods, since it was the soldiers who carried authority and power in these spaces. From this, they began to form ideas about what men should be, how they should occupy spaces, and what roles they should have in relation to other members of their families and communities. Little by little, in the socio-cultural imaginary, archetypes of masculinity begin to emerge that are influenced by the militarism that is so prevalent in Colombian society.

Families begin, as mentioned above, to replicate the militaristic mentality in their internal organisations and, simultaneously, to promote militarism as a guiding axis of the life project.

For many of the participant group, this translates into their families encouraging them to perform compulsory military service – although it is important to mention that for most young people in Colombia it is not even an option to say no – and then continue with the military profession or train to become police officers. Moreover, this type of mentality is reaffirmed by the school, where they are taught to glorify the figure of the soldier, since he was, in short, the promoter of the founding of the republic and the consolidation of the nation.

At school, students pay homage to patriotic symbols, the flag and the anthem, that promote a nationalist idea about the social and cultural cohesion of Colombia, and where militarism is a fundamental pillar of this composition.

With these two edges constantly coming into play in the lives of the young people of Bicentenario, as could be evidenced in the focus group, the untouchable figure of the soldier is solidified through his heroism which, in this context, is undeniable, as it is reaffirmed in various ways, through the institution and culture.

In the focus group conducted with the students of the University of Cartagena, it became evident that the group of participants identified that patriarchy, heteronormativity and militarism establish an impossible model for men, with characteristics that force them to renounce the feminine, diverse and flexible expressions of their gender.

The archetype that is established through the patriarchal system is rigid and from that rigidity, men are driven to pursue a duty-being around their masculinity that more closely resembles that of a soldier under military training, than that of a man with the possibility of exploring the expressions that most closely resemble his complex emotionality. Furthermore, in this focus group, as well as in the previous one, participants recognised the negative impact that this type of masculinity schema has on women's lives. Since women are located in the most vulnerable links of the patriarchal system, militarisation makes them a disputed territory, that must be ruled and conquered in favour of patriarchal and macho values. Militarisation has direct effects on women's lives, not only because it is their children, if they are mothers, their husbands, if they are married, and their brothers, if they have them, who go to war and whom they lose to the subjugation of militarism; but also because of all the care that this dynamic implies; the loss, the emotional traumas and the inequalities that war generates.

In addition to this, women are also subjected to the violent hyper-masculinity that militarisation generates and, usually, this violence is exercised over their bodies and their lives. In view of the above, the focus group with male and female leaders in Cartagena showed that the effects of militarised masculinities driven by the imaginary of the soldier hero on women create unnecessary repercussions on their mental health and emotions. In addition, this group asserted that women are the first to experience the violation of their human rights by men, especially in areas where the armed conflict has been most present.

As a result, the group of participants identified that these types of masculinity based on the figure of the soldier, and the violent effects this has on women, generate broken societies in which men voluntarily decide to abandon responsibility for their families, mainly paternity. It also legitimises militarised violence, generates generalised economic instability for women, and increases cases of femicide and violation of victims' rights by the Colombian state. In conclusion, this group stated that this type of masculinity based on the figure of the soldier reproduces a historical practice of war: women as spoils of war and recipients of sexual, social, physical, psychological and other forms of violence.

On the other hand, in the focus group with students from the University of Cartagena and the Rafael Núñez University Corporation, the effects identified from the construction of masculinity with the figure of the soldier as an example were: social stratification, GBV, expressions of violence in any context (even beyond war), the idealisation of violence (which occurs with men who express a militarised masculinity), the unquestioned tolerance of violence and the subordination of women. Likewise, in this space, a debate arose about the influence that expressing and performing a masculinity based on the figure of the soldier – a militarised masculinity – has in guaranteeing that men's access to women is imposed more frequently. Through access to the hyper-masculine, men can subject women to different institutions that have been socially normalised, such as marriage. And, in this line of discussion, these types of commitment also imply unequal power relations between men and women, and generate, for example, economic violence.

In the focus group with the 11th grade students of the Manuel Atencia Ordoñez school, the following effects of the type of masculinity that is constructed from the soldier-hero imaginary were identified: aggressions that can be reflected as physical, verbal, psychological and sexual; family abandonment by men, GBV, femicide, discrimination,

sexual and monetary extortion, and the total delegation of responsibility for the home to women. Additionally, in the focus group conducted with the group of young people in the insular zone of Cartagena, on Baru Island, effects very similar to those mentioned in the other groups were recognised, which were: GBV, economic violence to the midwives of Baru, domestic, psychological and physical violence, abandonment of parenthood and emotional shocks to children and mothers. In this sense, it was possible to show that the male and female participants in all the focus groups coincided in their responses about the effects on women of men adopting a militarised masculinity based on the figure of the soldier. It is clear that, although culturally the army and its men are glorified, there is also a collective awareness, at least in the spaces that were used in this project, of the consequences of replicating these values, principles and dynamics outside the walls of the cantons – or even within them, since, as Muñoz (2021) made clear, soldiers and policemen take what they have learned in training to their homes and families, as is seen below.

In Colombia, militarisation is a constant and daily presence; sometimes it is even complex to discern what is militarised and what is not, because its tentacular reach has trapped all spheres of social life. It does not occur only when the

presence of the military is legitimised, for example, in cities, but also when children are taught from childhood to admire these figures and aspire to be like them. This limits the possibilities of building a diverse and non-hegemonic masculinity that does not lead to violence against women and anyone perceived as different.

For this reason, in some of the interviews, the work carried out by ACOOC in this area also came to light, clearly informing young people about the things that war advertising does not tell them about military service and militarisation, all through information campaigns, educational material and even actions of high public impact, such as the Antimili Sonoro festival, which has been held nine times, with some events held in Bogotá and others in Medellín.

In the interview with Muñoz in 2021, he spoke about an investigation he led in 2000 with relatives and families of the metropolitan police of Medellin. In this investigation, he was able to see that the men came to impose the same rules that were imposed on them in the command, acting in the same way, speaking and addressing their partners and children with the same terrifying tone that was applied to them in training. From this, Muñoz concludes that the violence that occurs on their part towards their families is covered up, because

the same culture of discipline and the military is reproduced in spheres other than the institutional ones. Militarised masculinities, the glorification of the soldier as a hero, are not unique characteristics of wartime; they transcend these scenarios and are installed in the organisation of families, schools and society.

Non-hegemonic masculinities and feminist peace

One of the objectives of this research is to identify, based on the analysis of the process of construction of militarised masculinities, possible strategies to confront them in the local context where the project was implemented. In addition, from these strategies, we also seek to identify the ways in which feminist peace can be promoted, from the approach applied in this research.

Therefore, through the activities designed to collect information, we sought to learn about other initiatives or ideas from actors who have already had previous work on masculinities and gender. The following is a collection of different ideas and initiatives on non-hegemonic masculinities and feminist peace work.

Muñoz, from the masculinities roundtable, in the interview conducted in 2021, shared the experience he has had in addressing masculinities and their transformation in a militarised and patriarchal society such as Colombia. According to his experience, the alternative must begin by transforming the patterns of upbringing of boys and girls, since it is there where the expectations that society imposes on men and women are shaped. A real and profound transformation starting in childhood, could make it easier for men to openly express their feelings, to be able to "have another man as an erotic and affective object, and for a woman to have another woman as an erotic and affective object".

In addition, Muñoz states that, based on his experience and his research on the subject, the focus of the transformation of masculinities should be on the family, which should be rethought and reconsidered as an agency, in the sense that it can be a key and nuclear piece in the development of democracy and of the forms of dialogue that are possible within this configuration. The family is the first space of all social relations, whatever the organisation of the family (traditional or not), and, therefore, within this organisation it is possible to change the forms of authority, structure, hierarchical and non-hierarchical arrangements, and the ways of being a man and a woman.

As was seen in the implementation of the activities, what happens within the family can be replicated in other spheres and have lasting consequences and implications for the people living in society. Therefore, the transformation must come from the nucleus, from the most initial thing that a human being has before his total insertion in the social world.

On the other hand, Muñoz clarifies that education also has to change its structure and the patterns of values it teaches, since this has a direct effect on how being a man and being a woman are conceived. Universities, for example, must also have a real transformation process to promote feminist peace, where pedagogues in training must have curricula that explicitly talk about gender, its expressions, its dissidence, feminism and peacebuilding. For Muñoz, something key in the struggle for the construction of a feminist peace, is to involve men in the dialogues and constructions that are made in feminism, with real work on both sides that can dissolve the obstacles to achieve a truly feminist future, with masculinities that are completely different from the traditionally patriarchal ones.

In the focus group of students from the University of Cartagena, there was a space dedicated to building alternatives to militarised masculinities and all their effects.

In this sense, and from the particular experiences of students in political and activist spaces at their university, it was proposed to strengthen existing initiatives and collectivise them. Doing this would require digitally disseminating the initiatives that they call "counterculture". The importance of engaging in processes of self-recognition and self-criticism was also established, as masculinities are confronted not only at the collective level, but also in individual ways of holding on to patriarchal teachings and norms. It was also proposed to design and implement methodologies that promote questioning, so that what has been historically accepted as normal and legitimate can begin to be questioned.

Furthermore, in order to reach more people with initiatives to deconstruct militarised masculinities, it was seen as necessary to adopt an alternative language and methodology to the academic one in these dissemination strategies, in order to ensure greater general access to information. The students also proposed to work from feminist popular education and with an approach of the "ecology of knowledge", so that this would allow the localisation of knowledge and experiences according to the particular context in which they are located. For this, it was also argued that it would be necessary to implement psychosocial accompaniment processes.

Students emphasised the importance of reducing the margin of impunity of militarisation, which would require a broader systemic and structural change. Based on this, they also emphasised the importance of promoting conscientious objection among young people, since many of them do not know that it is an option and a right that they can exercise. The focus group with young leaders in the city of Cartagena, proposed strategies to confront militarised masculinities in Colombia such as: improve education, create schools for parents in the communities where they have access to topics such as gender and sexuality, and thus have a more informed approach to their children. It was also proposed to create care and listening centres for aggressive men and those who have been violent towards others, in order to ensure that there is a real rehabilitation of men, where they can decide to abandon their patriarchal pact with violent masculinity and build other types of healthier expression. Likewise, it was proposed that there be clear and dynamic spaces for dialogue, which are mixed, where workshops and focus groups can be replicated "like the ones Limpal has done in this community" (focus group, 2021). This group also identified that pedagogies are needed to disseminate in the media and social networks, as well as the construction of collectives with a gender focus where masculinities can be discussed in different settings, for example, in rural areas.

In the case of university students from the University of Cartagena and the Rafael Núñez University Corporation, it was proposed that a class be created to inform about human rights, gender and diversity, as well as the history of Colombia, since, as a result of the debate in the space, the conclusion was reached that it is necessary to know where the myths about the soldier hero come from, in order to unlearn them. In this space, the ecology of knowledge was also proposed with the intention of using popular education and the acknowledgement of violent contexts, in order to have a more intersectional approach. In the focus group of 11th grade students from the Manuel Atencia Ordoñez school, it was also proposed that education would be the best option to confront these types of masculinity, starting from an early age with approaches to non-violence and respect for life, as well as, in adolescence, educating on human rights, sexual health, gender and equity. Finally, in the group of the youth collective in the insular zone of Cartagena, Baru Island, it was proposed to build an integral education programme, in which the institutions and the national police would be trained on masculinities and GBV.

The symbolic actions carried out within the framework of this project are part of the section on non-hegemonic masculinities and feminist peace, precisely because they

represent a commitment of the group of participants to the work of confronting and dismantling militarised masculinities, and, in addition, constructing alternatives that can ensure that masculinities will not be violent and will not exist at the expense of women's wellbeing and integrity. In this sense, Bolivar's actions were the result of the discussions fostered by the focus groups after addressing the negative effects of militarised masculinities, with a personalised and collective focus on the individual and general experiences of the participating communities. It was concluded that these types of masculinity generate fear and cycles of violence that are difficult to break from generation to generation.

From this experience, it was possible to observe that boys and girls who live the effects of militarised masculinities in their daily lives, have a collective awareness of the changes that must be made, whether structural, systemic or individual, in order for them to break the cycle of violence that their families have lived for decades in their community.

These types of commitment appeal to two key points of the research: on the one hand, just as in childhood and adolescence they begin to create imaginaries about how a man should be, in these same stages they can also create alternative mechanisms for change and transformation

that can have lasting and collective effects on how they decide to occupy the space of being a man in relation to their environment and the people with whom they share their lives. On the other hand, this conclusion appeals to the concept of diverse masculinities, in which we see that social constructions are not static, and can change if there is genuine and serious work to achieve it.

This type of action demonstrates that young people can re-imagine their masculinities, and create healthier paths of community accompaniment to deal with what it means to be a man or a woman in a patriarchal society.

Within the alternatives to concrete militarisation exercises, such as compulsory military service, several of the organisations that participated in the implementation of project activities, as well as individuals interviewed, explicitly raised the need to increase the dissemination and impact of concrete exercises such as conscientious objection, which allows young people to refuse to be trained for war.

In this regard, the possibility was also suggested of starting a campaign in 2022, which would be focused on questioning or delegitimising recruitment, but from a masculinities perspective; in other words, the possibility was raised of

initiating the construction of a campaign called "I don't want to be a hero", which would be focused on taking away the strength of the institutional discourse around the figure of the hero soldier, and to propose a counter-informative exercise, in which many young men prefer to be sensitive, caring, peacebuilding, conciliatory, fun, diverse and supportive men, instead of heroes, considering what this idea of the hero has implied for the country's culture.

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CONCLUSIONS AND FINAL REFLECTIONS

During the time of implementation of this research, it was possible to identify that the institutional and cultural factors of militarisation have a direct effect on the conception, construction and exercise of masculinities.

Likewise, the masculinities resulting from militaristic processes in the socio-political composition of Colombia generate violence and GBV, also in men who are limited to experience their gender and their bodies in ways predetermined by the patriarchal value system. Therefore, this research approached the collection of different initiatives and ideas to resist these types of masculinity and all the consequences they have on the social fabric and on the physical, emotional and general wellbeing of women. The following is a compilation of the main conclusions generated by the research.

- The project demonstrated that the problem raised not only is considered relevant in the Colombian context, but also calls attention to its urgency due to its daily expressions (recruitment, repression, GBV, etc). Because of this, the collection of initiatives or proposals for transformation, resistance and self-protection against the militarisation of masculinities, open bridges of dialogue and articulation that will certainly materialise in 2022. Thus, it is possible to affirm that at least in terms of advocacy, this is a positive result of the project.

- It should be clarified that, during the implementation of the project, the transmasculine perspective of militarisation was contemplated from a semi-structured interview with a trans activist. This interview was imperative to understand that the approach presented in this research is limited and, to a large extent, biased, since the study of

masculinities that was conducted is based solely on cisgender life experiences. The interview was not included in the research analysis, because there were no other transmasculine experiences that were included in the implementation of the activities. A study and analysis of masculinities should include diverse, trans, non-heteronormative experiences that allow a broader view of the effects of militarisation in Colombia. The research should be deepened and, in the next stage of this project, the transmasculine perspective will be included.

- The way in which the activities were designed and implemented, making use of simple language, interactive platforms, eye-catching visual supports, participatory methodologies, reduced the burden on the research team to yield it to those who participated in the activities. Finally, the approach used also yields a positive balance at the end of the project. So, an important conclusion, especially in view of the continuity scenarios raised, is to maintain this pedagogical and participatory approach, which received positive feedback from the majority of the participants.

- In terms of context, although the Colombian government continues to deepen its policy of militarisation, repression and criminalisation of social organisations, it is also clear

that many of these organisations are clearly committed to resisting and transforming this patriarchal and militaristic model that is institutionally imposed. This, within the framework of the project, became evident in the socialised proposals, which bring together pedagogical, artistic, communicative and psychosocial accompaniment approaches, aspects with which Limpal, ACOOC and other organisations have common experiences and interests, which can serve as a basis to join efforts and initiate. For example, the development of a national campaign against the recruitment of young people, but focused from a gender perspective, raising the rejection not only of the militarisation of life, but of the specific type of masculinity promoted by the police, the army and the mass media.

- Anti-militarist feminist political change must be worked not only by women, but also with the presence and work of men who, from their own experiences and privileged role within patriarchy, can contribute to the transformation. Men must take charge of the masculinities they are exercising in their lives, through a forceful analysis of the violent effects of hegemonic masculinities. It is not about creating a pedagogical process for men, but with them, in which their work is as much individual as it is collective.

- Militarisation is a successful strategy because it is widely accepted by the population, even celebrated at times, and, through this research, it was possible to realise that, for this imaginary to be transformed with a greater scope, it is necessary that the conception of security be modified. If security continues to be equated with violence and weapons, militarisation will always find fertile ground in which to reproduce itself.

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