

## **CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE FIELDS AND NODES TO THE CONSTRUCTION OF PEACE<sup>1</sup>**

Álvaro Díaz Gómez Universidad Tecnológica de Pereira (Pereira). Coordinador Red de  
Psicología Social y Crítica. ASCOFAPSI

Alonso Tejada Zabaleta. Universidad Libre, seccional Cali. Representante Campo  
Psicología Social, Ambiental y Comunitaria Capítulo Valle. Colegio Colombiano de  
Psicología COLPSIC

Carlos Arango. Universidad del Valle (Cali) Red Colombiana de Psicología  
Comunitaria. Red de Psicología Social y Crítica. ASCOFAPSI

Elizabeth Ojeda. Universidad de Nariño (Pasto) Red de Psicología Social y Crítica.  
ASCOFAPSI

Fabio G. Moreno. (Bogotá). Red de Psicología Social y Crítica. ASCOFAPSI

Idaly Barreto. Universidad Católica de Colombia. (Bogotá) Red de Psicología Social y  
Crítica. ASCOFAPSI

Martha Isabel Álvarez R. <sup>2</sup> Universidad Nacional Abierta y a Distancia UNAD (Medellín).  
Red Colombiana de Psicología Comunitaria. REDPSICOM

Myriam Ocampo. Investigadora independiente. (Bogotá). Representante Psicología  
Social, Ambiental y Comunitaria, Capítulo Bogotá, Colegio Colombiano de Psicología  
COLPSIC; Integrante de la Red de Psicología Social y Crítica.

Norman Darío Moreno Carmona. Universidad de San Buenaventura (Medellín) Red de  
Psicología Social y Crítica. ASCOFAPSI

Shutther González Rosso. Universidad Nacional Abierta y a Distancia UNAD  
(Villavicencio) Representante Campo Psicología Social, Ambiental y Comunitaria. Capítulo  
Meta y Orinoquía. Colegio Colombiano de Psicología COLPSIC

Yomaira García Acuña. Universidad Simón Bolívar (Barranquilla) Red de Psicología

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Her contributions are based on previous collaboration with: Jaime Alberto Leal Afanador (Rector UNAD) Sandra Milena Morales Mantilla (National Dean) Juan Bayona Ferreira (ZOCC Director) Alexander Herrera Contreras and Margarita Lopera Ch (Cuchavira Research Group)

## INTRODUCTION

As part of the Colombian Congress of Psychology 2017 which had the motto "Psychology and Peacebuilding", from the presidency of both the Colombian College of Psychologists (COLPSIC) and the Colombian Association of Faculties of Psychology (ASCOFAPSI) an invitation was made to the disciplinary and professional fields coordinators from COLPSIC, as well as the networks and researcher nodes from ASCOFAPSI, and through a participatory methodology, integrated proposals would be presented regarding "the way in which each area can contribute to the construction of peace within this particular moment in the country".

In this context, from the coordination of the Network in Social and Critical Psychology, the invitation was made through the electronic mail database to the network members (159 psychologists), as well as to the Colombian Network of Community Psychology associates. They were asked to submit their written contributions no greater than a ten-line paragraph, establishing a period of one month to convey the corresponding ideas.

Eleven colleagues from the two previously mentioned networks sent in their contributions. These were read, categorized and brought together – practically through verbatim (only the necessary adjustments of the necessary links were made by the coordinator of the Social and Critical Psychology Network) - from which a semifinal version of the text emerged. This, in turn, was returned to the co-authors for the necessary comments and adjustments.

Some suggestions for paragraph relocation, idea accuracy, as well as grammatical and syntactic adjustments were received. This was summarized and accepted, resulting in the present version that was forwarded to the co-authors who gave their approval for its presentation at the Colombian Congress of Psychology.

Therefore, it is a collective document that has the following characteristics: public and private university professors around the country participated in its writing; authors were from different regions which allowed to have a geo-territorial mapping of social and critical psychology, as well as community psychology; gender balance was achieved in authorship; collaborative work was accomplished between union organizations such as COLPSIC and ASCOFAPSI, along with a dialogue between networks: Social and Critical Psychology Network and the Colombian Community Psychology Network; the authorship order was made according to name alphabetical order and did not entail any hierarchy or differential contribution in the content.

#### 1. Solid Academic Training.

Academia is a fundamental part of a culture of lasting peace and social responsibility. Accordingly, the promotion of peaceful coexistence processes require new dynamics to be considered such as relationships between researchers, groups and academic communities.

Transiting through a country that is overwhelmed by the effects of the Colombian armed conflict and its prolonged actions of violence against incomers and territories, represents a difficult task to tackle from a disciplinary frame. The understanding of what "social" conveys, in its plasticity and multiplicity, cannot be reduced to a single theoretical or methodological approach, nor to a limited series of conceptual categories or intervention techniques applied with the population. From a professional action standpoint, social psychologists and the social-science professionals have expressed a true need to use complex and broad paradigms and not univocal points of view.

Given the new conditions established by the Colombian State, ascribed in public policies, programs and protocols that advance towards the achievement of a fair, equitable and peaceful country, there is a very important opportunity for

psychology, as its fundamental role and activeness in peacemaking has been made explicit.

The State recognizes the transformative role of psychosocial action in eliminating or mitigating the adverse factors that have affected the Colombian population as an outcome of the era of social and political violence that has occurred.

Regarding the evaluation and intervention of psychosocial work-risk factors; the adoption of Primary Health Care (PHC) policy, which includes family and community care under a psychosocial approach and which assumes international strategies such as Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) and MHGAP (reduction of mental health gaps ) from the WHO (World Health Organization); the implementation of Mental Health public policy , with approaches based on equity, a differential path, psychosocial and community; the care and protection of armed conflict victims through the PAPSIVI program; politics of coexistence and citizenship led in school education; protection and psychosocial care for disability; are some of the challenges that the State has placed in the hands of psychosocial care.

However, the question that is important to ask ourselves is: Are the psychology professionals as well as the students in training, able to face these challenges? Taking into account that the demands to address them should include definitions, processes, and interventions that have a number of distinctive characteristics regarding the traditional training of a psychologist.

State standards are based on international guidelines that require evidence-based interventions; the criteria of efficiency, effectiveness and effectiveness are necessary; the principles of equity, the respect for differences, contextualization and the rejection of stigmatization are key features.

Policies make it necessary to work jointly in an interdisciplinary way, and the most important issue is that the fragmentation by areas of intervention in

psychology vanishes because it has to work in clinical-social-community-organizational-educational-legal conjunctions.

This panorama shows the current need to promote academic training that recognizes the Colombian reality and its psychosocial dynamics; and inquiries about the relevance of the training offered and the possibility of undertaking a curricular reform based on social reality<sup>3</sup> that makes a contribution from academic settings to the construction of peace in our country.

This involves three processes: Reflection, Formative Action and Research, which help clarify social conditions, State - Community relations, the recognition of current needs that are historical and changing, thus, there is a requirement to be constantly updated in the diversity of contexts. The scope of each of the processes will be briefly unfolded.

## 1. Reflection

### 1.1 Critical reflections through dialogue with communities

A fundamental contribution to the construction of peace from Social and Community Psychology is the generation of critical reflections and arguments with the various communities where there is interaction (rural and indigenous people, Afro-Colombians, students ...), in such a way that different knowledge is brought into the conversation by the questioning of official and media discourses, seeking to intercept the conditions that produce violence and other social situations linked to this (poverty, exclusion, marginalization).

Therefore, psychology that is taught must be grounded not only in the national context, but also in the regional and local context. This is related to other views towards the territories, the value given to them, and also to other ways of building

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<sup>3</sup> Carlos Arango. "Do we have a psychology for Colombia today?" Paper presented in the celebration of the first ten years of the psychology program at the Universidad del Rosario in Bogotá.

relationships. It is worth asking ourselves if we do not repeat in psychology what is set at a governmental level in the center-periphery relation. This means that we should produce more local knowledge, but also read it among ourselves, which is not happening.

To build an understanding of the professional practice in Psychology, within the framework of social reality problems, appeals to be conscious and forthcoming as to the outline created by the emergent processes of subjectivities and collective construction where individual agents, analysis categories, bond building and the learning acquired from professional activity.

All of the stated above shows other ways of seeing the other person. In that sense, collaborative work with people takes on another level. The views on what we commonly call communities should be modified, as we can find people with other knowledge of reality in them, on occasion more pertinent than those indicated by "expert" psychologists.

## 1.2. Establishment as a group of professional psychologists through networking.

Strengthening each other as a group of professional psychologists, which is conscious and committed to the construction of new realities, is one of the possible strategies to promote dialogue with communities. This is where the role of networks becomes crucial, to comprehend in a broad sense, the dynamics that are being developed around the social processes in which we are involved in, and beyond comprehension, we are called to unite efforts that overcome the barriers for solidarity and joint work.

By generating entrepreneurial visions of the country, as proposed by UNESCO, with "trans-cultural, trans-political, trans-national" actions, along with local, regional and international networks, which converge in reflections, articulations, community and governmental plans.

1-3.-To recover the history and memory of areas and networks.

There is a challenge then, for ourselves as a collective group, to recover our own history and from there to build scenarios for psychosocial community actions, based on solid axiological and ethical pillars.

The above entails psychology training to develop an understanding of the Colombian political and social process and to provide elements for the training of a criterion or a critical sense for a transformative approach within violent conflict situations.

In this line, the interaction between ASCOFAPSI and COLPSIC has a fundamental and permanent dynamic function, as well as the relationship between the academia and society.

1.4.- Disciplinary self-criticism regarding the discourse of peace and post-conflict<sup>4</sup>

When it is spoken from a Psychology viewpoint in any context or phenomenon we tend to place it on the background, silence or forget about important disciplinary debates. It seems to be a secondary issue to ask once again about the nature of our discipline and its heterogeneous knowledge and approaches.

Since 2013, a discourse of peace and post-conflict in Colombia has been emerging and has been spread throughout the contexts of the social sciences in different ways. This discourse increasingly creates a setting for a trend of peace and creates legitimacy condition for academic and investigative proposals. All of them should be about peace or post-conflict. And we all must work or think from that perspective.

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<sup>4</sup> This approach - with minor adjustments to handle the format of this document - was presented by Fabio Moreno for the call made by Ascofapsi for the Psychologist's Day Celebration (November 20, 2016) with the title "The discourse of peace and post-conflict as a numbness of the critical sense and of the imagination in the social and human sciences".

A smokescreen is created upon which we stop reflecting on the rest, a "peace", "post-conflict" discourse begins to be naturalized and normalized, within which, if one does not talk about it, one does not think about projects in it, from this or from that standpoint it is not legitimate, not appropriate, or not valid. Critical Psychology should not only be concerned about the numbness of the imagination and the silencing or concealment of the infinitude of our life and the life of a country. For all social researchers, professionals in the social and human sciences, this is very necessary to consider and to be aware about.

What are the implications of the normalization and conditioning of the imagination? What about a whole series of research themes and interests that do not point directly to or are not associated with such new dominant discourses as "peace" or "post -conflict"? Who is concerned about if this is important and unique? What economic interests and implications are implicit in these phenomena? What are the implications of curriculum agendas, professional training, academic competitiveness among professors, between institutions? Etc.

Just as public opinion undergoes numbness and the smokescreens imposed by the state, the ruling political classes and the media, as professionals in psychology and social science. We can be naturalizing peace and post-conflict discourses within universities, professional associations and work contexts.

Therefore, we cannot set aside two issues that we have a huge social commitment to and with an undeniable impact on peace. The first issue is corruption, as the very meaning of the community, the collective and social dimension is at stake with the generalization of its practice. The second theme is ethics, its reflection and professional training (not just psychologists) is a matter we should be having an impact on. It becomes necessary to think about ethics as a psychological issue, which we can investigate and design intervention strategies at universities and / or through public officials (although they are not considered the only corrupt ones).

## 2. Formative action

The following strategies are proposed for formative action: a) the application of course content and the planning of formative research for local communities; b) the support from tutors, research group members and future professionals in applied projects and as graduation projects ; c) Research professors as a touchpoint of different student ; d) young people who take responsibility , in a critical and constructive way, to make visible peace proposals that they carry out from their daily life and create a linkage as autonomous subjects and who are responsible for their duties and rights. They accept the national reality as a scenario for the generation of new proposals that can enhance their participation in the social dynamics.

## 3. Development of Interinstitutional Research Projects

### 3.1. Project on the construction of peace cultures

Establishing an interinstitutional research project could be a good strategy. A proposal can be to define it around the construction of peace cultures in two phases:

3.1.1.- Phase of instrumental Research on attitudes and practices oriented to the construction of peace cultures.

This applied study in different regions of the country can include educators interested in researching this subject. The project based on positive peace, accepted by UNESCO, as a structural and cultural process associated with psychosocial, economic, political and cultural variables. The first phase would aim to the design and validation of an instrument that could measure peace culture.

The conceptual dimensions would be defined by the researchers in the project formulation (a proposal is the KAP model: knowledge, attitudes and practices). The contribution of this study, of an instrumental type, is that researchers and professionals would be able to count on a validated tool in Colombia. Within this

framework, the networking of social and critical psychologists would be able to facilitate the development of a national study. The valuable work developed by the different social and critical psychology network members are usually of a local or regional scope.

### 3.1.2.- Phase of characterization of peace culture in Colombia.

It would be developed from the results of the first phase. The expected results of this proposal would intend to provide researchers with a tool that can be used in diagnosis and even the evaluation of effectiveness in peace education programs.

### 3.2.- Systematization of community learning and psychosocial mechanisms.

Community learning and psychosocial mechanisms are deployed in the construction of peace and peaceful coexistence in Colombia, as well as the management of community and academic knowledge in local development, processes that require the systematization and monitoring of their movements and results.

In Colombia, there are many experiences of peacebuilding that have been started by a civilian initiative and supported by religious or civil organizations, which are supported by different governmental bodies. These experiences have contributed to the creation of communities that claim their regional specificity, organized around a proposal of representation of themselves among society, in order to create coexistence models that question the use of violent means. A group of these experiences can be organized to support community initiatives expressed through networks, to provide answers to reality and the search for peaceful alternatives to the Colombian internal conflict, can be selected in order to systematize learning and processes that are derived from its actions.

The proposed work is based on entailing a relationship with communities that are benefiting from various intervention programs, which have accumulated knowledge about strategies to prevent and transform community life conditions, particularly impacted by different types of violence; including violence generated by

organized armed actors or violence imposed by the limited access to livelihoods that have an impact on their developmental possibilities as human beings.

Finally, considering the challenge of a collective commitment to peace building, we propose from the networks the need to ask ourselves about the different meanings and attributed meanings to peace and to be able to make a statement on the foundations and the multiple connotations that go through it.