

## Memory And Youth in Ayacucho, Spaces for Socialization and Construction of Meanings of the Internal Armed Conflict

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### Abstract

*The article analyzed how young people from Ayacucho constructed meanings about the Internal Armed Conflict (IAC) through socialization spaces such as family, friends, educational institutions, and the media. Using a qualitative phenomenological approach and interviews with seven young leaders from youth organizations, it was found that family narratives, especially those passed down by mothers and grandparents, played a key role in reconstructing fragmented and emotionally charged memories. Friendships, university spaces, and access to audiovisual productions further reinforced these memories, allowing young people to reinterpret the conflict with a critical perspective. Although their accounts reflected the influence of fear, poverty, and the pursuit of structural change, contradictions also emerged due to the lack of public policies on historical memory. It was concluded that youth organizations emerged as vital platforms for the collective reconstruction of the past, promoting inclusive narratives and generating innovative proposals that strengthened identity and the search for justice in the post-conflict context.*

**Keywords:** *Memory, Post-Conflict, Young People from Ayacucho, Socialization, Meanings.*

### Introduction

Our interest in studying the meanings of the internal armed conflict (CAI) arose coinciding with the end of the Fujimori regime in 2000, opening a democratic period focused on human rights and post-conflict. In this context, we accompany victims as volunteers and workers in their search for truth, justice and reparation.

Based on our experience, we were struck by the apparent 'loneliness' of the victims' families in their struggle, which we initially attributed to the 'indifference' of the young people, many of whom experienced the conflict indirectly. We questioned whether it was forgetfulness or indifference and how it was explained, how the political spaces in which they participate facilitate the construction and management of these meanings, and how these are concretized and reflected in the internal dynamics of the organization.

We believe that our research can contribute to the analysis of post-conflict processes, since, although the issues are considered to be over, they are not. Contrary to the belief that young people lack memory, we

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find that memory is a constant exercise in them, although it is activated in non-institutional ways, influenced by families, friends, educational institutions and the media.

Latin American studies on youth organizational action show that young people, faced with adverse contexts, seek to transform their reality through collective action, especially after the CAI. At national and local levels, young people mobilize through organizations, with innovative proposals in art, music and sport, to prevent violence and claim rights (Garcés, 2010; Pinilla & Lugo, 2011; Restrepo, 2010; Herrera & Chaustre, 2012; Cabrera & Romero, 2012). An example is the youth organization of Medellín, which through participatory action research (PAR), brought together popular knowledge and scientific knowledge to address everyday problems (Morales et al. 2016).

Bekerman et al. (2025) highlighted the impacts of the Argentine dictatorship on science, focusing on victims of repression and the role of the Commission of Memory in repairing the files of those affected. Their analysis underlined how the dictatorship deeply affected the scientific and academic structure of the country. For their part, García and Sotelo (2024) analyzed memory sites in Uruguay, pointing out how Law No. 19,641 facilitated the visibility of these spaces, although they highlighted that there was still work to be done in terms of accessibility and refunctionalization. These studies contributed to a better understanding of how the memory of victims of dictatorships in the Southern Cone has been addressed.

In Chile, Piper and Vélez (2024) explored the sites of memory that emerged during the 2019 protests, highlighting their ephemeral nature and resilient character, which challenged the official narrative about the dictatorship. Similarly, Villarroel and Oré (2024) studied the experience of ambiguous loss among children of the disappeared in Peru, showing how the trauma of enforced disappearance influenced identity and family relationships. In this context, the intervention of organizations such as ANFASEP was key in promoting resilience and the search for justice, providing an important perspective on memory and trauma.

In the cultural field, Velázquez (2024) highlighted the rise of youth literature in indigenous Mexican languages, underlining its role in preserving identities and in cultural resistance to homogenization. In turn, Manrique et al. (2024) analyzed the poetry of Rocío Silva Santisteban in *Las hijas del terror*, showing how her texts reflected the sexual violence and trauma experienced by Andean women during the internal armed conflict in Peru, questioning the power structures that perpetuated this violence. Espino and Mamani (2023) focused on the music of Ayacucho, analyzing how genres such as huayno became vehicles of cultural resistance and expression of collective suffering, despite political repression (Mansoor et al., 2022).

Regarding political and gender socialization, Inostroza (2023) studied the activism trajectories of two women in Greater Concepción, Lily Rivas and Lidia Queipullao, highlighting how, despite their different socioeconomic contexts, both challenged traditional gender norms in their political participation between the 1950s and 1980s. Inostroza's work highlighted the importance of education and the family environment in the political formation of these women, while questioning historical representations that minimize the role of women in the history of the Chilean left. Carrasco et al. (2023), for their part, analyzed how gender socialization in early childhood education perpetuated sexist roles and stereotypes, suggesting the need to transform educational environments to promote a more equitable vision between boys and girls.

In the context of legal socialization, Thomas et al. (2023) examined how belief in a just world influenced young people's cooperation with authorities, highlighting the importance of legal socialization in childhood and adolescence to form attitudes towards the legitimacy of norms. For his part, Guichot (2022) analyzed the educational reports of the NO-DO during Franco's regime, demonstrating how these functioned as propaganda tools to legitimize the regime, promoting values such as discipline, obedience and patriotism, and shaping the collective perception of the population in favor of Francoism.

In relation to violence and trauma, Dressler and Wolff (2024) addressed Ecuador's transition to a context of increasing violence, linked to drug trafficking and the reconfiguration of criminal groups, which posed serious challenges to the country's political and social stability. Similarly, Cárdenas (2024) highlighted the barriers faced by victims of the armed conflict in Colombia to undertake, pointing out limited access to resources and social stigmatization as factors that perpetuated economic exclusion. These studies

underlined the need to implement inclusive policies that fostered the integration of victims into the economy. Cornejo (2023) highlighted the importance of cultivating subversive memories in the context of homotransphobia and political violence in contemporary Peru. Through the analysis of Gio Infante's work, Cornejo invited us to reflect on the experiences of LGBTQ communities and to question the hegemonic narratives that normalize political violence against these communities, advocating for an inclusive and anti-racist queer peace.

These organizations also challenge official memory policies regarding the CAI, promoting diverse perspectives on the conflict and strengthening group identity (Aguilar & Muñoz, 2015; Espín, 2016). They are also essential in the construction of youth identities, where music and the street play a key role (Jiménez & Sánchez, 2016). In Putacca, for example, a CAI memory mural helped to reconstruct community identity (Fernández, 2011).

On the other hand, some young people, affected by forced displacement, organize themselves into gangs as a way of survival, reproducing violence and exclusion (Stroka, 2008). These experiences limit their agency capacities, which should be supported by differentiated policies for young victims of the conflict (Gómez, 2011; Criado and Urquijo, 2015). In Peru, Astete (2014) highlights youth organization to learn about the past in a safe way. Although there are studies on youth action in conflict contexts, there are few that address the meanings that young people generate about the CAI in the post-conflict context, and within their organizations, which is the focus of our study.

The social construction of meaning is a fundamental process in disciplines such as psychology and sociology. Saussure (1945) defines language as a system of signs that collectively acquire meaning. On the other hand, López (2012) emphasizes that meaning is generated in social interaction and the use of language within a community. Berger and Luckmann (2003) explain that reality is socially constructed through language, and De la Garza introduces the idea of "configurations" to describe alternative forms of knowledge. From social psychology, Bruner (1991) and Gergen (1996) argue that knowledge is socially constructed through interaction and language. Vygotsky highlights the importance of cultural signs in learning, while Bruner sees the creation of meaning as a cultural and narrative process. Gergen, on the other hand, considers that meaning emerges in social interactions, where words acquire meaning in exchange.

Memories, according to Hallbwachs (1995) and Jelin (2012), are social processes that are built in collective interaction and evolve over time, influenced by context and generations. Collective memory, far from being static, is transformed and is essential to generating critical awareness. Authors such as Agüero (2015) and Gavilán (2017) show how memories of the armed conflict, previously silenced, can be reconstructed and shared to promote reflection.

## Methodology

Qualitative research with a phenomenological and interpretive approach, as it allows us to understand the meanings that people construct from their lived experiences and transmitted through language in a specific context and period (Flores, 2018). This approach enables us as researchers to interpret how young leaders attribute meanings to the internal armed conflict, linked to their personal and collective memories (Vacilachis, 2006). The experiences are both their own and transmitted by others (Jelin, 2012), and the meanings they construct from these experiences depend on the significant interactions they have with others, mediated by language in a historical and cultural context (Fisher et al. 2016, cited in Flores, 2018).

According to Taylor and Bogdan (1994), qualitative research has a phenomenological approach, since it is developed in a natural environment. The researcher seeks to understand the meanings that people attribute to phenomena, such as the internal armed conflict, in a specific time and context. This approach is characterized by a flexible and horizontal logic, based on the mutual recognition of knowledge, where it is recognized that knowledge is built in interaction with others.

In this study, youth is considered a socio-cultural construct influenced by a specific context, where young people seek to transcend through their practices in peer groups. Seven young people between 18 and 26 years old were included, who lead youth organizations with shared and horizontal leadership structures (Garcés, 2010). These organizations are integrated into the Mesa de Concertación de Jóvenes de Ayacucho (MCJA), a space to influence regional policies on issues such as gender, environment and sexual health. The participants were selected voluntarily, with the support of key informants, based on the following criteria:

Table 1

Inclusion Criteria	
Place of birth.	Department of Ayacucho.
Place of residence.	Ayacucho.
Age.	Between 18 and 26 years old.
Length of stay in the youth organization.	1 year or more.

Note: Table prepared by researchers, 2024.

Table 2

#### *Characteristics of the Participants*

Code	Sex	Age (years)	Organization
E1	M	24	Youth organization "University Renewal".
E2	M	25	Association of Young Residents of Cangallo.
E3	M	22	Youth organization Network of Young Environmentalists (REDJA).
E4	F	23	Youth organization, "Qatum Warmi".
E5	M	25	Youth organization "Juventud Retama".
E6	F	24	Carmen Alto Youth Association.
E7	F	24	Youth organization, "Vilquino Pride".

Note: Table prepared by researchers, 2024.

Data collection was carried out through semi-structured interviews, due to their flexibility, which facilitates a fluid exchange between the researcher and the participant, promoting greater freedom to express themselves and the possibility of asking additional questions (Díaz et al., 2013). The axes of the interview were: 1) Knowledge about the CAI, to understand how young people understand the conflict in their daily lives. 2) Meanings of the CAI, to explore the meanings that young people construct through their social interactions. 3) The CAI and youth organizations, to understand their organizational dynamics regarding the conflict. The process began with the contact of a representative of the Mesa de Concertación de Jóvenes de Ayacucho, who acted as a "gatekeeper" (Taylor & Bogdan, 1994), facilitating access and establishing an atmosphere of trust.

The design and development of the questions for the semi-structured interview were validated and approved in an academic session with the thesis advisor. Each interview lasted on average 60 to 90 minutes. Support tools such as recorders and field logs were used to ensure accurate collection of information, always

respecting the informed consent of the participants. The interviews were conducted between September and October 2016.

The recorded interviews were transcribed and organized through a thematic analysis, in which categories or units of analysis were used, which were later systematized in a consistency matrix by the research team. The data analysis focused on the main objective of the study: to examine the meanings that young people assign to the internal armed conflict (CAI). The information collected was compared with the relevant literature on the phenomenon to generate a third discourse. The final report was then written and presented (Souza et al. 2012). The process of dialogue with young people about the CAI was complex, given that the politics of silence and fear persisted over time, which impacted the ways of thinking, feeling and acting of both those who experienced the conflict and those who did not experience it directly.

## Results and Discussion

### *Spaces for Socialization and Construction of Meanings About the CAI*

The internal armed conflict (CAI) in Peru, which took place between 1980 and 2000, was marked by extreme violence between armed groups and law enforcement, impacting the population unequally, especially in rural areas, indigenous people and youth. According to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (CVR), the conflict left around 69,298 victims, with Ayacucho being the most affected region (CVR, 2003). The main actors were the Communist Party of Peru - Shining Path (PCP-SL) and state agents, both responsible for human rights violations under the framework of international humanitarian law (ICRC, 2008).

In the process of clarifying these events, the CVR highlights the social and political conditions that allowed the PCP-SL to infiltrate communities, taking advantage of the lack of an effective State in many rural areas. This ideological organization sought to influence young people, especially in schools and universities, promising radical social changes (CVR, 2003). Despite the CVR's efforts to disseminate the Final Report and promote knowledge of the past, the implementation of these recommendations has been limited, with little public reflection on the results of the report, which has affected the creation of a critical collective memory (Reátegui, 2018).

Despite the lack of public policies on historical memory, the importance of incorporating the memory of the CAI into education is stressed, particularly for young people who did not directly experience the violence, in order to promote a more reflective and consensual analysis of the conflict (Jave, 2014; Uccelli et al., 2013). Without this dissemination, the country's capacity to train critical citizens and prevent the repetition of violent episodes in the future is limited.

The concept of youth has changed over time, being seen both as a source of social change and as a problematic group. In Peru, people between 15 and 29 years old are considered young (DS 013, 2019), and at 18 years of age the age of majority is reached. Youth is a process of development towards maturity, but it is not always socially recognized as adulthood, since it depends on the cultural context (Strocka, 2008; Venturo, 2001). Young people create meanings through their social relationships, influenced by institutions such as family, school and the media (Castro, 2007). However, these traditional institutions have lost power to cultural industries and youth models promoted by the market (Reguillo, 2003).

In Latin America, young people prefer to form autonomous and horizontal collectives, rather than more structured organizations linked to adults and institutions (Garcés, 2010). They group together to address social problems such as discrimination, poverty and violence, using new technologies to organize themselves (Rodríguez, 2013). In Peru, youth participation has been key in social struggles, although violence linked to groups such as Sendero Luminoso in the 80s and 90s affected their image (Montoya, 2001). With the return to democracy, the State has promoted youth participation through formal spaces, although with limited results (Montoya, 2001).



Youth organizations focus on horizontal relationships, strengthening identities, and developing critical capacities. Young people seek transparent political participation and value the use of digital technologies to expand their social action (Ortiz, 2012; Rodríguez, 2013).

The dialogue with young leaders of youth organizations of the MCJA allowed us to capture the meanings they construct about the CAI, in relation to their family, community, social and cultural environment, linked to the conflict that affected the country between 1980 and 2000. These meanings are constructed from various memories that young people recreate, based on the narratives of their families, friends, educational institutions and the media, which play various roles in this process.

### *From the Family*

The family has historically been a key space for socialization and the transmission of knowledge, especially with children and young people. It is in the family that ways of life, relationships, affections and culture are learned. In this context, the family is also the main space where young people learn about the CAI, with language playing a central role in the transmission of the memory of the conflict. Many of the young people we work with come from families directly or indirectly affected by the conflict; even if they did not lose a close relative, they heard stories about the CAI from their parents, grandparents or other family members.

The proximity or distance of family members does not influence how young people construct their meaning of the internal armed conflict, since they all recognize that the country lived through a period of conflict and its consequences. According to Jelin (2012), human experience includes not only personal experiences, but also those of others. In this sense, young people, not having been direct actors in the war, seem to have more freedom to redefine the conflict in a more open and critical way. This could explain why a significant part of MOVADF militants are young (Villasante, 2012). The study shows that, far from being unaware of the conflict, young people constantly rework knowledge, in a context of tensions between different memories, which demands more institutional reflection in a sociopolitical environment that does not favor these memory processes (Jave, 2014).

The young people who were children during the internal armed conflict did not participate directly, but they did live and learn from it. Their memories are built from the stories of teachers who lived through the events and their parents, who were the main sources of information (Ucelli et al. 2017). These young people learned to deny the conflict, although they recognize that there is always the possibility of something similar happening in the country, a “breeding ground” for violence. Thus, there is an implicit pedagogy in families about the CAI, seen from a moral perspective. An example of this is the testimony of a young woman: “According to my mother, she was a student when many of her classmates were taken, they disappeared and never returned. Living like that would not be good, living with uncertainty” (E-7).

This learning occurs mainly within the family, with primary socialization being the space where these meanings are transmitted (Berger & Luckmann, 2003). There are two forms of learning: one direct, related to the lived experience of violence, even when they were babies, and another indirect, learned through family stories. An example of the first is the testimony of "Juan", who, although he was a child during the war, remembers the experiences lived by his parents and neighbors. "I remember when my mother went to work and left us in the care of my relatives; they also had to protect themselves, although I don't remember well" (E-3).

In the family environment, young people learn to reinterpret the memory of the internal armed conflict (CAI), with parents being their main source of knowledge through their direct experiences. Secondly, there are grandparents, who also play a crucial role in transmitting memory. One young man mentioned: “My grandparents are from Cangallo, when we were children they told us what happened to their relatives [during the CAI], who had disappeared” (E-4).

Grandparents, due to their closeness and experiences, are key in socialization, since they experienced the conflict directly and continue to be the ones who recount those experiences. Although parents also talk

about the CAI, grandparents continue to be the first option in the transmission of memory, since culturally they are given the authority to do so (Jelin, 2012).

In the family context, the narrative about the CAI is influenced by gender. The impacts of the conflict were different for men and women due to their differentiated roles within the gender system, which gave rise to unequal experiences and social relations (Jelin, 2002). Women, in addition to grandparents, play a crucial role in the process of narrating the conflict.

As the testimonies illustrate, women are often the ones who transmit these memories. A young man mentions: "I have heard a lot about the CAI, in fact, we are the new generation that has heard about it from third parties, from second persons, in any case, like my parents, grandparents, uncles, etc., right?" (E-1). Another interviewee says: "I have an aunt in Chuschi... they tell us how the attack in Chuschi happened... and I ask them how the terrorists got there" (E-2).

The mother of one of the interviewees, who was a teacher, also told her: "[My mother] told me that she would walk on foot for two or three hours or even a whole day, from one village to another on the highway, and that she would see the police or MRTA patrol and she would say to them: your papers, your ID. If you didn't tell them your ID number, they would take you and make you disappear" (E-3). These stories highlight how women have been key bearers of memories of the conflict.

In many cases, young people do not receive narratives about the conflict directly, but rather learn about it through their parents and relatives, who recall what they experienced. As one interviewee points out: "My parents have suffered directly, and they always talk about these issues [violence] at any meeting" (E-6).

This raises the question: why are these memories shared mainly at "reunions"? It can be interpreted as a symbolic recognition of life, as a triumph over death. The conflict, seen as a limiting experience, meant that only a few survived, while the victims were the "less fortunate". This reflection may explain the relevance of reunions and how young people learn about war through narratives.

In general terms, young people are the main recipients of these stories, while the senders are usually, for the most part, parents, followed by grandparents and other relatives. One of them comments: "It is not talked about as much in my family anymore, but sometimes the subject comes up at meetings" (E-1). Another adds: "[In my house, the CAI is talked about] whenever there are family gatherings, for example, at birthdays. This year and last year it was more because they were busy with the burial of my great-great-grandfather, who had been exhumed and were preparing the burial. For my parents it was no longer sadness, but joy at finding him" (E-6).

Young people do not consider the subject of conflict as taboo, but the memory they share is not institutionalized, but fragmented and isolated, without integration of diverse perspectives (Jave, 2014; Uccelli et al., 2013). This is problematic because families have not always processed the conflict in its entirety. By focusing only on parts of the story, a reflective and exemplary sense is missing. Therefore, it is essential that memory work be an official and legitimized process (Jelin, 2012). This does not mean imposing a single memory, but recognizing the diversity of memories and redirecting them, ideally from a public-state initiative. According to Todorov (2000), fragmented memories focused on pain must be transformed into constructive and ethical stories.

Thus, although young people remember, their memories are scattered. It is necessary to create meaningful memories that exemplify the conflict, without imposing a single vision, but recognizing the plurality of memories (Páez et al., 2007).

The meanings that young people construct about the conflict are not definitive, but are marked by tensions and contradictions. Not having lived through the experience directly, their meanings are based on fragments of other people's memories, which they constantly reconstruct (Gergen, 2007). These accounts often lack specific details, reflecting their lack of direct involvement in the events, either because they were too young or even still infants during the conflict. In addition, young people often do not point out clear

responsibilities for the conflict, preferring to focus on the magnitude of the experience rather than identifying those responsible.

On the other hand, these stories are not fictional; young people are often considered protagonists, albeit indirect ones. For example, one interviewee recalls that his mother told him how, when he was one year old, he lived with her in situations of fear, in which they hid from the peasant patrols or the military to protect their lives: “My mother told me that when I was one or two years old, she carried me on her back and, when the military appeared, we hid, they lived looking to save their lives” (E-1). This illustrates how young people feel connected to the experiences of their family, both their own and those of others.

Language plays a crucial role in the transmission of these memories, as it allows the redefinition of recollections in a social context. As Ricoeur (1999) points out, all memory, even the most private, has a social character. Young people hear these stories told by their parents, grandparents or neighbours, and incorporate them into their own narrative, whether about their own experiences or those of their relatives. One interviewee mentions: “My mother told me that many women were saved because they brought their small children with them, otherwise they would join the ranks of the Shining Path” (E-1).

There are also narratives about personal tragedies, such as the disappearance of family members. A young man recalls: “My father told me that my uncles were disappeared, they were leaders of the Regional Agrarian Federation of Ayacucho, and to this day we know nothing about their bodies” (E-1). Emotions are present in these narratives, and many young people recount how their mothers cried when remembering the suffering they experienced: “My mother told, crying, how they took her out of Ayacucho and how they treated her badly. Every time they brought up that subject, she became very upset” (E-5).

Thus, young people not only learn about the conflict through the events, but also through the feelings of pain and loss that their families continue to experience. The transmission of these memories is charged with emotion, which shows that the act of telling stories is not only a verbal process, but also a physical and emotional one, creating a strong bond between the narrator and the listener (Jelin, 2012).

#### *From Friends*

Memories should not be restricted to the private sphere, but rather form part of social processes that seek to be expressed publicly, with the aim of interpreting the past and projecting into the future (Halbwachs, 1995). In this sense, memories are dynamic and do not follow a rigid chronological sequence. They are transmitted from generation to generation, which allows each of them to reinterpret and apply them to understand the present and guide their projections towards the future (Jelin, 2012).

Past experiences are updated in various ways (orally, through songs or academic texts), although they are not always integrated narratively to construct the present. According to scholars of the subject (Ricoeur, 1999; Jelin, 2002), there are two types of memory: habitual and narrative. In the accounts of those interviewed, the events of the internal armed conflict are mostly mentioned in the third person, as transmitted memories: “they told me”, “they told me”. These “third persons” include parents, relatives and even distant relatives.

For example, one interviewee mentions: “[When we travel together] to conferences, meetings, I remember that we sing songs from Ayacucho, like 'La flor de retama' or 'Perlaschallay', and that is where the conversation about the CAI comes up without realizing it” (E-6). Another comments: “We always touch on these topics, and there are people who are inclined to want to do justice by force, while others prefer to do it in an appropriate way, such as through a political party or by electing someone who supports the people” (E-7).

This shows how memories of the past are not only activated through symbols or songs, but also how those memories connect to a country marked by fissures and unresolved injustices. To understand the present, it is necessary to turn to the past, using signs and symbols that are contextualized within a culture and a shared collective space (Gergen, 1996, 2007).



It is crucial to understand who is being told and who is willing to listen. The key question is: who is ready to listen? It is not just someone who is part of the same community, which would be an "internal listener." In certain contexts, narrating experiences can become a repetition rather than a creative exchange. To do so, it is necessary to have people who can question and show genuine interest in a painful past, as well as being empathetic, as was the case with the university classmates. If this empathetic process does not occur, telling can become a simple reliving of the event (Todorov, 2000). On the other hand, dialogue with the other, rather than identification, facilitates the construction of meanings (Páez et al., 2007).

In the post-conflict, family and friends were the main listeners, but over time, memories transcended and reached new generations. Thus, academic spaces became places where these stories were shared. As one interviewee says: "I come to this city [Ayacucho], and some classmates [of students] tell me that their family lived in [CAI], for example, in Cayara or Huancasancos" (E-2).

Young people come from diverse backgrounds and have gone through different experiences. In this context, universities and other educational centres have become key spaces for meeting and active interaction (Gergen, 2007). Interestingly, six of the seven interview participants are university students.

People choose to share their experiences with those close to them, seeking to avoid silence and oblivion. Their intention is not to impose a vision of the past, but rather to recount what they have experienced. Young people find in their university friends a space where they can express these familiar experiences, which allows them to exchange perspectives on their daily experiences (Berger & Luckmann, 2003; Gergen, 2007). However, sometimes this need to tell is hindered by the lack of people willing to listen. In these cases, it is friends and close people who become the receivers, preventing the stories from being lost or trapped in the past.

The interviewees' narratives represent testimonies that recount experiences lived directly, providing a unique and personal perspective on the events reported. Many of those who tell these stories were witnesses to the events, such as parents who tell them to their children, or university classmates who share what they witnessed in places such as Chungui or Pilacucho. These stories are direct testimonies, since those who tell them lived what they narrate. However, there are also "indirect witnesses": those who heard these stories from others and passed them on, becoming bearers of these memories. In this way, memory is transmitted generationally, creating a process of remembering and sharing that unites people (Feierstein, 2012).

An interviewee describes: "A classmate, who was studying at the San Cristóbal University in Huamanga, began studying accounting, but did not finish; he ran away to Lima and trained as a construction foreman. He told me what the situation was like at the university at that time. In Huamanga there was a curfew and in the Pilacucho mudslide, corpses appeared in the morning, devoured by dogs" (E-2). Another adds: "A classmate from La Mar, from Chungui, tells me what her father told her about how they lived at that time and why the conflict occurred" (E-2).

The friend or college classmate plays a key role in the initial transmission of memory about a conflictual and painful past. This memory is shared voluntarily, unlike solicited testimonies, such as in court or in interviews for specific purposes, which are clearly guided by the interviewer and occur in a negotiation context. The act of telling, in these cases, reflects a personal decision to speak publicly, as occurs when interviewees share their stories with friends or children, and is linked to what we might call "my trusted friend." In this sense, human interaction facilitates the creation of new meanings through shared memory (Gergen, 2007).

An interviewee comments: "Older friends told me that in certain areas of Huamanga there were dead people, dismembered people. They hid or left their houses at night to avoid terrorists or the police, because when they took them away, they often did not return" (E-5).

*From Schools or Educational Institutions*

It has been argued that both schools and universities were key spaces used by the Shining Path for the indoctrination and recruitment of militants (Degregori, 2016). Various studies indicate that the subversive group began its activity in the university environment, where it managed to attract students and teachers to its cause. In addition, it is indicated that it was the students, teachers and professionals themselves who played a fundamental role in the dissemination of the Shining Path ideology (CVR, 2003; Jave, 2014; Uccelli et al., 2013).

From the perspective of today's youth, the idea of "deception" prevails, referring to how Sendero convinced its militants under the promise of structural change. In this context, "change" and the denunciation of corruption were key aspects that young people highlighted when justifying the Sendero proposal, something understandable in a developing society like Peru. One of the interviewees mentions: "They told me that it was because of a new mentality, a new way of thinking, that Peru was poor, and someone said: 'We have to change this situation, the government is corrupt, we have to beat it and form something else, like communism'" (E-3). Another interviewee points out: "They tell me that some young people saw an opportunity for change for Peru, and that they were indoctrinated at university with that ideology, deceiving them with the discourse that Peru was going to change. The young people thought that, by joining Sendero, in fact, something would change" (E-5).

The testimonies reflect how some young people were influenced by a new mentality of social change, described by the interviewee (E-3) as the belief that Peru, considered poor and governed by a corrupt regime, needed a radical change, oriented towards communism. This idea is also supported by the interviewee (E-5), who mentions that young people were indoctrinated in universities, believing that, by joining Sendero Luminoso, they would contribute to a significant transformation of the country. This phenomenon can be interpreted through the ideas of Garcés (2010), who suggests that young people seek social transformation in the face of adverse contexts, but in this case, ideological indoctrination led them to adopt a radical ideology as a solution. In addition, Pinilla and Lugo (2011) highlight how the search for change in contexts of poverty can generate collective mobilization among youth, although here it occurs within a framework of ideological manipulation.

The young people interviewed acknowledge that Sendero Luminoso took advantage of educational environments to disseminate its ideology of "great social transformation", managing to attract both students and teachers to its cause. In addition, they offered control over student services, organization of free time and possibilities of social advancement through the party and the CAI itself, in a context where the achievement of these objectives occurred through alternative channels to school and university (Venturo, 2001; Uccelli et al., 2013; CVR, 2003). Various studies support this perspective, from disciplines such as history, anthropology, psychology and political science.

However, the idea of universities and schools as "transmission belts" of the Sendero ideology has not disappeared completely. This notion is mixed with the socialization of memory that still occurs in these institutions, although not in a formalized way (Jave, 2014). Below are some quotes that reflect this situation: One of the interviewees comments: "Young people talk a lot about what happened at the university, because there was influence from teachers and students at that time of political violence" (E-1, ). Another interviewee mentions: "Nowadays, young people discuss the different perspectives on the CAI at universities and institutes" (E-2).

Curiosity is the main reason why young people seek information about the internal armed conflict. Teachers share personal memories, while students inherit family memories. The official history of the nation is learned in the classroom, but this process is influenced by personal experiences. As one interviewee notes, "I noticed that all Ayacucho residents are informed about what happened in the 1980s. At university, we know that the conflict began in Chuschi. At school, they told us that Sendero sought equality between the poor and the rich" (E-4).

The socialization that young people experience is mediated by their desire to understand the past, facilitating dialogues between them in a political context that is not very prone to these memory processes. "I heard about the CAI at university and, by reading what researchers produce, I got information from third parties, such as the media. But my family comes first" (E-5).

It is important to reflect on whether young people arrive at school or university without knowing anything. No, because their families are the first places where they learn about war (Jave, 2014; Uccelli et al., 2013). The family activates the memory device, which is expanded at school and university, where some teachers and reading materials also have an influence.

Youth understanding of the causes of the conflict continues to focus on poverty as a key factor and the need for radical change. This change had to be driven by a leader, and Abimael Guzmán is perceived as the chosen figure, although the notion of "deception" and manipulation persists. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (CVR, 2003) underlines the importance of addressing the underlying causes that gave rise to violence and of preventing the image of the Shining Path from infiltrating the collective perception of new generations. Despite recognizing the social, political and economic conditions that could lead to a repetition of the conflict, contemporary youth offer more nuanced and distant interpretations from previous generations, reflecting a capacity for agency and autonomy. In this sense, the explanations that previously attributed participation in the Shining Path to manipulation are no longer relevant in the current context.

Young people acknowledge that they have learned about the war, but they also refer to "other thoughts", that is, the contrast between past and present. Many appreciate how current conditions, such as access to the Internet and multiple sources of information, allow them to think more independently. As one of them expresses: "Before, they only had one source of information and they believed in that source. Now we have more information, we are more autonomous" (E-3).

The CVR's Final Report, delivered in 2003, highlighted that education was key in recruiting members for subversive groups, and recommended improving educational practices. Despite this, an atmosphere of mistrust persists in classrooms today, which makes open reflection on the conflict difficult. Many teachers, especially those who experienced the violence, prefer to avoid or treat the issue superficially, which demonstrates the lack of a clear policy on how to address it. An interview reflects how a teacher who had experienced the conflict addressed the issue in class: "They had never spoken to me at school, but he did touch on it and remember it; because he must have experienced it... he even started to cry" (E-4).

The dominant, official memory tends to invalidate or reduce personal experiences that do not fit into its main narrative, minimizing the suffering and experiences of those who faced abuse, torture or forced disappearances. These stories, marked by psychological trauma, can be seen as suspicious or linked to subversive ideologies, leading to the silencing of both individual and collective memories.

The treatment of these issues in the educational field remains complex, as the tendency is to avoid them or address them superficially. However, schools have the potential to transform these traumatic experiences into resources to promote positive changes, starting with how these interactions are managed within the classroom (Uccelli et al., 2017).

#### *From the Media*

The progress of society, influenced by the passage of time, is marked by historical events that not only serve to remember the past, but also to face the challenges of the present. This exercise of memory, when analyzing the past, must involve new generations, in order to build a more promising future (Huysen, 2000; Jelin, 2012).

Memory studies, especially in areas such as textual, audiovisual and artistic production, originated in the West, and this "explosion" of memory studies has had a significant impact on the creation of a "memory culture" (Huysen, 2000). From there, this influence spread to Argentina and other Latin American

countries, leading to a boom in photographic and audiovisual production. As a result, film, photography and television schools proliferated. Young people, in particular, have shown a notable interest in these topics, not only informing themselves, but also learning from them (Rodríguez, 2013; Botero et al., 2008). This phenomenon has generated an implicit pedagogy, in which the media contribute to the construction of a “memory culture”. Cinema, as an art of memory, allows us to rediscover forgotten gestures, faces and scenarios, serving as a way to reconnect with the past (Clarembaux, 2010).

In the Peruvian context, there is a significant increase in film and audiovisual production. These works not only portray the dramas of the recent past, but are also powerful instruments that facilitate the teaching and learning processes. "I have always liked to see those stories that are now published, like the Boca del Lobo films; I have always liked to see them" (E-2).

In this sense, filmmakers, photographers and producers play a fundamental role as “memory entrepreneurs” (Jelin, 2012). They not only create their works, but are also actively involved in debates and the defence of human rights. In contexts where the State shows little interest in dealing with this issue, these productions become a “memory trench”, preserving relevant material for present and future generations.

In Peru, especially in Ayacucho, film productions such as Camino a la Hoyada, Te saludan los Cabitos, La Boca del Lobo and La Casa Rosada stand out. Young people are the main consumers of these works, as reflected in the following quotes: "I have always liked to see those stories that are now published, like the films Boca del Lobo..." (E-2). "When I see films like on DVD, I feel like I am living those moments. It scares me and I would not like to have lived in those times of conflict, deaths; if terrorism came back, I think I would run away" (E-2).

In addition, in recent years, Ayacucho has become a key location for film production, supported by international initiatives such as that of the Association "Todos son nuestros hijos" from Argentina, which focuses on the drama of the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo. This initiative seeks to strengthen the study of memory and the defense of human rights, going beyond the local focus and broadening its impact internationally.

Young people are the main consumers of productions related to memory issues. In our study, the average age of participants indicates that they are part of what is called the "Internet generation", a group that no longer depends on traditional media to access information or expand their social networks. Instead, they turn to the Internet as their main source of knowledge (Rodríguez, 2013; Aguilar and Muñoz, 2015).

This creates an interesting paradox: while the State seems to promote forgetting, alternative media, where young people play a central role, are experiencing a boom in the dissemination of memories. These memory initiatives arise, to a large extent, indirectly. Young people constantly hear about the internal armed conflict (CAI) from relatives, neighbours and friends, which sparks their interest in delving deeper into the subject. Thus, the Internet not only becomes an accessible alternative, but also a key means of accessing information that might otherwise be out of their reach.

Some quotes are illustrative of this phenomenon: "What I know [about CAI] is through the news or secondary sources, not so much from reading" (E-3). "When something happens, I immediately see it on the Internet. We, of my generation, did not see all that [about CAI]. Also, I went to a private school and my classmates were not the ones who wanted to see those issues; they were more open. In other schools, those who were most interested were curious about those issues. I hardly knew about it, I only saw it on television" (E-3).

The interviewee (E-3) mentions that his knowledge about the CAI comes mainly from secondary sources, such as news on the internet and television, which reflects a disconnection with the collective action and youth mobilization described by Garcés (2010), who highlights how young people seek to transform their reality through social action. This lack of direct involvement also aligns with what was pointed out by Pinilla and Lugo (2011), who highlight that interest in certain topics may depend on the educational and

social context, as occurs in the case of the interviewee, where his peers showed no interest in the CAI. Furthermore, the dependence on the media to learn about the CAI can be seen from the perspective of Restrepo (2010), who analyzes how historical memory in post-conflict contexts is mediated by the media, distorting or limiting young people's direct knowledge of key events such as the CAI.

## Conclusions

Collective memory processes are essential to rebuild a society affected by internal armed conflict. Through remembrance, young people become active agents in the creation of lasting peace and in transforming historical suffering into tools for reconciliation.

Youth participation in memory and political action is crucial for social transformation. Young people can contribute to the construction of new narratives that promote peace and respect for human rights, although this process faces challenges due to tensions generated by past violence. The stigma associated with terms such as “terrorist” or “terracho” remains an obstacle to reconciliation, especially among young people. Combating this stigma is essential to heal the wounds of the past and promote peaceful coexistence.

Education and culture play a key role in transmitting historical memory, enabling young people to better understand the conflict and act as agents of change. Transitional justice, including symbolic reparation and the participation of victims, is essential to overcome past traumas and foster deeper peace. An inclusive narrative that recognizes diverse voices is necessary for effective memory. Young people have the potential to be the spokespersons for new ways of narrating the conflict, promoting reconciliation and understanding in society.

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