



Title of Project:

Pedagogies of Be[Ing] and Be[Coming]: A Critical Ethnographic Case Study to Understanding Youth Experiences of Social Justice and Peacebuilding in English Teaching in Urban Schooling in Colombia

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TIRF Research Topic Investigated:

Teaching English to Young Learners

Project Summary:

In “post-conflict” Colombia, formal education has been identified as crucial for promoting social cohesion among children. History and social studies curriculum in schools have been designated to teach conflict and peace for several years. However, English as a foreign language (EFL) classes remain guided by a neoliberal agenda towards preparing children with language capacity for economic leadership but not necessarily to discuss social issues, thus asking for more research to explore the possibilities of social justice and peacebuilding curriculum (SJPBC) is necessary. To address this gap, my research has turned to answer this overarching question: How is SJPBC envisioned, enacted and experienced by EFL teachers and students in a marginalized school? Drawing from critical ethnographic approaches, this study was carried out in a public high school located in an underprivileged area in Bogota, the capital of Colombia. The participants in this study were three English teachers and their socially diverse students (ages 11 to 17). I compiled extensive records of observations and conducted semi-structured interviews at various moments with teachers and a selected group of students. Preliminary analysis has found evidence that teachers and students collaborate to create lessons that forefronts humanity at the core of pedagogy. The teachers’ goals are more than simply teaching English academic content, instead also focusing on creating spaces for students to explore, discuss, and engage in social-justice-oriented projects as they drift away from outside-of-school violence. This study will extend research on English language teaching that is culturally relevant to children’s own contexts.