Colombian Leftist Non-State Armed Groups: The Gendered Experience of Conflict through to Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR)

Chiara Mizzoni

Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy to Trinity College Dublin, University of Ireland

2021
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Chiara Mizzoni
Abstract

Colombian Leftist Non-State Armed Groups: The Gendered Experience of Conflict through to Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR).

Chiara Mizzoni

The prevailing approach which the Women, Peace and Security Agenda takes to inform gender sensitive Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) is important but ultimately inadequate in the pursuit of gender equality. This research uses a Gender Relational Analysis framework to analyse the evolution of DDR in the context of Colombia from a gender perspective. A phenomenological methodological approach and feminist research practices were employed and 49 interview participants from four Colombian leftist non-state armed groups (NSAGs) and a number of subject matter experts contributed. Against the background of how gender conscious thinking has evolved within Colombian reintegration, the research reveals how prior leftist NSAG participation comes to shape experience and expectation of reintegration, and critically engages with its effectiveness in challenging entrenched gender hierarchies of power in a transformative way to produce more inclusive and equitable peace. This research draws attention to the complex gendered identities of women and men and the ways in which they must renegotiate their identity within reintegration. It reveals the impact of gender equality ideology and collective group identity on former insurgents. It advocates for an embedded gender mandate from the outset of peace negotiations, for a gender relational approach to DDR, and reintegration which offers elements of collectivist and individualised model approaches. The outcome of the research is a substantial case study of reintegration in the Colombian context which shows the value of gender relational analysis as a methodological approach within peacebuilding.
Summary

Both academic literature and international frameworks, and the initiatives they produce, promoted by the Women, Peace and Security Agenda (WPS) to inform gender sensitive Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR), typically take an ‘add women and stir’ approach. This recognises women as armed group members and seeks to ensure their access to gender-specific DDR support services within a safe space. Although essential, this is a gender mainstreaming approach which is inadequate in the pursuit of gender equality. In response, this research uses a Gender Relational Analysis framework to analyse the evolution of DDR in the context of Colombia from a gender perspective. It moves past the limitations of WPS, allowing better recognition and redress of an individual’s complex experience of identity, conflict and peace.

This research employed a phenomenological methodological approach and feminist research practices. It engaged 49 interview participants from four Colombian leftist non-state armed groups (NSAGs) as well as numerous subject matter experts. It documents individual gendered experience along three specific junctures (enlistment, belonging and reintegration) to provide a deeper understanding of the lived experience of former insurgents. This research reveals how prior leftist NSAG participation comes to shape experience and expectation of reintegration, and critically engages with its effectiveness in challenging entrenched gender hierarchies of power in a transformative way to produce more inclusive and equitable peace.

Both women and men are gendered beings and as such, enlistment, belonging and reintegration are all shaped through gender. This research revealed displays of hard masculinities form an early socialisation of weapons and violence with specific masculine identities, later reinforced by leftist NSAG belonging. Similarly, women place the symbolic reverence on gun ownership through the socialisation of militarised femininities. The obstacles that men and women face within their social and economic reintegration are comparable in some ways: societal animosity, an unwillingness to accept their participation in the formal work economy, personal security concerns and relative education and experience disadvantages. As such, both men and women are likely to feel a corresponding sense of vulnerability at the point of disarmament.

There was a strict code of conduct within Colombian leftist NSAGs which contained and directed violence. When these boundaries are removed, violence can overspill into civilian society. Some men who deemed themselves short of normative standards of manhood came to express this through harmful behaviour such as intimate partner violence, recidivism and dissidence, while other men came to embrace masculine positions which reject violence as a form of expression, focusing on family, fatherhood and reconciliation. The research further shows the importance of
attending to the gendered aspects of men’s identities, as they were found to be largely
conformative to overarching cultural standards of manhood.

The traditional focus on women when gendering DDR remains crucial, however this research
reveals women’s experiences are likewise complex, requiring a more nuanced approach to
reintegration. Insurgent women experience transformative shifts in their personal identity through
their armed group membership. Returning from war, they often find themselves misaligned with
the hegemonic gender order which sees their leftist NSAG gender performances and their
reconfigured insurgent identities as exceptional and undesirable. The research sheds new light on
the complicated ways in which women renegotiate their identity, including finding new agency
in the physical practice of a feminised identity and motherhood.

There is an ‘agency versus structure’ debate in the field of gender studies that is supported by this
research’s findings. This debate questions the extent to which individuals are free to make choices
or are restrained within existing systems of power. Ultimately, despite advancements in gender-
sensitive reintegration, the Colombian reintegration programme is not yet capable of being gender
transformative. While it does not seek to overtly reinforce societal gender dichotomies through
the socioeconomic opportunities provided to former insurgent women, the DDR process
nevertheless, reproduces wider societal trends and power hierarchies.

Reinvented gender arrangements within left-NSAGs, reshaped the identities of insurgent men
and women. Combatants took up new gender roles which alongside their interactions with
equality discourse and collective social arrangements led to a shift in formally prescribed, civilian
world perceptions of gender hierarchies. The research then counters one-dimensional assessments
of conflict and masculinities. Although not wholly emancipatory this research finds that
Colombian leftist NSAGs are, to some degree, upholding more equal patterns of gender relations
than the social relations of power seen in the conservative society in which they are immersed.
The extent to which equality has been realised is not absolute however. The findings, thus, draw
attention to these various contradictions.

It is precisely this new perception of the insurgent self and of the group’s gender hierarchy, that
leads to dissatisfaction for women within reintegration. Women experienced an ‘orphanhood’
when insurgent collective identity is interrupted by processes of DDR. Many DDR programmes
focus on combatants as individuals, however this research finds the experience of collectivity is
profound for combatants. DDR continues to dismiss thinking around the gender regimes and
group identity of leftist NSAGs which have reshaped the perception of gender hierarchies of
former insurgents. Militarised identities must be reformed and transformed; however, this
research suggests that maintaining the non-violent elements of group identity, those that are
inclusive of women and men, that promote a more equal gender narrative, and a tempered version of gender binary in relation to each other, may be beneficial.

When reintegration does not formally account for the loss of collective identity, the research finds that women tend to peacefully remobilise outside of formal DDR structures. The stance taken by the FARC in its own collective reincorporation model may yet circumvent the more negative aspects of individual reintegration, such as isolation, deprivation and depoliticisation and further its political project, so bolstering the sustainability of its commitment to non-violent and peaceful politics. A differential focus is always required in DDR, where policies must meet the needs of heterogenous individuals. However, a collective model could be employed to maintain social bonds, positive group identity and an opportunity for productive and political work in ways which a wholly individualised programme cannot. Moreover, the gender equality narrative has more space to function in collective reintegration, as it is less constrained by the discriminatory hegemonic gender order. In this way, this research argues for DDR which offers elements of collectivist and individualised model approaches. It calls for an embedded gender mandate from the outset of peace negotiations and a gender relational approach to DDR design and delivery.
Acknowledgments

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This thesis is dedicated to peacebuilders everywhere and to my daughter Margot, may she grow up in a more inclusive and equitable world.
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| ACR          | Agencia Colombiana para la Reintegración  
Colombian Agency for Reintegration (from 2011)  |
| ACR          | Alta Consejería para la Reintegración  
High Council for Reintegration (2006-2011)  |
| AETCR        | Antiguos Espacios Territoriales de Capacitación y Reincorporación  
Former Territorial Spaces for Training and Reincorporation  |
| ANMUCIC      | La Asociación Nacional de Mujeres Campesinas, Negras e Indígenas de Colombia  
National Association for Rural, Indigenous and Black Women in Colombia  |
| ARN          | Agencia para la Reincorporación y la Normalización  
Agency for Reincorporation and Normalization  |
| AUC          | Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia  
United Self–Defence Forces of Colombia  |
| BACRIM       | Bandas Criminales  
Criminal Gangs  |
| CAAFAG       | Children Associated with Armed Groups and Forces  |
| CNR          | Consejo Nacional de Reincorporación  
National Council for Reincorporation  |
| CODA         | Comité Operativo para la Dejación de las Armas  
Operational Committee for the Abandonment of Weapons  |
| CONPA        | El Consejo de Paz Afrocolombiano  
The Afro-Colombian Peace Council  |
| CONPES       | Consejo Nacional de Política Económica y Social  
National Social and Political Assembly  |
| CRS          | Corriente de Renovación Socialista  
Socialist Renovation Current  |
| CSIVI        | Comisión de Seguimiento, Impulso y Verificación a la Implementación del Acuerdo Final  
Commission for Monitoring, Promotion, and Verification of the Final Agreement  |
| DDR          | Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration  |
| ELN          | El Ejército de Liberación Nacional  
The National Liberation Army  |
| EPL          | El Ejército Popular de Liberación  
The Popular Liberation Army  |
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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EPS</td>
<td>Entidad Promotora de Salud (Health Promotion Entity)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ETCR</td>
<td>Espacio Territoriales de Capacitación y Reincorporación (Territorial Spaces for Training and Reincorporation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FARC</td>
<td>The Revolutionary Alternative Common Force (Political Party) (Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FARC-EP</td>
<td>Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia - Ejército del Pueblo (NSAG) (The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia - People's Army)</td>
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<tr>
<td>FCAS</td>
<td>Fragile &amp; Conflict-Affected States</td>
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<td>GBV</td>
<td>Gender-Based Violence</td>
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<td>GNI</td>
<td>Gross National Income</td>
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<td>IDDRS</td>
<td>United Nations Integrated DDR Standards</td>
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<td>IDPs</td>
<td>Internally Displaced Persons</td>
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<tr>
<td>INGO</td>
<td>International Non-Governmental Organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPA</td>
<td>Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGBTI</td>
<td>Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex</td>
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<tr>
<td>M-19</td>
<td>Movimiento 19 de Abril/The 19th of April Movement</td>
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<tr>
<td>MAPP-OEA</td>
<td>Misión de Apoyo al Proceso de Paz de los Estados Americanos (Mission to Support the Peace Process of the Organization of American States)</td>
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<td>MAQL</td>
<td>El Movimiento Armado Quintín Lame (Quintín Lame Armed Movement)</td>
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<tr>
<td>MIR-COAR</td>
<td>El Movimiento Independiente Revolucionario Comandos Armados (Revolutionary Independent Movement, Armed Commandos)</td>
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<td>NAPs</td>
<td>National Action Plans</td>
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<td>NCN</td>
<td>Consejo Nacional de Normalización (National Council of Normalization)</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisation</td>
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<td>NSAG</td>
<td>Non-State Armed Group</td>
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<td>ONIC</td>
<td>Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombiano (National Indigenous Organization of Colombia)</td>
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<tr>
<td>PCC</td>
<td>Partido Comunista de Colombia (Colombian Communist Party)</td>
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<tr>
<td>PLA</td>
<td>People's Liberation Army</td>
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<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<td>PNRSE</td>
<td>Política Nacional para la Reincorporación Social y Económica</td>
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<td></td>
<td>National Policy for Social and Economic Reincorporation</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRP</td>
<td>Persona en Proceso de Reintegración</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Person in the Process of Reintegration</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRSE</td>
<td>Política Nacional de Reintegración Social y Económica Social</td>
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<td></td>
<td>National Policy of Social and Economic Reintegration</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRT</td>
<td>Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores de Colombia</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Workers Revolutionary Party of Colombia</td>
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<td>PTN</td>
<td>Puntos Transitorios de Normalización</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Transitional Normalization Points</td>
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<td>SENA</td>
<td>Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje</td>
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<td></td>
<td>National Training Service</td>
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<td>SGBV</td>
<td>Sexual and Gender-Based Violence</td>
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<td>SMEs</td>
<td>Subject Matter Experts</td>
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<td>SRS</td>
<td>Security Sector Reform</td>
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<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
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<td>UNIFEM</td>
<td>United Nations Development Fund for Women</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNSCR</td>
<td>United National Security Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNSG</td>
<td>United Nations Secretary-General</td>
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<tr>
<td>UP</td>
<td>Unión Patriótica</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Patriotic Union</td>
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<td>VPOs</td>
<td>Violent Political Organisations</td>
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<td>WAAFG</td>
<td>Women Associated with Armed Forces and Groups</td>
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<td>The Women, Peace and Security Agenda</td>
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INTRODUCTION

Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) programmes are sets of structured strategies and interventions to support a societal transition from war to peace. They can be seen as technical exercises to demilitarise armed groups and remove the proliferation of weapons from societal circulation before reinserting demobilised combatants into civilian society through reintegration efforts so that they may become stakeholders of peace (Munive, 2013; UN Peacekeeping, 2020; UNIFEM, 2004). DDR is one of many components of a peace process that is used within the wider framework of peacebuilding. The DDR community has been moving towards the inclusion of a gender lens to peacebuilding and specifically DDR for some time, however questions remain about how to approach this gendering process and its overall effectualness in transforming the lives of its participants in post-conflict civil societies. This thesis contributes to these debates about the gendering of DDR through a case study of Colombian reintegration which has continued to evolve over the past three decades.

DDR

DDR is widely believed to be a precondition in ensuring the continued cessation of conflict and consolidating peace, as former combatants who do not engage successfully with DDR can become real threats in already fragile states (Banholzer, 2014). “The risk of re-recruitment is high when ex-combatants fail to reintegrate economically and socially into their civil host communities, which may cause substantial economic development issues, and a new turn in the cycle of violence becomes inevitable” (Schauer & Elbert, 2010:312). While DDR processes can appear overtly technical, they are in fact crucial to peace.

Demobilising combatants is the single most important factor determining the success of peace operations. Without demobilization, civil wars cannot be brought to an end and other critical goals - such as democratization, justice and development - have little chance for success (UN, 2004:61).

In reality, DDR is a highly complex and multivariate process with social, economic, political, humanitarian and military dimensions which most often take place in challenging environments. It centres individuals with often complex needs who have lost their livelihoods and the support network provided by their armed group membership. DDR aims “through a process that is symbolic as well as practical, to offer fighters a new identity that is compatible with peaceful development and sustainable growth” (Farr, 2003:27).
The United Nations defines DDR as:

**Disarmament** is the collection, documentation, control and disposal of small arms, ammunition, explosives and light and heavy weapons of combatants and often also of the civilian population. Disarmament also includes the development of responsible arms management programmes.

**Demobilisation** is the formal and controlled discharge of active combatants from armed forces or other armed groups. The first stage of demobilisation may extend from the processing of individual combatants in temporary centres to the massing of troops in camps designated for this purpose (cantonment sites, encampments, assembly areas or barracks). The second stage of demobilisation encompasses the support package provided to the demobilised, which is called reinsertion.

**Reintegration** is the process by which ex-combatants acquire civilian status and gain sustainable employment and income. Reintegration is essentially a social and economic process with an open time-frame, primarily taking place in communities at the local level. It is a part of the general development of a country and a national responsibility, and often necessitates long-term external assistance (UN, 2006a:2).

An important element of later-stage demobilisation is the process of **reinsertion**, which is further defined as,

the assistance offered to ex-combatants during demobilization but prior to the longer-term process of reintegration. Reinsertion is a form of transitional assistance to help cover the basic needs of ex-combatants and their families and can include transitional safety allowances, food, clothes, shelter, medical services, short-term education, training, employment and tools. While reintegration is a long-term, continuous social and economic process of development, reinsertion is a short-term material and/or financial assistance to meet immediate needs and can last up to one year (UN, 2006a:2).

Since the late 1980s, the UN has increasingly been called upon to support the implementation and execution of DDR in nations emerging from conflict, as its practices of implementation have evolved away from a conventional ‘guns for cash’ transaction, towards more complex interventions for former combatants, which seek to better ensure post-conflict reconstruction and long-term peace and development. These shifts were part of a wider trend where peacekeeping pivoted away from its traditional mandate of infantry soldiers maintaining a ceasefire line, towards much more complex peace operations addressing an extensive array of issues ranging from security and human rights, to rule of law and economic governance (UN, 2010; UN Peacekeeping, n.d). In more recent years again, the UN works not just on individually-focused DDR but also a community-based approach known as second generation DDR, which occurs during conflict and early on in the peace process. It is one which incorporates an element of community violence reduction where “armed groups…unlikely to have signed a peace agreement, are often involved in shadow economies and transnational criminal networks [and] may even be indistinguishable from communities” (UN Peacekeeping, 2020:1). Not all DDR programmes are UN led however, as is the case of Colombia, but they have all followed this similar trajectory in terms of conceptual development and evolution.
Although increasingly called upon, DDR does not replace all other political and social solutions to conflict. Disarmament and demobilisation are fundamentally short-term security measures, while reintegration should be conceived as a long-term process which is linked to development. The three interrelated phases of DDR mean that the concepts of security and development are intertwined from the outset. While the UN definition infers compartmentalised and sequential elements, in actuality DDR is an interdependent process which necessitates a tailored and adaptable approach in each unique situation.

There is no consensus on whether DDR should be conceived as a short-term tool focused on security and stability or a potential bridge to longer-term development (hence stronger emphasis on reintegration) (von Dyck, 2016:10).

DDR is often linked to another modern element of peace operations, security sector reform or SSR\(^1\). There is a general critique that both take an overly securitised and militarised approach to peacebuilding. This criticism arises not because short-term security and with it, disarmament and demobilisation are not necessary, they are crucial to establish the conditions for reintegration and development; but because the importance of long-term, deep reintegration efforts tend to be underemphasised (Jennings, 2008). DDR practitioners often prioritise disarmament and demobilisation. They tend to be explicitly referenced in peacekeeping mandates, overseen by the UN and are theoretically quantifiable through the number of combatants which present for the process and the quantity of weapons assembled and destroyed. DDR is therefore often still viewed as a technical, time bound exercise by the international community, to remove “the immediate threat to a fragile peace posed by groups of armed, uncontrolled and unemployed ex-combatants” (Sundh & Schjørljen 2006:14). This naturally leads to an outlay of resourcing at the outset of a peace process for the ‘emergency phase’ of a societal transition meaning that investment in reintegration efforts in the longer term is insufficient and a primary cause of inadequate outcomes (Ball & Van de Goor, 2006; UN INSTRAW, 2010; UNDP, 2005).

While a minimalist approach to DDR views it as a mechanism to remove the proliferation of arms from circulation, reduce the risk of violence and to stabilise in the shorter term to allow peacebuilding take root, a maximalist viewpoint considers DDR as intrinsic to development (Knight, 2010; Muggah & Colletta, 2009; von Dyck, 2016). The UNDP (2005) argues that to achieve the security objectives of DDR, former combatants must be supported to attain full social

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\(^1\) Security sector reform (SSR) is defined as improving governance over and service delivery by the security sector. This sector comprises organizations authorized to use force for the protection of the state and its population, as well as civil management and oversight bodies associated with such organizations. This includes military and paramilitary forces, intelligence services, police forces, border and coast guards as well as prison guards and correction officers (World Bank, 2003:1). There has been calls for DDR and SSR to better work in coordination and to be more effectively linked because “DDR and SSR share the same objective – consolidation of the state’s monopoly of force to uphold the rule of law – they succeed or fail together” (McFate, 2010:1).
and economic reintegration. Moreover, it finds that a cookie-cutter approach is ineffective. DDR should be context-specific, accounting for the unique dynamics and underlying root causes of the conflict (UNDP, 2005). Reintegration is linked to longer-term structural violence reduction and socioeconomic development. It tends to be left to, or managed in cooperation with local actors, civil society, international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) and other institutions. Unfortunately, its financial outlay tends not to follow its necessary long-term trajectory. Psychosocial assistance for example, tends be peripheral and underfinanced despite its considerable importance (DPI, 2012). As the success of reintegration depends on many ongoing and interconnected variables, impact assessment is difficult (IPA, 2002).

Despite these challenges, reintegration is arguably the most crucial and yet most difficult aspect of DDR to get right. The focus of economic reintegration encompasses access to sustainable civilian employment and development of skills through education and vocational training. Social reintegration refers to individuals acquiring a new social civilian identity and successfully rejoining society as accepted members by family and host communities alike. Political reintegration refers to former combatants becoming active citizens, understanding of their political rights and responsibilities. Even within reintegration there are contentious issues. The liberal peace and securitisation agendas prioritise economic reintegration and while essential, when overemphasised, other critical aspects to reintegration such as social, psychological and contextual, and their impact on overall socioeconomic reintegration may not be given sufficient consideration for successful outcomes (Basini, 2013; El-Bushra, 2000).

Reintegration must also strike a balance “between supporting ex-combatant’s specific needs and the needs of the wider community in order to prevent resentment” while promoting peace and reconciliation (UNDP, 2005:5). Community based approaches are a means to better redistribute the benefits of DDR, broaden the target group, reduce tensions and better contribute to local development. Moreover, as violent conflict is the context in which human rights violations occur, DDR must consider justice-related aims as often the involvement of combatants in DDR is predicated on the provision of amnesties and guarantees to those cleared of serious misconduct (Patel et al., 2010). Amnesty for genocide, war crimes, or crimes against humanity is unacceptable under the principles of international law. Transitional justice measures must deliver on truth, justice and reparations while supporting national reconciliation efforts and DDR should be articulated to support this endeavour (Patel et al., 2010; UNDP, 2012).
Gendering DDR

Gender inequality contributes to the structural causes of conflict in Fragile & Conflict-Affected States (FCAS), while conflict gives rise to complex and multifaceted effects on societal gender relations. War is gendered and so too is peacemaking. Gender mainstreaming is a public policy concept first established in 1995 “as a strategy in international gender equality policy”2 (Council of Europe, 2020:1). Five years later in October 2000, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) which advocates for the inclusion of women alongside gender sensitivity in conflict and post-conflict scenarios. “UNSCR 1325 called on countries to address the impacts that conflict had on women and girls around the globe and to systematically include women in peacebuilding efforts, including peace talks, peacekeeping and post conflict reconstruction efforts” (UNDP, 2019a:2). The four basic pillars of UNSCR 1325 are participation, protection, prevention and relief and recovery and since its adoption, there have been nine further resolutions aimed at strengthening the WPS agenda. Advocacy of gender conscious DDR emerged as a consequence of the WPS agenda and it is specifically mentioned in UNSCR 1325, the first UN declaration to do so stating that DDR measures should,

encourage(s) all those involved in the planning for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration to consider the different needs of female and male ex-combatants and to take into account the needs of their dependants (UNSCR 1325, 2000:3).

Although at the time pioneering, there are critical issues surrounding WPS which concern implementation issues including lack of progress, insufficient budget and inadequate National Action Plans (NAPs) but also within its conceptuality. These continue to hinder its objective of gender justice and gender equality measures within peacekeeping and peacebuilding initiatives. While the succeeding chapter provides a detailed overview of the WPS agenda and engendered DDR from a critical approach, it is important to articulate here certain gaps in its thinking in the context of introducing this research.

As Engeler and Fortune (2020) state, “critical approaches to the WPS Agenda have argued that it co-opts feminist knowledges into neoliberal governing structures, fails to call militarism and colonialism into question, and leaves gendered power

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2 Established at the at the Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 and defined as: “Gender mainstreaming has been embraced internationally as a strategy towards realising gender equality. It involves the integration of a gender perspective into the preparation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, regulatory measures and spending programmes, with a view to promoting equality between women and men, and combating discrimination” (European Institute for Gender Equality, 1997:5).
relations unchallenged” (Engeler & Fortune, 2020:1). The WPS agenda is built on assumptions which are not particularly culturally or context specific. It falls squarely within traditional binary thinking of gender by failing to both acknowledge sexual and gender minorities or men as gendered beings. Gender-responsive measures under the scope of the WPS agenda typically take an ‘add women and stir’ approach (Martin de Almagro, 2018). Yet gender parity through the physical presence of women does not necessarily attend to the power dynamics which uphold the systems of gender inequality. Numerical gender parity is inadequate in the pursuit of gender equality as it cannot ensure that the structural causes of inequality are addressed nor does it automatically equate to increased agency for women and other vulnerable groups.

Most discourse which surrounds conflict is reductionist, depicting women as victims and men as the perpetrators of violence. This greatly underestimates the role that women play in the continuation and perpetration of violence (Anderlini, 2007; Henshaw, 2017a). WPS typically elevates this reified narrative. This glosses over real nuance and complexity and is particularly pertinent in thinking about non-state armed groups and DDR participation. Women in fighting forces do not align with the stereotypical views of women as either inherently peaceful or victims (Farr, 2003). Yet women participate in armed conflict as combatants, as women associated with armed forces and groups (WAAFGs) in support roles or as dependants (UNIAWG on DDR, 2012; UNDP, 2005). While their numbers within fighting forces are increasing in contemporary conflict, women’s presence has never been exceptional (Henshaw, 2017a).

Despite the mention of gender sensitive DDR in UNSCR 1325, DDR has in the past been heavily criticised for its exclusion of women, contribution to gendered insecurity and prevention of gendered access to justice (Basini, 2013; Duriesmith & Holmes, 2019). DDR which excludes based on gender and overlooks these issues “fail to transform the political conditions that led to conflict” (Duriesmith & Holmes, 2019). As women’s contribution to warmaking is underacknowledged, it unsurprisingly their absence remains marked in DDR despite their critical role in the maintenance of armed groups (McKay & Mazurana, 2004). Although commonplace within peacebuilding discourse to emphasise that gender does not simply equate to women, peace interventions continue to perpetuate rudimentary and one-dimensional attitudes of women and men who are treated as homogenous and unchanging groups (Myrttinen et al., 2014; UNIAWG on DDR, 2012). Recent international attempts to mainstream gender within DDR has implied acknowledging women as combatants, protecting them from violence and addressing their gender-specific needs, while taking a quantitative approach to their presence (Anderlini, 2007; Barth, 2002; Bastick, 2017; Ní Aoláin et al., 2011). While these are important issues, this is a
gender mainstreaming approach which operates on the basis that gender equals women and women equals victims.

Much has also been written from an academic and policy standpoint on DDR, ranging from case study analysis through to best practice guidelines (Muggah, 2005; Rufer, 2005; UNDP, 2005). Research has focused less on the gender dimension of DDR while most work that does, tends to look at women’s exclusion from such programmes, rather than if their inclusion yields better overall results for sustainable peace (Anderlini, 2007; Olonisakin, et al. 2011; Rehn & Sirleaf, 2002; Ní Aoláin et al., 2011). Scholarly work on gender and DDR has also by and large overlooked group identity within analysis, focusing instead on the gender discriminatory barriers to participation and the gender-specific needs of reintegrating women which are concepts also elevated by the DDR international community (Hauge, 2008). Important dynamics such as “how gendered relations of power play out through gender-sensitive DDR…that seek to integrate women and transform hyper-masculine militarized masculinities” are also under-analysed (Duriesmith & Holmes, 2019:361). Scholarship has also focused less on DDR programmes which explicitly claim to incorporate gender into their strategies and what the outcome of that is on masculine constructs (Duriesmith, 2015; Specht, 2013).

Gender responsive DDR and other peacebuilding interventions which seek a gendered peace must begin from a point of departure which understands the complexity of gender relations in the context in which DDR takes place (UNDP, 2012). DDR through a holistic gendered lens is required to recognise how peacebuilding strategies shape particular forms masculinities in conflict and post-conflict scenarios, while working to dismantle hyper-masculine behaviour and militarised masculinities (Banholzer 2006; Cahn & Ní Aoláin, 2010). Gender aware DDR means conceiving of DDR in way which empowers all participants. The WPS Agenda operates from a positionality of binary thinking which has largely been neglectful of gender minorities (Thylin, 2018; Thylin 2019). DDR must also remain attentive to intersectional identities and social categorisations beyond gender. This extends to age, geographic location, ethnicity, disability and sexuality among other markers, yet the literature on this remains sparse.

As gender relations frequently shift in time of war, for instance in the uptake of non-traditional roles for women, there is an opportunity to redefine gender hierarchies during peacebuilding, yet real opportunities for change are often missed, or gender equality actually regresses (Ní Aoláin et al., 2011; Olonisakin et al., 2011). In post-conflict societies more generally, certain men continue to be typically endowed with political and economic power while women including female former combatants may be relegated to subordinate or stereotypical gendered roles (Cockburn & Zarkov, 2002). While DDR could be used to capitalise on shifting gender relations
during conflict unfortunately, it may replicate gender bias that is already persuasive in a given society. As a result of these arguments, this thesis will apply the theoretical conception of gender as relational through the explicit use of a gender relational analysis framework. Colombia is the given society under investigation given the evolution of gender thinking within its programmes of reintegration.

Research Aims and Questions

The aim of this research was to analyse the evolution of DDR in the context of Colombia from a gender perspective. Colombia’s protracted conflict has seen a slow evolution and incorporation of gender sensitivity in its DDR programming and a particular attention to gender within the 2016 Peace Agreement. This research sought to discover whether DD and especially R transforms life for female and male former combatants while accounting for their complex, intersectional identities. I undertook a gender relational analysis of former combatants’ experience of leftist NSAG participation and reintegration, to provide a deep, gendered understanding of former insurgents lived experience along meaningful points in the individual’s life trajectory. Against the background of how gender conscious thinking has evolved within Colombian reintegration, the research reveals how prior leftist NSAG participation comes to shape experience and expectation of reintegration, and critically engages with its effectiveness in challenging entrenched gender hierarchies of power in a transformative way to produce more inclusive and equitable peace. As such, this research seeks to contribute to wider international feminist discourse in peace studies and to be applicable beyond Colombia’s borders.

A gender relational analytical framework focuses on the mutual construction of masculinities and femininities and their intersections with other markers of identity such as ethnicity, class and sexuality alongside gender (Myrffinen et al., 2014). This was seen as especially important given the relatively high numbers of both women and ethnic minorities who fought in the Colombian conflict, alongside varying regional conflict dynamics and acute education and class differences within the Colombian population. Given their relatively lower societal positioning in relation to white and mestizo men, through rigid gendered power relations the Colombian gender order typically subordinates the social position of women and other minority identities who face ongoing marginalisation and discrimination.

To achieve the aims this research I developed the following central research questions.

1. How has gender been considered conceptually and practically in Colombian reintegration?
2. What are the gendered experiences of female and male combatants in relation to their leftist non-state armed group membership?
3. What are the gendered experiences of female and male former combatants in relation to their reintegration?

4. Are existing attempts to engender DDR processes reinforcing gender norms and dichotomies in the way they position former combatants in post-conflict societies?

Case Study

Colombia is a country with an extensive recent history of DDR encompassing a number of non-state armed groups (NSAGs). It has rather uniquely experienced multiple DDR programmes in its recent past which has been largely autonomous of international support. Colombian DDR is also relatively unique in that it has taken place in the context of ongoing socio-political violence.

Between 1989 and 1994, a cycle of bilateral peace negotiations occurred between the Colombian Government and several guerrilla groups including M-19³ and the EPL⁴ leading to a series of collective demobilisations. Today, two parallel and distinct programmes are being executed concurrently. The first of these reintegration programmes, has over its lifespan, supported thousands of participants who chose to individually leave or were captured from the FARC⁵, the EPL and the ELN⁶. It was managed by the Agencia Colombiana para la Reintegración (ACR) and takes place outside of the context of a peace agreement. Again, this is comparatively novel. Prior to this, the ACR was known as the High Council for Reintegration (ACR) and before this again, the Program for Reincorporation to the Civil Life (PRVC) and it had, under those names also managed the reintegration of Colombia’s right-wing paramilitary groups after their own collective demobilisations beginning in 2003.⁷ Since May 2017, the agency is known as the ARN or Agencia para la Reincorporación y la Normalización, and it remains in charge of Colombian reintegration, which is today, a comprehensive six and half year programme.

The second ongoing programme is collective social, economic and political reincorporation of the FARC, formerly the nation’s most prolific guerrilla group involved in the longest-running armed insurgency in the Western Hemisphere.⁸ This is occurring after a historic peace deal was reached in 2016 and is now its in fourth year of implementation. Consequently, the Colombian reintegration landscape is both relatively complex and comparatively highly developed making it an ideal case study. Both programmes today take a long-term view of reintegration and claim gender sensitivity. This ensured the case study was highly applicable and would provide the

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³ Movimiento 19 de Abril or The 19th of April Movement.
⁴ El Ejército Popular de Liberación or The Popular Liberation Army.
⁵ Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia or The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia.
⁶ Ejército de Liberación Nacional or The National Liberation Army.
⁷ The gendered experience of AUC membership and reintegration is not an element of this research.
⁸ Reincorporation is the official and preferred term to reintegration for this programme.
research with a solid inquiry into gender mainstreaming practices within DDR. Moreover, the various NSAGs in Colombia have had a diverse composition affording a relational analysis of gender highly relevant.

Research Methodology

My approach to the research process was strongly informed by the central principles guiding feminist methodology and the idea of gender as a relational concept. This led me to adopt a specific feminist approach, gender relational analysis. Gender relational approaches are inspired by the feminist concern for revealing gendered power inequalities and hold a normative aim of transforming women’s lives, however by including the relational element of gender, through a focus on the power interplays between men and women and the mutual construction of masculinities and femininities, men and other important markers of diversity are also considered within the analysis (Naujoks & Myrttinen, 2014). Designed specifically to be applied to peacebuilding research and practice, gender relational analysis is highly applicable to this research.

My fieldwork focused on garnering the lived experiences of former members of Colombian leftist NSAGs, from their premobilisation to group participation, through to their disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration. I was concerned with the gendered experience of women and men across these phases and how they come to shape each other, such as how gender constructions within leftist NSAGs form expectations of DDR thereafter.

To perform the practicalities of data collection and data analysis, a phenomenological methodological approach and feminist research practices were employed. Most of the data collection took place over two phases of field research together totalling a nine month period spent living in Colombia. Data collection was primarily achieved through conducting semi-structured interviews. In total, 49 interview participants partook in the research across 45 interviews. The research captured the personal narratives of 24 former combatants, 16 former insurgent women and 8 former insurgent men from four of Colombia’s leftist NSAGs. A further 25 interviews were conducted with subject matter experts. The research methodology will be covered extensively chapter 3.
Thesis Structure

The thesis is developed over six main chapters ahead of the conclusion.

*Chapter 1* explores the key theoretical perspectives underpinning the research namely, the gendered dimensions of the practices of conflict and peacebuilding. The chapter begins by exploring gender as a distinct concept and looks to scholarly discussions within the field of gender theory. The chapter then applies gender theory to the concepts of conflict and peacebuilding and specifically to DDR.

*Chapter 2* provides the background to the case study of Colombia, presenting the contextual information from which the research results and analysis are later positioned. After providing a general country overview and a deliberation of Colombia’s gender and ethno-racial relations, the chapter illustrates the historical development of the internal conflict and the nation’s various attempts to reach a negotiated solution to peace. This includes the most recent peace negotiations between the Colombian Government and the FARC and the resultant work in progress, the implementation of the 2016 peace agreement known as the *Final Agreement to End The Armed Conflict and Build a Stable and Lasting Peace* (Final Agreement, 2016). The chapter also considers the gendered dimensions of both the conflict and the peace process.

*Chapter 3* presents the research methodology, looking first to the selected theoretical framework, gender relational analysis and how it informs the methodological approach and then to the practical methods and techniques applied to data collection, analysis and interpretation. After a comprehensive description of the research process, the chapter concludes with a section on ethics, working in conflict and post-conflict contexts and with former combatant populations. Lastly, I discuss the role of the researcher through reflexive writing.

*Chapter 4* details the evolution of Colombian DDR. There have been several attempts of varying success to reach peace deals in Colombia with its numerous NSAGs. Since the late 1980’s, Colombian DDR has taken place across three broad phases. This chapter charts those phases from 1989 onward. Throughout the chapter, there is a parallel discussion of how gender and other strategies for diversity have advanced within Colombian reintegration. This discussion is further expanded upon, based on empirical data and analysis within the subsequent three chapters.

*Chapter 5* is the first of three chapters which present the empirical data gathered during the field work and an analytical interpretation of those research findings. I have chosen to document
gendered experience along three specific junctures of the conflict lifecycle which also correlate to meaningful points on the individual’s life trajectory.

Those three stages are:

1. The Gendered Experience of Leftist NSAG Enlistment
2. The Gendered Experience of Leftist NSAG Belonging
3. The Gendered Experience of Reintegration

This chapter explores the first two themes (The Gendered Experience of Leftist NSAG Enlistment) and (The Gendered Experience of Leftist NSAG Belonging); that is the process of becoming and actively being a leftist NSAG member. To understand how gender relations manifest and are constructed during reintegration, I began my gender analysis of reintegration at the point of leftist NSAG enlistment, making visible the gendered power relations which encouraged that transition before moving to the point of belonging, examining the construction of gender relations and gender identity within those leftist NSAGs; how these are reshaped to create a gender regime and collective gender identity which in many respects differs from civilian Colombian society. As combatants took up new gender roles, alongside their interactions with equality discourse and collective social arrangements, norms and rules, their perceptions of formally prescribed gender hierarchies also shifted. The experience of research participants is used to effectively show the presence of an insurgent group identity. Colombian leftist NSAGs were to some degree upholding more equal patterns of gender relations than the socially conservative society in which they were immersed.

Chapter 6 examines the third theme (The Gendered Experience of Reintegration) from the perspective of former insurgent women. The chapter covers the three distinct phases of Colombian DDR and looks for evidence of how the various gender policies and promises across the reintegration programmes have unfolded. To structure this gender relational analysis, I apply an integrated ecological model which provides a framework to study “multifaceted phenomenon grounded in an interplay among personal, situational, and sociocultural factors” (Heise, 1998:262). In doing so, I consider reintegration from differing levels; the individual or personal; the microsystem or “immediate context”; the exosystem or “institutions and social structures, both formal and informal” and the macrosystem; the “general views which permeate the culture at large” (Heise, 1998:264). I find that these levels are not mutually exclusive, given the complexity of human experience and interaction, they intersect and overlap.

My research concurs with many aspects of the literature especially concerning the gender-typical participation of most female former combatants in civilian society. It finds that the gendered societal stigma directed towards insurgent women often continues unabated upon their
demobilisation. The research sheds new light on the complicated ways in which women renegotiate their identity and on the importance of collective group identity and its palpable loss for women upon demobilisation. This loss and socioeconomic insecurity in the face of hegemonic cultural norms which remain largely static despite the conflict and shifting leftist-NSAG gender relations were found to be the most difficult aspects of reintegration. Moreover, specific configurations of gender relations within a reintegration programme were found to differ across place showing how they vary from one localised context to another. An intersectional lens further reveals that not all women experience reintegration equally. Meanwhile, outside of formal DDR structures, former insurgent women are choosing to non-violently remobilise in empowering ways, to counter the negative aspects of their reintegration, to reclaim their agency, to reconstruct their collective identity, to protect their collective interests and to further and agenda of peace. Moreover, Farianas\(^9\) have also collectively remobilised, forwarding a political platform and agenda of equality through their new conceptualisation of feminism.

Chapter 7 further develops the third theme (The Gendered Experience of Reintegration) now looking to the salient gendered issues which shape the reintegration experience of former insurgent men. In a similar vein to chapter 6, I consider experience across reintegration programmes and have structured the results of the gender relational analysis within an integrated ecological model framework which considers reintegration experience at different but interrelated societal levels (Heise, 1998). The individual or personal level explores issues of male loneliness, dependency, disempowerment and personal security. At the level of the microsystem, I consider how harmful practices and behaviours linked to the collapse of certain masculine constructs such as gendered violence can manifest in the immediate context. At the level of the exosystem, I explore reversion to traditional masculine role patterns within socioeconomic activities as well as the wider contextual risk of recidivism when male expectations of manhood are not attended to. At the final level of the ecological model, the macrosystem, I explore gendered societal stigma directed towards male former combatants.

Despite these difficult challenges facing men’s reintegration, one of the more constructive long-term impacts of being part of an organisation which espoused in some ways, more gender equitable practices and ideology means that many men are successful in later reassuming peaceful civilian identities. These men come to embrace masculine positions which reject violence as a form of expression, focus on family and fatherhood, and remobilise in non-violent ways to contribute to local reconciliation efforts, continuing in their conviction and promotion of the

\(^9\) Female members of the FARC.
equality narrative of their former armed struggle. However, their civilian aspirations were found to be largely conformative of overarching cultural standards of manhood.

Within the conclusion chapter, I offer a summary of the key findings in relation to the research objectives and offer main conclusions based on those research findings. Subsequently, I offer policy recommendations concerning the implementation and execution of gender responsive DDR. Lastly, I make suggested proposals for areas of future research.

This work is not an exhaustive account of gender and reintegation in the Colombian context, but it provides valuable insight into gendered lived experience from the perspective of the participating individual and of the gendered processes which rise to either meet or hinder their distinct needs. Inevitably, certain aspects of the debate are left out, attributable to the size of this research project, rather than an invalidation of those aspects. The inclusion of gender perspectives within war and peace analysis allows for more nuanced understanding of issues and participants. This research provides tangible learnings for peacebuilding and reintegration initiatives. The following chapter explores the gendered dimensions of the practices of conflict and peacebuilding.
CHAPTER 1: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

This chapter explores the key theoretical perspectives underpinning the research namely, the gendered dimensions of the practices of conflict and peacebuilding. The chapter begins by exploring gender as a distinct concept and looks to scholarly discussions within the field of gender theory. The chapter then applies gender theory to the concepts of conflict and peacebuilding and specifically to DDR.

Throughout the chapter, I reflect upon the feminist conceptions of each section and I argue that gender must be considered as a relational concept. I contend that the goal of engendered peacebuilding and by extension DDR, is achieved only by moving past the Women Peace Security (WPS) Agenda with its ‘add women and stir’ approach and deterministic and binary conceptions of gender, to one where an individual’s complex experience of identity and of conflict and peace is better encompassed through nuanced interventions which ensure improved outcomes. I discuss the contribution that a ‘Gender Relational Framework’ approach to analysis and policy within this space, and to DDR in particular can make (Myrttinen et al., 2014).

A Relational View of Gender

Gender is a social construct encompassing the psychosocial facets of a person’s life experience (Bradley, 2013). It must be considered as distinct from sex, which is biological maleness and femaleness and a method of categorisation. Femininities and masculinities are terms which describe gender traits, “social characteristics that are associated with perceived membership in biological sex classes” (Sjoberg, 2014:6).

Older conceptions of gender do not acknowledge it as “built on assumptions about relationships between sex and personality traits which are not fundamental, natural, or even necessarily accurate” (Sjoberg, 2014:8). The theory which presumes certain human traits are innate and carry universal validity is known as essentialism (Sterelny & Griffiths, 1999). Essentialism stands in opposition to theories of constructivism where certain characteristics are instead understood to be socially, ideologically or intellectually constructed. Gender norms are social attitudes which set the standard of what is considered ‘acceptable’ behaviour for people based on their gender or sex. A gender stereotype is an essentialist belief, a dominant normative notion about what it is to be a man or a woman, masculine or feminine. Gender minorities interrupt the conforming behaviour demanded by traditional and overarching gender norms and stereotypes. Non-
ciscender\textsuperscript{10} performances or gender transgressions can be viewed as dangerous and deviant and as a consequence, individuals who do not conform are often marginalised (Sjoberg, 2014). Gender studies is today heavily influenced by social-constructivism and postmodern feminist thought which challenge the more naturalistic and deterministic theories of sex and gender. Nevertheless, within wider society, gender alongside femininities and masculinities are still most often viewed through a lens of biological essentialism and with men and women positioned as binary opposites.

Raewyn Connell’s (1987) conceptualisation of the gender order refers to the hierarchical organisation of society through the arrangement of masculinities and femininities. It is maintained through various gender rules, customs and norms which come to structure individual’s lives, establishing the ‘state of play’ in any given society (Connell, 1987:139). In every society, gender shapes social relations and distributions of power, underpinning “the varied and complex arrangements between men and women, encompassing the organisation of reproduction, the sexual division of labour and cultural definitions of femininity and masculinity” (Bradley, 1996:205). As gender traits are both relational and hierarchical, power relationships emerge from a society’s given gender order as well as its other systems of power relations, such as race and class (Zevallos, 2015). Masculinity remains typically privileged and associated with those biologically categorised as men and as “traits associated with masculinity are given more regard in social and political situations, and men’s masculinity is assumed, then men and women are unequal in social and political institutions” (Sjoberg, 2014:7). This constellation forms the basis of gender inequality.

Raewyn Connell’s concept of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ has been particularly influential in gender scholarship (1995; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). It refers to practices which promote the dominant social position of men and the socially accepted way of being a man. It is the normalised, culturally idealised form of manhood, where certain traits such as competitiveness, strength and aggression are traditionally and socially revered. Connell also championed the idea of the existence of diverse and multiple masculinities (and femininities), i.e. the various ways people can be a man or woman, reasoning that gender identities were “framed in relation to hegemonic masculinity” (Bradley, 2013:52). The counterpoint to hegemonic masculinity is ‘emphasised femininity’ which as Harriet Bradley explains is “defined by its oppositeness to the masculine: emphasised femininity is soft, submissive, sexually coy, alluring or flirtatious, concerned with domesticity and preoccupied with bodily appearance” (Bradley, 2013:52). Emphasised femininity presents a socially idealised notion of womanhood (Connell, 2010).

\textsuperscript{10} The term for someone who does not identify as their sex assigned at birth but who does not identify as transgender (TSER, 2017).
Gender is highly politicised. It is a central organising principle of society, applicable not only at the level of the individual. All societal institutions are therefore gendered “and are locations in which the gendering of individuals and relationships takes place” (Bradley, 2007:6). Gender is omnirelevant and intersubjective, in that it refers to relations and shared meanings between people. It is apparent and relevant within every social interaction.

Claire Duncanson sees gender as “both an individual identity and as a symbolic system” (2016:7). Gender is interactional rather than individual and an important element of our social identity. That gender identity, how we perceive and present ourselves to society, and in turn, how we are perceived is formed “by how we act in relation to two things: our physical embodiment and social definitions of a man or women’s place in society, which we can conform to, reinforce, resist, subvert and so on, in a variety of ways” (Duncanson, 2016: emphasis added). Although we cannot think of gender as fixed by nature, neither is it wholly imposed by outside forces. “We claim a place in that gender order – or respond to the place we have been given – by the way we conduct ourselves in everyday life” (Connell, 2009:6). Recent thinking in the field understands gender as something we do. We actively create and recreate gender; it is not simply levied upon us. Accordingly, gender must be maintained.

Becoming a man or a woman, then is not a pre-determined state. It is a becoming, a condition actively under construction (Connell, 2009:5).

Judith Butler (1990) understands gender as performance. Gender performance theorises that individuals actively participate in the construction of gender, where gender is reproduced through daily acts or ‘performativity’ which ensures its continuation (Butler, 1990). Although Butler emphasises individual performance, agency versus structure is an ongoing debate within gender studies. The extent to which people make choices or are constrained within systems of power remains in question. Gender may be fluid, but many individuals continue to feel their personal gender identity is fixed (Duncanson, 2016). Similarly, a broader pattern of structural gender disadvantage is visible across society. Gender is a fluid concept but remains underpinned by material structure. We can view gender identity as,

intermittent, variable and fluctuating…[but] underpinned by a substratum or structure of gender relations, which are always operating, whether we are conscious of it or not (Bradley, 2013:76).

While individual gender identities are socially constructed and non-static, they are also constrained. “As individual agents, we are at least relatively free to choose our course of action, while at the same time being constrained by the structures and cultures which are our contexts” (Bradley, 2013:26).
Central though gender is to everyday life, social order and individual identity, it is important to acknowledge that it is not the only marker of social identity. How people view their own identity or how they are positioned in society is not determined by gender alone. Gender intersects with other social identities and power relations such as, but not limited to race, ethnicity, religion, nationality, disability, age and class. Social positioning results from “a complex interaction with other types of social relations, which can give rise to specific disadvantages” (Bradley, 2013:27).

This is the theory of intersectionality, a term originally put forward by feminist scholar Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw (1989) which illustrates how social categories are interconnected and intersect with gender, resulting in intersecting oppressions, discrimination and domination (Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1989).

A relational view of gender which recognises the complexity of gender relations and identities is mindful of intersectionality and,

understands that both men and women lead gendered lives, coloured by age, class and other identities. Gender relations vary from one context to another: the political, socio-economic and cultural dimensions of the context concerned, as well as its historical and geographical positioning, combine to produce varied patterns of gender relations. Masculine and feminine identities are created in relationship with and against each other, within the context of the whole of society (Naujoks & Myrttinen, 2014:6).

It is this theoretical approach which recognises both the relationality and intersectionality of gender relations and individual identities which underpins the analysis of this thesis. Bearing the value of this framework and theorisation in mind, the application of gender theory to conflict, peacebuilding and subsequently to DDR will now be explored.

**The Gendered Dimensions of Conflict**

Gender is a crucial part of war-making and war fighting, and war making, and war-fighting is a crucial part of understanding gender. In short, gender makes war and war makes gender (Sjoberg, 2014:17).

Wars are inherently political; they involve sustained organised violence between at least two political groups seeking to achieve their own political agenda. The feminist conception of war is however broader in its definition. War is understood as relational, systemic, social and individually experienced and the origins and consequences of war are believed to be gendered (Cockburn, 2008). War is not the singular or discrete event(s) of escalated violence it may feign to be. It must be conceptualised as a continuum. A feminist conception of conflict finds that the apparent distinct line between the conflict and post-conflict periods are largely fictional (Cockburn, 2008; Sjoberg, 2014). Gendered relations contribute to the production of conflict,
while the practices and consequences of conflict have differing effects upon different gender identities. Violence is itself productive, it produces a certain kind of gender relations. Moreover, gender relations and roles frequently shift in times of conflict (Cockburn & Zarkov, 2002).

Cockburn (2008) makes the strong assertion that militarism, militarisation, and war itself are driven and maintained by gender relations. Wars are made possible by the very gender-stereotypical and traditional notions which they also serve to reproduce. There exists a limited narrative of women as innocent victims, inherently peaceful, and reproducers of the nation. Women are ‘beautiful souls’ who inhabit the private sphere and for whom protective wars must be fought by men (Elshtain, 1987). This protection discourse, alongside victorious narratives are a key element in the legitimisation of war, and the subordination of women (Sjoberg, 2010). They are a key element in motivating men to take up arms in defence and protection of ‘thewomenandchildren’ and of their nation, which is often also conceptualised as feminine (Enloe, 1990).

If the ‘beautiful soul’ narrative is central to war, and war is central to the building and maintenance of the ‘beautiful soul’ narrative, gender is a lynchpin of war-making, and the war system is a lynchpin of gender subordination (Sjoberg, 2010:67).

The counterpoint to the beautiful soul is the (male) just warrior, the hero, the solider (Elshtain, 1982; Sjoberg, 2010). Sjoberg describes the ideal man during time of conflict as displaying ‘citizen-solider masculinity’, where men bravely fight to protect, and live to up various ideal expectations about the meaning of citizenship within a given nation or ethnic group (Sjoberg, 2014). This form of masculinity is the basis for which men go to war and it is also what shapes their conduct in combat (Sjoberg, 2014).

War efforts both rely on and perpetuate traditional notions of sex as dichotomized into men and women, with gender expectations of masculinities and femininities mapped onto the dichotomy (Sjoberg, 2014:87).

While organised violence is built upon certain gendered relations and assumptions and there is undoubtedly a sexual division of labour within war, most discourse which surround conflict is reductionist. While all individuals experience war in gender-specific ways, it is harmful to typcast. In stark contrast to the beautiful soul narrative is the lived reality of the many women who support men who fight, as well as the countless number of women who actively participate in warfighting (Myrthtinen et al., 2014). Their absence is normatively problematic “because it entrenches and contributes to, limiting assumptions about women’s capabilities, and about their roles in social and political life more generally as well as war specifically” (Sjoberg, 2014:15).

The gender order prescribes that people must meet the expectations associated with their perceived sex. Gender minorities interrupt the gender norms which allow war to operate, and so
they are routinely absent from war narratives. LGBTI persons often face specific exclusion, prejudice and heteronormative violence based on their sexuality or non-confirming gender identities which can be exacerbated both during and after conflict. Hard-line nationalism which often aligns to heteronormative conceptions may seek to exclude or police them further. The enemy in war is often portrayed as non-gender conforming to “associate disorder in gender roles with political disorder and atypical or proscribed violence” (Sjoberg, 2014:94).

Gender differentiation is [also] mapped onto differentiation among the parties that are fighting wars – where belligerents attempt to affirm their own masculinity while emasculating, or feminizing, their enemies (Sjoberg, 2014:16).

Here, Laura Sjoberg (2014) is describing a process of feminisation and it can amount to deliberate attacks upon civilian populations as well as conflict-related sexual violence. Women as bearers and reproducers of the nation can be deliberately targeted, where their sexual victimisation is believed to emasculate the male enemy (Yuval-Davis, 1997).

Historically, militaries and war-making have been dominated by men. A gender analysis of war reveals that its pursuit is tied to masculinity ideals. As Goldstein notes, there is not really a legitimate biological explanation as to why men are the vast majority of the world’s soldiers (Goldstein, 2001). As mentioned above, there is also no singular biologically determined masculinity but rather multiple coexisting social masculinities and neither violence nor aggression can be understood as ‘natural’ behaviour for men (Connell, 2001; Connell, 2003). There does however exist links between specific forms of masculinity and violence, warfare and the act of soldiering (UNESCO, 1997). Masculinities are linked to violence through a process which include social norms that give men access to weapons and a variety of social institutions insinuate and instigate a link between manhood and violence. The work of soldiering is premised on hegemonic ideals of militarised masculinity. Militarised masculinity is one form of masculinity that is typified by a limited set of behaviours, which comprise of gender traits such as obedience and aggression shaped through the military institution and constructed as a result of military training and service (Trenholm et al., 2013). Militarised masculinity seeks and contributes to the accomplishment of power and violence. The army or an armed group is an institution which produces violence, and it is through military service that masculinity becomes violent, as opposed to violence being something that is inherently natural to either men or women (Abrahamyan, 2017).

Subordinated masculinities are those which are considered lesser than and opposed to the hegemonic ideal (Connell, 1995). War narratives also confine men to the traditional gender roles they are expected to perform. Those men who fall short of the masculine ideal are also often concealed within narratives because the maintenance of hegemonic masculinity requires the
dismissal of both subordinated masculinities and women’s empowerment. The ‘Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell’ US policy approach towards sexual orientation and LBGTI persons in military service for example, typified this silencing of non-conforming gender identities (de la Garza, 2018).

The gendering of war is a material reality. It seeks to produce and recreate gender binaries and dualisms through its practices. When war is perceived as relational, systemic and as a continuum we can begin to see gender’s function within it. While gender relations are not the sole rationale for armed conflict in today’s world, they should however be considered alongside economic and ethno-national power structures as some of the prominent causations of warfare (Cockburn, 2008). War is organised political violence which requires organisation, mobilisation and justification, it is not a consequence of natural human nature. In every respect, notions about gender are integral to the making of war, while militaries and war making are core to maintaining the gender order in any given society. Accordingly, gender analysis must become an essential element of conflict analysis.

Thinking about war without gender (or gender without war) is incomplete, empirically and normatively…the existence, definition, causes, practices and consequences of war cannot be fully understood without using gender as a category of analysis…gender can be found at every turn in the practice of war, and therefore should be found at every turn in war theorizing (Sjoberg, 2014:12).

The Gendered Dimensions of Peacebuilding

Peacebuilding is the development of the capacity to manage and resolve conflicts non-violently. (Myrttinen et al., 2014:8).

Just as there are differing conceptions of war, there are differing conceptions of peace. A more limited viewpoint may consider peace as the absence of direct violence (Galtung, 1969). A more expansive definition seeks to address the structural or root causes of conflict with an aspiration of sustaining peace and a more equitable society (Galtung, 1969; IPI, 2017; Langer & Brown, 2016). ‘Positive peace’ requires a much greater scope of policies that encompass “social, political and economic change” (Pankhurst, 2000:3). Feminist scholarship and this thesis align with these latter definitions of peace (Duncanson, 2016; Galtung, 1996). Given that conflict exists along a continuum, peacebuilding “also occurs on the continuum between a social condition of full-scale warfare and peace” (Myrttinen et al., 2014:9). Internationally, there has been an increased focus on the components of peacebuilding, stemming from a consensus that peacekeeping has been unable to meaningfully attend to the root causes of a conflict, or to engage in post-conflict reconstruction and institutional building comprehensively. In UN parlance, ‘peacekeeping’ in its most pure sense is the cessation of conflict maintained through a ceasefire and UN presence, but
‘peacebuilding’ as signalled by UNSG, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, takes a more extensive view of peace into account (Boutros-Ghali, 1995).

As previously explored, gender norms and practices in international relations shape and are shaped by war, but it is equally important to attend to how gender shapes and is shaped by peace (Kimmel et al., 2005; Kronsell & Svedberg, 2012). Feminist scholarship has shown how security, peacekeeping, demilitarisation and peacebuilding are all structured by concepts of masculinity and femininity (Cockburn & Zarkov, 2002; Duriesmith & Holmes, 2019). Dyan Mazurana, Angela Raven-Roberts and Jane Parpart (2005) contend that peace programmes which are not implemented “with attention to gender dimensions of the conflict and post-conflict periods undermine a return to real peace, human security, and reconstruction – not only for women and girls but for society as a whole” (2005:1).

The most obvious political manifestation of this thinking is found in UNSCR 1325 and the broader WPS Agenda. This agenda advocates for women’s inclusion and gender sensitivity in conflict and post-conflict scenarios. The four basic pillars of UNSCR 1325 are participation, protection, prevention and relief and recovery. Participation calls for the “full and equal participation and representation of women at all levels of decision-making, including peace-processes, electoral processes (both candidates and voters), UN positions, and the broader social-political sphere.” (PeaceWomen, 2013:5). Protection calls for “specific protection rights and needs of women and girls in conflict and post-conflict settings, including reporting and prosecution of sexual and gender-based violence; domestic implementation of regional and international laws and conventions” (PeaceWomen, 2013:5). Prevention calls for the incorporation of a gender perspective and the participation of women in preventing the emergence, spread, and re-emergence of violent conflict as well as addressing root causes including the need for disarmament. Address the continuum of violence and to adopt a holistic perspective of peace based on equality, human rights and human security for all, including the most marginalized, applied both domestically and internationally (PeaceWomen, 2013:5).

Lastly, relief and recovery call for “access to health services and trauma counselling, including for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence” (PeaceWomen, 2013:5).

Most peace operations before UNSCR 1325 were gender blind and “failed to advance feminist visions of peace and security” (Duncanson, 2016:21). Moreover, most data previous to this was not disaggregated by gender and so it was difficult to demonstrate how war and violence affected the genders in different ways. The lack of acknowledgment of the real role women play in conflict in conjunction with wider cultural and structural bias has meant the international community has neglected to properly mainstream gender in peacebuilding (Anderlini, 2007; DPI, 2012).
As positive as a WPS Agenda has been to advance the protection and visibility of women, UNSCR 1325 and its subsequent resolutions, 1820 (2009); 1888 (2009); 1889 (2010); 1960 (2011); 2106 (2013); 2122 (2013); 2242 (2015); 2467 (2019); and 2493 (2019) have not come to pass without criticism. A critical feminist lens reveals that they can potentially portray women as passive victims rather than agents of change or even perpetrators, and that there is unhelpful dualistic and binary thinking in its discourse. Dianne Otto (2017) argues that the WPS agenda and potentiality for a feminist conception of positive peace has instead “become captive to the militarized security frame of the Council’s operation” (Otto, 2017:1). Nicola Pratt (2013) finds UNSCR 1325 and its subsequent resolutions to be a “reconceptualization of gender…through a reinscription of racial–sexual boundaries, evocative of the political economy of imperialism” (Pratt, 2013:772). Maria Martin de Almagro (2018) finds that the WPS agenda “is not only about adding women, but also about gendering in racialised, sexualised and classed ways” (2018:395).

The NAPs which it gives rise to “normalise certain subject positions in the Global South while rendering invisible and troubling others, contributing to (re)producing certain forms of normativity and hierarchy through a powerful set of policy practices” (de Almagro, 2018:395).

Although now commonplace within peacebuilding discourse to emphasise that gender does not simply equate to women, peace interventions often continue to perpetuate rudimentary and one-dimensional attitudes towards women and men who are treated as homogenous and unchanging groups (Myrttinen et al., 2014). If most women experience war differently to men, their conception of peace may well be different, bringing to the table new insights of how post-conflict societies and sustainable peace should look. Gendered peace absolutely requires the equal participation and representation of women and yet we must counter any postulation that women, as a homogenous, essentialised group hold a specific set of proficiencies that can guarantee peace. Gendered peace is also required to recognise that men too are gendered beings, and how peacebuilding strategies shape masculinities must be taken into account. As Carol Cohn et al. (2004) argues, “1325 is potentially revolutionary as it could inform our understanding of how peace is conceived, protected and enforced… but for this to happen the focus has to move from women to men” (Cohn et al., 2004:137 emphasis added).

Concerns have been expressed that opening up the gender mandate in this way could encroach on the gains achieved for and by women, but which are not yet fully consolidated. That the space they have succeeded in creating might be colonised. “One of the strengths of the WPS approach is that it is a necessary counterpoint to the generic male point of view, which dominates the traditional conflict and security discourse” (Myrttinen et al., 2014:12). However, if gender is synonymously aligned with women, it then by virtue disregards gender’s relational nature and the importance of bringing men and masculinity into research and analysis (USIP, 2011).
Acknowledging the social construction of masculinities continues to remain peripheral in peacebuilding, although this is slowly being addressed in present day thinking and practice. Acknowledging men’s gender identity, allows for gender analysis that should bring with it a whole host of new understandings and insights to men, conflict and violence (Myrttinen et al., 2014).

Masculinities are not fixed, and this creates opportunities for positive change and reform. They, like all gender traits are actively produced, they come into being only through social interaction. A strategy for peace and for changing masculinities must be an active construction. True change requires challenging engendered hierarchies within peacekeeping and providing specific routes to allow men to enact positive masculinities (UNESCO, 1997). Peacebuilding must contest, “the hegemony of masculinities which emphasise violence, confrontation and domination, replacing them with patterns of masculinity more open to negotiation, cooperation and equality” (Connell, 2001:4). An eradication of all traditional masculinities is not the end-goal as many masculine gender traits can be useful in peacebuilding. Gender analysis for peacebuilding strategies should also account for men who do not commit acts of violence, and those who choose not to participate in war.

When programmes are gender neutral they do little by way of considering or questioning presumed gender roles. When they have attained a level of gender sensitivity they better “recognize the specific needs and realities of men [and women] based on the social construction of gender roles” (WHO, 2007:4). When programmes are gender transformative they encompass “approaches that seek to transform gender roles and promote more gender-equitable relationships between men and women” (WHO, 2007:4).

An authentic gendered approach to peacebuilding means examining men, women and gender minorities alongside the changing nature of their interactions and the intersection of gender with other identities. For example, apart from a limited rights-based approach, the concerns of the LGBTI community are not addressed in any meaningful way in most peacebuilding interventions even though, “the disruptions brought about by conflict, displacement and post-conflict vagaries may well increase their vulnerability in terms of exposure to violence, a further weakened socio-economic position” (Myrttinen et al., 2014:15). Certain peacebuilding work where LGBTI activism is occurring is testing the “traditional notions of a male/female dichotomy” (Myrttinen et al., 2014:14). Accurately moving beyond the dichotomy requires an acceptance of the intersectionality of gender minorities who themselves are not a homogenous group. The specific concerns of the LGBTI community cannot be addressed if peacebuilding measures are narrowly conceptualised.
Jean Munro (2000) analysed gender within peacebuilding from three perspectives. *Gender equality* as an aim of peacebuilding, *gender as an analytical tool* to evaluate peacebuilding operations and *gender as an approach to peacebuilding* (Munro, 2000 emphasis added). Claire Duncanson (2016) in her book, *Gender & Peacebuilding* takes this schema and expands upon it. Each theme can be viewed through the lens of gender relationality. *Gender equality* in Munro’s conception largely refers to the political participation of women and one where gender equality is either a route to, or an outcome of peace. In comparison, Duncanson finds that we should “see gender equality more broadly defined as part of what it would mean for a society to be at peace” (Duncanson, 2016:12). It encompasses both the abolition of material disadvantage between men and women, and between all peoples disadvantaged because of other power structures as well as an end to symbolic subordination of the feminine to the masculine, “the deconstruction of gendered binaries that structure oppression” (Duncanson, 2016:12).

*Gender as an analytical tool* means using gender as a unit of analysis to understand gendered experiences of women and men in time of war, to cast light on the shifting nature of gender relations in the course of, and as a consequence of war and peace and to grasp the differing needs of men and women in conflict and post-conflict periods. Duncanson believes however it should also make visible how gender “structures both war and the peacebuilding project”, making gender analysis an even more powerful tool (Duncanson, 2016:13). For instance, some feminist scholars have cast a gender lens on the neoliberal economic reforms that come hand in hand with peacebuilding projects today to provide very strong critical analysis which demonstrates the negative and gendered impact of such approaches on women specifically (Duncanson, 2016).

*Gender as an approach to peacebuilding* relates to gendering policy and programmes and improving access and ways that women and men can partake in decision-making at all levels. A gender relational approach would further assert that peacebuilding needs to open up further to consider and encompass all identities. The participation of people of a variety of intersecting identities is an essential component of a relational approach to peacebuilding and to challenging inequality. Duncanson takes a firm stand against equating *gender as an approach to peacebuilding* to adding women to male dominated institutions. “It is about recognizing gendered inequality and trying to challenge them. It involves reconstructing masculinities (and femininities) and transforming unequal relations between elite men and women and other subordinated groups” (Duncanson, 2016:14). This idea which rejects the simplistic ‘add women and stir’ approach to masculine institutions as the solution to an unsteady peace, where real resources, capacity building, social services and a fair justice system are also required.

Gender analysis of peacebuilding through the three approaches as outlined above offers an insightful way of studying Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Programmes. It
allows us to use gender as a conception understood both as relational and intersectional to analyse the gendered impact of conflict, develop an approach to gender responsive DDR and as a normative aim for shaping positive peace.

Gender and DDR

Gender-sensitive DDR programming must be linked into the entire peace process, from the peace negotiations through peacekeeping and subsequent peacebuilding activities (Tarnaala, 2016:1).

As discussed above, women’s reality with war is complex and while the discourse surrounding women in armed groups is often supressed, their presence is neither exceptional nor uncommon (Henshaw, 2015; Henshaw, 2017a). Women participate in armed conflict as combatants, women associated with armed forces and groups (WAAGFs) or dependants (UNIAWG on DDR, 2012; UNDP, 2005). Women’s specific support roles are diverse and include spies, cooks, cleaners, porters, translators, radio operators and medics, as well as “wives” and sexual slaves (Mazurana & Carlson, 2004). Women’s motivations, just like men’s, for joining armed forces are also varied (Bouta, 2005). Sometimes their agency is denied through forced recruitment, but others choose to enlist for revolutionary, nationalistic, ideological or religious reasons and to exert their political agency. Women may volunteer if they have experienced or witnessed violence in their community, they may wish to escape economic poverty or achieve a measure of independence not typically available to them given the prevailing gender order (Bouta, 2005).

Women’s presence in armed groups is an ongoing planned process from those who seek to gain from and sustain conflict, and women are militarised to perform in armed conflict just as men are (Enloe, 2000). Along with frontline fighters, support roles are crucial for the maintenance of armed groups, especially irregular forces who lack the typical infrastructure bestowed upon national armies during war. Gender therefore is a key factor in the preservation of armed forces around the world (McKay & Mazurana, 2004).

The international community has recognised the need to engender DDR for some time. In 2004, UNIFEM published Getting It Right, Doing it Right: Gender and Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration, which made concrete recommendations on the gender mainstreaming of DDR processes (UNIFEM, 2004). UN Security Council Resolution 1325 two years later was the first resolution to explicitly reference women within DDR, stating that DDR should;

encourage(s) all those involved in the planning for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration to consider the different needs of female and male ex-combatants and to take into account the needs of their dependants (UNSCR 1325, 2000:3).
A broader recognition of the increasing frequency yet fragmented approach of DDR programming led the UN to later develop a coherent set of DDR standards known as the Integrated DDR Standards (IDDRS), a detailed set of materials to act as a DDR toolkit and training manual in which gender forms an entire module (UNDDR, 2020). In practice, gender thinking within DDR implies acknowledging women as members of armed groups, seeking to protect them from violence and addressing their gender-specific and psychosocial needs post-conflict (Anderlini, 2007; Barth, 2002; Ní Aoláin et al., 2011). This attention to women remains imperative but even today, many DDR programmes remain ill-equipped to provide that necessary support and women have and continue to be underserved (Tarnaala, 2016).

Acknowledging that 30 percent of fighters in many non-state or guerrilla movements are women would require significant change in every aspect of DDR programming, and planners are hard-pressed to make such changes. In other words, they are not significant enough to worry about (Anderlini, 2007:108).

Women continue to be hugely underrepresented on the global stage of international relations and security. One reason a gender focus within DDR is so lacking is because rarely are women included in high level peace negotiations where the specificities of DDR are discussed (UN Women, 2012; Henshaw, 2020a). Even when women are involved in formal peace negotiations, rarely do they enter explicit consultation on DDR which typically involves high-ranking military and commanders of armed groups, further reflecting the absence of women in these positions (Cahn & Ní Aoláin, 2010; Farr, 2003).

There is still an assumption that those who disrupt the processes of DDR and create spoilers are male, meaning that male combatants rather than auxiliary members of armed groups, who are often women, are targeted (K.C, 2019). The entire DDR programme begins with and is designed with a homogeneous male target audience in mind. At the same time, the overall focus tends to settle on disarmament and demobilisation rather than longer-term reintegration efforts (Anderlini, 2007). Given the narrow conception of a combatant, women may be deliberately excluded in DDR planning from the outset, while some female combatants are simply unaware that the benefits of DDR are available to them. Other women who do not have access to childcare for their dependants, or fear for their safety during the process, or the societal stigma directed towards the combatant or demobilised identity may avoid DDR entirely. In cases where admissibility is based on group disarmament, commanders must identify their combatants and women may be purposefully omitted if they are of value to the group and its preservation or are “held hostage” (Ball & van de Goor, 2006:14). Commanders may be unwilling to surrender women if they fear legal and social repercussions for abducting women (UN, 2006b). Female combatants may not hold an official rank in militia groups, they may share weapons or not carry arms at all. As a
result, they are often denied the opportunity to participate in DDR because they do not meet the necessary entry criteria required (Knight, 2008; Tarnaala, 2016). In Sierra Leone, combatants had to present, disassemble and reassemble a weapon to qualify for DDR which actively excluded many women (Mazurana & Carlson, 2004).

The WPS agenda and thinking within UNSCR 1325, is built on assumption of binary opposites while neither are particularly culturally or context specific. The discourse can render men’s gendered identities as invisible, discount women’s potential to contribute to better outcomes in DDR more generally and underestimate the role women play in the continuation and perpetration of violence (Anderlini, 2007). Most discourse which surrounds conflict is reductionist, depicting women as victims and men as the perpetrators of violence. Women suffer enormously and disproportionately in times of conflict, where their bodies are often the sites of violence, but as women are often essentialised in their role as caretakers, female combatants continue to be marginalised within security sector reform efforts. Women in fighting forces do not align with the stereotypical view of women as inherently peaceful (Farr, 2003). Often they are not seen as a security threat or as fitting the traditional stereotype of an armed combatant. Paradoxically, they are either seen as passive victims where they are exploited and overlooked or fail to garner sympathy and support as fighters.

Swati Parashar’s research (2011) into the gender performances of female combatants within irregular forces and subsequent creation of ‘militarized femininities’ disputes the continued exceptionalisation of violence by women and their involvement in warfare. Parashar believes that the imposed binary position of agency or victimization serves only to disallow female combatants the “possibility of any empowerment, joy, fear, vengeance or any other kind of politics…and serves to treat women like objects of discursive practices as we discuss politics ‘on’ them and not ‘by’ them” (Parashar, 2011:167; Parashar, 2011:174). It is often presumed that women who participate in political violence are motivated to do so for personal, as opposed political reasons, or that they have acceded to patriarchal influence. Their agency is denied to them or their violence is understood as a failing in their femininity or other aspects of their identity. “Women do not ‘do’ violence, at least not as autonomous agents or in the same way as men, has been the commonly held belief” (Parashar, 2011:175). When women are acknowledged albeit rarely they are always seen as ‘women fighters’ not simply ‘fighters’ (Sjoberg, 2010).

Former women combatants may find it especially difficult to readjust to civilian life if they no longer identify with traditional community and gender norms, yet they are often forced to resume traditional gender roles by their family, community and local leaders. Due to those conservative social norms, women will often seek to conceal their military past (Barth, 2002). DDR measures
may serve only to reinforce existing gender dichotomies through the social, economic and political opportunities that they provide. Assuming women in armed forces are nothing more than victims underestimates the role they play in the continuation of conflict and their untapped potential to contribute to more successful DDR outcomes (Anderlini, 2007). Conversely, their participation could empower women “to undo the dominant conflict script of their victimhood, making possible articulations of accountability for sexual harms and enabling women’s access to economic distribution and political representation” (Ní Aoláin et al., 2011:205).

We cannot assume that all female combatants will be willing to demobilise, especially if it compromises their personal security.

Women who joined opposition movements as a means of exiting traditional life are often more reluctant to lay down their weapons than male fighters. Coming from societies in which women are often heavily discriminated against or with personal experience of violence, they view the weapons they wield as a direct source of respect, empowerment and protection (Anderlini, 2007:100).

Women who choose to enlist in armed groups, may find their membership brings about identity issues and change in a more profound way as they must assume its hegemonic culture. Women who participate in political violence may feel empowered in patriarchal societies or those which are machismo in their cultural orientation, and which elevates the social positioning of men over that of women. DDR then may be a disempowering process for women combatants, they “lose the prerogatives that their ‘male assimilation’ in armed group provided them with” (Jaramillo et al., 2009:16). Yoana Londoño and Luz Maria Nieto (2006) found that women who fully embodied their new identity during the conflict and as combatants in a way which more aligned with manhood suffered the most upon reintegration as they struggled to reconstruct their identity as women.

As gender relations frequently shift in time of war, for instance in the uptake of non-traditional roles for women, there is an opportunity to ensure improved gender equity during peacebuilding, yet real opportunities for change are often missed, or gender equality regresses (Ní Aoláin et al., 2011; Olonisakin et al., 2011). Gender responsive DDR and other peacebuilding interventions must begin from a point of departure which understands and considers the gender relations context in which DDR is taking place (UN, 2006b). DDR could be used to capitalise on shifting gender relations during conflict, creating new spaces of opportunity to redefine traditional gender hierarchies (Olonisakin et al., 2011). Unfortunately, DDR may also replicate gender bias that is already persuasive in a given society.
In her research into guerrilla gender regimes in Latin America, Luisa Maria Dietrich Ortega (2012) demonstrated how such insurgent movements construct gender relations. She finds the creation of insurgent masculinities does not stem from the denunciation of female combatants, but through a process which diluted traditional gender dichotomies allowing for the creation of a specific comrade identity, which is held in esteem over traditional societal gender-binaries (Dietrich Ortega, 2012:489). Such gender shifts were however transient, with patriarchal ideology left largely intact upon demobilisation (Dietrich Ortega, 2017).

As peace agreements become roadmaps for peacebuilding, the UN Inter-Agency Working Group (IAWG) on DDR (2012) set out how gender responsive DDR must be considered from the point of peace negotiations onwards, which should have gender aware mediators and women as participants. The final peace agreement should have specific gender provisions. Moreover, DDR is costly, especially longer-term reintegration efforts, and appropriate financing for gender responsive DDR should be secured early on (UNIAWG on DDR, 2012). Gender responsivity must be built into the planning, design, implementation and closing stages of DDR though gender mainstreaming actions. Actual implementation requires that DDR practitioners are responsive to gender, that DDR programmes are monitored through gender-sensitive indicators and that gender-sensitive initiatives are incentivised (UNIAWG on DDR, 2012). The UNIAWG on DDR states that there are three broad principles upon which gender responsive DDR is based. Firstly, on gender equality.11 Secondly, on non-discrimination, fairness and equitable treatment.12 Lastly, centred on people13 (UNIAWG on DDR, 2012:9).

DDR programmes require not only the participation of female combatants but should also embrace a gender-inclusive framework which holds explicit attention to gender-specific issues, as well as the protection of women and girls from violence (K.C, 2019). There are many authors and organisations who provide ideas about what gender-sensitive DDR involves. That gendered analysis of participating armed groups should occur in the early planning stages of DDR. That DDR practitioners must directly reach out to female combatants in order to understand their numbers, their responsibilities and the specific benefits that DDR can and should provide to them. (UNIFEM, 2004; Williams, 2015). Once the intended target group has been identified and an adequate needs assessment has concluded, eligibility and benefit information must then reach

11 “The programme recognizes and supports the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women, men, girls and boys in DDR processes. This does not imply that women and men become the same, but that the programme takes into consideration the different needs and priorities of both groups” (UNIAWG on DDR, 2012:9).
12 “The DDR programme discriminate against individuals on the basis of sex, gender, age, race, religion, nationality, ethnic origin, political opinion, or other personal characteristics or associations. For DDR programmes to ensure fair treatment of women, men, girls and boys according to their needs, special measures might need to be put in place to compensate for social or historical disadvantages” (UNIAWG on DDR, 2012:9).
13 “The DDR programme recognizes that people representing different sexes and gender, as well as those of differing ages and physical ability have different support needs. The programme activities have to be culturally sensitive, appropriate and relevant, and offer specifically designed services for each group” (UNIAWG on DDR, 2012:9).
female combatants. Fieldworkers who identify female combatants must be trained to encourage their participation (Farr, 2003; Tarnaala, 2016). Information must target women and be disseminated through a variety of means. Issues such as illiteracy must be accounted for, as should the very remote locations of some armed groups.

Gender consciousness within DDR requires a range of gender-specific health and social services be made available to women (Ní Aoláin et al., 2011:134). Cantonment sites\(^{14}\) which are often involved in the demobilisation phase of DDR are ill-equipped to address female-specific needs and can create specific security issues, impeding women’s right to participate (UNIFEM, 2004). Dedicated facilities for women are required and sites must be secure. Reproductive and gynaecological care is vital. Many women will have been the victim of sexual abuse and rape. They may have borne children during the conflict, had clandestine abortions or contracted sexually transmitted diseases. DDR programming must offer women and their dependants dedicated services, which includes rape counselling, screening for sexually transmitted diseases, childcare, pre-natal, reproductive and maternal healthcare, identity protection, assured security, family planning, counselling and sanitary products (Banholzer, 2014). Rehabilitation and psychosocial services available to female combatants upon reintegration must deal with the emotional trauma of war as well as various medical and mental health concerns.

A gendered lens also reveals how DDR intersects with concessions over human rights violations (UNDP, 2012). Compromises for sexual violence and other gender-based crimes may be parleyed in peace negotiations that women are rarely privy to. This impunity creates specific vulnerabilities for women in the post-conflict environment (Cahn & Ní Aoláin, 2010). Conversely, gender awareness within DDR could create space for women to discuss incidents of sexual violence, present testimony and better link DDR with the wider justice system.

Within reintegration processes, consideration must be given for the non-conventional skills women may have acquired. While needing to be sensitive to the economic needs and realities of conflict-affected countries through labour market assessments; job placements, training and educational opportunities should align with the wishes and particular requirements of different women rather than relegate them to roles traditionally seen as female that are “low-wage, low-prestige” (Bouta, 2005; Henshaw, 2017b:4). In her study of women ex-combatants in Nepal, Luna K.C (2019) found that upskilling of women was neglected as were their formally acquired military skills. Instead, “their feminine roles as mothers or wives were emphasised and welcomed in the post-war context” (K.C, 2019:468). DDR should account for the many women who may

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\(^{14}\) Designated sites for the collective demobilisation of an armed group. The terms ‘encampment site’ or ‘assembly area’ or ‘barracks’ are also interchangeable terms used by the UN (UN, 2006a).
have assumed leadership positions and a range of new skills while mobilised (UN INSTRAW, 2010).

The participation of former combatants in the planning and delivery of DDR can lead to improved outcomes (DPI, 2012). In his research of former combatants of Sierra Leone and Liberia, Walt Kilroy (2014) highlights the exclusion of women and girls from DDR programmes and their specific reintegration difficulties from a social and economic standpoint as one of the most significant problems facing DDR. He found few incidents of a true participatory approach of all former combatants in the DDR process. However, when some participation was visible, outcomes such as work prospects and community relations were more positive. His analysis showed how a participatory approach to reintegration leads to improved social capital (Kilroy, 2014).

Fundamentally, men and women experience and approach conflict and post-conflict environments differently (Henshaw, 2020a). Gendered perspectives within DDR provides space for these differences to be addressed. More generally, post-conflict recovery and the construction of peace requires the participation of both men and women and a gender perspective within DDR supports this aim of long-term sustainable peace. Women are already unequally treated in most societies and DDR without a focus on gender exacerbates this. If the material benefits of DDR flow only to men, the post-conflict economy is distorted.

The aspects discussed above show how vital a gendered approach to DDR is for recognising the experiences and needs of women combatants. Yet a gender relational analysis and approach to DDR also requires making the construction of different forms of masculinity visible. During conflict and in situations of endemic violence a distinct form of masculinity known as hyper-masculinity is elevated. “Violence and masculinity converge in the sociological notion of "hyper masculinity": a masculinity in which the strictures against femininity and homosexuality are especially intense and in which physical strength and aggressiveness are paramount” (Harris, 2000:793). The work of soldiering is premised on hegemonic ideals of militarised masculinity (Trenholm et al., 2013). Banholzer (2014) found that the most credible threat from former combatants emerges from their habitual tendency to turn to violence, the physical expression of their hyper-masculine, militarised identities, where “combatants subscribe to a mode of masculinity that is imbued with a sense of manly physical strength, personal invulnerability, and high levels of conquest desensitised to violence” (Dzinesa, 2008:6).

The demobilization, demilitarisation and reintegration…of former combatants clearly overlap with the production, control, and maintenance of masculinities in conflicted and post-conflict societies (Cahn & Ní Aoláin, 2010:13).
Kimberly Theidon (2009) specifically looked to the militarised masculinities of Colombia’s insurgent groups, where militarised masculinity is defined as the “fusion of certain practices and images of maleness with the use of weapons, the exercise of violence, and the performance of an aggressive and frequently misogynist masculinity” (Theidon, 2009:5). Consequently, she finds that DDR should espouse gender analysis which examines the conspicuous associations between arms, violence and masculinities (2009). Theidon contends that, as certain forms of masculinity are essential to the maintenance of militarism, to “add gender” to DDR means moving beyond just “adding women” by also making visible the gender identities of men (Theidon, 2009:2; Theidon, 2009:4).

Gendered violence does not end upon the signing of a peace accord, rather it can transform and remerge in transitional societies. There is broad-based consensus on the continued pervasiveness of violence towards women in post-conflict societies (UNDP, 2012). "Upon reintegration, male combatants return to communities, and DDR may not account for or consider the violence that these men may bring with them into their homes. “Men [who are] unable to positively manifest masculine roles may return to violent and destructive means of expressing their identities” (UNIFEM, 2004:19). Violence may simply shift from the public to the private and this holds particular consequences for women. “The reassertion of violence in the private sphere during the transitional phases may constitute a form of compensation for male combatants, for their loss of public status and hegemony” (Cahn & Ní Aoláin, 2010:19).

Returning men may also experience ‘traumatic masculinities’ as they struggle to perform the hegemonic masculinity expected of them in civilian life. Often there are few opportunities where these men can focus on their emotional and psychological needs (Myrttinen et al., 2014). Conflict-affected countries tend to be very poor. Wars provide livelihoods and status, when they come to an end, transitional countries struggle to fill the void. Criminality and violence are one way of retaining specific masculinities as well as attending to material needs (Barker & Ricardo, 2005). As masculinities then are closely interconnected with a transitional country’s social, political, and economic outcomes, DDR must include a focus on these masculine constructs.

The success of DDR should be measured against the extent to which it actually reduces violence. DDR must convince combatants not only to hand over their weapons but to reject violence as a form of expression, “integrating the information known about the effects of hyper and other forms of heightened masculinities into the planning and delivery of…DDR” (Cahn & Ní Aoláin, 2010:20). If implemented correctly DDR should “start a process of changing the habits and identities of ex-combatants” (Ball & van de Goor, 2006:4). This requires understanding as to roots of the conflict and addressing inequalities at a societal level. Addressing militarised masculinities upon which war is raged requires deep rehabilitation efforts as well as societal
change. Combatants must be equipped with the tools to express their masculine identities in healthier ways.

As noted above addressing certain masculine constructs is especially difficult in conflict-affected countries when there are so few viable routes through which men can achieve status and assert positive masculinities. Education, employment and social opportunities become very important means for men to achieve this and to channel expression in more positive ways “which are not socially and politically destructive” (Cahn & Ní Aoláin, 2010:21). This further emphasises the need for extensive reintegration efforts which include counselling mechanisms and flexible socio-economic support on the part of DDR. Just as for women, DDR should not reinforce male stereotypical gender roles.

While bearing these theorisations in mind, additionally we must not be constrained by the one dimensional and dominant narrative of men, masculinities and conflict. In Re-thinking hegemonic masculinities in conflict-affected contexts’, Myrttinen, Khattab & Naujoks (2016) note the “relatively simplistic uses of frameworks such as hegemonic, military/militarized, or ‘hyper’-masculinities [where] a large part of masculinities are side-lined in research” (2016:1). They argue for a more nuanced analysis of masculinity, moving past reductionist approaches, creating spaces for victimised men and the study of positive masculinities which can support peacebuilding efforts.

DDR must also remain attentive to intersectional identities and social categorisations beyond gender which can come to impact DDR outcomes. This extends to age, geographic location, ethnicity, disability and sexuality among other markers. The Women, Peace and Security Agenda tends to operate from a positionality of binary thinking which has been neglectful of gender minorities. LGBTI people are not referenced in UNSCR 1325 for example, although the Security Council has more recently acknowledged their targeted victimisation in the context of conflict and warfare (UN, 2015). Theresia Thylin (2018) finds that DDR “policy guidance has failed to include ex-combatants who do not conform to a narrow, binary understanding of gender and make no reference to sexual and gender minorities” (2018:97). This is despite those individuals often facing complex reintegration challenges and “rapid transformations of roles, identities, expressions and practice following their demobilization” (Thylin, 2018:100). Within the context of NSAGs, many LGBTI combatants will have witnessed or experienced targeted heteronormative violence by their own group on fellow LGBTI combatants. They may have denied themselves sexual or intimate relationships or conducted them in secret, fearful always of heteronormative punishment. Others may internalise the hateful discourse about their identity and preferred sexual practices experiencing as a result feelings of guilt and shame.
In a similar vein, Mia Schöb (2016) draws attention to the fact that many demobilised former combatants in the Colombian context particularly are from diverse ethnic minority backgrounds represented often to an over-proportional extent within NSAGs, yet a diversity approach to DDR remains a relatively incidental side issue. She calls for a “more holistic approach to diversity for understanding patterns of inclusion and exclusion in Colombian DDR [and] ethnicity-sensitive reintegration in cooperation with their ethnic community (2016:117; 2016:126).

Another factor structuring combatants different experiences of conflict and peacebuilding is age. Although international human rights law prohibits “recruitment and use in hostilities” of person under the age of 18 and recruiting children aged under 15 is both prohibited under international humanitarian law and defined as a war crime by the International Criminal Court, children continue to be exploited for military gain. The recruitment of minors is an unfortunate reality of war across the world (Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, n.d). Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups (CAAFAGs) require child-centred DDR which must facilitate their departure from an armed organisation, reconnect and reunite children with family wherever possible, provide psychological and psychosocial assistance as well as access to education, reskilling and community reinsertion and economic opportunities. There are clear moral and legal obligations to protect all children affected by conflict, but it is also an important contribution to the sustainability of peace. Children who have participated in conflict often have a distorted outlook on the world and on the construction of the family. Without adequate psychosocial intervention negative longer-term effects for demobilised former child combatants and their receiving communities are more probable and those effects also impact broader economic development and social cohesion within a given region.

**DDR and Gender Relational Analysis**

Acknowledging the complex experiences that women and men have as combatants, engendering DDR necessitates gender relational analysis, which as introduced earlier in this chapter offers a theoretical conception of gender which recognises its relational and hierarchical nature, something which feminist intersectional theory and masculinity studies can provide (Connell, 2010; Crenshaw, 1991). As alluded to throughout this chapter, gender relational analysis is based upon two hypotheses, firstly that gender identities, gender norms and power dynamics are fundamental to peacebuilding. And secondly, while gender is a category of analysis within peacebuilding, to fully utilise its value it must be considered as relational. Gender responsive DDR demands a gender framework which accounts for both women and men as gendered beings
and can consider differences across and within these categories which are influenced by other socially constructed power relations, such as race, ethnicity, sexuality, class, kinship, disability, nationality and age etc. because,

key to the economic reintegration of all members of society are the possibilities of accessing resources, capital and information, as well as being able to secure these. As with access to justice, these forms of access are often highly dependent on factors such as gender, age, social status, marital status and geographical location (especially the urban/rural divide) (Myrttinen et al., 2014:20).

Taking a gender relational approach to DDR would allow us the opportunity to recognise women and all former combatants as a diverse, heterogeneous group with differing needs based on their identity and the specific inequalities they may face because of it. It also opens the space to consider all forms of militarised gender identities irrespective of the individual gender identity of those engaging in the militarised behaviour. This approach means that gender relational analysis now can identify the most vulnerable people in a given context irrespective of their biological sex or gender. It considers all of the social variables which may be impacting upon a person or group’s social positioning (Myrttinen et al., 2014). The framework is also one that is context specific. Seeking to understand how gender roles and relations operate in specific circumstances and environments. In this way, a gender relational approach can move past the more limited and deterministic conceptions of gender which can be perpetrated by the WPS agenda.

The absence of gender mainstreaming is not confined to DDR processes alone and there can be no doubt that enshrining it across the scope of peace operations is immensely challenging. But the drive to achieve this exists “out of a recognition that peace support operations will not be successful until they fully incorporate gender analysis into every aspect of their strategies and approaches” (Mazurana et al., 2005:45). DDR processes have become more gender responsive since they were first conceived, but there is still a gap between gender parity and the experiences of former female combatants (and female non-combatants) in post-conflict countries. DDR must move to close this gap, by ensuring gender-related issues remains at the fore of DDR planning and implementation. Such a gender awareness will better attend to the gendered issues of women and men, harness the untapped potential and capability of women and attain more impactful DDR, improving the post-conflict lived experience of former combatants and their communities alike. Above all else, DDR must acknowledge the agency of women, “they are primary agents in building lasting security. If we want peace to last, we must recognize their power and account for their presence” (Williams, 2015:1).
This chapter has explored the theoretical perspectives underpinning the research namely, the gendered dimensions of the practice of conflict and peacebuilding. The chapter began by looking at gender as a distinct concept and the latest thinking within the field of gender theory. It then applied gender theory to notions of conflict and peacebuilding and specifically DDR.

Gender analysis is an essential element of conflict and peacebuilding analysis. I argue that a goal of engendered peacebuilding is only achievable by moving past the WPS agenda to one where an individual’s complex experiences of conflict and peace can be better encompassed and considered. While gender and peace has traditionally been synonymous with women and peace, understanding gender dynamics and gender relations within war and conflict require us to also locate men and to make visible gender minorities. Masculinities are closely interconnected with a transitional country’s social, political, and economic outcomes as well as proclivity to violence and peacebuilding efforts must include a focus on these masculine constructs. Gender thinking within DDR must move beyond asking if women are simply included to a point where instead we analyse how DDR impacts on all genders and how it may serve to reproduce unequal gender relations and harmful behaviours post-conflict. Gender must also be understood as relational and context specific, we must acknowledge that gender identities are constructed by men and women, girls and boys, sexual and gender minorities together, and in relation to each other, where gender identities need to be seen in the context of other social identity markers (Myrttinen & Nsengiyumva, 2014). I advanced that a gender relational approach to analysis and policy is one means of achieving these goals.

The inclusion of gender perspectives within war and peace analysis and within DDR more specifically allows for more nuanced and effectual understanding of issues, participants, and the subtleties of peace. A feminist conception of peace is peace that is inclusive, expansive and transformative. The feminist conception of peace is something to strive for, and a gender relational approach to peacebuilding makes this ambition more realisable.

The theoretical framework introduced here will be used throughout the thesis to analyse DDR in Colombia. The strengths and limits of its evolving gendered approach to DDR will be assessed and field research conducted with former combatants will reveal their gendered experiences of mobilisation and demobilisation, informing the ways in which DDR processes reinscribe and challenge gendered norms for men and women. On this basis, the importance of adopting a gender relational approach to DDR as a step towards positive peace will be shown.
CHAPTER 2: THE CASE STUDY IN CONTEXT

This chapter provides the background to the case study of Colombia, presenting the contextual information against which the research results and analysis are later positioned. After providing a general country overview and a deliberation on Colombia’s gender and ethno-racial relations, the chapter illustrates the historical development of the internal conflict and the nation’s various attempts to reach a negotiated solution to peace, including the most recent peace negotiations between the Colombian Government and the FARC and the resultant work in progress, the implementation of the 2016 peace agreement known as the Final Agreement to End The Armed Conflict and Build a Stable and Lasting Peace (Final Agreement, 2016). The chapter also considers the gendered dimensions of both the conflict and the peace process. The case study in context provides an understanding of the society from which Colombian insurgent combatants originate and which they must later reintegrate back into upon their demobilisation.

Colombia, a Country Overview

Figure 1: Physical Map of Colombia (WorldAtlas, 2020a).
Figure 2: Departmental Map of Colombia (WorldAtlas, 2020b).

The Republic of Colombia comprises of 1.14 million sq. km and is the fourth largest country in South America. With a population of just over 50 million people it is also one of the most populous countries in the region. Just over 80% of the population now live in urban centres with 7.5 million people living in the capital city of Bogotá (Trading Economics, 2020; World Bank,
Colombia’s GNI\textsuperscript{15} per capita for 2018 was $6,180. It is an upper middle-income country and it has experienced consistent economic growth and human development since the early 2000s despite the internal conflict (Macrotrends, 2020). Colombia is one of the most biologically diverse countries on earth. Second only to Brazil for its domestic biodiversity, Colombia is home to 10% of the world’s flora and fauna species (National Geographic, 2017). A resource rich nation, some of its primary exports include petroleum, coffee, emeralds, gold, bananas and livestock. Colombian topography is partitioned by The Andes Mountains which divides into three separate ‘cordilleras’.\textsuperscript{16} The Andean Cordilleras beget a variety of different climates and environments which have in part contributed to the historical challenges for transportation, communication and state centralised control.

Even with a relatively positive macroeconomic and fiscal standing many within Colombian society live with insufficient resources. “The paradox is that while Colombia’s per-capita GDP and GNI place it in the World Bank’s upper-middle income country category, its poverty, income inequality, infant mortality rate, under-5 mortality rate, and other socioeconomic indicators look very much like those of a low-income country” (Morefield, 2014:1). At a national level, poverty stands at 27.8% but this rises to 40.3% in rural Colombia (IFAD, 2016). Despite its fairly consistent economic growth Colombia remains one of the world’s most unequal societies. In 2018 its Gini index, the most prevalent statistical indicator of inequality was 50.4.\textsuperscript{17} This sits below the Latin American average. In 2018, the top 10% of Colombia’s earners captured 39.7% of its income (World Bank, 2020). Colombian wealth disparity is extremely pronounced while Colombian landownership is also highly concentrated.

Colombia ranks first with regard to inequality in land distribution, followed by Peru, Chile and Paraguay… In Colombia, the top one percent of the largest holdings controls more than 80 percent of the land, while the remaining 99 percent account for less than 20 percent all together (Oxfam, 2017:13).

The historically neglected peripheral regions of Colombia, which include the Pacific coast, the Caribbean coast and the Amazon region often sit outside of the formal economy and it is here where poverty and infant mortality are highest, the provision of public services such as health and education the most neglected, and the population most underserved. While chronic undernourishment rates have fallen over the last twenty years there are still many Colombians who say they lack sufficient food and adequate housing (Colombia Reports, 2019).

\textsuperscript{15} Gross National Income.
\textsuperscript{16} Mountain chains.
\textsuperscript{17} Developed by sociologist Corrado Gini. the Gini index or Gini ratio, is a measure of statistical dispersion intended to represent the income and wealth inequality. An index of 0 represents perfect equality and of 100 perfect inequality.
Colombia gained independence from Spain in 1819 and it is one of the oldest democracies in Latin America. Despite high levels of political violence, somewhat contradictorily the nation has a long tradition of party politics, although particular critics dispute the validity of its democracy during certain periods and specific systems of rule (O’Donnell, 1994, Avilés, 2006). Today, the Colombian political system is a presidential representative democratic republic. It has a strong executive and the President is both head of state and government. After a constitutional amendment in the 2005, the President can now hold office for two four-year terms (Fair Vote, 2010). The Colombian legislature is a bicameral congress consisting of a 102 seat Senate and 161 seat House of Representatives. Members of both are directly elected for four-year terms. Colombia’s former exclusionary bipartisanism political system has been replaced with a multi-party political system although it remains centralised and many parties have been regarded as weak or internally fragmented (Avellaneda & Escobar–Lemmon, 2012).

After a social movement which began in 1988 a new national constitution came into being in 1991. It paved the way for significant reform across Colombia’s political institutions such as the popular election of department governors and mayors while also creating several new bodies including the Constitutional Court, the Human Rights Ombudsman and an autonomous central bank. Known as the Constitution of Rights, the constitution sets out inalienable, fundamental, legal, social, economic and cultural rights, and the collective and environmental rights of the individual. A ‘tutelage action’, an innovative legal remedy was introduced which allows individuals challenge government decisions if they infringe upon individual constitutional rights. It is now the most widely used rights protection mechanisms in the state (Constitution of Colombia, 1991). The constitution defined Colombia as pluri-ethnic to better recognise and protect the multi-ethnic and multicultural composition of Colombian society, allowing for often excluded Indigenous and ethnic minority groups to gain political, legal and cultural recognition (Constitution of Colombia, 1991).

While there is separation of power across the executive, legislature and judiciary as well as a well-functioning Constitutional Court, Colombia’s democracy has been marred by structural corruption visible throughout the various arms of state apparatus. This includes incidents of electoral fraud, political misconduct and abuse of power, bureaucratic corruption, nepotism and cronyism, state capture by organised crime and corruption in the extractive industries (Transparency International, 2013). In 2019, The Economist Intelligence Unit ranked Colombia’s

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18 Cámara de Representantes.
democracy 45th in the world based on 60 indicators\textsuperscript{19} awarding an overall ‘flawed’ democracy rating\textsuperscript{20} (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2019).

The Social Dynamics of Colombian Society

In line with the theoretical framework of this thesis, it is important to also consider the social dynamics of Colombian society from a gender relational approach as this will later come to impact on DDR initiatives. The following two sections discuss Colombian gender and ethno-racial relations.

Colombian Gender Relations

The multitude of gender roles, identities and attendant societal expectations in Colombian society are co-determined by a range of other interrelated identity markers, such as age, ethnic background (including belonging to one of over 100 indigenous groups or the Afro-Colombian community), religious and political background, marital status and the particular urban/rural setting. These different ways of being a woman or a man, a trans-or intersex person, a girl or a boy in Colombia have been affected by conflict and displacement to different degrees, creating new spaces and possibilities but also new gendered vulnerabilities and needs (Castañeda & Myrttinen, 2014:8).

It is not possible to reduce Colombian gender power relations to simplistic analysis or a single configuration; Colombian society is plural and diverse. There are nevertheless certain dominant cultural norms and a hegemonic gender order which has influenced to varying degrees society, and the gendered behaviours and expectations of Colombian citizens.

Machismo is a masculine ideology linked to traditional Latin American society and like all gender systems it is a social structure and socially constructed behaviour pattern (De La Cancela, 1986). Machismo holds some cultural equivalence to patriarchy. It is an exaggerated sense of traditional masculinity, a set of hypermasculine characteristics associated with fervent and aggressive masculine pride and heteronormativity. Great value is placed on traits such virility and strength (Valenciano, 2014). Machismo holds an exaggerated perception of power and entitlement and of dominance and control over women. It also encompasses more positive masculine traits such as, “…honor, pride, courage, responsibility, and obligation to family” (Edelson et al., 2007:2).

Marianismo is the female counterpart to machismo, its binary, feminine opposite. It is the female gender role which initially espouses purity and virginal behaviour and then, upon marriage

\textsuperscript{19} Grouped across five categories: electoral process and pluralism; civil liberties; the functioning of government; political participation; and political culture (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2019).
maternal, caring and nurturing qualities. “Latina women often evidence traits such as submissiveness, deference to others, and self-sacrificing behaviors” (Edelson et al., 2007:2). In Colombian society, machismo and marianismo are not always wholly actualised. They remain however persuasive and influential tropes, albeit to differing degrees across different sectors of society.

The traditional model of the division of power between genders and generations within families and households has tended to be male oriented and adult-centric. In this model, authority is highly valued and represents the capacity for decision-making and guidance, reinforced by the economic power that each person has within the household (Castañeda & Myrttinen, 2014:26).

Traditionally, Colombian gender roles for men and women have been heavily differentiated and families are arranged along patriarchal lines. From colonial times through to the establishment of the republic, a woman’s place was always located in the private sphere as her principal responsibility was as primary caregiver to her children. In comparison, men were the breadwinners and disciplinarians of the family concerned with constructs such as personal and family honour and pride. Children are expected to obey and respect their parents and figures of authority. More modern times has brought about a reconfiguration of Colombian women’s roles and many now engage in paid employment outside of the home, however men’s roles have remained fairly static over time.

In recent decades the shape of family life has also shifted, cohabitation is commonplace, and most children are born outside of marriage (Gill, 2016). Urbanisation, modernisation, conflict and displacement have contributed to this change (Castañeda & Myrttinen, 2014). Female-headed households especially among the urban poor are common as well as other configurations of the family unit, such as extended and non-familial households. These new arrangements hold differing implications, such as sons in female-headed households acquiring power and authority if they become the primary earner (Castañeda & Myrttinen, 2014).

Colombian men and boys are culturally encouraged to foster hard masculinities, and some are socialised in ways which may assist in NSAG and other armed group recruitment. Due to the conflict and high levels of crime and poverty, weapons are a source of reverence, protection and empowerment in some sectors of Colombian society. They are culturally acceptable or at least normalised. Even before recruitment into an armed group or gang, many young men and women will have already witnessed gun ownership and the value placed upon it. Displays of hard masculinities, aggressiveness and control as well as corresponding notions of success and status form an early socialisation of arms with violence and specific masculine identities.

Average family size in Colombia continues to fall and as of 2010, 80% of women in partnerships use contraception. In 2006, The Colombian Constitutional Court allowed for abortion in cases of
rape, fatal foetal abnormality and where the health or life of the mother is at risk. Although a significant step forward for women’s reproductive rights, the strict circumstances under which a medical termination can take place means that 44% of unintended pregnancies still result in clandestine abortions without proper medical care (Prada et al., 2011).

In respect to other aspects of women’s rights, there has been a slow advancement since the early 20th century. Colombia does not have a discriminatory family code and divorce was legalised in 1991\(^1\) (OECD, 2014). Literacy rates are comparable among men and women, but women tend to on average achieve slightly higher levels of education. Women gained the right to vote in 1958, marital rape was criminalised in 1996, and in 2008, Law 1257, the Violence against Women Law was enacted (UNDP, 2011). Law 1257 is a comprehensive piece of legislation concerning intra-familial violence under which “women have the right to health care, legal services, information regarding rights to press charges, confidentiality when receiving services, specialised assistance for themselves and their children, justice and the guarantee of non-repetition of the crimes” (OECD, 2014:2). Through the new Constitution of 1991 women are guaranteed the right to bodily integrity and autonomy as well as to equal wages, education and to own property. Other Colombian laws promote diversity through quotas in public life and electoral lists (UNDP, 2011). In 2013, a National Policy for Gender Equality was adopted which recognised the differing needs of women based on race and other social identity markers and it later led to the creation of a National Commission for Gender Equality (Freeman, 2013). Colombia also has an energetic and dynamic women’s movement and civil society which aims to advance gender justice.

Accordingly, there exists a strong constitutional and legislative framework to protect the rights of women and promote gender equality, however manifestation of this in practise remains elusive, due to slow uptake and specific structural challenges. This gap between policy and practice stems from insufficient resources and monitoring, high crime, instability due to the ongoing conflict, few sanctions for noncompliance or desire for affirmative action and little impetus to change the status quo (UNDP, 2011). In a patriarchal society such as Colombia, a range of detrimental discourses in public and private debate about the role and place of women vis-a-vis men hinders gender progress. Like overall human development, the pervasive gender gap exists despite advances in economic development and Colombia falls behind its regional average for gender equity (UNDP, 2019b).

Gender inequality in Colombian society manifests itself in the violation of women’s economic, political and social rights. While inheritance law is equal, Colombian women struggle to access land where various cultural practices benefits men. Women’s political representation falls well

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\(^1\) A non-discriminatory family code means parental authority under the constitution is shared by the mother and the father.
short of the 30% legal quota and some branches of public administration have no high-level women representation at all (OECD, 2014). The elitist, network-based nature of the male dominated political system form significant barriers which make female access difficult.

Overall, jobs are lower quality for women, and they suffer disproportionately from unemployment. They often work without regular pay as ‘contributing family workers’ in family businesses. They tend to dominate in temporary and provisional contracts and part-time work (Maclaren & Salahub, 2013). The gender wage gap has been estimated at 20%, rising to 50% in some instances in rural regions where it is even more deeply pronounced (Barrett, 2012; OMCT, 2003). Sexual harassment in the workplace is prevalent (OECD, 2014). Men largely do not contribute to domestic duties despite women’s presence in the labour force making the balance of work and family responsibilities challenging.

Colombian gender inequality also reveals itself through sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). Domestic violence is widespread and over 90% of it is committed by men. Most violence against women is intimate and most perpetrators are male partners, husbands and ex-boyfriends (Zwehl, 2014). The Institute of Forensic Medicine found that almost 40% of married or cohabitating women have experienced physical abuse by their partners and 80% choose not to or feel unable to report the crime (OECD, 2014). Colombia has the 10th highest rate of femicide, the most extreme form of violence against women in the world (ABColombia, 2013). Although a new law in 2015 made femicide a “distinct and legally defined crime”, punishable by up to 41 years in prison, it has yet to be adequately applied (Moloney, 2015:1). Access to the public space can be challenging for women and the women’s movement because of the conflict (OECD, 2014)

Colombia’s persuasive gendered violence stems from its deeply embedded machismo culture and harmful patterns of sociocultural expectations, norms and assumptions. Machismo and Marianismo are binary counterparts which can create dangerous stereotypes and as a consequence of that, destructive behaviour. These hold particularly negative consequences for women due to their vulnerability to intimate partner violence. These cultural stereotypes legitimise gender-based violence and those who exercise it. Enduring stereotypes about ways of being a man are obliged to be upheld by some even in harmful ways. Dominant cultural assumptions are substantively enforced in the private sphere. Women are viewed as of a lower social status and those who step outside the parameters of acceptable ways of being a woman have transgressed. These attitudes lead to victim blaming for rape and sexual assault. Offenders are often absent from the narrative as the patriarchal normative belief model shifts the responsibility from the perpetrator to victim. Victims can be ostracised and often, out of fear of reprisals they remain silent (ABColombia, 2013). Relative cultural acceptance of sexual violence against women is
linked to the traditional views that women should be sexually available to men. There is cultural resistance to social sanctions for perpetrators and the investigation of violent crimes against women as well as uneven application of law enforcement. Impunity is normalised, criminal investigations and convictions are substandard. “Impunity acts to reinforce, rather than challenge these pre-existing norms and patterns of discrimination against women, both inside and outside of the conflict” (ABColombia, 2013:1). SGBV has also been directed towards men, transgender people and children. As male-to-male SGBV is so taboo and sits outside of gendered stereotypes where men are considered as perpetrators only, male victims are silenced, this extends also to the idea or existence of women as perpetrators of sexual crimes (Castañeda & Myrttinen, 2014).

Discrimination on the grounds of an individual’s sexual orientation or gender identity is prohibited under the Colombian Constitution and its criminal code. Despite equality legislation, persistent attitudes around the superiority of heteronormativity coupled with poor legislative implementation and enforcement limit their effectiveness and the overall protection of LGBTI people. Access to the public space for the transgender community in Colombia is curtailed due to prejudice and violence, while they experience further bias accessing social services such as healthcare. Sexual heteronormative violence towards the LGBTI community in Colombia is often due to “discriminatory and derogative attitudes linked with moral disapproval of non-normative gender and sexual orientation” (Castañeda & Myrttinen, 2014:9). Sexual violence towards the community “aims to punish them because of their sexual orientation and to reinforce heteronormative gender patterns [or] consists of sexual violence within the context of sexual slavery, kidnapping and forced disappearances” (Castañeda & Myrttinen, 2014:9; Serrano, 2013). SGBV also manifests itself in the context of conflict related SGBV as will be more fully detailed later. The section now turns to explore Colombian ethno-racial relations.

**Colombian Ethno-Racial Relations**

While predominately Spanish speaking and Catholic, Colombia is exceptionally multi-ethnic and multicultural, and has one of the most representative ethnic presences in the region of the Americas. There are approximately 85 different ethnic groups whose ancestry is traced back to Indigenous Amerindians and after the Spanish occupation, Spanish and African peoples and the interactions between all three groups. A nation state with colonial roots, Colombia’s ethno-racial composition and its markedly stratified society reflects this historic reality.

A considerable majority of Colombians, over 80%, have European ancestry. Within this are those considered white as well as the largest ethnic group in the country, the Mestizo people who share
mixed European and Indigenous heritage and form just over half the population. The Mestizo population predominately speak Spanish and were initially based in the Andean highlands and engaged in agriculture before beginning to migrate to urban areas from the 1940’s onwards. As a nation Colombia lacks a strong vocabulary for race and ethnicity. In the 2005 national census, 85.94% of the population self-identified as ‘without ethnicity’ revealing how the majority see race and ethnicity as something external to themselves, instead as rooted in minority racial and ethnic groups through a process of othering. Today, this ‘non-ethnic population’ dominate the urban business and political class in Colombia.

Colombia’s Afro-Colombian population, those with African heritage represent about 10.6% of the total population and are principally based along the Colombian Pacific corridor (Bratspies, 2020). Within this population are distinct ethnic groups such as the Raizal, a Protestant Afro-Caribbean group living on the Archipelago of San Andrés, Providencia and Santa Catalina who speak English Creole; and the Palenqueros, a community founded by escaped slaves and Indigenous persons in Northern Colombia who speak Palenquero, the only Creole Spanish language in Latin America.

Indigenous ethnic groups, the descendants of peoples who arrived in Colombia from 10,000 BC represent about 3.4% of the national population. Within this relatively small percentage is a diverse plurality of about 102 groups with 64 languages (ONIC, n.d). The Wayuu being the largest native ethnic group. Colombia’s Indigenous groups primarily live in isolated or inaccessible areas such as the Amazon, the southern highlands and the Guajira Peninsula. Accounting for less than 2% of the population are other small ethnic groups including the Romani people who form the largest of these groups with approximately 5,000 people. There are also many immigrants from numerous countries such as Spain, Japan, Italy and Germany who have chosen to settle and live in Colombia. In more recent times, Colombia has experienced a massive influx of over 1.8 million Venezuelan migrants across its shared border due to instability in the country (ACAPS, 2020).

David Theo Goldberg (2001) coined the term the ‘racial state’ to theorise the modern nation state as one where race and state are defined in terms of each other. The modern state is formed through racial configuration, classifying its population differentially and hierarchically, and through processes of exclusion it attempts to homogenise the population (Goldberg, 2001). Although homogeneity is ultimately a pretense, heterogeneity is viewed as a disruptive force. The ‘other’ is endowed with racial meaning which act as a signifier of difference (Goldberg, 2001).

Modern states reproduce national identities through specific expressions of race, gender and class and Colombian’s past has produced racial, ethnic, gendered and classist hierarchies which persist
today. Racial and ethnic marginalisation is prevalent. Despite enshrined legal rights the Afro-Colombia population are continually subjected to social and economic discrimination, which hinders their access to resources and their political participation. Afro-Colombians comprise 30% of the population along the Pacific and the Caribbean Coast but over 70% fall into the lowest socio-economic strata. Colombian racism is intertwined with classism and elitism, minority voices are often dismissed as they tend to emerge from the economic periphery of the country where these groups previously settled away from their oppressors. Social and economic status in Colombia is often correlated with perceived whiteness so race is externally ascribed and allocated based on skin colour and social status. Colombia’s Indigenous population have also been marginalised throughout the nation’s history and these groups also continue to face race and class-based discrimination despite legal autonomy status in the Colombian Constitution. Up to 60% of Colombia’s indigenous groups are at risk of extinction and the cultural survival of many groups is at stake (Survival International, 2010).

In a large part due to the conflict and forced migration, Colombia now has 400,000 refugees living in neighbouring countries and 5.6 million internally displaced persons (IDPs), one of the highest numbers in the world (IDMC, 2019). As Colombian citizens, IDPs maintain all of their existing rights under national, international and human rights humanitarian law. Nevertheless, as IDPs remain within a national border they are often in a vulnerable situation of being under the protection of a government which may be complicit in their displacement. The regions most affected by conflict are areas of origin for both Indigenous and Afro-Colombian groups and so they are also disproportionality affected by displacement. Displacement holds particular spiritual and cultural consequences for these groups who are historically and culturally tied to their lands. It uproots communities and traditional social models of life. There is a correlation between displacement and economic interests and many natural resource projects occur in Indigenous areas or highly militarised zones (Oxfam, 2009).

Xeno-racism is a form of racism which bears all the traits of traditional racism, such as the reification and segregation of people but it is not necessarily somatic in nature. Instead it focuses on those who are displaced and dispossessed (Fekete, 2001). The Colombian IDP community is highly stigmatised and exposed to particular protection risks that include forced recruitment into criminality and conflict, trafficking and ongoing threats from displacers. Women and children are disproportionately affected. Family size tend to be bigger than average, with a higher proportion of single, female-headed households. IDPs are less educated than their urban counterparts and poorer than all other Colombians, “99% of people displaced from rural areas to urban areas are living in poverty” (ICRC, 2009:538). The vast majority are from a peasant or rural background and a disproportionate number are members of racial minorities.
Race and gender insect to create systems of interlocking oppressions within Colombian society. Racial prejudice manifests differently for women and girls. Indigenous and Afro-Colombian women are victim to multiple forms of discrimination and social disadvantage due to their gender, sex, race and ethnic background.

Colombia continues to experience violence, including sexual and gender-based violence and femicide, and the most vulnerable groups of women, particularly Afro-descendant, indigenous, rural, lesbian, bisexual and transgender women, and women with disabilities, disproportionately suffer serious violations without State protection or access to justice (Goldscheid, 2020:249).

Afro-descendant LGBTI persons are also “a twice marginalized community” subject to violent social discrimination (WCL, 2019: Executive Summary). These situations are aggravated further within the context of armed conflict. Existing gender and ethno-racial norms and inequalities shape and are reshaped by the conflict.

This section has, in line with the theoretical framework of this thesis considered the social dynamics of Colombian society from the lens of gender relationality. The following section of this chapter provides a historical overview of the Colombian conflict before looking to its gendered dimensions.

The Colombian Conflict

The Colombian Conflict held the dubious accolade of being the longest running internal armed conflict in the Western Hemisphere. For over six decades a multitude of armed actors; far-left wing guerrilla groups, far-right wing paramilitary groups and State security forces have engaged in low-intensity, intra-state, asymmetric “war with class dimensions” (Cockburn, 2007:13). The conflict has had devasting consequences and led to immense and frequent human rights violations against the Colombian civilian population. Between the period of 1958 to 2012 there were an estimated 220,000-260,000 conflict related deaths (CNMH, 2013). There have been tens of thousands of kidnappings, forced disappearances and other human rights violations and atrocities which have been committed by all parties to the conflict, including the Colombian State (OMCT, 2003). Colombia is the second most heavily mined country in the world. Eight million hectares of land has been illegally appropriated through violence and coercion. There has been widespread violence against journalists, human rights defenders and social leaders and the conflict has disproportionally impacted women and ethnic minorities. As mentioned above, Colombia has one of the most acute internal displacement situations in the world and as of April 1st, 2020, there were 8,989,570 million registered conflict victims (WOLA, 2020).
Conflict Origins

A conflict so protracted, complex and expansive cannot be reduced to a singular event but certain underlying roots to the conflict are evident; a historic concentration of land and capital which has ensured pronounced societal inequality; the absence of any meaningful land reform; an exclusionary political system and the repression of political opposition; and a weak and uneven State presence across the territories. Problems have been accelerated by international state actors, multinational corporations, narco-trafficking, criminal gangs and impunity for human rights violations. Together these have created the conditions for the conflict to last as it did.

Colombia’s democratic history has been dominated by two ideologically different but elitist political parties, the Conservatives and the Liberals. Attempts to consolidate their economic and political power led to several violent confrontations and the repression of political dissent between the late 19th century up until the 1940s. After World War II, populist liberal politician, Jorge Eliécer Gaitán who opposed the sitting Conservative Government and promoted ideas of land reform and social inclusion began gaining large popular support. In 1948, during his second presidential campaign for the Liberal Party, Gaitán was assassinated. His murder sparked massive riots in Bogotá known as El Bogotazo22 which left 2,000 people dead. The aftermath of Gaitán’s assassination reverberated throughout Colombia and it escalated simmering violence. What followed was a period of time now known as ‘La Violencia’ or The Violence, a decade of political unrest and civil war in which over 200,000 people between 1948 and 1958 lost their lives.

To end La Violencia, a Constitutional amendment in 1957 instituted a system of bipartisanship between the Liberals and Conservatives, known as the ‘Frente Nacional’ or the National Front. An equal number of representatives from both parties would now sit in Congress while the presidency would alternate between the two parties every four years. This pact continued to 1986 and while it formally ended La Violencia such an inflexible political system severely curtailed formal aspects of Colombia’s democracy. It effectively disenfranchised those who did not support either party. As a result, the political alienation of the National Front fostered its own political violence as any peaceful means for advocating alternative policies was severely limited. The more ideologically radical elements of the Liberal Party and Communist Party inspired by the socialist revolts across Latin America refused to accept the agreement and leftist groups took up arms to advance their cause.

22 From “Bogotá” and the -azo suffix of violent augmentation.
The 60’s and 70’s: The Guerrilla Movements

Historically, Colombia’s marginalised groups have settled in the countries most isolated territories where the organisation of social relations was largely left to those groups. During La Violencia certain independent republics emerged. During the 1950’s and 1960’s with support from the US, the Colombian Government undertook a series of anti-insurgency campaigns often targeting peasant communities believed to be harbouring communists and in response those communities founded self-defence peasant groups (Schöb, 2014). Entrenched societal division coupled with socio-political and economic disenfranchisement culminated in various forms of political mobilisation during the 1950’s and 1960’s. The independent community of Marquetalia was borne from the peasant social movement. The FARC, or Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) was founded there in 1964 by 48 peasants in response to a military offensives in the region. It became a mobile guerrilla force in 1966 and in 1982 a people’s army, adding ‘Ejército del Pueblo’ or ‘EP’, after the acronym FARC (Méndez, 2012; OMCT, 2003).

The FARC claimed Marxist–Leninist beliefs and a political platform based upon ideas of both agrarianism and anti-imperialism, it sought to overthrow the government and establish a communist state. In its early years it was supported by the Colombian Communist Party (CCP) (Offstein, 2003). The FARC “built support for their social and economic programme in areas of the country where capitalist exploitation of workers and peasants was giving rise to the greatest resentment” (Cockburn, 2007:14). That same year, the ELN or Ejército de Liberación Nacional (The National Liberation Army of Colombia) another left-wing guerrilla group rose from university unrest, founded by intellectuals, themselves inspired by Marxist ideology, liberation theology and the Cuban revolution. In 1967, the EPL or Ejército Popular de Liberación (The Popular Liberation Army) was founded by the Communist Party of Colombia or PCC. Despite their urban roots, the guerrilla movements at this time operated rurally and they remained relatively minor organisations with marginal activity during the 1960s (Schöb, 2014).

Throughout the 1970’s, a second generation of guerrilla movements emerged including M-19 or Movimiento 19 de Abril in response to the allegedly fraudulent presidential elections of April 19th 1970. M-19 were an urban guerrilla movement bringing a new dimension and scope to the conflict. As an organisation, they were more moderate in ideology and they tended to carry out visible and emblematic acts of political violence (Guáqueta, 2009). In 1975, they stole the sword of Colombian liberator Simon Bolivar from his former residence and in 1985 they took over the Palace of Justice in Bogotá, Colombia, and held the Supreme Court hostage during the siege.

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23 Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia.
24 The People’s Army.
25 The National Liberation Army of Colombia.
26 The Popular Liberation Army.
27 The 19th of April Movement.
1984, the MAQL or Movimiento Armado Quintin Lame\(^{28}\) was founded. It was an Indigenous guerrilla group based out of Cauca, formed to protect Indigenous lands from hostile attacks by large landowners and the assassinations of regional Indigenous leaders by the same and elements of the state. The ERP or Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo\(^{29}\) emerged in 1985 as a splinter group of the ELN. The Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores de Colombia\(^{30}\) was a political party founded in 1982 which later launched an armed wing.

The internal conflict escalated in the 1980’s. All of the guerrilla groups expanded in size, influence and reach. The FARC modernised and expanded, their strength increasing to a point where they threatened the political status quo. As its ranks swelled, its internal structure became centralised and hierarchical. The military command of the organisation and its most senior political body was The Secretariat, the Central High Command which composed of 25 commanders from seven blocs aligned with specific territories and similar urban structures. There were over 60 fronts which were the subdivisions of the blocs (Méndez, 2012; Colombia Reports, 2014). All members of the FARC were obliged to know and comply with the ‘Estatutos’ or Statutes which defined the internal command and disciplinary rules. The blocs also each had their own internal command norms. Commanders within the fronts were expected to comply with orders from high command. Outside of this structure sat militia members, trained by FARC to provide support and intelligence from small towns; urban militias carried out the same role in larger cities (Méndez, 2012).

In the mid 1980’s, the FARC entered into peace talks and in 1985 agreed a negotiated deal with then President Betancur to demobilise. The FARC alongside moderate leftist leaders formed their own political party the UP or La Unión Patriótica\(^{31}\), but subsequently sustained an extermination campaign by the paramilitaries and the extreme elements within the state and military leading to its eventual demise. Thousands of members and supporters of the party were assassinated, including presidential candidates, members of congress and councils and trade unionists. The FARC used this to justify their return to the armed struggle and responded with territorial military offensives and a large number of kidnappings. This, alongside the growing violence of the paramilitaries led the country into one of its most violent phases.

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\(^{28}\) Quintin Lame Armed Movement.

\(^{29}\) People's Revolutionary Army.

\(^{30}\) Workers Revolutionary Party of Colombia.

\(^{31}\) La Unión Patriótica (UP) or The Patriotic Union was founded in 1985 by the FARC and the Colombian Communist Party. A leftist political party, it came about as a result of peace negotiations between the FARC and the Betancur administration. The party was violently targeted by paramilitaries, security forces and drug gangs leading to the murder of thousands of members and its decline.
The 80’s: The Rise of Paramilitarism and the Narco-Phenomenon

Over its history, the uneven presence of the Colombian institutions across its territories has given rise to power vacuums and consequently parallel illegal structures including NSAGs, local landowners or narco-traffickers have stepped in to fill the void, directly challenging state authority and its exercise of the monopoly on violence, punishment and justice. The 1980’s onwards saw the formation of right-wing, armed, self-defence groups initially created largely as a protection response by ranchers, wealthy landowners and other private interests groups who were threatened by the increasingly powerful guerrillas and death squads formed by the drug cartels. The paramilitary forces originated from these groups and they emerged at the height of the drug trade and rapidly expanded their presence across the country (Gutiérrez Sanín, 2012).

Narcotrafficking escalated alongside the conflict in the 1980’s as drug trafficking provided revenue for weapons. Many of the armed actors from both the extreme left and right began to use a variety of criminal activities alongside drug trafficking such as kidnappings, illegal mining and taxes on production to fund their armed political campaigns. The FARC originally enter the drug trade as a middleman between coca growers who they would tax, and distributors, often acting as security for traffickers, later becoming a full-service organisation (Eccarius–Kelly 2012). The FARC’s decision to involve itself in the drug trade severely damaged it credibility with the public. “The coca trade, which is embedded in capitalist social relations of production, stands in contradiction to the FARC’s central ideological framework” (Méndez, 2012:76). In spite of this, the FARC’s ideology did remain relevant to the organisation and its members. It maintained a political wing focused on ideology education. Membership to the group was considered permanent and members were “required to sacrifice their life as civilians in their commitment to dismantling the Colombian state” (Méndez, 2012). Desertion was considered high treason and punishable by death.

Weak Colombian state institutions failed to adequately respond to the growing narco-phenomenon and drug cartels emerged as international demand grew. Although they lack a specific ideology or political grievance they are hugely involved in Colombian violence. In 1997, the AUC or United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia emerged from a merger deal of local right-wing paramilitary militias (Guáqueta, 2009). It was an umbrella organisation with six regional branches and were heavily financed through the drug trade (Méndez, 2012). The primary aim of AUC was to stop the expansion of the guerrillas and maintain the political status quo, especially local political regimes, by preventing the deepening of democracy in Colombia. They were closely tied to staunchly conservative political and economic forces in Colombia and they sought to guarantee that those dominant political and economic interests would not be threatened.
(Romero, 2000). Unlike the FARC, the AUC used some of their revenue to pay their members a salary and they managed to recruit thousands of members. The AUC would often operate with the tolerance or in collusion with Colombian armed forces. The extent of the infiltration of illegal armed groups into the political system was exemplified by the ‘parapolitics’ scandal involving the AUC where more than 11,000 politicians, businessmen, public officials, and citizens were investigated for their ties to the organisation (Colombian Reports, 2012). Militarily, the AUC lacked the capacity of the guerrillas so used a strategy of isolating guerrilla blocs by targeting support and supply chains. They were known for their extreme political violence and would execute any civilian whom they suspected of having ties with leftist sympathies or whom they perceived as a threat to their dominance. This included human rights activists, members of labour unions, women’s groups and community leaders and they were responsible for large-scale massacres and forced displacements (Tate, 2001).

Throughout the conflict, armed actors have sought to expand the territory under their control to concentrate their wealth, launder money through landholdings and manage drug running corridors and so within the context of the Colombian conflict, human displacement has been a direct conflict strategy as opposed to a consequence of the war. The process of taking land from the poor and giving it to the rich under the threat of violence is known as “violent agrarian counter-reform” (Thomson, 2011:29). This tactic was particularly employed by the paramilitaries. During perhaps the most intense period of the conflict, the early 1980s through to 2000, USAID stated that “armed groups acquired approximately 4.5 million hectares of land, or roughly 50% of the country’s most fertile land” (Elhawary, 2007; USAID, 2010:4).

The 90’s Onwards

In 1991, M-19 and the EPL and some smaller insurgent organisations including Quintin Lame chose to demobilise alongside the creation of the new constitution and some promised political reform. The FARC and the ELN meanwhile continued their military campaign. These collective demobilisations along with the subsequent reintegation programmes of the last 30 years are detailed in Chapter 4 and Chapter 6 of this thesis.

In 1999, then President Andres Pastrana held another round of peace talks with the FARC, while also negotiating for US support for Colombia’s military campaign culminating in Plan Colombia, a multibillion-dollar aid package. Pastrana gave the FARC a demilitarised zone the size of Switzerland as part of the peace process although FARC never demobilised. During the talks paramilitary violence escalated to unprecedented levels leading to massacres and massive
displacement. The talks collapsed in 2002. The FARC launched urban attacks and more indiscriminate acts of terrorism. The significant growth of the FARC in the 1990s is explained as a reaction to neoliberal economic policies and the increasing levels of repression from the state (Brittain, 2010). As opposed humanitarian aid, Plan Colombia supplied military assistance in the form of intelligence capabilities and weaponry, police and military programming and aerial fumigation of hundreds of thousands of acres of crop (WOLA, 2016).

Alongside the policies of newly elected President Álvaro Uribe in 2002, Plan Colombia was criticised for contributing to the deteriorating human right situation in Colombia (OMCT, 2003). Uribe came to power on the back of a campaign which promised to take a hard-line approach to the conflict including the use of direct confrontation. By 2002, guerrilla numbers had swelled to 22,000 members of which 18,000 were in the FARC (Sweig, 2002). Uribe launched his ‘policy of democratic security’, a new military offensive supported by Plan Colombia. He expanded state security forces, trained elite forces, created a network of informants and drew peasants into the army. A state of emergency or ‘internal disturbance’ was declared, greatly expanding the powers of the state. Colombia became highly militarised and civilians were at an increased risk by armed actors. State policy and armed actors had “immersed society in the internal conflict and militarized all aspects of Colombia life” (Oxfam, 2009:6).

This escalation of the armed conflict from 2003 onwards saw widespread displacement, human right abuses and infringements of international humanitarian law. Human right abuses were directly linked to the expanded state authority and military, but acts were committed by all sides of the conflict and included torture, displacement, forced disappearance, extra-judicial execution and harassment of human right activists and countless massacres. The state has itself been implicated in corruption and collusion of public officials, extra-judicial killing, torture, arbitrary detentions, threats and sexual violence. The Colombian military was also responsible for some of the worst atrocities during these years. The ‘false positives’ scandal centred around the extrajudicial killings of thousands of civilians by members of the armed forces who dressed their victims as guerrillas in order to present them as combat kills. There were 2,248 victims of military false positives between 1988 and 2014 (JEP, 2018). The FARC have been responsible for the killing and abduction of civilians, kidnapping and hostage-taking, forced disappearances, the use of child soldiers, forced displacement and the use prohibited weapons, including land mines (HRW, 2005a).

Negotiations for a paramilitary demobilisation began in 2002 and the AUC completed their collective demobilisation by 2006 under the Uribe presidency. By 2008, FARC was considerably weakened and had lost much territory, but that state military victory came with a huge amount of collateral damage. Overall, the majority of killing and disappearances (70%) have been attributed
to the army and paramilitaries and 30% to the guerrillas. During Uribe’s time in the presidency, massacres decreased but selected killing increased. Since 2000, at least 10,000 people have been kidnapped. By the end of Uribe’s reign FARC was reduced to only 9000 members (Saab & Taylor, 2009).

The deaths of several FARC commanders created a crisis of leadership within the organisation. Although Uribe did approach the FARC after the demobilisation of the AUC, these initiatives did not materialise into anything until President Juan Manuel Santos took office in 2010 and began secret preliminarily peace talks with the organisation. In 2012, official peace negotiations began and ran for four years in Havana Cuba, this chapter explores this process and its gender dynamics in the final section. Firstly, however the gendered aspects of the conflict are considered.

The Gendered Aspects of the Colombian Conflict

As made in evident in Chapter 1, gender shapes conflict and conflict is shaped by gender. The feminist conception of war finds its definition expansive. War is relational, systemic, both social and individually experienced and its origins and consequences are gendered (Cockburn, 2008). Gendered relations contribute to the production of conflict and violence, while the practice and consequences of conflict has differing effects upon different gender identities and other social categories of identity such as race and sexual orientation.

A gender lens reveals that women’s bodies can become the sites of intentional violence as perceived acts against the enemy. Colombian women are at risk of exploitation and abuse including sexual violence, torture, harassment and disappearance as result of the Colombian conflict (OMCT, 2003). Sexual violence has been used as a routinised and normalised military tactic in the conflict. All parties to the conflict have used sexual violence systematically to torture, punish, enact revenge and intimidate civilians and communities. Women are often directly targeted if they are seen to be with the ‘other’ side, for their partner’s alliances or for protecting children from forced recruitment (OMCT, 2003). The same set of cultural beliefs and attitudes that drive domestic violence, are linked to conflict related sexual violence (ABColumbia, 2013). The Colombian military is heavily implicated in sexual violence which has especially devastating effects, “when sexual violence is committed by the security forces, the civilian population are left with no authority to whom they can turn for justice” (ABColumbia, 2013:1). There is almost complete impunity for all actors, especially for military perpetrators (Oxfam, 2009).
Conflict related sexual violence must be viewed in the context of “patriarchal systems based on domination and gender discrimination [and also] other factors such as social, political and economic marginalisation need to be taken into account” (ABColombia, 2013:1). This hold specific ramifications for Indigenous and Afro-Colombia women as “these factors combine with historical attitudes linked to slavery and racial discrimination” (ABColombia, 2013:1). These two vulnerable groupings of women are the most at risk of conflict related sexual violence (Oxfam, 2009). Sexual violence has been used by armed actors against civilians but especially against human rights defenders and community leaders. While all social leaders have been targeted for their activism, women’s groups such as the National Association for Rural Indigenous and Black Women in Colombia (ANMUCIC) have been particularly singled out. Female human rights defenders attached to such groups have been kidnapped, tortured and killed (Oxfam, 2009).

Colombian NSAGs also policed wider societal gender norms. Some, such as the FARC violently enforced heteronormativity in their ranks or in the case of the AUC, in the regions and communities where they wielded power (Thylin, 2018; Thylin, 2019). Women were punished often publicly by paramilitary groups if they transgressed specific codes of conduct or gender roles as were members of the LGBTI community. Both the guerrillas and the paramilitaries used child soldiers during the conflict with some sexual abuse taking place thereafter.

Traditional war narratives tend to obscure a messy truth, that women too choose to participate in political violence. Women were involved in larger numbers in Colombian leftist NSAGs which complicates traditional war narratives and the assumed positioning of men and women given the varied roles including combat positions these women undertook. Women’s involvement in the FARC comprised at least 20% to 30% of its membership base, with some estimates reaching 40% (Ferro & Uribe 2002; Gutiérrez-Sanín, 2008; Londoño & Nieto 2006). In the ELN, women comprised 25%. During the disarmament of the EPL and M-19 again 25% of members who presented were women (Bergquist et al., 2001; Darden et al., 2019).

The high proportion of women within the ranks of the FARC led Francisco Gutiérrez Sanín and Francy Carranza Franco to refer to the organisation as “a feminized group—in a quantitative sense” (2017:770). The paramilitaries recruited women in far less numbers than the guerrilla groups perhaps unsurprising given its machismo culture and culture of indiscriminative violence (Medina–Arbeláez 2009). Some women did choose to enlist however, although their numbers were comparative to the guerrilla groups very small. Many of Colombia’s leftist NSAGs also had a sizable presence of ethnic minority fighters. The socioeconomic census conducted on over 10,000 members of FARC during their early reincorporation found that 29.9% identified as an ethnic minority (Consejo Nacional de Política Económica Social República de Colombia Departamento Nacional de Planeación, 2018).
The gendered aspects of Colombian leftist NSAG membership and the participation of women and men in guerrilla warfare is considered in detail in subsequent chapters. While the Colombian conflict has tended to constrict the space for the expression of alternative gender identities it has also created opportunities’ for the emergence of new gender dynamics especially concerning the gender roles and hierarchies of men and women who participate as combatants and members of leftist NSAGs. Through the presentation of the empirical data and the gender relational analysis of those findings, these particular gendered dynamics of the Colombian conflict; the gender arrangements within leftist NSAGs and later within practices of reintegration are taken up in detail in chapter 5, chapter 6 and chapter 7.

The Colombian Peace Process

This final section of the chapter details the most recent Colombian peace negotiations which took place between the Colombian Government and the FARC including its gendered aspects. The peace process between the two sides formally commenced in 2012 and almost four years of formal negotiations ensued. The resulting Peace Accords were signed in late 2016 beginning the implementation of the peace process, now in its fourth year. The peace talks were the third significant attempt in five decades to reach a negotiated, non-violent solution to the conflict. The agenda was based on a signed preliminary General Agreement which set out the parameters of the negotiations. The dialogues were formally guaranteed by Norway and Cuba and were sponsored by Chile and Venezuela. The negotiations took place in Havana, Cuba without a ceasefire agreement in place between the two warring sides.

The peace process has become a global reference for a negotiated solution to armed conflict. In many ways it broke new ground concerning methodology and its use of a variety of legitimacy and confidence building mechanisms. The talks were praised in particular for centring the rights of victims; for involving civil society; for addressing the structural issues of the conflict through the agreement provisions; and for the inclusion of a gender perspective (Herbolzheimer, 2016). Initially, the negotiations were relatively gender blind. This inclusion of a gender perspective was the result of sustained and extensive lobbying from Colombian women’s groups and civil society organisations and the women of the FARC. Their efforts culminated in the establishment of a dedicated Gender Sub-Commission in 2014. The Sub-Commission was mandated with reviewing the agreement to ensure an adequate gender focus throughout, as well as the inclusion of gender-sensitive language. In the end, some 18 women’s and LGBTI organisations spoke to the dialogue table in Havana, as did ten Colombian experts on sexual violence, various international experts.
and 13 former female NSAG members from around the world including Northern Ireland, Nepal and El Salvador (Abdenur, 2018).

The Final Agreement “took an unprecedented step to apply international standards of gender equality to the peacebuilding process [and] establishes the gender perspective as a guiding principle for its implementation” (Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, 2019b:7). As an overall result of the Sub-Commission’s work, 130 commitments centring women are contained within the final text (Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, 2019b). The Gender Sub-Commission was highly progressive in some elements and the Final Agreement benefited from the inclusion of a ‘transversal’ gender perspective across the provisions and recognising the distinct needs of certain groups such as rural women. Furthermore, Colombia was the first country to make reference to the rights of LGBTI persons in a peace agreement (Final Agreement, 2016).

Despite acknowledgment of sexual diversity and disproportionate harm against LGBTI persons, there was no explicit reference to masculine identities (Krystalli & Theidon, 2016). The intersection of race and ethnicity with gender was also not considered in real depth, “there was little reference in the summaries of the eight areas highlighted to the differential needs, experiences, and capacities of women and LGBTI individuals. Ethnic and territorial rights, which are fundamental rights for Indigenous and Afro-descent populations, are not mentioned in these summaries” (Bouvier, 2016:1).

A joint communication from the Government and the FARC during the process acknowledged that sustainable peace in Colombia was not possible in a society where gender injustice and apathy to difference remained prevalent and the Sub-Commission assured the following; access to and formalisation of rural properties in equal terms; the economic, social and cultural rights of women and people with diverse sexual identity from the rural sector; the promotion of women’s participation in representation spaces, decision-making and conflict resolution; the prevention and protection measures to address specific risks for women; access to the truth, justice and guarantees of non-repetition; public recognition, non-stigmatisation and dissemination of the work carried out by women as political subjects; institutional management aimed at strengthening women’s organisations and LGBTI movements for their political and social participation; and information systems disaggregated by gender (Las delegaciones del Gobierno Nacional y las FARC-EP, 2016). As noted by Camille Boutron (2018), “no peace agreement had ever gone so far in the inclusion of a gender perspective since the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325” (Boutron, 2018:116). From this perspective the Colombian Peace Process made significant advancements in the area of a gendered peace.
The final peace agreement is broken down into six primary ‘points’ or agreements. Point 1, ‘Towards a New Colombian Countryside: Comprehensive Rural Reform’ addresses the issue of land, land restitution and rights, technical and financial support for small farmers and rural development programmes to end extreme rural poverty. Point 2, ‘Political Participation: A democratic opportunity to build peace’ aims to deepen Colombian democracy by opening up political space. It guarantees the fair and safe participation of FARC in political life as well as other political opposition groups and movements and protection measures for leftist groups and human rights defenders. This second chapter is the key agreement in the political reintegration of the FARC. Point 3, ‘End of the Conflict’ concerns the disarmament, demobilisation and social and economic reincorporation of the FARC which is discussed in detail in chapter 4 (Final Agreement, 2016; Presidencia de la República, 2016).

Point 4, ‘Solution to the Illicit Drugs Problem’ describes a national programme for the substitution of illicit crop cultivation. Overall, the approach takes a less oppressive stance towards coca farmers than past anti-narcotic efforts, alongside a more assertive approach to targeting drug traffickers. Point 5, ‘Agreement Regarding the Victims of the Conflict: “Comprehensive System for Truth, Justice, Reparations and Non-Recurrence”, including the Special Jurisdiction for Peace; and Commitment on Human Rights’, created the transitional justice framework which includes two primary mechanisms, a justice tribunal and a truth commission both to be administered by a new agency known as the Special Jurisdiction of Peace (JEP). The tribunal takes charge of investigations, prosecutions and sentencing of all war crimes. The FARC former combatants not under investigation for such crimes present to an amnesty chamber before beginning a variety of reincorporation programmes that simultaneously support victims of the conflict. Point 6, ‘Implementation, Verification and Public Endorsement’ sets out the means to ensure the implementation of the agreement as well as the verification and measurement instruments to be used throughout (Final Agreement, 2016; Presidencia de la República, 2016).

Although a gender focus made its way to the negotiating tables in 2014, the voice of Colombia’s ethnic minority populations was included even later, and it was again the result of sustained lobbying by civil society groups. In 2015, the Afro-Colombian Peace Council (CONPA) joined forces with the National Indigenous Organization of Colombia (ONIC) and the Traditional Indigenous Authorities of Colombia to create an Ethnic Commission for Peace and Defence of Territorial Rights. The group then launched a global awareness campaign and in June 2016, was formally invited to the discussions. An ethnic chapter was included in the Final Agreement dedicated to their interests, although it sits outside of the six primary ‘points’. Its aim is to ensure that the rights of Colombian ethnic minorities are safeguarded and to state that a High-Level Ethnic Commission would be established to confirm the participation of ethnic minorities in the
implementation of peace. Although concise this was “a historic achievement for a sector of Colombian society that is often excluded and acutely suffers from the legacies of colonialism and slavery” (Sánchez-Garzoli, 2016:1).

The Final Agreement was signed on September 26th, 2016, but in October 2016, the public voted against peace with the FARC through a public referendum or plebiscite. It narrowly failed to pass by a small minority just 0.4%. Voter turnout was low at just 37% and regions which voted no tended to be those least affected by the conflict once again demonstrating the strong urban-rural divide which exists in Colombia. The polls had suggested a comfortable win for President Santos and the peace deal. It was a serious and shocking blow to the legitimacy of the Peace Accords and abruptly stopped a peace process that had only begun a few days earlier. Figure 3 below shows the results of the plebiscite across the various Colombian Provinces.

![Figure 3: Referendum on the Colombian Final Agreement. Results across Colombian Provinces (BBC, 2016).](image)

The result of the plebiscite ultimately revealed how many Colombian citizens were unhappy with certain guarantees made to the FARC, including the absence of custodial sentences for those members not guilty of crimes against humanity. It also brought to the surface the deep resentment the nation felt towards the armed organisation. Some felt that an agreement had been committed to without sufficient national consultation. There was a high level of absenteeism and while the ‘Yes’ campaign was disjointed and overly confident, the ‘No’ campaign ran a powerful but misleading discourse which in part, centred on the notion that the agreement was going to subvert the fundamental nature of the Colombian traditional family structure and promote in its place, an
alternative “gender ideology” through a definition of gender which included sexual diversity. In reality, the agreement merely reaffirmed the constitutional rights of all Colombian citizens and the disproportionate effect the conflict has had on some groups. It deliberately avoided topics such as same-sex marriage and adoption, seen as outside of the scope of the peace process (FARC-epaece, 2016). The ‘No’ side was led by former President Uribe and other vested interests such as land and business owners, conservative religious groups including the evangelical church and it was very efficient in its campaign.

To save the deal, President Santos consulted with opposing groups and 41 days later on November 12th, 2016, a new agreement with several modifications was formally announced and was published two days later. “Several mentions of gender were subsequently nuanced in the final version, particularly concerning the references to the diversity of sexual orientations” (Boutron, 2018:116). This new deal avoided a public vote and was ratified through Congress and the implementation of peace commenced for a second time.

In total, 13,577 former combatants have been accredited as demobilised (United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, 2020a). The UN received over 9,000 weapons and today, the FARC as an illegal armed guerrilla insurgency no longer exists. The FARC remobilised as a legal political party in September 2017 and participated in national elections in March 2018. They performed poorly at the polls and faced political harassment during the campaign, but they fielded 74 candidates. Keeping their original acronym, they are today still known as FARC which now stands for Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común. Through the peace deal, FARC’s new political party are guaranteed ten political seats in the Congress of Colombia, five in the Senate and another five in the House of Representatives. In July 2018, ten former members of the armed group filled those seats. The FARC is also continuing with their social and economic collective reincorporation, which is explored comprehensively chapter 4, chapter 6 and chapter 7.

Aside from the dissident FARC, today The National Liberation Army or ELN is the last remaining active guerrilla group in Colombia, thus far efforts to bring about a peace agreement that could lead to their demobilisation have been unsuccessful. While there has been a decline of violence, today it remains difficult to wholly categorise Colombia as a post-conflict nation as other armed groups continue to operate across various territories including the ELN, paramilitary structures and BACRIM. Key challenges and issues continue to impact negatively upon the realisation of peace and the provisions of the agreements. These include a limited state response

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32 The Revolutionary Alternative Common Force.
33 BACRIM stands for Bandas Criminales or criminal bands in English. These are criminal organisations involved in drug trafficking and other illicit economics (McDermott, 2020). According to Insight Crime, all but one of the BACRIM have their roots in the AUC (Insight Crime, 2014).
to filling the power vacuums left by the FARC’s withdrawal and the continued existence of paramilitarism, ongoing armed conflict with other armed actors, political polarisation and inefficiency.

President Iván Duque Márquez, the candidate from the Democratic Centre Party and a conservative former senator came to power in August 2018, supported by former President Uribe, his campaign centred on an opposition to many aspects of the peace deal. The country has experienced violent opposition to crop subsitution from drug traffickers as well as targeted political violence against supporters of the peace deal including social leaders and human right defenders. As of December 30th, 2019, there had been 303 verified murders of human rights defenders and social leaders since the peace agreement (UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2019). Displacement of civilians continues in some regions, a further 101,499 people declared themselves as displaced in 2019 alone (Unidad Victims, 2020).

An estimated 2,500 FARC dissidents also remain operational, a number up from an estimated 800-1,500 who did not participate on the original peace process, due to new recruitment and some recidivism (US State Department, 2019). Today FARC dissidents comprise of 23 small groups who lack a national command structure but operate as small guerrilla armies trying to maintain control over abandoned territory and various criminal rackets in their regions (Ávila, 2020). There has also been an increasing number of assassinations of former FARC combatants. As of March 26th, 2020, 192 have been killed with a further 13 disappearances and 39 attempted homicides since the peace deal began (Misión de Verificación de las Naciones Unidas en Colombia, 2020). This is a homicide rate 15 times greater than the national overall rate (El Tiempo, 2020a). These multiple issues challenge an already fragile peace.

That being said, in April 2019, the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies (2019a) the primary institute tasked with the technical verification and monitoring of implementation of the peace agreement stated that implementation was progressing in a comparable manner to other peace agreements. “More than two thirds of the commitments in the accord have been initiated, and more than one-third have been completed or have achieved substantial progress” (2019a:1). It further reported that Point 3 of the accords, concerning the end of the armed conflict and FARC’s transition to a democratic political party has achieved some of the highest levels of implementation. Ultimately, effective implementation of the Peace Agreement will require ongoing sustained, long-term commitment and solutions by both national and territorial governments irrespective of partisan politics, as well as the inclusion of civil society (Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, 2019a).
Unfortunately, the rate of initiation and implementation of gender-specific stipulations of the peace agreement has also been cause for concern. “Stipulations without a gender perspective have been completed at 5 times the rate of stipulations with a gender perspective” (Cossette & Perez, 2019:1). Despite more progress in certain areas, such as within Point 5 of the Accords concerning the rights of victims, as a whole “as of August 2019, 42% of these gender commitments have not been initiated, compared to 27% non-initiation of the general commitments… Furthermore, among those that have been initiated, fewer gender commitments have been fully implemented compared to general commitments in the Accord” (Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, 2019b:11).

Notwithstanding these implementation challenges, the negotiations in Havana were distinctive in terms of the degree of participation of women, including of female former combatants who are traditionally underrepresented in high level peace talks (UN Women, 2012; Henshaw, 2020a). Farianas comprised 40% of the FARC team by the end of 2015 (Bouvier, 2016; Henshaw, 2020a). This stands in contrast to the Colombian peace negotiations of the 1990’s where the participation of female guerrillas was lacking, despite their significant presence and importance in those guerrilla movements. Jessica Trisko Darden, Alexis Leanna Henshaw and Ora Szekely (2019) contend that the shift in approach and willingness to engage with women at this level of peacemaking is the result of a convergence of several factors, including UNSCR 1325, attention from women’s organisation at the international level and from the growing influence of Colombian women’s peace groups. These dynamics later supported the inclusion of a strong gender approach. How the existence or otherwise of equal representation and a gender focus carries through to Colombian DDR processes is explored in the subsequent chapters of this thesis.

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This chapter has provided the contextual information in which the research findings are situated. This chapter has delivered a detailed outline of the case study of Colombia. It firstly provided a general country overview and then a discussion of Colombian social dynamics, including the nation’s gender and ethno-racial power relations. Colombia as a formal colony has produced racial, ethnic, gendered and classist hierarchies which persist today. Dominant cultural norms such a machismo dictate acceptable ways of being for men and women and it can also manifest itself in harmful patterns of behaviour. The chapter then detailed the historical development of the internal armed conflict and the various attempts to reach a negotiated solution to the conflict and to peace over the last six decades. The final section discusses the most recent peace process between the Colombian Government and the FARC, the implementation of which despite many
challenges is still ongoing today. The gender dynamics of the conflict and the peace process have also been introduced and will be explored from the perspective of leftist NSAG members in the subsequent thesis chapters.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Chapter 1 explored the theoretical perspectives underpinning this research, namely the gendered dimensions of the practices of conflict and peacebuilding. Chapter 2 then provided an overview of the case study in context, including the social dynamics of Colombian society, the historical background of the internal conflict, attempts to reach a negotiated solution and the gendered dimensions of each. This chapter 3 now presents the research methodology, looking first to the selected theoretical framework and how it informs the methodological approach and then to the practical methods and techniques applied to data collection, analysis and interpretation. After a comprehensive description of the research process, the chapter concludes with a section on ethics, working in conflict and post-conflict regions and working with former combatant populations and lastly, the role of the researcher through reflexive writing.

Theoretical Approach

Chapter 1 presented feminist and gender theoretical thought as applied to the field of peace and conflict. The chapter detailed gender, intersectionality and masculinity studies theories as well as the notion of gender as a relational concept. My approach to the research process was strongly informed by the central principles guiding feminist methodology and the idea of gender as a relational concept. This led me to adopt a specific feminist approach, gender relational analysis which emanates from the scholarship presented in chapter 1. This section provides an overview of feminist methodology and specifically gender relational analysis in more detail.

Feminist methodology denotes research and theory which is conducted from an overt feminist standpoint. It first emerged as an oppositional response to the dominant, masculinist approach within the scholarly production of knowledge. Established methods were seen to promote stances and values not representative of women and instead advocated for men’s privileges while perpetrating their continued appropriation of academia. Feminist methodology opposes prevailing conceptions of gendered social life alongside assertions of gender neutrally. It strives to critically examine entrenched narratives as well as the means and methods of knowledge production (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002). While numerous, feminist methodologies do exhibit certain mutual characteristics.

A feminist approach to methodology examines the relationship between researcher and research participant while centring environment and context in a way that moves beyond other formal methodologies (Kovats–Bernat, 2002). Identifying power inequalities within the research process becomes a central tenant within the methodological approach (Gorelick, 1991). According to
Ramazanoglu & Holland (2002) research claiming to be feminist must leverage feminist theoretical thought and further the aims of gender equality as a direct consequence of its knowledge production, but not at the expense of other socially constructed power relations.

Research projects can be thought of as feminist if they framed by feminist theory and aim to produce knowledge that will be useful for effective transformation of gendered injustice and subordination. This does not however demand an exclusive focus on women or even gender as a sole power relation, the numerous interrelations of gender with, for example, racialized power, heterosexism, the effects of capitalism or disability, complicate any study that is focused exclusively on gender. Gender relations are difficult to separate in practice for other power relations (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002:147).

Feminist methodology therefore must remain attentive to intersectionality and illustrate how social categories other than gender such as race, class, ethnicity, sexuality, nationality, age and geography are interconnected, resulting in intersecting oppressions and discrimination (Collins, 2000; Yuval–Davis 2006).

Feminist methodology as presented by Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian (2010) encourages scholarly research to analyse the habitually silenced voices of women so rendering them visible despite a ‘politics of invisibility’. She asks us to challenge the victimhood narrative which tends to surround women and rather, “look carefully at the ways in which women locate themselves in the meanings they attribute to their experiences…document women’s resistances and struggles against power relations, in their daily acts and strategies of survival” (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2010:4). I adopted this idea in my approach to insurgent women who are often systematically portrayed as coerced individuals without political agency. I was aware for instance of the importance that a personal act of defiance such as NSAG enlistment can hold for an individual as an act of direct personal resistance even though it may not directly threaten the dominant gendered order (Gledhill, 2000).

This project is a feminist research endeavour through the application of theory which acknowledges gender as a power relation under observation but not in isolation. Although gender remains the defining category of analysis the research is attentive to the dynamism and multiplicity of power relations within social life. All NSAGs in Colombia operate within a sphere of both gendered, racialised and local contexts (Méndez, 2012). The experience of women former combatants for example, may differ across geographic, class and education lines and not just in relation to their male counterparts.

This research is a feminist research project in the sense described here and its focus on women’s voices, yet it pushes beyond a focus that equates gender to women by adopting a gender relational approach. Gender relational approaches are inspried by the feminist concern for revealing gendered power inequalities and hold a normative aim of transforming women’s lives however
by including the relational element of gender, a focus on the power interplays between men and women and the constructions of masculinities, men and other important markers of diversity are also considered within the analysis. Designed specifically to be applied to peacebuilding research and practice, gender relation analysis as described below is highly applicable to this research.

Gender Relational Analysis

Gender Relational Analysis as a practice strives to provide further insight and understanding of gender in peacebuilding (Naujoks & Myrttinen, 2014). It holds an overall normative aim which is the establishment of gender-relational peacebuilding where “peacebuilding incorporates gender as a ‘relational’ concept” (Naujoks & Myrttinen, 2014:6). As a methodological approach it was originally developed through research conducted by International Alert and has since been applied to several research projects by the organisation (Naujoks & Myrttinen, 2014).

As mentioned in chapter 1, the framework is based upon two hypotheses. The first, that gender identities, gender norms and other power dynamics are fundamental to peacebuilding, the second that for gender to be fully utilised as a category of analysis within peacebuilding it must be considered as a relational concept. Context is also highly considered.

The ‘relational’ view of gender understands that both men and women lead gendered lives, coloured by age, class and other identities. Gender relations vary from one context to another: the political, socio-economic and cultural dimensions of the context concerned, as well as its historical and geographical positioning, combine to produce varied patterns of gender relations. Masculine and feminine identities are created in relationship with and against each other, within the context of the whole of society (Naujoks & Myrttinen; 2014:6).

This relational view of gender is central to the methodological approach and considered within its methodological assumptions:

1. Gendered approaches to peacebuilding need to take account of the different roles, norms, expectations, opportunities, needs and vulnerabilities faced by women, men, girls, boys and transgender and intersex persons.
2. Gender identities need to be seen in the context of other social identity markers such as age, class, disability, ethnic background and marital status.
3. Gender identities are constructed by men and women, girls and boys, sexual and gender minorities both together and in relation to each other.

(Adapted from Myrttinen & Nsengiyumva; 2014:5)
The application of gender relational analysis demonstrates how certain groups of former combatants face specific vulnerabilities. Moreover, not all armed groups construct, maintain and reproduce gender relations in the same way. How various NSAGs in Colombia militarised the femininities and masculinities of their members to ready them for war and ensure they carried out their roles varies across groups. Each have their own set of informal and formal policies and conscious and unconscious gender norms. Such groups intentionally construct the individual and collective identity of their members through specific organisational tools and through the practice of warfare. Women are militarised to perform in conflict situations just as men are and likewise, the process through which this occurs and what behaviours are expected of them often varies.

These differences represent distinct militarized femininities which maintain aspects of traditional gender relations while transforming others according to the needs of the organization in question. The transformation of gender identities in each of the armed groups reveals the performative nature of gender roles in a militarized context (Méndez, 2012:ii).

Consequently, this research recognises that reintegration efforts must be cognisant not only of the individual but of their former NSAG and the gender relations constructed therein.

**Methodological Approach**

I have presented feminism and within this, gender relational analysis, as the framework guiding the methodology. Given this, to perform the practicalities of data collection and data analysis, a phenomenological methodological approach and feminist research practices were employed. Phenomenology is concerned with the study of lived experience of a specific event from the perspective of the individual and “the commonality of a lived experience within a particular group” (Chamber, 2013:1; Neubauer et al., 2019). The approach offers insight into how an individual, in a given context, makes sense of a certain phenomenon of personal significance (Langdrige, 2007). Using this approach means that interview participants must have first-hand knowledge of the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell, 2013).

I applied a phenomenological method because I believed it to be particularly suited to the aims of the research; it would allow me to understand the individual experience of leftist NSAG membership and reintegration and what comes to influence that experience before then moving to interpretation (Creswell, 2013). When this interpretive element is appended to a phenomenological method of research it allows the analysis to support practical theory or policy.
The approach also aligns well with feminist methodological principles and feminist research methods because from an epistemological perspective it sits within a framework of subjectivity, which values and trusts personal perspective and insight (Lester, 1999). It can also challenge pre-existing normative and structural assumptions by placing personal experience and perspective centre-stage; it gives voice to participants, recognises agency and renders visibility. Both phenomenological and feminist research methods focus on gathering data through inductive methods which include interviewing and participant observation both of which were used in this instance and are elaborated on below.

The Field Research

The research undertakes a gender relational analysis of Colombia’s DDR programmes from a time period between 1989 to 2020 from the perspective of participating individuals. The various programmes under investigation are detailed in chapter 4.

Most of the data collection took place over two phases of field research together totalling a nine-month period spent living in Colombia. Phase one occurred from January 2017 to May 2017 and phase two, from October 2017 to February 2018. Data collection was primarily achieved through semi-structured interviews. Additionally, I engaged in participant observation and textual analysis of primary documentation, in this instance photographs taken when in the field.

Sampling Strategy and Selection Criteria

The research necessitated that I apply a non-probability, purposeful sampling strategy. Non-probability sampling occurs when the sampling method does not consist of random selection, but rather subjective judgment drawn from theory and practice. It is commonly used in qualitative and applied social research where random sampling is unfeasible and may not even be theoretically prudent (Lærd, 2012).

A sampling frame is the catalogue of constituents, individuals or otherwise which make up an entire population, in this instance it is every person from a Colombian leftist NSAG who has participated in a Colombian DDR programme or self-demobilised (Ochoa, 2017). Sampling units are the individual constituents in a population. Non-probability sampling can be subdivided into convenience sampling and purposive sampling (Lærd, 2012). The sampling I undertook was purposive as my defined sample units, the individuals I interviewed from the reintegrating population were purposefully selected to form the sample (Ochoa, 2017). Furthermore, I set out with predefined groups in mind based on specific selection criteria (Trochim, 2020).
Selection criteria is the criterion on how specific units or individuals are chosen. It is based on hypotheses and suppositions made about the population (Ochoa, 2017). Given the geographic complexity of Colombia, the dynamics of its conflict and presence of multiple reintegration programmes, I wanted to interview individuals who demobilised from various leftist NSAGs and from as many regions as realistically feasible, bearing in mind safety, resource, time and access constraints which comes with choosing Colombia as a case study.

In line with a gender relational analytical approach, I needed to interview both women and men. The relational aspects of gender meant that I also sought where possible to make space for the inclusion of perspectives across ethnic, class and education lines and the rural/urban divide. It was with these broad categories in mind that I began the process of accessing a sample.

Ultimately, the sampling strategy for this project was idiographic in nature which sits well within the intentions of a phenomenological study, “the aim being to gather detailed information about the experience of a fairly specific group, on a fairly specific topic” (Langdridge, 2007:110).

**Sampling Access and Contact Methods**

The research utilised two categories of sampling techniques within purposive sampling; snowball and expert sampling (Trochim, 2020). From the outset I was aware that accessing interview participants may be of concern. Members of the Colombian former combatant population have spoken before about the consequences of revealing themselves and their past lives publicly. They have been targeted in acts of revenge by their own former organisation as well as by other NSAGs. I was also aware of the potentiality of research fatigue within certain sectors of the former combatant population, especially those who demobilised some years ago and may have previously acted as research subjects. Research fatigue occurs when certain groups of people become disproportionately represented as research subjects or ‘over-researched’ (Clark, 2008; Osborne, 2015). While accessing a sample was at times challenging, ultimately these two initial concerns did not hinder the final sample size or the dataset which was considerable in the end.

The sensitivity of my research topic required that I build my sample gradually. Accessing willing participants came from participant referrals where past participants recommended future subjects from personal acquaintances or their own professional network. Additionally, I met many participants after gaining the confidence of certain gatekeepers who provided trusted introductions (Mason, 2002). A snowball sampling is used “when samples with the target characteristics are not easily accessible… Snowball sampling can be effectively used to analyse vulnerable groups or individuals” (Naderifar et al. 2017:2).
Expert sampling involves sampling individuals with proficiency and specific expertise in a given area in order to elicit their opinions. It is a subcase of purposive sampling (Trochim, 2020). Those who lent their professional opinion to this work included local NGO leaders, think tank and INGO employees, reintegration professionals, journalists, research analysts and academics; all of whom shared a knowledge and understanding of specifics aspects of the phenomenon under investigation.

Although they have not been double counted in the dataset, I identified five former combatants from leftist NSAGs, three women from M-19 and one man and one woman from the EPL, who were also experts in the areas of gender, peacebuilding or DDR. These participants became extensively involved in one or more of those expert sectors through career choices later in life. Several others former combatants were also very well versed on a variety of topics central to the research.

I accessed both former combatants and key informants through snowball sampling. In Bogotá, an investigative journalist put me in contact with a former member of the FARC after we met to discuss my work. A contact from the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs supported introductions within the UN and EU missions based in Colombia. That contact from the UN later introduced me to some key informant interview participants in the Tumaco region. I met two former M-19 members after reaching out to the National Network of Women Ex-Combatants of the Insurgency online. They in turn referred me to other women in their network. During one field trip I started chatting to a local man in a small town in the Department of Tolima who mentioned his wife was receiving reintegration benefits and living north of Bogotá, having left the region for her own personal safety. He arranged for me to meet and interview her. While living in Bogotá, I attended multiple conferences and seminars concerning DDR and the Colombian Peace Process more generally and I would often meet key informants here. I interviewed a DDR expert and academic after meeting her regularly at a weekly peace discussion group. She introduced me to a former member of the EPL and he later introduced me to his wife, also a former member of the EPL, both agreed to be interviewed for this research. Lastly, direct but unsolicited initial contact with larger Colombian NGOs, think tanks and smaller peacebuilding organisations through email proved fruitful in accessing some key informant participants.

Within social analysis, gatekeepers are individuals who can determine research access to individuals, institutions or field settings (Saunder, 2006). Gatekeepers who supported interview introductions in tightknit rural communities included a local community association leader in the Cunday municipality in the Department of Tolima who also provided a personal interview and helped me arrange four more with former combatants in the region. Another two local organisation leaders in the small city of Yopal, working in reconciliation efforts and themselves
former members of the AUC paramilitary organisation were interviewed as key informants. They facilitated access to four former combatants while on that field research trip to Yopal. Two of those interviews, along with one I conducted in Tolima were later discounted as they were with individuals formally affiliated with the AUC speaking about their paramilitary experience. During the data analysis stage, I decided to omit the experiences of AUC former members as the sample size of just three individuals was deemed too small and the ideological and gender construction of that organisation was so different to leftist NSAGs.

Gatekeepers were also crucial to access the FARC cantonment sites and many interviews took place in those locations. During phase one of my research these camps were known as Zonas Veredales34, and it was here FARC were assembling en masse to demobilise or in their own words engage in the process of the ‘laying down of arms’35. This process was monitored by the United Nations. During the second phase of my research these zones had been renamed as ETCRs36 so called for their new emphasis on training and collective reincorporation.37 This process is further described in the participant observation section of this chapter.

Interviews

My research was achieved through qualitative research and employed a feminist and phenomenological approach to interviewing. It placed lived experiences at the centre of analysis (bell hooks, 1990). I sought to establish rapport and empathy with my participants (Lester, 1999). I interviewed those who had direct experience of DDR and studied localised and bottom-up reintegration efforts alongside more top-down efforts and expert opinion (Lentin, 1993).

In total, 47 interview participants partook in the research across 45 interviews. The research captured the personal narratives of 24 former combatants from four of Colombia’s leftist non-state armed groups; the FARC (18 participants), M-19 (four participants), the EPL (two participants) and the ELN (one participant). One man was a former member of both the FARC and the ELN but has not been double counted. In total, 16 former insurgent women and eight former insurgent men took part in the research. The anonymised profile of each interview participant is detailed in Appendix 1.

The research also integrated the opinions of a further 25 key informants, some of whom were directly involved in the execution of Colombian reintegration and reincorporation. I conducted

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34 Rural Zones for Transitional Normalization know as Zonas Veredales or ZVTNs.
35 La Dejación de las Armas in Spanish.
36 Espacio Territoriales de Capacitación y Reincorporación or Territorial Spaces for Training and Reincorporation.
37 Or reintegration as the process is known in international discourse.
serial interviews with two key informant participants, P06a and P06b and P08a and P08b, whereby I interviewed them each twice, once in phase one and later when I returned to Colombia a second time in phase two of the research (Read, 2018). There was a distinct advantage to speaking with these two participants twice, both were analysts at an established international peace organisation and a Colombian peace think tank, so I was able to gather their opinions as the peace process progressed over challenging and dynamic times.

There were three pair interviews involving two participants in each, (one participant later omitted based on her former AUC membership) and two interviews involved three participants. Interviews were conducted in English or Spanish. I interviewed seven participants who were living in the FARC ETCRs while I was on-site in those locations. A further three interview participants were also taking part in FARC’s collective reincorporation but were no longer living at the camps.

While taking a gender relational approach, I was especially keen to speak with women and members of ethnic minorities as feminist scholars have argued that the lives and corresponding social domains of women are largely absent in social research, “sociology ... has been based on and built up within the male social universe” (Smith, 1974:7). Furthermore, the experiences of certain groups of women, for example, women of colour are especially lacking (Alasuutari et al., 2008). In certain instances, it was not possible to identity an individual’s ethnicity. I deemed it either inappropriate to ask or received a response such as “Colombian”. Two participants did however self-identify as Indigenous.

All of the former combatant participants bar two had formally participated in some form of Colombian reintegration programme. The exceptions were two female former members of M-19. One who “left the M-19 very early on” (P02. Woman, M-19) and the second, who left the organisation before its peace negotiation. She engaged in what she termed “self-reincorporation” (P29. Woman, M-19). One other woman was never part of the FARC, she told me she had had been wrongly accused and jailed in a case of false positive, targeted because she had a brother in the organisation. “I didn’t belong, I was included because of my brother. I was a false positive. I was at home, at the farm, with my children, my husband, working, studying because I was finishing my high school degree… just because we were his family members they would persecute us (P46. Woman, FARC). Convicted of FARC membership, she felt she had one of two options, to sue the state, or receive reincorporation benefits, she chose the latter and it was arranged for her by her brother and the FARC. I was not aware of this discrepancy until I met her

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40 P46. Woman. FARC. Interview conducted in Chia, Cundinamarca 22/02/2018.
and listened to her story. She has been classified as FARC in the analysis only because she is participating in reincorporation by accessing some of its benefits. A breakdown of participants by leftist NSAG group, type of DDR programme and gender is shown in Table 1 and Table 2 below.

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<td>The FARC</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The ELN*</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>The EPL</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>M-19</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>24</strong></td>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
<td><strong>7</strong></td>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
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*Not tallied in the total as also a former member of the FARC and included within those figures.

**Table 1:** Interview participants by leftist NSAG and type of DDR Programme.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leftist-NSAG</th>
<th>No. Participants</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The FARC</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>The ELN*</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>The EPL</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>M-19</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>24</strong></td>
<td><strong>16</strong></td>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Not tallied in the total as also a former member of the FARC and included within those figures.

**Table 2:** Interview participants by leftist NSAG and gender.

I based myself in Bogotá during phase one and two of the research although the data collection was multi-sited. To explore aspects such as rural/urban differences, as well as to capture the experience of a diverse groups of combatants, I engaged in extensive travel throughout Colombia whenever possible. I made a total of ten field research trips outside of Bogotá to conduct interviews in rural Colombia and smaller towns and cities such as Tumaco on the Pacific Coast; Yopal, the small capital city of the department of Casanare in the central eastern region of Colombia, Villavicencio in the Department of Meta and Cunday in the Department of Tolima. Four of these field research trips involved visiting FARC Zonas Veredales and ETCRs. Lastly, three interviews were conducted over Skype, two while in the field and a third when I returned home. When interviews were in Bogotá or towns relatively close by I could get a combination of city buses and taxis to meet participants. Otherwise, I would fly to major cities were possible and
from there, travel by interdepartmental and local buses as well as vehicles such as a chivas\textsuperscript{41} and moto\textsuperscript{42} taxis. Figure 4 shows the various field research locations.

![Figure 4: Location of Field Research (adapted from vemaps.com).](image)

I initially developed a broad interview guide ahead of travel to Colombia where some key open-ended questions and topics were formulated in advance. I selected this broad interview guide method to create the space to encourage participants to talk in some depth, to choose their own words and to express their own lived experiences (O’Leary, 2009). As the research process unfolded I realised this needed to be revised into a minimum of two separate guides, one for key informants and one for former combatants. Later as the process unfolded further, I realised that the specific leftist NSAG and reintegration programme that an interview participant was affiliated with also shaped the discussion.

Overall, using a semi-structured approach, I was very willing to follow topical trajectories that emerged within the conversation. I was conscious of letting participants recount personal stories that were important to them, rather than force the conversation into any particular structure.

\textsuperscript{41} Type of collective bus for rural public transport that is built on a bus chassis consists of bench seating and open sides.

\textsuperscript{42} Motorbike.
found that some former combatants wished to speak to me more about their time in their leftist NSAG and others of their experiences after their demobilisation. As highlighted by Oakley (1981), feminist interviewing does not aim to elicit direct responses or reproduce hierarchal power relationships between the interviewer and research participant but rather, encourage reciprocity and non-hierarchal rapport. Ensuing that participants were free to express personal views in their own words was of the utmost importance. I was happy to let lines of discussion develop and would omit questions if I felt that had been previously answered or if I felt that the interview participant was or might be uncomfortable with a specific aspect of the conversation.

Ultimately, I had two very broad and relatively long interviews guides given the breadth and range of participants. I would consult these ahead of an interview and depending on the interview participant; whether they were a key informant from the ACR/ARN43 or otherwise; or former combatant and from which leftist NSAG and DDR programme shape a final interview guide as these factors influenced the ultimate direction of questioning and conversation. I regularly updated the master templates based on newly acquired insights. In this way they were very much dynamic documents. The former combatant and key informant semi-structured interview guides are available in Appendix 2 and 3.

On average, each interview lasted 30 mins to one hour, although there was considerable variation depending on the participant. Some of the interviews took place in difficult environments, outside for example, and sometimes with other adults, children or animals in relatively close proximity, making sound quality an issue although conversely taking place in the real-world context of people’s lives.

I found on occasion it was difficult for some research participants to wholly vocalise their opinion on a given topic. On occasion I was given a yes or no response and it could be difficult to encourage elaboration. On reflexion I credited this to several things. Many respondents had spent much, if not all of their adolescent and adult life in a leftist NSAG and had very probably never been asked their opinion on some of the topics I was raising. The experience of reincorporation was still very new for many participants from the FARC. Similarly, leftist NSAG combatants lived clandestine lives and come from an environment where openly discussing certain topics was not supported. Many were also relatively poorly educated, and some struggled in some instances to verbalise their feelings, especially for men I think, due to the dominate masculine norms surrounding expected male behaviour in Colombia.

43 The ACR is the Colombian Agency for Reintegration established in November 2011. In 2017, the ACR became the ARN, the Reincorporation and Normalization Agency in lieu of integrating FARC’s collective reincorporation programme within their scope of work. The evolution of the Agency is further is detailed in chapter 4.
There was also a markedly noticeable difference in the type of responses and critical thinking applied to personal experience across research participants from different leftist NSAGs. The six women and one man interviewed from M-19 and the EPL were very articulate and knowledgeable in their responses. It is likely they had been interviewed before on their life experience and they had also gone on to work in the field of peacebuilding, while conversely many of the FARC research participants had only recently demobilised and had little experience outside of their armed group.

I received verbal consent for all of the interviews and I also provided an information sheet about my research, as well as a consent form. After requesting permission from each of the participants, all of the interviews were tape-recorded and later transcribed. Where the interview had been conducted in Spanish, the transcript was later translated to English. The interview participant information sheet and the consent form are available in Appendix 4 and 5.

Informal interviews and off-the-record conversations also emerged as a valuable source of knowledge. These unscheduled or spontaneous discussions with individuals while in the field or at conferences were often highly insightful and I would jot down ideas in my field notes subsequently. Given ethical and confidentiality issues these conversations have guided my thinking, but I do not make any direct reference to the material discussed to align with the ethical standards of informed consent.

Participant Observation

My opportunity to engage in participant observation emerged through the field work, in particular at three different reincorporation sites on four different occasions. During phase one of my research I visited the Zona Veradal at Icononzo and the Zona Veradal at Santa Lucía in Ituango. During the second phase of my research, I visited the ETCR at Pondores in the La Guajira Department and I made a second visit to the ETCR at Santa Lucía in Ituango. Originally, there were a total of 26 ETCRs across Colombia although this number was later reduced to 24. These are shown in the Figure 5 below. Due to security concerns, at least two ETCRs including the ETCR in Santa Lucía in Ituango have had to relocate (JFC, 2020). The Colombian Government further wanted to relocate 11 more ETCRs for legal, logistical and security reasons but faced pushback from the FARC and also local communities, who felt they would be left even more vulnerable to violence if the peace deal security measures and development programmes were to leave their regions (Alsema, 2019; Dalby & Villalba, 2020).
Participant observation also took place in the private homes of other research participants and more generally as I travelled through and stayed in conflict-affected regions of the country. For participant observation to be successful there is often an individual with a significant role in the group under observation who will provide assurances for the researcher’s work and presence. The reincorporation camps are extremely remote and relatively inaccessible, and several individuals negotiated and facilitated access on my behalf.

I attended weekly discussion groups on peace efforts when I was based in Colombia, it was with that organisation that I was able to conduct my first site visit to the Zona Verdal Icononzo. We travelled there by van from Bogotá to deliver donations and supplies. In another instance, a contact in the UN monitoring mission arranged for me to accesses the ETCR, Pondores. I flew to Valledupar and from there travelled to Pondsore via arranged transportation in a UN vehicle. While I was there I was introduced to a senior member of the group before commencing my site visit and conducting interviews. In another case, at the ETCR Ituango, it was a photojournalist living nearby who initially supported me in organising my trip and by introducing me to another gatekeeper, a former member of FARC who was active in the local community near the ETCR and also worked with the ARN. I visited this ETCR twice, flying to Medellín and then travelling by bus to Ituango. On the first visit a former FARC combatant living on site collected me and my contact and brought us to the camp in his jeep. On the second visit I took a local moto taxi, arranged by my contact in Ituango. I was also due to visit the ETCR Tumaco. I flew to Tumaco via Medellin and Cali, but unfortunately my guided transport fell through once I was there and I deemed the road to the camp too dangerous to travel independently after hearing of ELN and FARC dissident activity in the region. I did still conduct several key informant interviews while in the city including with a reintegration specialist working at the ETCR Tumaco.
While the interview process centred on participant’s personal experience, my participant observation allowed me to gain insight into the social environment in which some of those lived experiences took place. I could then place those experiences within the context of what I witnessed. I noted these observable details in a field diary. My degree of participation ranged from ‘passive participation’, a bystander role through to ‘partially participating’ researcher or moderate participation (Bryman, 2012; DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002). Partially participating observation as detailed by Bryman (2012), occurs when observation is not the primary data source, but complementary to other data collection methods such as in this instance, the research interviews. Although it was a brief glimpse into the lives of former FARC members during their early reincorporation, the opportunity to actually visit the reincorporation spaces as part of this research was hugely illuminating and was not something as a civilian I was certain would be possible ahead of beginning the field research.

While on site, I would note details which included the topography of the area, the type and quality of accommodation, hygiene, medical, cooking and other facilities and the various education and economic projects underway at the ETCRs. I observed the clothing of combatants, for example, in phase one many were still wearing military uniforms, in phase two, inhabitants were wearing civilian clothing. I was attentive to visible gender roles as well as the presence of children and general interactions between family and friends.

Primary sources are original documents or images that are direct evidence of a specific topic under investigation, “created or experienced contemporaneously with the event being researched” (ib.uci.edu, 2020). I took photographs while on field trips and these visual sources served as powerful reminders of rural Colombian life, topography, living conditions and inhabitants of the ETCRs. I was able to directly document the development of one ETCR as I visited it twice, even capturing the presence and later absence of UN secure weapon containers. While I took photographs of the communal spaces within the ETCRs, I did not photograph the private living spaces of inhabitants. I was distinctly aware of how these photographs were capturing a significant moment in time and of a group of people rarely seen in such a relaxed manner.

Data Analysis

I applied Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to the data analysis which is a contemporary phenomenological approach and has become “a dominant qualitative research methodology in many academic disciplines” (Tuffour, 2017:1). IPA has two primary aims; to look in detail at how someone makes sense of life experience and to give a detailed interpretation
of the account to understand the experience (Smith et al., 2009). The researcher begins with one case before expanding to others and making more “general-knowledge claims” (Langdridge, 2007:108).

I applied a four-stage IPA process to the data analysis as set out by David Langdridge (2007). The process begins with the examination of the first case, working through each of the following stages:

Stage 1: Detail commentary. The meaning of specific sections within the transcript, such as synopses and interpretations, are explained.

Stage 2: Record emerging themes within the transcript. Preliminary notes become more significant statements, which reflect a broader level of meaning in particular sections of text. Commentary may begin to reflect broader, more theoretically substantial points.

Stage 3: Chronologically itemise themes. Common links between each theme are identified and then reordered and restructured in a more analytical or theoretical way. Some themes may cluster together, while others are separated out. Certain themes may appear to be more primary and others subordinate.

Stage 4: Produce a table of themes in logical and rational order. The themes are suitably named and referenced back to the original transcript using specific quotes. Some may be discounted at this stage.

(Adapted from David Langdridge, 2007:129)

The process is repeated for additional interviews and the emerging table of themes is revised and reworked. IPA is cyclical and iterative, and the researcher must remain flexible, allowing for amendments or complete modifications. My primary aim was to create thematic categories across individuals and yet preserve their stories. In this way the research would be able to make general knowledge claims, while simultaneously looking to personal narratives of participant’s experiences of leftist NSAG membership and DDR. My thematic analysis was viewed through a gender lens at each step.

IPA should take an idiographic approach, valuing each case in its own right and ensuring detailed case by case analysis and of the phenomenon under investigation before making more general claims (Tuffour, 2017). IPA is an in-depth, thematic and analytical approach and as such I devoted extensive time both listening to interview recordings and studying transcripts. As much of the data concerns lived experience and personal identity, it was rich and complex taking considerable time to order and code. The analytical approach was extremely intensive with many themes initially emerging across the cases, likely due to the in-depth nature of the interviews themselves, coupled with my wish to respect the integrity of the narrative and not exclude anything that I believed to be of importance to participants. Lester (1992) notes that phenomenological research
often results in large amounts of data and “messy” analysis as it can be difficult to code and categorise (1999:2). I certainly found this as there were multiple ways of linking significant discussions and observations.

To support the data analysis process, I decided to use the qualitative data analysis software package, NVivo. I used NVivo in two primary ways, to store safely my interview transcripts so that I could retrieve, view and analyse them in a manageable way especially given the volume of transcripts and secondly, to create a catalogue of potential themes as and when I identified them. The software allowed me to create and save commentary, highlight and save quotes and store sections of text I deemed important within their own themes. So that I could use the software efficiently I enrolled in and completed an online course provided by NVivo.

My overall approach was inductive as is the standard in a phenomenological study, moving from specific observations to broader generalisations. I searched for emerging ideas across the data as opposed to identifying codes to fit a preconceived hypothesis. For example, I realised early on in the process the importance of my findings in relation to leftist NSAG membership, in-group gender relations and individual gender and group identity. I did not expect the research results to incorporate so heavily leftist NSAG membership experience prior to reintegration. And so, I very much allowed the empirical data to determine the themes. Once finalised, I developed the project’s findings and conclusions.

Although the meaning ascribed to participant’s experiences is of central focus to my research, the role of the researcher in how I interpret that meaning was also acknowledged. IPA acknowledges the active role performed by the researcher in the interpretive process.

Presentation of Results and Analysis

I present the empirical data gathered during the field work and an analytical interpretation of those research findings from a gender relational perspective across three primary chapters; chapter 5, chapter 6 and chapter 7. Ultimately, I came to see the data as revealing through the lens of gender, an individual’s journey from civilian to combatant to civilian again, albeit now with the enduring identity of desmovilizada(o) or reinsertada(o) meaning demobilised and reinserted. These are socially constructed labels which carry strong and generally negative connotations in Colombian society.
I chose to document that individual gendered experience along three broad themes or specific junctures of the conflict lifecycle which also correlate to meaningful points in the individual’s life trajectory. Those three stages are:

1. The Gendered Experience of Leftist NSAG Enlistment
2. The Gendered Experience of Leftist NSAG Belonging
3. The Gendered Experience of Reintegration

In their study of insurgent women in asymmetric conflict, Darden, Henshaw and Szekely (2019) made visible insurgent women at the points of ‘recruitment’, ‘participation’ and ‘resolution’. Their research brought clarity as to “why women fight, how women fight, and how women help bring an end to fighting” (Darden et al., 2019:1). This research builds upon that structured approach. Scholarly research on gender and combatants often centres on women and their wartime experiences as a separate category (Darden et al., 2019). The analysis presented hereafter utilises a similar three-point arrangement, but the scope of investigation is broadened to consider the gendered experiences of male former combatants as well as other meaningful categories of identity. The analytical discussion presented here contrasts the former combatant population across Colombian leftist NSAGs and considers changes over time.

Chapter 5 details the first two themes, (The Gendered Experience of Leftist NSAG Enlistment) and (The Gendered Experience of Leftist NSAG Belonging). They explore the process of becoming and actively being a leftist NSAG combatant. The findings are gathered primarily through personal reflections of former combatants. The third theme (The Gendered Experience of Reintegration) explores personal experiences of DDR, with a special focus on reintegration, arguably the least studied and most important area of DDR to accomplish. I present the results of this third theme in chapters 6 and chapter 7 from the perspective of former female and male insurgent respectively. Each chapter is further sectioned into subthemes.

The research provides a gendered understanding of conflict and peace along the conflict lifecycle from the perspective of those who participate in war-making and who later become active in the construction of peace by virtue of their participation in DDR. The results provide gendered insight as to why and how individuals participate in irregular warfare and later in reintegration. Together these chapters form the basis for the thesis conclusions and recommendations.

Ahead of this in chapter 4, I set out the historical context and development of DDR in Colombia. This chapter is based primarily on secondary literature; however, I also make references to opinions raised with me during the interview process by a small number of former combatants and some participants who are experts in this field, to aid critical analysis and further illuminate DDR development.
Research Ethics

Basic ethical principle established to guide research on human subjects are necessary but insufficient for research in conflict and post-conflict environments. These environments present unique challenges to uniformed consent, confidentiality, risk-benefit analysis, researcher security, and beneficence (Campbell, 2010:1).

In post-conflict research contexts, ethical issues must remain responsive to the multidimensional and dynamic conditions of those environments. This kind of research can be ethically complex to navigate, challenging and seldom straightforward. Gaining the trust of an organisation or individual for research access can be difficult and the researcher’s credibility and overall objectives can be called into question. A well-considered ethics proposal becomes essential when planning to interview participants who are potentially vulnerable or disadvantaged about sensitive topics. Post-conflict societies can still be “characterized by ongoing militarized violence, widespread human rights abuses and a culture of impunity” (Goodman, 2000:12). Researchers need to be “armed with an understanding of the patterns and dynamics of conflict, so researchers can make informed decisions about when, where and how to do research” (Goodman, 2000:12).

Populations in post-conflict societies are often vulnerable. Patricia Lundy and Mark McGovern (2006) contend that while a research subject may feel some hurt or distress in relation to a particular research topic they may still wish to participate in order to recount their story or to raise awareness of an issue. While some argue that that ethical research must remain objective, others who are engaged in this kind of work maintain impartiality is unfeasible, but that the burden of responsibility still falls upon the researcher to conduct methodically rigorous research which aims to improves the wellbeing of participants, while remaining modestly aware of the actual impact of their contributions, which may be limited to enhanced contextual knowledge (Goodhand, 2000). Lundy and McGovern reject the notion of research impartiality and objectivity but rather call for a balance to be found where the researcher and subject engage “in a collaborative initiative to bring about social justice and social change” (2006:51).

In conflict and post-conflict societies information often becomes politicised and a researcher part that information economy (Goodman, 2000). By electing who to interview or speak with the researcher is inherently making choices about those voices which are counted (Goodman, 2000). Culture, language and social norms may be dissimilar between the researcher and participant which can complicate truly informed consent (Leaning, 2001). Maintaining informed consent also means not pressuring an individual to speak on a topic which they feel uncomfortable discussing. Issues of reciprocity are difficult to reconcile, and researchers must consider if giving voice to a participant is a satisfactory exchange for data collection (Schepet-Hughes, 1995; Wood, 2006). Researchers must be sensitive to implicit messages they may communicate unknowingly,
such as support for one party or one side and not to confer legitimacy nor set unrealistic expectations about what they can actually do for participants through the research.

In his research of DDR processes and the means through which the South Africa Government addressed the needs of former combatants, Cyril Kenneth (2008) identified several ethical dilemmas when interviewing former combatants, namely concerning access, the safety of the researcher and the public and lastly the welfare of the former combatants themselves as research participants. He found that former combatants were sceptical of being research participants more generally because they felt they received little benefit in return. Perceived exploitation on the part of combatants for their narratives, may make them apprehensive of participation. Likewise, Kenneth describes the distress he felt trying to balance confidentiality with protection for the community. “The distress I experienced was as a result of being morally torn between my ethical responsibility to confidentiality on the one hand, and on the other hand, my concern that ex-combatants might be involved in illegal activities and what to do with information” (Kenneth, 2008:19).

I was acutely aware that some research participants exist in a vulnerable space. Former combatants are frequently marginalised or stigmatised upon their reintegration and even face potential acts of violence and retribution by their former or opposing armed groups. They face specific personal and structural impediments to their reintegration. Many are unable to reveal their former identities, and some are rejected by their communities or lose their employment if they are ‘discovered’. I was aware of the ethical implications concerning research access, my personal safety and the welfare of those former combatants who chose to participate in my research. Conversely, I was also conscious that former combatants can be a direct threat to a peace process, should they choose to rearm or involve themselves in illicit economic activities and indeed can directly threaten the personal safety of individuals in the local community into which they reintegrate.

Kenneth found that feedback and debriefing with colleagues helped to relieve some of this pressure and by using such meetings as forum to air challenges, “provide a safe environment in which one can merely unload” (2008:19). He addressed these ethical dilemmas without perpetuating stereotypes by “foreground the needs and interest of ex-combatants to contextualize the social problems that are part of their lives [this] contributed to the understanding of the mechanisms and conditions behind these social problems” (Kenneth, 2008:20).

In his research of violent young men and paramilitaries in Medellín, Colombia, Adam Baird (2009) identified some key methodological dilemmas of interviewing violent men. Alongside “being ‘streetwise’ – using common sense, local knowledge and language skills” he noted the
crucial need for reliable gatekeepers when entering dangerous spaces in order to access the paramilitaries he wished to speak with (Baird, 2009:73). Certain risks to personal safety may only become apparent when in the field and therefore can be difficult to predetermine. Participant observation within a local community organisation allowed Baird keep abreast of security concerns, learning the “rules” to reduce potential chances of violence while building trusts and gaining access (Baird, 2009:73). It is important to respect and adhere to local community advice alongside building trust and gaining acceptance. While understanding local context is important for personal safety it also adds perspective to participant responses which further supports data interpretation and triangulation.

Researchers must also bear in mind that perpetrators of violent acts may moderate their own narratives of violent acts while stressing their own personal abuse or victimisation (De Laine, 2000). While feminist methodology commands empathy and respect of all research subjects, there are ethical considerations when building rapport with a potentially violent individual, or those who may have committed previous violent acts against civilians. At the same time, I was also committed to genuinely serving the best interests of those I spoke with and of connecting with their subjective experiences. There is no easy answer here. Some former combatants are often dealing with their own emotional trauma and may be suffering from PTSD. These traumas or other ordeals can span the conflict cycle, including what may have brought them to armed conflict in the first place. All that said, I very much did not wish to perpetuate negative stereotypes about former combatants. Alongside this, I had to also consider the wider community, balancing confidentiality and information disclosure. I believe that feminist research into former combatants can help to counter myths and negative stereotypes and my research reveals nuances in their lived experience.

Ethical concerns “tend to focus on the protection of the wellbeing and rights of the research participants” (Kenneth, 2008:4). This remains fundamental but it can mean that in challenging environments, other equally important debates are less accounted for (Kenneth, 2008). These other issues centre on concern for the welfare of the community and for researcher wellbeing, “the potential for physical harm as well as psychological distress brought on by the competing moral responsibilities one could likely encounter” (Kenneth, 2008:5). Ethical considerations are paramount within the work of feminist scholarship.

A feminist ethical approach to research demands compassion and an ethic of care with research conducted responsibly to mitigate potential harm. A feminist ethical approach to research is also attentive to the positionality of the researcher while still centring the participants, as well as acknowledging the existence of power relationships and of developing reflexivity. I embarked on research project with a strong sense of wanting to respect feminist ethical principles, alongside
the feminist scholarship normative objective to expose gender injustice and promote gender equality. The following section on reflexivity discusses this point from my positionality within the research in more detail.

Interpersonal relationships are also a consideration in feminist research. The need to develop rapport on one hand coupled with avoiding any exploitative relationship to gain data. Similarly, this applies to the presentation of findings. “Feminist researchers attempt to grapple with non-exploitative ways of presenting the voices of participants, especially where these voices appear to be silenced and or otherwise unheard” (Bell, 2013:93). In her writings on feminist ethics, Linda Bell (2013) details the key aspects of ethical practice for feminist researchers. These are, to do no harm (beneficence), to maintain confidentiality, privacy and anonymity, to ensure informed consent, to maintain disclosure and be aware of the potential for deception, to acknowledge the power relation between researcher and subject, to attend to subject representation or ownership of research findings, to ensure respect for human dignity, self-determination and justice, including safeguards to protect the rights of vulnerable subjects (Bell, 2013:85).

In terms of meeting my own ethical obligations ahead of any ethical approval I familiarised myself with the TCD Good Research Practice Guide which is a detailed discussion of good research practice and the role of research ethics and ethical review. Ethical approval for my research was initially granted at the departmental level, through the Irish School of Ecumenics and then given the sensitive nature of my work, ethical approval was sought and subsequently granted at Faculty Research Ethics Committee level in the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences at Trinity College Dublin in September 2016 ahead of any primary data collection. A detailed application which required a completed faculty application form, research proposal, participant consent form and participant project information sheet ensured I had considered ethical obligations long before I travelled to the field.

All participants were aged over 18 years of age at the time of the interview. I was conscious that informed consent for any interview must come from the participant directly as opposed to a gatekeeper. Because of specific security concerns I chose to gain consent from participants verbally. Former combatants may be hesitant about writing their name to protect their identities. Additionally, some of combatants were potentially illiterate and I did not wish to make them feel uncomfortable by requesting a signature. I would provide an information sheet about my research at the outset of an interview. Being conscious of illiteracy I would offer to read it aloud to ensure consent was informed.

I was careful to explain that participation was voluntary and then the aims of research from the outset and to give full disclosure. I made assurances of anonymity as well as the right to withdraw
at any point or not to discuss a certain topic if they so wished. Consent was also provided to tape-recorded interviews. Transcripts were anonymised and pseudonyms used to protect the identity of participants. Numbers was subsequently used in all future stored data records. I did not transcribe the name of any research participant at any point in the research process. All audio files were securely stored and encrypted, password protected and backed up. Once backed up the audio files were deleted from my tape recorder. Various encrypted documents were stored in an encrypted archive on my laptop. Data files were not stored on a USB, but rather transferred directly to, or created within my laptop. I also saved each file to a file hosting service. This ensured that the research was secure while travelling in the case of laptop theft for example. I took specific steps to respect the confidentiality and anonymity of participants and to ensure informed consent while in the field.

I faced a number of personal and professional challenges in the course of the research. Undoubtedly the foremost research challenge I encountered during data collection was accessing former combatants. This process took longer than initially anticipated, in part because I was not granted access to participants through the ACR during phase one. I filed an initial research proposal with the organisation upon my arrival to Colombia and despite several iterations it was not accepted. While it is impossible to speculate why this was the case, feedback from the organisation did mention that gender issues had been explored in recent past research. Similarly, the agency only grants access to individuals in the reintegration programme and where the research directly serves their particular research objective as an organisation. As discussed in the sample strategy section, I was able to overcome this issue by gradually building out a network of contacts through snowball sampling as well as extended time in the field. Ultimately, the sample size and dataset were not compromised, but in hindsight, I realised the extent of the challenge I had set for myself as a foreigner with initially limited Spanish and few professional contacts in Colombia.

During the period of application to my PhD I set out to improve my Spanish language proficiency. I had studied Spanish in school, but I had not spoken it in some years. Upon acceptance to the programme I began bi-weekly classroom-based lessons and daily self-study for the year ahead of my field research. I continued my Spanish lessons when living in Colombia, at different points attending language classes or using a private tutor as well as daily online live lessons to increase my proficiency to an intermediate level. This allowed me to navigate and travel to the most rural parts of Colombia alone and conduct interviews without the use of a translator. I cannot say with absolute certainly my lack of fluency did not impede the interviews, by being able to redirect a line of questioning based on a nuanced answer or story being communicated by the participant for example. I employed the use of a local translator to support with interview transcription and
translations as to do so myself would have been prohibitively time consuming as my written Spanish was not on par with my spoken Spanish. The translator signed a confidentiality agreement with me ahead of this. After analysing and reflecting on the quality of the content within the interviews transcripts ultimately I did not feel my language constraints were an impactful research limitation.

I found at certain times the research process to be exhausting and relentless, the constant effort and exertion to find research participants by putting myself ‘out there’ often through professional networking was outside of my comfort zone. Often at more formal events in Bogotá I felt like an outsider. Sometimes I interviewed people whose worldview I did not agree with. Comparatively, I lived a much more isolated existence that I would do at home. I was working alone and navigating a country through a second language that I was still getting to grips with.

Although I never felt overtly concerned for my safety, I spent a lot of time while in the field in a heightened sense of awareness. Indeed, one male participant expressed their surprise at my willingness to travel alone to remote parts of the country to meet ex-FARC in general given their notoriety in Colombia. It was often very difficult to assess a risk ahead of actually taking the action, for example taking a moto taxi through remote regions to access an ETCR or participant living in the countryside. I came to rely quite strongly on gut and intuition, assessing a situation quickly as well as through the assurances of contacts and acquaintances. After being introduced to one moto taxi driver by my contact for example and spending time chatting to him before we left Ituango, I felt secure in my decision. Likewise, when something did not sit right with me I would follow my instinct, such as choosing not to travel independently to ETCR Tumaco. I was meticulous about staying in close contact with family members back home in Ireland as well as my housemate and a friend in Bogotá who I could call upon in an emergency. I allowed a family member and friend access to track my mobile through an app and when I was in areas with no mobile reception I would provide them with the approximate times I would be offline.

**Reflexivity**

Reflexivity as a practice supports our understanding about where the researcher and the research participants are socially situated (Haraway, 1988; Oakley, 1981). As Gunaratnam (2003) explains, “meaningful communication can be achieved through reflexive research practices and engagement with the social and interactional effects of difference” (2003:89). To better understand my positionality as a researcher within the context of this research I kept a reflexive journal while in the field. It was mostly an attempt to understand how my academic position and
by virtue of being a white, able-bodied, well-educated, female, Irish citizen might come to influence the research or reinforce hierarchal power relationships (Richardson, 2000).

Despite my being a woman attempting to navigate a male-dominated culture in a second language, I felt very much was aware of my privileged position borne largely from my nationality, resources, language and education. The conflict has meant that violence and tragedy had become part of live experience for many of the people I interviewed and also met along the way. I was aware for example, that while I took measured risks to personal security entering areas still suffering from conflict or aftereffects of armed conflict, I was largely free to leave, realistically my interview participants in those regions were not. My ability to even travel to Colombia to engage in this kind of in-depth research is a privilege afforded to few researchers.

The reflexive journal allowed me to reflect on my own interpretations of an interaction or my feelings when in the field and on the road. While very much a subjective process it proved useful when studied alongside the transcripts and field notes. In the course of the research I realised I needed to examine my own beliefs despite being concerned with the beliefs systems of participants. It is impossible to leave bias and assumptions at the door when undertaking this kind of work and indeed the journal revealed to me how the interviews at one stage were starting to shape my own beliefs and so required a ‘stepping back’ to gain some perspective. I did recognise from the outset that I was not a detached and impartial observer but present in the frame of the research and an active, interested and subjective actor.

In larger towns and cities and when travelling I was regularly mistaken as Colombian given my Italian heritage on my father’s side. In rural, small towns my presence as a foreign woman travelling alone was viewed as something of an oddity, word often travelled fast and given the town’s size, I was clearly an unfamiliar person. I was regularly humbled not just by the extraordinary levels of hospitality and warmth shown to me as I was welcomed into people’s homes for meals, conversations and, on one occasion to stay as there was no local accommodation but also by the overt and dramatic differences in wealth and standard of living within and between the various regions I travelled through and along class lines. I had travelled quite extensively as a tourist through Colombia on two previous occasions prior but was now visiting conflict-affected regions largely bypassed by backpackers and travellers. I believe my Irish nationality helped me to access both former combatants and key informants as well as contributing to a rapport during interviews. Both groups of participants were for example, at least somewhat aware of the Irish Troubles, the Belfast Agreement and the decommissioning of the IRA which many connected to my Irish nationality upon introduction.
Research is not separate to but part of the construction of meaning around gender, race and ethnicity. It is a discursive practice and so it “is also produced by and produces racialized and ethicized social relations” (Gunaratnam, 2003:23). Likewise, it is produced by and produces gendered social relations. These and all social constructs are significant categories of meaning for individuals, however they are not alone in influencing experience (Gunaratnam, 2003). Individual identities are complex and while I was very much aware of difference, I also did not want to reduce a participant’s identity to any one marker. Such a reduction can I believe, gloss over the real complexity of lived experience. I documented some of the many connections I made with my interview participants and other day to day interactions, while also acknowledging differences. I stand firm in believing that we co-produced the interviews. I sought to conduct my interviews in the most sensitive manner possible, keeping feminist methodology at the forefront of my mind. I believe that this approach contributed to the quality of the interviews and had a positive impact on the researcher/participant relationship, especially as I endeavoured to avoid reinforcing potential hierarchical power relationships.

The empirical data did raise certain contradictions around the concept of gender equality. I witnessed and listened to diverse voices with competing knowledge claims. As future chapters will show, FARC interview participants expressed total in-group equality while key informants disagreed. Meanwhile former insurgents from the collective demobilisations three decades prior found a middle ground and were more measured in their critical analysis of insurgent equality.

Wherein lies the ‘truth’ is a feminist epistemological issue. Different knowledge claims are always based on different experiences and worldviews. Truth including my own, is based on specific histories and of power relations (Foucault, 1977). Space and time to allow for reflection as well as intersecting identity categories effect how former combatants make sense of their own past experience. Equally these factors influence how subject matter experts come to critique and analyse their specific field of interest. There is no absolute truth retrievable from the interview process, instead we must acknowledge the sincerity of individual narratives and of participants own experiences of the truth. Research is a discursive practice and therefore it is part of the construction of meaning of gender. I do not wish to discount the direct experience and narrative of Farianas44 or of their male former comrades. The research has made a feminist commitment to listen to diverse opinion and marginalised voices. One could see that feminist commitment to research would lead, for example, to concurring with the declaration of equality by FARC rank and file as absolute, thereby giving preeminence to the knowledge claims of these often-overlooked contributors. The input of experts and other former insurgents does cast a valuable

44 Women members of the FARC.
and critical lens on a complex issue but with established careers and by way of other privileges such as class and education, their views are typically more visible.

Furthermore, I hold my own opinion and bias, and feminist interpretation of data also acknowledges the impossibility of removing the researcher from the research process, seeing objectivity as largely futile. Mainstream scholarship in International Relations generally takes a positivist approach to epistemological and methodological issues which lends itself to a supposed objective analysis. Feminist approaches are less inclined to claim neutrality. Equality is loaded and contested term. As a principle, it has been central to Western thought for centuries. I take it to mean the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of people of all genders; a life free from discrimination based on sex and gender; an inalienable human right. The FARC insurgent conception of gender equality, which is largely based on the absence of a sexual division of labour is ultimately not my own definition of the concept and I endeavoured to recognise and acknowledge this throughout the presentation of the results and data interpretation.

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This chapter presented the research design of the thesis. I began by putting forward the theoretical framework of the research, Gender Relational Analysis. The chapter also set out the two methodological approaches applied to the research, feminist and phenomenological methodology, including the practical methods and techniques used to achieve the field work and data collection including sampling strategy, interview process and participation observation. Following on from this, the chapter discussed the data analysis method known as Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis and its application to the research and resulting themes and interpretation. The chapter concluded with a section on ethics, working in conflict-affected contexts and with former combatant populations as well as the research constraints and the role of the researcher through a section on reflexivity.

Having explained the methods by which this research is guided, I now turn to chapter 4 which will delineate the evolution of approaches to DDR in Colombia over the last three decades and particularly how thinking about gender and DDR has evolved. This sets the scene for the findings of how participants experience these processes from a gender perspective.
CHAP\v{}TER 4: THE EVOLUTION OF COLOMBIAN DDR

There have been several attempts of varying success to reach peace deals in Colombia between the government and its numerous NSAGs, and DDR has formed an integral part of many of these attempts. Since the late 1980’s, Colombian DDR has taken place across three broad phases. This chapter charts those phases from 1989 onward. The first involved the collective demobilisations of M-19, the EPL and other small guerrilla groups after a cycle of bilateral peace negotiations which began in 1989 and continued through to the early 1990s. The second phase began more than a decade later in 2003 and it involved the collective demobilisation of the paramilitary blocs under the AUC again, after a negotiated peace deal. The gendered experience of AUC membership and reintegration is not a subject of this research. However, a general overview of their reintegration programme instigated in this second phase is considered as it clarifies the reasons why the programme transformed as it did. This reintegration programme remains operational today and is accessible to those who choose to leave their NSAG or who have been captured. Most recently, the third phase of DDR concerns the collective reincorporation of the FARC, a process which began in late 2016 after their peace agreement. For three decades now there has been some form of DDR taking place within Colombia and as a result, domestic reintegration policy continues to evolve.

Throughout the chapter, there is a parallel discussion of how gender and other strategies for diversity have advanced within evolving approaches to DDR. This discussion is further expanded upon based on empirical data and analysis within subsequent chapters. Over time, there has been a growing recognition of gender and other categories of diversity within Colombian reintegration and an incremental incorporation of both. The research is interested in how this thinking has evolved conceptually and in terms of implementation over the three phases. Later the research considers its gendered impact on former combatant experience. The chapter looks at the historical evolution of DDR primarily through the use of secondary literature sources although research participants perspectives’ are included in places to aid critical analysis and further illuminate DDR development and the gender thinking therein.

 Colombian DDR is relatively unique in that it has taken place in the context of ongoing socio-political violence and not in a post-conflict scenario. Even today, armed conflict continues with multiple actors despite the peace deal with the FARC. Colombian DDR has been largely autonomous of international financial support, in sharp contrast to other DDR contexts. Reintegration for those who chose to individually leave their NSAG takes place outside of the context of a peace agreement. Again, this is comparatively novel. Today, two parallel and distinct
programmes are being executed concurrently, the reintegration programme for those aforementioned individuals and the collective FARC reincorporation programme. Both take a long-term view of reintegration. Consequently, the Colombian DDR landscape especially concerning reintegration is both relatively complex and comparatively highly developed.

Phase 1: The Collective Demobilisations of M-19, the EPL and Others (1989-1994)

Between 1989 and 1994, a cycle of bilateral peace negotiations occurred between the Colombian Government and several guerrilla groups leading to the collective demobilisation of over 5,700 combatants (Méndez, 2012). Indications by the Colombian State that they would be open to implementing a series of political reform measures and to modifying the 1886 Colombian Constitution facilitated the advancement of the peace talks. M-19 was the first leftist NSAG to begin negotiations under the Presidency of Virgilio Barco in 1989. They renounced their armed struggle and completed a year-long demobilisation process involving 791 combatants (DPI, 2012). President César Gaviria took office in August 1990 and peace agreements were subsequently reached with the EPL, the PRT and the MAQL, also known as Quintin Lame (Boudreaux, 1991). In 1994, factions of the ELN known as the CRS and Frente Francisco Garnica also demobilised, as did MIR-COAR an urban militia from Medellín (Carranza-Franco, 2019). All of these groups then entered civilian reinsertion programmes upon their collective demobilisations.

As each leftist NSAG negotiation was separate, each insurgent group came to the negotiating table with their own demands although they all centred on improved conditions for citizenship, the deepening of democracy, political participation and socioeconomic development. M-19 focused on expanding democracy and democratic participation through constitutional reform alongside a platform of human rights and socioeconomic policy reform. The demobilisation of M-19 took place alongside larger reforms to the national political system bringing a sense of renewed optimism for the Colombian democratic political process (DPI, 2012). The EPL called for regional plans for community development which had a participatory approach as well as

45 El Ejército Popular de Liberación or The Popular Liberation Army.
46 Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores de Colombia or Workers Revolutionary Party of Colombia.
47 El Movimiento Armado Quintín Lame or Quintin Lame Armed Movement.
48 Ejército de Liberación Nacional or The National Liberation Army.
49 Corriente de Renovación Socialista or Socialist Renovation Current.
50 El Movimiento Independiente Revolucionario Comandos Armados or the Revolutionary Independent Movement, Armed Commandos.
peace councils which could act as a vehicle for common decisions (Carranza-Franco, 2019). Quintin Lame, which had just 130 fighters had taken up arms in defense of Indigenous territorial land and they negotiated for investment in their communities (Boudreaux, 1991). Spearheaded by the EPL, they alongside M-19 and the PRT all participated as legal entities in a Constitutional Assembly which gave rise to the new Colombian Constitution in 1991.

Further constitutional reforms enacted in 1991, allowed groups such as M-19 to join the national democratic political process. They formed a political party, the M-19 Democratic Alliance. Initially, the party successfully transitioned into mainstream party politics but had all but disappeared three years later (Boudon, 2001). M-19 were less radical in their ideology than the FARC and less extreme in their political violence. Concern with political reform more so than political revolution supported their transition to conventional politics and public acceptance therein. Some former combatants from this time remain active in Colombian politics, predominately in oppositional parties, as well within national peacebuilding efforts, positively impacting human rights and policymaking dialogue (DPI, 2012). Gustavo Petro, a former member of M-19 who promoted their peace talks at the time, today serves as a Colombian Senator. He was previously Mayor of Bogotá and most recently, lost to the incumbent President Iván Duque Márquez in the run-off presidential election in June 2018.

The reinsertion benefits which the peace deals of this time guaranteed for former combatants included a monthly allowance for a period of 6 months, financial project support of between 2 and 3.2 million Colombia pesos, guarantees to personal security, education, vocational training, health and psychosocial care as well as job seeker assistance and land (Carranza-Franco, 2019). A type of DDR mechanism, the National Council of Normalization (NCN), was established to support the reinsertions, although the former guerrillas also independently founded NGOs to support their members. Those organisations helped channel financial benefits into common economic projects becoming “crucial to the process of social reintegration and community development” (Carranza-Franco, 2019:46).

This cycle of demobilisations succeeded in having a transformative effect on the Colombian political landscape which became more democratic and inclusive, allowing for leftist political parties to participate in national political debate (Jaramillo et al., 2009; Sarmiento Villarraga, 2006). Positively, the rate of recidivism was also comparatively low. In part, the relative success of these earlier demobilisations was due to the context in which the negotiations took place, demonstrating how context-specific DDR outcomes can be.

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51 Alianza Democrática M-19.
The EPL, Quintin Lame, the Corriente de Renovación Socialista. Those processes were successful in part because of the context. Drug trafficking wasn’t an issue, for example. Those were groups that didn’t operate at a large scale. Those were small groups operating in given regions. That made it easier to control them, especially to keep the command and control structures in place (P06a. DDR Expert, Colombian Peacebuilding Think Tank).

Although this first phase has been largely considered a successful example of DDR there were stark challenges. Unfortunately, a faction of the EPL refused to demobilise, while hostilities continued with the FARC and the ELN. Political violence across the country actually intensified following. Paramilitary structures emerged to counter the remaining guerrilla threat and in retaliation to the opening up of democratic space through reform and decentralisation, which encroached upon traditional strongholds of power (Carranza-Franco, 2019). Former M-19 commander and presidential candidate for the M-19 Democratic Alliance, Carlos Pizarro Leongómez was assassinated by the AUC in 1990 while onboard a flight. Former combatants became the targets of all remaining parties to the conflict complicating their reintegration and legal political participation.

Moreover, reintegration can become side-lined when it is located within a framework of military and security objectives as DDR has traditionally tended to be (DPI, 2012). “The government’s main goal was ending the armed conflict, and little thought was directed toward how to move beyond winning the war to securing peace” (Laplante & Theidon, 2006:60). Colombian DDR in the early 1990’s was bereft of a long-term conception of reintegration. The strategy of demobilising separate guerilla groups under different peace agreements meant that achieving consistency within their implementation in the face of an ongoing conflict proved difficult. The reinsertion programmes were short-term in their outlook and disjointed. They suffered from inadequate funding, monitoring, community consultation and had limited follow-up and support mechanisms (Laplante & Theidon, 2006).

The focus of the DDR programme was one of ‘welfare logic’. The State provided and that’s it, no accompaniment was given. No differential approach of any kind. The issue of ethnic populations wasn’t taken into account either. Many were indigenous in the case of Quintin Lame. And the gender issue wasn’t taken into account. It was a very flat policy with the objective of dismantling the [military] structure and providing some help for economic and social reincorporation. The socioeconomic reintegration focused on money aids, cash, productive projects. The problem was that those projects had no follow-up or the required technical assistance for them to be sustainable in time and thus many failed (P06a. DDR Expert, Colombian Peacebuilding Think Tank).

As mentioned above, these reinsertion efforts failed to incorporate any gender or diversity dimension, despite a quarter of the rank of M-19 and the EPL being women at the time of their demobilisation (Darden et al., 2019). Although some women were present in the negotiation
process, there was only one female signatory to any of the agreements and this evidenced later gender blindness within DDR (Darden et al., 2019; Méndez, 2012). One research participant, a former mid-level commander in M-19 and today a consultant said that despite “overtones of women’s vindication” from the M-19 side, women’s demands were ultimately side-lined.

I believe there were overtones of women’s vindication as part of the organisation. When I was mid-level commander, I asserted women's presence in actions making them visible, wearing skirts, making it evident, for them to acknowledge that women were also at those higher levels, directive and operational levels. During one of the last conferences Vera Grabe also raised the issue of women's demands. But there was no approach, women were not considered (P16. Woman, M-19).

Furthermore, the belief that women insurgents had achieved an insurgent equality and the pre-eminence of class struggle as the defining motivation of their leftist NSAG cause impeded issues of gender equality and female political participation from coming to the fore. Although women were concerned with important gendered issues such as children and family in the context of reintegration, in reality these concerns, and other gendered issues were improperly considered.

We believed in that egalitarian world. Women didn’t concern ourselves with raising demands of a feminist nature, but somehow of a ‘familist’ nature. Thus, the issue of children, the issue of projects that provided coverage to the family, making extensive the recognition to family. In general, our insights went that far (P15. Woman, EPL).

Women faced specific gender discriminatory practices in reinsertion such as masculine pronouns within reports, exclusion from roster schedules and an underrepresentation in leadership positions at the regional directorates for DDR (Bouvier, 2016; Londoño & Nieto, 2006). Women felt largely unaccounted for in reinsertion efforts and then faced severe social sanctions upon their transition to civilian life (Thylin, 2018; Londoño & Nieto 2006). In this way, reality did not live up to expectation for former insurgent women at this time. “There was a lot of excitement for a moment. Afterwards it was like a harsh reality, a country that had not transformed’ (P03. Woman, M-19).

Research participants criticised the application of the reinsertion programmes and the limited economic options presented to them as women.

What was agreed upon really was psychosocial care, economic support at first, education, health. There were basic things that happened, but they were very unstable, some people did, and some did not get them. Money came very late. The skills and abilities of people were not considered. Instead there were taxis, bakeries, making chorizos. It was presumed that, “they are guerrilla fighters, who we throw at this end of the (DDR) machine and catch as citizens at that other end

54 Vera Grabe is a former member and co-founder of M-19. Today she is a Colombian anthropologist, peace advocate and politician, a former member of Congress and the Senate.
56 P15. Woman. EPL. Interview conducted in Bogotá 20/04/2017.
57 P03. Woman. M-19. Interview conducted in Bogotá 01/03/2017.
and because we don’t know what they can do, then let’s give them taxis or a bakery or let’s give them a family (P02. Woman, M-19).58

Although peace was ultimately conceived as disappointment it did give rise to the opportunity to redefine formally violent tactics as non-violent strategies to achieve political goals.

I think for everyone it was very hard, because what we had in mind was that we were going to come to power. Now I know I sound hilarious but well, that was what we thought. By the time surrendering arms was decided upon, we knew that was not the option. There was sadness because there was no triumph, but on the other hand I believe that it worked in our favour because we learned how to make politics without firearms, which was the objective (Woman, M-19).59

The effects of this civilian reinsertion undertaken without an attention to a gender is further developed in chapter 6 through the empirical findings.

Phase 2: Moving Towards Reintegration


Although 17,200 combatants individually demobilised from 1998 to July 2002, it was not until 2003 that the second phase of Colombian DDR really commenced (Méndez, 2012). This started with the controversial negotiation process that led to the demobilisation of the AUC, the umbrella paramilitary group which had been active since 1997. While, the gendered experience of AUC former combatants is not within the parameters of this study, a brief DDR overview is detailed below as it was this programme which was later reconstituted into the reintegration programme that is still in place today.

The talks took place under the Presidency of Uribe; his administration was the first to open formal dialogues with a paramilitary organisation, in part, “an attempt to "de-paramilitarize" the Colombian state, distancing it from these "self-defense committees" that extended beyond legitimate governmental control (Laplante & Theidon, 2006:62). Despite the power the paramilitaries had accumulated, war-weary and tired of living in rural combat zones distanced from family and urban life they were prepared to negotiate (Méndez, 2012). There was a further expectation that Uribe’s hard-line military approach against the guerrilla would give rise to some military victory and so eradicating the justification narrative of the AUCs existence. They hoped for similar legal and political benefits granted to the demobilised guerrillas over a decade earlier (Laplante & Theidon, 2006; Rangel, 2005).

As the AUC did not have political status, Uribe was forced to negotiate legal changes through Congress in order to hold the talks (Méndez, 2012). In December of 2002, the AUC declared a unilateral cease-fire, the only precondition Uribe had set, and formal peace talks began in July 2003 in the town of Santa Fe de Ralito, Córdoba. The AUC agreed to demobilise by the end of 2005 (Arnson, 2005). The negotiations suffered numerous setbacks and ceasefire violations, but a deal was finalised. Several factions of the AUC began demobilising from 2003 onwards and later in 2005, a 368 sq. km. concentration zone was established to monitor the ceasefire and strengthen the demobilisations. Two large blocs firstly demobilised in 2003, the BCN60 with 874 members and the Peasants Defence Force of Ortega, followed by the Bananero, Cundinamarca, Catatumbo, and Calima blocs over a number of months (Arnson 2005; Laplante & Theidon, 2006). In total, the collective demobilisation of 31,671 paramilitaries took place over 39 demobilisation ceremonies. Many of these were televised. The collective process formally ended in 2006 (Jaramillo et al., 2009). A further 10,000 AUC members later individually demobilised through the transformed reintegration programme as described below (Schwitalla & Dietrich, 2007).

The negotiation and demobilisation strategy for the guerrilla groups and the AUC differed significantly. The ideology of the leftist guerrilla groups, “called for socioeconomic justice and the participation of marginalized sectors in the country’s political life” (Jaramillo et al., 2009:10). The paramilitaries lacked an explicit ideology apart from the continuation of the political status quo. They were largely created as protectionist groups in the absence of state authority and were much more closely linked to drug trafficking, illegal connections with the political establishment, and extreme violence and human rights violations which negatively impacted public and political opinion (DPI, 2012). Widespread national and international concern surrounded the deal over the lack of accountability for the war crimes of the AUC, “a reflection not only of the AUC’s violent history and illicit activities, but also of the lack of definition of the terms and framework for their reintegration into society” (Arnson, 2005:5).

The pre-existing legal framework for DDR benefits did not extend to those who committed serious human right violations and while an earlier law, Law 418 granted amnesty to former combatants who chose to participate in DDR it was only applicable to those with political status, making the paramilitaries ineligible. Therefore, much of their negotiations centred on the creation of multiple legal amendments to ensure amnesties and limited sentencing to incentivise demobilisation. The state formally extended the Law 418 in 2002 by adopting Law 782 which governs collective and individual demobilisation, established a verification regime and making it possible to grant legal benefits to former paramilitaries. This encouraged demobilisation

60 Bloque Cacique Nutibara or the Cacique Nutibara Bloc.
participation without granting political status (CJA, 2020). The legislative regime was further regulated a year later through Decree 128, which elaborated on social and economic reintegration benefits and legal amnesties.

In 2005, The Justice and Peace Law of Colombia (Law 975) provided a legal framework to prosecute and sentence members of illegal armed groups in the context of a peace process. It “explicitly merged DDR and transitional justice” changing the fundamental nature of Colombian DDR (Laplante & Theidon, 2006:51). Benefits included reduced sentences in exchange for truth and victim reparations. As was discussed in the thesis introduction, there are often tensions between conflicting issues of peace, security and accountability in post-conflict contexts and especially between DDR and transitional justice. As in the case of the earlier guerrilla groups, past demobilisations were technocratic exercises to achieve military and security objectives. The Justice and Peace Law finally allowed space for a transitional justice component as an element of DRR, however it was widely criticised by the political opposition, transitional justice experts and human rights organisations as counter to international jurisprudence and inadequate when addressing the rights of victims to truth, reparations and investigation (CJA, 2020; HRW, 2005b, HRW 2005c). The legal framework which underpinned the AUC agreements were insufficiently stringent and there was a general lack of oversight to the process. “In practice, flaws in this system have resulted in pardons for paramilitary members under investigation for non-pardonable offenses such as human rights violations” (Laplante & Theidon, 2006:65).

The Program for Reincorporation to the Civil Life (PRVC) was the entity operational under the auspices of the Ministry of Interior and Justice from 2003 to 2006 and the primary mechanism to support the transition of former combatants to civilian life. The organisation had regional centres across the country and offered vocational training, psychosocial services and a regular economic stipend. It received a sharp influx of participants due to the collective demobilisation of the AUC. Like the earlier reinsertion programmes for the guerrillas, the PRVC was conceived as a short-term reinsertion initiative, lacking in a longer-term outlook and follow up mechanisms.

DDR for the AUC was more ineffective than that of the guerrilla over a decade earlier (DPI, 2012). The verification commission to the process, the MAPP–OEA61 reported that human rights violations continued to be carried out by the paramilitaries during their demobilisation (Barraza & Caicedo 2007). There was close to 5000 extrajudicial killings in 2003 and the majority were carried out by paramilitaries (Laplante & Theidon, 2006). A collective demobilisation process should focus on dismantling the hierarchy and structure of an armed group, and this was lacking in the case of the AUC. Some former mid-level members established new criminal networks and

61 Misión de Apoyo al Proceso de Paz de los Estados Americanos or Mission to Support the Peace Process of the Organization of American States.
successor groups upon demobilisation such as the Urabeños, the Libertadores de Vichada and Bloque Meta. In spite of the DDR effort, paramilitary structures remained intact. Although they are recognised as a continuation of the AUC or ‘neoparamilitares’ by many, the Colombian Government refers to them only as BACRIM and this hinders potential avenues of justice for their victims. In some regions these groups yield significant local power, threatening the ongoing reincorporation of the FARC and the implementation of certain aspects of the peace agreement.

Of the 35,314 individuals who demobilised from the AUC between 2003 and 2012 just 7% were women (Darden et al., 2019). Technically the reinsertion process had a gender perspective based on “restoring the rights of girls and women ex–combatants” with support from the Presidential Committee for Women’s Equality (Méndez, 2012:124). However, women were not involved in the AUC peace negotiations and a gender lens was very limited. In reality, little was done to tailor reintegration based on specific needs.

The demobilisation of the paramilitaries was proceeded by a parallel national process of individual DDR made possible by Law 782 in 2002. Although collective and individual demobilisations differ, individuals merged within the process met at the point of reintegration and entered the same programme. While collective demobilisations came to an end in 2006 after all but one of the 39 paramilitary units had demobilised, the reintegration programme remained open to former NSAG members who could demobilise individually (Barraza & Caicedo 2007). This is now explored.

Phase 2b: The ACR Reintegration Programme (2006 onwards)

Over time, the PRVC became unable to meet the operational and organisational challenges that came with the amplified rate of AUC demobilisations and in response, the High Presidential Council for Reintegration (ACR) was established in September 2006 (ARN, n.da). This was a significant milestone for Colombian reintegration as policy focus shifted from short-term reinsertion to long-term reintegration. The Council assumed reintegration responsibility for individuals from AUC collective demobilisations and then later solely for individuals from the FARC, the EPL, the ELN and the AUC who were first certified as independently demobilised by the Operational Committee for the Abandonment of Weapons or CODA. Legal amnesties are
granted by the State for their political and related crimes once individuals do not perpetrate further offences.

The Colombian national reintegration programme uniquely takes place in the absence of bilateral negotiations and outside of a peace agreement (Jaramillo et al., 2009). While some combatants can be formally discharged from their NSAG, others make, an often perilous decision to abandon their armed group, present themselves to the state and join the reintegration programme. The decision can come at great personal cost as individuals are at risk of retributive action. The motivations behind such a decision are often multifaceted. Many become disillusioned with the cause. Others leave because they were war-weary; there had been a particular surge in aggressive military operations against the guerrilla under the Uribe Government and its democratic security policy launched in 2003.

I was feeling already a little tired after 10 years. And I was ill too and well the situation was very complicated. You couldn’t go out anywhere to get anything because wherever you showed up shots were fired. Kind of tired, more like bored [unmotivated], I don’t know… You are at great risk [escaping]… I took advantage of the moment… If you’re going to leave a general camp it’s difficult because they’ll chase you. Instead I escaped from a march in a small delegation. I sneaked out at night and they woke, and no one noticed I was gone (P18. Woman, FARC).

Other combatants simply wanted a different way of life for themselves and their families. “Out of tiredness and to change one’s life. Because they ordered my assassination and because I had the boy and I wanted the boy, he is 20 already to have a childhood and something different to what I had lived” (P17. Man, FARC). Farianas in particular left the FARC due its oppressive policies on forced contraception and abortion (Gutiérrez Sanín & Carranza Franco, 2017). One interview participant was granted permission to leave the FARC, a term known as ‘dar de baja’. Family reunification was her driving motivation. “The children. I was a mom, I had two boys, so it was better to be with the children. My responsibility was to be with the children” (P21. Woman, FARC). Others meanwhile chose reintegration because they were captured. “I didn’t choose, I was pulled out. I was pulled out forcefully… I was captured” (P07. Man, FARC). This dynamic may have implications for reintegration outcomes. “When there’s no explicit will to leave the group, the starting point of the reintegration is completely different (P10. Gender Expert, Colombian Peacebuilding Think Tank).

The numbers received into the national reintegration programme have been significant, in reality the programme has formed a large part of the Colombian counterinsurgency strategy by eroding

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65 P18. Woman. FARC. Interview conducted in Yopal, Casanare 30/04/2017.
67 Dar de Baja; to unenlist.
the membership base of the FARC and the ELN. The programme has so far worked with over 60,000 individuals.

FARC for example lost more men in 2009/2010 because of demobilisation than because of combat, so that’s highly interesting because we received 3000 people… We were getting an average of 10 persons, 10 people per day - that’s huge (P04. Former ACR Advisor).71

In 2007, the High Presidential Council for Reintegration ACR introduced a community reintegration model which sought to consider the needs of receiving communities and promote reconciliation. A year later reintegration was granted the status of State Policy and a national network of care centres was established to manage reintegration across the territories. In 2010, a Model of Psychosocial Care for Peace known as Mapaz was introduced (ARN, n.da).

In November 2011, under the new High Counselor for Reintegration, Alejandro Eder, the Colombian Agency for Reintegration (ACR) was established in place of the High Presidential Council (ARN, n.da). This latest iteration of the organisation was to further develop reintegration policy. The agency saw its role as supporting demobilised combatants to live a life of legality in a sustainable manner, strengthening state security and promoting peace by providing a holistic conception of reintegration. Decentralisation also became a new strategic element of policy, “what we were intending to do was provide attention in the territories. The programme before was focused in Bogotá. It was highly centralised” (P04. Former ACR Advisor).72 In 2012, a new strategy was launched to ensure reintegration policy was included in Colombian departmental development plans.

Today the ACR works extensively with external service providers at national and regional levels. This shift brought with it more context-relevant reintegration but also new challenges such as standardisation and quality assurance. Many peripheral Colombian regions lack institutional capacity, “the challenge was trying to coordinate with all these institutions nationally and locally, but also creating capacities to provide whatever we don’t have in the country” (P04. Former ACR Advisor).73 The ACR delivers many of its services through other public entities. Health services are issued through the national health service while professional training and vocational programmes are primarily provided by SENA.74

We are an articulator entity. For example, we cannot offer health services, but we do facilitate the articulation with those who offer health services and we give them training - how do you make an appointment, where you should go and how you get authorisation for a health examination. Healthy lifestyle habits. We take care of all those matters… For example, if you have an argument

71 P04. Former ACR Advisor. Interview conducted in Bogotá 03/03/2017.
72 P04. Former ACR Advisor. Interview conducted in Bogotá 03/03/2017.
73 P04. Former ACR Advisor. Interview conducted in Bogotá 03/03/2017.
74 SENA stands for Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje or The National Training Service, a Colombian public institution which develops vocational training programmes.
with your wife and maybe there are injuries, we can go ask for help at the Family Police Station, psychosocial attention and precautionary measures. So, we are as an agency teaching you, showing you how the entities work and which entities you can access effectively in order to receive the services they provide. That assistance is provided so that in the future, they can do it by themselves (P40. ARN Reintegration Professional).

The benefits of the ACR’s reintegration programme and the means in which it delivers its services has developed over the last decade. Initially, benefits included monthly stipends, health programmes, education and job training, psychosocial care and support in developing a productive project. Stefan Thorsell (2013) in his study of the Colombian economic reintegration strategy found that international DDR discourse favours a market-oriented approach in contrast to a preferable people-orientated methodology. In its initial policy of excluding certain stakeholders, Colombian economic reintegration followed that international neoliberal approach. Thorsell found that steps were later taken however towards a more people-centred approach leading to improved outcomes (Thorsell, 2013).

As thinking developed, the idea that achieving a sustainable and legal civil life required working beyond just the individual and into their environment gained prominence. A customised reintegration ‘route’ was advanced alongside a the notion of co-responsibility between the PRP and the ACR (ARN, n.db). The reintegration route is the path that each PRP must complete to reintegrate fully, as conceptualised by the ACR. The route provides additional benefits and includes families and receiving communities. It has eight dimensions; Personal, Productive, Family, Habitat, Health, Education, Citizenship and Security (ARN, n.db).

A reintegration roadmap is co-developed a suite of “conditions, benefits, strategies, methodologies and actions defined by the Agency [and] arranged with the person in the reintegration process, to promote skills development, overcome vulnerable situations and the autonomous exercise of citizenship” (ARN, n.db:1). Today, a former combatant spends on average six and half years in reintegration. Once completed they can take part in a graduation ceremony and remain in contact with the agency. In 2012, the first individual graduated from the reintegration route. In 2013, the agency adopted its multidimensional model. In 2014/2015, there were 21,000 people enrolled in the programme. Figure 6 below is an illustration of the Reintegration Route.

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75 P40. ARN Reintegration Professional. Interview conducted in Tumaco, Nariño 14/02/2018.
76 Persona en Proceso de Reintegración or Person in the Process of Reintegration.
Gender and Reintegration

In 2008, The National Council of Economic and Social Policy, the PRSE 77 published CONPES 3554 entitled the National Policy of Social and Economic Reintegration for Illegal Armed Groups and Individuals which made recommendations for reintegration and identified issues seen as barriers to successful reintegration (PRSE, 2008 translated from Spanish). Those socioeconomic policy recommendations explicitly referenced differential approaches including gender alongside age, culture, disability, geography and ethnicity together with customised care routes and non-discriminatory treatment (PRSE, 2008).

The PRSE called for a gender perspective within reintegration under a rights-based approach, noting differences between men and women based on “their interactions and their biological, social and cultural characteristics” (PRSE, 2008:58 translated from Spanish). Women were recognised as dynamic actors however their voluntarily demobilisation, “assumes a commitment to build and promote the growth of her family” and in instances where they are a partner to a demobilised combatant, to support them in their reintegration (PRSE, 2008:58 translated from Spanish). The policy stated that the ACR must focus on violence prevention and strategies for economic reintegration so that benefits extend to the couple. It also referenced the promotion of sexual health and reproductive rights. In respect of masculinities the document while noting that 90% of the people within reintegration were at the time men states,

The ACR will continue to apply a psychosocial intervention module to work on the theme of masculinity from the roles, imaginaries, representations and societal stigmas that exist about men

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77 El Consejo Nacional de Política Económica y Social.
in the various regions where the population in the reintegration process is located (PRSE, 2008:59).

Early detection and cross-institutional attention of the multiple forms of violence which can arise in “the nuclear family” is asserted as the means through which interfamily violence can be addressed, suggested mechanisms included workshops where non-violent conflict resolution, assertive communication, emotion regulation and gender roles are worked on (PRSE, 2008:57). Qualified professionals should provide psychological counseling for those who request it, to improve “the quality of the relationships of the participants and their family nuclei” (PRSE, 2008:57).

These initial approached to gender suggest a restrictive conception of gender and the position of women within reintegration and the nuclear family. Moreover, the policy document failed to mention sexual orientation apart from in one reference to Colombian national education plan which guaranteed participation in formal education irrespective of sexual choice (PRSE, 2008:28). The policy did acknowledge the autonomy of Colombia’s ethnic minorities groups; Afro-Colombian, Palenquero, Raizales and Roma, stating that once an individual self-identifies with one of these groups, the ACR should work to represent the interests of the person and their community (PRSE, 2008).

As reintegration policy evolved within the ACR, so its attention to gender but it was not until 2014 that the agency published its first standalone gender strategy. At this point, gender achieved a strategic place in Colombian DDR at least at the stage of policy and strategy conception. The gender policy was contemporary in its outlook and took from leading international standards at the time such as the 2006 UN International DDR Standards (UNDD, 2020). The new strategy recognised the difference between biological sex and gender as a social construction. It explicitly notes how an inclusive gender strategy should consider both masculine identities and men as gendered beings. “The two conceptual pillars of an attention differentiated by gender in DDR programs are femininity and masculinity” (ACR, 2014:7 translated from Spanish). The gender strategy also affirmed its “special emphasis on gender identities: masculinities, femininities, LGBT; traditional roles and stereotypes” (ACR, 2014:17 translated from Spanish). This approach in conjunction with the construction of ‘new masculinities’ would be achieved through dedicated psychosocial activities comprising diverse topics such as gender-based violence (GBV), interfamily violence, equitable relations, rights and responsibilities, sexual and reproductive health and the flexibility around traditional gender roles. The work of new masculinities was to recognise the existence of different forms of masculine constructs and promote non-violent masculinities (ACR, 2014).
The gendered experience of men and women within this reintegration programme is further explored in chapters 6 and 7. Whether the programme has lived up to its progressive intent in relation to the experiences of reintegrating women and men will be considered.

Phase 3: The Collective Reincorporation of the FARC (2016 onwards)

The national reintegration programme was joined by a new reincorporation programme upon the conclusion of the peace negotiations with the FARC in November 2016. It is the only collective programme currently taking place in Colombia. The decision for a NSAG to collectively demobilise after a peace negotiation or military defeat is the decision of its most senior command to accept a ceasefire and disarm because of irrevocable military loss or in exchange for political capital and/or other benefits after a process of negotiation talks. The order to assemble and disarm is issued down the ranks and complied with, in theory by all mid-level commanders and rank and file.

From the start we were not certain of the process, but we complied to the decision of the higher bodies. And so far, we’re following the orders and decisions made in the FARC Conferences. If that is what the higher bodies determine, that’s what we do. Besides that, we’re not people fixated on war. From the beginning, we have strived for peace, for a conversation (P41. Man, FARC).78

Reincorporation came into effect under the terms of the peace agreement as contained in Point 3, ‘End of the Conflict’ which detailed FARC’s disarmament, a process known as the ‘laying down of arms’, where the UN would receive and verify the FARC’s weaponry (Final Agreement, 2016). To monitor the ceasefire the various FARC fronts would assemble to collectively demobilise at the 26 Zonas Veredales and Transitional Normalization Points.79 From here, under security measures granted by the Colombian State, the FARC would commence its “preparatory process for the economic, political and social reincorporation… into civilian life in accordance with their interests” (Final Agreement, 2016:62). The FARC’s collective reincorporation differs greatly from the established, individualised reintegration programme which they sought to distance themselves from. Instead, FARC leadership conceptualised the social and economic reincorporation of their own rank and file as both collective and rural in nature alongside their transformation to a political party. That process was described as per the peace agreement,

A comprehensive, sustainable process of an exceptional and transitory nature which takes into account the interests of the community of the FARC-EP, its members and their families, aimed at strengthening the social fabric across the country’s territories as well as coexistence and

78 P41. Man. FARC. Interview conducted in Cunday, Tolima. 17/02/2018.
79 Puntos Transitorios de Normalización (PTN).
reconciliation among the inhabitants; furthermore, it is aimed at developing and deploying socially productive activities and local democracy. The reincorporation of the FARC-EP is based on the recognition of individual freedoms and free exercise of the individual rights of all those who are currently members of the FARC-EP and in the process of reincorporation… Every component of the reincorporation process shall have an equity-based approach, with a particular emphasis on women’s rights (Final Agreement, 2016:69).

A month after the conclusion of the peace negotiations, a National Council for Reincorporation, the CNR⁸⁰ consisting of two representatives from the government and the FARC was created to guide the strategic direction of reincorporation. While it was understood that the ACR would have a role to play in reincorporation the parameters of that role were initially undefined at least publically.

Even as thousands of FARC combatants carried out their ‘last march’ to the Zonas Veredales, there were serious concerns about the readiness and ability of the sites to ensure basic services (Brodzinsky, 2017). There were logistical, technical and practical issues evident when I visited and publicised in the media. Many were very much incomplete when the FARC began to assemble, and many lived in makeshift camps while they finished construction. However, the disarmament process was completed within several months, a considerable achievement by DDR standards and in total over 13,000 combatants have been accredited as demobilised (Otis, 2020; United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, 2020a).

A socioeconomic census of the demobilised FARC population was carried out by the National University of Colombia to support the future shape of reincorporation by understanding the needs of the population. It found that basic educational attainment was low, many combatants had not finished primary or middle school, and many had never been formally employed. The census found that most individuals wanted to work in collective productive projects that were agricultural in nature, as well as to complete their education. This focus on the collective as opposed individual was a key element in defining future aspirations of reincorporation from the perspective of the FARC. “Our projects are collective, not individual, as we want the housing to be. Collective, not individual” (P28. Woman, FARC).⁸¹

Small teams from the ACR were deployed to the zones early on tasked with the provision of early-stage reinsertion measures through collective attention. These initial activities included issuing identification cards as well as the provision of basic health and other services. On May 29th, 2017, the ACR was renamed the ARN, or Agencia para la Reincorporación y la

⁸⁰ Consejo Nacional de Reincorporación.
Normalización\(^{82}\) and the organisation further agreed to modify its function and expand its mandate to,

manage, implement, coordinate and evaluate, in a coordinated manner with the competent bodies, the policy, plans, programs and projects for the reincorporation and normalization of the members of the FARC-EP, in accordance with the Final Agreement signed between the National Government and the FARC-EP on November 24\(^{th}\), 2016 through the Technical Unit for the Reincorporation of the FARC-EP, and the policy of reintegration of armed people and groups in order to promote peace, security and coexistence (ARN, n.da:1).

Later that year, once disarmament was complete, the reincorporation spaces were renamed ETCRs as described in chapter 2 and their number reduced to 24. The zones became the sites of an ongoing community-based reincorporation and training model that would allow former members of the FARC to continue living together.

In June 2018, 18 months after the peace agreement was signed, the *National Policy for the Social and Economic Reincorporation of Former Members of the FARC* known as CONPES 3931 was published which contained 97 action points to be executed over an eight year period (PNRSE, 2018 *translated from Spanish*). A long-term reincorporation roadmap was approved in July 2019 which conceptualised reincorporation as within a framework of legality, as a social and economic route to civilian life and a “comprehensive, sustainable and transitory capacity-building process, implemented through access to rights for former members of FARC-EP and their families” (ARN, n.dc:1).

Today, the ARN offers services both inside and outside of the reincorporation spaces as FARC former combatants are now citizens, with the right to freedom of movement. The agency also manages the ETCRs, now know as AETCRs.\(^{83}\) The numbers of individuals living in the camps has dwindled over time and in November 2019, stood at 3,000 people (Ramírez, 2019). Family reunification, economic opportunities as well as concerns for personal security have led to the reduction in numbers. In October 2019, the murder of Alexander Parra a longstanding member of the FARC marked the first assassination that took place within the boundaries of an ETCR (Ramírez, 2020). At the time Parra’s wife, Luz Marina Giraldo was a candidate for FARC’s new political party. As mentioned in chapter 2 there has been at least 192 murders of former FARC combatants since the implementation of peace commenced (Misión de Verificación de las Naciones Unidas en Colombia, 2020).

The social and economic reincorporation route begins with an early-stage reincorporation period for 24 months, focused on initial reinsertion activities. The second stage is longer-term, a

\(^{82}\) The Reincorporation and Standardization Agency.

\(^{83}\) Antiguos Espacios Territoriales de Capacitación y Reincorporación or Former Territorial Spaces for Training and Reincorporation.
codesigned roadmap between the individual and ARN facilitator. Financial benefits include a one-time normalization allowance of 2 million Colombian pesos and then monthly basic income at 90% the minimum legal monthly wage, if the individual is unemployed and their roadmap is adhered to (ARN, n.dd). This second stage expands on service provision, focused on strengthening the capabilities of each participant. The new route has seven components, Community, Education, Economic Sustainability, Family, Habitability and Housing, Psychosocial Wellbeing and Health. Nonattendance for activities is accepted in instances of maternity leave and appearances to the transitional justice system among others, while benefits will be terminated in instances of criminal convictions (ARN, n.dd).

The education component of the route focuses on access to the primary, secondary and technical education systems under flexible models, access to higher education for individuals and their families and training for trades which support productive projects. The economic sustainability component focuses on income generation through productive projects, support for cooperatives while accounting for “territorial, differential and gender-based approaches” (ARN, n.dd:6). The aim of the productive projects is to ensure sustainable income, avoid recidivism and contribute to social integration. The Habitability and Housing dimension ensures decent living conditions through support with housing acquisition, construction or improvements. Individuals can access a single 8 million Colombian peso benefit for a productive project or housing investment.

The health component ensures access and support navigating the national social security and health system alongside a targeted programme for people with disabilities, high-cost illnesses and the elderly. The psychosocial wellbeing dimension enables individuals “to enhance their capabilities to establish meaningful relationships, strengthen their interpersonal ties and contribute to the improvement of the quality of individual and collective life, in addition to contributing to the coexistence and reconciliation of the territories where reincorporation is taking place” (ARN, n.dd:8). The family dimension strengthens family ties and development, guaranteeing rights and access to social services. Lastly, the community component centres on coexistence and reconciliation within local territories. In a similar vein to the reintegration programme, the route is supported by the relevant local and national agencies. Figure 7 below is a visual representation of the social and economic reincorporation route.
Figure 7: The Reincorporation Route (ARN, n.d.c).

Gender and Reincorporation

The ARN states that the reincorporation route is diverse and will serve the needs of the population irrespective of ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability ARN, n. dd). According to the United Nations Verification Mission as of October 2020, 1,467 individual projects, benefiting 1,734 former combatants, and 66 collective productive economic, benefiting 2,928 former combatants projects had been approved (United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, 2020a). 379 of the individual projects and 837 of the collective projects include women (United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, 2020a). Over 5,000 former combatants, 25% of them women are enrolled in primary through to high school education programmes. Approximately 1,700 more have accessed vocational training through SENA of which 29% were women (United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, 2020b).

According to the National Registry of Reincorporation, 25% of the total former FARC population who are in the reincorporation programme are women, so there proportion of women participating in the programmes mentioned above is positive (ARN, 2019b). The number of Farianas registered in reincorporation is similar to the proportion of women who presented to demobilise almost three
decades prior, although the experiences of Farianas has had some marked differences. This time several women were at the dialogue tables including Tanja Nijmeijer, a Dutch citizen who joined FARC in the early 2000’s and Victoria Sandino, a FARC commander who became a spokesperson for the group during the peace process, a member of the Gender Sub-Commission and today a Colombian senator. Additionally, the dedicated Gender Sub-Commission brought a ‘transversal’ gender lens to the final peace accords, an attempt to mainstream and integrate gender across the provisions, not seen before in high-level peace negotiations.

Conpes 3931, the policy document guiding reincorporation states that the transversal nature of the Final Agreement guides PNRSE policy and that there is “an expressed recognition is made of the rights of former women members of the FARC-EP, foreseeing possible disadvantages and gaps resulting from their process of reincorporation and transition to civil life” (PNRSE, 2018:25 translated from Spanish). Furthermore, it “reaffirms the need to guarantee an educational offering in accordance with their perspectives and needs, excluding traditional gender roles and to take advantage of the accumulated experiences of women in their militancy” (PNRSE, 2018:62 translated from Spanish). Conpes 3931 states that the ARN together with the CNR will design a psychosocial programme that accounts for gender, women’s rights and a territorial and ethnic focus (PNRSE, 2018). The policy document only mentions new masculinities once; concerning training for State entities involved in reincorporation (PNRSE, 2018). In total the document has 18 explicit affirmative actions (Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, 2019b).

Neither the national reincorporation policy, CONPES 3931 or the reincorporation roadmap was in place during the field research, the effects of which will be explored through the empirical data in the succeeding chapters. However, in 2019, the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies acknowledged the gender focus which had been incorporated within the policy, and the role it, alongside various gender policy mechanisms had played since then in ensuring female former combatant participation in economic reincorporation (2019b). Certain gendered barriers to women’s participation remain, including a disproportionate burden of care and access to specialised health services. This is especially pronounced for those who have left the ETCRs, giving rise to logistical challenges for the ARN, who must in parallel with other entities, “guarantee access to health, education, and prevention of gender-based violence programs for ex-combatant women and surrounding communities” (Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, 2019b)

According to the website of the ARN it has launched some reincorporation community projects with a focus on gender such as one “aimed at strengthening active citizenship of ex-combatant women” while gender education workshops have taken place at the zones of reincorporation
Meanwhile, Farianas are also intent on furthering their own political platform and version of feminism known as insurgent feminism (Las mujeres guerrilleras de las FARC-EP, 2017). They have pledged to continue their fight for Colombian women’s rights by pursuing an agenda of gender justice in rural Colombia, explicitly stating, “we are not demobilising, we are mobilising politically” (Stallone & Zulver, 2017:1). In their published manifesto for the Constitutive Congress of the Party, Farianas have put forward their vision of insurgent feminism which is further analysed in detail in chapter 6.

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This chapter has charted the development of Colombian DDR over the last three decades from 1989 to the present day. Reintegration has taken place across three broad phases, the first involved M-19 and other small guerrilla groups in the late 1990’s, the second, the collective demobilisation of the AUC which later became a national programme of reintegration, and thirdly since 2016, the collective social and economic reincorporation of the FARC. Colombian DDR is relatively unique in that has taken place in the context of ongoing socio-political violence, has been largely autonomous of international financial support and in some cases takes place outside of the context of a peace agreement. Today, two parallel and distinct programmes are being executed concurrently, the reintegration programme for those who choose to individually leave or are captured from leftist NSAGs and the collective FARC reincorporation programme. Both take a long-term view of reintegration. Consequently, the Colombian DDR landscape and especially the reintegration element is both relatively complex and comparatively highly developed.

DDR in Colombia has moved from being a technocratic exercise founded on military and security objectives and short-term reinsertion to a long-term co-created programme of reintegration with an objective of sustainable peace and security. The chapter looked at the development of gender conception and practice within that DDR evolution. Over time, there has been a recognition of gender and other dimensions of diversity within Colombian reintegration and an incremental incorporation of both. What is evident throughout the chapter is a slow shift from gender-blindness within DDR thinking, to one with the inclusion of a restrictive conception of gender and the role of women and later still, to a more contemporary and inclusive vision of gender, equality and diverse identities (ACR, 2014). The subsequent chapters provide a critical gendered lens to the construction and evolution of NSAG gender relations and to DDR. An in-depth and judicious analysis of the gender efforts within Colombian reintegration is set out in chapter 6 and 7 based on the empirical data supplied by the research participants. Ahead of this, chapter 5 explores the gendered experience of leftist NSAG membership.
CHAPTER 5: THE GENDERED EXPERIENCE OF LEFTIST NSAG MEMBERSHIP

This chapter is the first of three which present the empirical data gathered during the field work and an analytical interpretation of those research findings. The research captured the personal narratives of 24 former members of four of Colombia’s leftist NSAGs; the FARC (18 participants), M-19 (4 participants), the EPL (2 participants) and the ELN (1 participant). One man was a former member of both the FARC and the ELN. In total, 16 former insurgent women and 8 former insurgent men contributed to the research. Research participants formally attached with the EPL and M-19 had demobilised three decades prior. The remainder of the former combatant cohort, which included one individual from the ELN and all of the FARC participants had either participated in the Colombian national reintegration programme over the last two decades after capture or leaving their armed group, or they were part of the FARC collective reincorporation programme which began in 2016.

The research also integrated the opinions of a further 25 key informants who were subject matter experts on various topics concerning national and local reintegration efforts and Colombian gender relations. This diverse group included voices from academia, national NGOs, INGOs, Colombian think tanks, journalists and community leaders.

As detailed in chapter 3, the data was analysed using the qualitative method, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), an in-depth, thematic and analytical approach which seeks to makes sense of and give a detailed interpretation of life experience (Langdridge, 2007). Predominantly, the findings take a bottom-up approach where the experiences of former combatants are prioritised. I came to see the data as revealing through the lens of gender, an individual’s journey from civilian to combatant to civilian again. Building on the work of Darden, Henshaw and Szekely (2019) who made visible insurgent women at the points of ‘recruitment’, ‘participation’ and ‘resolution’, I have chosen to document that gendered experience along three specific junctures of the conflict lifecycle which also correlate to meaningful points on the individual’s life trajectory. Those three stages are:

1. The Gendered Experience of Leftist NSAG Enlistment
2. The Gendered Experience of Leftist NSAG Belonging
3. The Gendered Experience of Reintegration

This chapter explores the first two themes, that is the process of becoming and actively being a leftist NSAG member. The following chapters examine the gendered experience of reintegration of those same former combatants. Chapter 6 focuses on the gendered experience of women in
reintegration and chapter 7, the gendered experience of men. Together, the three results chapters present the most salient themes which emerged during the data analysis process.

I do not believe that gendered experience of reintegration should be studied in isolation, gendered experience leading up to that point must also be considered in the analysis. The decision to investigate the gendered experience of leftist NSAG membership was decidedly intentional. Women’s presence in and participation of armed conflict is all too often underestimated and misunderstood, which leads to their underrepresentation in, and flawed outcomes of DDR. Men’s gender identities are often not considered to any extent. Both are often considered as homogenous groups which erases contextual complexity and the nuance of experience.

To understand a decision to demobilise from political violence we must first understand the decision to mobilise into political violence. Among other objectives it can help to address those initial supply-side motivations that lead people to NSAGs and minimise the risk of recidivism. Moreover, to understand how gender relations manifest and are constructed during reintegration, we must also understand how they have been constructed and maintained during NSAG belonging. Gender is fluid and gender hierarchies and arrangements are often redefined during periods of social, cultural and environmental upheaval, be that during conflict or after it has concluded (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Consequently, I begin my gender analysis of reintegration at the point of Colombian leftist NSAG enlistment, making visible the gendered power relations which encouraged that transition before moving to the point of belonging, examining the construction of gender relations and gender identity within those Colombian leftist NSAGs.

The Gendered Experience of Leftist NSAG Enlistment

Local civilian populations are often recruited into NSAGs or expected to provide support in some capacity as those organisations do not have the infrastructure of national militaries. In cases of civil war and asymmetric conflict involving insurgent forces, the definition of combatant and its distinction from a civilian can be ambiguous (Gade, 2010; Watkin, 2005).

My mother is actually a displaced person. Before I was there [in the FARC] accomplishing my mission we had been displaced twice. I was there, then I came back, and my mother was displaced again. My mother has been displaced three times. Many times, people don’t understand that you are both the victim and the aggressor (P47. Woman, FARC).\(^{84}\)

\(^{84}\) P47. Woman. FARC. Interview conducted in Villavicencio, Meta 26/02/2018.
Civilians join NSAGs for a multitude of reasons, some are forced or coerced into the decision, but others see it as a liberating act of personal agency or as an obligation to a political cause (Bocanegra, 2020; Bouta, 2005; Darden et al., 2019). Chapter 1 explored the gendered dimensions of the practices of conflict and peacebuilding. A feminist conception of organised violence concludes it is built upon certain gendered relations and assumptions where for example, “patriarchal gender relations are seen to be intersectional with economic and ethno-national power relations in perpetuating a tendency to armed conflict in human societies” (Cockburn, 2010:140). War is legitimised by and reproduces gender-stereotypical ideals and protectionist narratives (Elshtain, 1987; Sjoberg, 2010; 2014). Society’s understanding of what it means to be a participant in warfare is also gendered, participants are almost exclusively considered male. There is often a sexual division of labour in conflict and individuals experience war in gender-specific ways, however the overarching discourse is reductionist. Rigid assumptions conceal the reality that “women’s participation in armed conflict is in fact profoundly routine” (Darden et al., 2019:1). This is normatively problematic, it legitimises ‘lesser than’ assumptions about women and therefore tries to rationalise their subordination (Sjoberg, 2010; 2014). Globally, as a counterpoint to the ‘beautiful soul’ narrative are countless female combatants and women who support war (Elshtain, 1987; Myrttinen et al., 2014).

A woman’s decision to join a NSAG may not necessarily align with the group’s motives to recruit women in the first instance. However, the decision to accept women into the ranks is the foremost factor leading to their presence (Thomas & Bond, 2015). It can be difficult to accurately assess the numbers of women in irregular forces through gender analysis as NSAGs rarely divulge such information. Women’s involvement in the FARC comprised at least 20% to 30% of its membership base, with some estimates reaching 40% (Ferro & Uribe 2002; Gutiérrez, 2008; Londoño & Nieto 2006). In the ELN, women comprised 25% of the group, while women were also particularly active in the EPL and M-19. During the disarmament of those groups, 25% of members who presented were women (Bergquist et al., 2001; Darden et al., 2019).

NSAGs recruit women for strategic and tactical purposes. They immediately have access to a larger pool of recruits to expand their operations. They may be actively competing for new members with other groups aside from the state. Alexis Henshaw (2020b) applied the theory of outbidding through a comparative framework to explore female enlistment into Colombia’s various leftist NSAGs, finding that their increasing presence and expansion of responsibility was “an intersubjective process, driven by competition among leftist movements existing in a crowded marketplace” (Henshaw, 202b:1).

Women by virtue of their gender can often carry out certain operations more covertly such as spying and transporting weapons. NSAGs may also view their presence as a means to win public
support. Leftist insurgent groups are more likely to recruit women than their far-right equivalents (Wood & Thomas, 2017). The case of Colombia mirrors this general trend, its leftist guerrilla groups actively recruited many women into combat and in far greater numbers than the Colombian paramilitary organisations.

Insurgent organisations who enlist women have improved chances of defeating government forces (Braithwaite & Ruiz, 2018). Jakana Thomas and Kanisha Bond (2015) found that violent political organisations (VPOs) who recruit women tend to be large, make use of terrorist tactics and have a platform of women’s rights which often promote “gender-inclusive messaging to attract female members away from competitors. Whether each group’s stance on ‘women’s issues’ is strategic or genuine, the rhetoric is often meant to signal a welcoming environment to interested women” (Thomas & Bond, 2015:11). They further concluded that a VPO’s demand for women is more indicative of female participation than the group’s “aggregate willingness to serve or society-level respect for women’s political rights – all common ‘supply’ indicators” (Thomas & Bond, 2015:5). “Whether discourse translates to genuine commitment” is part of the exploration within the following chapter section, the gender experience of NSAG belonging and subsequent chapters (Henshaw, 2020b:5).

The success of any NSAG is highly reliant on its ability to recruit, retain and replace new combatants, and with individuals who are prepared to commit violent acts (Gates, 2002). Joining a NSAG involves life-threatening risks and often a total discontinuity with past lives and social networks. Women not only enlist but are actively involved in the recruitment of new members. “I remember at a given point I had to work with women in the slums, where we were some 40 women, a lot of women. And I took them all to M-19” (P02. Woman. M-19).85

Societal discourse continues to uphold gendered assumptions about women who choose to participate in political violence. A former member of M-19 confirmed the multilayered conjecture which was directed towards her and her comrades about their enlistment, upon their collective demobilisation in the early 1990’s.

Scholars they would ask us, “did you guys go to war because you were sexually abused?” People imagine we went to war because we were raped or sexually abused. People think we went to war because we fell in love with a guy and just because we wanted to follow them we became part of the guerrilla. That we went to war because we were persuaded… because as women, we aren’t warriors, we aren’t fighters, we as women are pacifists. They think the men went there [to the guerrilla] and then persuaded us and that we went because we couldn’t think by ourselves with our little heads. And now when we return from war, we are dangerous women, violent women (P29. Woman, M-19).86

Her passage reveals the multiple, reductive tropes surrounding insurgent women and the various gendered assumptions which seek to remove their agency and ability to engage in rational thought from the narrative. Such surmises dominate because the behaviour of these ‘fallen women’ is incompatible with the socially acceptable and essentialist stereotypes of women as passive beings and peacemakers (Sjoberg & Gentry, 2007). The research findings challenge these preconceived and inflexible notions and demonstrate that the reified narrative of women as one-dimensional victims or peacemakers is antiquated.

As Laura Sjoberg and Caron Gentry (2007) explore, women are viewed as ‘mothers, monsters or whores’. If they are outwardly violent, they are deemed non-conforming, abnormal and illogical. “The woman fighter is, for us, an identity in extremis, not an expectation” (Elshtain, 1995:173). “We fail to “see” women combatants as normal or correctly identify their participation in conflict as being as combatants” (Darden, et al., 2019:4). Women who participate in war defy gendered expectations through their actions. “Women, especially those who took up arms during that time and now too, are women that have transgressed all social spaces” (P02. Woman, M-19).

That transgression later manifests into a distinct gendered stigma upon demobilisation. This is discussed further in chapter 6.

It is asserted that while men engage in political violence for politically charged motives, women’s impetus is personal. In short, women are deemed apolitical and emotional. As a former member of M-19 further noted, “women’s political work is disqualified by love” (P29. Woman, M-19).

Personal or intimate relationships discredit women’s political position and activism. “The political work of those women is not politically acknowledged as having political value. It’s believed that she’s doing what she’s doing because she’s in love” (P29. Woman, M-19).

Just as women are presumed to be peaceful, there is also an enduring belief in the inevitability of male violence. These essentialised arguments link certain attributes and behaviours to male and female biology and are harmful tropes (Breines et al., 2000). By presuming all men are predisposed to violence and women are never inclined to engage in it, we fail to understand the pathways that can lead all genders to political violence. Karen Kampwirth (2002) found that women are compelled to join insurgent groups for many of the same grievances as men and that personal biographical factors influence the decision. There are a variety of reasons for women and girls to enlist such as sexual abuse, unequal domestic burden, vengeance, protection and pre-

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existing links to an armed groups; multiple and related motives which are not always necessarily consistent with each other (Kunz & Sjöberg, 2009).

The following section provides a deeper analysis of the personal stories and histories that drew women and men into Colombian leftist NSAGs, beginning with the two most notably gendered themes, to escape dominant feminine ideals and to fulfil dominant masculine ideals. However, while these themes are discernible, motivations to join a leftist NSAG are less reductionist than overarching assumptions suggest, and in certain ways less gendered, in that there was a commonality of motives across the genders. The research found parallels across responses concerning reasons for enlistment. In a number of instances, former combatants held certain existing connections to a specific armed movement. Forms of alternative non-violent political activism or membership in other political organisations emerged as a gateway to leftist NSAGs. Overwhelmingly, respondents shared personal experiences of social injustice, barriers to education, economic and political grievances and human security issues. However, those shared motives are not necessarily gender neutral, how an individual arrives to a particular position can be a gendered process.

The empirical data makes evident that pathways to political violence overlap and are manifold and complex. The life altering decision to enlist into a leftist NSAG cannot be reduced to one single motive.

To Escape Dominant Feminine Ideals

The original intended beneficiaries of FARC’s armed struggle were the rural poor; the group was focused on dismantling the classist rather than sexist structures of Colombian elitist political system. Its distinctive political platform of gender equality evolved slowly over time but once established it came to be used for recruitment purposes. “In light of the systematic hardships women face, the FARC presents itself as a relief from everyday discrimination and a solution for women committed to solving inequality. The group describes its political project as a means for women to fight for equal treatment and the protection of their rights” (Stanksi, 2006:139).

It is important to consider both the ideological intention of a NSAG and the social conditions from which women leave to enlist (Stanksi, 2006). Women’s participation in NSAGs is conditioned not only by their own political grievances but also by the social options available to them, in a way that may be less poignant for their male counterparts (Darden et al., 2019). Women may enlist for reasons particular to womanhood, to avoid early marriage and subsequent traditional gendered family roles (Dietrich Ortega, 2012). In the FARC, although women were largely expected to engage in sexual relationships, they were free to choose their partners (Herrera
& Porch, 2008:611; Leech, 2012). They could also end those relationships, although it was not always without consequence, such as a loss of privileges if the relationship was with a commander (Krystalli, 2016).  

The social and economic opportunities available to women as civilians from an unequal rural society are highly constrained (Herrera & Porch, 2008). Colombia’s culture of machismo especially in the rural countryside typically elevates the social positioning of men over that of women. “In this context, the FARC offers women a certain degree of autonomy and personal development otherwise unattainable for rural women” (Gutiérrez Sanín & Carranza Franco, 2017:772). Women are embedded in societal structures that often seek to limit their agency. While any individual may feel empowered through NSAG membership, for women it is often concerned with escaping those normative gender expectations with their corresponding social limitations.

Women can enlist believing that the perceived gender equality of the armed organisation is greater than that of civilian life, that leftist NSAG membership offers an alternative existence. Although no female research participant explicitly stated they joined a leftist guerrilla group for the cause of women’s emancipation, they did cite group ideology as a motivating factor. “The ideal. It was an ideological issue” (P21. Woman, FARC). An attraction to the gender equality discourse was implicit in their reasoning. Many expressed continued alignment with the ideological principles of their former group which in the case of the FARC was “a discourse that explicitly links class and gender equality” (Gutiérrez Sanín & Carranza Franco, 2017:772). Moreover, all of the FARC women interviewed continued to attest to in-group gender equality.

We lived an equality, men and women are the same, something you don’t see here in Colombia, where because you’re a woman you are considered to be less, and if you’re a man [you see] male chauvinism. No, we never saw that in our organisation (P28. Woman, FARC).

Many confirmed their belief in more equitable gender relations within the FARC than wider society, making comparisons between their new roles and responsibilities and their lives before enlistment.

We did see that as something beautiful here, because as a civilian, meaning when you’re in your own house, women are just for cooking, for washing after their brothers, their father and, if they have a husband, then for the husband and to tend to him. And when we got here to the guerrilla ranks, not anymore (P26. Woman. FARC).

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90 The FARC maintained strict control over the reproductive rights of its female members (Krystalli, 2016). This is explored in more detail in section two of this chapter.
91 P21. Woman. FARC. Interview conducted in Santa Lucía, Ituango 07/05/2017.
Women are often especially vulnerable in times of conflict and NSAG membership can be seen as a viable route to security (Kaufman & Williams 2010). Female combatants can feel empowered by gun ownership and armed group affiliation. “They view the weapons they wield as a direct source of respect, empowerment and protection” (Anderlini, 2007:100). “I liked guns since I was a little girl. So that drew me even more, right? It was like the little spark” (P18. Woman, FARC).94

The perceived attainment of independence, security and equality as a motivating factor to enlistment, figured into insurgent women’s decision making. The ideological development of the FARC and its gender regime is studied further in section two of this chapter.

To Fulfil Dominant Masculine Ideals

I liked it. You know, when you’re young, you’re crazy (P42. Man, FARC).95

The protracted nature of the Colombian conflict and the high levels of violent crime across the country has led to a desensitisation and normalisation of violence in some sectors of society alongside the elevation of gun culture. As detailed in the theoretical perspectives chapter, machismo is an underlying masculine ideology in traditional Latin American society which holds an exaggerated sense of hegemonic masculinity and the perception of power and entitlement. There is a celebration of exaggerated machismo inherent in gun culture and within this attitude a belief that goals can be achieved through violence.

There’s a big culture of violence. After so many years of such a strong conflict, there’s now a culture of weapons. If you don’t do what I want, I threaten you with weapons or kill you (P38. Director, Local Peacebuilding NGO).96

Not all individuals who are exposed to violence as children will subsequently behave violently. However, there is an association between exposure and use, making it a risk factor (CDC, 2020). Leftist NSAG combatants have often grown up in conflict-affected regions where weapons are in circulation and where armed individuals command respect and power. “Some of them who have been places where the guy that had the weapon was the guy that you had to look up to, [thinking] “that's who I wanna be” (P04. Former ACR Advisor)97. Membership of a leftist NSAG gives to combatants the artefact they saw wield power in their communities.

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94 P18. Woman. FARC. Interview conducted in Yopal, Casanare 30/04/2017.
95 P42. Man. FARC. Interviewee conducted in Cunday, Tolima 17/02/2018.
96 P38. Director, Local Peacebuilding NGO. Interview conducted in Tumaco, Nariño 13/02/2018.
97 P04. Former ACR Advisor. Interview conducted in Bogotá 03/03/2017.
Male violence should be understood in the wider system of gender power relations, sociocultural and socioeconomic context. As human behaviour is in part socially constructed, it is influenced by societal expectation. Certain societal and group norms can endorse and legitimise violence.

In the complex scenario of violence that characterizes Colombia, cycling through an armed group is a rite of passage for many young men. In a context of generalized violence, the proliferation of criminal networks, a limited legal labour market, and a cultural economy that fuses weapons, masculinity, and power, grabbing a gun is not necessarily an aberration (Theidon, 2009: 16–17).

Membership of a leftist NSAG is a public performance and joining can satisfy many of the socialised internalised gender tropes about being a man that prevail in certain sectors of Colombian society.

Others see their enrolment as a possibility to gain recognition and power in or over their families and communities, and thus to become respected and feared. These violent performances of ‘hard’ masculinities (and less often ‘hard’ femininities) are geared towards several audiences: the performers themselves, who are seeking to reinforce their own toughness; their comrades whom they are trying to impress; the civilian population from whom they are trying to gain respect; the ‘enemy’ whom they are trying to intimidate; and potential sexual partners whom they are seeking to woo (Castañeda & Myrttinen, 2014:24).

Traditional protectionist tropes and imagery of the brave warrior can also prove enticing to men. One male respondent said he always planned to join the Colombian army after seeing their presence growing up but was swayed by the FARC after witnessing human right abuses in his community. He spent his childhood and adolescence witnessing armed conflict and men in uniform and this exposure meant he had an expectation of one day participating.

I liked them [The FARC] when I saw them… When I was very little I thought that it would be the army, the soldiers, that ones I saw around, so I grew up with that in mind and I told my family, “I’ll join the army when I grow up” … When I started seeing the FARC I began looking into that point of view and I no longer thought of the army, but the FARC called my attention the most (P36. Man, FARC).98

While different societies value different attributes, there is cultural pressure for men to be men in specific ways and to live up to national and normative ideals of masculinity which involve the accumulation of power and privilege. “Men perform masculinity in order to reproduce those power relations, as a result of which they will have the possibility to continue maintaining power and all privileges stemming from it” (Abrahanyan, 2017:2). Dominant cultural expectations can mean that men may seek NSAG membership as a means to acquire the prominence and resources that they feel entitled to but is otherwise lacking due to economic context or social positioning. When men fail to live up to societal ideals of masculinity such as being the sole breadwinner, NSAGs can become attractive, seen both as a viable route to the status they feel unable to acquire

as civilians, and a means to change the system which is preventing them from fulfilling their masculine gender roles. Male shame which is produced by “exaggerated ideas of masculine honour” can encourage this (UNESCO 1997:9; Thomas & Bond, 2015).

This section provided an analysis of the two most notably gendered themes, to escape dominant feminine ideals and to fulfil dominant masculine ideals concerning leftist NSAG enlistment. The section now explores further themes related to enlistment through personal stories and histories, where commonality of motives across the genders are evident although they are not necessarily gender neutral.

Activation through Activism

The research suggests that the FARC used organisations such as the Colombian Communist Youth movement and other political bodies such as the La Unión Patriótica (UP) as channels to identify future recruits. Interview participants spoke of earlier membership in those organisations.

I was 22 years old [when I joined the FARC]. I grew up inside the revolution since I was a boy. Back in the years when the JUCO of Communist Youths were a thing.99 From the Communist Youths we went to the FARC’s political movement, which was the Unión Patriótica, the UP. I was a UP leader (P17. Man, FARC).100

Other leftist NSAGs including M-19 were actively present in trade unions and some members joined directly from those bodies.

Independent syndicalism had the presence of guerrillas.101 All the leftists organisations had a role there. So, when I was 19 I started working in a trade union that had many clandestine proposals, secret documents, public debates… I arrived here in 1970 and the M [M-19] became known publicly in 1974. When the M started I was there, in all that syndicalist movement. I had been trained, I participated in organising awareness-raising tasks, I went with leftist currents, we had ongoing study circles…. political training rituals, so we worked on all of that and that’s when we started receiving their discourses (P29. Woman. M-19).102

Ideological and political inculcation often begins before official leftist NSAG membership. A history of previous membership in political organisations and civil society groups can act as a pathway to enlistment for both men and women.

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99 The Juventud Comunista Colombiana (JUCO) was the youth wing of the Partido Comunista Colombiao (PCC) or Communist Party of Colombia.
100 P17. Man. FARC. Interview conducted in Yopal, Casanare 30/04/2017.
101 Syndicalism is a labour movement that “advocates direct action by the working class to abolish the capitalist order, including the state, and to establish in its place a social order based on workers organized in production units” (Britannica, 2019:1).
Protection and Revenge Narratives

There is a human security dimension to Colombian leftist NSAG enlistment. Experiencing or witnessing acts of direct violence towards civilians including massacres and executions by right-wing paramilitary forces impelled several interview participants to enlist in a guerrilla movement. In these instances, individuals took up arms for protectionist and revenge motives, disillusioned by the inability of the state to protect their families and communities.

In my hometown there was a massacre carried out by the self-defences [The AUC], who massacred 11 people. That left a mark on me… I mean my mind shifted. I got scared because I saw uncertainty in the community, of whether they would return again to commit another massacre. So, years later I made that choice and joined the guerrilla ranks at age 18 (P27. Woman, FARC).103

Another research participant joined the FARC after he witnessed his uncle being attacked by a machete as the Colombian military looked on and took no action.

The other reason was seeing so many abuses to the people from where I’m from, that led me to enlist the FARC’s ranks… After I saw a paraco attacking very badly with a machete an uncle of mine and with the soldiers right there watching and knowing that he was a paramilitary.104 Well, I grew totally disappointed in that and that was it (P36. Man, FARC).105

After the execution of his brother by the Colombian armed forces in a case of false positive, another interview participant volunteered with the FARC in retaliation (P43. Man, FARC).106

One woman said she enlisted to protect her younger sister who had been recruited as a minor. This interview participant was 22 at the time and left her own business, a hair salon to join the FARC, working in a financial management support role. “I was only there for my sister. Yes, I did follow orders, like normally you would, like any other person… I had to make it look like I was convinced but in reality, I wasn’t…. From the moment I joined, I joined thinking that I was going to bring my sister back one day” (P47. Woman, FARC).107

Linda Klouzal’s research (2008) describes how women were specifically motivated to join an armed group after witnessing state violence, “witnessing or hearing of someone who had been victimized, and in response to a threat to loved ones targeted by the regime” (2008:298). Mia Bloom (2005) found that personal tragedy like the loss of a male family member to political violence can lead women to enlist into a NSAG. These are largely emotive-driven reasons, the empirical evidence here demonstrates that men can also be moved to enlist by emotion after witnessing authoritative or indiscriminate violence against loved ones and the wider community.

103 P27. Woman. FARC. Interview conducted in Pondores, La Guajira 08/12/207.
104 A paraco is slang for a member of a paramilitary organisation.
106 P43. Man. FARC. Interview conducted in Cunday, Tolima 18/02/2018.
107 P47. Woman. FARC. Interview conducted in Villavicencio, Meta 26/02/2018.
Moreover, personal and political motivations are not necessarily mutually exclusive, as the following account from a woman who spent 25 years in the FARC shows.

The reasons for my being in the FARC are mainly political. As we already know Colombian history, my family was associated to the UP and there was a lot of political persecution, a lot of murders, a lot of displacement… Back then I was about 9-12 years old when I started noticing that the UP was gaining strength and my parents, as they were activists suffered from a lot of persecution. There was a time when they started to assassinate many people…. When I started seeing this streak of violence and that they started to assassinate in the streets, on the roads, in their homes, many [victims] were our neighbours, our relatives, then I decided to join the FARC (P25. Woman, FARC).108

Perceived Social Injustice: Social and Economic Marginalisation

Interview participants from rural Colombia shared similar experiences of growing up in impoverished communities. Poverty and insurmountable barriers to the cost of education were recurrent reasons to enlist. One woman who was 14 when she was recruited into the FARC stated,

My reasons were mostly due to poverty. I come from a very humble family. Usually, all of us who go there [the FARC] come from humble families, peasants. I am from a small town here in Casanare, those forgotten ones, left in the rear end. One doesn’t have much support from anyone. My dream was to study, and I didn’t have anyone to help me with my studies. The three years I managed to study I had to work in order to study. It was a very, very hard struggle. So, what then? One day, well, they showed up around here (P18. Woman, FARC).109

Another woman also from the FARC echoed a similar sentiment.

Lack of opportunities. I never studied. We were raised by a single mother, very poor… the first offer one gets, one thinks it the best one. I do think it was the best one, it was a beautiful experience that was worth it, in which I learned a lot about life, the value life has, the courage with which things are earned so I think it’s the best experience of my life. I never regret it (P37. Woman. FARC).110

Despite a common rhetoric that women join armed insurgencies for love or to follow a man, only one female interview participant said she joined a leftist NSAG because of an intimate relationship. It was only one of many reasons she spoke of which also included poverty, sexual abuse and mistreatment and because she enjoyed the life that armed group membership would offer her. She joined aged 16 and spent seven years in the FARC.

There were many reasons. We lived in a very humble town, full of needs, too many… Sometimes there was work, sometimes there wasn’t, there was a lot of poverty. We were too many in our home, we were eight little siblings. And well, because things happen, I actually joined because I liked a guy…. A lot of us ended up going there because they thought, ‘oh how great’, others for vengeance, others for necessity, others because they like it, that’s the truth. I liked it. if I’m being honest, I liked it, I still like it. Also, for necessity, in my case they’re all included…I had a lot of

108 P25. Woman. FARC. Interview conducted in Pondores, La Guajira 08/12/207.
110 P37. Woman. FARC. Interview conducted in Santa Lucia, Ituango 10/02/2018.

124
shortfalls in my childhood. I had to work since I was a little girl, I arrived here in Bogotá when I was 11 years old... A lot of people abused me, I mean, they basically raped me. I was mistreated by the people I worked with, who were supposed to have a way of life a lot better than mine. So basically, all of this made me take a decision. Those are things that you don’t see. I mean a lot of people judge others, but they don’t know why they did certain things (P48. Woman, FARC).

Her account reveals the multiple and complex myriad of reasons an individual who has often experienced much hardship holds which leads to enlistment. In the absence of other viable social and economic routes, it can be difficult to untangle environmental push factors which lead to conflict participation from an autonomous decision to do so. Agency as a binary concept oversimplifies the realities living in a conflict zone and of conflict itself (Henshaw, 2015). Sometimes, the distinction between coercion and choice concerning NSAG membership is not so apparent (Darden et al., 2019). What is evident is that extreme inequality and poverty, especially in the countryside, are significant push factors which led many people to the FARC. Moreover, these experiences came to shape the political views of participants later in life, so that the political project of the leftist NSAG becomes a significant pull factor to enlistment.

Political and Ideological Alignment

There was minimal economic incentive to join a Colombian leftist NSAG, unlike the paramilitaries they did not pay their recruits a salary. Jeremy Weinstein (2006) finds that these types of armed groups tend to rely on ideology and norms to attract new members. This type of incentive tends to attract activists who wish to change the status quo, as opposed opportunists, although not exclusively (Gutiérrez Sanín, 2008; Weinstein, 2006 emphasis added).

As highlighted previously, several former insurgent women spoke of their political and ideological alignment to their leftist NSAG and that it was a factor in their enlistment. One woman said her impetus for joining M-19 was a belief in illegitimate state political practices and paramilitarism.

The practice of paramilitarism conducted by the state, backed up by the state, guaranteed by the state, protected by the state. It’s a practice that’s culturally allowed… It was a normal and natural practice that was legalised, formalising the elimination of political opposition, of whomever contradicts politically… We did know that we were going to die if we remained on the legal path. So, if we were to die on the legal path, then we might as well die on the illegal one and we didn’t care. We thought that we could accomplish more though being illegal and undertook the same risks (P29. Woman, M-19).

Within the interviews there was a clear overlap between social injustice and political grievance, individuals saw leftist NSAG membership as the only viable means to change wider social conditions.

My reasons for ending up in the FARC’s ranks is because the government… I didn’t have the resources to keep studying, I had no adequate housing. I wanted to keep studying but I wasn’t given the opportunity to do so. My parents had very limited resources and I didn’t see any other way. Perhaps coming here, to be able to fight was to see if further on, we could get something better (P26. Woman, FARC).

The consequences of political violence can be damaging and destructive while insurgent life is extremely difficult and dangerous. The previous accounts from two former members of different leftist NSAGs demonstrate how women are still willing to make a calculated risk for the potential to transform their political and social landscape. Given women’s relative absence from politics and the gender discriminatory barriers erected around them, the promise of political representation and radical change becomes for some a cause worth fighting for.

Violence can be seen as the only way of achieving political representation or preferred political systems. As women are traditionally excluded from public and political life this may in fact be particularly relevant for them... Violence is often used as a means for individuals to seek representation or communicate political preferences. This is particularly relevant for individuals who, like many women, may feel marginalized, disenfranchised or otherwise excluded from conventional political life (Thomas & Bond, 2015:40).

Insurgent women’s policy preferences often forward a platform of gender justice precisely because it is so often absent from conventional politics. The Fariana’s advancement of insurgent feminism since their demobilisation is evidence of this. This is explored in detail in chapter 6.

Men also felt unable to challenge the state authority through legal methods and saw insurgency as the only alternative. One man who spent 22 years in FARC said, “a country where 50% of Colombians live in extreme poverty. Where the state represses the people more and more … There are multiple consequences that lead us to stand up in arms, to reclaim our rights” (P41. Man, FARC).

The empirical data clearly demonstrates in many cases political agency and autonomy on the part of both women and men. Social, economic and political grievances were by far the most common response regarding the mobilisation to political violence.

Radical violent organizations can be a valuable substitute for traditional representation for individuals interested in supporting goals and expressing preferences that have been marginalized or overlooked by existing political structures (Thomas & Bond, 2015:6).

113 P26. Woman. FARC. Interview conducted in Pondores, La Guajira 08/12/207.
114 P41. Man. FARC. Interview conducted in Cunday, Tolima. 17/02/2018.
While both Colombian men and women can experience social, economic and political marginalisation, men do not experience it as a result of gender discrimination. Shared motives for leftist NSAG enlistment are not necessarily gender neutral, in that how an individual arrives at a particular position can be a gendered process. As the earlier narrative above demonstrated women can be impelled to join due to specific gender discrimination and gender-based violence alongside other motivations (P48. Woman, FARC).115

Personal circumstances later lend themselves to a particular political and ideological outlook which then aligns with, or is worked on further by leftist NSAGs and their political rhetoric to recruit new members.

There are some people [in the FARC] who take the political route... Those are the ones who talk and move the masses. They can stand up in a public square in the middle of a town or rural county and talk about the state’s oppression and of how we’ve suffered...That is how they take many people (P11. ACR Reintegration Professional).116

These political and ideological stances are later developed and used as tools to maintain group cohesiveness and further the military and political objectives. The theme of political and ideological inculcation during leftist NSAG membership is further explored in the latter half of this chapter.

An Intersectional Lens on Leftist NSAG Enlistment

A context-sensitive and intersectional focused gender analysis of pathways to leftist NSAG membership reveals several further nuances in explaining enlistment. There was comparability in responses from combatants from ethnic minority backgrounds for example, but the data also revealed the specific vulnerabilities of this population. One man claimed that the relatively high percentage of Indigenous people in the FARC was correlated with the extreme poverty and marginalisation of the population, “That’s why in the FARC you find so many Indigenous people...because it’s the only way to reclaim rights” (P41. Man, FARC).117

The two interview participants who self-identified as Indigenous gave their reasons for joining the FARC as poverty and after witnessing a targeted attack against their community. Colombian Indigenous groups often live in isolated regions with a historic absence of state presence and consequently have been at heightened risk of the armed conflict. A women from the Kankuamo

117 P41. Man. FARC. Interview conducted in Cunday, Tolima 17/02/2018.
people felt obliged to join the FARC because her community was being targeted.\textsuperscript{118}

In the Sierra Nevada, the paramilitary killed many Indigenous community leaders, especially from the Kankuamo Community. We didn’t see any suitable path other than taking up arms and perhaps maintaining a bit of the life we used to have, because they killed students, leaders, elders. That forced me to take up arms… When you start seeing that kind of violence of massacres in the villages where you live then you have no other path to choose from. You’re left with this one. I dropped out of school… I felt obliged to (P28. Woman, FARC).\textsuperscript{119}

The Colombian internal armed conflict is regional and takes place across a vast country. Accordingly, the behaviour and conduct within the various armed groups and across different blocs and fronts are not necessarily uniform, nor are the motivating factors to enlist. Tumaco is the capital city of a conflict-affected department of Nariño which is an epicentre of drug trafficking and the cultivation of coca. The population of Tumaco is predominately Afro-Colombian and the majority are IDPs, having been forcibly displaced by the armed conflict. The unemployment rate is very high and there is little by way of formal industry and employment. Locally, there are highly lucrative illicit economies in an otherwise very underprivileged part of the country, and this draws people into armed gangs. The director of the Personería there believed recruitment into illegal armed gangs including the guerrilla but also criminal organisations in this region was less concerned with political conviction and more wholly borne from economic necessity.\textsuperscript{120}

The issue of drug trafficking and the issue of illegal mining is very lucrative. So, I belong to the group not because of ideology, here in Tumaco people are not with the FARC due to ideology for the most part. It was due to an economic interest too. Because of everything that we spoke about before, about poverty (P39. Personería).\textsuperscript{121}

Motivating factors to enlist are also influenced by urban and rural differences. The FARC was an organisation with a predominately peasant composition and it held a particular attraction for rural women who may have perceived chauvinism in its ranks to be less than their rural contexts; whereas machismo within the middle-class urban population was probably comparatively lower (Ferro & Uribe 2002). When considering the profiles of interview respondents there were clear similarities across individuals formally within the same armed group. Profiles diverged more

\textsuperscript{118} The Kankuamo are an Indigenous people hailing from the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta mountain range. Their population is estimated to be around 15,000 people. Historically they adopted survival strategy of isolation although have been faced with a process of cultural assimilation. Their Indigenous language is Sánha. Their laws stem from nature, the law of origin, which ‘regulates the relationships between all living beings from the stones of the earth to humankind itself’ (Minority Rights, 2020:1). During the conflict ‘communities became victims of forced displacement, selective assassinations, massacres, forced disappearances, threats, confinement and forced recruitment into illegal armed groups’ (Minority Rights, 2020:1).

\textsuperscript{119} P28. Woman. FARC. Interview conducted in Pondores, La Guajira 08/12/207.

\textsuperscript{120} The Personería are a part of the Colombian Public Ministry whose role is to monitor and control the management of the mayors and decentralised public entities. Responsibilities are numerous and include the promotion and protection of human rights, the monitoring of due process, environmental conservation, public patrimony and the efficient provision of public services.

\textsuperscript{121} P39. Personería. Interview conducted in Tumaco, Nariño 14/02/2018.
when studying variance across leftist NSAGs.

Former FARC interview participants were in the main, young at the time of their recruitment and from impoverished and rural backgrounds. Groups such as the EPL and M-19 tended to attract individuals from those more middle-class and urban contexts, although not exclusively and the empirical data supports this; the women of M-19 interviewed were from urban centres or had spent prolonged periods of time living in those cities. They had attained a higher level of education prior to, and after their leftist NSAG participation. This also held true for the two former members of the EPL. Their responses centred less on personal circumstances concerning poverty, but they were equally motivated by issues of social and political justice. In a pair interview, two women from M-19 discussed how despite ideological differences, political, social and economic exclusion was the central reason for the existence of all of the leftist NSAGs and for those who joined.

The motives for which people in Colombia have gone to war in the insurgency have been the same. You can sum them up in the right to political participation. The right to own land, to justice regarding land. And the right to difference, that is to inclusion, the right to be included. So those motives are the same for all the organisations. But politically, ideologically, there are some who voice it from [the perspective of] democracy, others from communism, others say it for socialist transformations such as the ELN, where there’s a mix of the religious and the social (P02. Woman, M-19). 122

The experience of children as participants in conflict and DDR was not within the parameters of this research. However, it became apparent during the course of the fieldwork that some interview participants were recruited into a leftist NSAG when they were minors and therefore were Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups (CAAFAGs). 123 There has been an estimated 17,000 children recruited into Colombian armed groups over the course of the conflict (CNMH, 2017a). The FARC was particularly known for recruiting adolescents (Child Soldiers International, 2014). Minors often spend many years in an NSAG and so they later enter the reintegration programme as adults, as opposed to the child-centred reintegration programme which is also operational in Colombia. It was due to this reason that I came to interview several people who were children at time of their recruitment.

There was a divergence in opinion over the existence of forced recruitment and the ability of minors to consent to participate in armed conflict, most obviously between former members of

123 Preferred term to child soldiers. Not all children are used as fighters in armed groups. According to the Paris Principles on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (2007) CAAFAG is “a child associated with an armed force or armed group refers to any person below 18 years of age who is, or who has been, recruited or used by an armed force or armed group in any capacity, including but not limited to children, boys and girls, used as fighters, cooks, porters, spies or for sexual purposes” (Paris Principles on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict 2007).
the FARC and key informants. While children can be directly abducted into armed groups the reality is that, as highlighted in earlier accounts above and through the narrative below, they often ‘volunteer’ to participate. One participant who worked within FARC recruitment stated.

The guerrilla has never recruited people by force. There are 10, 15, 17 year old kids, minors, who see the guerrilla and think, “I want to go with you because at home my father hits me, my mother this, my aunt that, my grandmother this, everyone against me” or, “what I want is to join the guerrilla to come and kill the one who hurt my father with a machete, the one who killed my father”. The kids went [with the guerrilla] of their own free will (P44. Man, FARC).124

Another interview participant, a man from the Inga Peoples in the Amazonas was 14 when he was recruited into the FARC.125 Although he acknowledges he was “very young, very, very young”, he believes he exercised personal autonomy in the decision.

I wasn’t forced. Why would I put up a movie where many say they were forced, that they were a quota, because the guerrillas are not like that.126 I went to a meeting with them, one they organised for young people that was called the Communist Youth and I liked the subject. Besides all that, I had already finished primary schooling and in order to continue studying I had to move to Leticia, which is the capital of Amazonas. Of course, my parents didn’t have those resources. I didn’t have a way of going. I saw an option here. In the FARC, at the time the conflict wasn’t so cruel, wasn’t so tough, and the FARC had spaces to teach. They had spaces for mathematics, social studies courses, it was like a school (P07. Man, FARC).127

The research demonstrates the danger of neglecting the personal motivations of minors which sit behind ‘voluntary’ participation. Such motives stem from both push and pull factors, they consist of circumstances which originate in the community such as poverty, violence, the absence of schooling and vengeance and as incentives offered by the armed group such as assurances of food, education, status and protection (War Child, 2018a).

There’s too much unemployment, 70% unemployment. So young people, if they don’t have a job nor access to university or higher education, only 3% of young people access higher education, then kids have no opportunities and armed groups offer them an opportunity (P38. Director, Local Peacebuilding NGO).128

Even when a child ‘voluntarily’ joins an armed group it is often in a context of very limited alternatives, enlistment may present as the seemingly only viable option. “These limited options are incredibly complex as social, political, economic, and cultural elements mix and interact to create the various push and pull factors” (War Child, 2018b:1). Given that a number of research participants told me they joined the FARC as a minor I felt it would be remiss to exclude this

124 P44. Man. FARC and ELN. Interview conducted in Cunday, Tolima 18/02/2018.
125 The Inga are an indigenous ethnic group from the Southwest region of Colombia including Caquetá, Cauca, Putumayo and Nariño. They have a historical relation to the Inca. Their traditional language is Inga a dialect of Quechua. That are thought to number 21,000 and face physical and cultural extinction because of the armed conflict.
126 To put up a movie means to pretend something was different to what it was.
128 P38. Director, Local Peacebuilding NGO. Interview conducted in Tumaco, Nariño13/02/2018.
finding from the research. In the course of data collection none of the participants who were recruited as an adolescent, and later spoke to me as adults claimed it was under duress, instead all attested to self-determination in the decision. The use of children in conflict is indefensible but to make a clear distinction between forced and voluntary recruitment can be difficult.

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To understand a decision to demobilise from political violence we must first understand the decision to mobilise into political violence. This section explored the gendered experience of leftist NSAG enlistment. The empirical data makes evident that pathways to political violence are manifold and multifaceted irrespective of gender identity. Reasons to join a leftist NSAG are personal, political and intersectional. The overarching discourse concerning men and women’s participation in armed conflict is reductionist and problematic, it erases experience and conceals the complexity. Colombian leftist insurgent groups actively recruited a great many women into combat. This research confirms that women can be the perpetrators of political violence to forward political and social aims while equally men, can be driven by the personal and emotive. There was a commonality of motivating factors across the genders particularly concerning poverty, barriers to education, witnessing violence, economic marginalisation and political exclusion.

All individuals are gendered beings and shared motives are not always gender neutral. How an individual arrives to a particular rationale and position can be a gendered process. There are some distinctly ‘male’ reasons to go to war; societal expectations of male soldering, protectionist narratives and fulfillment of masculine ideals especially if they are felt to be lacking in civilian life or flaunted by public displays of NSAG membership. Meanwhile women seek to escape the normative feminine equivalent. Men and women inhabit different places in society especially in rural Colombia. The social positioning of women, the gendered division of labour and concentration of power in their communities comes to shape life chances and leftist NSAG membership can been seen as a viable escape route. Men may not feel excluded and disenfranchised by virtue of their gender, but by their class, location and other markers of identity. All individuals may feel a sense of empowerment though their leftist NSAG affiliation and through the ownership of weapon in a society where security is so fragile, and status and power are often located in the hands of the armed. Pathways to this sense of empowerment are also gendered.
The research demonstrates the importance of an intersectional and context-based lens to gender analysis. Identity categories such as ethnicity, class, geography and age creating interlocking oppressions and differential experiences. The chapter now explores the gendered experience of leftist NSAG belonging.

Section 2: The Gendered Experience of Leftist NSAG Belonging

Section two of this chapter now advances along the conflict lifecycle to undertake a gender relational analysis of the gendered experience of leftist NSAG belonging. Here I am interested in understanding how actively belonging to an insurgent group works to reshape men and women’s gendered selves and their perception of gender hierarchies. I approach the enquiry from two frames of thought; (gender equal) ideology and (insurgent gender) identity. I explore the ideological development of insurgent equality and then the construction of insurgent collective identity which sees masculine and feminine gender identity shifts, as will be evidenced from the interviews.

The research found a purposeful reconfiguration of the gender hierarchy within leftist NSAGs where traditional gender relations and binaries are tempered to maintain group cohesiveness and further military aims. A carefully constructed collective identity then supersedes traditionally prescribed male and female gender identities which typically sit in binary opposition to each other. Instead, insurgent behaviours which are valued are expected of all insurgents (Dietrich Ortega, 2012). This collective identity orientation emerges from unity under a common political and ideological cause, collectivism or the daily act of ‘doing’ life in the insurgent microsociety and carefully enforced group norms and rules.

Critics who argue that the FARC lost its ideological way question if it became, “just another terrorist organisation heavily involved in the narcotrafficking industry [or] in fact represents a legitimate political movement or alternative” (Lee, 2012:28). Undeniably, the groups’ involvement in criminal activities to fund its military campaign led them to be discredited by many. The findings make clear however the continued importance of its ideological and political framework for its rank and file members despite those practices.

Combatants from across the leftist NSAGs absorb and unite under the ideological and political principles of their group and this most often perseveres beyond demobilisation. The perceived presence of gender equality in leftist NSAGs differed across research participants due to intersectional and experiential difference, yet whether real or rhetorical, it emerged as a powerful discourse from many research participants. Colombian insurgent groups were not gender equal
nor wholly emancipatory, but their gender arrangements did differ markedly from the hegemonic gender order of traditional Colombian civilian society and this impacted positively on the experience of insurgent men and women. Although generally not considered in DDR, recognising these shifts in perceptions of gender hierarchy should be incorporated within DDR design and planning due to their potentiality to advance fairer and more equitable gender relations in post-conflict contexts.

The Ideological Development of Insurgent Equality

Ideology can be understood as a “coherent and relatively stable set of beliefs or values” (Knight, 2006:625). Through ideology, people “posit, explain and justify ends and means of organised social action, and specifically political action, irrespective of whether such action aims to preserve, amend, uproot or rebuild a given social order” (Seliger, 1976:14). Colombia’s leftist guerrilla movements took up arms in the name of revolutionary socialism. The Cold War era saw a rise in Marxist ideological thought and the FARC emerged at the height of this period (Marks, 2004). The group declared Marxist–Leninist ideological roots alongside a platform of agrarianism and anti-imperialism. The ELN embraced Marxism–Leninism and liberation theology. The EPL aligned with the principles of Maoism. In contrast, the M-19 sought democratic inclusion and were ideologically more flexible (Dietrich Ortega, 2017; Henshaw, 2020b; Thylin, 2019). All claimed they are fighting for a just society. Women’s rights was not an element of the FARC’s original political platform (Stallone & Zulver, 2017). Gender consciousness did not underpin any of the insurgent group’s ideological principles. They held a consciousness which conceived of an individual’s positionality within the system of social class. The pre-eminence of the class struggle within Colombian leftist NSAGs did still allow for the mass recruitment of women while creating the conditional framework for greater equality among members later through participation (Dietrich Ortega, 2017).

NSAGs may feel that gender-diverse participation or a focus on women’s rights or feminism dilutes central aims, threatens group cohesiveness or public perception (Haines 1984; Herrera, 2010; Thomas & Bond, 2015). However, violent political groups that already “promote gender-inclusiveness are likely to pay fewer costs in terms of time and effort toward socializing new members to women participants or marketing radical departures from their original platforms” (Thomas & Bond, 2015:12).

From 1966 onwards, the FARC formalised its training and became a centralised armed group with military style hierarchy and an exacting command and control structure. “We complied to the decisions of the higher bodies... If that is what the higher bodies determined, that’s what we
“did” (P41. Man, FARC). The FARC leadership slowly shifted from embracing pure Marxism to something less fervent although this oscillation was less discernible among rank and file (YRIS, 2016). It was not until fourteen years after its creation, at the 1978 sixth conference and then again at the 1982 seventh conference, that the decision was taken to allow women to enlist as combatants (Darden et al., 2019). The ELN unlike the FARC, first raised women’s rights in the 1960’s potentially due to its more urban and educated base. According to Darden et al., (2019) it is likely the leftist NSAGs assimilated gender equal ideology from each other, in part due to physical movement of female insurgents across the armed organisations.

As women became strategically important to the FARC, their class emancipatory discourse expanded to include gender equality as “a by-product rather than cause of the engagement and advancement of women within these groups” (Darden et al., 2019:59). While M-19 and the EPL dismantled in the 1990’s, ideological evolution continued throughout FARC’s protracted existence. The high proportion of women within its ranks led Francisco Gutiérrez Sanín and Francy Carranza Franco to refer to the organisation as “a feminized group - in a quantitative sense” (2017:770). In 1985, the group declared gender equality, and this then cleared the way for women to assume leadership positions (Darden et al., 2019). As the peace process unfolded in Havana, the FARC leaders sought to guarantee their future legal political representation by diluting their Marxist–Leninist roots further and, as could be argued, breaking from it entirely so that it could take its place in the existing Colombian democratic parliamentary system. By the time peace negotiations were concluding, gender justice had become pivotal to their agenda.

Political ideology is “sticky”, a shift in ideological outlook requires a shift in one’s personal belief system concerning human nature, values and principles of action (Lähdesmäki et al., 2020:83). Political persuasion and ideological alignment are achieved through persuasive techniques, inculcation, socialisation and extensive engagement over sustained periods to convince of the merits of a particular political position (Field, 2018). The FARC’s ideological principles and the obligations and rights of members were contained within its Statutes. “In the FARC or the ELN, if you wanted they taught you how to read and write. If you didn’t want to, fine. But you have to learn the Statutes and have to know about politics” (P11. ACR Reintegration Professional). The empirical data strongly revealed the adherence to a particular ideological and political doctrine and the emphasis placed on their instruction was “seen on a daily basis” (P21. Woman, FARC).

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129 P41. Man. FARC. Interview conducted in Tolima 17/02/2018.
131 P21. Woman. FARC. Interview conducted in Santa Lucia, Ituango 07/05/2017.
Our aims have always been political, more than military. From our organisation the main aim is the political one and that everything has to be achieved through a political change, that’s what they ideologically instilled in us since we began in the organisation (P25. Woman, FARC).132

The construction of a specific worldview was central to group cohesiveness. It unified members under the same ideological and political banner irrespective of their socially assigned gender identities. Research participants spoke about the values and principles which were nurtured by way of their leftist NSAG belonging, which focused on the armed struggle for social equality. It legitimised their sense of belonging and their military actions.

The training we received was to learn to be more supportive. Better people. To see other people’s needs as if they were our own… That’s the reason for our struggle… Of offering even your own life to reclaim the rights of a collective, of the people (P41. Man, FARC).133

You live a new life in the sense that you have new experiences and those experiences start to provide you with knowledge. When you’re at home you live isolated from the reality of things. When you are enrolled in the guerrilla they have already started to explain to you the reasons behind the fight, the motives behind our struggle, and that’s where you start becoming. You see the reality of life through a different set of eyes… This is something that guides you and you start to love the cause, so you can make a difference. In this case a social change where there are no exploited or exploiters, but instead everyone, with the same equality (P28. Woman, FARC).134

They always told us that they were fighting for social equality and that set the path for how we were living. There’s a lot of people with a lot of needs in this world. People suffer a lot from things like unemployment, lack of education, lack of opportunities for people with scarce resources… It left me a lot of good teachings, I learned how to become a better person. In other words, to me it was a very beautiful learning experience (P48. Woman, FARC).135

Gender relations frequently shift during conflict, creating new spaces of opportunity to redefine traditional gender hierarchies (Olonisakin et al., 2011). These spaces of opportunities can include the uptake of new social roles by women normally withheld for men. Research participants stressed there was no gender barrier to eligibility in any role in the FARC. “There is no distinction. There are female combatants in the fields and in the urban militias. Women assume their rank like any man” (P44. Man, FARC & EPL).136 Consequently, female research participants described FARC’s gender hierarchy as being markedly different from wider Colombian society. “In Colombia because you’re a woman you are considered to be less” (P28. Woman, FARC).137 Some felt they had escaped the traditional domestic burden.

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132 P25. Woman. FARC. Interview conducted in Pondores, La Guajira 08/12/2017.
133 P41. Man. FARC. Interview conducted Cunday, Tolima 17/02/2018.
136 P44. Man. FARC & EPL. Interview conducted in Cunday, Tolima 18/02/2018.
137 P28. Woman. FARC. Interview conducted in Pondores, La Guajira 08/12/2017.
As a civilian, when you’re in your own house, women are just for cooking, for washing after their brothers, their father and, if they have a husband, then for the husband, to tend to him. And when we got here to the guerrilla ranks, not anymore (P26. Woman, FARC).138

The insurgent gender equal ideology in theory, promised a different gender order and the eradication of gender discrimination and “male chauvinism”, which many Farianas believed to be unrealisable as female civilians (P28. Woman, FARC).139

In that sense I liked it a lot, because it’s not the same as before, we were discriminated out there, in civilian [life] We are discriminated big time and here that was very good (P26. Woman, FARC).140

Prevailing group ideology can help to ensure women’s commitment to their NSAG.

I ideology is integral in concealing contradictions between recruitment rhetoric and reality. Developing compelling interpretations of society, values, and symbols that claim to address the concerns of women aids and legitimizes terrorist organizations’ efforts to incorporate women into their activities…Simultaneously, employing ideological visions allows terrorist leaders to deflect (or at least suspend) questions about whether the recruits’ expectations are met or recruiting promises fulfilled (Stanksi, 2006:149).

When asked, all of the FARC research participants ardently attested to insurgent gender equality. This was argued on two grounds. Firstly, that the ideological and political aims of the organisation made discrimination illogical. “Yes always. We [women] had the same worth, why? Because we were fighting for equality. You cannot discriminate against any woman there. There we are worth the same” (P48. Woman, FARC).141 Interview participants further emphasised that as the principles of equal rights, duties and treatment was enshrined within the Statutes, systemic discrimination was unlikely.

We had regulations that were composed of three books, which were the Statutes, which was the political part. The Disciplinary Regime Regulation, where the sanctions and punishments were and some Internal Command Policies. Those internal policies, that regulation didn’t create differences. We all received the same political treatment, the same acknowledgement, the same duties, the same rights. Being commanders and being guerrilla fighters, we had to have the same regulations, the same rules, so everybody got the same kind of treatment (P25. Woman, FARC).142

Gender equality was specifically evidenced on the grounds of the absence of the sexual division of labour. This concerned day to day tasks and more permanent positions and was consistently reiterated. “If I cook, he cooks. If he goes to the field with the machete, I go to the field with the machete. If they go to fight, we also go to fight” (P37. Woman, FARC).143 These two lines of

139 P28. Woman. FARC. Interview conducted in Pondores, La Guajira 08/12/2017.
140 P26. Woman. FARC. Interview conducted in Pondores, La Guajira 08/12/2017.
142 P25. Woman. FARC. Interview conducted in Pondsore, La Guajira 08/12/2017.
143 P37. Woman. FARC. Interview conducted in Santa Lucia, Ituango 10/02/2018.
reasoning were echoed by all of the FARC research participants, making evident that from their perspective, it signalled gender equality.

Men and women are the same and we have the same rights and duties. In other words, regarding rights they have to give us the same treatment that is given to men. Regarding duties, men and women fulfil the same tasks. So, if I cook, the man cooks, if I have to use the trenching shovel to make a canal, so does the man. The same for all of us, we have the same rights and duties, equally (P26. Woman, FARC).144

The FARC research participants also offered up the same analysis of the treatment of ethnic minority combatants as they did for women. “It would be very illogical to fight for equality and when someone arrived with a darker skin tone than mine to discriminate against them” (P48. Woman, FARC).145 One man who self-identified as Inga said he personally never encountered discrimination. “In the FARC there is no you’re white [or] black, everyone there was from one group and we all spoke the same language. If they give us one arepa we all ate from that arepa” (P07. Man, FARC).146 Others saw the group’s diverse makeup as testament to their cause.

That’s what has characterised us usually, gender equality, equal conditions, regardless of if it’s for Afros, Indigenous or Mestizos. We have always been characterised by equality. We’re not racists, we don’t exclude anyone. In the FARC there was a diversity of ethnicities, cultures, everything. The FARC were comprised of everyone and that’s why we were always characterised by equality (P36. Man, FARC).148

The insurgent conception of gender equality is equated with women’s participation, the absence of a gendered division of labour and the enshrined principles of equal rights and responsibilities.

Leftist NSAG belonging expects that insurgent men carry out typically feminine-coded labour such as washing, cooking and cleaning and insurgent women perform typically masculine-coded roles such as soldiering, combat and in some cases leadership. There is a clear dilution of traditional gender dichotomies as men and women transgress previously reified gender boundaries (Dietrich Ortega, 2012). This is further explored in the following chapter section on collective and group gender identity.

Despite the unanimous consensus among former FARC research participants of gender equality, others, namely from the EPL and M-19 were more measured in their estimation. Their narratives also indicated new insurgent gender arrangements, but they stopped short of asserting the attainment of absolute gender equality. They spoke of leadership positions being commandeered

144 P26. Woman. FARC. Interview conducted in Pondores, La Guajira 08/12/2017.
146 A corn cake made from ground maize dough.
147 P07. Man. FARC. Interview conducted in Bogotá 23/03/2017.
by men, of having ideas appropriated, and of sexist micro-aggressions, referred to as “micro-chauvinisms” (P03, Woman, M-19).

Many times, you were at a meeting and you spoke, and everyone heard you, but when it came to acknowledge the contributions, you were rendered invisible. You became a part of what everyone thought. This is what everyone thinks, this was chosen by everyone. Or you were asked for advice secretly but publicly you weren’t heard. But [allegedly] there’s no sexism here; but there is (P02, Woman, M-19).

While there was ‘theoretical’ equality it coexisted alongside racial bias and in some case overt displays of racism towards ethnic minority combatants. This group of research participants believed there was progress, but not the absolute attainment of equality.

Yes, theoretically [there was equal treatment]. I believe that racism, sexism, classism, depends a lot on each person’s education. There is indeed a lot of racism in this country and a lot of classism. Racism [in the ranks] there could be much more, but I do think there’s always some. There’s always some [discrimination]. I think even in unconscious ways (P03, Woman, M-19).

The same with racism. Black comrades, men and women, suddenly [heard], “oh, but I don’t want to sleep beside him because blacks smell funny”. Small things in everyday life…That’s when you see the racism, in little daily details (P02, Woman, M-19).

This difference of opinion is down to three noteworthy distinctions. Firstly, the women of the earlier collective demobilisations had time to reflect upon their personal experiences of leftist NSAG belonging, something not yet afforded to the Farianas.

Ten years later, we started reflecting and started looking back to gather all those moments. There were certain moments in which there was discrimination, where we say, “I was not acknowledged here”. As women we tried, and nothing happened, and men made a bigger political presence and they became leaders. They led areas that they did not create. They led spaces we created (P29, Woman, M-19).

Secondly, these interview participants were also well versed on modern conceptions of gender equality which is more expansive in its definition than the FARC insurgent conception; “gender equality is realized when women and men and girls and boys enjoy the same rights, resources, opportunities and protections” (UNICEF, 2018:1). Thirdly, this cohort were entirely unrestricted in speaking their mind. Most Farianas I spoke with were in the process of reincorporation. They may have felt an obligation to speak highly of the organisation which was seeking public acceptance after the peace agreement.

149 P03, Woman. M-19. Interview conducted in in Bogotá 01/03/2017.
150 P02, Woman. M-19. Interview conducted in in Bogotá 01/03/2017.
151 P03, Woman. M-19. Interview conducted in in Bogotá 01/03/2017.
152 P02, Woman. M-19. Interview conducted in in Bogotá 01/03/2017.
Subject matter experts believed the FARC’s carefully crafted equality discourse to be largely rhetorical in nature, “what you have there is opportunism” (P06a. DDR Expert, Colombian Peacebuilding Think Tank).\textsuperscript{154} What constituted gender equality was deemed too rudimentary.

Yes, there’s equality to establish who cooks. Men and women cook. There’s equality, yes, I mean, if you have to take arms, men and women take arms. In command, decision-making, representativeness… it’s something else. In autonomy of their own body… Up to a certain point (P10. Gender Expert, Colombian Peacebuilding Think Tank).\textsuperscript{155}

Let’s have a look at what they say, which makes sense in a way. They say that in their armed group there is more gender equity because both women and men have to stand watch, cook, do their laundry. This is to say, that in those daily things they are equal… The problem is who makes the decisions, who is the boss (P13. Executive, Humanitarian Organisation).\textsuperscript{156}

Despite gender advancements, an insurgent glass ceiling at the highest levels of leadership persisted and the bar was set high for female combatants hoping to climb the military chain of command.

There are many more men taking command in the FARC and the ELN. In order to be a woman in command, you had to have been a member for a long time and really shown yourself as someone who deserved to be there. Nevertheless, it’s possible, but it’s much easier to go up the ladder and have those positions [if you are a man] (P11. ACR Reintegration Professional).\textsuperscript{157}

While Farianas did fill lower-level command positions, their absence became more discernible at the upper echelons of power. No woman was ever made a member of the FARC Secretariat, its former central high command. One woman, Elda Nedis Mosquera, aka ‘Karina’ was the only woman to reach the position of front commander (Gutiérrez Sanín & Carranza Franco, 2017). Two women reached the superior command of M-19 and for a time its strategic leadership in Bogotá was under the direction of three women (Londoño & Nieto, 2000; Dietrich Ortega, 2012; Sanchez-Blake, 2000). The insurgent glass ceiling did not factor into the FARC assessment of gender equality. Despite gender progression, leftist NSAGs were not completely impervious to archetypical gender hierarchy, their reluctance to allow women assume positions of power stems from this.

It is not an entity outside of society. It belongs to society. So, a sexist society, well, has a sexist guerrilla. Now there will be progress within that guerrilla, political thinking to transform the sexism [but] regarding the discrimination of power, there was. We said many times, “She won’t be elected, because she’s a woman she won't be appointed” (P29. Woman. M-19).\textsuperscript{158}

\textsuperscript{154} P06a. DDR Expert, Colombian Peacebuilding Think Tank. Interview conducted in in Bogotá 09/06/2017.
\textsuperscript{157} P11. ACR Reintegration Professional. Interview conducted in Bogotá 03/03/2017.
Despite declarations of insurgent equality, in practice it was not wholly fulfilled. Women were in the main absent from highest levels of power within the military hierarchy. Incidents of racist and sexist microaggressions still occurred. That said, there was instead a reconfiguration of gender relations, practices and norms that were markedly different from wider society. This held personal significance for many combatants and gave rise to a collective identity and masculine and feminine gender identity transformations which the final section of this chapter now explores.

Collective Identity and Feminine and Masculine Transformations

United under the same ideological and political cause, previously ascribed gender identity was rejected by leftist NSAGs and replaced with a carefully constructed collective identity which valued specific insurgent traits above archetypal gendered roles eroding the gender binary.

The insurgent organizations enable porosity between ‘female’ and ‘male’- coded realms through different mechanisms in order to foment cohesion and unity as comrades, as well as to take advantage of installed capacities of their militants, without being hindered by traditional gendered roles (Dietrich Ortega, 2012:495).

In the case of M-19, a gender conscious discourse was never developed, “it didn’t happen because of a conscious gender discourse because that didn’t exist. There wasn’t any. Class was a reference for us women” (P02. Woman. M-19). Even still, “the primacy of class consciousness and connected comrade identities indicates the construction of [new] guerrilla gender regimes” (Dietrich Ortega, 2012:494). The construction of the insurgent collective identity is an element of insurgent ideology given its emphasis on collectivism and rejection of individualism. Membership in the guerrilla involved a very different way of living than that of civilian life. While the production of violence is one element, so too are the new arrangements of social organisation. These were supported by the ideology and through persistent directives over the daily life.

Identity labels, fictive kinship and non-material incentives can be important tools of mobilization, recruitment and control for group leaders, as they often reinforce collectively-oriented thinking and encourage followers to accept present costs for the promise of future benefits” (Thomas & Bond, 2015:39).

Leftist NSAGs cultivated strong bonds where over time, notions of separatism were eroded. Great emphasis was placed on kinship and collectivity, several research participants likened their group belonging to being part of a new family. “That’s why we fought as a collective… We were a family” (P41. Man, FARC). “In war one feels that one has to be a sibling to the one beside

160 P41. Man. FARC. Interview conducted in Cunday, Tolima 17/02/2018.
you” (P16. Woman, M-19).161 “I have a lot to thank the guerrilla for actually. There I had a family, there I had friends, had brothers, because it was a brotherhood there” (P07. Man, FARC).162 Through the sustained practice of collectivism and sacrifice to the cause, individualism was rejected, and personal choice was superseded by needs of the organisation.

That’s what happens when you’re a member of a group, that has so many hierarchies and such huge causes, causes so general and so deep, you tend to place the political parties, the political organisation’s or the Army’s or the leader’s interests above your own decisions (P16. Woman, M-19).163

The insurgent collective identity is prioritised over traditional interpretations of gender identity.

In the movement, the people, all of them are warriors. Whether it’s Afro, or Indigenous, whether it’s a woman, they are guerrilla fighters” (P21. Woman, FARC).164

There were no men there, no women. There we were combatants, with equal conditions (P37. Woman, FARC).165

Gender is fluid, this collective identity sees distinct masculine and feminine gender transformations as masculinities and femininities are reshaped leading to shifts in gendered norms. “We become who we are through our interactions with social surroundings, which results in the idea that the implications and meanings of our gender identity are not fixed, but changeable” (Riley, 2019:6). This identity is characterised by the presence of women and a more gender equal ideology. Men and women worked side by side in new ways, within an institution which at the very least claimed equal rights for all members. Through persistent directives over the daily life in the form of training, education, rules, punishment, coexistence and peer pressure, specific behaviours and practices demanded of all insurgents are ensured. There is a normative change in gendered power relations which become internalised and normalised. The collective identity is consistently reinforced over many years. “When you have been so collective, when a collective identity has been built for over 10 years, 20 in my case, a we” (P16. Woman, M-19 emphasis added).166

Heidi Riley (2019) investigated how wartime participation within insurgencies comes to effect notions of male collective gender identity. She notes that “structural and social change may impact the way in which identities are formed or reconstructed and thus influence changes in notions of collective gender identity” (Riley, 2019:6). Her research centred on male low-level combatants of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) in Nepal. Similar to Colombian leftist

164 P21. Woman. FARC. Interview conducted in Santa Lucía, Ituango 07/05/2017.
165 P37. Woman. FARC. Interview conducted in Santa Lucía, Ituango 10/02/2018.
insurgent organisations, the PLA espoused communist ideals and recruited high numbers of women. Through her work, Riley moves beyond one-dimensional analyses of conflict, violence and masculinities exploring how men interact and relate to a more gender equal insurgent ideology (Riley, 2019).

Collective gender identity is defined as “attitudes toward gender-specific roles and conduct, notions of acceptable behavior within male–female interactions, and perceptions of gender hierarchies” (Riley, 2019:2). To structure the gender analysis of the empirical data, I apply Riley’s definition to the case of Colombian leftist NSAGs. She focused on masculine identity change during conflict and applied relational comparisons to three outgroups, state forces, rural population and women PLA members (Riley, 2012). I will focus on both masculine and feminine identity changes and the perception of male and female combatants to each other.

**Feminine Identity Transformations**

Women are counted as men. We are worth as much as men (P18. Woman, FARC). The Colombia’s National Center for Historical Memory (CNMH) found that the training and punishment regimes of the Colombian NSAGs can result in the deepening of gender binaries by giving “primacy to values that are culturally recognised as masculine (tenacity, resistance, courage, among others) to the detriment of values associated with the feminine (fragility, sensitivity, empathy) and that challenges both men like women in war” (CNMH, 2017b:158. *translated from Spanish*). While conflict can amplify certain harmful patriarchal attitudes, there can conversely be a redefinition of gender hierarchies. The acceptance of women into the ranks of leftist NSAGs allowed them to perform soldiering and masculine-coded behaviours which are valourised insurgent traits. Traditional gender binaries are eroded, women transgress the gender continuum and gender becomes detached from sexed bodies. Their presence disturbs “the socio-spatial ordering by rearranging it” (Swyngedouw, 2014:13). Duncanson and Woodward (2016) argue that women have to become bodily involved in masculine activities to initiate the disruption of the definition of masculine (2016:12). “In practice, insurgent organizations not only detach insurgent femininity from weakness, but encourage female militants to incorporate a stereotypically masculine-coded behaviour” (Dietrich Ortega, 2012:496).

Like men, women must be socialised and normalised to war. “Colombian women [in war] are expected to behave like men” (P11. ACR Reintegration Professional). They can become militarised to commit violence in much the same way that men can. Swati Parashar’s (2011)

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168 P11. ACR Reintegration Professional. Interview conducted in Bogotá 03/03/2017.
research looked to the gender performances of female combatants within irregular forces and the
subsequent militarized femininities which surface. Her work disputes the continued
exceptionalization of violence by women. Andrea Méndez (2012) demonstrated the significance
of the Colombian case study when analysing the militarisation of women in NSAGs. She found
different groups had distinct means in which they constructed their particular gender systems,
giving rise to “distinct militarized femininities which maintain aspects of traditional gender
relations while transforming others according to the needs of the organization in question”
(Méndez, 2012: ii).

Leftist NSAG belonging brings about profound gender identity shifts for women as they adopt
the overarching group hegemonic culture and pivot away from past feminine gender
performances. This shift was particularly marked for the women who joined leftist NSAGs
several decades prior.

It gives you an identity, if you’re a deeply feminine woman, that [shift] is simply going to be more
pronounced. You come out of the traditional role and change your high heels for boots and that
gives you a totally different view of the world. To begin with, much firmer, with a better standing.
And translating that to everything that the activity entails changes a lot. Now, if you know how to
use boots, you’re probably going to handle your heels well. [Women’s] traditional roles give you
heels and renders you helpless, which means in such traditional and chauvinistic societies there
always has to be a man to help and protect you, to keep you company. I’m talking about back then.
At that time, the situation was that women were deeply within traditional roles and making that
shift [to the guerrilla] fundamentally changed our personality and our identity (P02. Woman, M-
19). 169

These feminine identity transformations were simultaneously internal, relational and interactional
and they also manifested visibly through the physical body and movement.

Women had a different degree of consciousness. Even the way in which we carried our bodies
was different, the way of standing, the clothing, the strength, the effort, knowing that a woman
can do many things that are not only destined for men… But exercising a different way of moving,
of walking, the relationship with the body, with ourselves, that all changed (P02. Woman, M-
19). 170

The empirical findings suggest gun ownership was an important and symbolic relationship for
women insurgents, a gender-specific outwardly performance more typical associated with men.
An insurgent’s rifle becomes a physical manifestation of ideological consciousness and a source
of empowerment and security.

When we used a weapon, my courage was behind that weapon, my political consciousness was
behind that weapon. I was able to put my life on the line in order to defend it even if I carried a
weapon. Others died with a weapon in their hands, they didn’t die because they were unarmed, it

170 P02 Woman. M-19. Interview conducted in Bogotá 01/03/2017.
was also because of everything we had to do with those weapons. All of that, still exists: the political consciousness, the desire for change, that availability, that confidence in yourself. Because when you’re holding a weapon, you also become confident and you say to yourself “I can do it, I can do it” (P29. Woman, M-19).171

You grab your weapon and you feel cool, you feel nice because you didn’t have it before, you’d never touched it, you didn’t know you could fire a weapon. You didn’t know how it felt to hold a weapon, how it felt to shoot it. Having it was fun, it was nice, I had never lived it before, and those are experiences… Like I would tell them, we were never humiliated when we had our weapons, we were never mistreated, we were never beaten up (Woman, FARC).172

The redefinition of gendered norms brings changes to women’s expectations of treatment. “They sort of teach you values, your life’s worth. As a woman there, you’re worth a lot. There you learn how to demand respect, to respect others” (P18. Woman, FARC).173 There is a sense of empowerment that comes with successfully accessing and adapting to a perceived traditional masculine space.

For women it’s like there is a spring. We women have a certain kind of empowerment when we’re able to face the challenge of being in spaces that have traditionally been masculine. We feel it’s a challenge, we get in there, with difficulties to adapt our identity to that which is being required from us, especially in the armies. And that gives us a certain empowerment (Woman, M-19).174

Women’s participation in violent acts, rather than just “merely trying to “be like men” …were reconditioning their bodies and discovering empowerment through violence” (Churchill, 2005: 36). However, entry and acceptance to the insurgent collective also demanded feminine sacrifice, in a less than reciprocal relationship for women with their leftist NSAG. Cis women’s bodily lived experience concerning reproduction are different to mens. Certain biological differences were not accommodated. In the rural guerrilla, women had to manage monthly menstruation in a complicated and difficult environment and they were expected to adapt accordingly.

The subject of being a woman becomes different for oneself. So, things like menstruation, like being a mom, are more complicated. But the treatment, the rights, the responsibilities, it’s all the same for each combatant (P21. Woman, FARC).175

Motherhood is a gender-specific societal role culturally expected of Colombian women. Motherhood and reproductive bodily autonomy was severely curtailed by the FARC and to a lesser but still gender discriminatory extent, other guerrilla groups such as the ELN. They demanded mandatory contraception for female members and their enlistment was permitted on the basis that they would submit to this policy (Darden et al., 2019; Gutiérrez Sanín & Carranza Franco, 2017; Krystalli, 2016). This infringement of female reproductive rights has correctly

172 P48. Woman. FARC. Interview conducted in Usme, Bogotá 27/02/2018.
175 P21. Woman. FARC. Interview conducted in Santa Lucia, Ituango 07/05/2017.
been a contentious issue. The FARC has always defended its reproductive policy as necessary in times of war. Pregnancy and children were seen as detrimental to the safety and survival of the collective and removed the female combatant from her primary duties.

They knew they were going to be with them for a bit while they nursed them… They knew they had to let them go. Why? It was not because those here didn’t want them being with their child, it was because of all that was going on. Because of the dynamic itself, for example we had a heavy load to carry, we had very tough nights. We were institutionalised, we did understand why it needed to be that way for us. For example, [imagine] a bombing with a baby. In a bombing, a shooting, sometimes we had to even run. Sometimes we had to leave cooked food and start running because they were already on top of us, how could you have a baby there? Many female guerrilla fighters understood that, many didn’t (P35. Woman, FARC).

The collective gender identity is inclusive of women as insurgent fighters but not of women as mothers. It is partly constructed by the suppression of women’s biological reproductive capacities and a renouncement of maternity.

Insurgent women are also required to protect the survival and reputation of the collective in other ways not required of their male counterparts. Despite strict rules, there were still specific incidents of abuse of power and sexual harassment, while instances of sexual violence against civilians also occurred. The FARC has been hesitant to acknowledge these actions as it was not official policy. Moreover, Farianas themselves are reluctant to raise the issue publicly.

That’s one of the important issues, physical violence. They [the FARC] don’t talk much about this, there’s not much information. There must be, but they are very reluctant to expose this data. The Ombudsman did many visits to the rural concentration zones and they had the same perception; that women systematically refused to talk about the matter, were very reserved, didn’t say much, and denied it. And women [Farianas], when you hear them in publicly, especially the more visible ones, they always say, “no, we always had a dominant status, we could always decide, we had a say”. They have to maintain this discourse. One understands they have to maintain a discourse… but it is known that there has been violent practices within [the FARC] (P24. Employee, International Justice NGO).

With the guerrillas it wasn’t easy to address the issue of sexual violence. They have always denied it, they insist that it is not within their policies, that they sanction very harshly those who commit one of these acts with civilians. There is the death penalty. They insist it doesn’t exist. They insist if it has happened it has been isolated cases that don’t correspond [to policy and orders] and this much we believe, we have seen it to be true in the territories. This doesn’t lift the weight off the violent act, which has happened and has to made visible. But we are sure that the issue of sexual violence against women civilians hasn’t been a policy by guerrilla organisations (P13. Executive, Humanitarian Organisation).

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176 P35. Woman. FARC. Interview conducted in Santa Lucía, Ituango 10/02/2018.
Female FARC combatants feel obliged to remain silent about such incidents at their own expense in order to protect the collective. This practice can be detrimental to women in the post-conflict and DDR phase.

Also [we must] work with FARC women, so they can recognise not just the most evident violence [such as] physical violence, sexual violence. But for them to recognise the subtlety of violence, harassment, of discrimination… more structural. The tendency is to defend… It’s about the defense of the collective interests than those of a demographic population as important as women (P16. Woman, M-19).

Male Identity Transformations

Most scholarly gender work concerning NSAG male combatants explores the negative and violent consequences of masculinity in militarised contexts. This remains essential work and vital in shaping DDR, but we should also consider “how men engage with a more gender-equal ideology within the movement than exists in society” (Riley, 2019:1).

A redefinition of gender hierarchies during war can cause men to reconsider traditional gendered norms and assumptions (Duncanson & Woodward 2016). Militarised masculinities usually concern a specific repertoire of norms, attitudes and behaviours centring on obedience, aggression and violence (Goldstein, 2001). In Colombian insurgent groups, masculinity was performed somewhat differently. Men accepted values, traits and tasks traditionally conceptualised as feminine so that the outward expression of masculinity shifted, and space was made to accommodate this without emasculating men. The insurgent guerrilla differs from typical hegemonic conceptions of the male soldier.

The reconfiguration of gender arrangements within insurgent contexts disrupts the portrayal of guerrilla movements as univocally masculine organizations. In the same vein, traditionally feminine-coded traits, such as the ethic of care, display of emotions, spirit of sacrifice and comrade solidarity, were considered a strategic insurgent repertoire (Dietrich Ortega, 2012:496).

Riley found that the male combatant perception of their female counterparts was positive, but she caveated this progression by noting it was based upon women’s willingness to take on masculine traits and perform them well (2019:13).

As the participation of women is an empirical outcome of gender-equal ideology, it appears to have influenced a shift in the ideological content of masculinity during the war to be accepting of women’s participation in a variety of wartime roles and restricted the way masculinity was performed toward women in the movement (Riley, 2019:18).

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Leftist insurgents largely conformed to the new pattern of gender relations due to groups norms, ideology and policy. The group’s command and control structure also demanded compliance and their disciplinary regimes penalised those who broke the rules. “You couldn’t cross the line or take attributions that were not granted to you” (P44. Man, FARC & ELN). The gender order of civilian society was deemed contrary to insurgent ideology. Leftist NSAG membership holds certain extreme facets of machismo in check which includes causing harm to their female members who are deemed essential to the armed movement. The new gender regime demands a different performance.

If you are a chauvinist, you can be so in a chauvinistic society. Inside [the guerrilla] it was more difficult to be chauvinistic. I think it’s interesting to observe that relationship (P02. Woman, M-19).

The degree to which these protocols were enforced in the FARC is contested, “disciplinary devices offered limited protection to women as long as they remained under the organization’s control” (Gutiérrez Sanín & Carranza Franco, 2017). However, the research suggests that female combatants appeared to have assumed their positions in relative acceptance due to group ideology and disciplinary measures. Women could report specific incidents of harassment. Sexual violence and rape were strictly forbidden and curtailed though punishment, the most extreme of which was execution.

They [the guerrilla] taught me respect. No woman I’ve ever had can say that I hit her or was rude to her because they taught us that there. That’s why I doubt it when they [the ACR/people in general] suggest the assault of a girl… Because to them [the FARC] that’s a crime. There [in the FARC] whoever does that, gets killed. Of course, there are sexual relations in the guerrilla, but there has to be consent. If I want to have sex with my female comrade and if there’s no consent I can’t have sex (P17. Man, FARC).

Patriarchal and machista norms can lead men to think they are entitled to women’s bodies. This attitude is deemed largely unacceptable within the insurgent gender regime and its ideological foundations and as a consequence certain open and harmful displays of masculinity are restricted.

Complicating the Collective, An Intersectional Lens

Within insurgent organisations there are distinct, smaller collectives within the greater collective formed by location, the social construction of class and the urban/rural divide. Research

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180 P44. Man. FARC & ELN. Interviewee conducted in Cunday, Tolima 18/02/2018.
participants from M-19 discussed the challenges between rural and urban combatants, who often held stereotypical assumptions of the other.

My militancy was fundamentally urban, the urban work squad and the command. The base camp was at the countryside with a peasant composition, and there was a worldview which is the countryside’s worldview, held by every farmer, anywhere (P29. Woman, M-19).¹⁸³

Sometimes they [rural members] said, “they spend all their time in Bogotá riding cars”. When actually we had a lot of difficulties. We never had a car in our unit and Jesus, we had to transport weapons, propaganda, everything. They imagined that we stayed [all over], people who took us in because they sympathised… I worked at one point at the radio looking for places for TV interferences. We worked from households in the neighbourhoods. We would install the dial and cable at some bathroom in order to hack the signal. So that’s what one means when we talk about the peasant imagination and the urban imagination about peasants; “farmers are ignorant, farmers are dumb”. We had to work on that, both points of view. When colleagues arrived from the fields, we had to work a lot on their culture (P29. Woman, M-19).¹⁸⁴

Here the research participant is suggesting that members of M-19 who arrived to work in the city from the countryside needed support to adapt to urban life and that issues would arise over cross-cultural communication. Different qualities and skills were valued by different groups, rural guerrillas held physical strength in greater esteem.

In the rural guerrilla, physical capacity is overvalued. That affects not just women but also those who came from the city. In order to gain your position, you had to be very strong. Behind that there’s a stigma on weakness (P12. Man, EPL).¹⁸⁵

The research found that urban guerrilla did not always get to participate fully in collective culture that was strongly cultivated in the rural guerrilla. Conversely, they still had access to previous social networks, which were effectively shut off to rural guerrilla once they transitioned to life in the military camp.

We feel very alone in the city. In the countryside you fight in a group, a giant team fighting for a territory with large weapons. We in the cities are more unprotected. When you’re in the camp you have a collective responsibility. They didn’t need money. In the city even if you don’t have the resources you still have to make it to your appointment, and I cannot arrive looking like I please. If I look unpolished, I’m going to catch people’s attention. I have to look as if I’d come from an office. I used to tell them, ‘you guys have some obligations but with your uniforms and with the food’. I also had some advantages, I could go home, visit a friend. I could go to a conference; I am nourished in different ways. There you have book circles, but they are missing stuff that nourishes their political thinking. They left their entire life. Sundays, nights, days, they were with their rifle. We did the same here, but not in a way so devoted to camp life. There were two forces, very important and different, each having their strengths and weaknesses (P29. Woman, M-19).¹⁸⁶

There are also limits to the collective identity and it is problematised by intersecting fractures of minority gender and sexual identities. The new gender arrangements of the FARC still transpired within a heteronormative conception of gender. Those which fell outside of the acceptable heteronormative boundaries were forcibly excluded. All of the former combatant interview participants self-identified their gender as being a man or women, while their sexual orientation was not directly asked. No participant self-identified as being gay. Several when queried however, did voice their opinion on the general acceptance and participation of sexual and gender minorities within Colombian leftist NSAGs.

One former FARC insurgent confirmed the supposed nonexistence of gay people within the ranks. “Well actually very little. It has been seen but when they’ve already left and no longer belong to the group, but inside, as such, no” (P07. Man, FARC). LGBTI combatants were of course a reality and some researchers have documented their personal experiences (Thylin, 2018; 2019). The FARC actively prohibited sexual and gender minorities (CNMH, 2015; Thylin, 2018). Many were forced to conceal their sexual orientation to avoid retributive punishment. LGBTI couples were separated and punished through extreme heteronormative-based violence including execution (Thylin, 2019).

Gender policing and discrimination against non-heteronormative bodies was not limited to the FARC. The ELN and the EPL also remained typically heteronormative in outlook. One interview participant who later worked within Colombian DDR programming stated that all homosexual practices were forbidden during his time in the EPL, an organisation which demobilised in 1991. This was a stance largely reflective of wider homophobic societal norms at that time. “In our day all things related to homosexuality was banned from the organisation” (P12. Man, EPL). He also confirmed that gay people were almost entirely excluded from the FARC who held an “exacerbated attitude” toward the them (P12. Man, EPL).

M-19 were less gender discriminatory, in that its more flexible, inclusionary ideology made space for LGBTI members (Londoño & Nieto, 2006; Thylin, 2019). “People were welcome to come. It didn’t matter if you were a man, a woman, gay, lesbian. It was for people with a revolutionary spirit and with a political stand” (P02. Woman, M-19). Guerrilla organisations like any institution were in ways reflective of some wider societal norms but M-19’s policies were more inclusive. “All that happened in a conservative society. And the guerrilla was impregnated with

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that conservatism, but I don’t know of someone who suffered retaliations for being gay or lesbian” (P02. Woman, M-19). The structure of the FARC left less room for diversity.

In ideological terms M-19 had everything. There were Trotskyist, Stalinists, pacifists. That made M-19 build such a close relationship with members, it didn’t have such a directed, stern, discourse, but one in agreement with the ways of each person. New thoughts emerged. Plurality of thought was very difficult in FARC. Maybe that’s why the M-19 was so plural, because it came from there, people who thought differently and there was no room for them. Maybe that’s why the leaders said, “this has to be a movement with room for everyone”, because Colombia is very diverse. Therefore, that had to be reflected and the group had to accommodate everyone (P03. Woman, M-19).

Despite an acceptance of LGBTI people, their rights were never explicitly taken up by M-19.

We did not take on the subject but since the creation of the M [M-19] there was an LGBTQ member on the team who founded the M. It’s not like they appeared out of nowhere, they come with all of us men and women. The issue wasn’t a debate like it is today. There were gay colleagues on the teams, and they were there just like us, fighting. Now, were there any complaints? If there were, they were never mentioned, I mean never. Because that would’ve caused a debate about sexuality and it wasn’t easy to have a debate on that matter (P29. Woman, M-19).

The findings demonstrate that while insurgent organisations such as the FARC have a rhetoric of in-group gender equality, that standing is not extended to sexual and gender minorities. There is instead a narrow conception of gendered and sexed bodies. Although the 2016 Final Agreement uniquely referenced the specific vulnerabilities and needs of LGBTI victims, the FARC continues to erase the existence of its own LGBTI members and the treatment they received. “There’s a lot of stuff in terms of gender perspective that are lost on the FARC, for example LGBTI is one thing, they’re like, we don't have that” (P08a. Analyst, International Peacebuilding Organisation). This continued erasure holds consequences for gender responsive DDR which has alongside the WPS agenda more broadly, tended to overlook the needs of sexual and gender minorities (Thylin, 2018).

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This chapter explored the first two central research themes, the gendered experience of leftist NSAG enlistment and belonging. As women’s participation in armed conflict is often underestimated and masculine identities not fully conceived of, contextual complexity and the

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nuance of lived experience is erased, including in later DDR and peacebuilding measures. To counter this, the chapter considered gendered experience leading up to the point of reintegration, making visible the gendered power relations which encouraged enlistment before examining the construction of gender relations and gender identity within leftist NSAGs.

Through the personal stories and histories that drew women and men into Colombian leftist NSAGs, the results reveal that enlistment is shaped through two gendered subthemes; to escape dominant feminine ideals and to fulfil dominant masculine ideals. Women’s participation is conditioned not only by their own political grievances but also by the social options available to them, they are embedded in societal structures that often seek to limit their agency. While any individual may feel empowered through insurgent group membership, for women it is often concerned with escaping those normative gender expectations. An attraction to the equality and gender equality discourse of the various leftist groups was implicit in their reasoning. Membership of any NSAG is also a public performance that can also satisfy many of the socialised internalised gender tropes about being a man that prevail in certain sectors of Colombian society. Men may seek leftist NSAG membership as a means to acquire the prominence and resources that they feel entitled to but are otherwise lacking due to the economic context or social positioning and to fulfil male soldiering and protectionist narratives.

The research also found parallels across responses concerning reasons for enlistment. Motivations to join a leftist NSAG are less reductionist than overarching assumptions suggest, and in certain ways less gendered in that there was a commonality of motives. Overwhelmingly, women and men shared personal experiences of witnessing violent atrocities, social injustice, barriers to education, economic and political grievances. However, shared motives are not necessarily gender neutral, while both Colombian men and women can experience social, economic and political marginalisation, men do not experience it as a result of gender discrimination. How an individual arrives to a particular position can be a gendered process. The findings challenge the reductive tropes surrounding insurgent women. Women join insurgencies for the potential to transform their political and social landscape. The empirical evidence further demonstrates that men can also be moved to enlist for emotive reasons. Moreover, personal and political motivations are not mutually exclusive. There was a clear overlap between social injustice and political grievance, individuals saw leftist NSAG membership as the only viable means to change wider social conditions. The empirical data clearly demonstrates in many cases political agency and autonomy on the part of both women and men.

A context-sensitive and intersectional focused gender analysis of pathways to leftist NSAG membership reveals further nuances in explaining enlistment, including specific vulnerabilities of ethnic minorities which impact their proportionally high rates of participation. Motivating
Factors to enlist are also influenced by urban and rural differences and profiles diverged when studying variance across leftist NSAGs. While the use of children by leftist NSAGs is indefensible, the research demonstrates the danger of neglecting the motivations of minors which lead to ‘voluntary’ participation in a situational context of very limited alternatives.

To understand how gender relations take shape during the process of civilian reintegration, this chapter first needed to analyse how they were constructed by leftist NSAG belonging, by understanding how former combatants conceptualised that experience. The insurgent conception of equality is equated with the absence of a sexual division of labour, participation of minorities groups and enshrined principles of equal rights and duties. The extent to which it had been wholly realised was contested across research participants due to intersectional identities and differing lived experience. Colombian insurgent groups were not wholly gender equal or emancipatory, but their gender arrangements differed markedly from the hegemonic gender order of traditional Colombian civilian society. This impacted positively on the experience of insurgents.

The active experience of leftist NSAG belonging gives rise to new patterns of gender roles and relations which are reshaped through that active participation. The carefully constructed collective identity of the insurgency is consistently reinforced over many years. It supersedes traditionally prescribed male and female gender identities which typically sit in binary opposition. They are tempered to maintain group cohesiveness and further military aims. The distinct sense of equal insurgent belonging, comradery and shared collective identity is shaped by consistent instruction of ideological and political views, unity under common cause, collective living and formally prescribed group social arrangements.

The research found that this gendering process was supported and largely upheld by members and that it led to a shift in past civilian world perceptions of gender hierarchies. It gave rise to distinct masculine and feminine gender transformations. Insurgent women perform soldiering and masculine-coded behaviours which are valourised insurgent traits. They are socialised and normalised to war and can experience profound gender identity shifts as they pivot away from past gender performances. The work also counters more one-dimensional assessments of conflict and masculinities. Within leftist insurgent groups, militarised masculinity was performed somewhat differently. Men’s outward expression of masculinity changed, space was made to accommodate new values, traits and tasks traditionally conceptualised as feminine without emasculation. Leftist NSAG membership also held certain extreme facets of machismo in check.

Despite the assertion of an inclusive insurgent group, boundaries are erected to exclude and invalidate some individual identities. The insurgent gender regime in the most part, remained firmly within the limits of heteronormativity which saw harmful and violent gendered outcomes.
for LGBTI combatants. Moreover, women unequally shouldered responsibility for the protection and reputation of the collective, by renouncing maternity, reproductive autonomy and justice for specific incidents of gendered violence. Notwithstanding these grave contradictions, the research does suggest that Colombian leftist NSAGs maintained a gender regime which was in certain ways more equal than conservative Colombian civilian society.

Gender identity transformations and new perceptions of gender hierarchies brought about by leftist NSAG belonging could be harnessed to support gender justice work in reintegration and post-conflict contexts. The findings here will support understanding of how former combatants experience reintegration and it will contribute to thinking about how reintegration should reshape or maintain specific practices of gender to ensure better outcomes. The following two chapters provide a gendered understanding of reintegration and the challenges its poses for participants, in part due to the erosion of the collective identity, a prevalent gendered stigma and a misalignment that many former combatants feel when reintegration does not live up to expectations or the gender gains achieved through leftist NSAG belonging. These are all gendered processes. Chapter 6 begins this analysis with the gendered experience of women in reintegration.
CHAPTER 6: THE GENDERED EXPERIENCE OF WOMEN IN REINTEGRATION

How deep was this empowerment? That’s the question I ask myself nowadays. What you’re really consolidating within the group is becoming a valid interlocutor with men and being able to feel that you have the same value as they do. But when that moment ceases, when that moment of belonging and of believing we are equals ceases, because there is an equality discourse. Despite equality not being real there is an equality discourse, then many times what the spring does is compress itself once again to what is familiar, to what is traditional, to what we were (P16. Woman, M-19).¹⁹⁵

Chapter 5 detailed the first two research themes (The Gendered Experience of Leftist NSAG Enlistment) and (The Gendered Experience of Leftist NSAG Belonging), that is the process of becoming and actively being a leftist NSAG combatant. This chapter explores the third and final theme (The Gendered Experience of Reintegration) from the perspective of former insurgent women. The chapter covers three distinct phases of Colombian DDR. The first relates to the cycle of collective demobilisations of a number of smaller guerrilla groups including M-19 and the EPL in the early 1990s. The second is the longstanding Colombian national reintegration programme which has been open to any individual accredited as demobilised since 2003.¹⁹⁶ It is under the management of the ARN, formally known as the ACR. The final phase is FARC’s collective reincorporation which was recently established when the fieldwork commenced in early 2017. The mechanism to facilitate its coordination lies with the National Reincorporation Council (CNR), a body created as part of the peace process. The ARN now manages the social and economic reincorporation of the FARC and their collective spaces of reincorporation.

As was explored in chapter 4, there was a perceptible shift from gender blind to gender conscious DDR policy between the first two phases under investigation, where the initial demobilisation and reinsertion programmes failed to incorporate any gender approach. Reintegration policy has since evolved, and a reintegration gender strategy was initiated in 2014. The Colombian national reintegration programme is considered comparatively advanced, although this chapter explores it through a critical gender lens. More recently, a strong gender focus was incorporated within the Colombian Peace Agreement. The FARC took the decision to bypass the established reintegration programme for its own programme of reincorporation. It sought a collective and rural approach given its ideological roots and membership base and hoped that through it, it could occupy more space in the “national and local political sphere” by remaining relevant in territories (Segura & Stein, 2019:2). The peace agreement incorporated a gender focus and later FARC has integrated

¹⁹⁶ This has primarily concerned deserters and captives from the FARC and the ELN. Earlier in the lifespan of the programme, members of the AUC were also eligible to partake as outlined in chapter 4. The paramilitary gendered experience has been excluded from this research.
this and its more gender equal ideology within its political party platform, in part thanks to its Farianas. Insurgent feminism promises at least in theory, a more radical approach to gender than ever put forward by the formally armed group. This chapter looks for evidence of how these various gender policies and promises across the reintegration programmes have unfolded.

In order to understand the gendered impact of reintegration the previous chapter examined gender identity and gender relations within leftist NSAGs, how these are reshaped to create a gender regime and collective gender identity which in many respects differs from civilian Colombian society. As combatants took up new gender roles, alongside their interactions with equality discourse and collective social arrangements, norms and rules, their perceptions of formally prescribed gender hierarchies shifted. The experience of research participants was used to effectively show the presence of a collective group identity. Colombian leftist NSAGs were to some degree upholding more equal patterns of gender relations than the socially conservative society in which they were immersed. However, “hegemonic and non-hegemonic patterns in gender relations co-existed” in leftist NSAGs (Thylin, 2019:8). The findings drew attention to this contradiction, especially in regard to female leadership, reproductive rights and collective heteronormative boundaries which were violently enforced by some armed groups. Nonetheless, the effects of shifting gender dynamics and role patterns were still significant for participants and understood as positive. As gender relations are in a constant state of flux, reintegration can potentially undermine or promote those new practices of gender, this chapter looks for evidence of both, alongside the main challenges facing women in their reintegration. I question if reintegration can be managed in such a way that those more equitable left NSAG gender shifts are preserved post-conflict.

I have previously set out the broad academic debates concerning gender and DDR. Gender is a key factor in the preservation of armed forces around the world. Although the majority of regular and irregular soldiers are men, women’s presence is not remarkable and so DDR best practice calls for the mainstreaming of gender (McKay & Mazurana, 2004; UN 2006b; UNIFEM, 2004). Gender conscious DDR in theory implies acknowledging women as integral members of armed groups and embracing a gender-inclusive framework which seeks to protect them from violence, address their gender-specific and psychosocial needs post-conflict and ensure their socioeconomic security (Anderlini, 2007; Barth, 2002; K.C, 2019; Ni Aoláin et al., 2011). Instead, the consensus of DDR in relation to women points to a reality where they remain largely overlooked or treated in a tokenistic manner. DDR remains in many cases gender bound, and female participants underserved (Barth, 2002; Bouta, et al., 2005; Henshaw, 2017b; Tarnaala, 2016). Consequently, many women will purposely avoid it, or given the narrow conception of a combatant they are simply excluded from it entirely if their superiors purposely oppose it, or if
they do not hold an official rank or carry arms (Ball & van de Goor, 2006; Henshaw, 2017b). If admissibility is based on the presentation of a weapon and of disarmament, women can be denied the opportunity to participate (Knight, 2008; Tarnaala, 2016).

A gender focus is lacking in DDR in part because women are rarely included in high level peace negotiations where its specificities are discussed (Cahn & Ní Aoláin, 2010; Farr, 2003). Furthermore, discourse which surrounds conflict is reductionist, depicting women as victims and men as the perpetrators of violence. Women in fighting forces do not align with the stereotypical view of women as inherently peaceful (Farr, 2003). Women’s roles in the continuation and perpetration of violence is often underestimated and their continued erasure as participants in conflict narratives follows through to DDR (Anderlini, 2007). Assuming all women in armed forces are just victims misjudges their prior roles and potential to contribute to more successful DDR outcomes (Anderlini, 2007). When the overall focus is on disarmament and demobilisation rather than longer-term reintegration efforts, women’s needs can be neglected (Anderlini, 2007). When these are improperly attended to, such as in case of Liberia, women cannot access peace and security initiatives in the manner they should, while disproportionate benefits flow to men (Basini, 2013).

Women who choose to enlist in armed groups may find their membership brings about profound identity shifts as they assume the group’s hegemonic culture. Women who participate in political violence may feel empowered in otherwise patriarchal societies or those which are machismo in their cultural orientation. Later, they may find themselves returning to a hostile society which seeks to relegate their social positioning and return them to conventional gender roles and obligations. They may find it especially difficult to readjust to civilian life if they no longer identify with those traditional cultural norms. Often, they will conceal their military past (Barth, 2002). Some female combatants will choose to self-demobilise for fear of stigmatisation, insecurity, or if they do not have access to care for their dependants. DDR measures may serve only to reinforce existing societal gender dichotomies through the social, economic and political opportunities that they provide to women. Dietrich Ortega (2012) found for example that during the transitional period after armed conflict,

the temporary construction of the female comrade fades away as an ‘exceptional transgression’ amid systematic marginalization, discrimination, stigmatization and exclusion. In a larger context, this ‘transition into marginalization’ for female insurgent militants is one of the most visible forms of how patriarchal mechanisms are adapted, reinstalled and perpetuated in transitional contexts. (Dietrich Ortega, 2012:504).

My research concurs with many aspects of the literature especially concerning the gender-typical participation of most female former combatants in civilian society (Barth, 2002; K.C, 2019; Steenbergen, 2020). It finds that the gendered societal stigma directed towards insurgent women
often continues unabated upon their demobilisation (Henshaw, 2017b). However, the research sheds new light on the complicated ways in which women renegotiate their identity. Not all cultural expectations of women such as motherhood are necessarily forced upon them. The findings highlight the importance of collective group identity and its palpable loss for women upon demobilisation. This and socioeconomic insecurity in the face of hegemonic cultural norms which remain largely static despite the conflict and shifting leftist NSAG gender relations were found to be the most difficult aspects of reintegration. Moreover, specific configurations of gender relations within a reintegration programme differ across place showing how they vary from one localised context to another. An intersectional lens reveals that not all women experience reintegration equally. Meanwhile, former insurgent women are choosing to non-violently remobilise in new and empowering ways, to counter the negative aspects of their reintegration, to reclaim their agency, to reconstruct their collective identity, to protect their collective interests and to further and agenda of peace.

As gender is a central organising principle of society, applicable not only at the level of the individual, to structure this gender relational analysis of reintegration, I apply an integrated ecological model which provides a framework to study “multifaceted phenomenon grounded in an interplay among personal, situational, and sociocultural factors” (Heise, 1998:262). In doing so, I consider reintegration from differing levels; the individual or personal; the microsystem or “immediate context”; the exosystem or “institutions and social structures, both formal and informal” and the macrosystem; the “general views which permeate the culture at large” (Heise, 1998:264). While this approach aids conceptualisation and adds structure to the results and analysis, I find that these levels are not mutually exclusive, given the complexity of human experience and interaction, they intersect and overlap.

The Individual: Loss of Collective Identity

Losing the collective referent is like being left in nothingness (P16. Woman, M-19).197

The collective identity and sense of belonging which leftist NSAGs carefully cultivate, as described in the previous chapter, is interrupted by processes of DDR. Former combatants often lose their entire social network upon demobilisation and can find themselves adrift as their prior shared sense of purpose and group unity ends. “I am alone after having had a group of referents and this loneliness is a distressing loneliness” (P16. Woman, M-19).198 Female research

participants described this experience as an ‘orphanhood’, a rupture from their collective group identity as insurgents and the collectivity of leftist NSAG membership. They are confronted with a new civilian identity shaped by a society which tends not to value their past.

When you demobilise you’re told, “you’re no longer called so and so, and you become X”. How do you manage that after having had such a strong collective life? There is an orphanhood you begin to explore. In the end, this society is one of individuals (P15. Woman, EPL). 199

It happened [demobilisation] and we realised that we didn’t have the organisation that we had for many years, that had been our family. That was the hardest part. The majority returned to their homes, to families where you were suddenly not so well understood. That was what hurt the most. We practically had to look remorseful for taking up arms and we shouldn't have to be remorseful because we had fought for an ideal. But society didn’t understand that (P02. Woman, M-19). 200

The reintegration programme today provides a human point of contact for former combatants, but once successfully completed they can find themselves increasingly isolated.

There is a point where it has to let them go. While they’re connected with the ACR everyone has their own manager. When there’s any problem they call them, up until then everything is more or less ok. As time goes by, they manage to comply with the programme, and they leave it. That’s when there’s a huge sense of loneliness (P10. Gender Expert, Colombian Peacebuilding Think Tank). 201

This loss is more acutely felt by women as they are more often let down by policies of reintegration and peace than men, which exists to serve the majority. Moreover, men tend to reintegrate back into a society where their social positioning is less compromised.

A man is better equipped to face individuality than a woman. The majority of the force is comprised of men so considerations about the female minority are not as important when it comes to building public policy. The scenarios that are taken into account are for the vast majority, or those who manage to have agency. If there’s a sense of orphanage in that minority [women] well their claims are lost (P15. Woman, EPL). 202

Within the guerrilla, the individual become an element of the greater collective and over time this erodes a sense of individuality. “An individual position isn’t there that much. Then this change happens, and the challenge lies in how to think of myself as an individual but without breaking away from that collective ideal” (P34. Social Work Intern). 203 Former combatants to thrive, must reconceive of themselves as individual but in parallel, they may seek to remain connected to the collective ideal leading to an internal struggle. “The organisation is lost, there’s no collective

199 P15. Woman. EPL. Interview conducted in Bogotá 20/04/2017.
202 P15. Woman. EPL. Interview conducted in Bogotá 20/04/2017.
203 P34. Social Work Intern. Interview conducted in 10/02/2018.
support. Then the individual struggle is very strong, very heavy, amidst the individuality left by the negotiation” (P15. Woman, EPL). 204

Many combatants spend much of their adolescence or entire adulthood in their former leftist NSAG. Daily life in a militarised force is highly routinised and directed. “There was no autonomy in the FARC” (P13. Executive, Humanitarian Organisation). 205 Adaptation, autonomy and resilience are key skills which need to be fostered within reintegration. Insurgent life can create a state of dependency within the collective and many find themselves unable or reluctant to become self-reliant.

We were used to receiving food, receiving all personal products. Every personal object we owned they gave to us. Now we have to think about it ourselves, we have to find everything we need. A change to which we have had to grow used to, although for some it was tough on us. We were used to having it all. Right now, we have to understand that that luxury is over. We have to think about what to cut down on and save because now we have to pay for all our own things (P35. Woman, FARC). 206

Some women do find new agency in the practice of a feminised identity which was not possible in the collective. Colombian culture places strong value on both male and female physical appearance. “Things like going to the beauty salon, people say, that’s a stereotype, and yes it is but if you knew how important it is” (P10. Gender Expert, Colombian Peacebuilding Think Tank). 207 Many women turn to exaggerated feminine hair and beauty ideals which are not uncommon in certain parts of Colombian society. A teacher and volunteer working with individually demobilised female former FARC members believed there was an ‘ignorance’ about what being feminine was, but that women were at least free to present themselves as they wished.

They wear a lot of makeup. They have their hairstyles. Yes [they want to look very feminine]. I think it's because when they were inside the camp, they couldn’t wear clothes that they liked. They want to show their feminine side through their beauty, their haircut, their nails, their colour, their hairstyle (P05. Reintegration Volunteer). 208

The actual process of disarmament can be disempowering for women. “When you have based your safety and the defense of your life in firearms there is also a dispossession that makes you feel naked before unfavourable situations” (P16. Woman, M-19). 209 Women lose the literal and figurative item which symbolised their identity as insurgents and yielded them respect and safety. Disarmament signals the beginning of a systemic identity shift.

204 P15. Woman. EPL. Interview conducted in Bogotá 20/04/2017.
206 P35. Woman. FARC. Interview conducted in Santa Lucía, Ituango 10/02/2018.
208 P05. Reintegration Volunteer. Interview conducted in Bogotá 06/03/2017.
When we had our weapon, we felt that it was something that belonged to us, it was something that we loved, that we had to cherish. The day we had to leave it; well we did feel as if something was missing but we also understood that we were heading for change. That we had to change the weapon for the political party, that we were transitioning to a civilian life. I can’t say that it wasn’t hard for me to hand over the weapon, there were some who even cried, who took it badly. Some said goodbye to their weapon like me, by kissing it. Because it’s tough, I saw in the place where we had to hand them over, people who went and gave their weapon and showed a sadness, an ache… Well I did, inside of me I felt it. I did understand that the thing was that we were going to go through change (P35. Woman, FARC).

When you go out into civilian life there’s a huge feeling of insecurity. It is unknown terrain which I don’t know how to handle. There is insecurity, the tendency is to go back to what is familiar (P16. Woman, M-19).

DDR is a disempowering process for women if they lose some of the privileges that came with the successful assimilation within their armed group. Londoño and Nieto (2006) found that Colombian insurgent women who fully embodied their new insurgent identity in a way which more aligned with manhood suffered the most upon reintegration, as they struggled to reconstruct their identity as women. In cases similar to Colombia for example, the gender dynamics of guerrilla groups in Guatemala and Eritrea meant that their insurgent women felt comparatively more respected by male peers than civilian counterparts meaning they had relatively more to lose when their armed groups were dismantled during demobilisation (Barth, 2002; Hague, 2008). See Figure 8 for an image of one of the UN secure weapon containers used during the process of FARC’s disarmament.

Figure 8: UN secure weapon container, Zona Verdal Santa Lucía, Ituango (May, 2017).

Scholarly work on gender and DDR has by and large overlooked group identity within analysis, focused instead on the gendered barriers to DDR and the gender-specific needs of reintegrating

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210 P35. Woman. FARC. Interview conducted in Santa Lucía, Ituango 10/02/2018.
women (Hauge, 2008). This omission occurs despite many women exercising agency in their decision to enlist and experiencing new leftist NSAG gender arrangements positively, so that the loss of collective group identity is a significant emotional experience upon demobilisation. DDR aims to, “through a process that is symbolic as well as practical, to offer fighters a new identity” (Farr, 2003:27). This research suggests that many women struggle with finding new identities as they come to terms with returning to their former more restrictive gendered landscape. This is further explored throughout the chapter.

The following section examines gender dynamics at the level of the microsystem or immediate context, specifically within the collective reincorporation camps of the FARC.

The Microsystem: Reassertion of Gender Hierarchy

They talk about reincorporation because it’s collective. All of us in the group, from being insurgents to civilian life, but all together as a group (P11. ACR Reintegration Professional).\textsuperscript{212}

By choosing their own dedicated collective reincorporation programme, the FARC sought to maintain the identity and group cohesion it had constructed over several decades to further their new political project. The programme has a rural focus, where its former combatants would continue to live and work together in collectives and through a cooperative model. From the FARC point of view, the group was not demobilising in the traditional sense but transforming into a new legal, political entity. Unlike the collective demobilisations of the 1990’s and FARC reincorporation today, those who individually demobilise did not leave their former armed group with a clear political project in mind. The preexisting reintegration programme does not centre political reintegration apart from basic education within its citizenship dimension on the exercise of rights. A former member of the FARC who completed the reintegration route and was later employed by the ACR said, “it’s a route with a very individual approach and therefore, being a political subject is not cultivated” (P21. Woman, FARC).\textsuperscript{213}

The FARC sought a model which supported its political transition by maintaining a presence across the territories to consolidate political support and use its former combatant base. From the perspective of its rank and file, the new model would allow them to remain within prior social networks and work in collective agricultural productive projects which was shown, through the census of the population to be the wishes of most of its former insurgents.

\textsuperscript{212} P11. ACR Reintegration Professional. Interview conducted in Bogotá 11/04/2017.

\textsuperscript{213} P21. Woman. FARC. Interview conducted in Santa Lucía, Ituango 07/052017.
A belief in equality was central to leftist NSAG member’s sense of belonging. Despite an equality narrative carrying through to the peace agreement as a gender perspective, the research found some evidence of a reversion to archetypal gender patterns and that the collective sense of kinship and unity within FARC in some ETCRs was receding. “It’s different now. When it was us as the FARC, we were all guerrilla fighters. We were all like siblings” (P35. Woman, FARC). At the ETCR, Santa Lucía beside the town of Ituango in Northern Antioquia, I held a group interview with a female former combatant and two camp volunteers, both social work interns from the University of Antioquia. Together they discussed signs of retreating gender equality and the onset of machismo. They claimed that previous roles and responsibilities which would have been shared, were now being actioned on the basis on gender.

One does perceive machismo (P33. Social Work Intern).

Before, by their accounts when they were in the FARC-EP everyone did everything. That’s what I understood (P34. Social Work Intern).

Everything was equal for all of us. There was no difference because you were a man or a woman. We all worked equally (P35. Woman, FARC).

Now that they step towards civil society, those traditional roles are starting to be reproduced a little (P34. Social Work Intern).

So, the woman is in the house and the man goes out to work. The woman is the one taking care of the children and the one who cooks. That is currently a big challenge (P33. Social Work Intern).

It’s a change because they [men] already think differently, already think that we [women] can’t go to fetch wood or to work in the field or do other things. That we have to be in the house. We’re not used to that. We’re used to doing the same work (P35. Woman, FARC).

This female participant shared a specific example where the task of keeping communal spaces, such as the shared bathrooms clean was falling to her. “I have a hard time because if I go and clean up the bathroom, others come and leave it dirty. I’m the one losing out there, because every day it’s me who has to keep it clean” (P35. Woman, FARC).

No longer living under direct oversight from superiors some inhabitants were freeriding on the individual effort of others. See Figure 9 for some of the communal hygiene facilities at the ETCR Santa Lucía. Figure 10 shows the communal kitchen and dining area at the reception centre of the Zona Verdal Icononzo, and Figure 11, some of the communal washing facilities at the Zona Verdal Icononzo.
These same interview participants felt that local-level reincorporation policy was largely directed by men, who were more visible at camp assemblies. “I feel that the ones leading and thinking about the reincorporation issue, in the political, productive, economic, that men’s voices are more present and men’s interests” (P34. Social Work Intern). Although they confirmed that more women had begun to voice their concerns. “Little by little there’s leadership from women, women have proposals, they have the will, there are initiatives” (P34. Social Work Intern). “Whenever there’s an assembly now, we also stay to talk and say how we feel, to explain (P35. Woman, FARC).

At the ETCR Tumaco, Nariño, different gender dynamics were unfolding. A reintegration specialist working at the camp had not observed a regression to hegemonic gender norms. She also felt that the collective approach of the group was still being upheld.

That’s not happening. The girl might be pregnant, and she goes to work just like her partner. They’re at home and her partner can also take care of the baby the same way she does. What’s been observed here is that those traditional cultural roles haven’t been put into practice, such as the wife taking care of the children at home and the husband going to work. They’re still living with their theme of “all of us here are the same and we all do the same things” (P40. ARN Reintegration Professional).

She did acknowledge that she and her colleagues had yet to implement a gender strategy, partly because they had not yet received one from the ARN specific to reincorporation, but also because...
it was a sensitive topic for former Farianas due to differing conceptions of gender equality which needed to be introduced carefully.

We aren’t really working on that because we don’t have a guideline. And it’s not like we can tell them right away, “it has to be this way”. It’s a construction and a learning experience for both. What do the girls say? “We leave that place and they start to see us as if we were weak, and we aren’t weak. Us women carried the same weapons and the same weight the men carried, we did the same things, we see ourselves as equals”. We have to make that differentiation so that there is equity. They don’t see it that way. They still don’t see men and women the same way we do, not yet. We have to listen to them and understand how they feel, to see how we’re going to work on the gender equality issue. We have to handle them properly, so they don’t say, “you’re telling me I’m weak, why do you have to give me a hand for jumping over a puddle. I can jump by myself”. Give them the help of a man, for example, if my colleague gives one a hand, they get angry. It bothers them if you make them feel as if they aren’t able to do it by themselves (P40. ARN Reintegration Professional).226

In Guatemala, Wenche Hague (2008) found that that after demobilisation, former insurgent women were able to sustain their affirming group identity developed by guerrilla membership through their collective model of reintegration with male counterparts. This acted as “an asset for social and political participation” (Hague, 2008:295). She further notes that the choice of collective versus individual reintegration held significant implications for interview participants especially when returning to a patriarchal culture, in that collective reintegration continued to temper some of those preexisting discriminatory norms (Hague, 2008). The research here uncovered varying different degrees to which more equitable patterns of gender relations within specific sites of reincorporation were either retreating or persevering. Gender is always in flux, even at the more granular level of a self-contained community, due to the heterogeneous nature of human experience, local leadership and sociocultural dynamics, furthering evidencing the importance of contextually aware reintegration and gender measures even within specific programmes.

The Microsystem: Motherhood, Healthcare and Family

In what can be viewed as a reversion to cultural standards of womanhood, many female former leftist NSAG members choose to have children once they are in the process of reintegration. “I think that a woman, who is forced to get multiple abortions leaves society with the idea of wanting to do what she could not do inside the organisation. They almost immediately became mothers” (P05. Reintegration Volunteer).227 This decision is unsurprising given the reproductive rights of Farianas were severely curtailed and many left for that specific reason (Gutiérrez Sanín &

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226 P40. ARN Reintegration Professional. Interview conducted in Tumaco, Nariño 14/02/2018.
227 P05. Reintegration Volunteer. Interview conducted in Bogotá 06/03/2017.
This trend of swiftly choosing motherhood was also clearly evident within reincorporation after FARC’s leadership took a decision to lift the ban on procreation during the peace negotiations.

The media portrayed the ‘baby boom’ through a stereotypical lens. Motherhood was positioned as a potential solution to the ‘issue’ of female reincorporation and implicit was that it was the primary role of women leaving the conflict. Such discourse is highly troubling however as it relegates women to a narrow narrative which is palatable for societal consumption, but it neglects all of the other facets of their identity. Birth rates did rise quickly once Farinas were allowed to have children and I did see many women and men with young babies during my site visits. Later, when I returned to the ETCRs in phase two of the research, there were also older children onsite, the result of family reunification which had occurred in the meantime. The FARC meanwhile appeared to encourage pregnancy as a way to appease public sentiment. Figure 12 shows a Fariana with her young child and Figure 13, a Fariana sitting outside of her house, both taken at the Zona Verdal Icononzo.

![Figure 12](image1.jpg)  
*Figure 12: Fariana with her young child, Zona Verdal Icononzo (March, 2017).*  
*Figure 13: Fariana sits by her house, Zona Verdal Icononzo (March, 2017).*

Cantonment sites involved in the demobilisation phase of DDR are often ill-equipped to address female-specific needs although a range specialised health services should be made available to women through dedicated and secure facilities (Ní Aoláin et al., 2012; UNIFEM, 2004). Gender conscious DDR should offer services which include rape counselling, screening for sexually transmitted diseases, childcare, pre-natal, reproductive, gynaecological and maternal healthcare, family planning, counselling and sanitary products (Banholzer, 2014).
There is no differential system of healthcare for demobilised Colombian combatants. They join the public healthcare system through the state-run insurance scheme, the EPS.\(^{228}\) Research participants from reintegration and reincorporation programmes found the system to be inadequate. At the time of the site visits, FARC members were in the process of completing the paperwork required to enter the national system as an early reinsertion procedure. On-site in the camps, there are some basic health provisions, but this was timebound and limited in scope. Unfortunately, adequate prenatal and postnatal care and a clear policy to support pregnant women and parents early into their reincorporation route was not evident.

It’s a critical situation, it’s worrying mostly because of women’s situation in those zones. There are lactating women, pregnant women. They are not being given the care they should. This should have been planned beforehand. Care is being provided on the go. The needs of this population are being met in the field. That is serious, because the Agreement tells you that you must provide such special attention from the start… I don’t know if those zones, the camps were ever designed to provide for the needs of pregnant women (P06a. DDR Expert, Colombian Peacebuilding Think Tank).\(^{229}\)

Gynaecological and oncological healthcare emerged as another worrying gendered health issue for reincorporating FARC women. In a group interview at the ETCR Pondores, La Guajira three Farianas discussed the lack of female-specific healthcare.

It’s been terrible in that sense, there are girls here who were ordered cytologies and they haven’t been able to have them. Besides, when they go to get checked it’s a long errand. They say services out there are disastrous because they don’t treat people just like that. Some girls have had cancer problems, others have been operated on for ovarian cysts or had their ovaries removed, so they must have constant check-ups. The health service is truly awful in that sense (P27. Woman, FARC).\(^{230}\)

Those young women’s cancer problems have progressed, some companions have had their breasts operated on because cancer was in such an advanced stage, because [they were] waiting for the EPS to do. It’s not a hospital, it’s a cemetery. Our female companions have to go to private doctors, because the EPS service is inadequate. The government hasn’t wanted to comply with this health thing. One of the things we’re fighting for is the rights given to any citizen, which is health and education. So, they’re refusing us that (P28. Woman, FARC).\(^{231}\)

One woman said that medical care was quicker and easier as an active combatant in the mountain as the commander would send for a doctor when required and that they could provide gynaecological care, although this was probably partly related to the fact that FARC tightly controlled women’s reproductive rights.

\(^{228}\) Entidad Promotora de Salud or Health Promotion Entity.

\(^{229}\) P06a. DDR Expert, Colombian Peacebuilding Think Tank. Interview conducted in Bogotá 09/03/2017.

\(^{230}\) P27. Woman. FARC. Interview conducted in Pondores, La Guajira 08/12/2017.

\(^{231}\) P28. Woman. FARC. Interview conducted in Pondores, La Guajira 08/12/2017.
At the ETCR, Tumaco, Nariño reintegration professionals were providing female inhabitants with some basic early childhood education.

We had a workshop on how to raise children and we gave them very fun course material. So, each page said, well, if your child doesn’t want to eat, you have the following options: breathe, let him settle down, tell him about the importance of eating. It was basically on how to handle certain situations that were new for them. That they didn’t know how to react to due to their military training (P40. ARN Reintegration Professional).²³²

The family dimension of reintegration is very important; family reunification and re-establishing social platforms to anchor former combatants so that other initiatives can take place. Research participants spoke of leaving children, missing parent’s funerals and of families who were resentful of their leftist NSAG participation. FARC’s reincorporation led to a lot of reunification where family members in some instances relocated to the ETCRs. One woman I interviewed at the ETCR Santa Lucía, Ituango for example had her elderly mother living with her there. Other women discussed how they had reconnected with children but were unable to be together.

I have a 5 year old daughter. She’s not with me, I couldn’t have her with me due to the [military] causes. It’s been five years that I haven’t lived with her, my relatives have her. We have transitioned to another life which is civilian life, but she isn’t currently with us and she’s never been with me. I’ve simply had the opportunity now of visiting her on three or four occasions (P27. Woman, FARC).²³³

Circumstances did not allow me to have him here, he’s studying right now. He’s in ninth grade. I did have the opportunity of seeing him. They brought him here for me, but he went back to his city to continue studying (P28. Woman, FARC).²³⁴

These complex scenarios during reintegration can be very difficult for the women involved who were forced to be apart from their children as a consequence of their leftist NSAG membership. Another woman told me how her eldest son did not want to be with her. Although she was grateful that the peace process allowed her to reconnect with him she was still trying to rebuild the relationship.

The first son I had, it was 12 years without seeing him and this process has allowed me to find him. He doesn’t want me now, the way he should. But it’s understandable because it’s a consequence of war, but for me it’s highly positive that I’ve been able to find my son, so I owe all this to the process. Right now, I have my [other] son. But I have another son who I practically have to gain back because due to the war he doesn’t want to be with me. I must give him time and I must win him over. I have the smallest one who’s the one accompanying me here (P25. Woman, FARC).²³⁵

²³² P40. ARN Reintegration Professional. Interview conducted in Tumaco, Nariño 14/02/2018.
²³³ P27. Woman. FARC. Interview conducted in Pondores, La Guajira 08/12/2017.
²³⁵ P25. Woman. FARC. Interview conducted in Pondores, La Guajira 08/12/2017.
Female combatants are viewed as having absconded their culturally prescribed mothering role which adds to the complexity of their reintegration or reincorporation at the family level.

The whole issue of family reintegration, how to reincorporate a man to a family, where his wife took care of the children or how to reincorporate a woman who left her children in the care of her mother or of her sisters. These have different social indictments and different needs which cannot be forgotten. Also, different needs cannot be used as an excuse for women to lose their political place (P14. Director, Human Rights and Gender Justice Organisation).

The processes that women went through by participating in the guerrillas was contrary to Colombian society. When the transit to civilian life happened, women were charged with that transgression. “Let them go back to traditional roles, have them help at home, take care of the elders, care for children, provide a series of service-like things by way of atonement for the family’s suffering (P02. Woman, M-19).

A gendered burden was becoming apparent in the ETCRs due to some women’s care work. One woman questioned her ability to participate in future political or other roles if it required her to leave her children for a second time. She had already held a yearlong position in the disarmament monitoring mission alongside representatives from the government and the UN.

If I dedicate myself to politics I would have to leave him, and I don’t intend to lose my other child. Politics is very important to us, but there are other areas where I can contribute to the party and to our movement. We have it rough. There are no spaces for the children here, the consideration is for the job, “what it is that you’re going to do” but the children have never been considered. We’ve got twice the workload because I have to take care of my son and do my job, and that’s how I spend all my day (P25, Woman, FARC).

In the Guatemalan case, the collective reintegration model of cooperatives provided women with childcare which allowed them to assume other roles in parallel to being mothers, thus contributing positively to their social and economic reintegration (Hague, 2008). The narrative above shows that without adequate support systems in place for mothers, valuable female participation in post-conflict reconstruction is lost.

Key informants were particularly concerned that the positive shift in reproductive rights and bodily autonomy was not accompanied by sufficient education on what motherhood meant more widely for women’s reincorporation in the longer-term.

It posed inequalities from the start. You can’t promote maternity in ex-combatant women if you can’t guarantee that they’ll be able to assume their reintegration process as women and mothers under the same conditions as those who are not mothers… There’s no sexual and reproductive rights education. Yes, it’s their choice but is it a fully informed choice on what this implies for their reintegration. In a country where there is a gap between women with a certain level of education with and without children? Where it’s not the same to look for a job and meet a schedule...

238 P25. Woman. FARC. Interview conducted in Pondores, La Guajira 08/12/2017.
with and without children? We find it to be rushed. Yes, it’s nice and it’s their choice, but let’s not sell it as great (P10. Gender Expert, Colombian Peacebuilding Think Tank). The baby boom that is talked about, women who have opted for maternity. There are concerns for those women, that opting for maternity doesn’t become an impediment. That they can still also choose politics and building peace together as peers, in a democracy. Enjoy the same rights as their partners and accesses the resources of reincorporation: economic, social and political (P14. Director, Human Rights and Gender Justice Organisation).

The following section explores how women in reintegration interact with the wider exosystem including educational institutions and external opportunities for income generation to achieve socioeconomic security.

The Exosystem: Education and Socioeconomic Security

The attention that we received in our time when we surrendered arms didn’t correspond to the processes we women underwent because former women combatants are fundamentally political beings. We are political women. Being treated as a victim, as a person battered by war or as a perpetrator is not healing you, nor is it solving your situation as a political woman, with consciousness and knowing what you want. What we received was an approached oriented by the model of feminine roles. That is offensive for a woman who has had all that we had (P02. Woman, M-19).

This section explores former insurgent women’s interactions with the social and economic structures of education and employment. When education and labour market skills are insufficiently developed, women’s socioeconomic reintegration outcomes are hindered (Sørensen, 1998). If the material benefits of reintegration flow only to men, the post-conflict economy is distorted. Women are already unequally treated in most societies and reintegration can exacerbate this if it reproduces existing gender dichotomies. Cultural expectations about the position of women means insurgent women are expected to resume certain gendered performances which their leftist NSAG membership had intentionally sought to circumvent.

You have women that have been commanders, who had an important role in war and then she demobilises and society kind of expects her to have children and go home and provide to the husband. And that's pretty much it. Is that what we want? Is that the role that we want them to have in peace? (P04. Former ACR Advisor).

This reproduction of gender disadvantage through reintegration is unfortunately not uncommon. Luna K.C (2019) found that the military skills and subsequent upskilling of former combatant women in Nepal was neglected in their reintegration. Instead, “feminine roles as mothers or wives

241 P02. Woman, M-19. Interview conducted in Bogotá 01/03/2017.
242 P04. Former ACR Advisor. Interview conducted in Bogotá 03/03/2017.
were emphasised and welcomed in the post-war context” (K.C, 2019:468). Dietrich Ortega (2012) asserted that the dismantlement of leftist NSAGs means that they can no longer uphold their gender arrangements, they “lose the capacity to actively ‘shield’ militants from civilian social assignations” (Dietrich Ortega, 2017:312). This section explores if reintegration has (or has not), through the promotion of alternative practices of gender disrupted social processes which seek to reassert women’s ‘place’ in society.

As detailed in chapter 4, Colombian DDR in the early 1990’s was bereft of a gender approach or the longer-term conception of reintegration. Limited economic opportunities and the way in which benefits were distributed had a distinctly negative gendered impact on women. Some felt they had to relinquish their right to study in order to care for their families or so that male partners could advance, and many were left without economic projects when relationships ended.

We talked with our comrades about how many of those failed projects, the chicken and the taxis were done as couples. The projects were in the name of men and if those couples broke off, which is what happened in most cases, women were left with their children and without the projects, and men with the projects and no children (P02. Woman, M-19).

Education as a benefit was granted for the demobilised person to their whole family so they could have access. Frequently the man studied, and the woman declined in favour of her children. It was an abdication of her right in order to benefit someone else (P15. Woman, EPL).

Socioeconomic opportunities through reintegration need to be sensitive to economic realities, however, employment, training and educational opportunities should align with women’s wishes and without any automatic presumption of the roles they may want. Reintegration must also account for female military leadership and the various non-conventional skills insurgent women may have acquired through their participation in warfare (UN INSTRAW, 2010). One of the most significant challenges facing all Colombian former combatants today is their prior lack of formal education. They are at an immediate disadvantage after enlisting at a young age to a leftist NSAG. Many have poor literacy skills and it was an enduring obstacle as described below.

Because of my education level I haven’t been able to do a lot of things. They always tell you ‘but’ saying that you don’t have the correct education level. That’s one of the shortfalls that is always going to be there. And not only with me, there are people who don’t even know how to read or write so that is always going to leave us behind (P48. Woman, FARC).

The ARN works in part by linking former combatants to other state services. The option to complete primary and secondary school is through the standard adult education model while trade
and technical courses offered are carried out by SENA. This prevailing model can be taxing for women and does not provide contextualised learning.

She doesn’t know how to add and subtract, but probably has a sense of direction that we’ll never have. She’s probably able to solve certain situations which we can’t. But the educational model is standardised. So, when you bring someone in, who has other abilities and who didn’t develop the ones from the [standard] system, then reintegration is very difficult in an educational space (P10. Gender Expert, Colombian Peacebuilding Think Tank).246

Although the ARN reincorporation guide now references the provision of flexible models of education, in the ETCRs at the time of the interviews, a conventional model of schooling was being implemented and some women were struggling to keep up (ARN, n.dd). “We were left hanging because we didn’t understand properly. The ones with a higher level of education, we understood a little. But if they were beginners, they wouldn’t understand the primers” (P35. Woman, FARC).247

With all institutional gender mainstreaming efforts, moving beyond the tokenistic can encounter resistance, nevertheless, the ARN has comparatively made significant advancements in the area of gender-sensitive reintegration policy. Securing employment and with it a sustainable income and sense of purpose is one of the most important and yet most challenging aspects of reintegration. Organisational efforts are made by the ARN to place former combatants into income-generating work and prior to this, access to suitable training of their choosing. Nevertheless, many former combatants today remain unemployed and living in relative poverty. Even if reintegrating individuals do secure employment they often struggle to survive on low-wage, gender-stereotypical roles, “women selling food on the street, as household maids, in very complex scenarios” (P10. Gender Expert, Colombian Peacebuilding Think Tank).248

The expectation that society has of a woman who left the FARC is to work in the kitchen of a restaurant or go out and do woman’s work in the streets, like selling sweets on carts, or to marry and have children and begin a normal life (P05. Reintegration Volunteer).249

Many employment opportunities available are in the informal sector. This type of livelihood is precarious, leaving already marginalised people on the fringes of the economy. The informal sector is attractive as it allows former insurgents to circumvent formal workplaces where discrimination against employing a demobilised person is rife. Informal work also holds the attraction of quick but small financial gains, often there are few other options.

The dream of many of them is to be able to make enough money to buy a big cart of products and work on a corner, or to sell empanadas at the corner. In that way they will not have a boss, they

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247 P35. Woman. FARC. Interview conducted in Santa Lucía, Ituango 10/02/2018.
249 P05. Reintegration Volunteer. Interview conducted in Bogotá 06/03/2017.
will not have colleagues, they will not have to explain in an interview what happened during that gap of time (P05. Reintegration Volunteer).250

In Colombia, women and vulnerable groups more generally dominate in the informal sector so the position of former insurgent women mirrors this societal level trend and reproduces its hierarchies.

Women did well on education, on social reintegration factors, but worse on socioeconomic reintegration factors. That speaks to what you are saying, something that is general for other vulnerable populations in Colombia or women from other vulnerable populations in Colombia. Women all over the world, right? Even if we have higher education, we often have lower income or less economic opportunities (P23. ACR Gender Strategist).251

Even for well-educated former insurgent women the CV gap is a prominent issue as they feel unable to explain and justify their past.

There were many women who were in the guerrilla movements for many years. How do you justify that in your CV? After surrendering arms, many studied. There are many doctors, master’s degrees, professionals. But when you’re looking for a job they ask you, ‘what did you do from 1980 until 1990?’ There’s a gap and what do you say to that? (P02. Woman, M-19).252

Workwise, no one wants to know about a person with a past surrounded by peril. I would present my resume; people knew me because I had been a somewhat public person and they wouldn’t give me work. So, my first job was clandestine. My first paying job, because I needed to support myself, was with a peer from the organisation but from the political section. They took on a consultancy and hired me. I worked at home back then, hidden. I never put my name on what I wrote but it allowed me to start earning a living (P16. Woman, M-19).253

Many women in the reintegration programme choose training courses for preparation in industries traditionally coded as female such as hair and beauty. There is no singular explanation for this, but it is linked to the deeply rooted assumptions about the roles of Colombian women, their prior levels of education and the actual job prospects which exist. Most have a very pressing need to learn a skill which can quickly translate to the generation of income. These feminine-coded options are one pathway that requires little previous formal education. “They urgently need to learn how to develop a trade. To learn a skill, learn how to cut hair, learn how to do a manicure, learn how to make plastic bags, etc. If there is an organisation that is for example giving free classes on how to cut hair, they all go” (P05. Reintegration Volunteer).254

Before the advent of a gender strategy, women were more likely to be encouraged to take up these more traditional avenues of training and employment. One former member of M-19 who worked

250 P05. Reintegration Volunteer. Interview conducted in Bogotá 06/03/2017.
254 P05. Reintegration Volunteer. Interview conducted in Bogotá 06/032017.
as an independent consultant for the ACR found that SENA was prone to segregating based on gender, while women with children struggled to participate.

As said to us by women, “we inquired about the possibilities of courses for women and they said, there’s nothing for women at the moment. There’s only Construction Project Completion, Mechanics and it’s all for men”. So, they are excluded from the start because they don’t consider those to be women’s occupations. When Construction Project Completion might be an important trade for women. How do we prevent SENA from segregating, which are courses for women, and which are courses for men? Because then they [women] take useless courses, farming methods for laying hens, stuffed animals, making little dolls, manicure, beauty. Highly traditional! And the schedules aren’t very flexible. So, the women who are bringing up children because they were told they had to have a family, when do they go to SENA? (P16. Woman, M-19). 255

Over time, the emphasis on certain occupations has shifted, although as the following narrative demonstrates some newly popular training courses are still largely feminine-coded. What is apparent is that former insurgent women are consciously choosing training and the subsequent access to seed capital to establish their own independent productive ventures. They are entrepreneurial in that regard and actively seek financial independence.

Over time these things have been changing. Women have seen that there are other options beyond beauty-related jobs, sewing for example. There were many women who also asked for that because in the end they are given money for a productive venture. So, they invest their venture money in sewing machines (P11. Former ACR Professional). 256

Although former insurgent women conceive of themselves as equal many, similar to their male counterparts are from lower socioeconomic and rural backgrounds which may narrow their cultural reference points and consequently, the opportunities they may feel are available to them. “For you and me that have lived outside of this situation, we know that a woman can do any job she wants. But for them coming from another context, their cultural referent is smaller” (P05. Reintegration Volunteer). 257 For many though, there is a clear disconnect between their future aspirations and what is later presented to them.

Women as guerrilla fighters are political women with a very strong political ideology. When they arrive to the reintegration process and receive job proposals as for example, beauticians, many don’t agree with that. They come from thinking about themselves as political women to being offered jobs in something they don’t like. It has been very complicated; it is also a struggle with those beauty stereotypes that assume women have to work as beauticians and can’t do anything else. Nevertheless, I think that they [the ACR] are making good efforts to try and reintegrate them all, which isn’t easy (P01. Journalist). 258

Some women do succeed in opening small independent businesses and two of the interview participants had done so. “I have my business unit, it’s a styling salon, my productive project. I

257 P05. Reintegration Volunteer. Interview conducted in Bogotá 06/03/2017.
258 P01. Journalist. Interview conducted in Bogotá 03/02/2017.
work with it at home. I go out to work because that’s what I want to do” (P18. Woman, FARC).259 A third women I spoke with had a small shop in her front living room where she sold some grocery items. This allowed her to be at home with her children, but she admitted it was barely enough to get by and that it was an informal arrangement. To that end, some research participants felt that the few women who had gone on to achieve significant positions had done so mainly due to their own determination and ambition. “Female leaders who have come out of the ACR have done so mainly on their own effort” (P15. Woman, EPL).260 “That being said, there has been examples where women exercise leadership, but once again, I think that is more anecdotal rather than really supported through a strategy” (P49. ACR Employee).261

Ultimately, despite advancements in gender-sensitive reintegration, the Colombian reintegration programme is not yet capable of being gender transformative, while it does not seek to overtly reinforce societal gender dichotomies through the socioeconomic opportunities provided to former insurgent women, this process, this positioning and this reproduction of wider societal level trends and power hierarchies continues to take place.

The IDDRS also speaks about looking at non-traditional type of work and that was something that we discussed. I would really not claim in that sense, that the programme managed to get that kind of real gender transformation. We certainly discussed it, but I still think after all the work we did, we are still, kind of stereotypical often (P23. ACR Gender Strategist).262

The findings resonate with the agency versus structure debate in the field of gender studies, the extent to which individual (former combatants) and organisations (the ARN) are free to make choices or are constrained within existing systems of power underpinned by material structure (Bradley, 2013). This idea is further taken up in the macrolevel section of this chapter.

At the time of the field visits there were marked variations in the conditions of the reincorporation camps but an overall pattern of delay in the implementation of the state-supported productive projects was evident. Individuals were spending their time completing a variety of short courses on offer by SENA and others which included baking, entrepreneurship, basic financial management and tailoring alongside the more formal primary and secondary model of schooling. The ARN was providing basic reinsertion activities alongside this. Figure 14 shows the temporary camps that the FARC was living in when they first arrived to the Zona Verdal Santa Lucía as construction continued on the more permanent structures which were unfinished during the first site visit. That ongoing construction is seen in Figure 15. Nine months later, I returned to the

259 P18. Woman. FARC. Interview conducted in Yopal, Casanare 30/04/2017.
260 P15. Woman. EPL. Interview conducted in Bogotá 20/04/2017.
261 P49. ACR Employee. Interview conducted over Skype 02/07/2018.
262 P23. ACR Gender Strategist. Interview conducted in Bogotá 28/10/2017.
ETCR and the inhabitants had moved from the temporary camps into their homes some of which are visible in Figure 16. This ETCR has since been located due to instability in the region.

Figure 14: FARC temporary camp, Zona Verdal Santa Lucía, Ituango (May, 2017).
Figure 15: Zona Verdal Santa Lucía, Ituango under construction (May, 2017).
Figure 16: Completed houses, ETCR Santa Lucía, Ituango (February, 2018).

To compensate for the delays, some residents at different sites had pooled their initial reinsertion money to start small-scale projects of their own. At the ETCR Pondores, three women described a variety of projects underway some which were supported and others not. These included a cattle project, a bakery started by women, a chicken project, a dressing making project and a trout aquaculture project. Individuals had also begun tending to vegetable gardens which were mostly for personal consumption. These women said they were yet to receive their initial reinsertion package and that loans were used to initiate projects. Similar to women in the reintegration route, reincorporating Farianas expressed a desire to work, a frustration at the holdup and an ingenuity and resourcefulness in organising themselves. Figure 17 shows a woman working in the apparel project at the ETCR Pondores and Figure 18, some of the items that were being made.

Figure 17: Fariana working at a productive project, ETCR Pondores (December, 2017)
Figure 18: Clothing produced through apparel making productive project, ETCR Pondores (December, 2017).
Farianas in the reincorporation spaces were very much aware of the general mistrust felt towards the FARC as an organisation, and they were very hopeful that educational opportunities would aid their civilian acceptance. They were also aware that state reincorporation benefits would come to an end and they wanted to be self-reliant and participating civilians ahead of this. They asserted that were committed to peace and non-violent political participation.

Many of us have decided to finish high-school, others elementary school. We’re enthusiastic that entities such as SENA, will help us become more professional because many of us have had that opportunity within the organisation [the FARC], to become someone, like nurses and dentists. Maybe we didn’t have a role that would make Colombia accept us, give us a decent job, they might reject us. So, each one of us is making and effort, studying, getting the high-school diploma, getting to university, that will help us. We have a great deal of knowledge, but you know technology has advanced. We haven’t had the opportunity yet to become someone so that we’re not rejected because we’re ex-combatants. Each one of us wonders what our life will be like once the Agreement is completed. We have to bear in mind that the government told us it would give us money for two years and then economic resources will no longer come… [We don’t want to] end up in gangs and all that. We agreed to peace because we no longer want bloodshed, which took place for 53 years. We don’t want our children, our grandchildren, to live the same causes that we did (P27. Woman, FARC).263

It is important to draw attention to the fact that not all experiences of reintegration are equal for women. The extent to which reintegration can successfully empower women may be partly dependent on the position reached within their armed group. Even if day-to-day civilian life is challenging, some women from lower ranks may rediscover a sense of autonomy as they take charge over aspects of their lives previously determined by their superiors. Others may conversely feel disempowered if they had formally achieved a leadership position which reintegration cannot necessarily replicate.

When you’ve had some decision-making capacities, then reintegration does take power away. If it was a role where there was at least an equal relationship with men, returning to a family scenario where there is no parity, to a work scenario where it’s highly probable that mostly men are calling the shots, then reintegration becomes a scenario of loss in terms of power (P10. Gender Expert, Colombian Peacebuilding Think Tank).264

An intersectional lens also reveals specific advantages and hindrances for certain women concerning socioeconomic security. Women by virtue of having prior higher standards of education are at a distinct advantage in reintegration. The interview participants from M-19 and the EPL were testament to this. Location is often linked to class and educational positioning in Colombia and differences become very apparent upon demobilisation. Urban-based former combatants more generally may also find the transition to civilian life easier given their pre-

263 P27. Woman. FARC. Interview conducted in Pondores, La Guajira 08/12/2017.
established ties and ability to navigate urban environments and bureaucracy and where stigma may be comparatively less.

When we retired a lot of them came to the cities. We had been taking risks in the city our entire lives. We had a lot of places where we could go, a lot of people. They were adapting to a different world. Education, for example. If a comrade read and didn’t understand, as a group we helped to clarify but when we came into legal life those differences were huge, because whoever doesn’t have an education also doesn’t have a good resume to give them opportunities, while the person who went to university, that one has them. That’s when you started to notice the differences, they were more visible, they were huge (P29. Woman, M-19).265

Elise Barth (2002) who studied the experience of female former combatants of Eritrea found a direct link between education and later peacebuilding and political participation. Women who were active in these areas were educated. Farianas who reached a prominent position in the FARC or visibility during the peace negotiations may (and have) found themselves in significant party roles. Key informants worried that for rank and file based out in the territories, the reincorporation process could be disempowering and that the reversion to gendered norms would be significant enough to prevent sociocultural and political enfranchisement.

Women like Victoria Sandino keep it [empowerment], she’ll be a senator, she’s got it granted, and other women too, the most visible ones in the participation processes. Women at the territories, see how many women are pregnant and the amount of childbirths that have taken place. How do they go back to the position of being invisible from an active political scenario, as they were in FARC? There’re some women who are going to continue in the participation processes, I’m sure. But in most of what I’ve witnessed, they’re all in that model again, the nuclear family model and conventional job model. And the empowering process has been lost (P24. Employee, International Justice NGO).266

The following section explores the final level within the ecological model, that of the macrosystem.

The Macrosystem: Gendered Stigma and the Prevailing Gender Order

What we had conquered inside, we lost outside (P02. Woman, M-19).267

Receiving and host communities may be understandably suspicious of returning combatants if they have caused palpable harm, if they fear further violence and if they question why the former combatant population are in receipt of assistance not available to them. The mistrust of

Colombian former combatants is multilayered in that it arises from intersecting oppressions such as class, ethnicity and the socially constructed categorisation of ‘desmovilizada(o)’. These disadvantageous systems of power impact individual capacity to socially, economically and politically reintegrate. Insurgent women in particular, are viewed as having failed in their primary cultural roles.

Men return from war as heroes and women do not return as heroines. In their case it is the return of the son, the husband, the father, but women who disrupted their gender role, who left their children or the old parents, or their ill mothers, well they face different charges, [because of] the stereotype that women are good, caregivers, caring for children, we are tender. All that faces a female fighter who takes up a gun, who takes command (P14. Director, Human Rights and Gender Justice Organisation).

There is a social sanction for “going to extremes and breaking with the order. Overcoming the private intimate space. Going out into public is already a transgression and then to go into the even more radical, to war” (P15. Woman, EPL). The transgression of prescribed gender binaries and “of all social spaces” creates for former insurgent women, alongside their demobilised identity, a secondary gender-specific stigma during reintegration (P02. Woman, M-19). Societal backlash is particularly acute when insurgent women are mothers and they have been seen to abscond from their mothering role and responsibilities.

I’m going to use huge quotation marks on this one and with a deep criticism of what is called ‘natural’. It isn’t natural for women to leave their homes, leave their children (P15. Woman, EPL).

I have heard comments like, “how are they capable of leaving their children and going to war?” There’s more discrimination against women who are mothers (P34. Social Work Intern).

Their families condemn women a lot for abandoning their children, the role that was expected of her, the home, the husband. Even the ones that supported them, because many families kept their children while the women went to war. But then they collect a high payment from them. They hold it against the women. If the son is in trouble, it is because she abandoned him, but men aren’t condemned the same way. It’s more understandable (P13. Executive, Humanitarian Organisation).

Feelings of shame and guilt which arise from this stigma can drive further isolation when as humans, connection and belonging are essential to wellbeing. Female former combatants can come to internalise destructive discourses, feeling reprehensible for having failed cultural expectations.

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268 ‘Demobilised’ a demobilised person.
270 P15. Woman, EPL. Interview conducted in Bogotá 20/04/2017.
272 P15. Woman. EPL. Interview conducted in Bogotá 20/04/2017.
Then the difficulties will come as, first guilt for leaving the traditional roles and the social sanction...then there is social and family guilt, a Judaeo-Christian formation, guilt for abandonment, motherhood, abandoned parents, for transgressing from family life, it is abundant. That’s a specific burden us women have (P16. Woman, M-19).

The research found that gendered stigma was particularly pronounced during the era of the earlier demobilisations for the women of M-19 and the EPL. “Women faced double charges, for being guerrilla fighters and for being women that left their homes, that broke with the patriarchal authority of their fathers, that took a political stand, that left to the mountains” (P02. Woman, M-19). Londoño and Nieto (2006) also found that these female guerrilla populations felt particularly maligned and shunned upon their reinsertion. A gender-skewed stigma remains prevalent today however, and many women from later demobilisations still feel unable to talk about their past experience. A woman I spoke with who individually demobilised in 2004 said, “in general, it's better not to talk about it because there are people who retaliate” (P47. Woman, FARC).

Despite advancements in women’s rights and liberal attitudes more generally since the 1990’s, it could be argued that Colombia is again moving further away from attempts to reach gender equality. There was a severe backlash by opposition groups against the apparent ‘gender ideology’ contained within the peace agreement. Their opposition campaign claimed it was seeking to subvert the ‘natural order’ of the Colombian family and this narrative was an influential factor in the peace plebiscite narrowly failing in 2016. Less than two years later, in August 2018, Iván Duque Márquez was elected as Colombian President, a member of the Democratic Centre, a conservative and sometimes considered right-wing political party, he campaigned against the peace agreement in its current form (International Crisis Group, 2018). With the installation of a centre right government, female former combatants and indeed all Colombian women find themselves living within an increasingly conservative society.

It seems to me that when they feel we are emancipating; more chains fall over us. “Women, to your traditional places!” They are really scared of women’s freedom, so I think they’re trying to put pressure on us to go back (P16. Woman, M-19).

Former insurgent women find themselves at fundamental odds with civilian society, misaligned with the hegemonic gender order that sees their militant gender performances as exceptional and undesirable. By participating in a leftist NSAG they reconstructed their identities through the process but as many described, despite their revolutionary intent, overall societal cultural

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277 P47. Woman. FARC. Interview conducted Villavicencio, Meta 26/02/2018.
278 Centro Democrático.
conditions remained fairly static and intact. “Cultural conditions don’t change. Reintegration took place in a context that didn’t change or consider those [gender] gains. That was the biggest burden placed on reintegration (P15. Woman, EPL). This response from former insurgent women aligns with the work of Dietrich Ortega (2012) who found leftist NSAGs gender shifts to be largely transient. Similarly, Luna K.C (2018) found that “the reintegration period is obscure as the fundamental structure of society remains unchanged by the war” (Luna K.C, 2019:468).

Colombia is a highly conservative, patriarchal country. So even though, we were trying to [reintegrate women], we were doing it so, from the machista place, because this is the way we do things in this country (P04. Former ACR Advisor).

Although by Colombian standards the ARN is a relatively progressive institution, it must still operate within the confines of Colombian society. “Imbalance, inequality. The ACR can’t solve that” (P10. Gender Expert, Colombian Peacebuilding Think Tank). It can be challenging to try and implement gender transformative strategies of reintegration in a society where cultural expectation remains relatively conservative and stigma so pronounced.

There's been tons of research, we have the political will, we have the institution, we have the people that work with them. But you have a society that is not convinced, that is not willing to give them a second chance. And if you extrapolate that to gender, it’s the same thing (P04. Former ACR Advisor).

The ARN is quite open and not as conservative and strict as Colombian society. Which becomes like the dissonance between the two because, yes you can create really nice strategies, but there is a real-life side too. This is not only ARN’s work but it's Colombia’s work. Everyone has to be onboard, normalising the whole procedure, building understanding, acceptance and so on. In that sense the ARN is quite implicitly political, there is a certain set of norms within the agency that they are trying to transfer on to other entities (P49. ACR Employee).

Even with an executed gender strategy, when there is a gendered imbalance of power in society as there always is, reintegration for women is hindered.

Reintegration processes are highly successful to reintegrate people into poverty for example, to reintegrate people into the common logics of society. But reintegration processes are not very successful in changing the dynamics that in first place led to the conflict, so is that real peacebuilding? We’re not very successful at that, in Colombia or in the world (P04. Former ACR Advisor).

A broader pattern of structural gender disadvantage and other structural inequalities is visible across society (Bradley, 2013). This raises important questions about the ability of DDR in

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260 P15. Woman. EPL. Interview conducted in Bogotá 20/04/2017.
261 P04. Former ACR Advisor. Interview conducted in Bogotá 03/03/2017.
263 P04. Former ACR Advisor. Interview conducted in Bogotá 03/03/2017.
264 P49. ACR Employee. Interview conducted over Skype 02/07/2018.
265 P04. Former ACR Advisor. Interview conducted in Bogotá 03/03/2017.
isolation to transform overarching harmful gendered norms and or address structural inequalities which often underpin conflict.

Non-Violent Remobilisation: Reconstructing Networks from Below

The Network was born precisely to strengthen women (P02. Woman, M-19). As a result of the various gendered issues and challenges set out in this chapter, former insurgent women have chosen to non-violently remobilise in new ways to refute the disadvantageous aspects of their reintegration experience and renegotiate their civilian identity. In response to their socioeconomic and political neglect a decade after the earlier collective demobilisations, women came together to establish the National Network of Women ExCombatants of the Insurgency. The Network emerged after a time of reflection, former insurgent women were confronted with a reality that they had been disadvantaged by their demobilisation. That their equal standing in the insurgency had in some respects been romanticised as it did not translate through to their reintegration, both in the domestic sphere and in the public sphere through a lack of representation in their own party.

The Network, which is still active, provides a support system that was not forthcoming elsewhere by reconstructing some of the social networks and collective bonds broken up by demobilisation. “Most are grassroots women who take care of the Network as a space where they can place their disadvantageous situation and where they can feel as a collective” (P16. Woman, M-19).

Community support to establish new social networks and develop resilience has been recognised

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287 Red Nacional de Mujeres Excombatientes de la Insurgencia.
as crucial in DRR (UNDP, 2012). The network is a means through which women, who are often not public about their past, can reclaim the insurgent identity as something positive.

That’s why we call ourselves former insurgency combatants, so that women can adopt that identity and say yes, “one of the best things was to have been a guerrilla fighter. It gave me many elements to be in the world, to understand, to shape myself, to do many things” (P02. Woman, M-19).290

The Network aims to preserve the insurgent memory of women and further their original cause from a place of peace and its former insurgent women as political actors.

It has two objectives. Making clear that there is an insurgent memory, that being armed is not the only insurgency, that insurgency is a political stand and that it is a very different thing to have a country who wants to forget and bury the insurgent memory of women. We have a stand and we can keep it alive through actions. It is important that we can have pedagogies for peace through different media, using communications to activate citizens into exercising their rights. This is the theoretical framework, the founding reference of the Network (P02. Woman, M-19).291

In Colombia, female leadership and activism is strong at the grassroots level. Female former combatants are further able to rediscover collective referents through community participation in grassroots organisations and by work in positions that contributed to social justice and transformation at the local level.

They also have other referents of collectives in their communities. Most women are working in social-related things. Neighbourhood associations, work with children. Many of us, we maintained the vocation of social transformation through other jobs, of popular organisations that aim for social transformation, such as rights, the right to water, the right to the environment, victim’s rights. I myself worked with victims (P16. Woman, M-19).292

LGBTI former female combatants were also able to find a safe space and support within the Network.

For instance, in the Network there are several women who are lesbian and is the most natural thing and sometimes they call asking “Can I bring my girlfriend?” “Of course, come with your girlfriend, no problem” (P02. Woman, M-19).293

Former insurgent women have the capacity and will to contribute to social cohesion and be active agents of peace. By discounting rather than supporting their abilities through reintegration measures much social capital is lost.

I salute the FARC for having had a better vision and having learned from history. The thing is that we didn’t have a gender perspective. That at least now allows women to appropriate a discourse and a strong position to negotiate (P15. Woman, EPL).294

294 P15. Woman. EPL. Interview conducted in Bogotá 20/04/2017.
Through the peace deal reached with the government, FARC’s new political party, also known by the acronym FARC were guaranteed ten political seats for eight years - five in the Colombian Senate and another five in the House of Representatives. In July 2018, in what former President Juan Manuel Santos said was a “true milestone in our history” ten former guerrillas took their seats (Long, 2018). Two women, Griselda Lobo Silva and Victoria Sandino both longstanding FARC members and both delegates to the peace talks are now Colombian senators. Sandino, a former commander, was co-chair of the Gender Sub-Commision and is credited with steering the FARC leadership towards supporting a strong gender approach. The Gender Sub-Commision was also created as a result of sustained petitioning by the Colombian women’s social movement. FARC leadership initially resisted the gender advancements.

The gender issue within the FARC was a huge debate. The gender commission people pushed extremely hard for there to be sanctions for machista things. It took a long time, the first time that they presented it to the highest of the FARC there was mixed reactions. You get a general reflection of society when you bring 20 men together and say, ‘let’s talk about gender’. They got some pushing back and some people saying yes, and other people making the argument that you already have equality. And they're like, ‘well no, we do the same things as the men but that’s not the same as equality (P08a. Analyst, International Peacebuilding Organisation).

A narrative strongly emphasised in the Colombian media since the peace process was the ‘from guns for heels’ portrayal of insurgent women, an implication that Farianas were prepared to exchange their weapons for acceptable signifiers of being ‘real’ women. This says much about the Colombian perception of what modern-day femininity entails but also erases Fariana’s political agency and active citizenship.

We can’t place an armed woman who is later a beautiful woman in the same place. There are challenges in the reintegration which pass through media, due to those messages we are building, about the journey from a ‘woman warrior’ to a ‘woman citizen’. Either she is a mother, or a pretty woman but not a female citizen (P10. Gender Expert, Colombian Peacebuilding Think Tank).

Fariana’s are challenging this essentialist narrative and creating change from within the new political organisation, pushing forward with an agenda of feminism as a political platform, declaring themselves ‘anti-capitalist, anti-patriarchal, anti-imperialist, anti-homophobic and anti-racist’ (Las mujeres guerrilleras de las FARC-EP, 2017:2 translated from Spanish). Sandino was central to this new feminist commitment known as insurgent feminism; a women’s movement being led by former Farianas in reincorporation.

Despite women’s strategic role in the FARC and its claims of equality, feminism is a new word for the organisation. Mujeres Farianas, FARC’s women’s organisation published a thesis on the insurgent feminist manifesto where gender is understood as a social construction and feminism.

is conceived as, “a stream of thought and action that seeks to eliminate all practices aimed at maintaining the patriarchal social order that maintains inequality in the capitalist system in which women are excluded, discriminated, subordinate and abused” (Las mujeres guerrilleras de las FARC-EP, 2017:1 translated from Spanish).

Insurgent feminism directly links women’s emancipation to the class struggle finding traditional feminism under capitalism incapable of structural transformation and to have benefited only a particular subset of women. Insurgent feminism calls for a ‘deep and revolutionary’ transformation of all Colombian gender relations for all gender identities including of the LGBTI population, an end to machismo and the promotion of alternative masculinities. It claims this radical transformation will lead to the social, economic and political inclusion of Colombia’s most marginalised thereby ensuring a continuity between insurgent feminism and FARC’s original ideological principles. “It is understood that there is no liberation of women without the elimination of class domination, but at the same time, there is no possibility of human emancipation, without the recognition to fulfilment of the rights of women” (Las mujeres guerrilleras de las FARC-EP, 2017:2 translated from Spanish). Women’s empowerment will further result in collective empowerment whereby all of Colombian society will benefit through women’s liberation. Farianas are described as ‘political subjects’ and call for the ‘massive participation’ of women at all levels of the new political party (Las mujeres guerrilleras de las FARC-EP, 2017:1 translated from Spanish).

Some of the former Farianas I spoke with had high hopes of the inclusivity of FARCs political project and wished to be involved. “My plan is to contribute. Contribute from the space you are given” (P21. Woman, FARC).297

That’s why I say that a very beautiful experience, one is valued as one deserves to be. I imagine that the party will continue like, no discrimination, no exclusion. We became accustomed to everyone having the same worth and that’s how the party should continue (P37. Woman, FARC).298

The movement was in its infancy during the field work.

It’s very incipient but I know they’re thinking about it as women’s political axis. We will have to see how that goes, if it’s going to permeate all the female former combatants. I do think they’re using a very strong discourse, very aware of their need to remain active in political scenarios and apparently that’s what they’re making known within all the female former guerrilla. That’s a process that’s happening on the inside with the support of women’s organisations too, working with them on political strengthening, on the issue of rethinking gender (P24. Employee, International Justice NGO).299

298 P37. Woman. FARC. Interview conducted in Santa Lucía, Ituango 10/02/2018.
In early 2017, Victoria Sandino hosted a workshop for 70 Farianas who convened in Bogotá to conceptualise and delineate their role in their party (Abdenur, 2018). To start to build awareness and commitment within FARC’s former rank and file, gender workshops and meetings were held across many of the reincorporation spaces. When I visited the ETCR Pondores, one of these workshops was taking place and both men and women were present. Figure 19 below is an image showing that meeting.

![Gender workshop, ETCR Pondores (December, 2017).](image)

**Figure 19:** Gender workshop, ETCR Pondores (December, 2017).

At the ETCR Santa Lucía, women had formed their own gender group and they had completed a short gender course. Victoria Sandino had also visited with them with the explicit intention to disseminate information about gender issues such as the reassertion of traditional gender roles, which she urged women to resist.

She has come to give us talks on gender and has explained it to us very well. We women know that just because we made a transit to civilian life doesn’t mean we had to change things. She came to give us a talk first given to all men and women, and then she talked to the women. She said that women didn’t have to be stuck in the kitchen all day long and men in the fields. She said it wasn’t like that. Then more than one man complained, they said “the thing is women have to be at home”. But things aren’t like that, that’s why we speak of gender. They’ve explained it to us. For example, I believe that comrade “X” arrives today. She’s not the one in charge of gender but she’s a woman who has also explained that to us. They told us in our little gender group we have to be ready for her arrival (P35. Woman. FARC).³⁰⁰

At the ETCR Pondores, the ARN was also supporting gender initiatives. It was hoped that recipients would become local multiplies of that knowledge.

There is a work team that focuses on gender on behalf of the FARC; they have a diploma degree in gender studies, some boys and girls had their training. They can become multipliers of that training so that they can also make progress with communities and with members of the FARC to transmit that knowledge and assess how it’s going to be generated. We still don’t have guidelines

³⁰⁰ P35. Woman. FARC. Interview conducted in Santa Lucía, Ituango 10/02/2018.
on how the gender subject in the reintegration route is going to operate. So, we’re working on it in a local way (P40. ARN Reintegration Professional).301

Within the peace agreement, the incorporation of gender provisions to end inequality in conflict-affected areas creates a further framework for change and bolsters the chance for women’s participation. The realisation of those provisions and others, which focus on rural and structural transformation continue to face challenges however, especially concerning capacity, funding and societal pushback. Nevertheless, it is clear that Farianas wish to be present in this new chapter of the FARC. Likewise, they are seeking the participation of civilian women and underrepresented groups in the construction of peace. Where this new gender focused, and feminist commitment will end up largely remains to be seen. As both former FARC and citizens located within conflict-affected territories are largely supportive of the peace agreement there is an opportunity to promote gender equality more widely across society (Barrios Sabogal & Ricther, 2019). Farinas will need to work hard to ensure their vision remains on their party’s political agenda in spite of its male dominated leadership and a past tendency to defer to the collective interest. If the party receives backlash for its feminist agenda it may begin to retreat from their platform.

They have to get organised in order to have an internal force. That’s not easy. We are used to sacrificing our interests for the sake of the collective interests. The other thing is the hierarchical structure, it’s going to be very difficult. That eggshell must be permeated. And not just Victoria. It has to be a group of very strong women, so they can say, “gentlemen, here we have a position in the party that we didn’t have within the Force (P16. Woman, M-19).302

The FARC leading women have had a visibility that they didn’t have at the beginning and they’re audacious and capable enough not to lose what they have already gained. I do believe there’s an attempt to move as a communist political movement with a feminist approach, a kind of weird mix, but it’s there. But it’s one thing to say it and it’s another thing to materialise it in territories where women are expected to return to their family, not to the public scene. In the territories, will they win elections with women? When they encounter that reality, what are they going to do? Keep the women as leaders at the expense of losing votes? Because this will be a vote issue, will they sacrifice their feminism for votes? Will they prefer more votes and to let feminism come later, as usually happens (P10? Gender Expert, Colombian Peacebuilding Think Tank).303

It is also critical for Farianas to foster relationships with the already well-established women’s movement in Colombia to enact real change and win public support.

It’s an opportunity if they incorporate more women, who maintain an interactive relationship among equals with women’s organisations. Not the elite of the feminist movement, but with the grassroots organisations that a relationship must be maintained. We must ally ourselves so we can keep each other’s backs. We all win if we take advantage of this moment, which might be that of transformation (P16. Woman, M-19).304

301 P40. ARN Reintegration Professional. Interview conducted in Tumaco, Nariño 14/02/2018.
There’s an advantage with the FARC, which is that they realised before that the gender issue had to be incorporated. How it’s executed and how it develops will depend a little on the strength of the women inside the movement, but also on the strength and robustness and on the experience of other women, but also on society as a whole, especially on the women’s groups that contribute to that process (P15. Woman, EPL).305

Many of these women’s groups however represent victims of the conflict and may well remain suspicious of FARC’s intentions. “There are stands on abortion, sexual violence, that haven’t been addressed yet and that make them [Farianas and the women’s movement] grow apart. Some insist it happened and some deny” (P13. Executive, Humanitarian Organisation).306 True progress will require truth and an acknowledgement of the past. Positively, as part of the transitional justice process and national reconciliation effort, in September 2020 for the first time, senior members of the FARC acknowledged and apologised for the practice of forced abortions alongside the crimes of the recruitment of minors and kidnappings (El Tiempo, 2020b). This recognition of harm is a positive first step forward in the process of reconciliation and justice for Colombia’s victims. The International Center for Transitional Justice found that FARC’s public apology to be,

unambiguous and does not include any attempt to justify the practice. Quite the opposite, it expresses regret for causing suffering to victims and their families and acknowledges the wrongness of what they did. Last but not least, the apology contains a renewed commitment to reparation and to achieving peace and preventing further violence (ICTJ, 2020:1).

In this way it was an “unprecedented public declaration from a non-state armed group merits reflection from both the perspective of the transitional justice field as a whole and its implications for Colombia” (ICTJ, 2020:1).

The discourse of the radical transformation of gender relations coming largely from within the former ranks of the FARC has been unseen in previous Colombian reintegration efforts. In this way it breaks new ground. Insurgent feminism may also be one means to maintain the community and collective identity elements of the FARC in its new iteration. There is a collective thinking inherent within its theoretical construction. Its ability to enact significant change within and beyond its own party will fall to the Farianas and their determination to keep the philosophy central to their own female members, the new party and to forge new links with Colombia’s women’s movement.

305 P15. Woman. EPL. Interview conducted in Bogotá 20/04/2017.
This chapter has provided a gender relational analysis of women’s experience of reintegration, covering three distinct phases of DDR in Colombia’s recent past. I explored the female individual experience of ‘orphanhood’ as insurgent collective identity is interrupted by processes of DDR. This is felt acutely by women who are more let down by reintegration policy and must return to a society where their positioning is more compromised than mens. Scholarly work on gender and DDR has by and large overlooked group identity (Hague, 2008). The research finds that this an omission as many women who exercised agency in their decision to enlist to a leftist NSAG positively experienced its reconfigured gender arrangements, so that the loss of collective group identity is a significant emotional experience upon demobilisation. Former insurgent women find themselves at a fundamental misalignment in relation to hegemonic societal norms and gender relations which seek to relegate them back into cultural conditions which have remained largely static and intact. This research suggests that many women struggle with finding new identities as they come to terms with returning to their former, more restrictive gendered landscape.

The chapter explored shifting gender dynamics within the microsystem of FARC’s collective spaces of reincorporation. Although a belief in equality was central to member’s sense of belonging, the research found some evidence of a reversion to archetypal gender patterns and that the collective sense of kinship and unity was receding but that women had begun to counter it, in instances where it had occurred. Furthermore, this reversion was not the case across all localised reincorporation spaces, evidencing the importance of contextually aware reintegration and gender measures even within specific programmes of reintegration.

Many female former insurgents choose to have children early in their reintegration. While this is a powerful reclamation of bodily and reproductive autonomy, the discourse which accompanies it relegates women to a narrow narrative which is palatable for societal consumption and neglectful of all other facets of their identity. Support for these women was lacking in the areas of gender-specific and maternal healthcare, childcare and education which impedes longer-term reintegration or reincorporation efforts. Women must be able to fulfil all the diverse aspects of their identity be that the maternal or the political and participate fully in DDR without a gendered burden. Otherwise, valuable female participation in post-conflict peacebuilding is lost.

Cultural expectations means that insurgent women are expected to resume certain gendered performances which their leftist NSAG membership had intentionally sought to circumvent. The ARN has comparatively made significant advancements in the area of gender-sensitive reintegration policy. However, reintegration has not yet, through the promotion of alternative practices of gender, disrupted social processes which seek to reassert women’s ‘place’ in society.
Many female former combatants today remain unemployed, living in relative poverty or struggling to survive on low wages in gender-stereotypical roles which is a replication of the wider societal landscape for many Colombian women. Many former insurgents choose industries traditionally coded as female, linked to the deeply rooted assumptions about women’s roles, prior levels of education, gendered and former combatant stigma and tangible job prospects. The findings resonate with the agency versus structure debate in the field of gender studies, the extent to which an individual (former combatants) or organisation (the ARN) are free to make choices or are constrained within existing systems of power (Bradley, 2013). What is apparent is that former insurgent women are entrepreneurial and actively seek financial independence. Colombian reintegration is not gender transformative, while it does not seek to overtly reinforce gender dichotomies, this process, positioning and this reproduction of wider societal level trends and power hierarchies continues to take place.

Location is often linked to class and educational positioning in Colombia and differences between the urban and rural divide become very apparent upon demobilisation. An intersectional lens also reveals specific advantages certain women hold by virtue of attaining higher standards of education prior to their mobilisation, or from a visible presence in the ranks of their former armed group or its peace process.

Although the research found some flawed aspects to the collective reincorporation model being executed, the research took place within the early stages of a long-term strategy of implementation. More so than individual reintegration, collective reincorporation does hold the potential for women to assume occupations that would be seen as more typically masculine-coded through the productive projects, while gender relations in the camps did appear to be participatory and respectful.

The mistrust of Colombian former combatants is multi-layered in that it arises from intersecting oppressions such as class, ethnicity and the socially constructed categorisation of ‘desmovilizada(o)’. These disadvantageous systems of power impact individual capacity to socially, economically and politically reintegrate. The transgression of prescribed gender binaries creates for former insurgent women, alongside their demobilised identity, a secondary gender-specific stigma, which is particularly acute when they have been seen to abscond from their mothering role.

The ARN must operate within the structural confines of Colombian society. It can be challenging, (although still essential) to try to implement gender transformative strategies of reintegration when cultural expectation remains relatively conservative and former combatant stigma so pronounced. This raises important questions about the ability of DDR in isolation to transform
overarching harmful gendered norms and or address the structural inequalities which often underpin conflict. Gender is a fluid concept but remains underpinned by material structure and a broader pattern of structural gender disadvantage is visible across Colombian society.

As a result of the various gendered issues set out in this chapter, former insurgent women have chosen to non-violently remobilise in new ways to refute the disadvantageous aspects of their reintegration experience, renegotiate their civilian identity and reclaim their agency as political women. They have been successful in rediscovering collective referents through community participation in grassroots organisations and through work which contributes to social justice and transformation at the local level. By discounting rather than supporting the capacity and will of these women to contribute to social cohesion and peacebuilding much social capital is lost in the post-conflict context.

Fariana’s are challenging the essentialist narratives which surround female combatants and creating change from within the new political organisation, pushing forward with an agenda of feminism as a political platform. Its ability to enact significant change will fall to them and their determination to keep their philosophy and agenda central to all Farianas, the political party and the Colombian women’s movement with whom they must work to build trust and foster constructive relationships. Insurgent feminism may also be one means to maintain the community and collective identity elements of the FARC in its new iteration. There is a collective thinking inherent within its theoretical construction.

The succeeding chapter now applies the same gendered consideration to men and masculinities within process of reintegration.
CHAPTER 7: THE GENDERED EXPERIENCE OF MEN IN REINTEGRATION

This chapter explores the salient gendered issues which shape the reintegration experience of former insurgent men. In a similar vein to the previous chapter, I have structured the results of the gender relational analysis within an integrated ecological model framework which considers reintegration experience at different but interrelated societal levels (Heise, 1998).

The individual or personal level explores issues of male loneliness, dependency, disempowerment and personal security. At the level of the microsystem, I consider how harmful practices and behaviours linked to the collapse of certain masculine constructs such as gendered violence can manifest in the immediate context. At the level of the exosystem, I explore reversions to traditional masculine role patterns within socioeconomic activities as well as the wider contextual risk of recidivism when male expectations of manhood are not attended to. At the final level of the ecological model, the macrosystem, I explore gendered societal stigma directed towards male former combatants. Despite these difficult challenges facing men’s reintegration, one of the more constructive long-term impacts of being part of an organisation which espoused more gender equitable practices and ideology means that many men are successful in later reassuming peaceful civilian identities. These men come to embrace masculine positions which reject violence as a form of expression, focus on family and fatherhood, and remobilise in non-violent ways to contribute to local reconciliation efforts, continuing in their conviction and promotion of the equality narrative of their former armed struggle.

Before developing the analysis of the Colombian case, from the individual through to the more macro levels, the following section provides a preliminary discussion of militarised masculinity as detailed in chapter 1, and why a consideration of these masculine constructs is so essential within processes of DDR.

Masculinities in War

While most people who participate in DDR programmes are men, gendering DDR has been blind to masculinity, failing to address the intrinsic ways in which military life has come to shape certain norms of masculine roles and actions. Despite the work of the Gender Sub-Commission during the Colombian peace negotiations for example, there was no mention of masculinities in the final agreement which was a glaring omission.
The Gender Sub-Commission could have produced new masculinities as a global trend by saying, it’s not enough having women asserting their rights and being themselves, beyond a victim role. But the behaviour of men, demands a different vision of masculinity. A pacifist, integrated, a man who doesn’t lose his masculinity for helping in domestic duties or family responsibilities, who doesn’t have to be aggressive, unable to share emotions. A man who is more harmonious. The gender perspective should have given guidelines on those new masculinities in the Agreements. It did not go far enough (P15. Woman, EPL).307

A constructivist standpoint predicates that violence is not the intrinsic behaviour of men. Violence as a social construct is produced and reproduced through human interaction and relations of power and control.

Our culture is based very strongly on violence. There’s a culture of subjugation and exploitation. There’s this culture of ‘having’ as exercising power. We can’t say that we are violent by nature, because we aren’t at all. The cause lies within that culture of violence (P45. Director, Community Association).308

The work of soldiering is typically built upon hegemonic ideals of militarised masculinity (Trenholm et al., 2013). Masculinities when moulded through a military institution and specifically through military service and training become militarised. The intent is to “contribute to the accomplishment of power and violence” (Abrahamyan, 2017:4). While violent masculinities can emerge in many contexts, armed groups purposefully produce violence. Individual and collective military service in those organisations is one means through which masculinity becomes a violent expression of behaviour.

It is not that ‘masculinity’ generates war…but rather that the process of militarization both draws on and exaggerates the bipolarization of gender identities in extremis. Mustering troops is all about the mobilization of men into aggressive expressions of hypermasculinity (Mama, 2013:1).

In situations of endemic violence and conflict, hypermasculinity is elevated, where “the strictures against femininity and homosexuality are especially intense and in which physical strength and aggressiveness are paramount” (Harris, 2000:793). Gwinyayi Dzinesa (2008) further defines hypermasculinity in relation to combatants as one where they “subscribe to a mode of masculinity that is imbued with a sense of…personal invulnerability, and high levels of conquest desensitised to violence” (Dzinesa, 2008:6).

Military organisations often construct a gender regime which holds and further exaggerates heteronormative norms to uphold a specific version of hegemonic masculinity. In doing so, it disparages both femininities and subordinate ways of being masculine. “Militarism and heteronormative gender identities are co-constitutive” (Mama, 2013:1). Militarised masculinities are typically constructed in direct opposition to femininities and subordinated masculinities,

308 P45. Director, Community Association, Tolima. Interview conducted in Cunday, Tolima 18/02/2018.
which are viewed as both non-conforming and unacceptable within the ranks. “Women and feminine qualities are perceived as disruptive elements to military logic and practice” (Abrahamyan, 2017:5). Non-violent civilians and the enemy ‘other’ are assumed to have feminine traits and are positioned in this manner to justify violence against them. Amina Mama (2013) underlines the intersectional nature of this overall process which, is not just a masculinising process of a particular quality, but an intersectional dynamic that also ‘works’ ethnicity, religion and other social distinctions, and very often appeals to racial supremacist constructions of ‘the enemy’. This is not just a matter of ‘prejudice’ or ‘traditional gender stereotypes’ – because this gendering of subjectivity is a process that lies at the dehumanizing heart of a systemic shift towards “war preparedness” (Mama, 2013:1).

There exists a “salient link between weapons, masculinities, and violence in specific historical contexts” (Theidon, 2009:3). Weapons and violence as a legitimised form of expression are a normalised source of status, protection and control in some sociocultural contexts. Even before military or NSAG recruitment, many young men will have witnessed gun ownership and the accomplishment of objectives through violent means. Displays of hard masculinities form an early socialisation of weapons and violence with specific masculine identities which is then later reinforced through military service.

A key element of military training “is the destruction of a soldier’s civilian identity” and the reconstruction of the combatant identity as one which is aggressive, violent and obedient (Abrahamyan, 2017:5). This process holds serious repercussions for DDR, which can be considered as an attempt to do the very opposite; to reconstruct a demobilised soldier’s civilian, social identity in a way which rejects future violence as an acceptable form of expression and commits to furthering peace.

Banholzer (2014) found that the most credible threat from former combatants emerges from their habitual tendency to (re)turn to violence. Masculinities are closely interconnected with a transitional country’s future social, political, and economic outcomes. Male former combatants may experience traumatic masculinities as they struggle to outwardly perform the civilian hegemonic masculinity expected of them and by them. Often, there are few spaces where these men can attend to emotional and psychological needs (Myrttinen et al., 2014). Conflict-affected countries tend to be very poor and wars grant livelihoods and status. As they come to an end, transitional countries and specifically reintegration programmes can struggle to fill the void, and so criminality and violence becomes one destructive way of retaining specific masculinities as well as attending to material needs (Barker & Ricardo, 2005).

A strategy for demilitarization and peace must concern itself with this fact… Masculinities are the forms in which many dynamics of violence take shape. Evidently, then, a strategy for
Demilitarization and peace must include a strategy of change in masculinities (Connell 2002: 34, 38).

DDR when viewed through a holistic gender lens must focus on masculine constructs, making visible the construction of its different forms in conflict and post-conflict scenarios. It must work to dismantle hypermasculine behaviour and militarised identities so that “masculinities can change in ways favourable to peace” (Breines et al., 2000). Otherwise, peace efforts are destabilised and the safety of receiving communities and families threatened.

That being said, a one dimensional assessment of wartime masculinity especially in the context of leftist NSAGs conceals nuance and complexity, where not all insurgent masculinities can be considered inherently ‘bad’. Such analyses overlook how more egalitarian gender relations are constructed within the gender regime of such groups. As has been demonstrated by scholars working in the field and through the results presented in chapter 5, Colombian insurgent men incorporate new gender performances within their repertoire of masculinities, in part characterised by self-restraint and an acceptance of women as fighters and of equal standing (Dietrich Ortega, 2012; Riley, 2019).

Insurgent masculinities give rise to new masculine expressions and a new collective gender identity less hampered by the formally prescribed gender dichotomy, and indeed insurgent women are encouraged to perform these idealised behaviours in much the same way as men, creating a new perception of conventional gender hierarchies by men and women alike (Dietrich Ortega, 2012; Riley, 2019). The gender regime of leftist NSAGs do not wholly align with atypical analyses of militarised masculinities and unrestrained hypermasculinity. The study of militarised masculinities in the context of violence is not the whole story when thinking about reintegration.

Having established the importance of understanding masculinities in thinking about gendering DDR, the next sections discuss the findings from the fieldwork, exploring the constitution of leftist NSAG male participant’s masculinities and the implications for reintegration. The following section begins this gender relational analysis of the male experience of reintegration at the level of the individual.

The Individual: Loneliness, Dependency and Disempowerment

Due to the existence of norms around military masculinity, men tend to reintegrate back into a society where their social positioning is less compromised than women combatants, yet they can also experience a sense of loss upon demobilisation as the rupture with the past collective unfolds.
“We [men and woman] have things in common, the group referents” (P16. Woman, M-19).\textsuperscript{309} Despite often facing great hardship in the guerrilla, as they come to terms with these life altering changes there can be an idealisation of past experience especially if the present does not live up to expectations. “When I lived there, we lived well… Our needs were met” (P07. Man, FARC).\textsuperscript{310} Bureaucratic and resource-driven challenges are daily issues faced by millions of Colombian citizens, but some former combatants find this particularly difficult and perceive their situation as unjust.

There at least we had a camp where we could live and where food wasn’t lacking. And to get here, to what is called ‘civilization’ and to have to go through a thousand things, I don’t think that’s fair (P07. Man, FARC).\textsuperscript{311}

They can become resentful if reintegration is insufficiently accommodating of their perceived entitlements and easily frustrated when immediate needs are not satisfied.

While they were in their armed group they had everything that they needed right away. They tell us, ‘look, I would get sick and I would go with the war doctor and he told me, you have a hernia, I’ll open you up, get that hernia out and fix you right away’. Now they have to go to the doctor, go to the EPS, wait two months for an appointment with a specialist, schedule the surgery and wait for two more months. That has been fatal for them. It has been absolutely fulminating. The most complex thing for them is adapting to civil life and to what every Colombian has to deal with on a daily basis. They want everything right away (P40. ARN Reintegration Professional).\textsuperscript{312}

These issues stem from co-dependency, which is fostered in the guerrilla, male sense of entitlement and the sense of loneliness and rejection which manifests upon the dissolution of the leftist NSAG, leaving individuals without their collective and their cause. “They tell us, ‘coming here and having nothing and feeling homeless and feeling like nobody looks out for me, I don’t have anything’. Well it’s devastating” (P40. ARN Reintegration Professional).\textsuperscript{313}

Chapter 1 and 5 explored the symbolic relationship to weapons which is cultivated within leftist NSAGs. Weapons become an extension of identity, personified as ‘family itself’. “A weapon to us was everything, we loved our rifle as we loved our life. It was with which one defended oneself. In the FARC one learned to love one’s weapon as if it was family itself” (P36. Man, FARC).\textsuperscript{314} Given this attachment, there can be a real sense of loss and disempowerment at the moment of physical disarmament. Recounting their personal experiences two former FARC insurgents told me.

\textsuperscript{310} P07. Man. FARC. Interview conducted in Bogotá 23/03/2017. 
\textsuperscript{311} Interview conducted in Bogotá. Interview conducted in Bogotá 23/03/2017. 
\textsuperscript{312} P40. ARN Reintegration Professional. Interview conducted in Tumaco, Nariño 14/02/2018. 
\textsuperscript{313} P40. ARN Reintegration Professional. Interview conducted in Tumaco, Nariño 14/02/2018. 
\textsuperscript{314} P36. Man. FARC. Interview conducted in Santa Lucía, Ituango 10/02/2018.
The day that I went to give it up and give it to someone else in their hands, I felt bad, why deny it, nostalgia struck me. I didn’t cry at the moment, but later I went to my shack, to my hiding spot, and tears came to my eyes knowing that that my rifle was staying there and that I was no longer going to hold it (P36. Man, FARC).315

There’s no way you can feel happy when you’re letting go of a part of your life. That rifle, we learned to carry it not to wage war, but to defend our lives. So, in no way do we feel even proud to have left our weapons because they’re part of our security and of the security of the people (P41. Man, FARC).316

A former strategic advisor with the ACR found disarmament and its corresponding loss of power to be one of the biggest issues facing men in reintegration. “With men it’s the issue of power relations and the power position, they are so used to having power because they have a gun. Their role in society is determined by them having a gun” (P04. Former ACR Advisor).317 This is a critical issue for DDR because of the overwhelmingly negative impacts on civilian populations that this symbolic relationship can continue to hold, “post-violence violence…escalate[s] dramatically in the wake of war” (Theidon, 2009:34). While DDR must physically disarm combatants, but it must also attend to the cultural reverence placed on weapons; the figurative and real relationship between arms, violence and masculine identity to “separate out violence from masculinity” (Theidon, 2009:34).

What is constructed can be transformed. This will require an interdisciplinary approach that uses the tools of psychology, political science, anthropology, and economics to analyze locally and regionally salient notions of gender and violence” (Theidon, 2009:34).

The Individual: Personal Security

Many of the demobilised have been victims of attacks here in Tumaco. Attempted murder, we’ve had several. Many have also been assassinated. Many have been forcibly displaced (P39. Personería).318

Guarantees to the physical security of former combatants emerged as a fundamental precondition to reintegration. Few other efforts can flourish if the safety of an individual is under threat. Targeted violence and assassinations of former combatants have been an unfortunate reality in Colombia’s past, where multiple actors carry out retributive attacks. During the field research several participants were cautious in meeting me, requesting that we meet in a public space where I could be observed before being approached. The security guarantees to the future of FARC
combatants was raised with me during the earliest days of the peace process when the group were still assembling to lay down their arms.

If the security issue is not properly addressed, it may cause the failure of the process. People are not going to surrender their weapon to be killed the next day… You can offer them studies, health, anything you want, but if you can’t guarantee them their life, it is worthless. The issue is really security. The rest, I assure you is of no consequence (P13. Executive, Humanitarian Organisation).319

There was a sense of shared uneasiness expressed by many research participants due to the perceived fragility of the security situation in the ETCRs. “Safe? Not so much. Security isn’t all that much despite having a police post there… one analyses and sees that the situation isn’t adequate” (P36. Man, FARC).320 Such tensions limit individual freedom of movement, a fundamental right of demobilised combatants. While Colombian security forces were stationed at the entry points of ETCRs, the zones are large and difficult to secure. Special treatment was granted to high-profile individuals. In the ETCR Pondores for example, I saw that armed bodyguards, themselves demobilised FARC combatants were visibly stationed beside the house of the former commander.

It’s distressing, we know the right doesn’t agree with this peace process. So, what would happen? I think the same that happened with Unión Patriótica, with the ones from the M19. I think it’s scary, we don’t want a massacre. We don’t want a peace process like this, with so much blood, we’re already seeing it. Many leaders who supported us are already dead. Many members have already been murdered (P36. Man, FARC).321

Security concerns also impede the political participation of the FARC’s new political party, a central tenant of the Final Agreement and key to their participation in the process. During their political campaign in 2018, FARC candidates were forced to suspend canvassing for a number of days under the threat of violence. Alongside all of this, targeted violence against social leaders and civilian supporters of the peace process has continued.

The problem is they’re being killed. Several members of the party have been killed already. As has happened in the past and it is serious. I don’t see it as a factor that threatens the process as a whole. It is a factor within many factors, but it is indeed distressing because the aim of the whole process was for them to finally transition from an armed group to a political movement and the State must guarantee the conditions for them to exert that right. Otherwise they will say the process failed, and they will probably rearm. That’s already happening with the dissidents, so it’s dangerous (KI. DDR Expert).322

Today the security issue remains a concern, it undermines the integrity of FARC’s reincorporation and the wider implementation of peace. As of March 26th, 2020, 192 former

322 P06b. DDR Expert, Colombian Peacebuilding Think Tank. Interview conducted in in Bogotá 07/02/2018.
member of the FARC have been killed with a further 13 disappearances and 39 attempted homicides since the peace deal began (Misión de Verificación de las Naciones Unidas en Colombia, 2020). During my time in the field, former FARC combatants had been targeted outside of the ETCRs. While I was staying in Ituango, the town located beside the ETCR Santa Lucía, a local curfew had been imposed by the military to try to contain the simmering violence, but the situation has deteriorated further and at least two ETCRs have had to relocate. “The ETCR in Ituango, department of Antioquia, has been beset by the close presence of paramilitary groups and state failures to adequately secure and develop the zone” (JFC, 2020:1).

It’s difficult for these people to actually go back to exercising their civil rights. Having a normal life. Every effort is being made but there’s many people from the FARC who have left the spaces but haven’t done so in order to commit crimes, to rearm, but to conduct their reincorporation in an autonomous way (P06b. DDR Expert, Colombian Peacebuilding Think Tank).323

It is important to differentiate between those individuals who have left ETCRs to reintegrate in a self-directed manner to those who have chosen to rearm. However, alongside the acute security issue there has been a rising number of FARC dissidents. Since the field work, Elite Police Corps have been deployed to address the issue of illegal armed groups in the territories and provide Police Units for Peacebuilding in the ETCRs (Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, 2019b). This may help to mitigate some of the security concerns for former combatants and communities alike. The sense of unease was very palpable among both male and female FARC interview participants, but it is men who are more likely to rearm in cases of failed reintegration efforts. This issue of male recidivism and dissidence is taken up within the exosystem analysis of this chapter.

The Microsystem: Gendered Violence

When one has been immersed in violence for so long, in the jungle, well a fear of violence translating to the home is always present (P01. Journalist).324

Preexisting gender-discriminatory norms coupled with elevated hypermasculinity can create specific vulnerabilities for civilian women. In Colombia, gender-based and domestic violence rates are high irrespective of the armed conflict, as is impunity for these crimes and lack of justice for victims.

Family violence is extremely hard and evident here. All types of violence; physical, psychological and sexual. It is an issue of power differentials. It’s an issue of learnt conducts, of what their roles are about, the stereotype that the woman has to fulfil at home. Within the household there is a superiority of the man over the woman, the woman belongs to the man. Because I’ve learnt it to

323 P06b. DDR Expert, Colombian Peacebuilding Think Tank. Interview conducted in in Bogotá 07/02/2018.
324 P01. Journalist. Interview conducted in in Bogotá 03/02/2017.
Violence does not necessarily end when a peace accord is signed. In transitional country contexts it can often shift from the public to the private sphere as former combatants return home from war. As was explored in chapter 5 there was a strict code of conduct within Colombian leftist NSAGs which contained and directed violence. When these boundaries are later removed, violence can overspill into a civilian society which is already violent, and which exerts less social control or sanction over that violent behaviour, especially gendered violence.

In the guerrilla movement this is an apparatus. We were all together, there’s solidarity, there’s commitment and there are norms. When you leave and are left with nothing, you’re overwhelmed. There’s no one to contain you, contain your anger. Because there’s no support, and there are many frustrations and many rages that probably haven’t surfaced, unexpressed violence and aggressiveness in a violent society such as this one, you hold all that inside you and the moment you’re left without containment, it spills over. It’s very possible for it to happen from a human perspective (P02. Woman, M-19).326

The collapse of militarised masculinities can lead to intimate partner violence. Alongside machismo, militarised performances of masculinity formally expected of combatants can lead to increased physical and emotional vulnerability as reintegrating men try to retain their ‘hardness’; “The reassertion of violence in the private sphere during the transitional phase may constitute a form of compensation for male combatants, for their loss of public status and hegemony” (Cahn & Ní Aoláin, 2010:19). The Director of a large feminist and human rights organisation based in Bogotá directly connected the fragile masculinities of male former combatants to interpersonal violence, where men deem themselves as falling short of normative standards of manhood. When female former combatants find themselves in similar positions of disempowerment, they are unlikely to engage in such harmful behaviours. A male former insurgent with the EPL who later worked in a senior position within reintegration services discussed the ‘crisis of men’ and stated,

One of the things we found with reintegration problems was that, because we’re a chauvinistic society, and especially for the people in the countryside, from the rural areas, these men are the money earners, the authority, the referent. When that comes crumbling down, many times they’re left inactive and they’re incapable of developing… In turn, we find women may be just as affected, but she, either because they have children or because of their condition as women…women don’t remain licking their wounds, she knows she has to move forward (Man, EPL).327

In the small, regional city of Yopal, a social leader working in the area of community development and reconciliation with former combatants believed that economic and financial hardship led to domestic violence. As she explained,

> The thing is that when my children are crying out of hunger, when the landlord is coming to collect his money, when utilities are interrupted. Well anyone becomes desperate. So, it usually happens that these problems start, domestic violence unfortunately because they [men] can’t find a job (P20. Leader, Community Association for Reintegration).

“Well-designed programmes with men and boys show compelling evidence of leading to change in behaviour and attitudes” (WHO, 2007:4). Programmes which explicitly advocate for change in social norms and encourage debate on gender are therefore considered gender transformative. Research has indicated that health programmes which focus on men and boys including to address violent behaviour and which “explicitly acknowledge[e] how prevailing gender-inequitable definitions of manhood are part of the problem” have been shown to be effective in enacting real change in attitude and behaviour (WHO, 2007:15).

As previously outlined in chapter 4, the ACR introduced a gender strategy in 2014, which considered family issues including that of domestic violence. Further thinking was later developed around the construction of new masculinities and the inequitable societal gendered stereotypes which uphold imbalanced gender power dynamics (ACR, 2014). There has been a slow but perceptible shift from equating gender with women to one which acknowledges the role of men. While efforts are made to address inequality within the home and some key informants were acknowledging of the work that had been done in this space, others felt the concept did not go deep enough to truly enact a vision of new masculinity.

The ACR gender strategy went from less to more. It’s been a growth process. Initially the privileged strategies were income generation and labour reinsertion, not the household and family themes. Only when problems of family violence, alcohol consumption etc arose it became evident that thinking about these issues was in need and that’s where it started. Later they also incorporated masculinities, the logic of understanding that gender was not only to do with the particular needs of women but also with the dismantling of stereotypes. I believe the ACR currently has a coherent gender strategy for different moments in reintegration and the different needs and interests of men and women and in the relationship between them and their families (P10. Gender Expert, Colombian Peacebuilding Think Tank).

New masculinities. I think they are working on it at a family level. It’s about how to distribute roles. So, they tell men, ‘listen, you have to help cook, to look after the children’, but they don’t work hard on respect for women’s rights. They have elements of non-physical violence. But isn’t an approach that looks into the depths of where that violence comes from and what does a different masculinity really mean? Sharing roles within the home is not enough. Not beating your woman up, is not enough. There are other types of discriminations, who manages the resources? Who

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328 P20. Leader, Community Association for Reintegration. Interview conducted in Yopal, Casanare 02/05/2017.
studies? Who makes the decisions? I feel that the work on new masculinities is not being done in depth (P16. Woman, M-19).330

Within Colombian society, there is a hesitancy to admit emotional vulnerability which is seen as a sign of personal weakness. “In Colombia’s countryside people for years have been killed for having, probably just had some sort of easily treatable mental illness. They are not safe; they are less than those in society” (P08b. Analyst, International Peacebuilding Organisation).331 The introduction of psychosocial support was a fundamental component in the design of the Colombia reintegration programme. It refers to the psychological and social dimension of an individual and the dynamic relationship between the two. It promotes the restoration of social cohesion by helping individuals and communities to “heal the psychological wounds and rebuild social structures after an emergency or a critical event. It can help change people into active survivors rather than passive victims” (IFRC, 2020:1). It is both preventive and curative.

The psychosocial aspect is the core aspect of a DDR process, because if you don’t do that then you are not creating capacities in the human being to stay permanently in legal civilian life. Colombia was very successful in creating a highly detailed, psychosocial, individualised programme. I think that’s very important because the gender strategy understands or supposedly understands or is based upon that individual understanding of the process (P04. Former ACR Advisor).332

That was also a full component on health, for both men and women, and they’re certainly linked to masculinities. So that was something that we tried through the strategy, through this psychosocial support, working with different, ex-combatants, both men and women then from their own positions and different vulnerabilities (P23. ACR Gender Strategist).333

Psychosocial support interventions within Colombian reintegration can encompasses group work, and education where certain competencies are worked on. “Yes, exactly, to get along with people and all that. But we also had it inside the guerrilla, and much stricter than here” (P07. Man, FARC).334 The shape it can take varies across individuals. If specific intervention is required, the ACR will refer the participant on to other therapeutic services. Some former combatants are more supportive of it than others. “Many say, no, I’m not crazy, I don’t need to go to a psychologist. It’s not about being crazy, they are the people who orient you to move forward” (P17. Man, FARC).335

They equate psychosocial with being told you’re crazy. That’s a difficult subject to address, even when you say, ‘if you feel sad you can go to the psychologist’. They say ‘no, if I feel sad I have to recover and I have to be strong, I don’t need that’. It comes from their own experiences, from

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332 P04. Former ACR Advisor. Interview conducted in Bogotá 03/03/2017.
333 P23. ACR Gender Strategist. Interview conducted via Skype 28/10/2017.
335 P17. Man. FARC. Interview conducted in Yopal, Casanare 30/04/2017.
what they’ve had to go through, because they had to be really strong while facing many situations (P40. ARN Reintegration Professional). 336

Psychosocial interventions within DDR measures are essential for both individually reintegrating men and women and at the level of community where the social fabric has been eroded due to conflict. While preventative and curative it should not replace accountability and justice for victims of gender-based violence.

Perpetrators of violence, of course they need psychosocial support, but you have to treat them as victimizers. It’s not a case of “psychosocial support because the poor guy, he was in the war, he is affected” No. They are different things. Violence is a crime in war and out of war. And an ex-combatant who comes home and beats and hits his wife is violent and needs to go to jail because that’s a crime and that’s it. Of course, the psychosocial accompaniment in these reincorporation processes is fundamental. It’s about rebuilding of their life, not leaving the past behind, but building on what has already been done and also to unlearn, hegemonic masculinities, to unlearn the femininity of gender roles. This is a very radical change, moving to another type of social relationship, without hierarchies. Psychosocial support is also fundamental for communities to receive with generosity. To look at the other and think that he’s a murderer does not allow reconciliation, that imaginary must be broken from as well. You have to understand the context, the decisions of the ‘other’, and historically that has not been easy. Why they went to war, why they’re here today. That requires support and collective processes (P14. Director, Human Rights and Gender Justice Organisation). 337

The reassertion of male gender norms, socioeconomic security and fulfilment of post-conflict masculinities is now explored.

The Exosystem: Reassertion of Gender Norms and Practices

Dominant cultural representations of masculinity mean that men seek out ways to achieve masculine ideal standards upon reintegration. For some it is through their physical presentation. “For men too, getting a Maluma or James or Cristiano Ronaldo style haircut, they go crazy, crazy for it” (P10. Gender Expert, Colombian Peacebuilding Think Tank). 338 Other may seek to acquire typically established symbols of status. “Before that money was given, there was no kind of financial education. With their first payment of two million a lot of them were buying a TV and that’s supposed to be the money that they start investing in their future with” (P22. Photojournalist). 339 This is not that uncommon after disarmament as men seek out items which hold masculine or cultural prestige (UNDP, 2012). DDR should educate participants on issues

336 P40. ARN Reintegration Professional. Interview conducted in Tumaco, Nariño 14/02/2018.
such as financial management but also be capable of “providing alternatives to the gun as a symbol of power” (UNDP, 2012:37).

To support the economic sustainability of PRPs, those employed as reintegration specialists work to multiply the effectiveness of state benefits and investment for productive projects. The following passage describes that process and suggests that men generally decide on masculine-coded avenues of income generation such as construction, although their choice is also ultimately constrained more generally by prior levels of education and experience.

We have tried to multiply their resources as much as we can. For example, we have this guy who is a construction worker. He bought his own tools, offers his services and he doesn’t have to rent tools, he goes with his own set. That has made it a lot easier for him, having a bigger income than before. We have this other guy who made his own food cart to sell fast food and he also works as a moto-taxi driver, so that has helped him a lot (P40. ARN Reintegration Professional).

Similar to former insurgent women, many male former combatants are expected to resume stereotypical masculine roles regarding employment, and many will seek out the opportunity to do so. “A man who left the FARC is not going to work in a restaurant’s kitchen. They generally work in the street, as taxi drivers, have more masculine jobs” (P05. Reintegration Volunteer).

“I’m a guard, a security guard. I’ve done training as a bodyguard” (P17. Man, FARC). The notoriety of the male NSAG combatant as strong, fearless and not opposed to exercising violence, grants men easier access to types of employment where behaviours linked to aggressive displays of masculinity are normalised, such as in the security sector, “a macho, a Rambo… he’s more of a ‘bad’ guy” (P05. Reintegration Volunteer). “Who is interested in an ex-combatant who knows how to handle weapons and who if they need to confront someone, will? Security firms. That type of sector becomes a work scenario” (P10. Gender Expert, Colombian Peacebuilding Think Tank). Despite work on the part of the ARN, it has so far not been possible to move past non-traditional roles for men in reintegration in any meaningful way.

I don’t think even after my work we really managed to change much. The IDDRS also speaks about looking at non-traditional type of work, especially in issues around livelihood. Yes, there are cases, people came to me and said, I convinced a participant [who said] “I cannot do, cocina” because I’m a man”, but then he started that course and found he really likes it. I would really not claim that the programme managed to get that kind of real gender transformation. We certainly discussed it, but I still think after all the work we did, we are still often kind of stereotypical (P23. ACR Gender Strategist).

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340 P40. ARN Reintegration Professional Interview conducted in Tumaco, Nariño 14/02/2018.
341 P05. Reintegration Volunteer. Interview conducted in Bogotá 06/03/2017.
343 P05. Reintegration Volunteer. Interview conducted in Bogotá 06/03/2017.
345 Kitchen.
346 P23. ACR Gender Strategist. Interview conducted over Skype 28/10/2017.
Despite certain avenues of employment being more likely for demobilised men they too struggle to attend to material needs, finding themselves in the informal sector and precarious work environments. The obstacles that men face with socioeconomic reintegration are comparable in some ways to women. Societal animosity, an unwillingness to accept their participation in the formal work economy, personal security concerns and relative education and experience disadvantages all complicate their participation in the labour market.

I would make sure people had jobs. They only use us to tell stories, anecdotes. Those stories are good, interesting, touching, maybe. But you don’t make a living out of that. We fought oppression, but we’re here now and we left that. It’s practically like assuming this new role in life, and many doors close for us. It’s not so many the companies that open those doors (P07. Man, FARC).347

The ACR creates alliances with external private sector partners to bolster the productive dimension of reintegration but prejudice continues to impact economic opportunities. “There is a perception among many still that you can’t hire these people, that they can’t function” (P49. ACR Employee).348

Strong regional dynamics also influence how reintegration strategies play out on the ground as culture, local economy, local institutions and conflict dynamics vary across the territories impacting the availability of services and opportunities.

Cultural aspects are very important but most of all the local institutions, the local actors, the private sector. They are not the same. In Córdoba you don’t have many economic options to reintegrate people into workforce. In Medellín you have a highly cohesive private sector. Whereas in Pasto you don’t. So, how do you accomplish some minimum standards? The process learned a lot about that, and we created a reintegration route. We were trying to make a more cohesive programme and more understanding of the differences between regions. It is not the same trying to reintegrate someone in Bogotá as it is to do it along the coast (P04. Former ACR Advisor).349

Some regions for example, simply do not have a formal economy industries. “In Tumaco there are no businesses, so you’re rarely going to find a formal job. They receive financial support in order to establish a productive project and we have to place our bets on that because there’s no formal employment” (P40. ARN Reintegration Professional).350 The productive dimension of reintegration is therefore incredibly challenging for both former combatants and the DDR practitioners who work with them. Alongside income, jobs provide a sense of purpose, freedom and independence.

It is important from many different perspectives, both in the sense that you are gaining your own income and are economically independent but also for a sense of belonging and finding purpose. I remember talking to one guy who said, “Ok I have a job, I don’t get paid enough, far from enough.

347 P07. Man, FARC. Interview conducted in Bogotá 23/03/2017.
348 P49. ACR Employee. Interview conducted over Skype 02/07/2018.
349 P04. Former ACR Advisor. Interview conducted in Bogotá 03/03/2017.
350 P40. ARN Reintegration Professional. Interview conducted in Tumaco, Nariño 14/02/2018.
and I work every day. I still feel freer because I’m in charge of my own situation”. Since everyone in modern society is supposed to have a job it’s a huge part of normal life. It’s a huge element of feeling like you are part society (P49. ACR Employee). Socioeconomic anchoring within a community is essential for reintegrating individuals. Work and earning a salary are presumed activities of a modern capitalist society. In Colombia, as in much of the world, breadwinning-related masculine activities are highly valued and are normatively assumed behaviours for men. Being a household’s primary income earner is also linked to machismo, which as discussed in chapter 3, is the dominant male gender-role identity in many parts of Colombian society (De La Cancela, 1986; Valenciano, 2014). It can be challenging for men to live up to the provider and protector roles assumed of them. For some, the inability to realise male sociocultural expectations manifests in harmful behaviour. Without adequate intervention, male sense of entitlement and presupposed access to masculine gender roles which typically provide a sense of worth and respect may come to be realised through violence, criminality and recidivism if those feelings of discontentment become unmanageable (Banholzer, 2014).

Recidivism is the act of reoffending and competing with the lucrative money available in Colombian illicit economies is obviously impossible for the ARN or any reintegration programme and some former combatants are lured back by economic incentives. Feeling obliged to provide for family, a highly valued expectation can lead men to reoffend.

Some of the reasons have to do fundamentally with economic incentives. Simply put, the programmes offered by the State weren’t attractive enough (P06a. DDR Expert, Colombian Peacebuilding Think Tank).

They have never had money, so they don’t know how to administer it. It happened to me at first. I was learning, but there are many that don’t. At the end of the month they experience hunger, and then bad friends appear inviting them to steal or rob, and there’s many who accept (P47. Woman, FARC).

What we want is to work. Despite that many have gone back to crime. It’s not because they want to go back to crime. When you’re estranged from the organisation you belonged to. If there’s no work, you steal, kill, but from hunger. Every guerrilla fighter, every commander who’s demobilised comes with their family. They can’t leave everything and forget it. They can’t just leave everything behind. There’s family, there’s children, there’s a wife (P44. Man, FARC/ELN).

There’s absolutely no justification, but if a person was raised in a violent context, if that was what they learned to earn a living and there’s no armed group anymore, but their family is in need, the man asks himself, how am I going to raise my children? The first offer he gets is, either go extort someone, or go collect this debt for me, or go put pressure on X. They do get offers for such things.

351 P49. ACR Employee. Interview conducted over Skype 02/07/2018.
352 P06a. DDR Expert, Colombian Peacebuilding Think Tank. Interview conducted in Bogotá 09/03/2017.
353 P47. Woman. FARC. Interview conducted in Villavicencio, Meta 26/02/2018.
354 P44. Man. FARC/ELN. Interview conducted in Cunday, Tolima 18/02/2018.
We can’t talk of reintegration when it’s only desk based, disregarding the background of the matter (P20. Leader, Community Association for Reintegration).

One former member of the FARC who individually demobilised some years prior to our interview discussed how he had been approached by other armed groups who attempted to recruit him.

There were people who broke off. I don’t deny it, they went to the guerrilla, they joined the self-defences. They took a lot of people. I’ve been invited but I’m one of those who didn’t. I came here, I want to be different. I won’t do it, because that would mean continuing my life on the same path. But we’re lacking the resources for housing, more support from the State. Housing is the most important thing. Because if you have a roof over your head, you work to find food (Man, FARC).

His narrative is positive in that he personally rejected the advancement of other armed organisations but flags just how difficult it is to carry out DDR in a context of ongoing social violence when numerous other armed actors remain active which increases the risk recidivism. Regional dynamics as referenced above may also impact upon the rates of recidivism. Socioeconomic opportunities vary widely across Colombia, as does the presence and therefore increased risk of access to certain illicit economics. There have been reports of attempts to directly recruit from reincorporation camps. “There are FARC members who have joined the ELN, who have joined the EPL, rumours about FARC joining the Ganistas. They have intentionally recruited people from the ECTRS into dissident groups” (P08b. Analyst, International Peacebuilding Organisation).

Many former combatants find reasons to leave and join the dissidences. Many lads are going to be stuck saying “well, what am I going to do?” Not because they don’t know how to work, we know that all the people in FARC have been born into this job, they’re peasants, they know how to work in different rural things but when they realise security conditions aren’t there because of unemployment, out of need. Lack of education. It all adds up to that. The State’s failure to fulfil its obligations with the guys from the FARC (P41. Man, FARC).

Dissidence is where a group of individuals or a faction of an armed group refuse to disarm despite a peace negotiation. Dissidence, or later recruitment into dissident factions are harmful spoilers which impact the exosystem and destabilise peace efforts. Former combatants may rearm if they feel unprotected and out of fears of retributive or targeted attacks so effective security measures become essential in DDR measures. Former membership in leftist NSAGs bestowed a sense of status and power upon many individuals. The following passage describes the demobilisation of the EPL at the beginning of the 1990’s.

355 P20. Leader, Community Association for Reintegration. Interview conducted in Yopal, Casanare 02/05/2017.
358 P41. Man. FARC. Interview conducted in Cunday, Tolima 17/02/2018.
With the EPL, those [DDR] programmes did not take into account middle-ranking officials. That had long term consequences. Many middle-rank officials didn’t participate in the demobilisation process. Dissidence started, those dissidences began to attack the members of their own group who had demobilised [and so the demobilised] had to rearm themselves. Why? The DDR programs did not consider safety guarantees. EPL dissidents later became members of the paramilitary groups (P06a. DDR Expert, Colombian Peacebuilding Think Tank).359

The passage above demonstrates the cyclical nature of violence and suggests that former rank may influence reintegration outcomes. Mid-level commanders generally occupy a privileged place within an armed group, exerting substantial influence over their rank and file soldiers while concurrently preserving close links with the senior command. For some, demobilisation can result in a more severe loss of status and affluence (Stockholm Initiative 2006; Themnér, 2011).

It has to do also with a more psychosocial issue, a status issue. A weapon gives you power and if you give it up you lose your leadership, your power. In fact, that’s something interesting. Many of the ones who resumed criminal activities are middle-ranking officials (P06a. DDR Expert, Colombian Peacebuilding Think Tank).360

The perceived loss of power that former combatants can experience seems in some case linked with positions of power within the group. The research also found evidence of this disempowerment in the context of women as was explored in the previous chapter. If barriers to safe civilian participation appear unsurmountable recidivism and dissidence may been seen as a viable route to attend to male material needs, retain specific socially valued masculinities and restore a sense of lost empowerment.

During the fieldwork there was evidence of delays in the allocation of the reincorporation basic allowance, leaving people to rely on the goodwill of others and the provision of basic commodities in the ETCRs. “That has brought a lot of trauma…. there are other needs that they haven’t been able to fulfil. So, all of these things have generated huge problems and also deep unhappiness” (P40. ARN Reintegration Professional).361

In April 2019, the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies reported that,

Delays have occurred in the socio-economic reincorporation of ex-combatants. This has generated dissatisfaction and distrust among some ex-FARC-EP fighters. Allocating sufficient resources to the reincorporation of former guerrillas back into civilian life is essential for preventing a return to violence (Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies 2019a:2).

Some former combatants talked to me about living in a legal limbo while waiting for their clearance. Meanwhile, the productive agrarian projects designed so as to support collective economic reincorporation were also facing delays in systemic implementation, although the
situation has since improved. Figure 20 and 21 below, show male former FARC members participating in and watching a game a football at the Zona Verdal Icononzo. Many men were struggling with waiting for productive projects to begin in the early days of their reincorporation process. They were used to an active and regimented military routine, and they found the delays frustrating. “The infrastructure didn’t exist to facilitate these people to begin their reincorporation process. They’re out of jobs, the projects haven’t been implemented (P24. Employee, International Justice NGO).”

Figure 20: Male former FARC members, Zona Verdal Icononzo (March, 2017).

Figure 21: Male former FARC members, Zona Verdal Icononzo (March, 2017).

There has been a stark decline in the numbers of FARC choosing to remain in the ETCRs. Over the past three years, many individuals have left the reincorporation space to reunite with family and search for work, some saying they would return when productive projects were launched. Those who choose to move away lose elements of their collective support. Some were living between two locations, working elsewhere during the week and returning to the ETCR at the weekend. Despite delays many male ETCR residents were actively trying to work around these productive projects delays and implementation issues.

We do want to start working on projects. We’re a collective of people used to working. Projects have started but that has been very precarious. They have started with borrowed lands, sheer work force (P41. Man, FARC).”

I started doing a project for myself. I didn’t know how long it was going to last. I started investing in it, to keep providing because I can’t wait for the government to keep their word. So, I’ve haven’t been spending it but saving it to see what comes up (P43. Man, FARC).

Figures 22 and 23 show some of the various initiatives underway. Figure 22 is an image of male former FARC members working in apparel project at the ETCR, Pondores. Figure 23 is an image

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363 P41. Man. FARC. Interview conducted in Cunday, Tolima 17/02/2018.
364 P43. Man. FARC. Interview conducted in Cunday, Tolima 18/02/2018.
of a group of male former FARC members who were looking at ways to redesign the housing onsite and at the same ETCR to improve living conditions.

Figure 22: Apparel making productive project, ETCR Pondores (December, 2017).
Figure 23: Housing project, ETCR Pondores (December, 2017).

The Macrosystem: Gendered Stigma

It’s going to take them a long time because people don’t accept them, don’t acknowledge them as such [a legal political entity]. There’s many people who still feels a lot of resentment, a lot of hatred, and it’s normal, it’s normal, and I think they know that (P06b. DDR Expert, Colombian Peacebuilding Think Tank).

In general, if you ask the community, what do they expect from the [demobilised] population, well it’s not very good things. Society in general is rooted in war’s school of thought. “Take them to the dungeons, stick them all in jail, let them be thrown far away, where they can’t return to harm us further”. That’s the common denominator (P20. Leader, Community Association for Reintegration).

The enlistment of men into warfare is seen as expected. As their participation is understood as logical, the warrior and protectionist narratives which define wartime masculinities means that they can be perceived as heroes upon their return home from war, even when societal buy-in for irregular conflict is not necessarily strong. “Stigma, yes but for men somehow it is the warrior role. Something that justifies them” (P10. Gender Expert, Colombian Peacebuilding Think Tank). Despite this, in the Colombian context, resentment and bias towards NSAG demobilised combatants adversely affects men. Both female and male reincorporating members of the FARC perceived mistrust and suspicion directed towards them, driven by their former group attachment.

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365 P06b. DDR Expert, Colombian Peacebuilding Think Tank. Interview conducted in Bogotá 09/03/2017.
366 P20. Leader, Community Association for Reintegration. Interview conducted in Yopal, Casanare 02/05/2017.
and experienced across the genders. As one FARC woman said, "no, the same. I don’t think they classify there. It is very strong for men and women" (P21. Woman, FARC).368

The issue of stigma and unacceptance was a prevalent concept raised across multiple interviews as a primary obstacle to reintegration and social acceptance. While the brave male warrior trope exists, so too does violent imagery associated in particular with male fighters, impeding their acceptance back into society. “I have a feeling that the men getting rid of the stigma of being in the FARC is going to take a lot more time than for the women. They have I think that violent imagery which is stronger with the men in a lot of places” (P08b. Analyst, International Peacebuilding Organisation).369

I have thus far emphasised the problematic legacies of militarised masculinity for the individual, including disempowerment and the collapse of masculine identity; their families, through gender-based violence and society including dissidence and recidivism. Now the chapter moves to consider the complexity of masculinities and the lasting impact of leftist NSAG belonging on gender norms.

Non-Violent Remobilisation

While DRR, through psychosocial efforts must teach former combatants how to solve conflict non-violently and be attentive to the risks, the following narrative demonstrates how many men do experience a shift in individual outlook and as civilians, decide to reject the use of violence as a legitimate expression of grievance.

I was one who thought hopefully the peace process wouldn’t happen. But seeing the situation, seeing that it wasn’t right for one to be killing each other with someone who is maybe also the son of a peasant, forcibly recruited, taken to the fields, people who might have like the same origin as oneself, peasant, poor. When one then sees that, one doesn’t deem it fair and starts developing a different mentality. These are things that as days pass, with time and the clarity of what’s explained to you, well, one understands the situation and it’s true (P36. Man, FARC).370

The research found that many men, despite facing socioeconomic challenges and cultural pressure to live up to ideal standards of manhood have a real desire to be productive and peaceful contributors to society, to ‘be good people’. “There are many of us who really want to be included, who want to be good people and we have done so” (P17. Man, FARC).371 And while many former insurgents feel unable to reveal their past, numerous others report good relationships within their

368 P21. Woman. FARC. Interview conducted in Santa Lucía, Ituango 07/05/2017.
family and community. Although several participants admitted that civilian life could be challenging, no one stated that they preferred their time in their leftist NSAG. “My wish is to have prosperity. To be given some comfort level. To live in calm and peace. Now we can share with the whole community, with no fear…One suffers sometimes but then the one lives better” (P43. Man, FARC).

War is often waged along on strict hegemonic ideals which are discriminatory of women and subordinated masculinities and combatants are socialised within these gender systems. But as the presentation of results in chapter 5 demonstrate, within Colombian leftist NSAGs a new pattern of gender relations and dynamics emerges, forged by a more gender equal ideology and collectivity, a process which is not always so evident in other armed military forces. However, both hegemonic and non-hegemonic gender relations cohabited within leftist NSAGs (Dietrich Ortega, 2017). Many violently upheld heteronormative boundaries for example. They used violence against perceived enemies but in the main did not allow it to be directed towards its female members. Men were expected to carry out feminine-coded roles and women, masculine-coded roles and positions of leadership. Although not without contradictions, this can be seen in some ways, as a democratisation of gender relations. As Barker (2008) notes,

The social division of labor is probably the most complex and difficult aspect of gender inequalities. The association of production with men and reproduction with women is so deeply ingrained in the organization and structure of workplaces and family life that changing it via policies and programs is not an easy task” (Barker, 2008:11).

The democratisation of gender relations within leftist NSAGs, had begun a process of deconstructing the sexual division of labour which has some lasting impact and could be encouraged to continue. It would be positive to see education and engagement on issues concerning fatherhood and caregiving as the empirical data here and elsewhere has flagged a careburden within reincorporation as negatively impacting on women’s participation (Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies. 2019b). Moreover, increased caregiving by men “promote[s] gender equality among children… the warmth or proximity of a child’s relationship with his or her father is correlated with non-traditional (more gendere-quotable) definitions of masculinity in sons and in more progressive versions of femininity in daughters” (Barker, 2008:7). This contributes to a longer term vision of structural change and a more equitable society “by promoting generational changes in the gender balance of caregiving” (Barker, 2008:7).

It has been found that reshaped gender relations constructed within Central and South America leftist NSAGs were largely transient and that the dilution of traditional gender dichotomies were strengthened again upon demobilisation (Dietrich Ortega, 2012). This research found that at the

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372 P43. Man. FARC. Interview conducted in Cunday, Tolima 18/02/2018.
level of the individual, some former insurgent men, like women, were uncomfortable with a total reversion back to traditional gender expectations. One male former combatant who now works as cook, a role traditionally undertaken by women, felt timid about admitting this to me but explained it was what he wanted to do. “Yes, I like to cook, I like cooking a lot, why lie?” (P17. Man, FARC).373

In the main, the aspirations of former insurgent men were not found to be radical in their gender outlook and they were largely conforming of cultural standards of manhood. “My plans for the future is to be able to be with my family in peace. That means that I can stay there, live there, to work the fields (P07. Man, FARC).374 Men aspired to live in peace and security with their families and be able to offer their children opportunities they did not have. “To have my two sons with me and to live the life God has in store for me. To live a good life, an enjoyable life. Having my children and having my home. Like any other family, normal” (P17. Man. FARC).375

Other men discussed working in a specific career, living free from debt, to further their education and training and to own a small business, many expressed a desire to own a home. “There’s a lot of people like me who really means good, who want a house, a decent employment that allows us to survive…I’m really a person who wouldn’t want the State to provide for me, to support me completely. Here I have to work and help my children A decent house and a decent job and that’s it” (P17. Man, FARC).376 Overall, mens expectations of fulfilling breadwinner masculinities and being the family provider remains the aspired norm.

Men also however expressed continued alignment with the social cause of the armed movement and wanted to continue to contribute and to support the aims of FARC’s political party.

I’ve always dreamt of finishing my studies, getting a technical degree in something and moving forward with the political party, continuing to support. My idea is to keep on fighting in the party as long as we have the strength and as long as they let us into politics (P36. Man, FARC).377

To get training. To contribute to the development process of the country we want. It’s all about how positive and willing to work we are, about how much we want to transform as individuals, not because us as combatants were something different. Our way of thinking has remained the same, humanitarian, solidarity (P41. Man, FARC).378

They also continued to believe in the cause of gender equality and that FARC, the political party wished to replicate that within society.

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373 P17. Man. FARC. Interview conducted in Yopal, Casanare 30/04/2017.
378 P41. Man. FARC. Interview conducted in Cunday, Tolima 17/02/2018.
The thing about men and women. A concept, everything here is like equality. It has never been considered that because you’re a woman, then no. We all have the same rights. Yes, [they want to replicate equality]. I believe that we all have the same rights and because it has always been that way. We’ve never wanted to say for example ‘not women’ because there’s a right to equality. Women are the same as us (P43. Man, FARC).379

In the field visit to Yopal, where multiple interview took place, I attended a community meeting hosted by the local departmental government secretary to discuss the peace process and local projects. Former combatants from both sides of the conflict, leftist insurgent groups and right-wing paramilitaries members were present, “Here we see people from FARC, ELN, the self-defences. We are all like a big family” (P18. Woman, FARC).380 Figure 24 is an image of that meeting. These were positive incidents to witness in a society that remains largely polarised. In Yopal, various initiatives has taken place to support reconciliation efforts which involved former insurgents form leftist groups and the AUC. These were deemed to reduce stigma and have a positive effect on the community relations.

I’m not in favour of asking for forgiveness with only words. We proposed that with the lads [demobilised men], were going to provide a social service. The lads started on a project called eco-trial, we built stone paths. We planted little plants. When the work was well underway we started inviting parents, students and the teachers. It went well, we ended activities with a sancocho381, teachers, former combatants and children eating side by side. Even the army participated. I think that society feels more grateful with these sort of acts, these expressions of will, of collaborating, sharing ideas, doing tangible, visible things. There was a good reception; the community backed the initiative and congratulated them. All the impact from the rejection and stigma that previously was present was lifted. When the community starts seeing all those beautiful actions, then their position softens a bit. Stigma never ends. But it decreases a little at least (P20. Leader, Community Association for Reintegration).382

Figure 24: Community meeting, Yopal (April, 2017)
Within the current reincorporation process, reconciliation efforts and community building were also underway. In the ETCR Santa Lucía I was told how former combatants and local civilians studied and graduated together and that events were held by the FARC for the local community. In the ETCR Pondores community relations were also described as positive. Rituals of forgiveness have taken place involving FARC and Indigenous communities in events which have been supported by the UN and Government (Ángel, 2020; United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, 2020c). Figure 25 is an image of male former FARC combatants attending an event at the ETCR Icononzo. They are listening to ‘una carta para las paz’ being read aloud, a reconciliation initiative started to enable Colombian citizens and FARC former combatants write to each other. Figure 26 is of one of the small initiatives started in the ETCR Pondores, a café/restaurant, on the side of the building is a mural with the word ‘Paz’. The Kroc Institute (2019b) further reports that “103 pre-contractual processes are underway in 72 municipalities for the implementation of community projects for reconciliation” involving former combatants and local communities alike (2019b:53). These efforts help reconstruct the social fabric of society, address stigma, and simultaneously restore some of the lost prestige and status some former combatants may be experiencing in socially constructive ways.

Figure 25: Former FARC combatants, Zona Verdal Icononzo (March, 2017).
Figure 26: Peace mural, ETCR Pondores (December, 2017).

383 A letter for peace.
384 Peace.
This chapter has explored the salient gendered issues which shape the reintegration experience of former insurgent men. The results of the gender relational analysis were structured within an integrated ecological model framework which considers reintegration experience at different but interrelated societal levels (Heise, 1998). The individual or personal level explores issues of male loneliness, dependency, disempowerment and personal security. The microsystem considered how harmful practices and behaviours linked to the collapse of masculine constructs such as gendered violence can manifest in the immediate context. The exosystem explored reversions to traditional masculine role patterns within socioeconomic activities as well as the wider contextual risk of recidivism and dissidence when male expectations of manhood are not attended to. The macrosystem lastly explored gendered societal stigma directed towards former insurgent men (Heise, 1998).

Despite these difficult challenges facing reintegration, which can hinder outcomes, many men are successful in later reassuming peaceful identities, in what can be viewed as one of the more constructive long-term impacts of being part of an organisation with a more gender equality ideology and practices. These men come to embrace masculine positions which reject violence as a form of expression, focus on family and fatherhood, and remobilise in non-violent ways to contribute to local reconciliation efforts. In the main, the aspirations of former insurgent men were not found to be radical in their gender outlook and they were largely conformative to cultural standards of manhood. Men’s personal expectations of fulfilling breadwinner masculinities and being the family provider remains the aspired norm. However, men also expressed continued alignment with the cause of the armed movement and continuing in their conviction and promotion of the equality narrative of their former armed struggle. Some wanted to continue to contribute and to support the aims of FARC’s political party.

The following is the concluding chapter, I bring together the various strands of my work and analyses developed throughout the previous thesis to provide a review of the work in relation to the research objectives before moving to main conclusions, policy recommendations and recommended future avenues of research.
CONCLUSION

To conclude the thesis, a review of the work is now presented. I offer a summary of the key findings in relation to the research objectives and offer my main conclusions based on those research findings. Subsequently, I offer policy recommendations concerning the implementation of gender responsive DDR. Lastly, I make suggested proposals for areas of future research.

The aim of this research was to analyse the evolution of DDR in the context of Colombia from a gender perspective. Colombia’s protracted conflict has seen a slow evolution and incorporation of gender sensitivity in its DDR programming and a particular attention to gender within the 2016 Peace Agreement. This research sought to discover whether DD and especially R transforms life for female and male former combatants while accounting for their complex, intersectional identities. I undertook a gender relational analysis of former combatants’ experience of leftist NSAG participation and reintegration, to provide a deep, gendered understanding of former insurgents lived experience along meaningful points in the individual’s life trajectory. Against the background of how gender conscious thinking has evolved within Colombian reintegration, the research reveals how prior leftist NSAG participation comes to shape experience and expectation of reintegration, and critically engages with its effectiveness in challenging entrenched gender hierarchies of power in a transformative way to produce more inclusive and equitable peace.

To achieve the aims this research I developed the following central research questions.

1. How has gender been considered conceptually and practically in Colombian reintegration?
2. What are the gendered experiences of female and male combatants in relation to their leftist non-state armed group membership?
3. What are the gendered experiences of female and male former combatants in relation to their reintegration?
4. Are existing attempts to engender DDR processes reinforcing gender norms and dichotomies in the way they position former combatants in post-conflict societies?

To perform the practicalities of data collection and analysis, a phenomenological methodological approach and feminist research practices were employed as detailed in chapter 3. To understand the context in which former combatants are located, I presented the contextual information from which the research was later positioned in chapter 2. Colombia as a former colony has produced racial, ethnic, gendered and classist hierarchies which persist today. Dominant cultural norms such as machismo dictate acceptable ways of being for men and women and despite the societal upheaval caused by the internal conflict, these overarching norms remain embedded, and are largely reinforced by the conflict. In tracing the evolution of DDR over time in Colombia in
chapter 4, it was clear that gender thinking has developed gradually in the planning of DDR from gender blindness to inclusion of gender perspectives. Whether such developments have yielded transformative results was considered through the experiences of demobilised female and male combatants from M-19, the EPL, the ELN and the FARC.

The research documented individual gendered experience along three specific junctures; leftist NSAG enlistment; leftist NSAG belonging and leftist NSAG enlistment reintegration. I began my analysis at the point of enlistment purposively, to make visible the gendered power relations which encourage the transition to armed group membership. I then examined how actively belonging to an insurgent group works to reshape men and women’s gendered selves and their perception of gender hierarchies. I approached that enquiry from two frames of thought; (gender equal) ideology and (insurgent gender) identity. Lastly, the impact of reintegration on individual experience was detailed where I employed an integrated ecological model to structure the gender relational analysis (Heise, 1998). In the following sections, I emphasise the key conclusions I draw from this work.

The Importance of Adopting a Gender Relational Approach to DDR

The thesis began by noting that the prevailing approach in the academic literature and international frameworks on DDR tend to reduce engendering DDR to recognising women as armed group members, ensuring their access to DDR and addressing their specific needs within it, in a safe space free from violence (Anderlini, 2007; Barth, 2002; Bastick, 2017; Ní Aoláin et al., 2011; UNIFEM, 2004). Similarly, the Women, Peace and Security agenda remains subject to valid feminist critiques (Otto, 2017; Pratt, 2013). It takes a dualistic and deterministic approach to gender which does not adequately acknowledge the complexity of women and men’s identities and the sociocultural context in which they are located (Anderlini, 2007; Engeler & Fortune, 2020; Henshaw, 2017b; Martin de Almagro, 2018). The gender initiatives which WPS consequently promotes and which has informed the engendering of DDR typically take an ‘add women and stir’ approach, which is inadequate in the pursuit of gender equality and gender justice. Gender responsive DDR should be based on the three general principles of gender equality; non-discrimination, fairness and equitable treatment; and be centred on people (UNIAWG on DDR, 2012:9).

In response, this research uses a gender relational analytical framework (Myrttinen et al., 2014). From the outset, I remained inspired by the feminist concern for revealing gendered power inequalities and the normative aim of transforming women’s lives. However, by including the
relational element of gender, through a focus on the power interplays between men and women and the mutual construction of masculinities and femininities, I wanted to also make visible men and other social categories of identity. In this way, I sought a framework which moved past the limitations of WPS, where an individual’s complex experience of identity and of conflict and peace, from mobilisation through to demobilisation and reintegration is better encompassed.

Taking this gender relational approach to the research findings this thesis stresses the importance of recognising the following in DDR and particularly within reintegration efforts:

1. That men are gendered beings, as well as women.
2. That former female combatants have complex identities.
3. The impact of gender equality ideology on former combatants.
4. The collective identity which is constructed through leftist NSAG membership.
5. That former combatants are shaped by complex and multifarious identities.

Each of these individual points are now expanded upon as main conclusions below.

Main Conclusions

Men are Gendered Beings, as well as Women.

In contrast to predominant gender approaches to DDR that focus on ‘adding women in’, this research reveals that both women and men are gendered beings. As their gender shapes aspects of leftist NSAG membership and reintegration, DDR must therefore be sensitive to these dynamics. As the research showed, a precursor to leftist NSAG belonging and DDR, is mobilisation into political violence shaped through gender. To escape dominant feminine ideals and to fulfil dominant masculine ideals emerged as particular subthemes in the interviews. Women’s participation is conditioned not only by their own political grievances but also by the social options available to them. They are embedded in societal structures that often seek to limit their agency and leftist NSAG enlistment is one perceived means to allow women escape the limiting aspects of dominant feminine ideals. Furthermore, membership of a NSAG is a public performance which can also satisfy many of the socialised internalised gender tropes about manhood. It is a means to acquire the prominence and resources that men feel entitled to but are otherwise lacking. Membership is also seen as a vehicle to change the system which is preventing them from fulfilling their masculine gender roles.
While the research confirms aspects of existing literature on gender and mobilisation, it also challenges and complicates the picture. Motivations to join a leftist NSAG are less reductionist than overarching assumptions suggest and in certain ways less gendered (Bloom, 2005; Klouzal, 2008). Overwhelmingly, women and men shared similar personal experiences of witnessing violent atrocities, social injustice, barriers to education and economic and political grievances. These shared motives are not necessarily gender neutral however and how an individual arrives at a particular position can be a gendered process. For example, men may not feel excluded and disenfranchised by virtue of their gender, but by their class, location and other markers of identity. The empirical data demonstrates political agency and autonomy on the part of both women and men, challenging in particular, the reductive tropes surrounding insurgent women. Similarly, men can be moved to enlist for emotive reasons. Individuals identities are complex, and the personal and the political are not mutually exclusive to the genders.

The pursuit of war is undoubtably tied to masculinity ideals (Dzinesa, 2008; Trenholm et al., 2013). There is also a figurative and real relationship which exist between arms, violence and masculinities (Theidon, 2009). This research revealed how displays of hard masculinities form an early socialisation of weapons and violence with specific masculine identities, later reinforced by leftist NSAG belonging. Moreover, the findings note the symbolic reverence placed on gun ownership by women through the socialisation of militarised femininities, a gender-specific outward performance more typically associated with men. An insurgent’s rifle becomes a physical manifestation of ideological consciousness and a source of empowerment and security.

Moving from mobilisation to demobilisation and reintegration, the obstacles that men and women face within their social and economic reintegration are comparable in some ways. Societal animosity, an unwillingness to accept their participation in the formal work economy, personal security concerns and relative education and experience disadvantages all complicate their participation in the labour market, while both men and women can feel a corresponding sense of vulnerability at the point of disarmament. However, the research also drew attention to the gendered aspects of this process.

Paying attention to masculinities when gendering DDR is crucial. For example, the research showed that within reintegration certain avenues of employment are more accessible for demobilised men. The gendered assumption and notoriety of the male NSAG combatant as strong, fearless and not opposed to exercising violence, grants men easier access to types of employment where behaviours linked to aggressive displays of masculinity are normalised, such as in the security sector. Despite this, they struggle to attend to material needs, finding themselves in the informal sector and precarious work environments. Socioeconomic anchoring within a community is essential for reintegrating individuals and sustainable economic activity provides
more than an income. It provides dignity, status and a place in society. Work and earning a salary are presumed breadwinning-related masculine activities which are highly valued, normatively assumed behaviours for men and linked to machismo (De La Cancela, 1986; Valenciano, 2014). Those who deem themselves as falling short of normative standards of manhood, who feel disempowered upon demobilisation and through the collapse of militarised masculinities can come to express this through harmful behaviour. This includes intimate partner violence, recidivism and dissidence. There was a strict code of conduct within Colombian leftist NSAGs which contained and directed violence. When these boundaries are later removed, violence can overspill into a civilian society which is already violent, and which exerts less social control or sanction over that violent behaviour especially in the private sphere.

Many men do however choose peaceful, non-violent civilian identities, they come to embrace masculine positions which reject violence as a form of expression, focus on family and fatherhood, and remobilise in non-violent ways to contribute to local reconciliation efforts. However, the research reveals the importance of attending to the gendered aspects of men’s identities, as they were found to be largely conformative to overarching cultural standards of manhood. Male interviewees spoke of hoping to fulfill culturally normative provider and protector roles as their civilian aspiration.

**Former Female Combatants have Complex Identities**

This section summarises in greater detail the research findings concerning the complexity of former insurgent women who must renegotiate their identity upon demobilisation. The traditional focus on women when gendering DDR remains crucial, however this research reveals the complexity of women’s experiences before, during and after mobilisation, requiring a more nuanced approach to reintegration which moves beyond simplistic ‘add women and stir’ conceptions of engendered DDR.

Former insurgent women, like men carry a stigmatised ‘desmovilizada(o)’

identity. However, they also must confront a secondary gender-specific stigma that has a catapulting effect backwards to their former positioning in society. It is levelled towards them because they have transgressed prescribed gender binaries, and it is particularly acute when they have been seen to abscond from their mothering role.

Women’s reintegration is further hindered by education and economic disadvantage. Former insurgent women are also consciously choosing feminine-coded training and career paths, but it

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385 Demobilised.
is a choice which is constrained. The findings resonate with the agency versus structure debate in the field of gender studies, questioning the extent to which individuals are free to make choices or are restrained within existing systems of power, by context and the “substratum or structure of gender relations” (Bradley, 2013:76). That said, women do make rational choices within their limited field of options; to access seed capital and establish their independent ventures in order to evade the rife stigma concerning employing demobilised people. Women are entrepreneurial in that regard and in the reincorporation camps they also demonstrated an ingenuity in organising themselves. However, the attainment of real positions of power or leadership is rare and not supported through strategy. Gender transformative DDR therefore needs to draw from such complex analysis.

In identifying gender conformity in post-conflict reintegration for men and women, the research confirms previous work that reaches similar conclusions (Bouta, 2005; Henshaw, 2017b; K.C, 2019; Steenbergen, 2020). However, this is not a straightforward or uncontested process. The research sheds new light on the complicated ways in which women renegotiate their identity. Not all cultural expectations are necessarily forced upon women in reintegration. Some find new agency in the practice of a feminised identity through physical appearance and motherhood which was not possible in the collective. Many women choose to have children upon demobilisation, in what can be viewed as both a reversion to cultural standards of womanhood but also a powerful reclamation of bodily autonomy. The discourse which surrounds this phenomenon however is troubling, it relegates women’s demobilised identities to a narrow narrative, palatable for societal consumption by designating their capacities to care roles only.

Furthermore, the positive shift in reproductive rights was found not to be accompanied by sufficient education or support for motherhood which impacts on women’s reintegration in the long term. Individuals hold multiple identities and inhabit multiple positions. Some are elevated more so than others in specific contexts. Whereas leftist NSAG membership suppressed maternity, by contrast women’s politicisation which was important to them during NSAG membership is largely erased upon demobilisation, especially within individual reintegration programmes. Women should be able to assume all facets of their (peaceful) identities within reintegration.

The research found that insurgent women are politicised beings; their motivating factors to enlist, continued conviction to the cause and disappointment with reintegration outcomes is evidence of this. When DDR fails to support former insurgent women much social capital is lost in the post-conflict context. What is evident from the research is that the entry point to women’s participation in peace begins with (but is not fulfilled by) presence. Farianas comprised 40% of the FARC team in Havana by the end of 2015 (Bouvier, 2016). Due to this, domestic and international pressure and the work of the Gender Sub-Commission, the final agreement has a strong gender focus.
Farianas continue to exert their presence within the party and policy. The approach taken by the peace process, by reincorporation and through the determination of Farianas themselves has allowed for their repoliticisation past demobilisation in a way which the pre-existing reintegration programme and the collective demobilisation of the 1990’s did not. Insurgent women’s policy preferences often forward a platform of gender justice precisely because it is so often absent from conventional politics and Fariana’s agenda of feminism demonstrates this.

**The Impact of Gender Equality Ideology on Former Combatants.**

A key theme that emerged in the research was the way in which the reinvented gender arrangements within left-NSAGs reshaped the identities of insurgent men and women and this needs to be recognised and maintained in DDR.

The research found that the insurgent conception of gender equality is equated with women’s participation, the absence of a gendered division of labour and the enshrined principles of equal rights and responsibilities. The extent to which equality was realised was not absolute, however it emerged as a powerful discourse. Despite the assertion of absolute inclusivity and more gender equal practices, boundaries were erected to exclude and invalidate some individual identities and certain hegemonic patterns remained. The findings drew attention to this contradiction, especially with regard to female leadership, reproductive rights and violently enforced heteronormativity. Insurgent women were required to protect the survival and reputation of the collective through feminine sacrifice in ways not required of their male counterparts.

However, the research found that this overall gendering process had a profound impact on many interviewees. As combatants took up these new gender roles, alongside their interactions with equality discourse and collective social arrangements, it led to a shift in formally prescribed, past civilian world perceptions of gender hierarchies. Collective gender identity is defined as “attitudes toward gender-specific roles and conduct, notions of acceptable behavior within male–female interactions, and perceptions of gender hierarchies” (Riley, 2019:2). Applying Riley’s definition to the case of Colombian leftist NSAGs, it was clear that women experienced profound gender identity shifts as they pivoted away from past gender performances and assumed the group’s hegemonic culture. Women transgressed the gender continuum, and, in some regards, gender became detached from sexed bodies. Many women said they felt equal.

Militarised masculinities usually concern a specific repertoire of norms, attitudes and behaviours centring on obedience, aggression and violence (Abrahamyan, 2017; Goldstein, 2001). This research counters one-dimensional assessments of conflict and masculinities. Due to these
shifting gender hierarchies within leftist insurgent groups, militarised masculinity is performed somewhat differently to archetypical definitions. Men’s outwardly expression of masculinity shifted, and space was made to accommodate new values and traits traditionally conceptualised as feminine. Leftist NSAG membership also held certain extreme facets of machismo in check.

Although not wholly emancipatory, the research finds that Colombian leftist NSAGs were to some degree upholding more equal patterns of gender relations than the social relations of power seen in the conservative society in which they were immersed, concurring with the work of Luisa Maria Dietrich Ortega (2012), who found that guerillas groups devote considerable resources to the management of their gender relations and that what emerges is not constructed from the denunciation of women but rather through the dilution of traditional gender dichotomies, creating the space for a specific insurgent identity which is held in higher esteem. My work further aligns with and builds on that of Heidi Riley (2019) and Myrttinen, Khattab and Naujoks (2016) who each draw attention to the oversimplification of militarised and hypermasculinity in conflict and peace analyses, where other masculine constructs are all too often dismissed.

Colombian insurgent men incorporated new gender performances within their repertoire of masculinities, in part characterised by self-restraint and an acceptance of women as fighters and of equal standing (Dietrich Ortega, 2012; Riley, 2019). Some men, like women, were uncomfortable with a total reversion back to traditional gender expectations upon demobilisation. Others expressed continued alignment with the cause of their former leftist NSAG, continuing in their conviction and promotion of the equality narrative of their former armed struggle. I argue that a more layered analysis of masculinity is required to support reintegration and peacebuilding efforts. Although generally not considered in DDR, recognising these shifts in perceptions of gender hierarchy should be incorporated within DDR design and planning due to their potential to advance fairer and more equitable gender relations in post-conflict contexts.

Our work as feminist peace scholars is to conceptualise gender equality more expansively than past efforts. One element of this is an end to symbolic subordination of the feminine to the masculine, “the deconstruction of gendered binaries that structure oppression” (Duncanson, 2016:12). Not to detract from their violent histories, leftist NSAGs have gone some way in this journey of binary deconstruction concerning the social and sexual division of labour. DDR should seek to continue this work and especially focus on advancing male caregiving and fatherhood roles, given its opportunity to allow former female combatants to advance in other areas of reintegration and its potentiality for generational change and the promotion of gender equality (Barker, 2008).
The research has also clearly demonstrated how gender relations vary from one localised context to another by uncovering the different degrees to which more equitable patterns of gender relations within specific sites of reincorporation were either retreating or persevering. There was further evidence however that where it was in retreat, women were beginning to pushback and efforts were being made to reassert the equality narrative including by high-visible Farianas and through gender workshops. The findings show however, that gender is always in flux, even at the most granular level, further evidencing the importance of contextually aware gender measures within and across specific reintegration programmes.

The Collective Identity which is Constructed Through Leftist NSAG Membership.

Many DDR programmes focus on combatants as individuals. However, what becomes clear from this research, is that experience of collectivity is profound for combatants. Those demobilising under individualised earlier phases of Colombian DDR experienced a great sense of loss and loneliness. While not perfect, the collective approach employed for the FARC has benefits. This section addresses the specific collective identity which is forged in leftist NSAGs and its later impacts within reintegration.

As discussed above, there is a purposeful reconfiguration of the gender hierarchy within leftist NSAGs to maintain group cohesiveness and further military aims. The carefully constructed collective identity of the insurgency supersedes and tempers traditionally prescribed male and female gender identities which typically sit in binary opposition to each other. This collective identity orientation and sense of equal insurgent belonging emerges from consistent instruction of ideological and political views, unity under that common cause, collectivism or the daily act of ‘doing’ life in the insurgent micro-society, formally prescribed group social arrangements and carefully enforced group norms and rules. It is consistently reinforced over many years. Within the guerrilla, the individual become an element of the greater collective and over time this erodes a sense of individuality.

Social networks and group identity have been found to have a critical impact on the involvement and perceptions of female armed group members (Barth, 2002; Hague, 2008; Viternas, 2015). It is precisely this new perception of the insurgent self and of the group’s gender hierarchy, that leads to dissatisfaction for women within reintegration. Scholarly work on gender and DDR has by and large overlooked group identity (Hauge, 2008). This omission occurs despite many women exercising agency in their decision to enlist and who experience their new leftist NSAG gender arrangements positively. The research uncovered a female experienced ‘orphanhood’ as insurgent
collective identity is interrupted by processes of DDR. This research finds that collective group identity and the loss thereof becomes noteworthy upon demobilisation.

As they return from war, former insurgent women often find themselves at fundamental odds with civilian society, misaligned with the hegemonic gender order that sees their leftist NSAG gender performances and their reconfigured insurgent identities as exceptional and undesirable. Insurgent women experience transformative shifts in their personal identity through their armed group membership, but despite their revolutionary intent, overall societal cultural conditions remained fairly static and intact. Other scholars have also noted this particular phenomenon (Dietrich Ortega, 2012; Luna K.C, 2018). Gender is a fluid concept but remains underpinned by material structure. While women’s gender identities have shifted as a result of leftist NSAG membership they are later constrained by a broader pattern of structural gender disadvantage and struggle to reconstruct their civilian identity as they come to terms with returning to a more restrictive gendered landscape (Bradley, 2013).

DDR continues to dismiss thinking around the gender regimes and group identity of NSAGs which have reshaped the perception of gender hierarchies of former insurgents. DDR through a security lens seeks to dismantle military chains of command and group identity. Militarised identities absolutely must be reformed and transformed; however, the research suggests maintaining the non-violent elements of group identity could be beneficial - it is inclusive of men and women, promotes a more equal gender narrative, and a tempered version of gender binary in relation to each other.

Although reintegation does not formally account for the loss of collective identity, the research found that women tend to peacefully remobilise outside of formal DDR structures, to reconstruct those absent social networks, reclaim their past collective identity and agency, protect their collective interests and to further an agenda of peace. This was evidenced by the establishment of the National Network of Women ExCombatants of the Insurgency. Female former combatants are further able to rediscover collective referents through community participation in grassroots organisations and by work in positions that contributed to social justice and transformation at the local level. More recently, the remobilisation of Farianas within a collective political project is also testament to the power of female led collective action and identity. Insurgent feminism can also be one means to maintain the community and collective identity elements of the FARC in its new iteration. There is a collective thinking inherent within its theoretical construction.

Segura & Stein (2019) found that FARC’s collective model of reincorporation has thus far hindered their reintegration because of the conditions of the spaces and the new government’s opposition to them. I instead find that the stake that the FARC has taken in its own collective
model may yet circumvent the more negative aspects of individual reintegration, such as isolation, deprivation and depoliticisation while furthering its political project, so bolstering the sustainability of its commitment to non-violent and peaceful politics. The participation of former combatants in the planning and delivery of their DDR has been shown to lead to improved outcomes and social capital and FARC have been involved in the design of their reincorporation from the outset (DPI, 2012; Kilroy, 2014). Wenche Hague (2008) found that maintaining elements of the collective can further women’s (and men’s) capacity to contribute to peace. While I also maintain that a differential focus is always required in DDR where policies must meet the needs of heterogenous individuals, elements of a collective model may maintain social bonds, positive identity and opportunity for productive and political work in ways which a wholly individualised programme cannot. Moreover, the gender equality narrative has more space to function in collective reintegration, less constrained by the discriminatory hegemonic gender order. In this way, the research argues for a model of DDR which includes elements of a collectivist and individualised approach.

**Former combatants are shaped by complex and multifarious identities**

While the gender relational analysis undertaken in this thesis demonstrates the importance of focusing on women and men as gendered beings, this form of analysis also enables an understanding of how other markers of social identity interact with gender to shape NSAG belonging and demobilisation. This thesis reveals how the phenomenon of enlistment, belonging and reintegration are context-based and influenced by the complex intersecting identities of women and men.

A context-sensitive and intersectional focused gender analysis of pathways to leftist NSAG membership reveals several nuances in explaining enlistment. There was some comparability in responses from combatants from ethnic minority backgrounds with those from the majority population for example, but the data also revealed the specific vulnerabilities of this population given the disproportional effect the conflict has had on these communities and in the regions where they live.

Where unemployment and disadvantage are particularly high and there is a strong presence of both armed actors and illicit economies, people can be drawn into armed groups for economic rather than ideological reasons. Motivating factors to enlist are also influenced by urban and rural differences. The FARC was an organisation with a predominately peasant composition, interview participants were, in the main, young at the time of their recruitment and from impoverished and
rural backgrounds. FARC held a particular attraction for rural women who may have perceived chauvinism in its ranks to be less pronounced than their rural contexts; whereas machismo within the middle-class urban population was probably comparatively lower (Ferro & Uribe 2002). Groups such as the EPL and M-19 tended to attract more individuals (although not exclusively) from middle-class and urban contexts and the empirical data supports this. Responses from former members of M-19 and the EPL centred less on personal circumstances but they were equally motivated by wider issues of social and political justice.

Within insurgent organisations there are distinct, smaller collectives within the greater collective formed by location, the social construction of class and the urban/rural divide. The research found that the urban guerrilla did not always have the opportunity to participate fully in the collective culture that was strongly cultivated in the rural guerrilla. Conversely, they still had access to previous social networks, which were effectively shut off to rural guerrillas once they transitioned to life in the military camp. Furthermore, an intersectional lens reveals there are limits to the collective identity forged in leftist NSAGs, it is problematised by intersecting fractures of minority gender and sexual identities. The new gender arrangements of the FARC still transpired within a heteronormative conception of gender. Those which fell outside of the acceptable heteronormative boundaries were often forcibly and violently excluded. The findings demonstrate that while insurgent organisations such as the FARC have a rhetoric of in-group gender equality, that standing is not extended to sexual and gender minorities. There is instead a narrow conception of gendered and sexed bodies.

Intersectional analysis further revealed that not all women experience reintegration equally, with women’s diverse backgrounds impacting reintegration outcomes. Location is often linked to class and educational positioning in Colombia and differences become very apparent upon demobilisation. Female former combatants who previously attained higher standards of education before mobilisation or achieved a position of visibility within their former armed group or its later peace negotiations are at a distinct advantage within reintegration. The extent to which reintegration can successfully empower women may be partly dependent on the position reached within their armed group.

Strong regional dynamics further influence how reintegration strategies play out on the ground as culture, local economy, local institutions and conflict dynamics vary across the territories impacting the availability of services and opportunities for both former insurgent women and men. Some regions for example, simply do not have formal economic industries or the presence of adequate state and institutions. Moreover, the risk of recidivism may be greater in those regions where those civilian opportunities are less, and the ongoing presence of illicit economies remain. The research has also evidenced just how difficult it is to carry out DDR in a context of ongoing
social violence when numerous other armed actors remain in active competition for new recruits in immediate contexts.

A Final Note on Colombian DDR

There is some evidence that Colombian DDR has evolved over time to be more cognisant of the various complexities and challenges detailed in the main conclusions, moving from being a technocratic exercise founded on military and security objectives with corresponding short-term reinsertion measures, to a longer-term, co-created programme of reintegration that holds an objective of sustainable peace in conjunction with security aims. The gender blind nature of DDR of the earlier collective demobilisations meant challenges were particularly acute for women. Limited economic opportunities and the way in which benefits were distributed also had a distinctly negative gendered impact.

Since then, there has been a recognition of gender and an incremental incorporation of thinking about it. This firstly made space for the inclusion of a restrictive conception of gender and the role of women through the maintenance of the nuclear family (PRSE, 2008). Later the dedicated reintegration gender strategy initiated in 2014 brought with it a more contemporary and inclusive vision of gender and the promotion of different masculine constructs thereby moving away from equating gender with women (ACR, 2014). While efforts are made to address inequality within the home the concept did not dive deep enough to truly enact a vision of new masculinity. A strong gender focus was later integrated within the Colombian Peace Agreement through the creation of the Gender Sub-Commission and the transversal gender lens to the accords. Later still the national policy for reincorporation reaffirmed claims to account for gender, women’s rights and a territorial and ethnic focus (PNRSE, 2018).

All still remains open to valid critique, however. When programmes are gender transformative they encompass “approaches that seek to transform gender roles and promote more gender-equitable relationships between men and women” (WHO, 2007:4). Ultimately, despite advancements in gender-sensitive reintegration, the Colombian reintegration programme is not yet capable of being gender transformative. While it does not seek to overtly reinforce societal gender dichotomies through the socioeconomic opportunities provided to former insurgent women, this process, this positioning and this reproduction of wider societal level trends and power hierarchies continues to take place.

It may yet still be too early to fully evaluate the capability of the FARC reincorporation programme to effect real change in addressing underlying gender inequality. Challenges
undoubtedly remain despite the strong vision of gender and presence of women from the early stages of negotiation. The implementation of this increasingly progressive approach to gender and DDR has been hampered by the polarised Colombian context. Other issues centre on access to specialised health and gendered barriers to education and productive initiatives due to the burden of care. The current approach has further work to do in addressing masculinities, maintaining gender equality ideology and ensuring reintegration through the lens of intersectionality as well as gender.

The research now offers up a series of recommendations for gender responsivity in DDR which stem from the analytical points as discussed within the main conclusions above.

Policy Recommendations

Consider the national sentiment towards a peace deal and the prevailing attitudes surrounding issues of gender. Societal buy-in for peace or indeed gender progression is never guaranteed, as the Colombian plebiscite clearly evidenced. From the outset, all communities must be keep informed of peace talks as it unfolds so that they feel invested in its outcome. Information must be disseminated in a clear and timely manner via multiple media channels and must make often complex negotiations comprehensible for all citizens. Sensitisation and awareness outreach campaigns are required to counter stigma and spread the agenda of peace. In a deeply conservative society where many were already suspicious of the peace deal, the ‘gender ideology’ argument put forward by the ‘No’ campaign was allowed to take traction and was improperly refuted. It successfully played on public fears and prejudice. LGBTI and women’s voices could have been brought to the fore to make their positionality and their vulnerabilities in the context of the conflict better understood.

Embed a gender mandate from the outset of peace negotiations. A gender focus is lacking in DDR in part because women are rarely included in high level peace negotiations where its specificities are discussed (Cahn & Ni Aolain, 2010; Farr, 2003). This was evidenced in the research by the narratives of the women of M-19 and the EPL. The presence of Farianas in the peace talks and the subsequent creation of a Gender Sub-Commission during the proceedings led to multiple gender provisions within the Final Agreement (2016). This provided early on, a mandate for the gendering of peace, including within DDR, as well as commitments to end structural inequality. An established framework such as this bolsters the chance for women’s subsequent participation in DDR and other peace initiatives. It further sets an ongoing precedence of women’s politicalised identities. Incorporation of gender early on helps to contest the potential
(or inevitable) pushback against later gender initiatives within DDR and elsewhere as the implementation of peace progresses.

**Adopt a gender relational approach to DDR design and delivery.** The research has shown the value in a gender relational approach to DDR as it considers the mutual construction of masculinities and femininities in relation to each other and their intersections with other markers of identity (Myrttinen et al., 2014). It offers a means through which to move past the more limiting aspects of WPS by avoiding deterministic characterisations of men and women and presumptions about their needs. Instead, an individual’s complex experience of identity and of conflict and peace, from mobilisation through to demobilisation and reintegration is better encompassed.

**Consider the more equal gender ideology and collectivity identity of NSAGs within DDR.** When the personal motivations behind mobilisation and experience of NSAG membership together with feelings about demobilisation are wholly conceptualised through gender analysis, DDR can better work to address potential misalignments in future civilian world expectations of participating individuals. For example, some views may be linked to the perceived more egalitarian regime combatants now find themselves exiting, and the perceived more restricted one they must enter.

The more equal gender ideology and patterns of gender relations of leftist NSAGs should be maintained while militarised identities are reformed and transformed during DDR. **Changes in gender roles should be encouraged and incentivised.** To start to build awareness and commitment towards gender equality and feminism within the former ranks of FARC, **gender education workshops** were held across the reincorporation spaces by high-level Farinas for men and women, who act as female role models and by supporting partners. This endeavour is one which could be replicated in other DDR scenarios where recipients can later become local multipliers of that knowledge. The democratisation of gender relations within leftist NSAGs, had begun a process of deconstructing the sexual division of labour which has some lasting impact and could be encouraged to continue.

**Refocus and reconsider men and masculine identities.** Despite insurgent masculinities differing from hegemonic conceptions of the soldier or fighter, male and female insurgents are still socialised to produce violence and hold a symbolic relationship with weapons. An attention to this within DDR, through **psychosocial measures** which address underlying vulnerabilities and builds resilience as a tool in violence prevention remains vital. DDR must replace weapons as a emblems of power with **alternative representations of prestige and through the promotion of alternate role-models.** The research highlighted the importance of viable socioeconomic opportunities to fulfill civilian ideal standards of manhood and has demonstrated in particular the value of **men participating in local reconciliation efforts** as an important vehicle to reduce
stigma and create a sense of pride and purpose. **Education and engagement on issues concerning fatherhood and caregiving** hold benefits for women, men and future generations alike. Lastly the programmes which have been shown to effect the most change on attitudes and behaviour and which centre on men should **explicitly advocate for changes in social norms**.

**Consider a holistic programme of DDR which offers elements of collective and individual models of reintegration.** In May 2016, 13 former female combatants provided their opinion on inclusive peacebuilding during the peace negotiations. Women from M-19 and the EPL were in attendance as were female former combatants from Northern Ireland, El Salvador, Nepal and others (Abdenur, 2018). Recommendations included political activism in the territories, continued unity and the implementation of collective projects. I recommend an approach to DDR which **maintains a differential focus and attention to minority needs but can also offer opportunities for collectivity in productive and political work and the maintenance of positive group identity** in a way which a wholly individualised programme cannot. Moreover, a gender equality narrative has more space to exist and expand in collective reintegration, less constrained by the discriminatory hegemonic gender order.

**Ensure access to specialised pre-natal and post-natal healthcare and childcare and support women in family reunification.** Many women choose to become mothers upon demobilisation, especially in instances when a NSAG had a young demographic and where reproductive rights were tightly controlled. Demobilisation also leads to family reunification and in the Colombian case, many civilians including children moved to the ETCRs. The FARC’s decision to end the ban on having children during the peace negotiations was a clear signal of what was to come and yet facilities were not adequate initially to support these social processes. The provision of childcare ensures women can participate fully in other aspects of their reintegration. The acute stigma women face who have been seen to abscond from their mothering role alongside legal implications of gaining access to dependents for parents have complicated family reunification in the FARC case. These complex issues must be conceptualised and addressed.

**Contextualized-based education** within reintegration would support the many women and men who want to pursue education but struggle to keep up with standardised approaches. This, alongside **access to seed capital and corresponding training for the establishment of microbusinesses** especially for female-headed projects would support socioeconomic outcomes.

### Avenues for Future Research

To conclude, I offer three suggested avenues for future research.
Due to the small sample size of three interviewees and the sizable scope of the remaining data, former combatants with paramilitary backgrounds were ultimately excluded from this research. Further research is warranted to study group participation and disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration from the paramilitary perspective. The patterns of gender relations within these organisations contrast greatly to leftist NSAGs. Furthermore, Colombian paramilitary structures continue to exist despite past DDR efforts making understanding of these residual armed groups all the more pertinent.

A further study of the FARC’s reincorporation would at this later stage be constructive in assessing the evolving nature of the collective model approach and transformation of the former armed group to legal political entity. In particular, how gendered configurations of power have continued to play out on the ground; the uptake of roles by women in less gender bound productive projects and their ongoing participation in peace initiatives and politics. This would provide valuable insight into the collective model of reintegration more generally and as a potential approach to gender transformative reintegration.

A relational view of gender is mindful of intersectionality as categories of identity aside from gender come to shape experience of reintegration and can create challenging configurations for former combatants. This research, while it prioritised the experience of women and men cast an intersectional lens on the work wherever possible, including through the discussion of CAAFAGs; the treatment of ethnic minority and LGBTI combatants within leftist NSAGs; the urban, rural and educational divide between former insurgent women; the impact of former rank; and the regional dynamics which influence localised gender relations and reintegration outcomes. Through the course of the data collection and analysis the research also uncovered other insightful findings concerning the reintegration experience of ethnic and sexual minority former combatants which encompassed criticism that reintegration lacked nuanced understanding, leading to tokenistic efforts with insufficient oversight and impact. These would be fruitful avenues to develop in future research to further support the conceptualisation of gender responsive DDR.

***

The outcome of the research is a substantial gender relational case study of reintegration in the Colombian context. The research has shown the value of gender relational analysis as a methodological approach within peacebuilding and specifically DDR initiatives. It has contributed to international feminist discourse in peace studies and is applicable beyond Colombian borders. As evidenced in this work, a gender relational approach to DDR begins from a point of departure which understands how gender relations operate in specific contexts. It reveals a vista of former combatants as a diverse, heterogeneous group with complex identities
and specific vulnerabilities. It has revealed the lived experiences of former insurgents, from their pre-mobilisation to group participation, through to their disarmament, demobilisation and re-integration and consequently how those phases come to shape each other. It advances understanding of gender responsive DDR.

A feminist definition of peace seeks to address the structural causes of conflict with an aspiration of sustaining peace in a more inclusive, equitable society. It is something to strive for. The societal transition from war to peace brings with it an opportunity to foster gender equality. DDR is often the first point of contact for combatants within their new post-conflict, civilian world and so it is well placed to play a role in this. A gender relational theoretical framework, and the policy recommendations that emerge from such analysis, can support this vital endeavour.
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Appendices

Appendix 1: Anonymised Profiles of Research Participants

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<tr>
<th>Interview No.</th>
<th>Participant No.</th>
<th>Former Combatant</th>
<th>Key Informant</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>DDR Programme</th>
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Appendix 2: Former Combatant Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Interview Guide: Former Combatant

Age: 
Gender: 
Ethnicity: 
Place of birth: 
Marital status: 
Children: 
Education: 
Region you live now:

Part 1: Armed Group Membership

1. What were your reasons for enlisting?
2. How long did you spend in the armed group?
3. What training did you receive in the armed group?
4. Do you think you changed in your identity or outlook in life as a result of your training and time in the organization?
5. Do you think that women were treated as equals? If not, how were they treated?
6. Do you think that ethnic minority members were treated as equal? If not, how were they treated?
7. Do you think you were treated differently because of your own identity?
8. Do you think that male and female former combatants are treated differently in Colombian society?
9. How did you feel when you disarmed/laid down your arms?
10. Collective DDR: Initially, what was your opinion of the peace negotiations? Did you want to join the process?
11. Individual DDR: Why did you choose to leave your armed group?

Part 2: (if in) Reintegration

1. What do you do now?
2. Have you received education or job training? What type and did it meet your needs?
3. Have you received psychosocial services?
4. Did you feel a sense of loss or disempowerment upon reintegration?
5. Do you think the reintegration programme was adapted to your specific needs? (as a woman, man or member of an ethnic minority for example)?
6. Do you think you have changed as a person as a result of your reintegration?
7. Have you received training in managing your emotions or dealing with certain types of behaviour?
8. What other support have you received?
9. Was/is the money you received enough?
10. How is your relationship with your family and community now?
11. Do you feel safe?
12. In your opinion what are the biggest challenges you face in reintegration?
13. What would you change about the reintegration programme if you could?
14. What are your plans and wishes for the future?
15. Do you feel positive about your future and the future of peace in Colombia?
16. Is there anything else you would like to talk about?

Part 3: (If in) Reincorporation

1. How are the conditions here in the ETCR?
2. Are the facilities adequate? (health, housing, as woman or for children etc?)
3. What is a normal day here for you?
4. Can you tell me about the productive projects? Do you participate in a project?
5. Have you received education or job training? What type and did it meet your needs?
6. Have you received psychosocial services? Would you like to in the future?
7. What would you like to do in the future, in an occupation?
8. Is there childcare if you would like to access that service?
9. What other support have you received?
10. Is the money sufficient, has there been delays?
11. Have you visited your family? How is your relationship with them?
12. Do you want to participate in FARC’s new political party or local community organisations?
13. Will it be easy or difficult for women and mothers to participate politically and economically?
14. What is insurgent feminism to you?
15. Have you received education on the themes of gender or new masculinities?
16. In your opinion what are the biggest challenges you face in reincorporation?
17. What specific services and benefits do you want to access as part of your reincorporation?
18. Do you feel safe here?
19. Did you feel a sense of loss or disempowerment upon reincorporation?
20. Why are members leaving the camps?
21. What would you change about the reincorporation programme or the peace process if you could?
22. What are your plans and wishes for the future?
23. Do you feel positive about your future and the future of peace in Colombia?
24. Is there anything else you would like to talk about?
Modelo de Entrevista: excombatientes

Edad: \hspace{1cm} \text{Género:} \hspace{1cm}

Etnicidad: \hspace{1cm} \text{Lugar de nacimiento:} \hspace{1cm}

Estado civil: \hspace{1cm} \text{Niños:} \hspace{1cm}

Educación: \hspace{1cm} \text{Región vives ahora:} \hspace{1cm}

Parte uno: membresía del grupo armado

1. ¿Cuáles fueron tus razones para alistarte?
2. ¿Cuánto tiempo estuviste en el grupo armado?
3. ¿Qué capacitación recibiste mientras estuviste en el grupo armado?
4. ¿Crees que has cambiado en tu identidad o tus perspectivas en la vida debido a su formación o su estancia en la organización?
5. ¿Crees que las mujeres eran tratadas como iguales? Si no ¿Cómo eran tratadas?
6. ¿Crees que los miembros de las minorías étnicas son tratados como iguales? Si no ¿Cómo eran tratadas?
7. ¿Crees que fueron tratados de manera diferente a causa de su propia identidad?
8. ¿Crees que los hombres y las mujeres excombatientes son consideradas de la misma forma por la sociedad colombiana?
9. ¿Cómo se siente sobre la deposición de tus armas/cuando dejaste tus armas?
10. DDR Colectiva: ¿Inicialmente, cuál fue tu opinión sobre las negociaciones de paz? ¿Desea unirse al proceso?
11. DDR individual: ¿Por qué dejaste tu grupo armado?

Parte 2: (si en) Reintegración

1. ¿En qué trabajas ahora?
2. ¿Has recibido educación o capacitación laboral? ¿Y qué tipo? ¿Responde a tus necesidades?
3. ¿Has recibido los servicios psicosociales?
4. ¿Tienes una sensación de pérdida o desapoderamiento luego de reintegración?
5. ¿Piensas que el programa de la reintegración está adaptado a tus necesidades específicas? (que tienes como mujer/hombre, como minorías étnica por ejemplo).
6. ¿Crees que has cambiado como persona como resultado de la reintegración?
7. ¿Recibir formación sobre la gestión de sus emociones o tratar ciertos tipos de comportamiento?
8. ¿Qué otro apoyo has recibido?
9. ¿Fue/es el dinero suficiente?
10. ¿Cómo es tu relación con tu familia y la comunidad ahora?
11. ¿Te sientes seguro?
12. ¿En su opinión, cuáles son las mayores dificultades a las que se enfrenta como reintegración?
13. ¿Qué te gustaría cambiar sobre el programa de reintegración si pudieras?
14. ¿Cuáles más son tus planes y deseos para el futuro?
15. ¿Eres positivo acerca de tu futuro y el futuro de la paz en Colombia?
16. ¿Hay algo más que te gustaría hablar?

Parte 3: (si en) Reincorporación

1. ¿Cómo fue y como es las condiciones acá en el ETCR?
2. ¿Las instalaciones son adecuadas? (salud, de vivienda, como una mujer, o para niños etc).
3. ¿Cómo es un día normal aquí para tu?
4. ¿Puede decirme acerca del proyecto productivo aquí? ¿Participar en un proyecto?
5. ¿Has recibido educación o capacitación laboral? ¿Y qué tipo? ¿Responde a tus necesidades?
6. ¿Has recibido los servicios psicosociales? ¿Le gustaría recibir los en el futuro?
7. ¿Qué quieres hacer en el futuro, en una ocupación?
8. ¿Hay cuidado de los niños si desea acceder a los servicios aquí?
9. ¿Qué otro apoyo has recibido?
10. Es el dinero suficiente? Hay retrasos?
11. ¿Has visto su familia? Cómo es tu relación con tu familia ahora?
12. ¿Quieres participar en el partido político de Las FARC u organización local o la comunidad?
13. ¿Será fácil o difícil para las mujeres y madres a participar políticamente, económicamente?
14. ¿Cuál es el feminismo insurgente a tu?
15. ¿Has recibido educación sobre el tema de género, masculinidades nuevas?
16. ¿En su opinión, cuáles son las mayores dificultades a las que se enfrenta como reincorporación?
17. ¿Qué servicios específicos y beneficios quieres acceder como parte de tu reincorporación?
18. ¿Te sientes seguro aquí?
19. ¿Tienes una sensación de pérdida o desapoderamiento luego de reincorporación?
20. ¿Por qué algunos miembros que abandonan los campamentos?
21. ¿Qué te gustaría cambiar sobre el programa de reincorporación o el proceso de paz si pudieras?
22. ¿Cuáles más son tus planes y deseos para el futuro?
23. ¿Eres positivo acerca de tu futuro y el futuro de la paz en Colombia?
24. ¿Hay algo más que te gustaría hablar?
Appendix 3: Key Informant Semi-Structured Interview Guide

**Interview Guide: Key Informant**

**Date:**

**Place:**

1. What is your role or position?
2. Are you working within reintegration or reincorporation at this time?
3. If elsewhere, what is your experience or knowledge of DDR in Colombia?

**Reintegration**

1. Have you received gender training in the ACR/ARN?
2. How would you describe the gender strategy?
3. Do you think that the conception of gender in the ACR has developed over time?
4. What are the specific and individual needs of men and women regarding reintegration?
5. What is your opinion about the reintegration programme and its route with the 8 dimensions?
6. What are the economic and social outcomes for participants?
7. Do many former combatants work in the informal sector? Why?
8. Is it more difficult for women or men to find work?
9. How would you describe former combatant stigma? Is it gendered?
10. In a conservative society, is it difficult to empower female former combatants and transform gender roles?
11. Do you think traditional roles are reproduced in reintegration?
12. Can you tell me about the workshops and psychosocial services available?
13. Is there a focus on the citizen or the political participation for demobilised combatants?
14. Is domestic violence an issue within the population after reintegration?
15. What are the needs of the local community generally in relation to reintegration?
16. The population is very diverse. Is there a defined strategy for the reintegration of former combatants from ethnic minorities or other identities? What are their specific and differential needs in your opinion?
17. And for the communities that host them? Do Indigenous communities have special reintegration needs for example?
18. Do you think that discrimination based on ethnicity is a serious issue which affects outcomes for minority former combatants?
19. Do you think there are differences between the needs and outcomes of reintegration depending on the former combatant armed group?
20. Overall, what factors contribute to successful reintegration?

**Reincorporation**

1. What was your impression of the demobilisation/or laying down of arms of the FARC?
2. What is your overall opinion of the reincorporation process?
3. Is there a gender strategy and are specific gender issues considered for each participant?
4. What are the primary needs of the individuals from the FARC?
5. What are the most serious challenges that they face?
6. How do you feel about the work of the Reincorporation Council and the ARN and the differences of opinion between the two? The individual versus collective approach?
7. Can a collective programme still have room for an individual approach? With gender and other individual identities for example sexuality and ethnicity?
8. Do FARC see its members as a homogeneous group with the identity of FARC insurgent?
9. What is your opinion of the ETCRs How are the conditions?
10. What is your opinion of the reintegration strategy and productive projects delays?
11. What benefits and services are currently offered in the ETCRs by the ARN and others?
12. What productive projects have started?
13. Have psychosocial programmes started?
14. Is there land to cultivate?
15. Are health services sufficient, including for pregnant women?
16. Is there childcare for parents so that they can participate in services and projects?
17. Do you think there will be a reproduction of the traditional roles of FARC men and women in the collective process?
18. Will mothers be able to participate politically and economically if they want to?
19. Are local communities involved in the projects? What are the needs of the local community in relation to reincorporation?
20. Why are some former combatants leaving the camps?
21. Is there gender education for people in the ETCRs?
22. What do you think about the FARC's conception of Insurgent Feminism?
23. How will FARC balance certain issues of the past, for example previous violence against women citizens and female combatants with FARC feminism?
24. What is your opinion about the increase in violence against social leaders and human rights defenders? Are the protection measures for them sufficient?
25. What is your opinion of the violence against the FARC former combatants? Is security a serious challenge for reincorporation and political participation?
26. Can you tell me why the terminology of reincorporation is so important for the FARC?

Collective Demobilisations

1. Do you have an opinion of the collective demobilisations in the 1990’s?
2. What were the benefits offered?
3. Was there an attention to gender in these processes?
4. Was there an attention to other specific differential needs?
5. What were the main challenges that former combatants faced at this time?
Modelo de Entrevista: Profesionales

Fecha:  
        Lugar:  

1. ¿Cuál es su papel o posición?  
2. ¿Está trabajando con reintegración o reincorporación en este momento?  
3. ¿Si en otro lugar, cuál es su experiencia o conocimiento en DDR en Colombia?  

Reintegración

1. ¿Ha recibido capacitación sobre género de la ACR/ARN?  
2. ¿Cómo lo describiría la estrategia de género?  
3. ¿Crees que las ideas relacionadas con el género en la ACR se han estado desarrollando a lo largo de los años?  
4. ¿Cuáles son las especiales o necesidades individuales de hombres y mujeres con respecto a la reintegración?  
5. ¿Cuál es su opinión en general, sobre del proceso de reintegración y la ruta con las 8 dimensiones?  
6. ¿Cuáles son los resultados económicos y sociales para los/las participantes?  
7. ¿Hay muchos algunos excombatientes trabajan en el sector informal? ¿Por qué?  
8. ¿Es más difícil para las mujeres o los hombres para encontrar trabajo?  
9. ¿Cómo lo describiría la estigmatización de excombatientes? ¿Tiene el impacto de género?  
10. ¿En una sociedad conservadora, es difícil para empoderar a las mujeres excombatientes y transformar sus roles de género?  
11. ¿Hay una reproducción de los roles tradicionales en la reintegración?  
12. ¿Puede decirme acerca de los talleres y servicios psicosociales disponibles?  
13. ¿Hay un enfoque del ciudadano o la participación política de los combatientes desmovilizados?  
14. La violencia doméstica es un problema en la población después reintegración?  
15. ¿En general, cuáles son las necesidades de la comunidad local aquí en relación de reintegración?  
16. La población es muy diversa. ¿Hay una estrategia definida para la reintegración de algunos excombatientes de las minorías étnicas u otras identidades? ¿Cuáles son las especiales o necesidades es su opinión?  
17. ¿O las comunidades que reciben ellos? ¿Cuáles son las necesidades de la comunidad Indignas por ejemplo?  
18. ¿Cree que discriminación basado en origen étnico es un serio problema y se lo afectar los resultados para excombatientes de minorías?  
19. ¿Cree que hay diferencias entre las necesidades y los resultados de reintegración dependiendo del grupo armado del que vienen los excombatientes?  
20. ¿En general, qué factores contribuyen a una reintegración exitosa?  

Reincorporación

1. ¿Cuál fue su impresión de la desmovilización/ o la dejación de armas de las FARC?  
2. ¿Cuál es su opinión en general del proceso de reincorporación?  
3. ¿Hay una estrategia de género y cree que las cuestiones específicas de género y otras formas de identidad son consideradas por cada participante?  
4. ¿Cuáles son las principales necesidades de los individuos de las FARC?
5. ¿Cuáles son los problemas más serios que los participantes se van a enfrentar?
6. ¿Cómo se siente sobre del trabajo del consejo nacional de reincorporación y las diferencias de opinión entre la ARN y las FARC? ¿El enfoque de la individual versus el colectivo?
7. ¿Puede un programa colectivo todavía tiene espacio para un enfoque individual? ¿En el género y otras identidades por ejemplo la sexualidad, la etnicidad?
8. ¿Piensas que las FARC ver a sus miembros como un grupo homogéneo con la identidad de un insurgente de las FARC?
9. ¿Cuál es su opinión de los ETCRs? ¿Cómo son las condiciones?
10. ¿Cuál es su opinión sobre los retrasos de una estrategia definitiva de reincorporación y los proyectos productivos?
11. ¿Qué beneficios y servicios son ofrecidos actualmente en los campamentos, de la ARN y otros?
12. ¿Qué proyectos productivos han comenzado?
13. ¿Los programas psicosociales han empezado?
14. ¿Hay suficiente tierra para cultivar?
15. ¿Hay suficientes servicios de salud para todos, incluyendo a las mujeres embarazadas?
16. ¿Hay cuidado de los niños para los padres para que puedan asistir a los servicios y los proyectos?
17. ¿Cree que habrá una reproducción de los roles tradicionales de hombres y mujeres de las FARC en el proceso colectivo?
18. ¿Las madres con hijos pequeños puedan participar política y económicamente si quieren?
19. ¿Las comunidades locales están involucradas en los proyectos? ¿Cuáles son las necesidades de la comunidad local aquí en relación de reintegración o reincorporación?
20. ¿Por qué algunos miembros que abandonan los campamentos?
21. ¿Es la gente en los ETCRs educada sobre el género?
22. ¿Qué piensa sobre de la concepción del feminismo insurgentes de las FARC?
23. ¿Cómo va a equilibrar las cuestiones del pasado por ejemplo las historias de violencia contra la mujer ciudadanas y combatientes con FARC feminismo?
24. ¿Cuál es la opinión del aumento de la violencia contra líderes sociales y defensores de derechos humanos? ¿Hay suficiente seguridad?
25. ¿Cuál es su opinión de la violencia contra las FARC? ¿Es seguridad un mayor reto para las FARC en la reincorporación y la participación política?
26. ¿Puede decirme por qué la terminología de reincorporación es tan importante para las Farc?

Desmovilizaciones Colectivas

1. ¿Tiene una opinión sobre las desmovilizaciones colectivas en los años noventa?
2. ¿Cuáles fueron los beneficios ofrecidos?
3. ¿Hubo un enfoque de género?
4. ¿Cuáles fueron los principales desafíos que enfrentaron los excombatientes en este momento?
5. ¿Hubo un enfoque en otras necesidades diferenciales específicas?
Appendix 4: Research Participant Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet

I want to invite you to be part of a research study. Before you decide to participate, I want to explain why this study is being done and what it would mean for the participants. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. You can ask questions if what you read is not entirely clear or if you would like to know more about something. Take some time to decide whether or not you want to participate.

Introduction

This project is studying reintegration and reincorporation programmes in Colombia. I want to understand these programmes from the perspective of men and women and people with differing needs who have directly experienced them. I am interested in knowing if you think the programme you participate in understands and adequately attends to your individual needs and your return to civilian life.

Why am I doing this project?

I am doing this project because I believe that reintegration and reincorporation programmes are important for each person who participates in them and for the community in which they take place. I believe that they can make a positive contribution to peace and security. This project could contribute to future programmes and therefore also to the individuals who participate in them. I think this study will provide insight into what it means to be a woman, a man, or person with differentiated needs in these programmes and how they can be improved.

Why have you been asked to participate?

You have been asked as you were a member of the ___ and have been part of the ___ programme. You have been chosen because I feel that you can contribute a lot to understanding and knowledge about the programme.

What do you have to do if you decide to participate?

If you agree to participate, we will have an interview in which I will ask your opinions. The interview will last approximately one hour. If you accept, I will record the interview, although it is your decision and you are not obliged to accept that the conversation is recorded. Will your participation in this project be kept confidential? If you agree to participate, your name will not be disclosed to other people or entities. Your answers to the questions will be used for the purpose of this project exclusively. The information that I collect in this study will be kept completely private. Any information about you will have a number instead of your name. Only I will know what number it is. It will not be shared or given to anyone. I'll make sure they don't appear in these key theses about your identity. Any quotation I make in the thesis of what you say will be totally anonymous.

What are the advantages of participating?

There will be no direct benefit to you, but you may find it useful to share your experiences and opinions. Also, your participation will help us to know more about how to improve future programmes by supporting research in this area.
Are there downsides to participating?

There is a risk that you share some personal or confidential information by accident or that you feel uncomfortable talking about some topics. However, I do not want this to happen. You don’t have to answer any questions or participate in the interview if you feel that the question(s) are too personal or if talking about those topics makes you feel uncomfortable.

Is it mandatory to participate in the study?

No, your participation in this project is completely voluntary. You are not required to participate. Similarly, if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time during the interview or the project if you change your mind. You can also not answer specific questions.

Your rights within the interview

At the end of the interview / talk you will have the opportunity to review what you said and you can ask me to modify or remove parts, if you want, in case you do not agree with my notes or in case I have not understood you correctly. I can give you information about the future project at the end of your interview. I can also give you a written copy of the interview, once I have transcribed it.

In the extremely unlikely event that illegal activities are reported, I will be obligated to report them to the authorities. If you have questions you can ask them now or later.

If you want to ask me later, you can contact me at:

Chiara Mizzoni
Email: mizzonc@tcd.ie
Telephone: 0057 313 864 8222
Hoja de Información de los Participantes

Quiero invitarte a hacer parte de un estudio de investigación. Antes de que decidas participar, quiero explicar por qué se está haciendo este estudio y qué implicaría para los participantes. Por favor tómate un tiempo para leer la siguiente información con atención. Puedes hacer preguntas si lo que leas no resulta del todo claro o si quisieras saber más al respecto. Tómate un tiempo para decidir si quieres o no participar.

Introducción

Este proyecto está estudiando los programas de reintegración y reincorporación en Colombia. Quiero entender estos programas desde la perspectiva de los hombres y las mujeres y de las personas con necesidades específicas que los ha experimentado directamente. Estoy interesada en saber si crees que el programa en el que participas(te) comprende y atiende adecuadamente tus necesidades individuales y tu reincorporación a la vida civil.

¿Por qué estoy haciendo este proyecto?

Estoy haciendo este proyecto porque creo que los programas de reintegración y reincorporación son importantes para cada persona que participa en ellos y para la comunidad en la cual se desarrollan. Creo que pueden hacer una contribución positiva a la paz y la seguridad. Este proyecto puede contribuir con programas futuros y por tanto también con los individuos que participen en ellos. Creo que este estudio aportará comprensión sobre lo que significa ser mujer o ser hombre, y de las personas con necesidades específicas en estos programas y cómo pueden mejorar.

¿Por qué te han pedido que participes?

Puede ser que te hayan preguntado porque fuiste miembro de ___ y has sido parte del programa ___. Has sido escogido porque me parece que puedes contribuir mucho a la comprensión y el conocimiento sobre el programa.

¿Qué tendrías que hacer si decides participar?

Si aceptas participar tendremos una entrevista en la cual te preguntaré tus opiniones. La entrevista durará una hora aproximadamente. Si aceptas, grabaré la entrevista, aunque es tu decisión y no estás obligado(a) a aceptar que se grabe la conversación. ¿Se mantendrá confidencial tu participación en este proyecto? Si aceptas participar, tu nombre no será divulgado a otras personas o entidades. Tus respuestas a las preguntas serán usadas para el propósito de este proyecto exclusivamente. La información que yo recoja en este estudio será mantenida totalmente privada. Cualquier información tuya tendrá un número en vez de tu nombre. Solo yo sabré cuál número es. No será compartido o entregado a nadie. Yo me aseguraré de que no aparezcan en estas tesis claves acerca de tu identidad. Cualquier cita que haga en la tesis de lo que tú digas será totalmente anónima.

¿Cuáles son las ventajas de participar?

No habrá beneficio directo para ti, pero puedes encontrar útil compartir tus experiencias y opiniones. Además, tu participación seguramente nos ayudará a saber más sobre cómo mejorar futuros programas y apoyar la investigación en esta área.
¿Hay desventajas de participar?

Existe el riesgo de que compartas alguna información personal o confidencial por accidente o de que te sientas incomoda(o) hablando de algunos temas. Sin embargo, no quiero que esto pase. No tienes que responder cualquier pregunta o participar en la entrevista si sientes que la(s) pregunta(s) son demasiado personales o si hablar de esos temas te hace sentir incómoda(o).

¿Es obligatorio participar del estudio?

No, tu participación en este proyecto es totalmente voluntaria. No estás obligada(o) a participar. De igual manera, si aceptas participar eres libre de retirarte en cualquier momento durante la entrevista o el proyecto si cambias de opinión. También puedes no responder preguntas específicas.

Tus derechos sobre las entrevistas

Al final de la entrevista/charla tendrás la oportunidad de revisar lo que dijiste y puedes pedirme que modifiques o quite partes, si así lo quieres, en caso de que no estés de acuerdo con mis notas o en caso de que no te haya entendido correctamente. Puedo darte información sobre el proyecto a futuro al final de tu entrevista. También puedo darte una copia escrita de la entrevista, una vez la haya transcrito.

En el caso extremadamente improbable de que se reporten actividades ilícitas, estaré obligada a reportarlas a las autoridades. Si tienes preguntas puedes hacerlas ahora o más adelante.

Si deseas preguntarme después, puedes contactarme a:

Chiara Mizzoni  
Correo electrónico: mizzonc@tcd.ie  
Teléfono: 0057 313 864 8222
Appendix 5: Research Participant Informed Consent Form

Participant Informed Consent Form

I have read the above information, or it was read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and all have been answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily give my consent to be a participant in this study.

DECLARATION:

- I am 18 years of age or older and I am competent to give my consent.
- I have read, or have had read to me, a document that provides information about this study and this consent form. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and they were all answered to my satisfaction and I understand the description of the study that was given to me.
- I agree that my data can used for the purposes of the study and I have no objection to my data appearing in publications, in such a way that my identity is not revealed.
- I understand that, if during the interview I reveal illegal activities, they will be reported to the authorities.
- I understand that I can stop the electronic recordings at any time and that I can at any time, even after my participation in the study ends, have such recordings destroyed (except for the situations mentioned in the previous point).
- I understand that, considering the aforementioned limitations, no recording will be reproduced in public forums or made available to any audience, except for the current researcher / research team.
- I freely and voluntarily agree to be part of this study, although without prejudice to my legal and ethical rights.
- I understand that I may refuse to answer any question and that I may withdraw at any time without penalty.
- I understand that my participation is completely anonymous. My name will only be recorded on this informed consent form, which will be stored safely and securely on file, but not in printed form and that cannot in any way be linked to the transcripts or interpretations of this interview.
- I understand that I can give my verbal consent if I do not wish or cannot write or sign my name.
- I have received a copy of this agreement.

SIGNATURE OF THE PARTICIPANT

Date:
**Researcher's Statement of Responsibility:** I have explained the nature and purpose of this study, the procedures to be followed, and any risks that may be associated. I have offered to answer any questions and have fully responded to them. I believe that the participant understands my explanation and has freely given informed consent.

I understand that if, during the interview process, I discover evidence of illegal activities from the moment of demobilisation, I am obliged to report these activities to the authorities.

**CONTACT DETAILS OF THE RESEARCHER:**

Chiara Mizzoni  
Email: mizzonc@tcd.ie  
Telephone: 0057 313 864 8222

**SIGNATURE OF THE RESEARCHER**

Date:
Formato de Consentimiento Informado de los Participantes

He leído la información anterior o me fue leída. He tenido la oportunidad de hacer preguntas al respecto y todas han sido respondidas a satisfacción. Voluntariamente doy mi consentimiento para ser participante en este estudio.

DECLARACIÓN:

- Tengo 18 años o más y soy competente para dar mi consentimiento.
- He leído, o me han leído, un documento que ofrece información sobre este estudio y este formato de consentimiento. He tenido la oportunidad de hacer preguntas y todas fueron respondidas a satisfacción y entiendo la descripción del estudio que me fue dada.
- Estoy de acuerdo con que mis datos sean usados para los propósitos del estudio y no tengo objeción con que mis datos aparezcan en publicaciones, de manera tal que no sea revelada mi identidad.
- Entiendo que, si durante la entrevista revelo actividades ilícitas, éstas serán reportadas a las autoridades.
- Entiendo que puedo detener las grabaciones electrónicas en cualquier momento y que puedo en cualquier momento, aún después de que se termine mi participación en el estudio, hacer que se destruyan dichas grabaciones (a excepción de las situaciones mencionadas en el punto anterior).
- Entiendo que, considerando las limitaciones antes mencionadas, no se reproducirá grabación alguna en foros públicos ni se hará disponible a audiencia alguna, a no ser por la actual investigadora/equipo de investigación.
- Libre y voluntariamente acepto ser parte de este estudio, aunque sin perjuicio de mis derechos legales y éticos.
- Entiendo que puedo reusarme a responder cualquier pregunta y que puedo retirarme en cualquier momento sin penalidad alguna.
- Entiendo que mi participación es totalmente anónima. Mi nombre solo será registrado en esta hoja de consentimiento informado, la cual será almacenada de manera segura y protegida en archivo, pero no en forma impresa y que no podrá de manera alguna ser vinculada a las transcripciones ni interpretaciones de esta entrevista.
- Entiendo que puedo dar mi consentimiento verbalmente si no deseo o no puedo escribir o firmar mi nombre.
- He recibido una copia de este acuerdo.

FIRMA DE EL PARTICIPANTE

Fecha:
Declaración de responsabilidad de la investigadora: He explicado la naturaleza y propósito de este estudio, los procedimientos que se seguirán y cualquier riesgo que pueda estar asociado. He ofrecido responder cualquier pregunta y respondido plenamente a las mismas. Creo que la (el) participante entiende mi explicación y ha dado libremente su consentimiento informado.

Entiendo que, si durante el proceso de entrevista descubro evidencia de actividades ilícitas desde el momento de la desmovilización, estoy obligada a reportar estas actividades a las autoridades.

DATOS DE CONTACTO DE LA INVESTIGADORA:

Chiara Mizzoni
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Teléfono: 0057 313 864 8222

FIRMA DE LA INVESTIGADORA:

Fecha: