

**Young University Students' Social Images of the Reintegration Process of ex FARC-EP Guerrillas into Civil Society in Bogotá-Colombia**

**By**

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## **Abstract**

This exploratory qualitative case study recruited twelve youth who were in the first semester of a university program in the city of Bogotá, Colombia, to explore their social images of the FARC-EP ex-combatants' reintegration process, and how they perceive their ideas about possible interactions with ex-combatants that could occur in spaces such as the university, the neighbourhood, and the work place. The twelve participants represent some of the subsets of the Colombian youth population who are considered to be receivers of cultural, social, and political dynamics as well as being agents of transformation. They expressed their fears, rejection, acceptance, and hopes related to FARC-EP ex-combatants' reintegration into civil society.

The key findings of this study indicate that the respondents are thinking, feeling, and talking about peace, justice, and the Colombian conflict. Their narratives expressed an insider's knowledge and emotions about the peacebuilding process-taking place in the country. Their fears about the ex-combatants' reintegration includes: (1) FARC-EP's lack of honesty in signing the peace agreement and the impossibility of the organization behaving according to Colombian laws; (2) They also demonstrated openness to the reintegration process and the need of accepting ex-combatants as part of their daily life, especially because some are optimistic that the society can transform the conflict; (3) Most of the participants showed knowledge about the reintegration process and FARC-EP, and had different opinions about whether it is a terrorist or rebel group; (4) They displayed critical thinking in analysing the origins of information that they receive that is related to the peace process; (5) The participants' ideas about Colombia's most recent reintegration process provides some interesting insights into how to build sustainable peace in this divided society; (6) The

interviewees' reported that reconciliation and forgiveness were critical ingredients of the peacebuilding process; and, (7) The storytelling methodology is an important method in gathering data from young people in protracted conflicts (see Senehi, 2019). This study contributes to the Peace and Conflict Studies (PACS) literature by highlighting the crucial role of including youth voices in peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts in post peace accord societies (see Byrne et al., 2019).

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Finally, I dedicate this thesis to all the people who have suffered the impact of the conflict in Colombia and to my thesis participants who were able to share their thoughts with me and make this paper real

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## **Introduction**

### **Introduction**

The thesis topic choice stems from previous studies and my work experience in Colombia and it is motivated by the need to implement the post-peace agreement reached by FARC-EP guerrillas and the Colombian Government in 2016. As a psychologist, I have had the opportunity to work with victims of the Colombian civil war including women and young people. This experience exposed me to the resiliency capacity of these populations and the need to work together to build peace in the country. I saw how the youth are striving to change their realities, and how they imagine new worlds with opportunities to coexist peacefully. Based on my experience, I can say that many children and youth were involved in the Colombian civil war as victims, victimizers, and as peacebuilders leading and participating in constructive processes to transform violence. I learned that the children's and youth's voices, perspectives, expectations, and ideas are important in consolidating peace in Colombia. As a professor at a University placed in Bogotá-Colombia, I also see how young people are debating and thinking about political issues and the peace agreement, they are taking part in social movements and are aware of the importance of changing violent relationships among all Colombians. This thesis emanates from my feeling that children and young people are the future hope for people who are willing to live together peacefully in Colombia.

The country has been embroiled in a violent protracted conflict for nearly 60 years leaving impoverished, missing, dead, displaced people, fragile government institutions, and a polarized and radicalized country. Many Colombian conflict experts collaborated to write the 2015 Historical Commission of Conflict and its Victims (HCCV) (Comisión histórica del

conflicto y sus víctimas). The HCCV report indicates that the roots of the conflict are over control of land and the lack of deep agricultural reform laws as well as a profound ideological division between conservatives and liberal political parties, the exclusion of other political parties, the Catholic Church's involvement in national political issues, and the state's impossible task to cover the national area with a strong institution to respond to each regional particularity.

Since 1983, many attempts to resolve the conflict between FARC-EP and the Colombian government via a peace agreement failed. From those peacebuilding efforts the Patriotic Union (UP) emerged as the political wing of FARC-EP that tried to participate in a democratic election during the 1980s. However, the paramilitary phenomenon arose during this time as well as the drugs trafficking economy that changed and made more complex the conflict dynamic. During the 1990s, there were two more peacebuilding endeavors that did not succeed and were followed by a deepening of the conflict with the escalation of kidnappings, the intensity of the murder of politicians, the increased number of displaced people, the penetration of corruption at all political levels, and the incremental rise in power of the drugs cartels. The latest of those failed peace endeavors was the process carried out by president Andres Pastrana with US military and economic support. This context led to Alvaro Uribe Velez's presidency and his politics of "Democratic Security" that was characterized by an offensive military response against FARC-EP with the support of the US. After several military setbacks and multiple leaders killed, FARC decided to negotiate peace in 2012, with the Government of President Juan Manuel Santos. This peace process was supported by the international community including Norway, Cuba, Venezuela, and Chile that helped to establish key points in the negotiation process such as the abandonment of weapons,

reparations and the recognition of victims, the reincorporation of former guerrillas into civilian life, and a transitional justice system to judge all those who participated in the conflict.

Add to this process the international support, and we also notice to some degree, the participation of civil society in the 2016 peace agreement. Several groups of victims and social organizations were invited to contribute in *La Habana* dialogues. However, those groups did not have the opportunity to be included in participating in the peace agreement process compared to other groups. For example, the negotiators invited six victims' delegations whose voices were added to the peace agreement process. Yet ethnic and cultural groups were not invited nor included in the peace agreement process until the very last moment. This exclusion created a perception that both parties involved in the conflict were using ethnic groups to approve the peace agreement instead of having their voices and perspectives front and center throughout the process (Braconnier Moreno, 2018).

On the other hand, young people have contributed to peacebuilding from formal and informal scenarios. An example is located in information released by the United Nation Development Program (UNDP) that shows the results of a national consultation with 30 young peacebuilding leaders in 15 departments, who contributed to defining the youth peace and security agenda in Colombia (PNUD, 2017). Likewise, the UNDP report highlighted the need to strength the capacity of youth organizations for planning, execution, and monitoring projects, as well as for their sustainability (PNUD, 2017). The report also calls for investment in research focused on youth and its role in building peace and security in the country, as well as in identifying priority intervention and investment areas (PNUD, 2017). It means that

the peace process explored incorporating different voices emanating from civil society, including youth, to set the basis for an inclusive and heterogeneous agreement.

Likewise, in 2017 Search for Common Ground and the United Network of Young Peacebuilders led a global mapping of youth organizations in peacebuilding, including Colombia, that described the general panorama of activities, achievements, strengths, and needs of youth organizations (SFCG, 2017). This mapping also recommended developing more comprehensive knowledge about the dynamic of youth organizations at the local level, as well as their characteristics, life cycles, relationship with the environment, and impact on the community (SFCG, 2017). In other words, those analytical reports by both organizations recognize that young people were a significant actor in the Colombian civil war not only as victims and victimizers, but also as builders of peace and as constructive social actors. This encourages academic and political institutions, and the general society to listen their voices and incorporating them into the conflict transformation and peacebuilding processes.

By listening to their voices and understanding their ways of facing conflicts, as a researcher I recognize the importance of building new relationships among individuals and communities to improve our coexistence. Therefore, I use Paul John Lederach's (1997) relational approach that underlines the need of rebuilding relationships in conflictive scenarios. In order to create new relations, it is important to consider people's hopes and fears, sense of justice and peace as well as acknowledging their past and the possibilities of changing their future (Lederach, 1997, p. 30). In general, this is call for understanding young people perceptions feelings and experiences to reconfigure them in critical social spaces that are more constructive, inclusive, and to facilitate new forms of dealing with differences and conflicts. Consequently, I decided to designate my Master's thesis research to studying

Colombian urban youth perceptions of FARC-EP ex-combatants' reincorporation into civil society, as well as their fears, hopes, and knowledge of this process.

This thesis explores the perceptions and experiences of a group of young students from a university in Bogotá-Colombia with regards to living in the same society with ex-FARC-EP combatants. The thesis describes youth' possible interaction in social scenarios such as university, work place, and neighbourhoods with ex-combatants. I used a semi-projective storytelling methodology devised by Greenfield and Tarrow (1970) and used by Byrne (1997) to explore Northern Irish schoolchildren's perception, images and experiences of conflict, peace, and social change.

### **Significance of the Study**

Recent literature on youth in post-peace agreement societies remark the capacity of the agency of young people and their capacity for transforming negative discourses that prolong conflict (Boyden, 2003; Brett and Specht, 2004; Boyden, 2007; McEvoy-Levy, 2006; Wessells, 2006; Özerdem and Podder, 2011; Sommers, 2012 as cited in Özerdem, 2015, p.). This research provides empirical evidence about the relevance of youth actions, and it also acknowledges that several contradictory discourses that constitute them affect this population. From this perspective, it is possible to inquire about social structures and discourses that surround peace processes and which youth are experimenting with to then identify the impact of those discourses on youth's viewpoints. However, the research also allows to think that this viewpoint around peacebuilding is not completely manufactured by those structures because youth have the agency or capacity to assimilate discourses and make

them part of their own cognitive and behavioral repertory as well as transforming them so that individuals' are in a position to face conflict.

This perspective interlaced with Lederach's (1997) relational approach lead us to the importance of knowing how young people are imaging their relationships with others in a conflictive and polarized context in order to understand new paths and gateways for possible conflict transformational approaches. Thus, this research seeks to convey a deep analysis of a small group of urban youth' perspectives, fears, hopes, and knowledge that are determinant to be able to coexist with ex-combatants that contributes to ongoing peacebuilding research in Colombia while also suggesting some policy actions and professional practices around the reintegration programs. Thus, the research contributes to a better understanding of the existing psychological, social, and cultural dynamics of young people within Colombian's post-peace agreement society.

### **Outline of the Thesis**

The body of this thesis consists of five chapters. Following this introduction, the first chapter presents a brief overview of Colombian conflict history in the last century, with an emphasis on rebel groups' emergency since the period called *La Violencia*, as well as some historical context of the response from Colombian governments to the different periods of violence lived in the country. Likewise, it underlines different attempts of peace processes, in particular the once that occurred in the eighties, nineties, and twenty-one centuries. In addition, this overview chapter highlight the role of traffic drugs and cartels in Colombian conflict as well as the role that played the international politics of countries such as the US

and Cuba. At the end of this chapter, there is a briefly discuss of the key points achieved in the 2016 peace agreement between Colombian government and FARC-EP, including the reintegration program of ex-combatants

The second chapter presents the theoretical literature review that informed the framework for this study. The chapter is divided into six sections. The first section presents analytical concepts and frameworks that explain key concepts such as peacebuilding, reconciliation, and reintegration. It includes Johan Galtung insights of peacebuilding and go through other contemporary authors to discuss reconciliation and the applicability of reintegration in post-conflict scenarios. The second section discusses John Paul Lederach relational approach for peacebuilding. The third section explores the psychological perspective of youth political thinking development and the impact of war on children and youth's ideas about peace. The fourth section analyses youth as social constructed category and the relation with concepts such as peacebuilding and justice. The fifth section also analyse ex-combatants as social constructed category and the sixth section explain social image as a key concept to understand young people perceptions about reincorporation process.

The third chapter presents the research method and methodology used in this study. This study used a non-probability sample strategy namely a purposive sampling technique and includes the twelve study participants. Further, I conducted semi-structured individual interviews using a semi-projective procedure that refers to a particular story completion test based on verbal stimuli in terms of the data collection. I also used the two analysis and interpretation phases pointed out by Stringer (2014) namely, categorising and coding, and the analysis of key experiences emerged from the interview. Interviewees were treated with

respect and appreciated for their knowledge and participation. Confidentiality and the anonymity of participants are strictly respected.

Chapter four presents the participants' narratives obtained in collecting the data. The chapter is organized into four sections. The first section describes the knowledge and perceptions that participants have about FARC-EP and the reintegration process. The second section shows participants' ideas of why ex-combatants can be discriminated against and stereotyped in a possible relational context in the recipient society. The third section draws arguments used to support or not support the reintegration process. The fourth section describes opinions around the economic aid received by ex-combatants from the government as part of the reintegration process. The fifth section shows expectations and the mood of participants in relation to a possible interaction with ex-combatants.

Chapter five is the final chapter in this study. It composes the conclusion, key findings, and reflections of this study as well as the study limitations and opportunities for future research, which are opened up in light of it. This concluding chapter highlights the key major findings that emerged inductively from themes and subthemes in the data.

## **Conclusions**

This introduction provides a short overview of the study, its significance, the researcher's background, and outlines how the study proceeds. It is important to understand the development and background as well as the structural, systemic, individual, and groups factors that lead to conflict escalation or deescalation (Rubin, Pruitt, & Kim, 1992 as cited in Byrne & Senehi, 2009, p. 3). The Colombian conflict is the outcome of various hidden and

complex factors. The following chapter, chapter one, provides a chronological overview of the Colombian conflict since the period called *La Violencia* to the 2016 peace agreement between the Colombian government and FARC-EP highlighting socio-political and economic events/issues that were determinant in prolonging the conflict.

## Chapter One

### The Historical Context

#### Introduction

In order to describe how the Colombian conflict is the result of a complex set of socio-political, economic, and historical factors, this chapter presents the historical context. One of the themes which specialists and academics researching the Colombian conflict have not reached a unanimous conclusion about is the beginning of the contemporary conflict (Pizarro Leongómez, 2015). This debate was discussed in the paper titled, *Contribution to the Understanding of the Armed Conflict in Colombia*, which was a product of the Historical Commission of the Conflict and its Victims in 2015. This commission was composed of twelve specialists with the task of producing a statement on the origins and the multiple causes of the conflict, the main factors and conditions that have facilitated or contributed to its duration, and its effects and impacts on the population. In fact, one of the most complex topics for historians is to establish whether the latest conflict started in 1930, 1946, 1948, 1958, or in the decade of the eighties in the twentieth century (Pizarro Leongómez, 2015, p. 16).

This historical context explores five specific moments that helps us to understand the current conflict in Colombia. The first historical moment describes the emergency of the historical period called *La Violencia* (The Violence), which, for some researchers, is central in comprehending the contemporary conflict. The second historical epoch explores the National Front as a political phenomenon that, on the one hand deescalated the conflict that emerged during the period called *La Violencia*, yet it narrowed political participation and the

emergence of democratic institutions. The third historical period is related to the 1980s and the insertion of paramilitary groups and the drug trafficking cartels. Later, it describes the Colombian conflict after the 1991 Constitution; and finally, the chapter provides an overview of the 2016 peace agreement and the reintegration process of FARC-EP ex-combatants into mainstream society.

### **La Violencia (The Violence)**

Pizarro Leongómez (2015) analysed how some Colombian conflict scholars distinguish between two periods of violence that are somehow related to the contemporary Colombian conflict: the first stemmed from the 1946 to 1964 period, and the second lies within the 1964 to the present day period (p. 20). Molano (2015) states that the Colombian armed conflict started in the epoch called *The Violence* (p. 1). The breaking point of *The Violence* was the assassination of the popular liberal political leader Jorge Eliécer Gaitán. This violent act triggered the social phenomenon called *El Bogotazo*, a series of riots and lootings that began with his death on April 9, 1948.

The political circumstances that contributed to Gaitán's assassination were building for some time. Between 1923 and 1929 the coffee crops' profits grew significantly because of the international market, and this phenomenon encouraged peasants to colonize wasteland to grow these crops. This resulted in conflict amongst the colonizing peasants, and local farmers whose legal land titles were precarious in the face of the powerful landlord social class. Some of the landlords enforced major obstacles on the colonized peasants who decided to clear and occupy the nearby land claimed by the landlords. In 1929, the US economic

crisis negatively impacted the coffee industry in Colombia, boosting the peasant's process of occupation and clearing of wasteland to grow other crops. It also encouraged an influx of people to rural areas to work on farms in the form of sharecropping and leasing (Molano, 2015, p. 6). This manner of work increased the land conflict in many regions because tenants started to demand ownership of the land. Additionally, in places such as Sumapaz, Anolaima, and La Mesa, among others, the renters or leasers created unions to change the labour regime (Molano, 2015, p. 6). Jorge Eliécer Gaitán supported the leasers' wishes to become landowners, in part because he emphasized the importance of agrarian reform (Molano, 2015, p. 7).

In 1936, the liberal government created Law 200 to deal with the land conflict. An important piece of this law was the social function of property that was linked to the coffee industry's prosperity (Molano, 2015, p. 9). Law 200 promoted splitting the land up so that some of it was given to the peasants. The government paid the landlords for their land, then sold it to the peasants to secure property and a supply of labour (Molano, 2015, p. 9). This law was one of the axes around which the agrarian conflicts would transform into an armed conflict. The peasants understood the social function of property as their legal right to uncultivated lands, whether or not they had a title for them. For landowners, this law was thought to be, in many regions, a threat that they had to resist by arming their workers (Molano, 2015, p. 10). The Law 100 of 1944 tried to eliminate the conservatives and landlords' concerns removing the tenants' benefits obtained in the Law 200. This Law guaranteed the rights of the owners to the land for fifteen more years, and avoided the colonizers of becoming the legal owners of portions of the land. Property rights were unknown and the landlord class on the peasants' unleashed official violence. Armed gangs

defending the landowners' interests on regions where the peasants had taken legal possession of land previously titled to landowners, or where they threatened to invade the land (Pérez Martínez, 2003).

In 1946, after sixteen years of the Liberal Party in power in the government, the Conservative Party returned to power. The new president, Luis Mariano Ospina Pérez, was considered the “Trojan Horse” of the popular conservative leader Laureano Gómez, who sympathized with the political ideas of dictator Francisco Franco in Spain and Nazism in Germany (Molano, 2015, p. 13). Laureano Gómez also was famous for issuing threats such as “civil war is inevitable and hopefully we will win elections” (Molano, 2015, p. 13). The new conservative president used the army and police force to impose a conservative social and political order (Molano, 2015, p. 14), and as a result, the armed forces often did not interfere when supporters of the Conservative Party committed crimes against Liberal Party constituents.

Meanwhile, Jorge Eliécer Gaitán took over the Liberal Party. On February 7, 1948, Gaitán organized the so-called “the March of Silence” to denounce the slaughter of liberal peasants and he called for an end to the violence (Molano, 2015, p. 14). The subsequent murder of Gaitán on April 9 of that year was part of the conservative strategy to obstruct the return of the liberals to the Presidency of the Republic. Since the 1920s, a sector of conservatism was determined to maintain the power they had obtained in the War of a Thousand Days, and they were willing to use any means - ideological, electoral, or armed - to do so. The Catholic Church and powerful financial and business groups, especially the oil industry, were the unconditional official allies of this conservative sector (Molano, 2015, p.15).

David Bushnell (1984) mentioned that when Jorge Eliécer Gaitán was assassinated, the conflict spread throughout a large part of the country. This occurred in different stages in which accumulated factors related to agrarian problems, political representation, and international components were the fuel for the turn toward extreme violence (as cited in Fajardo, 2015, p. 23). Henceforth in Colombia, particularly in rural areas, there began a campaign of terror at the hands of the police, the army, and gangsters that provoked the construction of what Vilma Franco calls a "counterinsurgency order" (as cited in Fajardo, 2015, p. 23). This expansion of repressive actions led to the political crisis of the late 1940s and early 1950s. It involved the expulsion of peasants and the extermination of political opponents, particularly those who had followed Jorge Eliécer Gaitán (Fajardo, 2015, p. 24).

During the 1950s, a mission of international economists sought to break the model of population growth in rural areas in developing countries. The diagnosis proposed by the Canadian Lauchlin Currie, one of the economic mission representative's, referred to an agrarian structure in Colombia that was irrational where flat lands were devoted to extensive livestock, while agricultural production was concentrated in those areas with more unproductive characteristics. This phenomenon conditioned peasants to move to work in small plots of land. Therefore, Colombia had a mass of unproductive peasants congregated in plots of land without much productive potential. The mission suggested that people should migrate to urban areas to wait for an expanding internal market to offer them jobs. This migration program was also boosted by repressive methods used by landowners (Pérez Martínez, 2003).

This situation led to the creation of what is called the liberal guerrillas, composed of approximately fifty thousand liberal combatants who followed the leader Guadalupe Salcedo

in the region of the Llanos. The guerrillas fame stems from the fact that they had progressively emancipated themselves from liberal landowners and liberal political elites to the point that, in 1953, they began proclaiming self-declared "Laws" surrounding agrarian transformations (Pécaut, 2015, p. 17).

Meanwhile, by 1948 the Communist Party (CP) was declared illegal and became involved in the armed resistance against the government. The police occupied the headquarters of the CP, and an arrest warrant was issued for its leaders, the circulation of their press was forbidden, and their regional members were forced to disperse and live in rural areas due to government repression (Pizarro Leongómez, 1989, p. 10). However, the liberal guerrillas outnumbered the communists in terms of troops and territories. After Gaitan's assassination, conservatives and the US accused the international communist movement, without proof, for the murder. After the US Secretary of State launched this speculation, the conservative president Mariano Ospina Pérez, his party, the media, and some liberals close to the political right wing accepted it, and from that moment onward, it began an alliance against the insurgency and an anti-communist ideology emerged from the state (Renán Vega, 2015, p. 21).

There were frequent hostilities between the liberal and communist guerrillas. Since 1951, relations between both groups hardened over these disputes and control of territories (Pécaut, 2015, p. 17). Government forces were weak compared to the number of guerrillas. The liberal guerrillas had about twenty-five thousand members; meanwhile, the communists had between forty-five and fifty-five thousand members (Molano, 2015, para. 52). The conservative Laureano Gómez was elected president of Colombia in 1950. He sent Colombian troops to the Korean War, seeking support from the US in Colombia's internal

war against communism. According to Parsons (1997), Laureano Gómez argued that democracy was incapable of preventing a communist revolution; then, he proposed a corporate syndicalist regime inspired by Franco's dictatorship, which sought to "create an authoritarian system headed by an all-powerful president" (as cited in Molano, 2015, para. 52). The Liberal Party and the majority of conservatism strongly opposed Laureano Gómez's regime and they therefore agreed to Gustavo Rojas Pinilla's military coup of June 13, 1953 (Molano, 2015, para. 52).

It was only after 1953 and the military coup that the majority of liberal guerrillas demobilized. However, the communist guerrillas refused to do so (Pécaut, 2015, p. 17). In conclusion, the period known as *The Violence* greatly affected rural people but the political power structures remained intact (Pécaut, 2015, p. 18). *The Violence* left at least two hundred thousand people dead (Hobsbawm, 1968, p. 264).

In July 1954, the Constituent National Assembly elected Rojas Pinilla president for the period 1954-1958. The new president decreed in September 1954 "the prohibition of international communism in Colombia" (Molano, 2015, para. 53). It was a standard copied from the Communism Control Law passed by the United States Congress two weeks earlier in Washington.

### **El Frente Nacional (The National Front)**

*El Frente Nacional* was an agreement established between the two traditional parties, the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party, to rotate executive power every four years for a period of 16 years. This pact included the distribution of public positions and the monopoly

of political representation in different regions between both parties. The agreement started in 1958 after eight years of military dictatorship and it is possible to assert that it worked as a double transition: from war to peace and from dictatorship to democracy (Giraldo Ramírez, 2015, p. 4). Pécaut (2015) pointed out that this pact between the political parties discredited the dictatorship of Gustavo Rojas Pinilla, underlined the ineptness of the military forces in controlling the government, avoided discussing the responsibility of both parties in the period of *The Violence*, and did not carry out any action to support the victims of *The Violence* (p.18).

*El Frente Nacional* produced restrictions on political participation, leading to protests by many political sectors that saw this agreement as an authoritarian regime that tried to declare itself as the Rule of Law (Pécaut, 2015, p.19). In addition, military forces, police forces, and private agents used violent repression against social protest. There was *clientelism* or a social order that depends upon relations of patronage; in particular, a political approach that emphasizes or exploits such relations between both parties, and voter turnout in elections was only about 40 percent (Pécaut, 2015, p.20). This political context made *El Frente Nacional* a hermetic system that radicalized other sectors who thought that the only way of transforming the social situation was through armed struggle (Pécaut, 2015, p.19). However, one success of this period was the significant decrease of homicide rates compared with the period of *The Violence* (Giraldo Ramírez, 2015, p. 4). Paris (1990) said that *El Frente Nacional* was an experiment that limited political competition calming the tensions between Liberals and Conservatives. It smoothed the parties' differences until they almost disappeared (as cited in Giraldo Ramírez, 2015, p. 4).

On the other hand, although the economy was also modernized (Pécaut, 2015, p.20), this economic development was related to community repression, exile, and the loss of land of a significant percentage of the population (Giraldo, 2015, p. 26). In short, the government had a labour force and abandoned land which helped the government to accumulate capital. This led to an increase in the production of commercial agricultural crops such as rice, cotton, sugar cane, and bananas that contributed to the economy. In contrast, there also was social discomfort that triggered the armed resistance (Giraldo, 2015, p. 26). Law 135 of 1961 promoted the bestowal of land to the landlords and land colonizers. Incora (the Colombian institute for agrarian reform) addressed this issue. In general, the process of adjudication of wastelands during this period is very unequal creating a process of colonization and the formation of rural properties with differentiated rhythms. This indicates a state policy without a clear planning and vision on land use and rural property development (Machado, 2009, p.294). The balance of the agrarian reform was very poor (Molano, 2019) so that the landlords land concentration increased, medium properties were not strengthened, and the sharecroppers and tenants' participation on land decreased.

The aforementioned indicate that despite the transition to peace and the modernization of the economy following *El Frente Nacional*, this period became a breeding ground for new armed groups. One cause of this phenomenon was the development of commercial agriculture that coexisted with the precarious socio-economic situation of a significant part the population (Giraldo, 2015, p. 27). According to Toro Agudelo (1985), by 1954, more than 50 percent of rural land owners had only two hectares of land, around 1,200,000 peasants did not own land, and 3 percent of land owners monopolized 50 percent

of productive lands, which were left unused or were only used for raising cattle (as cited in Giraldo, 2015, p. 28).

To resolve this condition, the government proposed Law 135 of 1961, which aimed to reform the agrarian social structure. This law designed procedures to eliminate the inequitable concentration of rural property and prevent its unproductive use, and to provide lands to those who did not own any (Giraldo, 2015, p. 28). However, the law found opposition from landowners and the program's defenders established by the US called Alliance for Progress (*Alianza para el Progreso*). This program delineated an economic plan and a counterinsurgency doctrine. Supporters of this policy considered it inappropriate to provide peasants with land or loans to purchase land (Giraldo, 2015, p. 28). Mariano Arango (1994) concluded that the results of this "agrarian reform" only turned out to favour 4.36 percent of the population that were without land (as cited in Giraldo, 2015, p. 29). After the failure of this reform, the government, along with the Church, landlords, and businessmen, revoked the law. It should be noted that the "agrarian reform" proposed by Law 135 of 1961 was not only "marginal," but the reaction generated among its opponents led to its revocation in practice (Giraldo, 2015, p. 30).

Scholars such as Javier Giraldo (2015) mentioned that as a result of the counterinsurgency war established by the Alliance for the Progress, the peasant organizations that emerged in some regions were annihilated. The US politico-military circles designed this initiative as the "preventive" strategy against peasant communities that had taken refuge in the mountains and were called "independent republics." It would be the military accompaniment of the agrarian reform law (p. 30). Marginalized groups responded to this plan with armed insurgency. In particular, three armed groups gained prominence: The

Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) was influenced by the revolution in the Soviet Union, the National Liberation Army (ELN) was influenced by the revolution in Cuba, and the People's Liberation Army (EPL) was influenced by the revolution in China (Giraldo Ramírez, 2015, p.7).

Unlike previous civil wars, the groups that emerged in this period did not have short term and small scale objectives. Instead, they aimed to achieve a triumphant revolution that would completely change the political, economic, and social structures of Colombia (Giraldo Ramírez, 2015, p.8). Jorge Giraldo Ramírez (2015) noted that another element, which promoted the emergence of the guerrillas was the fact that a significant sector of Colombian intellectuals supported the use of violence instead of changing the system using more democratic methods (p. 9). This debate in academia was influenced by Marxist and decolonization ideas until the 1980s. However, between 1965 and 1980, Colombia's guerrillas maintained a precarious existence. FARC went through a notorious crisis with minimal growth, the EPL was barely capable of dealing with its internal divisions, and the ELN had in fact almost disappeared after 1973 (Giraldo Ramírez, 2015, p. 9).

During this time, the government and the Colombian army received support from the Special Group created by US President John F. Kennedy to fight the insurgence influenced by communism in different regions around the world (Renán Vega, 2015, p. 27). Part of the aim of the Special Group was to provide diplomatic, political, economic, psychological, educational (for e.g., School of the Americas) and military support to the countries where the communists were active. The design of this military strategy did not mention human rights, the international norms of war, or the Geneva conventions on the treatment of prisoners (Renán Vega, 2015, p. 28). Meanwhile, many members of Colombia's guerrillas acquired

training in Cuba. They used the peasant's previous experience of *The Violence* to locate themselves in areas of *low military presence*, and they linked themselves with the practices and trajectories of the liberal guerrillas (Giraldo Ramírez, 2015, p. 9).

In conclusion, despite the fact that *El Frente Nacional* managed to achieve peace and preserve the democratic system, it was unable to advance a solid program of social reforms. Probably, the greatest frustration of *El Frente Nacional* came from the government's failed attempt to transform rural areas. Similar to what happened during the 1930s, the effort to promote agrarian reform found resistance from landowners who imposed an authentic counter-reform. This situation contributed to the global Cold War scenario, with the influence of the US and Cuba that facilitated the rise and transformation of armed groups in Colombia.

Pizarro Lengómez (2015) underlines three external events, which influenced the Colombian internal conflict. First, the military coup that overthrew Salvador Allende in Chile in 1973 was interpreted by the Colombian left as a confirmation of the unfeasibility of accessing and retaining power through democratic means. Second, the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua boosted a socialist revolutionary "new wave" in Latin America, especially in Guatemala, El Salvador, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru. Third, the new military doctrine in the US through the government of Ronald Reagan closed the era of peaceful coexistence, leading to an international confrontation that culminated with the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War (p. 38).

During this 1970s period in Colombia, a new guerrilla group called M-19 emerged. It was characterized as being more urban and nationalist. Its founders argued that their reason for taking up arms was the fraud that emerged during the 1970 presidential elections, in which Misael Pastrana Borrero won over General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla as head of the political

party ANAPO. Pastrana Borrero was the candidate of the conservative and liberal political elites representing the continuity of *El Frente Nacional* and conservative dissidents and people from the popular and left sectors supported liberal Rojas Pinilla. At midnight April 19, 1970, the presidential voting results were confused by the media and for all of the constituencies because the newspapers concurred that Rojas Pinilla was the winner. However, after the results were shown in the media energy and power stations failures emerged in some regions and, by April 21, the media informed the public that Pastrana Borrero not Rojas Pinilla had won the presidential election by a short margin (Acuña Rodríguez, 2015, p.233). As a result, the new guerrillas called for a “popular mass movement against oligarchy,” and on the other hand, powerful drug cartels as well as paramilitary groups emerged.

### **Armed Conflict Expansion**

In 1977, the four united trade union centers, the CTC, UTC, STC and the CGT, organized a strike to protest against unemployment. The success was such that the President himself, Alfonso López Michelsen, named the strike "a little April 9<sup>th</sup>" (Pécaut, 2015, p. 27). The government banned demonstrations and censored the radio in an effort to disrupt the protest. The Committee of Political Prisoners in 1980 estimated that in that single day, there were twenty-four people dead, more than one hundred wounded, and five thousand arrested (Wills Obregón, 2015, p. 27).

This popular strike caused violence that worsened on September 12, 1978, when the Workers' Self Defense (ADO), a small organization constituted in 1974 by people of middle

class and popular origin who claimed the right to armed rebellion, killed Rafael Pardo Buelvas, former Minister of Agriculture and former Minister of Government during the 1977 strike. Along with this murder, kidnappings became more common as a social phenomenon in urban centers (Wills Obregón, 2015, 27). Several days after this event, the new President Julio César Turbay approved, under a state of siege, decree 1923 or the Security Statute. This allowed the military criminal justice board to judge a series of crimes committed by civilians against other civilians and the military through Verbal Councils (Wills Obregón, 2015, 27). The armed forces noted that this security statute was the opportunity to fight the "internal enemy" that threatened the "national interests," yet the analyst Catalina Jiménez contended that this led the military to "consider that any opposition or critic to the state was a threat to the transcendental political values" of the nation (El Tiempo, 2010).

The Security Statute led to human rights violations such as torture and the detention of people. Due to this authoritative regime that expanded the military's power, people from different political ideologies – liberals, conservatives, socialists, and communists - created the Permanent Committee of Human Rights Defense in 1979 trying to denounce the violations coming from the government and military (Wills Obregón, 2015, 29). However, these kinds of initiatives did not have the sufficient force to be a counterweight to the authoritative military behaviour of the state.

Belisario Betancur was elected to the Presidency of the Republic in August 1982 and he delivered a speech that addressed the years of authoritarianism under the Security Statute. During the presidential campaign, he proposed a new understanding of the conflict. He spoke of the context of injustice and inequality that contributed to the rise of the armed rebellion and he recognized the guerrillas' political status. By doing so, he could propose a dialogue

with the guerrillas (Wills Obregón, 2015, 30). Once he assumed the presidency, Betancur's government began a peace process with FARC, which culminated with *The Uribe Agreements*. This agreement was signed on May 28, 1984, and both parties committed to a "bilateral ceasefire and to search a political exit to the Colombian armed conflict." As a consequence, in November 1985, it was created the political movement called Patriotic Union (UP). The UP was a political party that included FARC members, members of political parties, civil society, and trade unionists. This movement participated in the regional and local elections becoming a political alternative to the bipartisanship depicted by Conservatives and Liberals. Shortly thereafter, M-19 and EPL were added to this agreement (Wills Obregón, 2015, 30). However, the opponents and government opposition argued that the peace agreement was nonsense, having taken into account the increase in kidnappings and extortions carried out by the guerrillas; so that even in the middle of the many dialogues with the guerrillas, these opposition groups increased their strength (Wills Obregón, 2015, 30).

In addition, drug trafficking became a new social and economic phenomenon was consolidated during the 1980s. The first signs of this new illicit economy appeared in the mid-1970s; at that time, the industry was mostly focused on marijuana that went relatively unnoticed (Pécaut, 2015, p. 29). Since the 1980s, Colombia became a central element of what was called Regan's "war on drugs" promoted by the US in the cocaine producing countries. The "war drugs" diminished cocaine production in Bolivia and Peru, yet by reducing the production on those countries, Colombia was able to become the largest producer of cocaine during the 1990s (Pécaut, 2015, p. 32). Drug trafficking strengthened all the groups involved in the armed conflict, including the guerrillas, the paramilitaries, and organized crime gangs.

For example, FARC increased its power due to the coca boom in the economy during the years 1980-1990. The guerrillas' social base increased, in part, because they started to protect thousands of people who cultivated the coca plant from the abuses of the traffickers (Pécaut, 2015, p. 31). FARC was inclined to intervene more and more in all the stages of formation and commercialization of cocaine, with the exception of the access routes to the consumer markets (Pécaut, 2015, p. 32). By doing this, FARC entered into competition with drug traffickers who, in contrast, controlled the activity until the end stages. For a time, there was cooperation between them. The laboratories and narcos routes were installed very often in FARC-controlled zones, and they demanded the payment of commissions. The local sale of coca from producers linked to the guerrillas took place in municipal capitals controlled by the traffickers. Yet this cooperation ended when the paramilitaries began an open war against the guerrillas (Pécaut, 2015, p. 32).

The first large-scale demonstration of paramilitarism began at the end of the 1970s when the increase of kidnappings, cattle robberies, and charges made by the guerrillas to landlords, ranchers, and drug traffickers led to the emergence of the group Death to Kidnappers (MAS) ("Muerte a secuestradores MAS," 2011, para. 1). The event that sparked the formation of this group occurred on November 12, 1981, when Luis Gabriel Bernal Villegas, a member of M-19, kidnapped Martha Nieves Ochoa. She was the sister of the Ochoa brothers, who were members of the Medellin Cartel. On December 1, 1981, the Ochoa brothers called for a meeting in Medellin attended by 223 people, most of who were mafia bosses, including Pablo Escobar, Carlos Ledher, and Gonzalo Rodríguez Gacha ("Muerte a secuestradores MAS," 2011, para. 5). The objective of this meeting was to create a coalition that would respond to the actions of the guerrilla groups. Each attendee offered two million

pesos and ten of their best men to MAS. In this way, MAS was born, a private army of around 2,200 men and a fund of 446 million pesos (“Muerte a secuestradores MAS,” 2011, para. 6).

At the same time, Maria Teresa Ronderos (2014) mentions that in regions such as *El Magdalena Medio*, FARC started to more aggressively expand its territory (cited in Wills Obregón, 2015, 34). It began to extort and kidnap farmers who had invested in land. The exasperation of farmers and gangsters grew. In addition to these three players - guerrillas, farmers and mafiosos- more groups began to influence the conflict, including landowners, some politicians, and the military that felt betrayed by the peace dialogues of that decade (Wills Obregón, 2015, 34). In the case of the military, some officers decided to face the war in a clandestine manner using *the legal framework along with the formation of paramilitaries groups* in alliance with some political leaders (Wills Obregón, 2015, 34). Each of the actors in this network not only contributed resources, connections, and knowledge, but they also added their own interests to the conflict. The farmers wanted to protect themselves from extortion; the military wanted to suppress communism and win the war; the gangsters wanted to protect their routes, laboratories and businesses; and the politicians needed their votes (Wills Obregón, 2015, 35).

Meanwhile, FARC transitioned from 4 war fronts in 1978 to 24 fronts in 1982. During the Seventh Conference of this guerrilla group in 1983, it added the acronym EP (Army of the people) to its name becoming FARC-EP (De Zubiría, 2015, p. 43). ELN was also undergoing changes. After the 1973 *Anolí* operation in which the government of President Misael Pastrana Borrero decimated the ELN, the group reorganized itself in the Magdalena Medio region under the leadership of the Spanish priest Fr. Manuel Pérez Martínez (Giraldo, 2015, p.19). At the same time, M-19 was concentrating its forces on the Southern Front. A

command of M-19 attacked the Palace of Justice in Bogotá in November 1985. This attack left around 100 people dead and 12 missing, among them 11 magistrates of the Supreme Court of Justice. In addition, EPL increased its activity in the northeast of the country and new guerrilla projects emerged such as Quintín Lame, PRT, and MIR *Patria Libre* (De Zubiría, 2015, p. 43).

In the context of the "peace process" carried out by Belisario Betancur's government in 1982, a ceasefire was signed in 1984 with the main guerrilla groups, with the exception of the ELN. Although M-19 and the EPL would break up soon after, FARC officially maintained the terms of the agreement until 1987 (Pécaut, 2015, p. 33). In 1987, the truce between FARC and the government was broken, and the Simón Bolívar Guerrilla Coordination (CGSB) was created instead. This was an umbrella group of guerrilla organizations, which included FARC-EP, M-19, ELN, EPL, Workers Revolutionary Party, and the Quintin Lame movement. Later, FARC-EP and ELN left the CGSB movement and it ultimately disappeared from the political scene in 1991.

In 1985, FARC manifested its will to create a political wing by forming the Patriotic Union (UP) party similar to Sinn Fein, the political wing of the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) in Northern Ireland. Several FARC commanders took part in this new political party and various sectors of the left political wing also joined it. In a short time, the UP achieved several important successes. In an alliance with the Communist Party it obtained five Senate seats and nine seats in the House of Representatives. In the 1988 local elections, the first that were carried out under the modality of universal suffrage, the UP won 23 mayorships and numerous municipalities. It even won several seats in Congress. These

political achievements by UP were enough to provoke concern from a large part of the political class (Pécaut, 2015, p. 33).

The paramilitary groups, who were supported by military members and politicians at all levels, undertook the systematic extermination of UP militants. It is estimated that the number of victims killed was around 2,500, including most of the elected leaders, presidents of the organization, union leaders, and peasant leaders (Pécaut, 2015, p. 34). The massacre convinced FARC-EP that they had no other option besides taking military action.

The end of the 1980s left a bloody mark not only on civilians, combatants, and members of the UP such as Jaime Pardo Leal and Bernardo Jaramillo, but also on notable people from different social sectors that includes notorious murders cases of: journalist Guillermo Cano Isaza, who denounced the crimes committed by the Medellín Cartel and its leader, Pablo Escobar; human rights defender Héctor Abad Gómez, who denounced the forced disappearances of people in Medellín; presidential candidates such as Liberal Luis Carlos Galán (De Zubiría, 2015, p. 43) and the candidate of the recently demobilized M-19, Carlos Pizarro as well as the extermination of the Unión Patriótica party; the kidnappings implemented by FARC-EP and ELN; and the arbitrary arrests and torture committed by the Colombian military forces. In addition, between 1986 and 1990, 19 car bombs exploded leaving approximately 300 victims; gunmen killed 250 policemen; the guerrillas bombed the Caño Limón-Coveñas oil pipeline 125 times; and there were 15 billion pesos lost due to terrorist acts.

### **The Colombian Conflict after the 1991 Constitution**

This context motivated civil society movements to ask for institutional reform, specifically a National Constituent Assembly whose main objective was to create a new Constitution that replaced the 1886 Constitution. Colombians voted for a National Constituent Assembly because they believed it could help the country avoid impunity and terror (Lemaitre, 2012, p. 3). Lemaitre (2012) underlines the peace discourses surrounding the new Constitution. She analysed three types of discourse: first, rhetorical peace, which focused on the need to bring together representatives from different sides; second, political peace, which meant peace with the guerrillas; and third, peace with drug traffickers, or at least the end of the war on drugs (p. 4).

Rhetorical peace was symbolically depicted in the preparatory meeting of the Constituent Assembly. On one side was Aida Abella, a survivor from UP's left party; and on the other side, Carlos Daniel Abello, a conservative businessman. On the same day there was also the discourse from the new Republic's President Cesar Gaviria (Lemaitre, 2012, p. 5). Aida Abella emphasised that peace would mean the peace between the Colombian state and the insurgent groups, Daniel Abello underlined the fact that peace meant returning the country to the morality and justice that had been lost, and Cesar Gaviria highlighted that peace meant to strengthen "democracy" but he did not require peace to occur with all armed groups. The new government led by Cesar Gaviria saw peace as related to building a modern, more liberal, and more legitimate state (Lemaitre, 2012, p. 5).

In 1991, M-19 handed their weapons over to the government and participated in the Constituent Assembly during a reintegration process despite the assassination of its leader Carlos Pizarro who was running for the presidential election. In addition, a peace process was carried out with EPL and some peace dialogues occurred with FARC-EP. It was thought

that a liberal peace supported by the government, the Liberal Party, and M-19 ex-combatants would be possible (Lemaitre, 2012, p. 10). The idea of a liberal peace via strengthened democratic institutions and human rights was translated into directly-applied judicial mechanisms, reforms that limited the powers of the state of siege, mechanisms of direct democracy, more direct elections, and more spaces for popular participation (Lemaitre, 2012, p. 11). Various political sectors converged during these reforms and, in ideological terms, the only actors who opposed them were some traditional conservatives who defended the limitation of individual freedoms by the state in times of crisis.

Between 1990 and 1994, the liberal politician Cesar Gaviria served as President. In this period neoliberalism was installed as part of the government program (De Zubiría, 2015, p. 45). It is understood that this neoliberal project is part of a cumulative cause of the Colombian conflict (De Zubiría, 2015, p. 47). Delia López y José Bell (2007) mentioned that,

This project left a society increasingly unequal; a society with more unemployment, underemployment and precarious employment; a society in which, every time, the number of poor people is greater; a society with deterioration in living conditions and with a downward social mobility; a society in which citizens are progressively expropriated from their political and social rights by the market; a society with increasing rates of violence and crime; and a society that offers no future (cited in De Zubiría, 2015, p.48).

In addition, commercial agriculture declined as a result of neoliberal measures and the importation of food. Money flows were associated with drug trafficking and were invested in livestock and land. It was known as the golden age for coca crops (Molano, 2015, para. 100).

In 1997, the largest paramilitary group, called the *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia*-AUC, was created. It was an umbrella organization that gathered different regional groups together as it aimed to create a programmatic agenda, a negotiation with the Colombian state, and a political status (“La expansion,” 2008, para. 2). During the peace negotiations between the government of Andrés Pastrana (1998-2002) and FARC-EP, the territorial presence of paramilitary groups increased significantly. In November 1998, the AUC murdered 40 people and incinerated around 100 houses in regions such as Bolívar, Antioquia, Meta, and Vichada (“La expansion,” 2008, para. 5). AUC massacres increased between 1998 and 2001. This phenomenon, in part, is explained because of the territorial expansion strategy of the AUC and the control of coca production by cartels that were fighting for territories and drug routes (“La expansion,” 2008, para. 8).

In 1994, the Liberal candidate Ernesto Samper Pizano was elected president. However, his election was determined by the intervention of the *Cartel de Cali* (drug trafficking organization) (Giraldo, 2015, p. 25). The losing candidate, Andres Pastrana, presented evidence of the mafia funding Ernesto Samper Pizano’s campaign run for office. This triggered an institutional and civil division between those who supported the president and those who called for his resignation. In 2011, the analysts Jesus Antonio Bejarano Ávila said that it was “a government that has no control over anything, except resources to buy agreements, nor has the capacity to convene, nor legitimacy, nor political room for manoeuvre” (cited in Giraldo, 2015, p. 26). It was one of worst crises of legitimacy in the history of the country, and it led to increased illegal activity by all actors. The guerrilla war organizations that had not agreed to the peace negotiation in the 1990 and the paramilitary groups found a favourable environment to grow in this context of distrust and weakened

institutions. They used narco-dollars as fuel to re-enforce their strategies (Giraldo, 2015, p. 25).

The four years of the Ernesto Samper Pizano presidency left a deteriorated government that paved the way for his political opponent, conservative Andrés Pastrana (1998-2002), to become president. The new president strengthened Colombia's relationship with the US due to the need to restore diplomatic ties that the scandal of "narco-democracy" during the Ernesto Samper Pizano presidency had weakened (Silva, 2005, p. 37). In 1998, Pastrana announced *Plan Colombia*, which aimed to solve the structural problems related to drug trafficking. This plan's axis was peace negotiations with the FARC-EP (Silva, 2015, p. 37). That same year, the first anti-narcotics division of the Colombian army was created. Its mission was to act in the regions of Putumayo and Caquetá where FARC-EP had their strongholds, although it did not intervene in the territories in the hands of paramilitaries (from which cocaine was exported). In Pastrana's "diplomacy for peace," drug trafficking was considered the "fuel of conflict," allowing economic and military aid support from the US to flow into Colombia (Silva, 2005, p. 37).

*Plan Colombia* illustrated that the state was weak and had no national presence. The *Plan* included support for the peace process, economic reforms, and structural adjustments. The Washington Consensus influenced these adjustments as well as the modernization of the armed forces, the intensification of the anti-narcotics struggles, and judicial reform (Silva, 2005, p. 38). The peace process with FARC-EP was initiated in 1999 in the region of Caguán. It involved the retirement of the Colombian army from 42,000 km<sup>2</sup> where the peace dialogue would take place. Scholars like Jerónimo Ríos (2015) analysed that both sides did not really have, from a rational perspective, true motivations for negotiation and for abandoning the

armed conflict (p. 68). On one side, the government wanted to increase and strengthen security and Colombian institutions via *Plan Colombia*. The new relationship with the US and the huge investment in modernizing its military forces meant that the Colombian state could assume an advantageous position in the dialogue, given the unequal and beneficial correlation of both forces (Ríos, 2015, p.68). On the other side, Pizarro (2011) mentioned that FARC-EP used the retirement of the Colombian army in Caguán to advance its war against the state. There they had kidnapped people, trained combatants at all levels in their military schools, and learned new war techniques, including the use of explosives " (as is cited in Ríos, 2015, p.68). For example, the Colombia Three of PIRA (Provisional Irish Republican Army) members Niall Connolly, James Monaghan and Martin McCauley were arrested in 2001 in Bogota for training FARC guerrillas in bomb making. The Minister of Defense noted that during the peace process, FARC-EP increased its number of combat fronts to 70 and recruited the highest number of guerrillas in its history, reaching 17,000 combatants (Ríos, 2015, p.68).

Between 1998 and 2002, there were 17,818 international humanitarian law violations; 17,043 abuses of human rights; 18,595 victims of violence; 14,342 deaths; and the number of people displaced from their territories reached its highest level in Colombian history (Otero, 2007 cited in Ríos, 2015, p.73). All of these factors blurred the peace process and Andrés Pastrana's negotiation in Caguán, leading to the arrival of the right-wing politician, Alvaro Uribe Velez, to the presidency of Colombia (Ríos, 2015, p. 73). When FARC-EP kidnapped Senator Eduardo Gechem Turbay, on February 20, 2002, the negotiation process came to an end.

*Plan Colombia*'s second stage was expressed in the political project of Alvaro Uribe Velez's presidency (2002-2006, and 2006-2010) called *Democratic Security*. The Colombian conflict was redefined as a "terrorist threat" and escalated to intentional spheres due to the US agenda's and commercial interest in Colombia (Vega Cantor, 2015, p. 40). Between 1998 and 2008, US instructors in Colombia trained 72,000 soldiers, and 7,000 Colombian soldiers received instruction in the US. The strength of the military force reached 427,847 soldiers and policemen in 2008 (Vega Cantor, 2015, p. 40). As part of the military intervention, the government of Álvaro Uribe Vélez "invited" the US to lead the bombings against guerrillas and to assume control of intelligence systems in the war (Vega Cantor, 2015, p. 41).

There were several attempts to negotiate a peace process in Alvaro Uribe Velez's presidency. One began in 2003 when the AUC started a demobilization process with the endorsement of the Colombian government. In 2006, the last group of AUC demobilized under the so called Law Justice, Peace, and Reparation process. Criticism was raised about this process, both nationally and internationally, including by the Organization of American States-OAS Peace Process Support Mission. It identified three concerns regarding this process, such as the regrouping of the demobilized into criminal gangs that exercise control over specific communities and illicit economies; the presence of new armed actors; and the strengthening of armed self-defence and paramilitary groups in areas left by the demobilized groups (Turriago Rojas, 2016, p. 169).

In addition, in 2005, Alvaro Uribe Velez looked for a humanitarian prisoners' exchange with FARC-EP and the support of the governments of France, Spain, and Switzerland. This process proposed to exchange hostages held by the FARC-EP, especially the so-called high profile hostages, for 13 FARC-EP inmates located in Colombian prisons

or in the US (Turriago Rojas, 2016, p. 169). However, it was interrupted after FARC-EP bombed the Superior School of War in Bogotá. Due to this act of violence, the government started to rescue hostages via military operations; this was so for the case with the greatest media impact, namely the rescue of the politician who was running for the presidency, Ingrid Betancourt.

The *Democratic Security* developed between 2002 and 2008 reduced the guerrillas' territorial presence as well as political representation and number of active members. However, the procedures established under the Democratic Security plan violated human rights depicted by the territorial incursion of the Colombian army into Ecuador to attack guerrillas groups violating bilateral agreements, the rewards system that encouraged guerrilla combatants to kill other combatants to receive acknowledgment and economic recompense, the alliance of army sectors with paramilitary groups to initiate massacres in different regions, and one of the most spine-chilling cases where civilian, mostly youths, were killed and then presented as guerrilla combatants who died in combat against the army in order to receive rewards from the government (Pérez, 2010, p. 92).

### **The 2016 Peace Agreement and the Reintegration Process of FARC-EP Ex-combatants**

In Alvaro Uribe Velez' government, the Colombian economy grew on average 5.5 percent GDP each year, and outperformed Brazil, Chile, and Mexico. However, in Colombia, this growth was not proportional to the social progress and the living conditions of all Colombians. In the words of Ronderos (2010), "Brazil was able, in those years, to rescue 40 million people from poverty; Peru, where one in four people went hungry in 2001, managed

to reduce poverty by half; even Venezuela, in spite of the internal political polarization, reduced its poor and its indigents by half. Colombia, on the other hand, improved socially was minimum. Poverty went down from 51 to 46 percent, only 5 points" (p.4), yet in another way, indigence was extended. This is only a fact that shows that Colombia was not focusing on the roots of the conflict such as poverty, corruption, access to land, and political exclusion among others.

Poverty, corruption, access to land, and political exclusion are part of the structural roots of the conflict that the government has to tackle in order to build a positive peace in Colombia. It means that peacebuilders must focus on the structural, social, cultural, economic, political, and individual dimensions that are fostering and maintaining such deep social divisions, exclusion, and human rights violations (Galtung, 1975). After Alvaro Uribe Velez government, in 2010, Juan Manuel Santos is elected as Colombian President. The new President and FARC-EP with the support of the international community, started a new negotiated peace agreement which contains six major items: 1) Comprehensive rural reform seeks to establish the foundation for the transformation of rural areas creating the conditions to ensure the health and well-being of the rural population. 2) Political participation seeks to promote and strengthen citizen participation in matters of public interest outlawing violence as a method of political action. 3) End of the conflict is illustrated within the agreement as a bilateral and definitive ceasefire the cessation of hostilities, and putting arms beyond further use. 4) Solution to the problem of illicit drugs states that both parties must commit to finding a solution to the problem of illicit drugs, and clarify the historical relationship between the armed conflict and the cultivation, production and commercialisation of illicit drugs, and the laundering of assets derived from this phenomenon. 5) A comprehensive system for truth,

justice, reparation and non-repetition aims to contribute toward the historical clarification of what happened in the conflict, and promotes and contributes to the recognition of the victims, while recognizing the responsibility of those that were involved directly or indirectly in the armed conflict; and which promotes coexistence across the country. 6) The implementation and verification mechanisms seek to monitor and verify all of the party's compliance with their commitments (Presidencia de la República, 2016).

Item three is related to the end of the conflict in the peace agreement and recognizes the reintegration of FARC-EP guerrillas into civilian life. This item underlines that the reintegration process considers some of the following actions: 1) The creation of rural transient normalization zones, whose main objective is to begin the process of preparing FARC-EP ex-members for reincorporation into civil life. 2) The creation of a disarmament process, which includes the mandate that FARC-EP has to provide information to clean and decontaminate territories affected by antipersonnel mines, improvised explosive devices, and explosive remnants of the war. 3) The reincorporation of former FARC-EP combatants into civilian life - economically, socially, and politically – in a process that meets their interests. It aims to strengthen the social fabric across the country, promoting coexistence and reconciliation. 4) The creation of a social and solidarity economy organization called the Social Economies of the Common (ECOMÚN) to promote a process of collective economic reincorporation for ex-combatants. 5) And actions to guarantee the social and economic reincorporation of former combatants such as providing them with a basic income. Plus, a subvention will be given to the demobilized once the rural transient normalization zones have ended so that they can access social security and social programs, and participate in the

process of creating a pedagogy for peace (Agencia para la Reincorporación y la Normalización, 2018).

However, this is not a new process in Colombia. The reincorporation and reintegration of former combatants has been carried out since 2006 when the government established a reintegration policy that aimed to offer psycho-social services, education, legal assistance, and productive projects to ex-combatants including paramilitaries and guerrillas (Agencia Colombiana para la Reintegración y la Normalización, 2016). The Colombian agency for the reintegration of former combatants has noted that since this policy was laid down, the reintegration process has faced some challenges such as the fact that many ex-combatants are experiencing discrimination, and they are being stigmatized and stereotyped by mainstream society (Agencia Colombiana para la Reintegración y la Normalización, 2016).

On the other hand, a Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies report noted that the state of implementation of the Colombia peace agreement that includes the period from December 2016 to May 2018 underlines some areas of concern (Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, 2018). One area of concern is the slow long-term political, social, and economic reincorporation of ex-combatants into society, and in providing for their security. There is a lack of a strong long-term reincorporation strategy “that integrates the visions and considers the special needs of ex-combatants” (Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, 2018, p.9). Therefore, this information in addition to the notification of the Colombian Agency for the Reintegration of Ex-combatants indicates that the purpose of enhancing a social fabric in post-agreement Colombian society to promote peaceful coexistence and reconciliation is undergoing difficulties.

In a more general context, it is known that a greater percentage of Colombian society is pessimistic in relation to the Colombian peace process (Cardenas, 2013). This attitude was reflected in the 2016 referendum where more than fifty percent of the Colombian constituencies voted against the peace agreement between the government and FARC-EP guerrillas (Basset, 2018). However, there is no certainty over whether there is or is not real support of Colombians for the peace agreement. After people voted in the referendum, Juan Carlos Velez, the director of the campaign against the peace agreement between FARC-EP and the Colombian government, said that the leaders of the NO campaign manipulated the voters' attitude. He said that the campaign focused on people's indignation. It was based on the power of social media and through the recommendations of strategists from Brazil and Panama that recommended that the media "stop explaining the agreements to focus the message on indignation"(Semana, 2017)

Now, if we accept the premise that social group's specific ideas about ex-combatants can determine the relationships between them; then, we are able to argue that this negative attitude can hinder the reintegration processes. Related to this phenomenon, Kaplan and Nussio (2018) mention that interactions between community members and ex-combatants "may also encounter stigma, jealousies over demobilization benefits, and animosities between victimizers and victims that further impede reconciliation" (p.133). Consequently, both community members and ex-combatants can perceive a security risk arising for them in Colombia.

The Colombian Agency for Reintegration and Normalization (2016) reported that in the last ten years more than 10,000 ex-combatants, including paramilitaries and guerrillas, have obtained a bachelor's degree. In addition, more than 21,000 have passed basic primary

school, and around 700 participants have entered higher education. By 2013, about 20,000 ex-combatants had formal employment and a similar number had accessed job-training programs. Similarly, around 31,000 participants are currently linked into the financial system. This data indicates that many people who hail from guerrillas and paramilitary groups are already living in cities, towns, and rural areas; working in companies, farms, and governmental institutions; studying in universities and schools; and, participating in social movements and political parties. It means that they are reintegrating into civil society.

The reintegration policy and the peace agreement with the FARC-EP guerrillas have set a new dynamic in Colombian society that raises some questions: How are ex-combatants being received by the mainstream society, and are former combatants in the reintegration process being stigmatized and stereotyped? And if that is the case, then what are those attitudes that ex-combatants are facing throughout the social reintegration process? In what sense are those attitudes affecting the reintegration process, and is it possible to create a safe and inclusive reintegration process for ex-combatants? Related to these questions and challenges, the Colombian Agency for Reintegration (2016) points out that it is more usual that people in the reintegration process state that they have been dismissed from their jobs, discriminated against in their universities, or rejected in their work environments when their bosses or colleagues know about their past. These psychological and social phenomena are barriers for ex-combatant reintegration and for building a sustainable peace in Colombia.

## **Conclusions**

Colombia's socio-political history in the last century provides sufficient information for understanding the confluence of events and contexts leading to the country's protracted violent conflict. There is a debate that if the modern conflict started in the period called The Violence or whether it began in the sixties with the emergence of communist guerrillas. The inability of government leaders to create agrarian reform to develop rural areas and to offer productive land to peasants as well as the lack opportunity for peasants to participate in a democratic election for alternative political parties rather than the Conservative and Liberal parties have assisted in maintaining the conflict. The Colombian conflict escalated and expanded with the emergence of drug trafficking and paramilitary groups, both of which permeated private industry and politicians in the eighties and nineties. Some peace-agreements were created without much success allowing the armed actors to reinforce and extend their war capacity in several of Colombia's regions. The US's international policies also played an important role in escalating the conflict without solving its underlying roots. On the other hand, the Democratic Security policy implemented by president Alvaro Uribe Velez strengthened the Colombian army yet it received criticism for its human right violations. Finally, the 2016 peace agreement between the Colombian government and FARC-EP focuses on six major areas: rural reform, political participation, the end of the conflict, illicit drugs, a restorative justice system for those who participated in the conflict, and verification mechanisms to monitor all of the parties commitments to the peace process.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Literature Review**

#### **Introduction**

It is important to research the obstacles faced by Colombia's post peace agreement process including those that are related to the possibility of reconciliation. Reconciliation is based on relationships; then, we have to focus on elements that regulate the relationships of members of the community especially young people who are significant agents in the construction of a more peaceful society (Lederach, 1997). Individual and collective experiences and perceptions impact relationships and the reconciliation process. Therefore, it is relevant to research the experiences and perceptions of youth in post peace accord societies to ascertain how they understand key political issues within the reintegration process (McEvoy-Levy, 2006).

In order to do that in this chapter, I explore theoretical concepts such as peacebuilding, reconciliation, and reintegration discussed by Johan Galtung (1975), Thania Paffenholz (2010), and Ho-Won Jeong (2005) as well as the description of reconciliation concepts used in places such as Mozambique and Liberia. I also focus on a peacebuilding relational approach proposed by John Paul Lederach (1997). I examine the category of ex-combatants presented by McMullin (2012) as socially constructed. I define social images as a critical phenomenon related to the research, and finally I explore the relation of young people with conflict and peacebuilding.

#### **Peacebuilding, Reconciliation and Reintegration.**

The 2016 peace agreement offered Colombians an opportunity to get involved in a long-term peacebuilding process. The peace agreement assisted both the government and FARC-EP guerrillas to control, at least to some degree, the bloody conflict that has occurred over the last number of decades. The Conflict Analysis Resource Center (CERAC) (2016) underlines that after the bilateral agreement the consequences of the armed conflict between the FARC-EP and the Colombian government has decreased to its minimum levels in 52 years in terms of the number of victims and combatants killed and wounded, and violent actions undertaken by armed groups. It means that social, cultural, and economic activities have resumed to reconstruct communities in regions affected by the war between both adversaries. The latest peace agreement has implicit structural reforms to ensure access to the land for people who previously did not have access as well as encouraging people's political participation including their guarantees for exercising political opposition (Agencia para la Reincorporación y la Normalización, 2018). In addition, it contains agreements at the social and relational levels such as the social and economic reintegration of ex-combatants; and a system of truth, justice, reparation, and non-repetition. The peace accord aims to use peaceful means to institutionalize structural and social transformation in Colombia's democracy.

Johan Galtung (1975) developed three approaches to peace, namely peacekeeping, peacemaking, and peacebuilding. Peacekeeping aims to use blue helmet UN peacekeepers to balance power between adversaries. The adversaries are "kept away from each other" under the risk of being penalized if they break the rules. Peacemaking is about getting "rid of the source of tension," and peacebuilding is associated with removing the causes of war from the structural levels and offering alternatives to war (Galtung, 1976, p. 298 cited in Paffenholz, 2010, p. 45). Paffenholz (2010) noted that Galtung's understanding of these peace approaches

are based on his definition of negative and positive peace. Whereas peacekeeping is related to the lack of direct violence (negative peace), peacemaking and peacebuilding are related to positive peace that directly tackles structural violence to promote social justice (Paffenholz, 2010, p. 45). Both of these approaches have been useful in the international policymaking arena. For example, the term peacebuilding was used in the 1992 UN Secretary-General report titled an *Agenda for Peace* where it is related to disarming combatants, destroying weapons, repatriating refugees, retraining security forces, monitoring elections, and advancing the protection of human rights in post-conflict societies (democratic peace theory or the liberal peace). However, there is a debate that points out that these measures do not necessarily lead to “peace on a durable foundation” (Paffenholz, 2010, p.46).

Thania Paffenholz (2010) describes two different peacebuilding general theories, namely international relations and middle-level theories. International relations theory pays attention to security, order, and justice in the international system. Within this theory, she distinguishes four approaches: (1) realism where peacebuilding is associated with maintaining stability via hegemonic power; (2) idealism where peacebuilding is based on norms and standards enacted by a supranational-entity like the United Nations; (3) structuralism that appeals to the mobilization of the masses to change power and address any justice imbalance; and (4) post-structuralism that aims to understand the differences and discourses of ordinary people. On the other hand, she identified four schools of thought in the middle-level theories: (1) the conflict management school whose main goal is the short-term management of conflict via mediation and negotiation; it focuses on elites in power who have the capacity to end violence through negotiation. The main critique of this school is that it tends to concentrate solely on the top leadership forgetting other grassroots and middle-tier

leaders. (2) On the other hand, the conflict resolution school seeks to rebuild relationships between parties; it uses peace education, community dialogue, and conflict resolution training. Some of its critiques are that it usually does not include the voice of ordinary people and there is the lack of acknowledgement of the importance of culture in conflict. (3) The complementary school tries to find some congruence between the conflict management and the conflict resolution schools. (4) Finally, the conflict transformation school concentrates on peacebuilding through reconciliation within societies.

In contrast, Jeong (2005) mentions that peacebuilding embraces activities such as ceasefires, refugee resettlement, economic reconstruction and reform, the participation of former adversaries in the democratic political process as well as social reconstruction, rehabilitation, and reconciliation (p. 1). It means that a central part of the peacebuilding is to centre on transforming adversarial relationships. According to Jeong (2005) the development of peacebuilding depends on “improvements in intercommunal relationships” including constructive and inclusive forms of perceiving the other that can be promoted via education and reconciliation alongside structural reforms (p. 4). This relational framework is the same process identified by Paffenholz (2010) as conflict transformation that was developed by Lederach (1997).

This relational approach points out that undertaking a reconciliation process means that it is imperative to zone in on the rebuilding of relationships. Lederach (1997) indicates that reconciliation is a created social place where past and future meet, where opponents brings their hopes and fears, and where there is an acknowledgement of the past and a possibility of imagining a joint future in which truth, justice, peace and, reconciliation meet. The social space should allow that adversaries “share their perceptions, feelings, and

experiences with one another, with the goal of creating new perceptions and new shared experiences” (Lederach, 1997, p. 30).

In the Colombian context, Rettberg and Ugarriza (2016) explored the reconciliation of 1,843 Colombian citizens using quantitative methods. The general results show that people tend to associate reconciliation with attitudinal and emotional change concentrating on the more psychological, personal, and interpersonal dimensions. Based on those results, Rettberg and Ugarriza (2016) propose that, “reconciliation policy should be oriented much more toward promoting and improving social relations than toward singling out and underscoring the traumatic experiences of specific victims’ groups” (p. 531). These findings suggest that the peacebuilding process that includes the transformation of relationships and reconciliation as a prerequisite to consolidate peace are suitable and tuned into the Colombian post-peace accord scenario.

Now, building new peaceful relationships between adversaries, promoting reconciliation, and stimulating the immersion of ex-combatants into civil society are possible via a reintegration process. In a peacebuilding process there are three stages or actions related to the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) of ex-combatants (United Nations, 2018). Disarmament is about the collection, documentation, control and disposal of combatants’ small arms, ammunition, explosives, and light and heavy weapons. Demobilization is the formal and controlled discharge of active combatants from the armed forces, and reintegration is the process by which ex-combatants acquire civilian status and gain sustainable employment and income. Peacebuilding is a political, social, and economic process with an open time frame, primarily taking place in communities at the local level (United Nations, 2018).

Social reintegration may include activities such as transporting ex-combatants and their family dependents to their chosen destination; payment in the form of a transitional allowance; programs related to literacy classes, sports, and cultural activities; retraining in new skills and counselling; and, assistance in housing and education about micro-credit, and guarantee of their security (Jeong, 2005). However, scholars and practitioners have shown a lack of agreement about reintegration as a concept. Organizations such as the UN assumed that social reintegration occurs at the community levels; while, some scholars have focused on different issues such as the acceptance of ex-combatants by their families and neighbours, as an outcome of transitional justice, or as a process more related to economic and political participation (Kaplan & Nussio, 2018, p. 133). Nilsson (2005) also mentions that definitions used by nongovernmental organization (NGOs) underlines the economic and social assimilation of ex-combatants into civil life; therefore, their methods centre on assimilating ex-combatants into the economic system (p. 23).

A case in point is Mozambique whose activities and challenges were assessed by scholars. For example, Alden (2002) noted that ex-combatants received a monthly subsidy for eighteen months, an agricultural kit, and training. The aim of this allowance was to guarantee income over a considerable period of time meanwhile the ex-combatants create a social network in the community so that they could be employed. The vocational training was based on the belief that ex-combatants had a lack of skills to find employment (Alden, 2002). However, in Mozambique the peacebuilding process concentrated on the ex-combatants economic and development occupational skills, while little was done to prepare them psychologically and socially to return to civilian life making them potentially vulnerable to the reintegration process (Lundin, 1998).

Another case in point is Liberia. The peacebuilding process started in 2003 and involved over 101,000 people and the benefits included safety allowance payments and a reintegration opportunity choice between vocational training and formal education, each included monthly subsistence allowances (McMullin, 2012). In this case, despite reintegration efforts, empirical studies found that ex-combatants are still framed in discriminatory narratives (McMullin, 2012). I am assuming in this thesis that social reintegration is the process by which ex-combatants become involved in their communities (for e.g., see Kaplan & Nussio, 2018, p. 133). This definition makes implicit the interactive nature that places primacy on relationships, especially on building new relationships that aim to forge peaceful coexistence.

In Colombia, the Reincorporation and Standardization Agency (ARN) administers reintegration policies and programs. The ARN's starting point is the Program for Reincorporation to Civil Life (PRVC) that functioned between 2003 and 2006. Since 2006, the reintegration program has assisted ex-combatants with grants to start micro-business projects, and provided them psychosocial support, educational and vocational training, healthcare, and a monthly stipend on the condition that they participate in program activities (Agencia para la Reincorporación y Normalización, n.d.). By 2006, due to the massive demobilisation of combatants from the paramilitary groups or the AUC, the reintegration process was projected as a long-term program and it created the High Presidential Council for Reintegration (HPCR) (Agencia para la Reincorporación y Normalización, n.d.). HPCR distinguishes between the reincorporation program (short-term) that has evolved into a reintegration process (long-term) with a larger coverage and management capacity and with better tools and the ability to accompany demobilized people

(Agencia para la Reincorporación y Normalización, n.d.). In 2011, the High Councillor's Office became the Colombian Agency for Reintegration (ACR) that was replaced in 2017 by ARN. The ARN aims to manage, implement, coordinate and evaluate the reintegration and normalization of FARC-EP members (Agencia para la Reincorporación y Normalización, n.d.).

The model used in the reintegration program in Colombia has brought “community members and ex-combatants together to dialogue, build a community project or produce a cultural event” (Kaplan & Nussio, 2018, p. 138). Despite this approach, empirical studies demonstrate that many ex-combatants still feel discriminated against in their communities (Kaplan & Nussio, 2018, p. 138). In addition, a 2011 ACR-funded assessment about the community reintegration process in Colombia established that, “a large share of community members (41%) view ex-combatants with fear and distrust them more than non-ex-combatant residents (82%)” (cited in Kaplan & Nussio, 2018, p. 138). This may lead to the ex-combatants' exclusion and lack of participation in civilian life. Isolation as an alternative to providing self-security is found in some Colombian ex-combatant narratives. For example, Nussio (2011) found that not only did the general population consider demobilized people as a source of violence, but there is also a belief among the ex-combatants that they have to keep away from other demobilized people because they are related to crime (p. 590).

### **A Relational Transformation Approach to Peacebuilding**

Lederach (1997) notes that sustainable peacebuilding processes are based on reconciliation within societies and communities. They need to go through a conflict transformation process

across four dimensions: personal, relational, structural, and cultural. Personal refers to the individuals' emotional, perceptual, and spiritual areas affected by the conflict. The relational dimension is about relationships, interdependence, expression, communication, and interactive aspects related to the conflict. The structural dimension focuses on the analysis of social structures that give rise to conflict and how conflict affects the existing structures. The cultural dimension assesses how conflict impacts culture but also how culture can transform conflicts.

Lederach (1997) also underlines the importance of transforming relationships at the local level that includes the perceptual and attitudinal components of individuals and groups. Thus, part of the job has to focus on the roots of groups' radicalized political ideological division, discrimination, and prejudice. Similarly, Jeong (2005) highlights that the peace transition needs to build trust and minimize fears among conflict actors. Part of this trust building is related to the conflict party's perception of security, expectations, and performance. The process of building trust and confidence can be determined by the way we perceive and interpret the other. In other words, the transformation of relationships and people's perceptions and attitudes is linked to the possibility of building confidence in the society.

On the other hand, Peace and Conflict Studies (PACS) scholars agree that that part of peacebuilding development depends on short, medium, and long-term processes of social reintegration of the civil war's ex-combatants (Jeong, 2005). Consequently, government programs and civil society have to be clearly articulated by all stakeholders' in order to implement a successful reintegration process. Paffenholz and Spurk (2010) also offer a comprehensive analytical framework of the role of civil society in peacebuilding. They

underline seven functions of civil society in terms of peacebuilding: protection, monitoring, advocacy, in-group socialization, social cohesion, intermediation, and service delivery. Among the objectives of these seven functions, two are geared toward promoting attitudinal changes within society by developing peaceful conflict resolution and reconciliation processes to create and repair relationships so that people can live together in peaceful coexistence. It means that government initiatives are important yet civil society group roles are also determinant in supporting a successful reintegration process.

Now, elements such as the transformation of relationships, building confidence, and the reintegration of people into civil society, as well as changing people's attitudes and perceptions come together in key institutions such as the schools and universities. These institutions are important for ensuring society's social cohesion. The International Bureau of Education staff that are evaluating intergroup conflicts concluded that, "schools have an essential influence in building social cohesion within societies, but schools can also contribute to the formation of adversarial and segregated attitudes that form the basis for future adversarial behaviour" (as cited in Paffenholz & Spurk, 2010, p.73). Although, the education system is not the only socialization agent to emphasize in the peacebuilding process; it is a very important and central place for peacebuilding to allow for a strong democracy to develop. It allows for implementing the socialization process to encourage peaceful coexistence and to promote people's respect for diversity and political inclusion. Thus, the educational institutions become significant scenarios of analysis within a peacebuilding context.

### **War and Young People's Political Development**

In this thesis, I explore young university student's sense of moral order and political perceptions related to the reintegration process in Colombia. The traditional psychological perspective has emphasized children and youth's political thinking to be part of a transitional and developmental process to adulthood life (see Alpízar & Bernal, 2003; Luna, 2016). For example, Jean Piaget (1967), Eric Erickson (1972), and Lawrence Kohlberg (1984) did a parallelism between the development of logical reasoning and the development of moral stages. This premise underlines the fact that young people are capable of seeing the "systems" that operate in the world and the variables that are related to them. Due to the development of this aptitude, individuals are capable of approaching other people in terms of the place they are taking in the system; that is, there is a perception of the role taken by others. Finally, individuals attain a stage of moral judgement where they take the social system as a reference to judge human rights and social justice issues fairly (Kohlberg, 1984, p. 172).

Some of the critiques of moral developmental theory centres on the salient role of reason. The commitment to reason is grounded in the belief that moral thinking depends on a person's capacity to reason. For example, Kohlberg has been criticized for disregarding other factors such as culture, gender, and a person's emotions and emotional intelligence (Arnold, 2000, p. 368). In general, critics note the necessity of putting reason into a larger perspective as well as trying to understand how people actually function in the social world (Arnold, 2000). In addition, critics are aware of the necessity of including cultural variables such as customs and traditions, social context and daily life as well as theoretical development from other theories such as feminist theory in the study of children's moral development (Arnold, 2000).

In addition, Connell (1971) underlines that political outlooks are only present in the adolescence period. In this stage, thanks to the formal operation when young people develop their ability of logical thought, deductive reasoning, and systematic planning, the individual is capable of developing a “belief system” and abstract theory about society that is “internally consistent and consciously held” (p. 90). Young people have the ability to “reason about the organization of hypothetical society”; at this age, there is recognition of whole societies as a subject of argument (Connell, 1971, p. 91). Connell (1971) also stresses that children and adolescents’ political thought is a distance psychological phenomenon in two senses: an objective social distance and a subjective distance. The first points out that children’s relationship with politics is indirect because they learn about political events via other people. The second underlines the awareness of children that politics is something remote to them and more closely tied to adults. The sense of distance provides no influence to the children over political issues. On the contrary, children learn about the physical world and intimate social relations operating on it and reacting to others, yet children cannot do this with political events (Connell, 1971, pp. 228-229).

A second difference between learning about the physical world and political events is that the second "is itself part of society" (Connell, 1971, p. 230). Connell (1971) emphasizes that political thought is a social product manufactured and passed onto adults. In contrast to Piaget’s developmental theory where the child’s reasoning of his or her environment is independent of adults’ thoughts, Connell (1971) highlights that adults’ thought is significantly essential for children's political construction of events (p. 230). However, it is important to point out that children and youth do not simply reproduce adult’s political thinking. To some degree, the construction of political thought depends on each

person's individual characteristics. "The children selectively appropriate the material provided by schools, by mass media, by parents, and build of them individual structures" (Connell, 1971, p. 233). This idea gives some agency to children and youth that emanates from their own curiosity and developing mental skills. Therefore, we have a dual idea about children and youth's formation of political thought. On the one hand, the idea of children and youth's thoughts is imitative of adults; and on the other hand, there is the idea that their political thought is original.

In this sense, we can approach children and young people's political thinking as a phenomenon of inquiring from a more psychological perspective depicted mainly by classical scholars such as Jean Piaget and Lawrence Kohlberg to a more interactional approach that focuses on political thought as a result of the interaction between social forces and individual characteristics as portrayed by Connell. On the other hand, studies that explore the formation of subjectivity acknowledge the importance of this interaction emphasizing youth agency (Sanchez & López, 2015). From this frame of work, children and young people are individuals that have their own way of constructing their reality and are socialized with it. They have their own perceptions, experiences, and expectations about the world that surrounds them. Therefore, they are not only the product of a family, school or social dynamic, or repositories of information or imitators of adult life; they are also participants and builders of these dynamics (Sanchez & López, 2015). Consequently, we have to understand their practices and experiences from their own authentic voices and life experiences.

Now, the impact of war on children and youth's ideas about peace is contradictory (Cairns, McLernon, Moore, & Harvoort, 2006). On the one hand, data collected from World

War II as well as from the Palestinian and Israeli conflict show children and youth's pessimism about peace in the future (Cairns et al., 2006. p. 119). On the other hand, data from South Africa, Uganda, and Sudan indicate that children and youth have a more optimistic point of view about building peace (Cairns et al., 2006. p. 119). However, there is agreement that children and youth's visualization of peace is "richer and more colourful when the children are in a state of hope, which stimulates imagination" (Spielmann, 1986, p.64 cited in Cairns et al., 2006. p. 119). A study of 384 university students' living in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Israel, Northern Ireland, and South Africa found that gender and religion provided significant observable differences in how the students' reported how they engaged in conflict that were evident in their choice of conflict styles as well as their desire to accommodate or collaborate with other people (Polkinghorn & Byrne, 2000). The ideological struggle with attachment to cultural and historical symbols impacts the socialization process of Northern Ireland's Protestant and Catholic schoolchildren (Byrne, 2000). In the Colombian context, there are studies that pay attention to the relation between war and children and youth (Alvarado et al. (2012). Some of these studies approach children and youth as a group that are part of a dialogic process between them and the social world (Alvarado et al., 2012). One example of this point is the study titled, "Schools as Peace Territories, the social construction of the boy and the girl as political subjects in the contexts of armed conflict" (*Escuelas territorios de Paz; construcción social del niño y la niña como sujetos políticos en contextos de conflicto armado*) carried out by Alvarado et al. (2012). This study focuses on children's understanding of the processes of the construction of the political subjectivity of childhood in war contexts. This type of study stands on the need for a paradigmatic change where children are not seen in a passive role but instead as having a transformative role in politics. For the purpose of this thesis, I accept the interaction of the

social environment and individualistic characteristics of children and youth as the basis of their political thought and I see children and youth as individuals with the agency to transform their realities.

### **Young People, Conflict and Peacebuilding**

Youth is a transforming and competitive category that depends on the social and historical context where it is located (Senehi & Byrne, 2006). For example, Alpízar and Bernal (2003) differentiate diverse approaches that are important in addressing the context: 1) Youth as a psychobiology developmental stage where youth is understood as a moment of risk and endangerment. 2) Youth as a key moment for social integration where young people must be trained in values and skills in order to have a productive and socially well integrated adult life. As in the previous perspective, youth is placed in a transitional process. 3) Youth as socio-demographic data where young people are thought of as a homogeneous group that coincide in age and can be used for controlling the population or to be incorporated into the labour force. 4) Youth as an agent of change where youth carry the responsibility and hope of changing the social reality. 5) Youth as a developmental problem where the definition of youth is related to problems such as unemployment, drug abuse, and adolescent pregnancy, among others. 6) Youth generations where youth is considered to be a population group that can be compared with other groups from other periods of time. And 7) youth are a socio-cultural constructed category where scholars propose to locate the category in a historical and social context.

The study of youth in PACS cuts across disciplines such as politics, international relations, sociology, psychology, education, criminology, and anthropology (Özerdem & Podder, 2015, p.4). Consequently, much of the literature on youth and conflict tends to approach youth as a negative entity. For example, in international relations the focus is on the danger of “disaffected youth” facing this group as always at risk (Özerdem & Podder, 2015, p.4). Similarly, Pruitt (2013) analysis of the peacebuilding literature found that “young people tend to be viewed in one of two ways, as victims or perpetrators of violence” (p. 6). The first frames youth as harmed by violence and unable to change their own situation. The second points out that youth are potential perpetrators who use violence due to their own experiences as victims. However, the new literature is approaching youth from the agency perspective that connects youth and peacebuilding through the actions exercised by youth to recover from conflict (Özerdem & Podder, 2015, p.5). This recent perspective is close to what Alpízar and Bernal (2003) constructed the youth as an agent of social change where young people are seen as activists challenging the dominant system, questioning their quality of life and social services, and thinking about environmental and social justice issues.

I assume that youth are socially constructed and I see young people as agents of change. I consider youth to be a concept that acquires its meaning throughout history and society via discourse, symbolism, and practices. This assumption is useful to explore the role of youth in peacebuilding (McEvoy-Levy, 2006). They can play a role against the peacebuilding process, if they were victims they could be involved in defensive activities such as immersing themselves within bandit groups or even behaving as dissidents (McEvoy-Levy, 2006, p. 6). On the other hand, youth may also work at the grassroots level strengthening communities, promoting groups dialogue and facilitating peace groups; in this

sense “they are creating themselves while also creating each other” (McEvoy-Levy, 2006, p. 7). The longer term duration of a peacebuilding process, in part, depends on what is accepted or rejected by the next generation, how they socialize, what are their perceptions and experiences, the type of leader and facilitators they will assume, and what will be their structural circumstances, and political attitudes (McEvoy-Levy, 2006, p. 7).

Similarly, scholars have emphasized how youth and children’s points of view about politics and conflict determine their support for political institutions and democracy. For example, Byrne (1997, 2000) points out those children’s attitudes, perceptions, and behaviour are an important element of analysis because they reproduce them in the society. Likewise, classical studies related to youth and children’s moral and political development in the context of social conflicts also point out this idea as they consider that children’s imagination, honesty, and openness to talk about politics make them a good subject of inquiry (Coles, 1986; Garbarino, Kostelny & Dubrow, 1991).

In this thesis, I explore my young informant’s sense of moral order and political perceptions related to the reintegration process of ex-FARC guerrillas in Colombia. The traditional psychological perspective has emphasized youth’s political thinking as part of a transitional and developmental process as they move into adulthood life (see Alpízar & Bernal, 2003; Luna, 2016). For example, Jean Piaget (1967), Eric Erickson (1972), and Lawrence Kohlberg (1984), studied the parallel between the development of logical reasoning and the development of moral stages. This premise underlines the fact that young people are capable of seeing the “systems” that operate in their world and the variables related to them. Due to the development of this aptitude, individuals are capable of approaching other people in terms of the place they are taking in the system, that is, they can perceive the

role taken on by others. Finally, individuals attain a stage of moral judgement when they take the social system as a reference point to judge human rights and social justice issues fairly (Kohlberg, 1984, p.172).

Some of the critiques of moral developmental theory center's on the salient role of reason. The commitment to reason is grounded in the belief that moral thinking depends on a person's capacity to reason. For example, Kohlberg has been criticized for disregarding other factors such as culture, gender, and a person's emotions and her or his emotional intelligence (Arnold, 2000, p. 368). Developmental theory place youth as a group of people developing their maturity and reason capacity; in contrast, adults are placed at the summit of the development process who already have a well-established identity and enough rational maturity to address the important issues in society. In general, critics note the necessity of putting reason into a larger perspective as well as trying to understand how people actually function in the social world (Arnold, 2000). In addition, critics are aware of the necessity of including cultural variables such as customs and traditions, social context and daily life practices as well as including theoretical development from other theories including feminist theory (Arnold, 2000).

On the other hand, Connell (1971) underlines the point that political outlooks are only present in the adolescence period in contrast to very young children's political outlooks. In this stage, thanks to the formal operation when children develop the ability of logical thought, deductive reasoning, and systematic planning, the individual is capable of developing a "belief system" and abstract theory about society that is "internally consistent and consciously held" (p. 90). Young people have the ability to "reason about the organization of hypothetical society," at this age there is recognition of whole societies as a subject of

argument (Connell, 1971, p.91). Connell (1971) emphasizes that political thought is a social product manufactured and passed onto adults. In contrast to Piaget's developmental theory where the youth's reasoning of his or her environment is independent of adults' thoughts, Connell (1971) highlights that adults' thoughts are significantly essential for political construction of young people's thoughts (p. 230). However, it is important to point out that youth do not simply reproduce adult's political thinking. To some degree, the construction of political thought depends on each person's individual characteristics. "The children (it also can apply to youth) selectively appropriate the material provided by schools, by mass media, by parents, and build of them individual structures" (Connell, 1971, p. 233). This idea gives some agency to youth that emanates from their own curiosity and developing mental skills. Therefore, we have a dual idea about the youth's formation of political thought. On the one hand, the idea of the youth's thoughts is imitative of adults; and on the other hand, the idea is that their political thought is original.

In this sense, we can approach young people's political thinking as a phenomenon of inquiring from a more psychological perspective depicted mainly by classical scholars such as Jean Piaget and Lawrence Kohlberg to a more interactional approach that focuses on political thought as a result of the interaction between social forces and individual characteristics as portrayed by Connell. On the other hand, studies that explore the formation of subjectivity acknowledge's the importance of this interaction emphasizing young people's agency. From this frame of work, young people are individuals that have their own way of constructing their reality and are socialized with it. They have their own perceptions, experiences, and expectations about the world that surrounds them. Therefore, they are not only the product of a family, school or social dynamic, or repositories of information or

imitators of adult life; they are also participants and builders of these dynamics (agency) (Sanchez & López, 2015). Consequently, we have to understand their practices and experiences from their own voices and life experiences.

Now, the impact of war on children and youth's ideas about peace is contradictory (Cairns, McLernon, Moore, & Harvoort, 2006). On the one hand, data collected from World War II as well as from the Palestine and Israel conflict showed the children and youth's pessimism about peace in the future (Cairns et al., 2006. p. 119). On the other hand, data from South Africa, Uganda, and Sudan indicated that children and youth have a more optimistic point of view about building peace (Cairns et al., 2006. p. 119). However, there is agreement that children and youth's visualization of peace is "richer and more colourful when they are in a state of hope, which stimulates imagination" (Spielmann, 1986, p. 64 as cited in Cairns et al., 2006. p. 119).

In the Colombian context, testimonies demonstrate that "youth interpret the meaning of conflict for themselves, their families, and their communities" making youth an agent of their own lives "who develop survival strategies for themselves, their families, and their communities" (Sanford, 2006, p. 77). More recently, scholars are working on research with regards to children's conception of justice and equity in the Colombian conflict (Alvarado & Ospina, 2018) as well as with the narratives of children on violence, conflict, and peace in the Colombian civil war (Sánchez, Lopez, & Serna, 2015). Alvarado and Ospina (2018) and Sanchez et al. (2015) emphasize that children are individuals who socialize in their own ways with their own particularities. They consider that children and youth have valid and self-constructed points of view, and that their own representations, therefore, have to be listened to, understood, and characterized. The category of youth is socially constructed. In this study,

I highlight young people's diverse forms of expressivity, yet I also emphasize that the youth's identity is a socio-cultural process.

### **Ex-combatants As a Social Category**

In this thesis, I adopt the concept of ex-combatants used by Jeremy McMullin (2012) who analysed how some scholars and practitioners' narratives about ex-combatants end up as stigmatization, hindering the reintegration process. McMullin (2012) approaches this concept as a socially constructed category meaning that elite groups and non-combatant citizens use the label 'ex-combatant,' which in turn become an "identity marker, and eligibility demarcator" (p. 389). Referring to people as non-combatants or ex-combatants automatically frames and determines their relationship with mainstream society. From this point of view, people provide an identity to the other person when they use certain categories to classify people. The meaning, perceptions, emotions, images, experiences, information, and beliefs that people have about ex-combatants help us to understand the dynamic of the reintegration process from within a relational framework. Celia Cook-Huffman (2010) also raises this point noting the mechanisms of creating identities in a conflict and how identities impact conflicts. She argues that these approaches help us to understand the "emergence, escalation, and transformation of social conflict" (p.19).

Complementing the idea of ex-combatants as a socially constructed category that can determine the reintegration process via one's identity, McMullin (2012) addresses the concept from a Foucauldian perspective. He argues that the idea around the ex-combatant is built from a disciplinary and governmental process that is proposed by DDR programs that

creates the boundaries surrounding the notion of what is an ex-combatant. From this perspective, “the ex-combatant is constructed as ‘the permanent outlaw’ who represents a ‘bundle of threats’ unless he can be tempered by the post-conflict state under international tutelage” (McMullin, 2012, p. 390). In this thesis, I assume both perspectives to refer to ex-combatants as a socially constructed category and as a disciplinary discourse.

Evaluating the narratives surrounding ex-combatants emanating from the DDR, McMullin (2012) found that policymakers, scholars and practitioners frame ex-combatants in a major category that he calls “ex-combatants as a threat.” It means that demobilized people used to be related to as a homogeneous, armed, angry, and apolitical group. Assessing the case of Sierra Leona, McMillian (2012) traced the threat narrative in the media proliferation of the “New Barbarism,” which emphasized that the cause of the war was because men were angry and corrupted without paying attention to the role of internal and external dynamics as well as structural factors (pp. 393-394). This narrow view internalizes the causes of the conflict on fighters as it framed that the war existed because the combatants were irrational and evil people who needed to be addressed, fixed, and reintegrated into a healthy democratic society.

On the other hand, there is a second major category that frames ex-combatants as an object of resentment. This category of resentment arises from the analysis of the narratives emanating from transitional justice research. McMullin (2012) found a dichotomous treatment in the DDR process where ex-combatants were related to perpetrators and communities were connected to victimhood. These narratives create competing categories “where wars produce perpetrators or victims” (McMillan, 2012, p. 403). Two notions support the resentment category. First, communities are considered to be innocent victims and ex-

combatants are collectively guilty. “All of them are perpetrators of human rights abuses, war crimes, and crimes against humanity during the war and violent intimidation of communities” (McMullin, 2012, p. 404). Second, “communities are more deserving of assistance after war because it is unfair to give ex-combatants special treatment not afforded to non-combatant communities” (McMullin, 2012, p. 404). The problem with this dichotomous viewpoint between ex-combatants and the mainstream community is that it hinders community solidarity, understanding, compassion, acceptance, and the reintegration of ex-combatants.

### **Social Images of Ex-combatants in the Colombian Reintegration Process**

It is important to understand the perceptions and meaning that Colombian society has bestowed on ex-combatants in order to contribute to a more contextualized and successful reintegration process. I use social images as a central concept for this inquiry because I need a concept that emphasizes the relational peacebuilding approach that allows me to analyse people’s images, experiences, expectations, receptivity, mood, and level of knowledge of living with ex-combatants. Charles Taylor’s (2004) social image definition is the one best suited to this study. He argues that social image is “the ways people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underline these expectations” (Taylor, 2004, p. 23).

The use of the concept “image” is to underline my interest in stories that express the social understanding of ordinary people about a specific phenomenon such as the ex-combatants’ reintegration into the Colombian peacebuilding process (see Senehi, 2009, 2019;

Boulding, 2009). Social image expresses the sense and expectation of people about others, and the common understanding that shapes people's practices in social life (Taylor, 2004). Taylor uses social image instead of social theory because he assumes that to understand people's sense about particular practices one has to focus on what he calls a "wider grasp." It means that people's practices are determined by a "largely unstructured and inarticulate understanding of our whole situation" instead of an organized theoretical doctrine (p. 25). We operate in social groups using the "grasp" we have in common with others, without necessarily using theoretical frameworks. "Humans operate with a social imaginary well before they ever got into the business of theorizing about themselves" (Taylor, 2004, p. 26).

With regards to social images, researchers need to look for what makes sense for people in social practice. In this thesis, I analyse what are young people's sense about ex-combatants and the relationship with them in an imaginary reintegration scenario based off of the work of Greenstein and Tarrow (1970) and Byrne (1997). I examine how these youths will address a possible interaction with an ex-combatant to understand the common knowledge and emotions they have about this particular group. I use social image to explore how youth see themselves as standing in a continuing relation with people who demobilised in Colombia. In other words, in this thesis I explore the young university student's sense of moral order and political perceptions related to Colombia's reintegration process.

## **Conclusions**

As illustrated in this chapter, PACS scholarship provides multiple theoretical frameworks that explain strategies to transform conflicts, to implement peacebuilding and reintegration

processes. For example, Lederach (1995, 1997, 2010) notes that a crucial area to guarantee peace in post-conflict societies is in building relationships. Then, it is imperative to pay attention to the perceptions, attitudes, emotions, and thoughts of communities and people involved in conflict in order to transform the conflict into peaceful social relations. On the other hand, youth are assumed to be agents of social change who can play a role in communities to positively transform the conflicts' dynamics. As a youth category, ex-combatants are also considered to be a social constructed concept that, according to people's perceptions, determines the reintegration process of ex-combatants into civil society via identity. Finally, social image is a central term in this thesis as it implies experiences, expectations, receptivity, mood, and level of knowledge of people living with ex-combatants in Colombia.

The following chapter presents the adopted research methodology in this study to inquire about the study participants' social images and perceptions of living with ex-combatants in scenarios such as in the university, neighbourhood, and the workplace.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Research Methods and Methodology**

#### **Introduction**

In this thesis, I wish to explore young students' social images related to the reintegration of FARC-EP ex-combatants embodied by a group of students in a university in Bogotá-Colombia using semi-projective incomplete political stories or storytelling (see Senehi, 2019) qualitative research methodology (Greenstein & Tarrow, 1970, p. 535). The study includes the student's images, perceptions, experience, and level of knowledge as well as cultural and political ideas about the reintegration process of FARC-EP guerrillas. I interviewed 12 university students who were in the first year of their program using problematic incomplete stories-episodes to elicit their perceptions about living in the same society with ex-combatants.

#### **Research Question**

What are a group of university students in the first year of their program's social images about the reintegration of ex-combatants from FARC-EP into the civil society? I focus on this group of students' because it is usually the youngest age group found in universities coming from urban neighbourhood schools in Bogotá to the broader social environment of the university. I was especially attentive to the narrative defining their possible interaction with ex-combatants that converge in places such as the university, the neighbourhood, and the workplace.

## **Recruitment Strategy**

Prior to approaching university directors and coordinators about the possibility of recruiting potential study participants, I applied and received human ethics approval from the University of Manitoba. This study adheres to all of the commitments enlisted in the approved Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board (JFREB) application. JFREB's protocol approval expires on March 26, 2020.

After receiving ethics approval, I visited various directors and coordinators at the University Minuto de Dios. Ultimately, all of my email and phone call recipients reacted positively towards the research project and expressed their enthusiasm and encouragement. We agreed to send out an invitation to students from the first-year to participate in the study. One of the directors offered her office to me to carry out the interviews. Ultimately, my "outsider" positionality as an external person from the University, and the support and endorsement of directors and professors granted me the privilege to gain the preliminary trust of potential participants in order to move forward with the research.

This study used a non-probability sample strategy namely a purposive sampling technique. A purposive sample refers to the intentional selection of research units based on specific traits and characteristics, rather than random selection (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003, p. 713 cited in Teddlie & Fen 2007, p. 80). I aimed to recruit 12 young university students in their first year of study who are living in a context where it is possible for them to be in contact with ex-combatants. The inclusion criteria were the age of the students (between 18 and 24), the neighbourhood where they were living, and the semester they were studying in (first semester). Within the Colombian cultural context young people in this age range are still considered youth. The twelve participants are not a representative sample of all youth

living in Bogotá, Colombia, and therefore cannot be extrapolated to the wider society. Notwithstanding, their experiences, perceptions, and knowledge about the reintegration process shed some light on young peoples' social images about the Colombian peace process.

## **Methodology**

The thesis objectives put in place a question related to the methodology: How can I explore and discuss young university students' social images about ex-combatants' reintegration into the community? I used a semi-projective procedure that refers to a particular story completion test based on verbal stimuli. Children and young people relate well to stories (Connell, 1971). I replicated this Greenstein and Tarrow (1970) qualitative method that was also used in Byrne's (1997) study of Belfast schoolchildren's images of conflict and peace (pp. 80-94). Greenstein and Tarrow created an instrument with political situational episodes, interviewer instructions, and probing suggestions to explore young people's political images in Britain, France, and the US. This qualitative methodology was also field tested by Byrne in the violent Northern Ireland conflict, and can be applied to other ethnic conflict milieus. Nevertheless, this instrument was mainly used in the Anglo-speaking world and the situational episodes correspond to young people's social and political realities that are different from the research participants in this thesis. So, I adapted the semi-projective procedure used by those authors to create a more suitable instrument for the Colombian context (see Appendix A).

This semi-projective storytelling procedure is a method framed in the qualitative research paradigm (see Greenfield & Tarrow, 1970; Byrne, 1997, 2000). This design is well suited for unobtrusively inquiring about young people's political images since it produces

data that is rich in description of people, places, conversations, and behaviour (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The word “projective” is taken from the psychodynamic practice to indicate the external representation of an inner quality (Greenstein & Tarrow, 1970, p. 497). In this case, “the standard assumption is that a story completion about another person is ‘really’ about one’s self” (Greenstein & Tarrow, 1970, p. 500). On the other hand, the use of the prefix “semi” is to denote that the verbal stimuli are less ambiguous than in the traditional and orthodox projective instruments, as it is, for example, in the Rorschach ink blots.

A semi-projective storytelling procedure based on a verbal stimulus poses a problematic dilemma that is more structured and culturally situated differently to the ambiguous stimulus in the traditional projective instruments (Greenstein & Tarrow, 1970, p. 502; Byrne, 1997, 2000). Therefore, a semi-projective method does not look for a deep psychological analysis, yet it tests “values, cognitions, perceptual sets, characteristic ways of perceiving typical social situations, expectations about actions that will take place under specified circumstances, and so forth” (Greenstein & Tarrow, 1970, p. 502).

The research project was organized into two general stages. For the first stage, I did a pre-test of the semi-projective instrument to adapt it within the Colombian context. I produced in both Spanish and English a number of situational episodes that are related to the Colombian reintegration process to elicit students’ perspectives. So, in this stage, I worked collaboratively with a randomly selected group of Colombian youth friends between 18 and 20 years of age living in Winnipeg-Canada to produce and test a group of situational episodes to be implemented in the second stage of the research. I reviewed the literature to find some relevant situational episodes and I discussed with my participants a hypothetical situation where they can get involved with ex-combatants in a context such as in Bogotá-Colombia. I

administered the incomplete stories to the research participants in Bogotá. Previously, the pre-test was administered to a group of young people who are from Bogotá and that recently arrived in Winnipeg-Canada. Then, I adjusted the situational episodes ensuring their clarity so that young people in Bogotá could understand all of the episodes.

Once I adapted the instrument to the Colombian context, I prepared it to interview some young university students living in Bogotá. During the second stage I applied the adapted instrument as semi-structured interviews with 12 students attending a university in Bogotá. The selection of this institution responds to the diverse young population that it admits as students. I explained to each participant the objective of the research and asked him or her to sign an ethics-informed consent form in order to be interviewed. I recorded all of the interviews to demonstrate the authenticity of the data, and to ensure that I did not lose any nuance from the interviews.

**Positionality.** Reflecting on researcher positionality is to question the researcher's beliefs, political stance, and cultural background (gender, race, class, socioeconomic status, educational background) as important variables that may affect the research process (Bourke, 2014). In this thesis, my identity is characterized as a middle-aged, heterosexual, cisgender male Colombian who has lived his last ten years in Bogotá and overseas. I am an open supporter of the Colombian peace agreement and a human rights defender. I belong to the middle class in Colombia and my experience working with Colombian conflict victims and youth led to my interest in conducting qualitative research to understand the youth's perceptions of the FARC-EP ex-combatants' reintegration process. Over the last four years I have worked as professor in a University in the city of Bogotá, which allowed me to keep in touch with current political and social debates carried out by young people.

My status in the research was both, as insider and outsider. As a Colombian researcher who actively defends the peace process, I identify myself as an insider in the research. I am aware of my personal political position in order to ensure that this bias does not affect significantly the results of this research. Likewise, my position as research university professor also elevated my powerful status within my relationship with the participants, who were students. This power relation was addressed via informed consent, the clarification of each participant's free and voluntary participation in the research, and to clarify that my participants do not feel or perceive that my role will affect their student status within the university.

On the other hand, I was an outsider living in Canada who does not belong to the youth generation anymore, which means that I have to understand, from the outside, their language and way of living. Moreover, I carried out the research in a different university from the institution that I work for to minimize the power relation between a professor and university students. Therefore, in this research my positionality functioned as a shifting relation that moved in a hybrid sort of way from an insider to an outsider position.

**Data Analysis Procedure.** The stories and interviews transcripts were analysed using the categories that emerged from the definition of each situation, the image of character(s), and the outcome of the episode (Greenstein and Tarrow, 1970). I used the two analysis and interpretation phases pointed out by Stringer (2014) namely, categorising and coding, and the analysis of key experiences. In the first phase; I reviewed, unitized, categorized, and coded the data. Themes emerged inductively from the data. In the second phase, I analysed the interviewee's significant experiences such as feelings, moment of crisis or incidents that were revealed during the research process.

**Quality of the Field Research.** Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed four criteria to establish research trustworthiness with interviewees, namely, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (as cited in Stringer, 2014, p. 92). With regards to credibility, I used prolonged engagement and interaction with my study participants providing them enough time to share their stories and opinions in the interview. Finally, to complete the credibility criteria, participants had the opportunity to debrief their emotions with me as well as their interpretation of the research instrument (the interview schedule) and the research process.

I described in detail the context of the university and I asked the university coordinators to be attentive to any needs that the participants might have during the research process. Finally, I recorded and transcribed the interviews that were password protected on my computer and that only my adviser and I have access to.

**Bogotá as the Research Location.** Despite the fact that many ex-combatants decided to stay in rural zones, cities have an important responsibility in receiving and housing demobilized fighters. Data from the Colombian Agency for Reintegration (2018) shows that since 2012 Bogotá has received around six thousand demobilized combatants. Most of the ex-combatants living in Bogotá are located in vulnerable neighbourhoods such as Ciudad Bolívar, Kennedy, Bosa, Usme, San Cristobal, Rafael Uribe, Suba, and Fontibón (Romero, 2017). According to a survey of the Bogotá Cómo Vamos organization (2015) the *bogotanos* have prejudices about ex-combatants. For example, 76 percent of Bogotá citizens consider that there is discrimination in the city because ex-combatants are being labelled as displaced,

only 20 percent of the inhabitants have a respectful attitude toward the demobilized former combatants who are reinserted into the population.

A 2017 survey also carried out by Bogotá Cómo Vamos (as cited in Romero, 2017) shows that 51 percent of respondents would be willing to have a demobilized worker as a co-worker, and only 46 percent would accept that person as their neighbour. The survey also draws attention to the fact that young people are those that are most open to this experience. For example, people between the ages of 18 and 25 are the most willing (61 percent) to have a demobilized comrade as a co-worker or in having them live in their neighbourhood (52 percent) (Romero, 2017). This data suggests that Bogotá is a major recipient city for ex-combatants but also that its citizens' perceptions about ex-combatants are in flux. This is a good location to go deeper in detail about what young people think about ex-combatants and the possibility of coexisting with them peacefully.

The research took place at the Congregation of Jesus and Mary's Catholic university called *La Corporación Universitaria Minuto de Dios* (UNIMINUTO). This university is a private Catholic institution that is accessible to students from different cities and from different social backgrounds. It is an institution founded under the principles of inclusion and social impact in the community, and its main location is located in the Minuto de Dios neighbourhood in Bogotá. This thesis does not use the ideological position of the Catholic university as a variable of analysis as my participants are from the first year of their undergraduate program and they are not long exposed to the institution's moral principles. Also, many of the students who hail from impoverished inner city barrios are studying in this institution for economic reasons rather than for ideological affinity. However, it is important to acknowledge that the religious ethos of the institution could be an important variable that

determines people perceptions. The majority of its student population live in neighbourhoods such as Bosa, Ciudad Bolivar, Fontibon, San Cristobal, and Usme where ex-combatants are already settled. These areas are among the poorest neighbourhoods in Bogotá and most of the population belong to the lower social class and working social class (Secretaría Distrital de Planeación, 2016). I interviewed twelve students living in those neighbourhoods.

**Human Ethics.** The research ensured that the study participants were not be harmed as a result of their participation in the research project (Stringer, 2014). The first ethical consideration for my study was with regards to the issue of privacy and the anonymity of my research participants. To ensure that my participants' privacy and anonymity was safeguarded, I informed them of their voluntary role in the study, and explained that they may decide to withdraw from the study at any stage. I informed the informants that besides the thesis adviser, I would not divulge their identities to any other third party.

The procedures for ensuring the participants' safety, anonymity, and confidentiality were clarified at the beginning of the study. I use pseudonyms to hide the identity of my respondents in my thesis. I used informed consent (see Appendix B) and provided clarity about the purpose and aims of the study, the use of the results, and the likely consequences of the study. In case any participant became anxious or distressed during the interview or expressed any psychological or emotional discomfort, I offered them free counselling services. Consequently, all of the respondents had access to the clinical psychological centre of Konrad Lorenz University and Santo Tomas University. I also requested assistance from the student support centre of UNIMINUTO that was involved in the study. I also asked students to read and sign the informed consent form. Moreover, I discussed the research

procedure and what will happen with the data with the university directors. At the conclusion of the thesis, the university will be provided a summary of the results.

## **Conclusions**

The Colombian conflict is the outcome of a complex set of elements. In order to understand young people hopes, fears, perspectives, and knowledge about peacebuilding in Colombia and FARC-EP ex-combatants' reintegration process, it is necessary to give them the opportunity to express their ideas and images about these phenomena. As such, the use of a semi-projective procedure structured in individual interviews as a research methodology fit with the characteristics of the study and its participants. This procedure is based on a verbal stimulus using a problematic dilemma related to living together with ex-combatants. Semi-projective method tests values, cognitions, perception and expectation about social situations.

In addition, conducting research about sensitive topics such as the reintegration process of ex-combatants in a polarized country like Colombia is challenging. However, working with youth university students makes this challenge more interesting because they belong to a scenario where people from different city areas come together and where it is accessible to talk to youth, as it is in the university context. This scenario also provides a physical, private, and comfortable structure to carry out individual interviews providing participants the sense of safety to express their own views without fear of being labelled or judged.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Young University Students' Social Images of the Reintegration Process of FARC-EP Ex-combatants into Colombian Civil Society**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter presents the data acquired from the study participants to obtain social images of the reintegration process of ex-combatants from FARC-EP into civil society. The participants' narratives in this chapter describe their images, experiences, expectations, receptivity, and level of knowledge of possible interactions with ex-combatants that converge in places such as the university milieu, neighbourhood, and workplace. The situational episodes or social situations used to stimulate participants' narratives elicited from the participants' four areas which can be understood as the student's: (1) knowledge and perceptions of FARC-EP and its reintegration process, (2) discrimination and stereotypes surrounding ex-combatants, (3) arguments supporting or opposing the reintegration process, and (4) the student's expectations and mood/emotions when interacting with ex-combatants.

#### **Participant's Knowledge and Perceptions of FARC-EP Ex-combatants Within the Reintegration Process**

During the 1980s and 1990s, FARC-EP increased its involvement with the drug trafficking economy and population extortion via kidnapping. Colombians' begun to relate guerrillas with those activities and associate them with the displacement of, and attacks against the population. In addition, since the end of the nineties, the media discourse removed the idea that the conflict is a political struggle and that FARC is an ideological movement as the

guerrillas are now framed as terrorist groups. After the failure of *El Caguán* peace process, the people's distrust of FARC-EP increased. The people's perceptions were also influenced by the selection of information promoted by various Colombian governments' and the media who used to only focus on the guerrillas' terrorist attacks. Yet it did not pay the same attention to the army's human rights violations, and the paramilitaries atrocities because it supported the governments' position. The rejection of FARC-EP by a significant portion of the Colombian population was symbolized by great social mobilizations in 2008 and 2011 where thousands of Colombians marched in the streets asking FARC-EP to disarm and demobilize, and free kidnapped people. In part, most of the participants' perceptions are related to this general social framing of the conflict.

In my data collecting process, I did not directly ask the participants about their opinions of FARC-EP. The student's knowledge and perceptions of FARC-EP are raised inductively from the first two situational episodes. The participants had to complete a story in order to explain to an international student what FARC-EP is and what will happen to ex-combatants from this group after the peace agreement was signed with the Colombian government. In general, there is a negative perception of FARC-EP guerrilla. Some youth refers to FARC-EP as a terrorist group or a group that extorts money and is composed of bad people. For some participants, FARC-EP is a group that commits violent actions such as kidnapping and displacing people from their land to then take it over. Related to this viewpoint, Tom commented on the issue in the following manner:

TOM: They are a terrorist group that has done a lot of damage to the Colombian people for all of the years that they have existed. Not only to Colombia, but it has also affected other countries, because they are trafficking drugs. They commit crimes

against humanity, they have displaced people from their homes. They are not guerrillas. We know it as something bad. They there [international community] know it as a guerrilla group, but here we do not know it as something revolutionary.

Tom not only used the word terrorist to refer to FARC-EP, he also stated that it is not a guerrilla group making it very clear that in his opinion FARC-EP is not a revolutionary organization. Tom also makes a distinction about how Colombians perceive FARC-EP and how people from other countries identify them. Likewise, Tom's idea is also reflected in Mary's narrative. This is what she had to say on the issue:

MARY: I would tell other people that it is a group [FARC-EP] that attack cultures and territories to then invade them. Their purpose is to get people out of their territories; so they can take them over.

Mary emphasizes the group's objective. She asserts that FARC-EP's only purpose was to displace people in order to control their territories. Mary's opinion is illustrative of how FARC-EP has become bereft from its political or revolutionary ideology. Those youth's opinions are similar to those that circulate in the Colombian media about FARC-EP. The main media's ideas are that FARC-EP traffics drugs, kidnap civilians, and displace people.

On the other hand, some participants recognize the past and how the guerrillas emerged as peasant social movements' that pursued the transformation of the political order, and to protect people using subversive and revolutionary methods. Some participants consider the emergence of FARC-EP, and other subversive groups to be linked to the Colombian government's lack of management and control over some of the national territories. However, most of the participants agree that their ideology was diverted due to

acts of kidnapping and drug trafficking. Colombia's communist revolutionary groups emerged in the sixties with the aim of changing the political, economic, and social structures of Colombia. The emergency of communist guerrillas occurred in an economic and social context where the inequitable concentration of rural property was the main characteristic in Colombia society. Both George and Jessica reported on this issue in the following way:

GEORGE: It is a subversive group that defended the values, laws, and rights that in some regions were lost and where the state omitted and lost control. They [the government] did not take them into account and that's why this group [FARC-EP] got into these places and started doing other things, supposedly they did it for the ideals and to survive.

In contrast to Tom and Mary's opinions, George underlines the subversive characteristic of FARC-EP. He acknowledges to some degree that he is caught up in a political struggle with this group. Similarly, Jessica had this to say on the issue:

JESSICA: The guerrillas are a group of people who came together to make a protest group against the government, but as time went by it turned out to be more towards the side of violence and force, that is to say the objective of protest was not seen, but more violence and kidnappings became normal.

Likewise, Peter noted that the guerrillas have a different political ideology than the government's. He reported on this issue as follows:

PETER: It is a group of people who have a methodology of wanting to change the political thinking that already exist. They do this to attack the government because

they have a different ideology. They think that what the government does is wrong. They use weapons to threaten the government so that they fear them.

George, Jessica, and Peter have in common that their ideas about FARC-EP are related to the changing social order and the violent acts that they commit are linked to their opposition to the Colombian government. On the other hand, Lucia has a similar point of view to George, Jessica, and Peter. She noted that FARC emerged from among impoverished peasants that embraced Marxism; however, she also mentions the shift undergone by ex-FARC-EP from being a political alternative organization to becoming a group that promotes illegal industries. This is what she had to say on the issue:

LUCIA: I know that the guerrilla of FARC was born from peasants and they wanted to go to socialism. But then, kidnappings entered to be used for political exchange. What they want is socialism first, but then drug trafficking and kidnapping were used and they stopped being a political fight to be a criminal group.

Cleo recognized FARC in relation to the most recent peace agreement and she also mentions that FARC has a double contradictory characteristic of protecting people's interests yet at the same time harming ordinary citizens through the use of violence:

CLEO: I would say that it is a group that demobilized thanks to the peace agreement that was carried out. That is why all the weapons and lands they had occupied were handed over by them. It was a group that sought to defend the people, but went to the extreme of hurting people and causing harm.

An interesting story was related by Margaret about FARC-EP underlining that this group is based mainly in the periphery of the country. Although she acknowledges that this

group also operates in cities such a Bogotá, her story emphasised that FARC is a group that operates in the mountains, jungles, and far away regions. War is perceived as something distant and remote for people residing in urban areas. She reported on this issue in the following manner;

MARGARET: They [FARC-EP] are found in towns, mountains, wooded parts, and in other cities, other places, also in Bogotá, I think. They go against justice and the Colombian government. For them, what they do is good, but really it is not right at all. They seek to do evil to get the attention of the government to see if they help them to get what they want.

Jennifer underlines that the media influences the community's general perception of FARC-EP. This is an interesting part of her story because there is an invitation to gather different information in order to understand how the guerrillas emerged in Colombia. Also, she analyses different distinguished members of FARC-EP that takes into account their role in the peace process to implement a just society. Jennifer does not perceive FARC-EP to be a uniform group. This is what she had to say on the issue:

JENNIFER: FARC is an armed group that has been in Colombia for long time, but it is known or the news shows it as something bad, that only kidnaps people, displaces peasants, and harms the country. But it would be good to investigate why that armed group was created because it was created by bad acts of the government and they decided to do a revolution. But they also did not look for a good deal and started doing bad things like recruiting people. I think this might damage people recruited lives.

Similarly, Rose's story also displays critical thinking with regards to the Colombian conflict. She reported on it in the following manner:

ROSE: It is a group of people who use economical extortions. They are very bad. But not all are bad because there are many who have been kidnapped and deceived (Rose refers to people who were forced or recruited to participate in FARC-EP)... Leaders should have certain penalties but those who had been forced to participate in FARC should be demobilized. They will have the possibility to participate in politics, university, and schools.

Most participants recognize that Colombia's revolutionary groups started from peasants' social movements justified in addressing social issues; yet after a while, they diverted their objectives and replaced them by trafficking drugs and taking control of land from others. However, the respondents did not mention the international influence on the protracted Colombia conflict. For example, the US's "preventive" strategy to prevent communism's expansion in the region forced marginalized groups to respond with armed insurgency (Giraldo, 2015). The emergence of armed communist groups such as FARC, ELN, and EPL was also influenced by the Cold War and the triumph of the Cuban revolution in 1959 (Giraldo Ramírez, 2015, p. 7), the military coup that overthrew Salvador Allende in Chile in 1973, and the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua (Leogómez, 2015).

On the other hand, some participants express some knowledge and images of what is happening to ex-combatants since the emergence of the peace process with the government. Even when some of their details are not accurate, the general idea concerning the reintegration process is linked to what they see that was established in the peace agreement. In Colombia, the institution that is in charge of the reintegration process is the Colombian

Agency for Reintegration and Normalization (ARN). From this institution, reintegration is defined as the process “to develop skills and civic competences among demobilized people and their environments.” It creates spaces for “coexistence and reconciliation actions, and encourage co-responsibility of external actors.” The mission of the ARN is to promote the return of the demobilized population to legality in a sustainable manner. For this reason, demobilized people are not only given education, training for work and psychosocial support; they are also assisted in boosting their productive projects (Agencia para la Reincorporación y Normalización, 2019). Some young people recognize the importance of giving ex-combatants the opportunity to reintegrate into civil society even if it is not easy, and there may even be a significant amount of discrimination levelled against the former combatants. Luke recognized that the reintegration process has created some positive achievements:

LUKE: The peace agreement was made in the [Juan Manuel] Santos government. Santos said that those who demobilize would have access to education and the right to have a normal life. There was a vote [peace referendum] where it was decided whether or not people agreed to the peace process, and the peace process won. However, many Colombians said no because they thought they were going to steal that money. But lately it has been seen that several ex-combatants have graduated from high school that means that the peace process is working.

Jennifer also highlighted that the peace process appears to be working, as former guerrillas are becoming productive citizens in the society:

JENNIFER: According to what I have seen, those who turned in their weapons are looking for work and economic stability. From what I have heard, the government is giving work, homes, and a salary to the people who turned in their weapons.

Data obtained from the ARN in Colombia before June 2019 points out that 13,190 ex-combatants have been recognized as member of FARC-EP (Agencia para la Reincorporación y Normalización, 2019). From this number, 94 percent of ex-combatants are already affiliated to the public health system, 79 percent are members of the pension system, and 1,773 former combatants or FARC-EP are enrolled in academic institutions (Agencia para la Reincorporación y Normalización, 2019). In addition, the economic reintegration program is oriented towards the generation of productive alternatives, both collective and individual. It aims to consolidate income in the medium and long term, within the framework of legality. People in the process of reintegration are entitled for a one-time financial support package to undertake a socioeconomic project. Under this program, 213 disbursements were approved and 1,445 ex-combatants have benefited from those disbursements.

Lucia recognized that the government has set aside political positions in the senate for former combatants that clearly indicates that the peacebuilding process appears to be working:

LUCIA: I know that the reintegrated people are being subsidised by the government in order to return to society. They have the right to have 12 seats in the senate, a political party, and access to the JEP [Peace Special Jurisdiction] to be judged for the crimes done in the past.

On the other hand, Aura also recognized that the ex-combatants will initially be discriminated against as they try to reintegrate themselves within the society. She noted that this process will not be easy for them:

AURA: It is assumed that the state will involve them [ex-combatants] with us and we have to be integrated with them. At the beginning they will be discriminated against and there will be open discussions about them, but then we will have to accept them.

Some of the narratives also show that there is realistic analysis surrounding the achievements of the reintegration process. Some of respondents recognize that the process is somewhat difficult, and that some of the ex-combatants will actively return to the guerrilla groups. Tom showed some scepticism around the reintegration process, noticing that even when the ex-combatants sought the peace process, in reality, they did not want it. This is what he had to say:

TOM: I believe that many will continue in the war because they have been there all their lives and they are used to it, it is not easy to leave there and come here to get a job to have a normal life. It's going to be very difficult to get out of there.

Margaret recognized that the issue is complex as some people will successfully reintegrate into society while others who find the process more difficult will be drawn back into the guerrilla groups:

MARGARET: Some combatants are aware of the peace process. Others are not happy with the guerrillas because they got involved against their will. They can demobilize and with the peace agreement may go easily, the rest of them may enjoy it and stay in their guerrilla group, so they say they are going to seek an agreement, but they will not leave.

Brian mentions that the reintegration process depends on society's response. He thinks that Colombian society is not ready to receive ex-combatants, especially because Colombian society does not have many opportunities for its people:

BRIAN: They would be dispersing, there would be a lot of unemployed people without much to do, and there would be a lot of free space in the lives of these people. My belief is that by demobilizing them, there would be a society that is a little heavier [more difficult]. They have already been bad. How they will be incorporated into the community if they do not have opportunities from benefactors.

Some peace organizations and the media analysed the challenges of Colombian society facing the reintegration process. They argue that the DDR policy has the challenge of promoting conditions in the local and regional societies that include active participation of the whole society in the reconciliation process that also integrates community grassroots movements, victims, ex-combatants, public institutions, scholars, and socioeconomic groups in the widespread social movement for the construction of peace and an important strategy to avoid the repetition of new armed uprisings (Castellanos, 2016).

To sum up, the participants demonstrate knowledge related to FARC-EP. Most associate this organization with terrorist attacks, kidnapping, drug trafficking, and displaced people. Despite the fact that some are aware of its revolutionary past, the participants agree with the idea of FARC-EP's social struggle is a deflection from government behaviour. This idea is linked with what historians pointed out around conflict expansion in Colombia during the eighties. In the 1980s, the emergence of drug trafficking in Colombia and the more frequent kidnapping of rich farmers to provide a financial system for the revolution was

salient characteristics that deteriorated FARC-EP's social revolution image. On the other hand, some participants displayed critical thinking about images around FARC-EP when they invited Colombian academics to do research on FARC-EP as a heterogeneous group to know more about this group and to not only rely on media information that was biased in the past. Some participants' also demonstrated knowledge around the reintegration process. They know that FARC-EP ex-combatants have the right to receive economic and social support from the Colombian government. Also, they discussed the political participation of ex-combatants in the democratic process as something negotiated in the peace agreement.

### **Discrimination and Stereotyping of Ex-combatants**

This area was analysed with regards to two possible social situations. The first simulates the possibility of a famous ex-combatant becoming involved in an episode with a police officer, who is monitoring those persons' that drive too fast in a city. The second relates to the possibility of people from civil society working with an ex-combatant. Some of the participants point out that the treatment offered to ex-combatants depends on whether the person supported the peace process or not. Numerous narratives underline the fact that being an ex-combatant may make people pay more attention to the person. Jennifer recognized that it could cause him/her to be stigmatized as well as demanding that the person should demonstrate that s/he is more peaceful compared to the ordinary citizen:

JENNIFER: The police officer asks the man why he is going so fast. When the officer sees that he is an ex-combatant, the officer does the due process. But if the policeman

supported the peace process, he would treat him as a normal person. But if not, that would change. It depends on which police officer identifies the ex-combatant.

Cleo also notes in the episode with the police officer that the policeman would scrutinize the ex-combatant's documents very carefully:

CLEO: The policeman stops him for speeding and asks him why he is going so fast, and then asks for his documents. If the policeman does not see anything suspicious, he will let him go, despite being a former combatant. But the policeman would have doubts surrounding his judicial past. So he would review everything and question him a lot, but if he does not find anything, he would have to let him go.

Louis also believes that the police officer would treat the former combatant harshly. He reported on this issue in the following manner:

LOUIS: The policeman would treat the ex-combatant harsher, and demand more from him because he is an ex-combatant. He [the policeman] would think that he is taking part in some illegal business. The ex-combatant would hand over his things and documents. The ex-combatant would say that he is doing nothing that he is just doing what he does in his daily life.

Similarly, Lucia is of the opinion that the aggressive actions of the policeman would escalate conflict with the ex-combatant. This is what she had to say on the issue:

LUCIA: The first thing the police officer will do is arrest him faster because he belonged to the group [FARC-EP]. Later they will judge him more for having belonged to the group. He will treat him badly, judge him, and criticize him. The policeman will say that they consider themselves to be better than other people

because of their special jurisdiction. The former combatant is going to feel attacked and a problem can arise.

Similar examples of discrimination are found in a work scenario where an ex-combatant is employed. Tom articulated that the ex-combatant would create a stressful work milieu that the boss would have to address. He had this to say:

TOM: The boss would investigate deeply if he [ex-combatants] has a negative history. He [boss] would talk with his superiors to see if he [ex-combatant] will continue to work or not because he is a danger to other people because he does not know how to deal with a situation of stress or threat.

Louis also highlighted in his narrative about the work scenario that there will be friction between the ex-FARC guerrilla and the boss. He also mentions that whether ex-combatants' are accepted by their colleagues or not depends on whether the ex-combatants change their ideology. This is what he had to say on the issue:

LOUIS: Distrust begins. The first thing that will emerge is distrust. If he [the boss] is very rational, at once he will dismiss him, he [ex-combatant] will see a rejection, or simply if he [the boss] is an intelligent person he will put him to a test to see how is his behaviour like, if he continues with the guerrilla thinking

George was also of the opinion that the former combatant's past would come back to haunt him or her because the boss would continue to have negative perceptions based on stereotypes. He highlighted this point in the following story:

GEORGE: They easily dismiss him, because of his background, because he [boss] thinks they are still criminals and wants to steal. They [the company] will think that he entered the company to do something bad.

Moreover, Aura illustrated in her story that the ex-combatant would have a difficult time in the organization as the employer would have very negative stereotypes about that person. What is interesting about Aura's narrative is that she states that we will always have a negative perception of FARC-EP. This statement can play out as an obstacle for the reintegration process of former FARC guerrillas into society:

AURA: He may be fired. They [the company] may think that he [ex-combatant] could kill them, or create conflicts at work, and problems. It would be very difficult for them to accept him; it could happen only if they get used to him. I think they can fire him because he is from FARC and we will always have a bad perception of them.

Lucia also reported that the ex-FARC guerrilla would be fired because the employer would perceive that s/he is a criminal and that will create a hostile work environment. This is what she had to say on the issue:

LUCIA: The first thing that will happen is that he [the boss] will talk to him [ex-combatant] to fire him because they think that being an ex-combatant is synonymous with being a criminal, and it will affect the image of the company.

The aforementioned ideas of possible discrimination and the use of stereotypes are similar to what was underlined by the ARN in 2016 in a report about the evolution of the reintegration process in Colombia. In this report, the ARN argued that Colombia is institutionally prepared for the post-conflict milieu, but Colombian society is not yet. The

protracted conflict, the attacks against society, and the low intensity conflict that takes place in the peripheries areas of the country have resulted in the people's lack of confidence and the use of stereotypes of ex-combatants (Agencia para la Reincorporación y Normalización, 2016). It is recurrent theme that reintegrated ex-combatants express that they are dismissed from their jobs, discriminated against in their universities, or rejected in their workplace.

On the other hand, Bety mentioned that the police officer's discriminatory action depends on the community, which is integrating the ex-combatants and people's individual characteristics, as well as the role that the ex-combatants played in war.

BETY: If he [boss] is a good person, he would call him and ask him why he did not tell him before that he used to be a combatant and let him continue working, but if he is a bad person he would be fired just for being an ex-combatant.

However, some participants focused on the guerrilla member's characteristics instead of the community's characteristics. Rose's assessment of the story illustrates that the boss would integrate the young person into the workforce except if that person is a leader of the guerrillas. This is what she had to say about the issue:

ROSE: He [boss] would ask him about his story. I think no one should judge him [the ex-combatant]. But if he [the ex-combatant] was a commander he [the boss] would not accept him for the job and if he is a young man who was deceived into being a guerrilla, then he would accept him.

On the other hand, McMullin (2012) noted that ex-combatants are perceived as "dangerous, apolitical, and resented" people. These ideas are the outcome of broader assumptions that are incubated, reinforced, and sustained through economic, social, and

ideological structures that are asserted to be natural (p. 390). In this thesis, some of the participants' narratives illustrate how anomie and violent behaviour are attributed to ex-combatants. Former combatants can be perceived as a threat to society because they could be thought of as possessing weapons or committing infractions to maintain their power status after the peace agreement. Tom also thinks that ex-combatants do not have the right to complain about any abuse of power because of their past behaviour during the war and the illegal acts they were complicit in:

TOM: They [ex-combatants] are supposed to have combat training and that could be dangerous. I do not think he [referring to the situation of a police officer asking him to stop] stops easily when he see the policeman, there could be a persecution. If the policeman identifies him, he could be in danger because the ex-combatant could be armed.

Similarly, Rose highlights in her story that former combatants are dangerous because of their military training so the encounter with the police officer would clearly end in violence. This is what she had to say on the issue:

ROSE: The policeman asks for documents and does the due process, but I believe that the ex-combatant will have weapons and a catastrophe could occur. The policeman would call his superior, so there would be a reaction from the ex-combatant, who takes out a gun and points it at the head of the policeman. Then, the ex-combatant threatens him, saying that if he says something to his superior, he will kill him or kill his family.

Aura highlights that the ex-combatant must respect people and not resort to the use of violence. She explained it as follows:

AURA: If the police officer stops the car and we are in a peace process, we have to have good communication. The ex-combatant has to understand and accept that he is driving fast and that the policeman is doing his job. The ex-combatant could be furious because he is used to having power or suddenly they can communicate well and reach an agreement.

Despite the fact that the interviewees highlighted in their stories that the ex-combatant is a threat for society, they still articulated that the person should be given the chance to change and be fully integrated into civil society in order to fully resolve the conflict. For example, Jennifer is of the opinion that the employer has to forget about the past and treat the employee with respect otherwise the peace process will not succeed:

JENNIFER: In Colombia, people who do not have a high social status are discriminated against. When they see that he is a former combatant, they could judge him and not give him the job. A social agreement must be made and the bad things that FARC did in the past has to be left in the past. There may be rejection from some colleagues, there will always be prejudices, and the boss could even fire him.

Similarly, Peter strongly felt that the employer should give the former combatant a fair chance. He reported that the person decommissioned his/her weapons and wants to work and to have a good future:

PETER: If he is working, it is because he handed over the weapons. He is looking to change and to not have conflicts with the state. It may be that the boss calls him and

talks with him to reach an agreement and realizes that he [ex-combatant] really changed and wants to work.

In addition, Cleo was adamant that the employer must provide economic opportunities to the ex-combatant and his/her past has no bearing on the person's desire or ability to work:

CLEO: They have no right to fire him. We cannot move forward if we do not give them opportunities. The owner of the company would have liked to know that he was a combatant before hiring him, but that is not going to have any implication in his work.

In conclusion, many participants think that ex-combatants will be discriminated against because of their past. This data confirm previous analysis circulated by ARN related to former combatants' reintegration into civil society. Ex-combatants can be stigmatized for being aggressive, having anomic behaviour, or for being criminals. Some also believe that FARC members do not have the rights to complain against authority figures because of their past. However, youth also think that ex-combatants deserve an opportunity to be accepted into Colombian society. Some narrative shows the reintegration process as a step forward in Colombian peacebuilding. It means that the perception on ex-combatants is not a uniform category. Also, some stories describe how the reintegration process depends on individual characteristics and one's personal political position.

### **Arguments Supporting or Not Supporting the Reintegration Process**

The respondents' opinions about why people either support or do not support the reintegration process of former combatants emerged from stories completed from a social episode that placed a debate among youths that either deliberately supported or did not support whether an ex-combatant should be part of civil society. The students' arguments around the reintegration process are related to the real changing behaviour displayed by ex-combatants. It seems that the young students understand the reintegration process for ex-combatant to be an individual rather than a collective process.

Some of the students argue that if ex-combatants wish to be incorporated into society, then they should be provided with the opportunity to do so. However, if they demonstrate that they only desire to manipulate society and take advantage of the peace process then that opportunity should be denied to them. Their stories are also related to the impossibility of ex-combatants living a "normal" life due to an inner condition that they see themselves as "evil" persons or because they are traumatized by the war. On the other hand, the interviewees noted that the people who support the reintegration process for ex-combatants could be associated with the same ideology of FARC-EP that can unleash a stigmatization that they are associated with the guerrillas. For example, this is what Tom had to say on the issue:

TOM: The debate is about whether they are going to really change and how they can overcome traumas and return to society and continue with their lives. It depends a lot on each person and their personal characters; some want to change and have a normal life, and others will not be able to get a job and take on all the responsibilities that we have.

Tamara's narrative articulates that former combatants need a second chance to rebuild the country. This is what she had to say on the issue:

TAMARA: Those who disagree [with the peace agreement] argue that they are bad people and murderers who violated the laws of the country. But everyone needs a second chance and we need the country to help us to build a second chance for them.

Margaret noted that those who support providing opportunities for ex-combatants and those who are opposed because they believe that they are evil are doing so out of a sense of how they perceive social justice:

MARGARET: Those who defend the position of ex-combatants support it because they decided to be ordinary people, so we must accept them into society. The others argue that it is possible that they sought the peace agreement because they want to deceive society, manipulate it, and in a hidden way, to do evil.

Peter is of the opinion that those who support the reintegration process are themselves Marxists that support the guerrillas. He reflected on this issue in the following manner:

PETER: They can support the ex-combatant because they had the same ideology because they also think that what the government does is wrong. Maybe they support him by saying that he demobilized because he really wants to be part of us and not because of what he did in the past. After saying this, probably they [peace accord opposition] accept him.

George dully noted that the society was evenly split between those who supported the reintegration process and those who were opposed to it. This is what he had to say:

GEORGE: Those who support him [ex-combatant] will say that he is a good person who wants to change his life. He is a person with purpose. The others, who are against, will insult them and accuse them of being guerrillas because the family collaborated with a combatant. They are going to attack him.

Those stories are aligned to the political division context within Colombia around the peace agreement. The peace accord faced obstacles stemming from the political tension generated in different sectors of Colombian society similar to all previous peace negotiations. One of the challenges that threaten the success of the peacebuilding process in the post agreement context is that Colombian society seems to be divided not in the purpose of achieving peace with an illegal armed force through negotiated agreements, but in the way it is being handled, especially because of the possible benefits that the Colombian Government would grant to FARC 's ex-combatants in order to obtain peace (Melamed, 2014, p. 69).

Aura articulated that if the society supports the reintegration process it would have two outcomes: positives and negatives. The positives have to be with victims' restoration and the negatives are related to supporting the violent acts that FARC-EP committed in the war. Aura noted that it is very challenging to accept the ex-combatants back into civil society:

AURA: The debate is in favour and against [ex-combatants]. He can support his parents, logically, I would also support my parents, or he may also have a different opinion from his parents. Maybe, the education he [student] has had in college changes him [of opinion]. Or he may support his parents and say that he supports FARC and that they support the territories invasion. This has good things and bad things because they [ex-combatants] also help but also make us lose very valuable

things like our families and our houses. Among the good things could be that they return the houses.

Another interesting point related to the effectiveness of political debates surrounding the peace process also emerges from these narratives. For example, Lucia mentions that in these kinds of debates, people do not change their opinions. She argues that people use those debates to reinforce their opinions about ex-combatants:

LUCIA: It will generate a fight for a political position. Some will be on the right political wing and they will be against the ex-combatant and others will be in favour. What is going to happen is that they are not going to change their ideas, but they are going to reinforce them, so this will end up in a fight.

On the other hand, Cleo expressed optimism in the debates surrounding the reintegration process. She argues the need for a no-aligned position to avoid political radicalization as a way to improve peaceful coexistence in the country:

CLEO: Those who do not support [peace agreement] say they [ex-combatants] do not have the right because they did a lot of damage and they are criminals. I think you can reach an agreement between the parties. You have to make a neutral decision and think that those people are not to blame. If we give them the opportunities, it may be that the country improves.

Likewise, Jennifer describes the political division and viewpoints surrounding former combatants but she also underlines the need of being empathetic with ex-combatants in order to overcome conflict:

JENNIFER: The partner who tells the story agrees with his parents. But several of the group will say no because they are murderous people who violated the laws of the country. The partner who agrees to explain that all people have the possibility of having second chances, for example, in my case, if they had recruited me I would like them to give me second chances

To sum up, the youth narratives describe the divided political context that Colombian society is facing during and after the peace agreement process. Some participants expressed optimism and underlined the importance of helping to reintegrate ex-combatants into civil society. Doing so means that it is imperative to develop forgiveness and to be empathic with former combatants. However, other participants articulate that those debates are fruitless because people only become more radical with their own point of view so that political debates end up as unproductive disagreements among people.

In addition, some stories portray that people who take a side in the peace process can be framed as having a dichotomous outlook on life. Those who are in favour of the reintegration process can be framed as Marxism supporters or as socialists, and those who are against the peace agreement can be thought of as radical people who belong to the political right wing. Finally, some narratives unveil some ideas of approaching ex-combatants as people who are not capable of living a “normal life” because of their “traumas” or that they lack the enthusiasm of being part of society.

### **Respondents’ Opinions About Whether Ex-combatants Should Receive Economic Assistance From the Government**

The peace agreement signed between FARC-EP and the Colombian government established the provision of economic aid to combatants as part of the reintegration program. The economic aid focuses on four benefits: 1) Single Standardization Assignment that consists of an economic benefit that is granted to each FARC-EP ex- members once the Transitory Normalization Zones have been ended. 2) Basic Income that is an economic benefit that is granted to each FARC-EP member, once the process of accreditation and transition to legality has been completed and since the termination of the Transitory Normalization Zones and for twenty-four months. It is provided to those former combatant members that do not have a contractual labour relationship or a contract of any nature that generates income. This economic benefit will be equal to 90 percent of the legal monthly minimum wage. 3) Individual productive projects that are business units where production, processing, storage, distribution and commercialization of inputs, products or services are carried out. 4) And Collective Productive Projects that are business units led by formal organizations, whose members have been organized with the purpose of increasing their income (Agencia para la Reincorporación y Normalización, 2019).

The information related to youth perceptions about this economic assistance was taken from a social situation where the government and the senate have to decide if they will pay a two-year salary to ex-combatants. People who are in favour of this approach argue that it could help consolidate the reintegration process so that ex-combatants can adapt into civil society. However, most interviewees consider a two-year salary to be too much while they agree that this time period should be reduced. On the other hand, people who are against paying this monthly stipend to ex-combatants argue that it is a reward for people who broke the law. For example, Tom reported that the President gave his word as part of the peace deal

to support the ex-combatants with economic assistance to ease their transition back into society:

TOM: The President sees it [stipend] as a way to end the war and as a way to ensure that they [ex-combatants] do not return to war; it is an incentive. Many see them as terrorists and would be against rewarding them for what they did.

Similarly, Peter noted that it was a good idea for the government to provide some aid so that the former combatants could find steady employment. He reflected on the issue in the following manner:

PETER: It would be good, but only for a year and not for two years. To help them to get a job to show a change if they are not getting a salary from something they fought against. To help them to get jobs since they left the mountain and that give them money for a year while they stabilize.

In contrast, Cleo was of the opinion that the government within a limited time scale should support the former guerrillas so that they can meet their basic human needs:

CLEO: I have a neutral position. To reach an agreement, it is necessary to achieve that. You cannot tell them to give us everything, to hand over weapons and land, demobilize, and that then we will just forgive them. In part it makes sense. That salary is to have their basic needs covered, such as a house and their studies, but only for the first two months.

Louis also believed that the ex-combatants should receive welfare support from the government. This is what he had to say on the issue:

LOUIS: The congressmen are right because they should start to be productive people. But the president is helping them to have a base to start with. I am closer to the opinion of the president, but I agree only helping them once [paying a salary] so that they can start looking for employment.

Similarly, some respondent's narratives hint that they are thinking about ex-combatants in relation to the recipient community. Some participants compare the economic aid received by ex-combatants with the payment and welfare received by the general community who already belong to the civil society. This contrast ended with their idea that ex-combatants were "evil" people who are rewarded for doing bad things, and that this is an injustice for the recipient community who are "normal and well behaved people." For example, Jennifer articulated that the government should support the ex-combatants for two-years while raising the minimum wage for all citizens:

JENNIFER: If the Colombian salary is low, how it is possible to give them [ex-combatants] a higher salary? But the regime [peace agreement] says its only two years while they get back on their feet again. Then, I agree that the regime should be paying them for only two years. But we also have to improve the salary for the rest of society.

Moreover, Jane believes that the government has a responsibility and a duty to assist former combatants so that they can get back on their feet. She highlighted the issue in the following manner:

JANE: It is very difficult for an ex-combatant to adapt to society. It is difficult to get a job or to study, or to have a house because they are going to be stigmatized by people. Therefore, it would be a great help [receiving a salary] while they stabilize as

normal people. But also, the bad thing is for a person who has struggled all his life and has no money, and then someone who has done bad things and gets it easy. But, I would agree to help them.

In contrast, Margaret also noted that there is an idea floating around within the society that the ex-combatants are not working hard enough to deserve governmental economic assistance. In other words, she thinks that ex-combatants are unworthy beneficiaries of aid. She noted the following in her story:

MARGARET: I think it is not a good idea because the person must learn to earn things and face situations like looking for work in whatever and earn their salaries because there are many people who try hard and have done nothing wrong and do not have very good salaries, and they work hard. Why do we have to pay a person to live for free just because they wanted to demobilize?

Aura thinks similar to Margaret. She is opposed to the idea of supporting spongers who exploit the system. He contends that the former guerrillas need to find gainful employment:

AURA: I do not think it's a good idea. They come to take things from us and we must also give them more, no. They should earn things with effort, by working. Just as they took away things from others, so they have to recover them by themselves

In addition, Rose feels that the government is rewarding terrorists who murdered many people during the armed conflict. This is what she had to say on the issue:

ROSE: I think it's not a good idea either. How will they [government] give them money and will they pay them for all the damages they did? It's not a good idea, it's like rewarding them for all the massacres and all the damage they have caused.

Additionally, some of the participants openly expressed their arguments to support the economic aid distributed by the government for the ex-combatants. In particular, they recognize it as an important step in the reintegration process. For example, George shrewdly observed that the transition will be difficult for the ex-combatants because of stereotypes yet if the government does not assist them in meeting their needs they will have no choice but to return to armed conflict:

GEORGE: It's a good idea because many people come from rural areas and lost their family and homes because they were in the war. Many are not going to hire them, just because of their past, so how are they going to live? If the state does not support them, they will be back to war because they only know how to make war.

Bety also agreed that the former combatants must be assisted so that they can find employment to prevent them from being involved in future armed conflict:

BETY: It would be good if it is done; so that, in those months when they receive a salary, they will try to find a job and organize themselves. So they do not return to the life they were leading.

Lucia also noted that the ex-combatants are poor and will struggle economically if the government fails to help them and uphold its side of the peace agreement:

LUCIA: I think that at the end they will do what the congressman says, because the President can propose ideas, but cannot apply them without their [congress]

permission. At the end, they will not be given help and that will be poor ex-combatants because they will not know how to reincorporate into society.

Data produced by ARN shows that by June 2019, this institution has invested more than 200,000,000,000 Colombian pesos (around \$60,000,000 Canadian dollars) in the reintegration process. Around 86 percent of certificated ex-combatants are receiving a basic income and 98 percent of former combatants already receive a single standardization assignment. On the other hand, most of the collective productive projects have been supported in departments such as Antioquia, Cauca, Choco, and Meta, among others, where the war impacted people rather severely.

In conclusion, most of the participants agree with the idea that economic aid should be offered to ex-combatants and they perceive this process as a key project to avoid recidivism; however, they also disagree with the long-term implementation of this project. Other participants disagreed with the idea of offering a basic income to ex-FARC members because they believe it is a reward for those who committed crimes against humanity. It is possible to observe the same arguments in both opinions that circulate in Colombian political debates of those who support and those who do not support the peace agreement. The economic support is already occurring in Colombia and a great percentage of ex-combatants are part of the reintegration process via economic stabilization.

### **Expectations of Interacting With Ex-combatants**

Information was obtained from the interviewees about a social situation where a young lady named Maria and some friends of her realize they are living in the same neighbourhood as

members of a former FARC-EP guerrilla. Most participants admit that it could be an uncomfortable situation in the beginning yet some of their stories indicate that once people realize that they are reincorporated into civil society, nothing bad would happen. For example, Tom associated FARC-EP symbols like the *Ejército del Pueblo* flag with danger and negative feelings. This is what he had to say:

TOM: I think Maria would call the police, the police would come to check why they have a flag in that house because we see a flag of the FARC is somewhat confusing because we do not see it as something good but we see it as something bad. When the police arrive, they will ask why they have that flag. When they realize they are ex-combatants, nothing will happen.

Jennifer also sees the flag as an emblem that people consider to be dangerous. However, she recognizes that the former combatants are working with the community to build a peaceful society:

JENNIFER: When they see the flag, they get scared because that symbol means danger. Maria is curious and comes closer; then she realizes that they are ex-combatants who have tried to create a new society, so she alerts her friends that there is no danger.

Cleo also recognizes that people would be frightened of the ex-combatants, yet the peace agreement stipulates that they have a right to live a peaceful life. She reported on this issue in the following manner:

CLEO: They would be frightened because of FARC's past and history. But it is something that they have to live with. They cannot say that they do not want them

there and kick them out because if there is already an agreement and a law that exonerates them. Maybe, they would care a little, but they would continue with their normal life. In my personal opinion, I have nothing against ex-combatants because an agreement was reached and we have to support them and give them opportunities and not judge them.

Peter sees the event through the framework of politics believing that people have a constitutional right to exercise their political rights through the democratic process:

PETER: First of all, I would respect the opinion of the other person in relation to this house. You never know why the other person supports them. Even if you think that the other person is doing it wrong, you do not know why they are doing it. The ideology of the owners of the house could be the same as that of the FARC, it is up to them if they support FARC or not and we should not care if they support the FARC. It does not affect her at all.

Despite the fact that some participants' stories expressed that after their initial negative impression of ex-combatants, people will accept them as members of their geographical area, others mention that ex-combatants may be dangerous neighbours. Consequently, the reaction from the latter group of interviewees who had seen the FARC flag is more likely to involve that they keep their distance from those homes or that they would even attack the homes of ex-combatants. Louis recognized this possibility yet he cautioned that people must respect the former combatants indicating that Colombians are subject to discrimination when they live and work in other countries:

LOUIS: If the group knows a lot about FARC, they might be upset and damage the house and remove the flag. I find the subject interesting. We as Colombians also visit other countries and also experience discrimination and we cannot do the same with guerrillas.

George is adamant that the neighbours that recognize the FARC flag must immediately warn their neighbours and contact the police to come and investigate the people living in that house:

GEORGE: They will easily warn their friends and neighbours; they will warn the entire neighbourhood. They may call the police to tell them there are guerrillas in that place and they could think that guerrillas meet in that house to make plans for battles and strategies to attack the state.

Sofia also admitted that she would be afraid if she saw the flag because she would perceive that the people living in the house were planning a terrorist attack in the neighbourhood. This is what she had to say on the issue:

SOFIA: I think I would have a negative reaction. If I agree to give them an opportunity, it does not mean that I am not afraid. I might think that they are going to perform a terrorist attack in the neighbourhood and they are going to do something bad. I would leave.

These narratives describe some ideas and stigmas that the interviewees' manifest within themselves but that they also perceive as manifest within the rest of society. Living in the same geographical area with ex-combatants can produce fear and confusion for some people. Yet many agree that when people realize that ex-combatants have already

decommissioned their arms and are coexisting peacefully with the rest of community, then they are accepted into that community. Other stories set more radicalized reactions that vary from being violent against ex-combatants to being completely open to accept them as part of their community. Some of these findings confirms Nussio's (2011) assertion that, "not only the general population consider demobilized people as a source of violence, but also there is a belief among the ex-combatants that they have to keep away from other demobilized people because they are related to crime" (p. 590). The data also demonstrates that the youth are open to rebuilding new peaceful ties with ex-combatants and to have an optimistic point of view about building peace.

In relation to this need to build trust, in 2019 the ARN prepared eighteen towns and cities, including Bogotá, to receive former combatants in Colombia. It was done using the communitarian reincorporation model that has been implemented by this institution since the paramilitaries were demobilized. The aim of this approach is to create bonds of trust to rebuild family, community, as well as the professional, and economic environments (Pedraza, 2019). According to the media reports this strategy was oriented to find a pretext that unites the community. For example, in some towns the strategy used was art. After receiving psychological support as well as lectures on the prevention of recruitment, and gender violence, civil society and former combatants were given the task of rebuilding a community hall. There, victims and ex-combatants, children and young people, participate in music, painting, or photography workshops. The media reported the opinion of one of the former combatants who participated in one of these gatherings as follows: "At the beginning it was difficult; when I returned after belonging to an illegal group, people showed a lot of

fear. It's hard to get to this facet, because you want to change. People were afraid because they knew what one had done” (Pedraza, 2019).

### **Key Findings**

In the literature review section, I underlined how individual and collective experiences and perceptions impact relationships and the reconciliation process. It means that researchers and practitioners should focus on understanding and transforming adversarial relationships. The transformation of relationships and reconciliation are a prerequisite to the consolidation of peace. I emphasize that my thesis focuses on youth because they are social agents who are capable of transforming their social realities, which make them an important subject of analysis within peacebuilding efforts in post-peace agreement societies. The main findings of this thesis point out that these young university students perceive the former combatants as threats and fugitives. It means that the narratives of the research participants frame ex-combatants as a threat. The participants’ narratives also fit what is called the “resentment category” where communities are measured as innocent victims and the ex-combatants are collectively guilty. However, this is not an absolute and monolithic perception, in contrast, my informants’ also perceive the ex-combatants to be people who deserve an opportunity to show they are not a threat anymore to civil society and, despite the fact that some of my participants contend that the ex-combatants are guilty, this label is challenged when some of their narratives talk about FARC-EP as a heterogeneous group.

In order to understand the adversarial relationship raised from the youth participants’ narratives, the literature review also discusses young people’s social images as a key concept

to pay attention to. This concept denotes a subjective dimension of people that includes cognitive dimensions. It is important to include cognitive variables such as people's schemas and sets of assumptions in efforts to reconcile parties embroiled in conflicts especially as they related to either solution or negotiation blockages in contrast to relationship biases or positive and negative images of the other party's behaviour (for e.g., see Alzate et al., 2013; Maoz, 2004, pp. 227-228). I use the latter category to analyse some of the ideas and images, which emerged from the interview data with university youth participants. This means that reconciliation depends, in part, on how individuals perceive events related to conflicts and, in this case, the reintegration process of ex-combatants into society. The negative image of ex-combatants in this conflict situation creates evil and wicked images of the other. This process is more salient in stories related with the ex-combatants being questioned for breaking the law, for receiving economic aid, and the possibility of living with them in the same geographical area.

Many interesting findings emerged inductively from the data. However, this discussion focuses on eleven key findings that include the interviewees negative perceptions of FARC-EP highlighted by participants in the twelve interviews. First, in these stories, some participants show the ex-combatants to be people who are armed and can use their weapons against authority figures or they are taking advantage of the peace process to prepare terrorist attacks. Also, FARC-EP is defined as a terrorist group indicating a group without any political purpose or any social claims because it only wants to displace people from their land and take it over. This finding also shows how some participants tend to attribute positive traits to society members and the recipient community, and see them as "normal" people who

work hard for their living. Meanwhile the ex-combatants are perceived as people who are rewarded for committing terrorist attacks.

These participants' thoughts correspond to what is called a dichotomous perception where there is an impossibility of seeing the other as someone who is contributing to the peace process or who is a complex, historical, psychological, social, and cultural person who also has her/his own fears and who struggles for fairness, equal treatment, and respect for their human dignity. It is the idea that I am good and the other is bad. One of the main characteristics that arise from this perception is the attribute of anomie and extreme behaviour deposited on ex-combatants including the suspicions of their real intent of returning to civil society. This belittling and delegitimizing of the peacebuilding attitudes and actions carried out by FARC-EP as a revolutionary group really expresses the respondent's lack of trust of the reintegration process and the peace agreement in general. This phenomenon can be a barrier for deep reconciliation and the success of the reintegration process of former combatants.

Second, an interesting finding resulted from a participant's story that acknowledged the role of the media in framing the conflict. This person mentioned that the mass media only covers and presents acts such as kidnapping or displacement produced by FARC-EP, and she invited the media to do more research to understand the underlying dynamics of the conflict. This thought is related to the fact that people's conflict perceptions are framed via socialization using selected information about the conflict. The media including people's social network mainly does this socialization. From a cognitive perspective, this term helps to explain why people have perceptual biases and distortions that act as a barrier to peaceful coexistence. Information, ideas, and facts are selected by institutions and transmitted to

people via the socialization process using mechanisms such as schools, peers, parents, and the mass media to create a general idea about a social phenomenon that will become a cognitive structure determining the person's future assimilated information.

Third, despite the fact that some participants' fit into the category of relationship-centred biases, they have negative images related to ex-combatants. It is also true that a significant portion of the respondent's narratives also recognize the FARC-EP's revolutionary past and the responsibility of the Colombian government in the conflict. The idea that a revolutionary group's actions centred on changing a corrupt state helps to reduce a negative cognitive frame related to ex-combatants. It means that my young respondent's perceptions related to FARC-EP is not uniform and instead they correspond to a complex and conflictual scenario of meaning around FARC-EP as well as the Colombian conflict. This disputing scenario makes some of the interviewees have a less dichotomous perception of the conflict. In these cases, the cognitive frame of "I am good and you are bad" is blurred and it is used as a reflection more related to reconciliation, expressing their will of providing opportunities to ex-combatants, and being more open to their former adversary.

Fourth, on the other hand, the informants are part of a complex reconciliation process in a society emerging from violent conflict where ethnocentrism, lack of trust and validity of the other party make it difficult for mainstream society to see and connect with each other positively in order to build trust so that they can negotiate constructively with each other (see Alzate et al., 2013, p.62; Maoz, 2004) Some of the interviewee's stories show evident distrust toward ex-combatants. It was more manifested in stories related to the workplace and the ex-combatants living in the same neighbourhood. The respondent's distrust is closely related with discrimination and stereotypes about ex-combatants. In some narratives, distrust arose

from information shared by the mass media such as the fact that ex-combatants are armed people that do not have any real intention of demobilizing because they want to use the peace process to attack the state, or ex-combatants are people who can threaten others when they feel like they are threatened. My participants' stories indicated several times those ex-combatants were persons' who do not follow societal agreements because they are more like pariahs or outcasts.

Fifth, other interviewee's narratives also indicate that some youth propose creating a society that trusts the real intentions of the ex-combatants' demobilisation process. They recognize the need of providing former combatants with an opportunity to reintegrate into civil society in order to transform the Colombian conflict. Also, some of the participants distinguish between ex-combatants and FARC-EP dissidents who reject the peace process. It is manifest in the stories where a group of youth see a house flying a flag with a FARC-EP emblem and they become more at "ease" when they realize that the people living there are part of the peace process. This perception is also found in stories where an ex-combatant is working and his/her boss that becomes aware of his/her past. In some of these narratives the respondents emphasize that the boss does not have the right to fire him/her because of his/her past; on the contrary, the boss should give the ex-combatants an opportunity to really change their lives. Trust is an element that empowers the reintegration process.

Sixth, most of the interviewee's stories recognize that FARC-EP had a revolutionary beginning against a state that used to do "wrong things" and was "absent and lost" in some regions of the country. They recognized that their behaviour was reasonable and that they had a point of view that needs' to be included. However, their narratives also acknowledge that FARC-EP is a rebel group with social plans, and they also mention in their narratives

that this legitimacy blurred when FARC-EP started kidnapping and using drug trafficking for financial purposes. Also, some of the interviewee's narratives define FARC-EP as a terrorist group. The respondent's used the concept "terrorist" in their narratives to refer to this group. They told stories where it was clear that they have less trust for the ex-combatants compared to others who did not use it. The word "terrorist" implies that this group does not have a political or social struggle that fosters an assumption of illegitimacy around group actions.

Seventh, the moral imagination of youth and the reintegration process in Colombia is important. In this thesis, youth are viewed as a window to understanding, to some degree, community perceptions of the reintegration process of former FARC-EP combatants. This analysis includes the understanding of young people as agents of change linked with the peacebuilding process. From this perspective, they offer insight for reflecting on the socio-political and economic shift necessary to achieve peaceful societies. In other words, understanding youths' ways of thinking of their social realities are useful to comprehend not only how broader communities deal with their own dynamics but also to see new paths to change and improve people's general wellbeing.

Apart from the participants' images surrounding the FARC-EP reintegration process, the data collected in this research also helps us to understand young people's moral thinking. Moral themes emerge inductively from the data that frame the form of how the participants are facing the reintegration process. Those themes are organized as 1) young people are a heterogeneous group, 2) participants' concept of justice, 3) youth' critical thinking, 4) the participants' meaning of forgiveness.

Eight, young people are a heterogeneous group. The participants' narratives are diverse and show different opinions, perspectives, and logical thinking. Some of the participants' stories denote discourses that circulate in the media or emanate from institutions and social groups. It means that some interviewees' opinions are linked to those discourses that have gained visibility in social spheres and they were adopted via the socialization process. Those discourses are especially related to how individuals see the world as a dichotomous reality that is divided between "good people and bad people" to narrow the possibility of seeing different layers, contrasts, and nuances of social phenomena. Those discourses indicate the strong affiliation of some participants to more radicalized viewpoints about the conflict, which is similar to what is displayed for radical right and left wing political groups. For example, the participants whose stories show a markedly negative image of ex-combatants were less prone to include narratives that accept the provision of economic aid for ex-combatants.

However, most participants did not show radical standpoints about the reintegration process. Participants whose stories show acknowledgment of positions that is in favour of or against the peace agreement and the reintegration process claim that they are "neutral." Others disagree with some aspects of the reintegration process but accept the ex-combatants and some of the programs that aim to support them in order to achieve peace. The youth participants who use different arguments to explain their viewpoint show that they are not only recipients of discourses, yet that they also have the capacity of transforming and taking an original position about the reintegration process. This situation puts us in front of a heterogeneous group where some individuals are more prone to incorporate and adopt visible

discourses into their identity, and others who are more prone to take those discourses and compare them with other discourses in order to take a personal position.

This finding confirms the need for approaching youth studies from a notion of understanding the importance of youth agency and their voice in peacebuilding and working for social change. It means that youths are social players whose identity and political viewpoint are constituted via discourses but also that they are active constructors of their own identity. The constitution of youth identity has a different level of influence. Some young people are more susceptible to adopting radical discourses and making them part of their identity. This promotes inclination toward deep social divisions. Others are more prone to transform radical discourses into a more flexible attitude that encourages them to be more open in relation to the FARC-EP reintegration process. These analyses lead us to underline the fact that the construction of youth identity is not a homogenous process instead it is a complex process that involves psychological, historical, and structural levels. It means that to understand the youth dynamic in relation to peacebuilding it is necessary to acknowledge that this group is dynamic and heterogeneous

Ninth, participants' concept of justice is significant. The narratives obtained from the collected data transit from two kinds of justice, retributive justice and restorative justice. Retributive justice is linked to the punitive system adopted by liberal states that really prevent a holistic, grounded and pragmatic peace from emerging in society. The principles of retributive justice are: a) that crime means breaking the civil norm that is typified by the law, b) positive laws represent what is useful for society, defining what is harmful, and c) there is a clear definition of crime as equivalent to social damage.

From this perspective, the criminal is considered as one who has transgressed the social pact, and the criminal justice system is the instrument to impose a penalty on the offender. The state has a monopoly over the use of violence to maintain order and to penalize those who flagrantly violate the laws and social norms of the state. On the other hand, restorative justice recognizes that misconduct and criminality affects the society, the state, the survivors, and the perpetrators. It has a communitarian character based on bonds of friendship and fraternity and in recognizing the humanity of both the victim and the violator. It focuses on the future behavior of the offender and his/her non-recidivism in the criminal action and, the recognition of the rights of the victim.

The participants' stories that show concerns about the offer of economic support to ex-combatants are framed in the concept of retributive justice. They are focused on punishing FARC-EP members that they consider to be criminals who broke the law. Someone who is outside of law has to be punished as an example for the rest of society to maintain social order. In this case, victims are mentioned as affected people who were displaced by guerrillas and who lost their land and homes, and family members thanks to these groups. However, they consider the rest of Colombian society as a "normal" group of people who were offended; therefore, the way to implement justice is that offenders must be held before punitive justice. Meanwhile, the participants' narratives that describe the importance of respecting the peace agreement and supporting ex-combatants without discrimination and with economic aid are framed into restorative justice. Particularly, in these narratives victims are not mentioned as victims, unlike, the participants that highlighted that society is in need of creating relationships with ex-combatants in order to avoid future recidivism and to overcome the Colombian conflict.

On the other hand, justice is also mentioned to refer to the ex-combatants' position. Some stories show how discrimination can be perceived as an act of injustice for ex-combatants who have left the conflict to reintegrate into civil society. This is a significant reflection because it denotes that youth are capable of thinking that justice is not only a part of the social group who was offended by guerrillas but also that it is justice for the offender. Likewise, participant narratives also describe how Colombian society is an unequal society where justice depends on the social status of where people belong to in the class stratum. These findings denote a polysomic concept of justice among participants that determine their viewpoints over the reintegration process, but it also shows how they are able to think of justice as a general social problem.

Tenth, young people's critical thinking is an important component of peacebuilding. The participants adopt a critical position. This way of thinking works as leverage for their agency. Critical thinking allows people to approach social phenomena from a different point of view and take a personal and original position to deal with it. Also, critical thinking empowers individuals to see the complexity of social problems in order to fully understand them. The interviewees descriptions show the capacity of understanding the composition of ex-combatants not as a uniform group but as a heterogeneous collective that is made up of leaders and subordinates, as well as people who were forced to be part of it. This understanding affects the way that participants think of what is the best forum to implement justice among ex- FARC members. On the other hand, the participants refer in their stories to historical events and government responsibility that determined the emergence of FARC as a revolutionary group, followed by the transformation of the guerrillas' objectives into the incorporation of drug trafficking.

Likewise, the respondents provide a critical analysis of Colombian society and its capacity to respond to the reintegration process. Some of the narratives show concerns for employment problems and low salaries that can be issues for those who want to reintegrate into civil society. The young students interviewed also mentioned the political composition that is affecting Colombian's positions regarding the peace agreement. They identify right wing political groups as opponents of the peace accord signed between FARC-EP and the Colombian government as well as the socialist political project proposed by ex-members of FARC. The participants who use critical thinking were more prone to have less radical positions against the reintegration process of ex-FARC guerrillas.'

Eleventh, the participants' meaning of forgiveness is important to fully grasp the underlying dynamics of the peace process. Forgiveness is a relevant concept that emerges from the data. Some participants stated that it is important to forgive ex-combatants in order to overcome the Colombian conflict. Youth students think that the problems with ex-FARC members should be left in the past. It is an important statement because it clearly shows a palpable desire to strive for the best step forward in building the peace. The concept of forgiveness is related to "give a second chance to ex-combatants" to again be part of civil society. This concept is also related to a sense of humanity and empathy for ex-combatants. There are phrases the interviewees' use such as "you do not do to others, what you do not want to be done to you" to refer to the idea that people should do good things in order to receive good things back (karma). Also, some participants highlighted that they would not like to be discriminated against so they will not discriminate against ex-combatants.

To forgive is essential to the process of implementing empathy. One participant described how she has shifted her idea about the Colombian peace process. She told the story

of being an opponent to the peace process but her opinion changed when a victim shared his story with her and argued how important and positive it was for him and his family to have the peace agreement. This finding demonstrates that part of the peacebuilding work that has to be done is to create bonds among victims, victimizers, and members of the recipient society.

### **Conclusions**

The participants' perceptions of the reintegration process in Colombia are diverse and rich in images. This finding shows how some participants tend to have dichotomous perceptions of the reintegration process, assuming positive characteristics of recipient communities and negative characteristics of ex-combatants. However, some participants showed what could be called perceptual biases that emanate from the media and social networks that can be a barrier to the peace process. This perception is not uniform and participants also described as information that has blurred the dichotomous point of views related to the conflict. In addition, when the respondents illuminate distrust in their stories they also describe discrimination and stereotypes about ex-combatants. In contrast, those who demonstrate trust are more prone to be open to supporting the reintegration of FARC-EP members into civil society.

The findings also highlight the significance of youth agency. It is possible to see how youth are a heterogeneous group of individuals who have their own way of understanding the reintegration process. Also, their agency is unveiled via critical thinking, especially when the participants are capable of analysing the reintegration process from different perspectives.

Finally, the data helps to describe young students' meaning of justice and forgiveness. The first is related to both retributive and restorative justice and the second is connected with empathy. Chapter 5 is the concluding chapter of the thesis.

## **Chapter Five:**

### **Conclusions**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter incorporates the overall key findings that emerged inductively from the study. It contains reflections about the limitations of the study and recommended avenues for future research. The preceding qualitative chapter 4 presented the major themes and sub-themes that stemmed from the participants' stories of their perceptions and images of ex-FARC-EP members' reintegration process in Colombia including their ideas about FARC-EP, and their analysis of the possibility of coexisting with ex-combatants in social scenarios such as in the university, the neighbourhood or the workplace.

The findings from this study contribute to the PACS literature especially as it relates to youth and peacebuilding, as well as the reintegration process by highlighting the agency role of youth in post peace accord societies, the need to understand their characteristics as a particular group, and the meanings that they have around peacebuilding components.

#### **Overall Key Findings**

The Colombian peace agreement was signed in September 2016. After the closure of this formal peace process, the government submitted the peace agreement to a referendum that was endorsed by fifty-one percent of Colombians. The majority of the people who voted in the referendum did so against the peace agreement, which forced the government to negotiate with the political leaders that had objected to the peace process. Consequently, in November 2016, the Colombian government and FARC-EP signed a new agreement in El Teatro Colon

that was ratified by the Colombian senate. After this date, Colombia seems like a divided society with those who support the peace agreement and those who are against it. The data collection process for this research was carried out in May 2019 two and a half years after the senate endorsement of the peace accord and almost a year after the major key opponent of the peace agreement won the presidential election in Colombia.

The new Colombian president, Ivan Duque, presented his objections to six articles of the statutory Law that regulates the operation of the Special Justice for Peace (JEP). According to the new government: 1) the law does not regulate precisely the main obligation of the offenders to fully compensate the victims, so it proposes that there be material reparations with their assets that satisfies the victims. 2) It does not specify that the task of verifying the people involved in the peace process must be the responsibility of the High Commissioner of Peace as representative of the President. 3) The law does not make it clear in which cases investigations against people subject to the JEP are outside the orbit of ordinary justice. 4) It considers that criminal action is renounced against crimes against humanity, which is inconvenient because it would constitute impunity. 5) The law conditioned the extradition of people offering to tell the truth without establishing any kind of terms. To the government, it can produce an incentive to enter the JEP from third parties under the alleged truth.

These objections created a great debate in Colombia between those who attack the JEP and those who defend it as an alternative justice mechanism for people involved in the civil war. In this case, the debate is not focused on accepting or rejecting the peace agreement instead it is concentrated on the JEP. Although, the focus of the debate was different, the political division related to the peace accord remains. In addition, a UN report in March 2019,

indicate that the social, economic, and political reintegration of ex-combatants keeps going and improving as time goes by. For example, the National Reincorporation Council (CNR) had approved 22 collective projects, compared to the 20 reported in December, while the Agency for Reintegration and Standardization (RNA) had approved 162 individual projects benefiting 1,592 ex-members of FARC-EP. In addition, funds have been disbursed for nine collective projects and 133 individual projects (Organización de Naciones Unidas [ONU], 2019, Nota de Prensa, para. 4). Therefore, the ongoing political division in Colombia and the application of the reintegration process frames the context in which the data was collected.

This study does not claim that its findings are representative of all youth living in Colombia. The findings are representative of the twelve study participants. Nonetheless, the participants' voices in this study must be viewed as a window into the soul of Bogota's urban youth. The participant's narratives are complex, varied, and contrasting. However, what the participants have in common is their experience of living in a country that has been in a civil war for more than sixty years and this context is influencing their hopes, fears, and perceptions about coexisting with people who were directly involved in the conflict.

This thesis reflects on the complex history of the Colombian conflict and the multiples variables that have influenced it as being one of the most protracted conflicts in the world. The thesis focuses on the reintegration of former FARC-EP members into civil society. Furthermore, it analyses the social images of a group of university students about this reintegration process. The question about what are their social images led to the question of what is the most appropriate methodology to understand this phenomenon in young students, so that the semi-projective storytelling method was an appropriate tool to inquire into their perceptions and ideas. In addition, this thesis outlines the participants' narratives in relation

to their knowledge about FARC-EP and the reintegration process, as well as their ideas of social situations that involve living together with ex-combatants. Finally, the data shows the participants moral thinking unveiling the youth's agency, critical thinking capacity, and justice meaning.

**Understanding the Colombian conflict.** The Colombian conflict is the outcome of multiple factors. To understand its complexity, it is necessarily to track the different political events that occurred in the last century in Colombia, including the period called *The Violence*, the bipartisanship that excluded other political options, the unfruitful nature of rural reforms implementations that did not allow peasants to access land, the influence of US international policies as well as the impact of global politic dynamics within the Cold War and the Cuban revolution. In addition, the conflict was affected by the emergence of drug trafficking and paramilitary groups in the 1980s as well as the failure of a number of peace processes that did not include multiple actors in the conflict or from civil society.

In the last two decades, the conflict between guerrillas and the government increased due to the Democratic Security policy implemented by Alvaro Uribe Velez's government with the support of the US. This policy framed FARC-EP as a terrorist group and decimated it in some of Colombia's regions, but also it led to human rights violations and did not solve the roots of the violence. After the implementation of the Democratic Security policy, Juan Manuel Santos became Colombian President and, in 2012, began dialogues with FARC-EP in Cuba with the international support of Norway, Cuba, Venezuela, and Chile. This peace process ended in 2016 and left a divided country with those who now support the agreement and those who do not support it.

The latest peace agreement between FARC-EP and the Colombian government includes the reintegration process of FARC-EP members into civil society. This process creates a procedure to prepare ex-FARC-EP members to be part of different recipient communities that includes a disarmament process as well as economic, political, and social support. A previous reintegration process with paramilitary groups faced obstacles related to ex-combatants' discriminations in social environments such as educational institutions and workplaces, among others. This experience, among others, motivates scholars to analyse the mechanism of producing perceptual frameworks that help to ameliorate tensions within protracted conflicts.

**The role of youths in the peacebuilding processes is important as well as the use of a storytelling methodology as a suitable inquiry procedure to tap into youth and children's perceptions.** Young people and children play a significant role in favour of or against peacebuilding processes. They can be involved in grassroots movements that strengthen and transform peaceful communities, yet they can also be involved in disruptive groups that cause more violence (McEvoy-Levy, 2006, p. 7). On the other hand, peacebuilding is a long-term process that will also impact future generations. It means that young people's perceptions of conflict and the peacebuilding system that helps to resolve it are serious elements of success or failure within peace processes. Creating peaceful relationships in post-peace agreement societies depends on how individuals, including youth are socialized, and what kind of perceptions and experiences they acquire in relation to the other, and what kind of leaders are they and will become (McEvoy-Levy, 2006, p. 7).

This indicates that youth are a significant subject of analysis to evaluate positive intergroup relationship dynamics, the setting up of peaceful communities, the projection of

peace processes, and the efforts to find new creative ways of resolving conflicts. On the other hand, the story completion test used to inquire about young student participants' social images about the reintegration process of ex-FARC members is a method that suits the characteristics of the participants. Communication with youth and children must be adjusted to their characteristics allowing them to transmit their thoughts and feelings in their own way. In this case, the storytelling methodology enables youth and children to complete the stories using their imaginations, their own words, opinions, and emotions related to the social situation. An interesting characteristic of the story completion procedure is that "it can provide an insight not only into cognitive and affective orientations but also into conative" (Greenstein, 1975, p. 1376). This feature makes it an ideal instrument to explore youth's social images and perceptions.

**The phenomenon of dichotomous perceptions.** People's perceptions' depends on but also affects identities. "Identities delineate who is 'us' and who is 'them', mobilizing individuals and collectives, and providing legitimacy and justification for individual and group aspirations" (Sandole, 2009, p. 19). Theorists often make a distinction between personal identity and the collective. Personal identity focuses on an individual's sense as a unique person. "Social identity refers to the facets of one's self-image that derive from salient group memberships" (Stets and Burke 2000 cited in Sandole, 2009, p. 20). The development of social identity can be understood from social interaction, the impositions of those who are in power positions, or just because individuals choose an identity from any collective (Sandole, 2009, p. 23). The empirical data indicates that some participants have dichotomous perceptions affecting their identities or positions around the Colombian conflict.

This is found in the media, social networks, and everyday Colombians debates over the peace agreement. In this case, the participants locate themselves as a “normal” and a “good” society that have been victimized by guerrilla groups, while ex-combatants play the role of being the “evil” other who did great damage through drug trafficking and taking over lands that belong to “poor” people. Ex-combatants are described in some narratives as dangerous criminals, with anomic behaviour that are incapable of reintegrating into civil society. These attributed identities become a dispositional barrier for ex-combatants’ to reintegrate into civil society. Those participants whose narratives show more salient dichotomous viewpoints of the conflict tend to create stories that allot discrimination, stereotypes, and more extreme behaviours to their counterpart.

However, due to the heterogeneous characteristic of the youth and their diverse forms of understanding their realities, some dichotomous perceptions of the conflict blurred, especially in those stories where the participants use critical thinking. It means that when narratives include the analysis of different discourses, evaluates the pros and cons, and describe historical process there is a tendency to locate themselves within a “neutral” place that suggests that ex-combatants do not have to be discriminated against and should be given a second chance. These participants show what is called in the PACS literature as a low level of collective generality (Rothbart & Korostelina, 2009, p. 89). It means that the perception of the Other as a differentiated group whose behaviours is heterogeneous helps to do not simplify the characteristics of the outgroup. The findings indicate the importance of the youth’s use of analytical thinking to support peacebuilding efforts.

**The importance of developing a moral imagination.** Lederach (2010) considers that part of the process of building peace must focus on forging the capacity of people’s moral

imagination (p. 5). It means that communities should develop capacities of living together by practicing ways of avoiding violence and imagining the ways to include the those that they consider to be their enemies. Living together with the enemy should overcome the dualistic polarity and take the risk of stepping forward into new forms of coexistence that do not include the path of violence (Lederach, 2010, p. 5). Some participants in their stories, especially those that describe the meaning of justice and forgiveness, take this risk. Youth participants' meaning of justice is framed within so called retributive and restorative justice. Those who use categories from retributive justice tend to be more radical against the reintegration process and those who use restorative categories tend to be more open to creating new constructive relationships including values such as solidarity. Likewise, forgiveness becomes a dispositional attitude to overcome conflict that is based on empathy and awareness of people's humanity.

The participants demonstrate that they are proposing a turning point of locating themselves in an expansive view of reality. Their capacity for forgiveness and empathy allows them to imagine that the Other is an individual who can commit mistakes like everybody else, including themselves and their families. This capacity creates bonds and openness to social environments suitable to forging more peaceful relationships including with those who are considered enemies.

### **Future Research**

This study explored the social images of a group of young students attending a university in Bogotá, Colombia in relation to living together with ex-FARC-EP combatants who are

undergoing a reintegration process into civil society. Indeed, the data shows a heterogeneous group that expresses either its support or opposition to this process; as well as their perceptions that lead to rejection, discrimination, acceptance, and openness to the ex-combatants. However, due to the limitations of resources, time, and research scope the study only focuses on a particular group characterized by twelve urban university students who did not have any previous direct contact with the conflict. Consequently, in order to have a better picture of young people's complexity and diversity, future research should focus on broader and different subjects including youth from rural areas and those who do not belong to the third level educational system.

In addition, this research recruited participants from both genders to ensure diversity. Nonetheless, the gender perspective was not fully included in this study nor an analysis of the impact of intersectionality on young people's attitudes and behaviour. Therefore, the study does not contribute to the understanding of the relations among youth, gender, and the reintegration process. Future studies should include this perspective because gender is a social construction that organizes principle for every aspect of life, shapes routines and habits, establishes relationships, and determines people's capacities and vulnerabilities (Snyder, 2009). This will assist the researcher to better analyse youth complexity, especially in the area of how gender identities shape social images and the research subjects' positions in relation to peacebuilding. Finally, it is important to note that the findings from this small sample cannot be extrapolated to the wider youth social group in Colombia. Therefore, quantitative studies of a larger sample frame are needed to evaluate youth's perceptions taking into account the analyses of more variables that can contribute to having a broader

understanding of the youth's social images and their attitudes about living with ex-combatants.

## **Conclusions**

The peacebuilding process requires an accurate understanding of people relationships and complex factors that determine conflict. My study suggests that relationships that incorporate critical thinking, including other ways of understanding justice and attitudes toward forgiveness can contribute to the multiple solutions that are needed to create peaceful societies that promote intergroup tolerance, mutual respect, and cultures of difference. It also, demonstrates how youth implement their moral imagination and how it can be used for improving relationships with ex-combatants. It is hoped that the data collected in this study, and the key findings motivate the policymakers and decisionmakers of this critical peacebuilding enterprise in Colombia about the necessity of including youth's opinions, ideas and imagination in peacebuilding efforts.

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## **Appendix A.**

### **Research Instrument in English**

#### **General Instructions (adopted from Byrne, 1997, and Greenstein and Tarrow, 1970)**

- 1) Tell the stories clearly and informally. Pause where is it marked (...). Try to make sure that the person does not feel he or she is being examined; make it clear that we are interested in his or her imagination rather than his or her knowledge.
- 2) If the person does not understand a part of the story, repeat it slowly, using simpler language if necessary, but without changing the meaning of the story. If the person asks for

additional information or asks, “Is this story about me? You should answer: “That’s for you to decide.”

3) The story can be finished any way the participants want to finish.

4) For a participant who “don’t know the answers”, stress again that: Remember there are no right or wrong answer. It is just a matter of imagining (picturing) how the story finishes.”

5) If they continue to “not know” the answer to the stories, as a last resort ask: “What would you do?”

6) If a portion of a participant’s answer is unclear, say: “I didn’t quite understand the part about...”

### **Social Situations**

Introduce the interview slowly and informally with some version of the following:

“I am going to ask you some questions. You’ll have to use your imagination to answer them. This is not a test, and there is not a right or wrong answer. This is the way the questions work. I will tell you the beginning of a story, and you can finish it in any way you want. Simply imagine how the story would end. Do you understand?”

Here is an example:

1) A group of youth of your own age is playing. Some of them want to play one game, others want to play another game. There are not enough people to play both games. Finish the story.

A second example:

2) To go to the university, a student must cross a dangerous road. The student’s parents have told him or her always to walk and never to run. One day, while the student is crossing the road, a policeman tells him or her to run instead of walking. What does the student do? Finish the story.

3) Now here is another different kind of story. A new student comes to your university. He or she comes from another country. He or she says to you: Tell me something about the

Colombian peace-agreement that I do not understand. For example: What is a FARC-EP guerrilla?

What would you say?

4) Suppose the international student says: What will happen with the ex-FARC-EP guerrillas after the peace-agreement?

What would you answer?

5) One day, a famous FARC-EP ex-combatant was driving his or her car to a meeting. Because he or she was driving very fast... a police officer stops his or her car... Finish the story.

Possible questions to add: What do the police say? What does the ex-combatant say?

6) The coordinator of a program hires three people to work for him. A few months later he realizes that one of his workers in the past belonged to the FARC-EP guerrillas... Finish the story

7) Pedro/Ana is a university student. He/she is hanging out with some friends from his/her university. One of his/her friends tells a story about his/her parents supporting an ex-FARC-EP combatant...there is a debate in the group about that theme... Finish the story

8) Here is a story about some members of the Congress and the President. The president wants to pay a stipend for two years to ex-FARC-EP combatants but the congressmen and congresswomen think that is not a good idea. Finish the story.

9) One day, Maria who has your same age was hanging around with some friends in their neighbourhood. They realize that one of the houses in their neighbourhood is flying a flag with the FARC emblem. Finish the story.

Thank you very much for answering these questions. Now, do you have anything you would like to ask me, or anything more would like to say about different things we have been talking about?

## **Appendix A. Research Instrument in Spanish**

### **Instrucciones generales**

- 1) Cuente las historias de forma clara e informal. Realice una pausa corta donde está marcado (...). Asegúrese de que la persona no sienta que lo están examinando. Dejar claro que estamos interesados en su imaginación más que en su conocimiento.
- 2) Si la persona no comprende una parte de la historia, repítala lentamente, usando un lenguaje más simple si es necesario, pero sin cambiar el significado de la historia. Si la persona solicita información adicional o pregunta: "¿Es esta historia acerca de mí?" Responder: eso lo decides tú.
- 3) La historia puede terminarse de la forma que los participantes quieran terminar.
- 4) Para un participante que "no sabe las respuestas", enfatice nuevamente que: Recuerde que no hay una respuesta correcta o incorrecta. Solo se trata de imaginar cómo termina la historia.
- 5) Si siguen "desconociendo" la respuesta a las historias, como último recurso pregunte: ¿Qué harían?
- 6) Si una parte de la respuesta de un participante no está clara, diga: No entendí la parte sobre...

### **Situaciones sociales**

Inicie la entrevista de forma lenta e informal siguiendo como ejemplo la siguiente introducción:

Voy a hacerte algunas preguntas. Tendrás que usar tu imaginación para responderlas. Esto no es una prueba, y no hay una respuesta correcta o incorrecta. Esta es la forma en que funcionan las preguntas. Te contaré el comienzo de una historia y puedes terminarla de la manera que desees. Simplemente imagina cómo terminaría la historia. ¿Es claro para ti?

Aquí hay un ejemplo:

- 1) Un grupo de jóvenes de tu edad están jugando. Algunos quieren jugar un tipo de juego, otros quieren otro. No hay suficientes personas para jugar ambos. Termina la historia.

Un segundo ejemplo:

- 2) Para ir a la universidad, un estudiante debe cruzar una calle peligrosa. Los padres del estudiante le han dicho que siempre camine y que nunca corra. Un día, mientras el estudiante

cruza la calle, un policía le dice que corra en lugar de caminar. ¿Qué hace el estudiante?  
Termina la historia.

3) Ahora aquí hay otro tipo de historia. Un nuevo estudiante llega a tu universidad. Él o ella viene de otro país. Él o ella te dice: cuéntame algo sobre el acuerdo de paz en Colombia que no entiendo. Por ejemplo: ¿Qué es la guerrilla FARC-EP?

¿Qué dirías?

4) Supongamos que el estudiante internacional dice: ¿Qué pasará con el miembro de las guerrillas de las FARC-EP después del acuerdo de paz?

¿Qué responderías?

5) Un día, un famoso excombatiente de las FARC-EP conducía su automóvil a una reunión. Debido a que él o ella conducía muy rápido ... la policía detuvo su automóvil ... Termine la historia.

Posibles preguntas para agregar: ¿Qué dice el policía? ¿Qué dice el excombatiente?

6) El coordinador de un programa contrata a tres personas para que trabajen para él. Unos meses después se da cuenta de que uno de sus trabajadores perteneció en el pasado a la guerrilla de las FARC-EP ... Termine la historia.

7) Pedro es un estudiante universitario. Él está compartiendo con algunos amigos de su universidad. Uno de sus amigos cuenta la historia de sus padres apoyando a un excombatiente ... hay un debate al interior del grupo sobre ese tema ... Termine la historia

8) Aquí hay una historia de algunos miembros del Congreso y el Presidente. El presidente quiere pagar un salario por dos años a los excombatientes de las FARC-EP, pero los congresistas piensan que no es una buena idea. Termina la historia.

9) Un día, María, que tiene tu misma edad, estuvo dando vueltas con algunos amigos en su vecindario. Se dan cuenta de que una de las casas en su vecindario tiene una bandera con el emblema de las FARC. Termina la historia.

Muchas gracias por responder estas preguntas. Finalmente ¿tienes algo que te gustaría preguntarme, o algo más que te gustaría decir sobre diferentes cosas de las que hemos estado hablando?

## Appendix B

### Informed consent



**Study Title:** Young University Students' Social Images of the Reintegration Process of ex FARC-EP Guerrillas into Civil Society in Bogotá-Colombia

**Primary researcher:** Leonardo Rafael Luna Eslava, Master student, Arthur V. Mauro Centre for Peace and Justice, University of Manitoba, Email: unal@myumanitoba.ca.

**Research supervisor:** Dr. Sean Byrne, Professor, Peace and Conflict Studies, Arthur V. Mauro Centre for Peace and Justice, 304 St. Paul's College, 70 Dysart Road, University of Manitoba, R3T 2N2, Email: Sean.Byrne@umanitoba.ca

This consent form, a copy of which I will leave with you for your records, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you a basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you consent to be interviewed, it should take about one hour of your time. If you would like more detail about anything mentioned here, or need information that is not included, feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand that this interview is voluntary.

#### **Project Description:**

This research seeks to understand the perceptions of a group of young students from a university in Bogotá-Colombia with regards to living in the same society with ex-combatants from FARC-EP guerrillas. The ultimate goal is to publish and share insights that will contribute to a better understanding of the existing psychological, social, and cultural dynamics of young people within Colombian's post-peace agreement society.

#### **About the researcher:**

I am currently a Master student the Peace and Conflict Studies program at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg-Canada. I am originally from Colombia.

#### **Confidentiality:**

I will keep any information about your identity gathered in this research strictly confidential, unless you specifically authorize me to identify and/or quote you in my final reports and any literature that is written as a result of this research. If you are referred to in my thesis, or other venues, it would be written in such a way as to protect your identity and your real name or position would never be used, unless you specifically authorize it. Your interview will be recorded and analyzed as part of the study unless you decline to have it recorded. All written and recorded digital files will be kept in a safe and your consent form will be stored separately from the recorded interview. Only I will have access to your personal identity information and all of the information will be destroyed by the end of December, 2020.

**Results of this research:**

Within one year of the interview, I will provide you with a brief on the project (if you wish), outlining my general findings and progress. Results from this research will be described in my final written thesis, and likely in other publications and at professional meetings and conferences. At your request, I will also notify you about any publications that arise from this research.

**Risks and Benefits:**

The community may benefit if the findings of this research help in suggesting some policy actions and professional practices around the reintegration programs. If for any reason you do not feel comfortable through this interview or feel distress or anxious, please tell me and we can stop the interview at any time. A list of free service mental health providers is provided at the end of this document, and you may access them at any time if you do experience or wish for emotional support at any time. I will not report the results of your interview whether you decline or consent to participate in the interview to anyone.

**Participation is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time:**

Participation in this research is voluntary, you may stop at any time during or after the interview by simply stating that you wish not to participate further. If you wish to withdraw from participating after the interview is done, you may call my private cell phone or leave an e-mail at the contacts on this form at anytime up to three months after the interview. If you do decline to participate, your interview material, whether it was recorded or written, and the consent form would be destroyed.

Also, you are in the right of not answer specific questions from the interview without withdrawing from the study.

**Consent:**

Your signature on this form, indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding this research project and that you agree to participate. In no way does this waive your legal rights or release the researchers or the University of Manitoba from its legal and professional responsibilities. If you would like more clarification at any point, or even a verbal report on the status of the project, please feel free to contact me at any time at the previously noted e-mails. You could also contact my academic advisor, Dr. Sean Byrne (as above) or the University of Manitoba Joint Faculty Research Ethics Board at (204) 474-7122.

This research has been approved by the University of Manitoba Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact them at (1-204) 474-7122 or e-mail at: [humanethics@umanitoba.ca](mailto:humanethics@umanitoba.ca)

Please answer the following questions with a check mark in the YES or NO box:

	YES	NO
I have read or had read to me the details of this consent form	( )	( )
Have your questions have been addressed?	( )	( )
Do you agree to participate in this study?	( )	( )
Do you agree to have the interview audio-recorded?	( )	( )
Do you want the information to remain confidential?	( )	( )
Do you agree to have the findings (which may include quotations) from this project published or presented in a manner that <b>does not</b> reveal your identity?	( )	( )
Do you wish to be identified and quoted, and not remain anonymous in the study?	( )	( )
Do you agree to be contacted by phone or e-mail if further information is required after the interview	( )	( )
Do you wish to receive a summary of the findings?	( )	( )

If YES, please provide an e-mail address or instructions how you would like to receive the summary:

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Do you wish to receive a notification of any publications resulting from this study (my thesis, journal articles etc)? ( ) ( )

If YES, please provide an e-mail address or instructions how you would like to receive the

notifications:

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Participant's name (printed) \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

If done verbally- explain why: \_\_\_\_\_

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Researcher's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date/Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Place: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Contacts for local mental health service providers**

#### **University of Santo Tomas, Psychological Office.**

The psychological Office is open Monday to Friday from 7:00 A.M. at 9:00 P.M. Saturdays from 8:00 A.M. at 1:00 P.M. and from 2:00 P.M. at 5:00 P.M. For the first appointment, you must bring: a photocopy of the identity document. The services provided include the following:

- Psychological counseling.
- Psychological and therapeutic intervention at the individual, group, couple and family level.
- Psychological evaluation: (application of psychometric tests of intelligence, personality, differential skills of knowledge and vocational, performance and pedagogical support).
- Processes of Professional and Vocational Guidance

Appointment request: You can do it person in Cra. 13 # 51-88 or by telephone to 5878797 ext. 1941, or, 1942.

### **Konrad Lorenz University**

This is a social service centre that aims to satisfy the needs of the general public in areas such as:

- Psychological Counseling
- Evaluation and Measurement of Behavior

To access to this centre you can go to Cra. 9 No. 61 - 38, Chapinero, Bogotá D.C. or call PBX 3472311, ext. 172 - 181 or send an e-mail to: [centropsicologiaclinica@konradlorenz.edu.co](mailto:centropsicologiaclinica@konradlorenz.edu.co)

## **Appendix B**

### **Consentimiento Informado**



**Título del estudio:** Imaginario Social de Jóvenes Universitarios sobre el Proceso de Reintegración de ex miembros de la Guerrilla de las FARC-EP en de la Sociedad Civil en Bogotá-Colombia

**Investigador principal:** Leonardo Rafael Luna Eslava, Estudiante de Maestría, Centro para la Paz y Justicia Arthur V. Mauro, Universidad de Manitoba, Email: [lunal@myumanitoba.ca](mailto:lunal@myumanitoba.ca).

**Supervisor de la investigación:** Dr. Sean Byrne, Profesos de Estudios de Paz y Conflicto, Centro para la Paz y Justicia Arthur V. Mauro, 304 St. Paul's College, 70 Dysart Road, Universidad de Manitoba, R3T 2N2, Email: [Sean.Byrne@umanitoba.ca](mailto:Sean.Byrne@umanitoba.ca)

Estimado participante, este formulario de consentimiento es solo una parte del proceso de consentimiento informado. El objetivo es darle una idea básica de qué se trata la investigación y en qué consistirá su participación. Si acepta ser entrevistado, la entrevista durará aproximadamente una hora de su tiempo. Si desea más detalles sobre cualquier cosa mencionada aquí, o necesita información que no esté incluida, no dude en preguntar. Tómese el tiempo para leer esto detenidamente y para comprender que esta entrevista es voluntaria. Como participante en la entrevista, Usted se quedará con una copia de este formulario.

### **Descripción del Proyecto:**

Esta investigación busca comprender las percepciones de un grupo de jóvenes estudiantes de una universidad en Bogotá-Colombia con respecto a vivir en la misma sociedad con excombatientes de las guerrillas FARC-EP. El objetivo final es publicar y compartir ideas que contribuyan a una mejor comprensión de las dinámicas psicológicas, sociales y culturales existentes de los jóvenes dentro de la sociedad colombiana que se encuentra experimentando los acuerdos de paz

**Acerca del investigador:**

Actualmente soy estudiante del programa de Estudios de Paz y Conflictos en la Universidad de Manitoba en Winnipeg-Canadá. Soy originario de Colombia.

**Confidencialidad:**

Toda la información sobre su identidad que sea recopilada en esta investigación se mantendrá de forma estrictamente confidencial, a menos que usted me autorice específicamente a identificarlo o citarlo en mis informes finales y en toda la literatura escrita como resultado de esta investigación. Si hago alguna mención en mi tesis u otros lugares sobre Usted, se hará de tal manera que proteja su identidad y nunca se usará su nombre o posición real, a menos que Usted lo autorice específicamente. Su entrevista será grabada y analizada como parte del estudio, a menos que decida no hacerlo. Todos los archivos digitales escritos y grabados se guardarán en un lugar seguro y su formulario de consentimiento se almacenará por separado de la entrevista grabada. Solo tendré acceso a su información de identidad personal y toda la información se destruirá a finales de diciembre de 2020.

**Resultados de la investigación:**

En el plazo de un año a partir de la entrevista, le proporcionaré un resumen del proyecto (si lo desea), en el que se describen mis conclusiones generales y mi progreso. Los resultados de esta investigación se describirán en mi tesis final escrita, y probablemente en otras publicaciones y en reuniones y conferencias profesionales. A su solicitud, también le notificaré sobre cualquier publicación que surja de esta investigación.

**Beneficios y riesgos:**

La comunidad en general puede beneficiarse si los hallazgos de esta investigación ayudan a sugerir algunas acciones políticas y prácticas profesionales en torno a los programas de reintegración. Si por alguna razón no se siente cómodo durante esta entrevista o se siente angustiado o ansioso, dígame y podemos detener la entrevista en cualquier momento. Al final de este documento, se proporciona una lista de proveedores de servicios de salud mental gratuitos, y puede acceder a ellos en cualquier momento si experimenta o desea apoyo emocional. No informaré los resultados de su entrevista a nadie, ya sea que rechace o acepte participar en la entrevista.

**La participación es voluntaria y se puede retirar en cualquier momento:**

La participación en esta investigación es voluntaria y Usted puede retirarse en cualquier momento durante o después de la entrevista simplemente declarando que no desea seguir participando. Si desea retirarse de participar después de que se realice la entrevista, puede llamar a mi teléfono privado o dejar un correo electrónico a los contactos de este formulario en cualquier momento hasta tres meses después de la entrevista. Si no desea participar, su material de la entrevista, ya sea que esté grabado o escrito, y el formulario de consentimiento se destruiría.

**Consentimiento:**

Su firma en este formulario indica que ha comprendido a su entera satisfacción la información relacionada con este proyecto de investigación y que acepta participar. De ninguna manera esto renuncia a sus derechos legales o libera a los investigadores o a la Universidad de Manitoba de sus responsabilidades legales y profesionales. Si desea más aclaraciones en cualquier momento, o incluso un informe verbal sobre el estado del proyecto, no dude en contactarme en cualquier

momento en los correos electrónicos mencionados anteriormente. También puede comunicarse con mi asesor académico, el Dr. Sean Byrne (como se indica arriba) o con la Junta de Ética de Investigación de la Facultad de la Universidad de Manitoba al +1(204) 474-7122.

Esta investigación ha sido aprobada por la Junta de Ética de Investigación de la Universidad de Manitoba. Si tiene alguna inquietud o queja sobre este proyecto, puede comunicarse con ellos al correo electrónico: [humanethics@umanitoba.ca](mailto:humanethics@umanitoba.ca)

Responda las siguientes preguntas con una X en la casilla SÍ o NO: SI      NO

He leído los detalles de este formulario de consentimiento ( )    ( )

¿Sus inquietudes sobre el proceso han sido resueltas? ( )    ( )

¿Está de acuerdo en participar en el estudio? ( )    ( )

¿Está de acuerdo con que su entrevista se pueda grabar? ( )    ( )

¿Desea que su información se mantenga confidencial? ( )    ( )

¿Está de acuerdo que los resultados de esta investigación (incluyendo las citas) se publiquen o presenten en manera tal que **no revele** su identidad? ( )    ( )

¿Desea ser identificado y citado en la investigación y no permanecer anónimo? ( )    ( )

¿Está de acuerdo en ser contactado por teléfono o e-mail si se necesita más información después de la entrevista? ( )    ( )

¿Desea recibir un resumen de los resultados de la investigación? ( )    ( )

Si su respuesta es SI, por favor indique un correo electrónico o las instrucciones de cómo le gustaría recibir el resumen:

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¿Desea recibir notificaciones de alguna publicación que resulte de este estudio (mi tesis, revistas, artículos)? ( )    ( )

Si su respuesta es SI, por favor indique un correo electrónico o las instrucciones de cómo le gustaría recibir el resumen:

\_\_\_\_\_

Nombre del participante \_\_\_\_\_

Firma del participante \_\_\_\_\_

Firma del investigador \_\_\_\_\_

Fecha y hora: \_\_\_\_\_

Lugar: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Contactos de proveedores de servicios de salud mental**

#### **Universidad Santo Tomas, oficina de psicología.**

La oficina de servicios psicológicos está abierta de lunes a viernes de 7:00 a.m. a las 9:00 p.m. Sábados a partir de las 8:00 a.m. a la 1:00 p.m. y desde las 2:00 p.m. a las 5:00 p.m. Para la primera cita, debe traer: una fotocopia del documento de identidad. Los servicios prestados incluyen los siguientes:

- Asesoría psicológica.
- Intervención psicológica y terapéutica a nivel individual, grupal, de pareja y familiar.
- Evaluación psicológica: (aplicación de pruebas psicométricas de inteligencia, personalidad, habilidades diferenciales de conocimiento y apoyo vocacional, de desempeño y pedagógico).
- Procesos de Orientación Profesional y Vocacional.

Solicitud de cita: Usted puede hacerlo en persona en la Cra. 13 # 51-88 o por teléfono al 5878797 ext. 1941, o, 1942.

#### **Universidad Konrad Lorenz**

Este es un centro de servicio social que tiene como objetivo satisfacer las necesidades del público en general en áreas tales como:

- Asesoría psicológica
- Evaluación y medición del comportamiento.

Para acceder a este centro puedes ir a Cra. 9 No. 61 - 38, Chapinero, Bogotá D.C. o llamar a PBX 3472311, ext. 172 - 181 o enviar un correo electrónico a: centro psicologíaclinica@konradlorenz.edu.co

## Appendix C

### Research Permission Letter



UNIVERSITY  
OF MANITOBA

Director  
Psychology Program  
University of Minuto de Dios  
Bogotá, Colombia

Dear Director,

This letter is to request your permission to interview twelve students from the University of Minuto de Dios in order to collect data for my master's thesis. The research project is titled, ***Young University Students' Social Images of the Reintegration Process of ex FARC-EP Guerrillas into Civil Society in Bogotá-Colombia.*** The thesis intent is to explore the perceptions and experiences of a group of young students from a university in Bogotá-Colombia with regards to living in the same neighbourhoods with ex-combatants from FARC-EP guerrillas.

The primary researcher, Leonardo Luna, is currently a candidate for a Master's degree in Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Manitoba. Leonardo Luna is a Colombian psychologist who holds a Master's degree in Social Research. If you are interested in emailing the researcher or talking by telephone to discuss the research project, he can be reached as follows:

Email: [lunal@myumanitoba.ca](mailto:lunal@myumanitoba.ca)

Each interview would take about one hour to complete and would be done at an appropriate time and place that is best suited for the student. There is no obligation and the participant will be able to stop at any time before, during or after the interview. At the participant's request, the interview will also be destroyed. The participants will first go

through a detailed informed consent, outlining all the students' rights and how anonymity and confidentiality would be protected and they will be provided with a copy.

**Risks and Benefits:**

The institution and the community *may* benefit *if* the findings of this research help in the improvement of practices and policies with respect to the reintegration process of ex FARC-EP guerrillas into civil society. There is a risk that imagining possible scenarios of living with ex-combatants may cause some participants emotional stress. Before each interview, Leonardo Luna would caution participants about this possibility, with the consent form he will go through with the participant. The researcher would provide participants with the contact information of, and how to access free counseling resources in Bogotá, in the event that they feel an adverse reaction to being interviewed.

**Confidentiality:**

All information about the participants identities gathered in this research will be kept strictly confidential unless they specifically wish to be quoted in the thesis and in any literature that is written as a result of this research. All written and recorded digital files will be kept in a secure location and will be destroyed later.

**Results of this research:**

Within one year of the interview the institution would be provided with a written brief (if you wish to receive it), outlining the general findings and progress of the research project. Results from this research will be described in the final written thesis, other publications and at conferences or professional meetings. At the institution's request, it would also be notified about any publications that arise from this research.

If you have questions or concerns, please feel free to contact Leonardo Luna, or his academic supervisor, Dr. Sean Byrne, or the University of Manitoba Ethics Review Board at the below contacts.

**Contact information:**

**University of Manitoba**

This research has been approved by the **Joint Faculty Ethics Review Board** of the University of Manitoba; you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact them at (204) 474-7122 or Email at [humanethics@umanitoba.ca](mailto:humanethics@umanitoba.ca)

**Supervisor**

You could also contact my research supervisor, Dr. Sean Byrne, Professor, Peace and Conflict Studies, Arthur V. Mauro Centre for Peace and Justice, 304 St. Paul's College, 70 Dysart Road, University of Manitoba, R3T 2N2, Email: [Sean.Byrne@umanitoba.ca](mailto:Sean.Byrne@umanitoba.ca)

**Primary researcher**

The primary researcher for this project is Leonardo Luna, Master of Arts Candidate, Arthur V. Mauro Centre for Peace and Justice, University of Manitoba, Email: [leoeslava@hotmail.com](mailto:leoeslava@hotmail.com) or [lunal@myumanitoba.ca](mailto:lunal@myumanitoba.ca)

Best regards

Leonardo Luna



Estimado Director,

Esta carta es para solicitar su permiso para entrevistar a doce estudiantes de la Universidad de Minuto de Dios para recopilar datos para mi tesis de maestría. El proyecto de investigación se titula *Imágenes Sociales de Jóvenes Estudiantes Universitarios sobre el Proceso de Reintegración de las Guerrillas de las FARC-EP en la Sociedad Civil en Bogotá-Colombia*. La intención de la tesis es explorar las percepciones y experiencias de un grupo de jóvenes estudiantes de una universidad en Bogotá-Colombia con respecto a vivir en los mismos barrios con ex combatientes de las guerrillas FARC-EP.

El investigador principal, Leonardo Luna, actualmente es candidato para un Máster en Estudios de Paz y Conflictos en la Universidad de Manitoba. Leonardo Luna es un psicólogo colombiano que posee una maestría en Investigación Social Interdisciplinar. Si está interesado en enviar un correo electrónico al investigador o hablar por teléfono para hablar sobre el proyecto de investigación, puede contactarlo de la siguiente manera: Correo electrónico: [lunal@myumanitoba.ca](mailto:lunal@myumanitoba.ca).

Cada entrevista tomaría aproximadamente una hora y se haría en el momento y lugar que sean más adecuados para el estudiante. No hay ninguna obligación y el participante podrá retirarse de la entrevista en cualquier momento antes, durante o después de la misma. A petición del participante, la entrevista también puede ser destruida. Los participantes primero pasarán por un consentimiento informado detallado, describiendo todos los derechos y cómo se protegerá el anonimato y la confidencialidad; adicionalmente mantendrán una copia del consentimiento.

**Riesgos y beneficios:**

La institución y la comunidad pueden beneficiarse ya que los hallazgos de esta investigación ayudan a mejorar las prácticas y políticas con respecto al proceso de reintegración de las Guerrillas de las FARC-EP en la sociedad civil. Adicionalmente, cada estudiante tendrá la posibilidad de manifestar sus opiniones frente a la posibilidad de convivir con los ex combatientes. Existe el riesgo de que imaginar posibles escenarios de convivencia con ex combatientes pueda causar estrés emocional en algunos participantes. Antes de cada entrevista, el investigador advertiría a los participantes sobre esta posibilidad, con el formulario de consentimiento que él realizará con el participante. El investigador proporcionaría a los participantes la información de contacto y la forma de acceder a los recursos de asesoramiento gratuitos en Bogotá, en caso de que sientan una reacción adversa al ser entrevistados.

### **Confidencialidad**

Toda la información sobre las identidades de los participantes reunida en esta investigación, se mantendrá estrictamente confidencial, a menos que las personas deseen ser citadas en la tesis y en cualquier publicación como resultado de esta investigación. Todos los archivos digitales escritos y grabados se guardarán en un lugar seguro y se destruirán más adelante.

### **Resultados de esta investigación:**

En el plazo de un año a partir de la entrevista, a la institución se le entregará un resumen escrito (si desea recibirlo), que describa los hallazgos generales y el progreso del proyecto de investigación. Los resultados de esta investigación se describirán en la tesis final escrita, así como en otras publicaciones y conferencias profesionales. A solicitud de la institución, también se le notificaría sobre cualquier publicación que surja de esta investigación.

Si tiene preguntas o inquietudes, no dude en comunicarse con Leonardo Luna o su supervisor académico, el Dr. Sean Byrne, o con la Junta de Revisión de Ética de la Universidad de Manitoba en los contactos a continuación.

### **Información del contacto:**

Universidad de Manitoba

Esta investigación ha sido aprobada por el Comité de Ética de la Facultad de Pos grados de la Universidad de Manitoba. Si tiene alguna inquietud o queja sobre este proyecto, puede contactarlos al +1 (204) 474-7122 o enviar un correo electrónico a [humanethics@umanitoba.ca](mailto:humanethics@umanitoba.ca)

Supervisor

También puede comunicarse con el supervisor de investigación, Dr. Sean Byrne, Profesor, Estudios de Paz y Conflictos, Centro Arthur V. Mauro para la Paz y la Justicia, 304 St. Paul's College, 70 Dysart Road, Universidad de Manitoba, R3T 2N2, correo electrónico: [Sean.Byrne@umanitoba.ca](mailto:Sean.Byrne@umanitoba.ca)

Investigador principal

El investigador principal de este proyecto es Leonardo Luna, candidato a Magister, Centro Arthur V. Mauro para la Paz y la Justicia, Universidad de Manitoba, correo electrónico: leoeslava@hotmail.com o lunal@myumanitoba.ca

Atentamente

Leonardo Luna

## Appendix D

### Recruitment Email



Dear Student,

My name is Leonardo Luna, I am a Colombian psychologist who is currently studying in a Master's of Arts program in Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Manitoba in Canada. The title of my thesis research is *Young University Students' Social Images of the Reintegration Process of ex FARC-EP Guerrillas into Civil Society in Bogotá-Colombia*. As part of my study, I need to interview twelve students from the University of Minuto de Dios to collect data for my thesis. The study's intent is to explore the perceptions and experiences of a group of young students with regards to their living in the same neighbourhoods with ex-combatants from FARC-EP guerrillas.

I would like to invite you to participate in this research. If you agree, you will be interviewed privately for about an hour by the main researcher. It is important to clarify that your participation in this research is not related with your academic process at the university and it is your choice to participate freely in the research. Furthermore, if you decide to participate in the study, you will be able to withdraw from it whenever you request. It is also important to know that the whole information that you provide to me will be confidential.

If you are willing to obtain more information about my research and desire to participate in the study, you can contact me through the email [lunal@myumanitoba.co](mailto:lunal@myumanitoba.co)

Best regards

Leonardo Luna

Spanish version

Estimado estudiante,

Reciba un cordial saludo.

Mi nombre es Leonardo Luna, soy psicólogo colombiano que actualmente estudia un programa de maestría en Estudios de Paz y Conflictos en la Universidad de Manitoba en Canadá. El título de mi investigación de tesis es Imágenes sociales de Jóvenes Universitarios sobre el Proceso de Reintegración de ex Guerrilleros de las FARC-EP a la Sociedad Civil en Bogotá-Colombia. Como parte de mi estudio, necesito entrevistar a doce estudiantes de la Universidad de Minuto de Dios para recopilar datos para mi tesis. El objetivo del estudio es explorar las percepciones y experiencias de un grupo de jóvenes estudiantes con respecto a vivir en los mismos barrios con excombatientes de las guerrillas FARC-EP.

Me gustaría invitarlo (a) a participar en esta investigación. Si está de acuerdo, el investigador principal lo entrevistará en privado durante aproximadamente una hora. Es importante aclarar que su participación en esta investigación no está relacionada con su proceso académico en la universidad y es su elección libre el participar en la investigación. Además, si decide participar, podrá retirarse de la investigación cuando lo desee. También es importantes que sepa que toda la información que proporcione será confidencial.

Si desea obtener más información y participar, puede ponerse en contacto conmigo a través del correo electrónico [lunal@myumanitoba.co](mailto:lunal@myumanitoba.co).

Atentamente,

Leonardo Luna