The Role of Social Networks in Memory Formation and the Social Reintegration of Ex-combatants

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by

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La paz nace del alma.

-Rodolfo Fierro

ABSTRACT

This doctoral dissertation examines the social reintegration of ex-combatants with a focus on the role of social networks and the formation of collective memory. The case is that of FARC ex-guerrillas in Colombia. Building on the work of Maurice Halbwachs ([1952] 1992), it understands memory as evolving over time by present circumstances and interpersonal interactions. The work engages with the focus on groups in Collective Memory scholarship and infuses insights from social network theory and relational sociology. Empirically, the work is based on interviews and participant observation in Colombia. Settings include two cities and two rural areas. Following a review of literature and a presentation of methods and data, chapter four analyzes the role of space in shaping interactions. Chapter five examines the role of an education initiative in fostering relationships between civilians and FARC ex-combatants. Chapter six discusses the importance of incorporating a life course perspective in the social reintegration of ex-combatants. The process of reintegration presents an opportunity to examine how collective memories transform through new forms of interactions. These chapters show how a civilian's understanding of the conflict changes by interacting with ex-combatants. It similarly examines how the ex-combatant perspective changes. The relevance of the findings goes beyond the specific setting, as this dissertation shows for an increasingly polarized world, how it is important to understand the way in which individuals' perspectives of conflicts are formed and transformed.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACR	“Agencia Colombian para la Reintegración” (Colombian Agency for Reintegration)
ARN	“Agencia para la Reincorporación y Normalización” (Agency for Reincorporation and Normalization)
CNMH	“Centro Nacional de Memoria Historica” (National Center for Historic Memory)
COP	Colombian Peso
CRS	“Corriente de Renovación Socialista” (Socialist Renovation Current)
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration
ELN	“Ejército de Liberación Nacional” (National Liberation Army)
EPL	“Ejército Popular de Liberaión” (Popular Liberation Army)
ETCR	“Espacio Territorial de Capacitación y Reincorporación” (Territorial Space for Training and Reincorporation)
FARC	Before the peace agreement, this abbreviation stood for “Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia” (The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia). Following the peace agreement, the political party that emerged initially retained the same abbreviation with a changed meaning: “Fuerzas Alternativas Revolucionarias del Comun” (Common Alternative Revolutionary Force). The party subsequently changed its name to Comunes.
FARC-EP	“Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – Ejército del Pueblo” (The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People’s Army)
FEU	“Federación de Estudiantes Universitarios” (Federation of University Students)
FMLN	“Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional” (Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front)
IRA	Irish Republican Army
IRB	Institutional Review Board

LGBTQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer
M-19	“Movimiento 19 de abril” (April 19th Movement)
MAQL	“Movimiento Armado Quintin Lame” (Armed Movement of Quintin Lame)
OACP	“Oficina de Alto Comisionado para la Paz” (The High Office for the Peace Commision)
PAPDRB	“Programa de Atención al Proceso de Desmovilización y Reintegración en Bogotá” (Program of Complementary Services to the Process of Demobilization and Reintegration in Bogotá)
PC3	“Partido Comunista Clandestino Colombiano” (Clandestine Communist Party of Colombia)
PRT	“Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores” (Revolutionary Party of the Workers”)
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNP	“Unidad Nacional de Protección” (National Unity of Protection)
UP	“Union Patriotica” (Patriotic Union)
USD	United States Dollar
ZVTN	“Zona Veredal de Transición y Normalización” (Transitory Zones of Normalization)

1. INTRODUCTION

Following over half a century of conflict, Colombia signed a peace accord with the FARC[1] in 2016. Thirteen thousand guerrilla combatants put down their weapons and demobilized to 26 formal settlements across rural parts of the country (OACP 2018). Ex-combatants need to adapt to new forms of living in a wide array of ways, as they transition from taking turns patrolling perimeters to baking bread and running cooperatives[2]. But this change is insufficient if others in Colombia do not change as well. If animosity persists, the divide between ex-combatants and others will be reinforced, and the precarious peace achieved thus far risks reverting to violent conflict[3].

During the conflict, combatants develop a sense of identity and belonging to their armed group (Wood 2008) as well as a distinct set of collective memories (Quishpe 2018). The transition to peace involves a change to the symbolic boundaries between ex-combatants and the rest of society; this transition similarly involves shifts in identity and collective memory. But whereas collective memory has typically emphasized a group lens, I concluded that networks are a more useful analytical concept.

Similar processes have occurred earlier in other locales such as Northern

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[1] FARC has historically been the acronym for “Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia” (The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia). Following the 2016 peace accord the newly formed political party retained the acronym but changed its meaning to “Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común” (Common Alternative Revolutionary Force). The party’s name was once again changed in 2021 to “Comunes” (Commons).

[2] Viterna (2013) highlights how ex-combatants in El Salvador communicated to her their difficulties in understanding how to use money. During my predissertation research, an informant of mine conveyed the challenges that some ex-combatants faced when they demobilized to Bogota but had never seen a streetlight before.

[3] FARC ex-combatants could remobilize for conflict by either joining the splinter FARC group called the Dissidents that is still militarily active or join another armed group National Liberation Army (ELN). On the flip side, 135 ex-combatants have been murdered since the signing of the Peace Accord by paramilitaries, police officers, and dissident FARC guerrillas.

Ireland, where I conducted a pilot study to inform this dissertation (Soto and Savelsberg 2023). A collective approach is especially significant in the case of the FARC, as they are reintegrating collectively, living together in settlement camps, and forming cooperatives.

The practice of transition from ex-combatant to civilian is known as reintegration. Reintegration is a critical aspect of peace building, but it is too often seen through the lens of “dismantling the machinery of war” rather than “fostering social reconstruction” (Theidon 2007:67). Further, the military lens which predominates the related field of research has tended to focus on the ex-combatant, excluding the vital role of the surrounding community. Similarly, it often viewed the ex-combatant more as challenge rather than as an asset in the transition to peace (Clubb 2016; McEvoy and Shirlow 2009; Friðriksdóttir 2018).

My research examines the social reintegration of ex-combatants attentive to the micro-mobilization processes in the transition to peace. Specifically, I further develop the link between interactions, groups (networks), and memory. This is in line with Jeffrey Olick’s insight that, "It is not just that we remember as members of groups but that we also constitute those groups and their members simultaneously in the act, thus "re-member-ing" (Olick 2007:29). This argument suggests that changes in interaction patterns, and group practices, are always associated with variation in representations of the past. My research examines the contexts conducive to developing constructive relationships outside their group, the specific role that boundary spanners between ex-combatants and the local population play, as well as the impact of shifting relationships on representations of the past and present.

Representations of the past, crucial in the reintegration process, are known as

collective memories. A core insight of related scholarship is that collective memory is developed and transformed through group activity (Halbwachs [1952] 1992). Further, rather than being a fixed conception of the past, it evolves and is affected by current circumstances. Representations of the past, present, and future are important because they affect courses of action. In this thesis I ask how these representations change in tandem with interactions that defy social boundaries. Does the blurring or re-signifying of these boundaries go together with changes in the corresponding representations of the past?

A crucial element of network structures that evolve in the reintegration process are boundary spanners, which play a critical role in social networks to bridge isolated clusters of individuals. Inspired by a network approach, my research examines not only boundary spanners, but also other individuals in their social circle (ranging from those closer to those further removed). While this structural approach is crucial to my argument, I go further and argue, in agreement with Lichterman (2005), that there is not just more or less togetherness but also different kinds of togetherness. As Mark Pachucki and Ronald Breiger (2010) argue, "contemporary work on culture... and social networks... [can be] usefully seen as mutually constitutive and coevolving with common roots in relational thinking" (2010:206). I thus am attentive to the different ways in which individuals span boundaries, and to the meanings associated with these interactions.

In investigating the social process of reintegration, I further build on the work of Elisabeth Wood (2008) who focuses on the social processes of war, as I examine the social processes of peace. Wood discusses the way in which war shapes networks, including political mobilization and military socialization. In this spirit, Jocelyn Viterna (2013) examined the process of mobilization of the FMLN guerrillas in El Salvador, she

argued that demobilization should be seen as “re-mobilization” and should be analyzed with a similar model. As ex-combatants put down their weapons, a process of mobilization begins to encourage them and civilians to participate in society in new ways.

Jocelyn Viterna’s model of micro-mobilization consists of two components, identities, and the arenas in which they operate. For Viterna, identity consists of three categories: 1) skills (talents, knowledge, and personal attributes), 2) resources (time, money, material goods), and 3) commitments (social ties). Similarly, arenas are the cultural context, which defines the value for specific identities based on their perceived ability at certain tasks, and the social ties linking individuals to opportunities. Viterna advocates for an identity-based approach to mobilization which explains the stratification that occurs within groups of similar characteristics in terms of participation before and after the conflict. In my dissertation, I am expanding the arena concept by also incorporating Mario Small’s emphasis in *Unanticipated Gains* on the role institutions play in the development of networks. I do this by examining how an education project builds ties between young college graduates from the capital with ex-combatants from rural areas (Chapter 4).

I expand on Viterna’s model of (re)mobilization in three ways: First, by incorporating the role of collective memory which she omits. Second, by focusing on network dynamics where she focuses on dyadic ties. Lastly, by examining interactions through a cultural pragmatic lens (Alexander 2006). These added elements permit a richer understanding of how social reintegration takes place.

Table 1 provides an overview of core concepts introduced thus far. All are crucial for the development of my argument in this dissertation.

Table 1: Concepts

Concept	Definition and explanation
Social Reintegration	The post-demobilization process through which relationships develop between ex-combatants and neighbors, coworkers, and others. It occurs in parallel to a broad range of other aspects of reintegration, including finding employment, and accessing government services. My research includes both ex-combatants and community members.
Groups	Significant literature has focused on groups as the sites where interactional practices, identities, and customs become institutionalized (Fine 2012). Individuals can simultaneously belong to multiple groups with different group styles (Eliasoph and Lichterman 2003) or group customs (Lichterman 2005). I distinguish groups (as interactional settings) from categories (where individuals may share characteristics or identities but do not necessarily interact).
Networks	Social network analysis and relationalist approaches emphasize how individuals are entangled in a web of relationships. Networks can be densely interconnected or more sparsely connected. Clusters of relationships may be relatively disconnected or have a limited number of boundary spanners who bridge the clusters.
Boundary Spanners	Where symbolic boundaries are the lines that individuals see as separating "us and them," boundary spanners are actors who cross these lines via interactions and relationships with the "other." Their anomalous actions may begin to reshape or re-signify these boundaries unless group members re-assert and defend the boundaries (Pachucki, Pendergrass, and Lamont 2007). Boundary spanning can be sporadic or consistent, transactional, or affective. The relationships can be simplex, where the tie is of a single meaning (e.g., baker – client), or multiplex, where the tie has multiple meanings (e.g. baker – client, soccer teammate, brother-in-law)
Collective Memory	Collective memory consists of notions of the past that are shared, mutually acknowledged and reinforced by a collectivity. Giving shape to group identities, these notions are a socially constructed emergent property; they are given meaning through interactions between individuals and in turn shape action of individuals. Groups play a central role in memory formation. Memories are affected by present experiences, interests, and contexts of social actors (Halbwachs [1952] 1992).
Symbolic Boundaries	Social boundaries between groups are more or less fluid, Individuals can belong to multiple groups simultaneously. Related overlapping identities can vary in salience and permanence across time and space. Interactions can reify group boundaries or undermine them. The primary symbolic boundary of interest in my research is between FARC ex-combatants and members of other communities.

	FARC ex-combatants are feared, and disparaged. This is evidenced through action (avoidance or aggression) and words ("terrorist," "narcoterrorist," "they should just be killed.") I start with the assumption of a generalized boundary (more rigidly defended by some than others) and examine the reaction to boundary spanners as a testament of whether the boundary is softened or defended.

Theoretical Expectations

Literature cited above suggests first that patterns in collective representations and memories between ex-combatants differ from patterns of representations and memories of members of surrounding communities. Collective representations and memories develop within groups, and I expect that Colombian conflict has resulted in distinct "perceptions of victimization, actors responsible for the violence, and causes of the conflict; appropriate frames of interpretation…" (Savelsberg 2015: 21 describing elements of collective memory in the context of the violence in Darfur).

Secondly, literature further suggests that the representations of boundary spanners incorporate elements from both sides[4], developing hybrid codes, whereas the representations of secluded individuals with limited interactions with the other group will tend to fit more cleanly in their respective side.

A third expectation derived from the literature is that representations differ between boundary spanners according to the nature of the relationship. To clarify, I conceive of boundary spanning as falling along a spectrum. Individuals may be more or less of a boundary spanner, rather than being or not being one. Additionally, the relationships can signify very different meanings to the participants and third parties. They can be

[4] This may be the case because individuals who have certain framings (e.g., terrorism) are less likely to become boundary spanners, or because boundary spanning reduces the likelihood of having certain framings. This research design cannot finally determine the causal direction.

transactional, simplex relationships across the divide or more affective, multiplex relationships.

The representations of boundary spanners who primarily have instrumental or work-oriented relationships varied from boundary spanners who have more affective and overlapping types of relationships with the other side. Representations incorporate complex understandings of the conflict for individuals that best exemplify boundary spanning, and develop multiplex, and affective relationships across the divide.

Literature suggests fourthly that the setting of social reintegration matters (in so far as it shapes the relationships). The proportion of community members to ex-combatants is high in urban areas and low around formal settlement camps[5]. As a result, secluded community members in urban areas would be more removed or distant from the representations of ex-combatants than they would be if they resided around the formal settlements. Similarly, secluded ex-combatants in the ETCRs would be more removed or distant from the representations of community members than they would be if they resided in urban areas.

My argument neither implies that all individuals from one category (FARC or community members) narrated the conflict in line with the collective representations of their corresponding category, nor does it suggest that all boundary spanners narrate the conflict in a more complex manner than those secluded. However, I expect patterns of representations to emerge which can be identified along the lines specified above.

[5] I use the term "formal settlement camps" to simplify the name changes that have taken place over the years, which are not relevant to my work. The formal settlement camps were initially called *Zonas Veredales Transitorias y de Normalización* (ZVTNs) [Transitional Village Zones of Normalization], then *Espacios Territoriales de Capacitación y Reincorporación* (ETCRs) [Territorial Spaces for Training and Reincorporation], and most recently *Antiguos Espacios Territoriales de Capacitación y Reincorporación* (AETCRs) [Former Territorial Spaces for Training and Reincorporation]. These name changes have been the result of the expiration of legal statuses and the creation of new legal entities for the same settlement camps.

Unexpected Discoveries

My theoretical expectations are informed by theories on networks and collective memory. My fieldwork mostly confirmed those theoretical expectations as the following chapters show. However, I also made unexpected discoveries. For instance, I initially expected localized networks to play a more significant role in cross-group interactions. I was inspired by Richard Sennett's (2012) often quoted regret of not building a Spanish market on the edge of two very distinct neighborhoods in New York City that could have made the boundary more porous for interaction. Applying his arguments to my setting, I was interested in places like the bakery in the Mariana Paéz FARC settlement camp that I thought would be central meeting points for the surrounding rural communities that had nowhere else to buy bread. Consequently, I believed that much of my fieldwork would involve identifying such liminal spaces and observing cross-group interactions in them.

While this expectation was partly confirmed, what stood out more to me was the way in which networks spanned significant geographic distances. People from different walks of life traveled long distances to share their experiences but also to learn from FARC ex-combatants. City dwellers were often surprised when they learned that ex-combatants lived in the same city that they lived in. The imaginary that the FARC lived in the formal settlement camps obscured the reality that they also lived in the cities. Increasingly as time passed, more FARC ex-combatants live in cities than in the remaining formal settlements but the strong imaginary which associates them with the formal settlements is slow to change.

The initial hook for the development of long-distance networks was nearly always related to a particular expertise or vocation. But the relationships that developed pushed things further. There were doctors who traveled long distances, at times by UN

helicopters, to FARC settlement camps to provide pro bono medical services. They described to me how they worked harder during those weekends than during a normal workday, attending to ex-combatants and civilians in rural areas, some of whom had walked for hours to see a doctor for the first time in years. They spent their days assessing injuries and recommending treatment to patient after patient. It was dark when they were able to sit down to eat dinner and rest. And at this point in the interviews there was an inflection, a new beginning. The doctors went on to talk about the stories they heard and shared over this last meal which transformed their understanding of ex-combatants and the conflict. They had gone to provide medical assistance and walked away with a new understanding of the conflict. The primary difference between this observation and the expectation has to do with the cross-country, urban-rural networks compared to localized networks within the rural areas separated from those within urban areas.

Similar stories were shared by college students who went to the settlement camps on service trips, akin to what many US college students might do through Habitat for Humanity or AmeriCorps. Following the signing of the peace accord, many student groups organized buses to go to the settlement camps to share their expertise in everything from physical education to social media campaigns. One former student who had participated in this activity described her personal journey over several years from thinking she was going to share her expertise to working alongside ex-combatants in the development of a cooperative.

In the chapters that follow, I explore how expectations were confirmed, but also the multitude of ways in which unexpected discoveries took place, and how they transform the understandings of both ex-combatants and civilians. I begin by reviewing

the literature for the reader to ground their understanding in the core scholarship on reintegration, collective memory, and the civil sphere (Chapter 2). I then describe the methods which I employed in my dissertation (Chapter 3). The next three chapters examine the development of relationships between ex-combatants and civilians from different angles. Chapter 4 examines the role of physical space in facilitating and shaping networks. Chapter 5 examines an educational program that brings recent college graduates from Bogotá to the settlement camps to provide GED equivalency training, and the unintended relationships beyond the classroom that were made possible by the cohabitation requirement due to the remoteness of the program. Finally, Chapter 6 examines how relationships building is shaped by the life course of both civilians and ex-combatants.

While I focus on emerging relationships between ex-combatants and civilians, it is necessary to state that these are the exception rather than the norm. Most Colombians have never had a conversation with an ex-combatant. Their understanding of the conflict and who ex-combatants are is shaped by the press and social media. WhatsApp chain messages spread widely with sensationalist and polarizing messages which further separate former ex-guerrillas from the general population.

A necessary condition for each of the transformative experiences that my research participants shared was an interest or willingness to engage. This first requirement is evidently not experienced widely. Furthermore, the decision to engage often did not go as planned, resulting in another step along the process where things could have resulted differently. Time and time again, transformations took place in off moments, secondary to the primary activity that individuals had embarked upon -

whether that was attending to medical issues or teaching high school equivalency courses.

On a final note, this dissertation is not just the documentation of the transformation of others but itself the product of my own transformation as a researcher and Colombian. My own motivations for undertaking this project were to better understand the post peace accord era. I sensed that the role of relationships and networks needed to be more central to our understanding to the solidification of peace. During my research, my view of the FARC and the conflict has been transformed through countless hours of conversation with ex-combatants and civilians who interact with them. My own transformative experiences interacting with the FARC were reinforced by hearing the stories of civilians who had similar experiences. The most convincing narratives were those of individuals who themselves had been victims of the FARC during the conflict and yet had unique experiences post peace accord which reframed how they understood the FARC and the conflict. These did not occur through intentional reconciliation initiatives or fora but through intimate conversations beyond the limelight, facilitated unexpectedly from activities with other purposes.

2. LITERATURE

Scholars have typically discussed reintegration from two perspectives, one focused on job training and employment (Bowd and Özerdem 2013) or one focused on the relationship between each ex-combatant and the government (Metsola 2006). For my dissertation, I focus on social reintegration (Bowd and Özerdem 2013; Kaplan and Nussio 2018; and Özerdem 2012), examining the ties between ex-combatants and their neighbors and co-workers. I do so because reintegration is crucial for the solidification of the transition to peace.

I am particularly attentive to how group processes lead to cultural changes in memory and identity, and vice versa. The focus on relationships in group settings and the meanings that they took on is partly due to a theoretical interest in group dynamics. It is further justified because of the *collective* nature of the FARC demobilization. In prior waves of demobilization in Colombia, ex-combatants demobilized individually, looking for work and undertaking the transition relatively independently. By contrast, after the peace agreement, the FARC have demobilized to settlement camps together, the government distributes funds to FARC cooperatives, and the FARC has transformed from a guerrilla group to a political group with guaranteed seats in Congress for two terms.

These realities raise questions related to the formation and transformation of collective identity. The literature discussed below provides a lens to understand how group boundaries change, and the role interactions and memory play.

I begin with brief historical sketches of Colombia followed by two sections: one on Post-Conflict Studies, the other on Cultural Sociology. The section on Post-Conflict Studies covers the main research on the empirical area of focus, including subsections

on the Social Processes of War, Reintegration, and Reconciliation. The section on Cultural Sociology includes Interactions, Memory, and Symbolic Boundaries.

Historical Context for Colombia

On April 9, 1948, Jorge Eliécer Gaitán was assassinated. He was a popular presidential candidate whose speeches pitted the oligarchy against the people. His killing set off massive riots in the country's capital and a decade of political conflict known as *La Violencia*. In 1959, Fidel Castro overthrew the government in Cuba and became an example for revolutionaries across Latin America. In 1964, two Marxist guerrillas formed in different regions of Colombia, The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and The National Liberation Army (ELN). Other guerrilla groups formed in this time include the Popular Liberation Army (EPL) in 1967 and 'the 19th of April' Movement (M-19) in 1970. Right wing paramilitary groups emerged to combat the leftist guerrillas, partly with the support of state forces. Beginning in the 1970's armed groups on both sides became increasingly involved in the drug trade to finance their operations. Each of the groups has been responsible for multiple atrocities including kidnapping, extortion, rape, and killings. Throughout the conflict, and continuing into the post-peace accord period, women have been victimized through sexual abuse and domestic violence and social leaders have been killed in alarming numbers. Marginalized groups such as women from Afro-Colombians and Indigenous people have been disproportionately affected (Nnoko-Mewanu 2023).

A debate rages across ideological camps on whether there was an armed conflict in Colombia (which implies multiple actors fighting for causes), or if the violence committed constituted acts of terrorism (which implicitly removes the State from the

guilty parties and eliminates any justification for the acts). Throughout the conflict, the government has had links with the paramilitaries. It has been guilty of its own perverse participation, most notably the “False Positives” scandal where members of the military killed poor or mentally impaired civilians and presented them as guerrillas in combat uniforms killed in battle in order to inflate body counts to receive promotions and other benefits (Gordon 2017, Gordon et al. 2020, Acemoglu 2020). Known cases from 2008 onwards run into the thousands, and just recently, the *New York Times* has unveiled documentation that the Government under Ivan Duque was re-establishing incentive structures that were responsible for killings in the past (Casey 2019).

Following an amnesty in 1985, a faction of the FARC demobilized, and together with members of the Colombian Communist Party, formed a political party called the Patriotic Union (UP). The Colombian National Center for Historic Memory (CNMH) has documented that over the subsequent two decades 4,153 members of the UP became victims of violence (CNMH 2018:108).

In 1999, the Colombian President Andres Pastrana demilitarized a zone called El Caguán, composed of a tract of land about the size of Switzerland (26,000 miles) to conduct peace negotiation talks with the FARC. This zone included areas from the department of Meta (the state where I conducted my fieldwork) and Caquetá. These talks failed and critics have accused the FARC of not having had any intention to negotiate and instead using the demilitarized zone to strengthen militarily (Torres 2012).

Colombia has undergone several waves of demobilization as early as 1954. Starting in the 1980’s the country progressively formalized the processes associated with the reintegration of ex-combatants. The Colombian government signed peace accords in 1990 with the M-19, in 1991 with EPL, PRT, MAQL, and CRS. Drawing on

data from ACR and the National Police, Kaplan and Nussio state that 52,419 individuals were certified as demobilized between August 2002 and January 2010, including over thirty thousand right wing paramilitaries that demobilized under the term of former President Alvaro Uribe (Kaplan and Nussio 2018:137). The Colombian Government formed the High Council for Reintegration (ACR) in 2006, whose purpose was to reform and prepare individually demobilized ex-combatants for civilian life. In 2011, the Colombian government institutionalized the ACR as a national agency. In 2016, President Santos signed a peace accord with the FARC. In 2017, as part of the peace accord, the national agency changed its name to become the National Agency for Reincorporation and Normalization (ARN).

Over 13,000 FARC demobilized (OACP 2018) to 26 formal settlements initially known as the Transitory Zones of Normalization (ZVTNs), and the Government has since changed the names to be the Territorial Spaces for Training and Reincorporation (ETCRs). In this dissertation I refer to these as "formal settlements" for simplicity's sake as the changes in their legal status were not my focus. As soon as FARC ex-combatants completed their initial registration with the government, they were free to move around the country. Some continue to reside in the ETCRs, others have moved to cities.

A group of FARC Dissidents remains militarily active, as do the ELN. The Colombian Victims Unit has registered 8,839,146 victims from the armed conflict since 1985 (Unidad de Victimas 2019), in a country whose population is just over 49 million.

Post Conflict Studies

In 2014, Andreas Wimmer rightly challenged the discipline of sociology to turn its attention to the examination of war. “Given the prevalence and ubiquity of war, what

does sociology have to offer to explain its causes, conduct, and consequences?" (Wimmer 2014:174) Yet, while sociology has engaged at least to a limited degree with war and conflict (Smith 2005; Viterna 2006), it has addressed post-conflict contexts even less (Brewer 2010). This oversight has resulted in underutilizing the insights from sociology for ending violence and for securing peace. Additionally, the divide between sociology and post-conflict studies presents an opportunity to challenge and stretch sociological theory in a new context.

Since there has been relatively more sociological scholarship on war than on post-conflict studies, this section begins with a brief review of that scholarship to identify analytic categories and approaches that can be adapted for researching post-conflict settings. I use Elisabeth Jean Wood's (2008) term "Social Processes of War" to highlight the role of socialization, norms, and practices. Despite the centrality of these concepts to questions in post conflict studies, they are underexamined. My research builds on Wood's work to highlight the centrality of these social processes.

I then focus on two areas of post conflict studies: Reintegration and Reconciliation. Scholarship on the reintegration of ex-combatants focuses on military concerns (eliminating the threat), economic concerns (securing jobs), and citizen concerns (relationship with the government), but relatively little scholarship engages with social reintegration (relationships with other civilians). My focus on social reintegration extends the discussion of socialization, norms, and practices described in the social processes of war literature and consequently implies a transformation of interpersonal relationships between adversaries. This transformation of interpersonal relationships following conflict is commonly referred to as reconciliation.

Ernesto Verdeja (2011) distinguishes between minimalist and maximalist conceptions of reconciliation. Critics of reconciliation typically refer to Verdeja's minimalist approach when they object to how reconciliation excludes structural issues such as inequality that shape the conflict and post-conflict contexts of those relationships. Other scholars propose new terms like civil reconstruction and civil repair to refer to Verdeja's maximalist approach that aims to confront the structural causes of the conflict. Yet there is little consensus on what that means in practice. Considering the broader objective of my project, I focus on post conflict scholarship that addresses interactions, groups, civil society, collective memory, norms, and practices.

The Social Processes of War

For this subsection, I take inspiration from the work of three scholars: Elisabeth Jean Wood (2008), Ana Arjona (2014), and Jocelyn Viterna (2006, 2013). Each examines the social order of war; the first two are political scientists, the third as a sociologist. Wood examines processes of military mobilization and socialization in Peru, El Salvador, Sri Lanka, and Sierra Leone, whereas Arjona examines governance practices of armed non-state actors in Colombia. Viterna examines mobilization and recruitment into the guerrillas in El Salvador. In each of these cases, I am interested in the attention paid to the social processes of mobilization and organizing for war. I share Viterna's view that an analytically similar process applies to the transition to peace, where it is not simply a demobilization but a re-mobilization, involving the creation of new practices, norms, and identities. I'll return to these authors below.

While a growing literature highlights the 'local turn' in peacebuilding (Mac Ginty and Richmond 2013; Paffenholz 2015; Bräuchler 2018), it does not take the social

process approach highlighted below. Roger Mac Ginty and Oliver P. Richmond emphasize that the "'local turn' is connected to the critical approach to peace and conflict studies and has been heavily influenced by critical and post-structural theory, postcolonial scholarship and practice, interdisciplinary, as well as a range of alternative ethnographic, sociological and action-related methodologies" (Mac Ginty and Richmond 2013:763). For them, the local is about increased attention to the voice and representation of local actors. Importantly, moving toward the local constitutes a shift in power relations between the local and the international. Thania Paffenholz states that the "local turn" has been problematic because of its "binary and essentialist understanding of the local and the international" (Paffenholz 2015:857). Instead, she argues for recognizing hybrid actors that defy the simple binary, and the power differential between "local" elites vis-à-vis the surrounding communities.

The literature on "the local" examines post-conflict settings from a micro approach, shifting the attention from leaders negotiating peace agreements to examining how communities transition to peace. However, this literature does not examine the transformation in practices, norms, socialization, and networks, along similar lines as the literature focused on "social processes of war" to which I now turn.

In "The Social Processes of Civil War: The Wartime Transformation of Social Networks," Elisabeth Jean Wood (2008) examines how war shapes individuals and their relationships. She indicates that scholars have under-examined the social processes of war, and she sets out to illuminate "the transformation of social actors, structures, norms and practices… [in civil wars, focusing on] six social processes: political mobilization, military socialization, polarization of social identities, militarization of local authority, transformation of gender roles, and fragmentation of the local political economy" (Wood

2008:539). This approach is distinct because, while other studies of war focus on the effects of violence on their victims, Wood's approach examines how war changes individuals through their participation as well.

In Wood's discussion of military socialization, she states that, "An overarching pattern is the substitution of complex everyday ties, shaped by multiple overlapping networks of family, employment, and community, by ties with members of the armed group" (Wood 2008: 547). From drilling exercises to initiation rituals, there are a myriad of ways in which military socialization builds cohesiveness within the military unit, and separation from those not in the military unit. In addition to the exercises and rituals, the physical proximity with other recruits and distance from other family and friends plays a significant role.

Wood presents a counterfactual to highlight how different the lives and social networks of recruits would be if they had not joined. "Rather than transitioning to adult life through traditional cultural rituals of maturation, apprenticeships to particular occupations, and participation in migrant labor networks, young recruits are socialized to adulthood through their integration into armed groups and the wielding of violence" (Wood 2008: 547). Put simply, war changes people. However, it is not just the violence and death associated with war that causes these changes; the social processes required for mobilization and organizing war also shape people's lives through the corresponding sets of practices, and peer groups with whom recruits associate.

Wartime practices shape relationships both in a structural and affective way. Socialization practices infuse meaning into the relationships that recruits build with their peers and superiors. This also shapes their prior relationships and precludes the relationships that they might have formed had they followed a more traditional life

course. This suggests an element of path dependence, as recruits are socialized by the practices of a group, and as they strengthen ties with that group. Yet what happens when that group disbands or transforms? I discuss this process of group formation and transformation in subsequent subsections in relation to memory and to social movements.

Ana Arjona (2014), one of Elisabeth Wood's students, builds upon Wood's insights and identifies the concept of "wartime institutions," the governance structures of armed non-state actors in local areas. She argues against the view of war as being chaotic and disorderly, and instead highlights the development of institutions in times of war that structure social processes. Arjona emphasizes the variety of local orders that took place during the conflict in Colombia. Together with her research team, she created a random sample of 32 municipalities where at least one-armed non-state actor was present for at least six months, stratifying by region for geographic variation. She then conducted a survey to establish a measure of the armed non-state actors' involvement in local institutions, and she stratified along this measure randomly selecting a total of 74 communities from the municipalities to conduct focus groups (Arjona 2014:1366-139). Her findings highlight how regulation by armed non-state actors varied locally, and she presents bar charts contrasting the frequency of armed group presence, the aspects of conduct regulated (free speech, sexual conduct, mobility, personal image), public goods provision, and dispute resolution.

Arjona highlights the significance of her contribution to post conflict studies by arguing that, "Given these differences in how local societies are regulated during the war, it is likely that the greatest challenges and opportunities for peace, reconciliation and reconstruction vary from place to place" (Arjona 2014:147). Arjona calls on scholars

to disaggregate country-level analyses to examine how local institutions shape relationships between civilians, combatants, and the state. The random, stratified sampling approach she employs gives robustness to her claim of variation in local institutions; however, the bar charts do not provide a rich understanding of the local institutions. Building upon this contribution requires examining social practices even within the broad categories Arjona identifies.

I now turn to the exemplary work of Jocelyn Viterna. In her article "Pulled, Pushed, Persuaded" (2006), Viterna examines women's mobilization in El Salvador. She argues against scholars who search for factors that "typically" lead to mobilization; instead, she highlights the broad variation in motives that individuals have in joining armed groups.

Viterna conducted a tiered sampling process, beginning with a list from the United Nations of the 25 *municipios* (akin to US counties) most affected by the conflict. She then chose six villages from these *municipios* to ensure variation of the ideological camps within the guerrilla group. Finally, she hired research assistants to survey every house in each village (or a random subset from the largest villages) to identify women who had participated in the guerrillas and women who had not participated in the guerrillas about a decade prior (Viterna 2006:11)

This process allowed Viterna to argue against the idea that there is a single path towards mobilization, while identifying a three-part typology. She catalogs individuals into three pathways, Pulled (Politicized), Pushed (Reluctant), and Persuaded (Recruited). Those recruits whom Viterna categorized as pulled or politicized joined out of ideological conviction, out of their belief in the political cause of the guerrillas. Those who were pushed or reluctant joined out of necessity; they felt compelled to join due to

government repression or fleeing from violence. Finally, those who she categorized as persuaded or recruited fell into two camps, those seeking adventure and those seeking retribution. Viterna states that individuals in each of the three categories exhibit different constellations across three key areas: biographies, networks, and situational context.

She summarizes her argument as follows:

> *Identifying conjunctural paths to mobilization has the potential to deepen our sociological knowledge of whether and how specific biographical characteristics (e.g., gender, race, class, age, sexuality, etc.), network memberships (e.g., political organizations, religious organizations, unions, family ties, neighborhoods, etc.), or changing situational contexts (e.g., democratic transitions, state repression, increasing globalization, etc.) contribute to popular mobilization (Viterna 2006:41).*

She affirms that each of these factors on their own are insufficient for distinguishing who joined and who did not join the guerrillas. There were individuals who were well connected with friends and family in the guerrillas but did not themselves join. Similarly, there were individuals who suffered state repression and were forced to flee violence but were not compelled to join. She states that the task is to identify how macro-structural conditions are perceived and internalized by individuals, and it is for this reason that a micro approach to mobilization is needed. The point is not to exclude the external factors but rather to see how individuals assimilate them differently.

In *Women in War: The Micro-Processes of Mobilization in El Salvador*, Viterna (2013) builds upon her prior work. One chapter addresses “Demobilization, Remobilization and Entrenchment.” Here, Viterna argues that the reintegration process should be examined with a focus on the same set of factors, although with different actors: “identities (and their related skills, resources, and commitments), arenas, and emotionally charged recruitment narratives” (Viterna 2013:60). When combatants are demobilized, they leave the war with a different identity than the one they entered with.

"Their understanding of 'who I am' now includes commitments to new people and newly acquired skills and resources. However, whether or not these new commitments, skills, and resources coalesce into a new participation identity depends largely on whether a well-matched opportunity for participation arises" (Viterna 2013:60). Former guerrillas need to find a way to convert the skills and experiences into something valued following the conflict. She cautions, however, that, "Postwar organizations' conceptualization of who might constitute a 'good recruit' also changed dramatically from wartime recruitment" (Viterna 2013:61). They did so even when these organizations emerged directly from the former guerrillas.

The work of each of these scholars (Arjona, Viterna, and Wood) breaks open the black box of "war," illuminating the social processes involved in socialization, norms, and practices. While these micro approaches, focused on norms and practices, are well developed in the study of war, analogous studies for the transition from conflict towards peace are underdeveloped. With research indicating that war transforms practices, norms, socialization, and networks, it is reasonable to infer that an inverse process needs to take place in the transition to peace. Such an inverse process may either dismantle the "war institutions" or create "peace institutions." However, this process has not been systematically investigated. For example, while Wood (2008) highlights the socialization processes of recruitment into armed groups, little attention has been paid to the socialization process for this transition from combatant to ex-combatant. One might expect this to be included under the concept of reintegration, but—as will be discussed in the next section—this is not a central focus of that literature. Reintegration is seen as the end of being a combatant but not as the beginning of being a civilian. Because the military lens has predominated reintegration practice and scholarship, the focus has

been on avoiding a return to combat instead of the social processes of the transition to peace.

Reintegration

The United Nations Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Resource Center defines reintegration as follows:

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

The process of transition from ex-combatant to civilian status is inextricably linked to one's understanding of each of those categories (combatant, ex-combatant and civilian) as well as to broader conceptions of the nature of the conflict. While practice and scholarship tend to treat ex-combatants the same, Viterna (2013) argues that biographies, networks, and contexts matter. Kaplan and Nussio (2015) show that the focus cannot be just on the ex-combatants, and that the traits of the surrounding communities matter for the transition. As indicated in the previous section, through a discussion of Viterna's work, individual recruits join guerrillas through different pathways and those in turn shape the individuals further. As a result, when individuals demobilize, they have different pathways available to them. In addition to these differences, the way in which technocrats imagine ex-combatants also shapes how they design reintegration programs. Are ex-combatants seen as committed social activists fighting for a better world or power-hungry terrorists with no ideals?

Kimberly Theidon lays out the challenge as follows:

> *"[b]y reducing DDR [Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration] to 'dismantling the machinery of war,' these programs have failed to adequately consider how to move beyond demobilizing combatants to facilitating social reconstruction and coexistence." (Theidon 2007:67)*

When the government and the military have been focused on combat, we need to begin thinking in a post-conflict manner. During the conflict, demobilized combatants pass into legality but are often of interest to the government's war efforts. This military lens focused efforts on removing weapons from ex-combatants and extracting counter-intelligence information. This conflicting interest affects the reintegration process in its design and implementation. Theidon (2007) emphasizes that building peace is a new challenge, different from ending the war. This subsection examines different aspects of reintegration and then turns to representations of ex-combatants. However, as indicated above, the aspects or reintegration and representations are intertwined.

Aspects of Reintegration

For scholars and practitioners alike, efforts at reintegration tend to focus on the ex-combatant in isolation, and on economic and citizenship perspectives. The economic perspectives focus on job training and employment (Bowd and Özerdem 2013), whereas the citizenship perspectives examine the relationship between the ex-combatant and the government (Metsola 2006). Employment and income generation are undeniably important for satisfying first order needs of survival. However, depending upon the implicit aims of DDR programs, this may be the end goal or an interim objective. Incorporating a focus on social reintegration means seeing employment not simply as an income generation activity but also a means for relationships between ex-combatants and civilians to be transformed. The social aspect of reintegration, focusing on how ties

develop and are transformed between ex-combatants and their neighbors and co-workers, is an important element to the solidification of peace.

The body of scholarship on social reintegration is limited (Bowd and Özerdem 2013; Kaplan and Nussio 2015; Özerdem 2012). Bowd and Özerdem (2013) discuss how to assess social reintegration and highlight the necessity that an ex-combatant's "identity is reconstructed into that of a civilian" (Bowd and Özerdem 2013:460). Kaplan and Nussio (2015) highlight the significance of the receiving community and indicate that the more civically active the receiving community is, the greater the capacity for individuals to become involved. Successful reintegration is not solely in the hands of the ex-combatant but is dependent upon contextual characteristics of the place where they attempt to reintegrate. Viterna (2013) also emphasizes the significance of alignments between the ex-combatant's skills and the opportunities in receiving communities. Similarly, there is a growing consensus that scholarship on reintegration needs to incorporate a development lens as "reintegrating people into poverty is not a sustainable strategy and leads to the reactivation of conflicts" (Herrera and Gonzalez 2013:294). Examining the actions and behaviors of ex-combatants in isolation is insufficient for understanding the process of reintegration that necessarily involves others as well.

A study on a municipal program in Bogotá in the early 2000's allows me to contrast two different approaches to reintegration, one planned at the local level and one planned at the national level. Francy Carranza-Franco (2014) discusses how the Program of Complementary Services to the Process of Demobilization and Reintegration in Bogotá (PAPDRB) tailored national Demobilization, Disarmament, and Reintegration (DDR) processes for the municipal level. Her primary conclusion concerns how "the programme aimed to bring together the three different, sometimes antagonistic, actors in

the DDR process: the national government, the community and the demobilised population" (Carranza-Franco 2014:262). Her focus is on how subnational entities (e.g., municipalities) found ways to push back on the national government agenda and insist on matters being tailored to local conditions.

She describes how the national government had created a system of external contractors to administer "peace homes."

> *The contractors were paid by the number of people receiving reintegration aid, which led to practices such as overcrowding in the buildings, lowering quality in food and services and the creation of poor, unhygienic living conditions. Although these shelters were designed as temporary accommodation giving them time to rent a place on their own means, the stay was frequently extended by months and most of this was idle time since no education, jobs or other activities were provided (Carranza-Franco 2014:261).*

These processes were created by a national administration concerned with addressing a military problem rather than a development or humanitarian one. The national government had a policy to foster desertions from the guerrillas, and the very success of this objective led to the secondary issue of how to reintegrate these individuals once deserted.

The municipal program PAPDRB was created to respond to this gap. A report released in 2011 by the Bogotá Mayor's office, was subtitled "A Differentiated Model, Polyphonic, and Pedagogical." It cites a World Bank report from 1998 that stated, "part of the problem of the DDR processes in Colombia was a lack of preparation of the communities to meet ex-combatants, and the lack of a disposition from the political classes to open real democratic spaces for organized political expression." (PAPDRB 2011: 23) The municipal program developed initiatives to facilitate the involvement of ex-combatants with surrounding communities. The program took on a tailored approach that aimed to build upon their existing skill sets, in line with the asset-based approach

discussed below. Notably the directors of the municipal program were themselves ex-combatants who had demobilized earlier. This background likely gave them a unique perception of the meanings, opportunities, and challenges of other ex-combatants.

Representations of ex-combatants

As stated above, Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) has primarily been seen from a military lens (Herrera and González 2013: 276), and scholars working in this area are often affiliated with Security Studies Centers. Consequently, the focus of DDR scholars and practitioners has primarily been on Disarmament and Demobilization, with less attention paid to Reintegration.

Furthermore, this common DDR perspective views ex-combatants as criminals, and this framing shapes the types of questions asked, and the approaches undertaken by researchers. Alpaslan Özerdem states that there is "a paucity of literature providing a clear understanding of" social integration, and so he turns to desistance theory "which outlines assistance models for ex-offenders' re-entry into society" (Özerdem 2012:52).

Throughout the literature, scholars present ex-combatants in a homogenized fashion, despite broad variations across geographies, times, armed groups, and even within armed groups. Schöb (2016) indicates that the assumption has often been that combatants are young men, and—with the exception of gender scholars—few have examined the characteristics of the target group of DDR programs. Research employs a similar analytic lens to ex-combatants on opposing sides of a conflict, and across the globe in Colombia, Northern Ireland, and elsewhere. Exceptions include Gutiérrez Sanín (2008) and Nussio and Ugarriza (2013) whose research finds significant differences

between FARC and paramilitary combatants in Colombia in terms of social composition, socialization processes into their groups, and after their demobilization.

Conceptually, a crime-focused approach frames the ex-combatants as villains and other actors as "good." The process of reintegration is inherently conservative, in that it does not imply changes to society but rather to the ex-combatant to adjust to society. Discussions of reintegration typically focus on what the ex-combatant needs to do rather than the surrounding community. From this perspective, ex-combatants should aspire to become like civilians. This framework is problematic in complex (post)conflict contexts where lines between perpetrators and victims are blurred, and the state itself has participated in atrocities against "innocent" actors.

Popularly held views assume that ex-combatants are security threats, "they know nothing else than killing" (Nussio 2018: 141), and that they are "responsible for organized violence after demobilization (Nussio 2018: 142). However, Nussio (2018) analyzed estimated recidivism rates using police records in Colombia to conclude that—while some ex-combatants have committed crimes following demobilization—this popular held perception does not hold. Instead, he suggests that ex-combatant behavior follows life course predictions that, "by growing older, ex-combatants become less attracted to violence." (Nussio 2018: 136)

A separate literature examines the transition from ex-combatant to civilian through an asset-based approach, starting with the skills and resources that ex-combatants bring to the table (Clubb 2016; McEvoy and Shirlow 2009; Friðriksdóttir 2018). McEvoy and Shirlow highlight how in Northern Ireland "many politically motivated ex-prisoners themselves bridle at the term 'reintegration,' suggesting that it undermines their 'hard earned' status as political rather than ordinary offenders" (McEvoy and

Shirlow 2009: 33). McEvoy and Shirlow go on to highlight the significant contributions that ex-combatants have made following their demobilization to building peace in Northern Ireland, and they conclude, “These skills and experiences should be recognised, encouraged and harnessed in any society seeking to resolve conflict” (McEvoy and Shirlow 2009: 49).

Gordon Clubb (2016) follows a similar argument in *From Terrorists to Peacekeepers,* highlighting the constructive community roles that IRA ex-combatants have played in de-escalating violence. In addition, Friðriksdóttir (2018) highlights the need to incorporate ideology into analyses of reintegration, seeing it as motivation for “both violent and peaceful modes of positive change” (Friðriksdóttir 2018: 2). She goes on to say that her claim is not that all ex-combatants are social activists, but that such labels can coincide. Friðriksdóttir’s work highlights how ex-combatants describe their own motivations. Yet she does not examine group interaction, and so the role of ideology is presented as an individual process rather than a social one.

From the traditional framing of ex-combatants as terrorists, who only know how to kill, this new depiction of ex-combatants as social activists and constructive agents of change is unimaginable. It is at least a drastic reversal from their prior activity as ex-combatants. However, a more likely possibility is that there is a greater continuity between life’s purpose and ambitions, albeit expressed differently, throughout their lives. Examining this possibility further is necessary not only to better understand who ex-combatants are, but also to understand the transition to peace.

This line of research could extend Viterna’s research (2006) on seeing reintegration as ‘re-mobilization’, and the different pathways for mobilization of combatants, to present multiple pathways of demobilization and reintegration. If there is

a greater degree of continuity than might be allowed from a desistance framing, then the outcome of reintegration may depend upon not only the ex-combatants, themselves, nor even just their surrounding community, but also the alignment or misalignment between life purposes and changes in society. As the discussion in the next section elaborates, lasting peace must engage with transforming interpersonal relationships and the structural causes of the conflict.

Reconciliation and Reconstruction

For Wagner-Pacifici and Hall reconciliation involves changes in identity, and the development of "more complex views of each other through such things as integrative narratives" (Wagner-Pacifici and Hall 2012:191) Ernesto Verdeja states that reconciliation is:

> *a condition of mutual respect among former enemies, which requires the reciprocal recognition of the moral worth and dignity of others. Political reconciliation is achieved when previous, conflict-era identities no longer operate as the primary cleavages in politics, and thus citizens acquire new identities that cut across those earlier fault lines. (Verdeja 2011:166)*

One suggestion of how mutual respect is built is Gordon Allport's Intergroup Contact Hypothesis (1954). Recent meta-analyses of studies from the past 50 years support the hypothesis and argue that it can now be referred to as a theory (Pettigrew and Tropp 2006; Hewstone and Swart 2011). Intergroup Contact Theory states that increased contact between groups can improve relations under four conditions: 1) status equality, 2) intergroup cooperation, 3) common goals, and 4) institutional support. Nevertheless, Intergroup Contact Theory suffers from several limitations. Not only does the approach fail to specify the processes through which intergroup relations improve (Pettigrew 1998; Pettigrew et al. 2011), it also does not consider the broader contexts

within which interactions unfold. A look at processes and contexts and their complexities is thus needed.

First, reconciliation requires clearly defined parties that are going to be reconciled. In complex, protracted conflicts, there is not necessarily agreement on who these parties are. In Northern Ireland, for example, many community relations initiatives take Catholics and Protestants as the two groups that need to be reconciled. Yet McEvoy, McEvoy, and McConnachie (2006) caution against seeing the conflict as two-sided (between Protestant/Unionists and Catholic/Nationalists) as that description obscures the political violence of various state agencies including the British Army and local police. Colombia similarly has a multitude of actors that cannot be discussed independently, and as with Northern Ireland the state also committed numerous which are often erroneously omitted from discussion.

Second, a focus on "the local" is also visible in many scholarly works (Theidon 2006, 2007, 2012; Prieto Sanabria 2012) that have focused on coexistence, where perpetrators and victims live side by side following conflict. For instance, Kimberly Theidon refers to what she calls "the micropolitics of reconciliation" which she captures in the following questions:

> *How do people commit acts of collective violence against individuals with whom they have lived for years? When the war ends, what do people do with the killers in their midst? What do local processes of reconciliation tell us about how people dismantle lethal violence? Finally, what are the possibilities and limitations of communal forms of justice, punishment, and reconciliation among "intimate enemies? (Theidon 2006: 436).*

Yet Verdeja critiques the focus on co-existence, by distinguishing between minimalist and maximalist approaches of reconciliation. A minimalist conception of reconciliation is "simple co-existence between former enemies, premised on a rejection of violence" (2011: 168). By contrast, a maximalist conception "stipulate[s] more

extensive requirements for morally acceptable coexistence… call[ing] on perpetrators to acknowledge, repent, and ultimately be forgiven by their victims" (Verdeja 2011: 169).

This distinction between minimalist and maximalist reconciliation echoes a central distinction in the post-conflict literature made by Johan Galtung in creating the terms positive and negative peace. Negative peace is the absence of personal violence, whereas positive peace entails an affirmative condition such as “egalitarian distribution of power and resources” (Galtung 1969:183). Thus, for Galtung, peace is related not only to conflict, but also to development. Where prior literature focused on “conflict resolution”, now scholars are employing the language of “conflict transformation”. Whereas traditionally scholars and practitioners saw peace as the result of resolving a conflict, increasingly it is understood that conflicts may persist long after violence has stopped. The challenge then lies in shaping the transformation of that ongoing process. In each of these different debates, the question relates to an attempt to define the objective more ambitiously, and the dangers of too narrow a definition.

One manifestation of this debate is seen in Northern Ireland between community relations and human rights approaches. McVeigh and Rolston challenge a view of Northern Ireland being “post-sectarian” after the peace accord and criticize foci on “interpersonal relationships rather than structural inequality” (McVeigh and Rolston 2007:15). As McEvoy, McEvoy, and McConnachie suggest, framing the nature of the conflict as between the “two tribes” has led to extending this to the resolution through reconciliation. This has been attractive to “policymakers ‘anxious for quick-fix solutions to long-term structural problems’” (McEvoy, McEvoy, and McConnachie 2006:95). In contrast, Beirne and Knox (2014) interview activists from both camps to highlight the differences but ultimately conclude that it is a false dichotomy between potentially

synergistic approaches. A focus on interpersonal relationships is necessary, as is a focus on structural problems. The two approaches can be complementary rather than at odds. By contrast, focusing exclusively on interpersonal relationships will leave structural inequalities outside the scope of research and practice.

Moving beyond questions of reconciliation, some scholars prefer the terms of "civil repair" or "civil reconstruction." There is an overlap between these terms, but the latter two tend to encompass a broader re-imagination of society rather than a narrower restoration to relationships between groups in conflict. Fletcher and Weinstein explain the need for the term "social reconstruction" since mass violence destroys not only lives but also a society's social fabric. However, they state that the social arrangements preceding the violence may not have been adequate, and so reconstruction may involve the "construction of new societal structures and relationships" (Fletcher and Weinstein 2002: 624). When the word "re"-construction is employed, however, it is recognized that it is not necessarily a return to the past but rather an attempt to make a new beginning. Similarly, Arriaza and Roht-Arriaza highlight that "[t]hese efforts are sometimes referred to as reconciliation. We prefer the term social reconstruction, although we add that this implies a transformative element, not simply a return to an unjust status quo" (Arriaza and Roht-Arriaza 2008: 156). In these framings, reconciliation is seen as conservative, as negative peace (the absence of violence), and reconstruction by contrast is challenging the deeper social causes of violence and therefore working towards positive peace. Stover and Weinstein (2004) similarly distinguish "social reconstruction" from reconciliation, indicating that the former "reaffirms and develops a society and its institutions based on shared values and human rights" (Stover and Weinstein 2004:5). Not all scholars view these two concepts this way, for instance Shannon Golden,

presents nearly the opposite view, “I conceptualized reconciliation as a forward-looking process of social reconstruction…” (Golden 2013:42)

In “Progress and Disillusion: Civil Repair and its Discontents” (2016) and *The Civil Sphere* (2006), Jeffrey Alexander engages with the concept of civil repair in relation to economics and modes of incorporation (ranging from multiculturalism to assimilation). He presents a challenge to assimilation processes of incorporation which has relevance for the earlier discussion of the reintegration of ex-combatants.

> *As notions of radical exclusion gradually gave way to the idea of incorporation, individual members of economic, ethnic, racial, and gender out-groups were allowed entrance to the social center. However, they were required to leave their polluted qualities at the door. This was the homogenizing logic of assimilation: individuals could be incorporated, but not their qualities. Publicly, the styles, values, and modes of expression of the core group must be adopted as one’s own. (Alexander 2016:77)*

Are ex-combatants to be reintegrated free from any of their qualities, motivations, and life histories? Scholarly literature and practitioners often present ex-combatants as criminals and terrorists without any discussion of what led them to take up arms. Ex-combatants are effectively asked to “leave their polluted qualities at the door” and become “good citizens.” The focus becomes how to keep them from taking up their weapons again, rather than what led them to believe that route was necessary and what can be done (by them and others) moving forward.

While these texts on civil repair and civil reconstruction share a critique of reconciliation, there is less agreement on what sorts of transformations are necessary. Part of the allure of the term reconstruction may come from other historical instances ranging from “reconstruction” in Germany following WWII and, in the US, following the Civil War.

Culture and its Role in Reintegration

The term "culture" takes on different meanings across different disciplines and times of scholarship. Pachucki and Breiger (2010) indicate that, "In the 1970s, the term "culture" implied culture writ large, as national character or the ultimate values of a society, whereas today it is more likely to refer to local practices and meanings, discourse, and repertoires" (Pachucki and Breiger 2010: 2). Interpersonal interactions shape groups and their memories. Each of these in turn shape interactions.

Another shift was proposed by Jeffrey Alexander and Philip Smith (2003) in “The Strong Program in Cultural Sociology: Elements of a Structural Hermeneutics,” where they distinguish between Cultural Sociology from Sociology of Culture. They define the former as a manner of examination, while the latter is the examination of an object, "culture." In the case of Sociology of Culture, culture is seen as an effect or output of other processes (structural/economic). By contrast, Cultural Sociology "makes collective emotions and ideas central to its methods and theories precisely because it is such subjective and internal feelings that so often seem to rule the world” (Alexander and Smith 2003: 5).

As Berger and Luckmann indicate, culture is both cause and effect. Speaking of knowledge, an aspect of culture, they state, “Knowledge is a social product and knowledge is a factor of social change” (Berger and Luckmann 1967: 87). As a socially constructed and emergent property, culture can be examined as an independent or dependent variable. Culture shapes how individuals behave, while it is—at the same time—created and sustained by the behavior of individuals. Scholars can ask how

culture affects other spheres but also, how culture is created, reproduced, and transformed.

In the following, I review core literature on the role of interactions in constructing, maintaining, and transforming boundaries between groups and on processes mediated by the bi-directional role of memory. Interactions shape and are shaped by distinctions of “us versus them” (symbolic boundaries). Interactions shape knowledge of the present and the past (memory), which in turn shapes future interactions and symbolic boundaries. This section tackles these topics via two interrelated subsections on interactions and memory. The first subsection examines interactions through multiple lenses including social network analysis, relationalism, formalism, groups, and symbolic boundaries. The second subsection extends this discussion into the field of collective memory.

Interactions

Social network analysis has at times been presented as competing with cultural approaches; in fact, social network analysis emerged in direct opposition to cultural approaches (Pachucki and Breiger 2010). However, increasingly there is a recognition that network ties are not only conduits of culture but also gain significance through cultural processes. Mark Pachucki and Ronald Breiger (2010) argue that "contemporary work on culture... and social networks... [can be] usefully seen as mutually constitutive and coevolving with common roots in relational thinking" (2010:206). There has been a growing convergence of cultural sociology and network analysis, in part through the school of relational sociology. (Emirbayer 1997; Erikson 2013; Mische 2011; Pachucki and Breiger 2010)

Emily Erickson (2013), highlighting the possibilities of constructive engagement, indicates that social network analysis mixes two inconsistent theoretical frameworks (formalism and relationalism), and is thus not inherently relational. Formalists focus on social networks as structure, examining the pattern of ties or structural holes while minimally incorporating the meaning of those ties. Thus, while social network analysis focuses on the tie (a relationship) as its fundamental building block, the term relationalism signifies more than a focus on relationships. Erickson states, "for relationists, meaning is inseparable from the study of social networks because relationships are created out of meaning. For formalists, in contrast, meaning is something that flows through relationships and should be separated out from structural analysis whenever possible" (Erikson 2013: 227). In structural approaches, the existence of the tie supersedes the nature of the relationship whereas in relational approaches the relationship is defined by its meaning to each participant.

Emirbayer, in a "Manifesto for a Relational Sociology" (1997), distinguishes between Relational Sociology and essentialist approaches. The relational approach makes an ontological claim, asserting that the objects of study do not have essentialist qualities. The emphasis is on a constructionist view and focuses on the processes by which objects are created and transformed. Emirbayer emphasizes that while the essentialist approach sees objects of study as having characteristics of their own, the relational approach takes a more process-oriented view and sees them as defined by their relationship with others. Applying the relational approach to memory research, Jeffrey Olick seeks "to rethink collective memory in a more thoroughly process-relational manner" (Olick 2007: 90). Similarly, in discussing a special issue of *Memory Studies*,

Ann Rigney states, “[our cases] bear out the need for a 'processual and relational' approach to the dynamics of collective memory-making” (Rigney 2002: 254).

Matthew Desmond applies this relational approach in his study of evictions (Desmond 2016) and expounds on the methodological implications for ethnography (Desmond 2014). He states, "Relational ethnography involves studying fields rather than places, boundaries rather than bounded groups, processes rather than processed people, and cultural conflict rather than group culture" (Desmond 2014: 547). He clarifies that ethnography is not inherently relational; on the contrary, much ethnography starts with essentialist assumptions about bounded places or communities. He provides four guidelines for ethnographers aiming to construct a relational object of analysis. "One can study: (1) fields rather than places; (2) boundaries rather than bounded groups; (3) processes rather than processed people; and (4) cultural conflict rather than group culture" (Desmond 2014: 562).

Andreas Wimmer describes how Fredrik Barth’s work departed from the ethnographic approach of bounded communities:

> *Barth broke away from the Herderian canon in anthropology, according to which each ethnic group represented a historically grown, uniquely shaped flower in the garden of human cultures. Instead of studying each of these cultures in a separate ethnography, Barth and his collaborators observed how the boundaries between two ethnic groups are maintained, even though their cultures might be indistinguishable and even though individuals and groups might switch from one side of the boundary to the other (Wimmer 2014: 971).*

This relational approach implicitly pushes back against a particular concept of structure. In Wimmer’s words quoted above, if each ethnic group were a “uniquely shaped flower in the garden of human cultures” then there would be a coherence within each ethnic group and a fundamental difference across ethnic groups that together compose the garden. In this view, the group would provide the guiding principle for

interaction within the group and therefore scholarship can similarly be bounded within the group.

In this sense, interrelated groups are a central topic of interest for my project, while interrelations within groups continue to matter. Gary Alan Fine (Fine 2010; Fine 2012) emphasizes how relationships within groups function to propagate cultural practices. He writes, "Interaction provides a dynamics for social life but lacks the structure on which action creates stability and self-reference. Groups provide this structure" (Fine 2012:172). This extends what might otherwise be ephemeral interactions, through the development of group idiocultures.

Going beyond relationships within groups, Nina Eliasoph and Paul Lichterman (2003) advance an argument about the consequence of overlapping group membership. By examining individuals in multiple groups, they highlight that an individual may behave one way in one group but another in a different group.

In *Elusive Togetherness*, Lichterman (2005) examines this notion further under the term group customs. He explores how religious groups attempt to build relationships with different groups. Lichterman emphasizes that the formalist social network approach fails to recognize the meanings that individuals give their relationships. It is insufficient to identify that there is a tie present. Instead, we need to look at how the corresponding individuals understand that tie, and their approach towards each other. One of his central findings is that the custom within groups affects their effectiveness in reaching outwards. He states that “[D]ifferent customs produce different kinds of group togetherness, not just more or less togetherness” (Lichterman 2005:52).

However, the concept of groups in much of the cultural sociology literature overlooks the broader set of relations between individuals within and across groups.

Eliasoph and Lichterman (2003) and Fine (2012) explore the function of groups but overlook the potential impact stemming from the varying centrality of some individuals over others within those groups. *Group styles* highlight the impact on an individual's behavior of their overlapping group membership, but it does not bring to light the differences that would result from other shared ties between individuals in and across those groups.

Fine (2012) discusses how the analysis of interlocking of groups permits a "meso-level of analysis" between individual and macro approaches which enriches both structural and interactional approaches.

The concept of groups implies the existence of boundary making and symbolic boundaries (us versus them), although it is distinct from the literature of group dynamics. Research on symbolic boundaries examines how individuals define the line that separates us and them. Symbolic boundaries are contextual and can change from person to person, place to place, and moment to moment. As this mutability hardens, social boundaries form. Bail quotes Lamont and Molnar (2002:168) to define symbolic boundaries as the:

> *...conceptual distinctions made by social actors... [that] separate people into groups and generate feelings of similarity and group membership… [Conversely] social boundaries are objective forms of social differences manifested in unequal forms of social differences manifested in unequal access to an unequal distribution of resources... and social opportunities (Bail 2008: 38).*

This places symbolic boundaries and social boundaries on a spectrum, where symbolic boundaries are relatively fluid and about "feelings," and social boundaries are relatively rigid and with material impacts. However, Edgell et al. (2019) show that the distinction between these literatures overlooks that "drawing symbolic boundaries is not

a benign practice; rather, it is associated with willingness to draw social boundaries that support material and political inequality."

Pachucki et al. (2007) follow Lamont and Molnar (2002) in highlighting "four characteristics to boundaries: permeability, salience, durability, and visibility" (Pachucki et al. 2007: 332). Pachucki et al. also employ a range of terms to highlight cross group interaction including "boundary spanners," "crossers," "hybridity," "bridging." While actors in these positions are not limited by the boundaries, their acts can serve to either reinforce or blur boundaries. A critical mass of individuals crossing previously recognized boundaries might indicate that it has lost its significance. Similarly, “As Stein reminds us, ’a community’s boundaries remain a meaningful point of reference for its members only as long as they are repeatedly tested by people who are on the fringes of the group and repeatedly defended by those within it’’ (p. 8)” (Pachucki, Pendergrass, and Lamont 2007: 341). Therefore, individual boundary spanners may play a role in the withering away of boundaries or strengthening them.

The role of boundary spanners directs our attention to the question of agency and structures, as they exist in a liminal position and play a role in transforming structures. William H. Sewell (1992) points out the ambiguity that has existed around the term structure. “Whereas for anthropologists ’structure’ has typically meant culture, for sociologists structure is understood to be ’hard’ or ‘material’ and seen in opposition to culture which has been seen as ‘soft’ " (Sewell 1992: 3). This view of culture as ‘soft’ is precisely what Cultural Sociology aims to refute. Sewell points out that sociological theories of structure have been well suited to explain continuity while ill-suited to explain change. Through his reformulation, agency and structure are not posed in opposition but rather they are co-constitutive. Structure emerges through agency, and while

structure serves to reproduce individual practices, it requires individuals to respond accordingly. Otherwise, it withers away.

While Sewell's analysis breaks down the binary of agency and structure, Emirbayer and Mische (1998) go further in an elaboration of the concept of agency. They emphasize how actors "continuously engage patterns and repertoires from the past, project hypothetical pathways forward in time, and adjust their actions to the exigencies of emerging situations" (Emirbayer and Mische 1998: 1012). These patterns and repertoires of the past will be examined in more depth in the subsection on memory.

Related, Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1966) state, "The decisive question is whether [an individual] still retains the awareness that, however objectivated, the social world was made by men - and, therefore, can be remade by them" (Berger and Luckmann 1967: 89). One particularly clear illustration of the emergent property resulting from the passage of time is the example of parents (Berger and Luckmann 1967: 74-81). As they interact, they consciously create a social world, but their children are born and grow into a fundamentally different situation. Many of the conscious decisions of their parents are hidden behind the veil of "simply the way things are done." However, while scholarship has examined continuity it has not examined change as effectively. Throughout their discussion in *The Social Construction of Reality*, the process of de-reification is identified as needing examination but stated to be beyond the book's scope.

> *The historical and empirical application of the sociology of knowledge must take special note of the social circumstances that favor dereification - such as the overall collapse of institutional orders, the contact between previously segregated societies, and the important phenomenon of social marginality. These problems, however, exceed the framework of our present considerations (Berger and Luckmann 1967: 91-92).*

Ann Swidler echoes this assessment, as she states, “that our usual models of culture’s effects are most inadequate [for unsettled times]” (Swidler 1986: 278). With the focus of research having been on continuity rather than change, she indicates, “A crucial task for research is to understand how cultural capacities created in one historical context are reappropriated and altered in new circumstances” (Swidler 1986: 283).

Memory

Groups, including ex-combatants and surrounding communities, are marked by shared memories, and boundary spanners are agents who may contribute to memory shifts. It is thus appropriate to examine the field of Collective Memory research with its long history in sociology. Maurice Halbwachs, a student of Emile Durkheim, is "widely considered the founding father of contemporary collective memory research" (Olick 2007: 5). Halbwachs continued to develop several of the works of Durkheim with the infusion of new empirical data. Yet, different from Durkheim, Halbwachs employs the concept of groups rather than society. Lewis Coser highlights two points of significance to this in his introduction to a compilation of Halbwachs' writings, *On Collective Memory* ([1952] 1992). First, related to the ontology of memory itself, one cannot speak of the memory of the entire society, but rather of collective memories of particular groups, and by consequence, there are a multitude of collective memories in any given society. Secondly, "Every collective memory requires the support of a group delimited in space and time" (Halbwachs [1952] 1992:22). These two points together place groups at the center of both, about what memory is and how it is formed and maintained.

The collective memory literature takes a social constructionist approach, which plays out both in the construction and re-construction of memory. As Savelsberg and King state, “This does not mean, of course, that the past did not happen. People did suffer pain, they cried, screamed, resigned, and many died. All of this is all too real. Yet the way we know about their suffering is never direct. It is always mediated and filtered” (Savelsberg and King 2007: 9-10). The examination of collective memory aims to illuminate the processes by which knowledge of the past is mediated and filtered and the impacts this has on subsequent action.

Halbwachs is known for developing the presentist approach to memory that argues that memory is shaped by the current circumstances. As he puts it, "...to the extent that the dead retreat into the past this is not because the material measure of time that separates them from us lengthens; it is because nothing remains of the group in which they passed their lives, and which needed to name them, that their names slowly become obliterated" (Halbwachs [1952] 1992: 73).

The presentist approach is at times contrasted with Karl Mannheim's theory of generations (1952) which argues that memory is influenced by the life course, as events that occur during formative moments leave a stronger imprint. In confirmation of this theory, Schuman and Scott found that individuals asked to specify the two events that were most important in the last fifty years tended to name events that happened when they were in early adulthood. However, the sharp contrast between the presentist and generation approaches is a strawman (Olick 2007: 8). The presentist approach asserts that memory of the past is shaped by the present, but it does not state that it can be made or re-made without regard to the events that transpired. Similarly, while the generations approach emphasizes the relative strength of memories developed at

formative moments in one's life, it does not claim that a memory from a formative period remains unchanged for the duration of the individual's lifetime. Both approaches converge when the process of memory formation is further specified in terms of interactions, practices, and groups.

Jeffrey Olick advocates that "Conceiving of collective memory as part of a political-cultural process thus remedies the presuppositional tendency to view it either as unchanging and definitive past or as pure strategy, always malleable in the present" (Olick 2007:40). A first step is to distinguish between what Olick (2007) terms "Collected Memory" and "Collective Memory," and consequently replace a psychological approach by a sociological approach. In the case of the former, memory is seen as analogous to a library catalogue, where following an event a memory is stored and preserved until needed, at which point it is recalled in identical form, and corresponding wear and tear from time elapsed. Collective Memory by contrast recognizes that memory is shaped by the interactions surrounding an event, the narratives, and rituals.

In the same vein, Alexander et al. (2010) describe cultural trauma, a specific form of collective memory. In the first chapter of their volume, Alexander argues against what he calls the "naturalistic fallacy" of the psychological view, which indicates that trauma is a natural consequence of an extreme event. By contrast, cultural trauma theory argues that trauma is the result of the interactions and narratives of the event that raises it to the level of trauma. These conceptions of memory and trauma do not deny the existence of the original event but emphasize that the meaning attributed to it is not inherent in the event itself.

Memories are not static, but the result of social interactions. A relational perspective thus examines the process by which memories are formed rather than the

memories themselves. As Olick puts it, "So much of our colloquial and scholarly discourse indeed treats memory as a thing: the memory. But what is memory except the variety of practices that comprise remembering?" (Olick 2007: 10) This statement highlights the interaction-centric approach that is central to my project. Yet Olick's wording here goes too far. While colloquial and scholarly discourse has overlooked the process of remembering and the corresponding implications for memory, the resulting memory itself also shapes subsequent interactions and symbolic boundaries. This is aptly conveyed by Savelsberg and King (2007) who show how the “reciprocal relationship between law and collective memory speaks to direct and indirect ways in which law and collective memory mutually affect and constitute each other” (Savelsberg 2007:206). It is necessary to examine how memory is socially constructed, but without obscuring how that same social construction subsequently shapes other social processes.

At a subsequent point, Olick frames the relationship between memory and group membership differently, stating, "It is not just that we remember as members of groups but that we also constitute those groups and their members simultaneously in the act, thus "re-member-ing" (Olick 2007: 29). Here the process of remembering and group definition coincide. As remembering serves to form memories, it also serves to shape groups, which in turn will be the space in which subsequent interactions occur that continue to (re)shape memories in the future.

These memories of the past shape identity, and the definition of group boundaries ("us" and "them") as well as behaviors across these groups. I next turn to memory scholarship that focuses on violent pasts, to address the question, how the constitution of these groups changes when their very being is reinforced by memory?

Martha Minow identifies a common dichotomy presented in the literature, "A common formulation posits the two dangers of wallowing in the past and forgetting it. Too much memory, or not enough... “(Minow 1999: 2)

This presents memory in a linear fashion as something that can be quantified. While discussions in transitional justice often frame the matter in this way, this approach implicitly falls more along the lines of Olick's Collected Memory rather than the Collective Memory. It sees memory as unchanging over time, and society can either access it or not, to a greater or lesser extent. Either way, the argument refers to an essentialized "it."

In contrast to this perspective, a body of literature examines how memory changes over time and is shaped by an array of factors. Savelsberg and King state that recent literature argues that “the collective memory of past atrocities is a key mechanism determining whether cycles of violence and hatred will persist or cease” (Savelsberg and King 2007: 31). They emphasize the role of legal institutions in shaping collective memory. Court cases do not simply decide the innocence or guilt of the defendant, but also serve an important role in the writing of history. However, they do so in competition with other mechanisms, and selectively due to a unique set of institutional rules that “restrict information and allow only some evidence provided in court” (Savelsberg and King 2007: 24). How do individuals understand and categorize events of mass violence?

Through content analysis of over 3,000 news articles and interviews with journalists, government and nongovernmental actors in eight countries, the analysis indicated that the framing of the violence in Darfur was shaped by court interventions. (Savelsberg 2015). In *Representing Mass* Violence, Savelsberg (2015) shows how

distinct fields of action (humanitarian aid, human rights, diplomacy, journalism) as well as country histories shape how social actors framed the Darfur conflict. Judgements by the International Criminal Court (ICC) shaped these framings, but in distinct ways. For instance, in the humanitarian field, professionals were less inclined to apply the genocide label, perhaps in part because their orientation to providing humanitarian aid required maintaining ongoing relationships with the Sudanese government so as not to lose rights to operate in the country. Similarly, country histories mattered, where, for instance, German diplomats were hesitant to point fingers because of the shadow of the Holocaust. Each of these examples indicate that the evaluation of an event is shaped by the power dynamics and institutional rules of professional fields and national contexts.

In recognizing that memory of the past is shaped by a variety of factors including legal interventions and group interactions, some actors intentionally aim to shape how the past is seen. Alejandro Baer and Nathan Sznaider indicate that, "Memory activists want to radically reshape everyone's understanding of the past as a means of reshaping the future" (Baer and Sznaider 2017:8-9). In these framings, memory is not solely a reflection of the past, but also shapes the perceived possible directions forward. Ann Rigney indicates that the engineering or orchestrating of memory for a more "productive of a peaceful and just co-existence, rather than the source of division, remains one of the underlying assumptions of (post-) conflict governance" (Rigney 2002:251-252).

For instance, Oscar Fernando Acevedo Arango proposes the concept, "reserved memories" (as quoted in Quishpe 2018:98) to refer to those distinct collective memories that the FARC may have formed in isolation during the conflict. He suggests that individuals may not have shared these memories publicly during the conflict due to threats to the life of anyone who dared state them but might now emerge in contest of

previously unquestioned narratives. Quishpe (2018) highlights three instances of memory entrepreneurship following the peace accord, where the FARC ex-combatants are producing art (music, theater, dance, and paintings), commemorations and public acts, museums, and tourist routes to disseminate their narratives of the conflict. The new forms of engagement between the FARC and the rest of Colombian society will bring into contact distinct collective memories, the resulting changes of one or both of these collective memories are significant for the solidification of peace. There is similar scholarship on the representation of collective memories of conflict in political murals (Rolston 2010) and political tourism in Northern Ireland.

Discussion

As much of the literature in this section emphasizes the reinforcing tendencies of culture, I seek to explain how change takes place. Swidler (1986) above challenges research to examine “how cultural capacities created in one historical context are reappropriated and altered in new circumstances” (Swidler 1986: 283). This is precisely the challenge in the context of reintegration; the conflict shaped individuals lives in profound ways, the task in the transition to peace is to reappropriate and alter cultural capacities for the new context.

Theoretical insights from boundary work is relevant for the examination of the social reintegration of ex-combatants, informing the process of their becoming an accepted part of civil society and the salience of the label 'ex-combatant.' As Bail (2018) emphasizes how "immigration in Europe is ideally suited to the study of boundary work, given major differences in the causes, sources, and scope of interaction between immigrants and natives across countries," (39) a similar argument can be made for the

reintegration of ex-combatants, particularly in Colombia, where they are located in distinct spatial areas within a similar geography.

Group boundaries between the FARC and the rest of civil society have been formed and reinforced through decades of conflict. Will these boundaries blur through the actions of boundary spanners? Will memories constrain such actions? Will distinct collective memories of the conflict facilitate some actors in becoming boundary spanners while hindering others? Will the act of boundary spanning re-shape collective memories?

3. METHODS

For my dissertation, I conducted thirteen months of fieldwork in Colombia between 2018 and 2020, consisting of participant observation and semi structured interviews. My dissertation research included two months of fieldwork in 2018, when I conducted pre-dissertation research, and eleven months of fieldwork beginning in fall 2019 and extending through the summer of 2020. The larger time period was interrupted by the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. During the first half of my fieldwork, I reconnected with individuals whom I met in 2018 and established rapport across the different settings. I was able to make several trips to my respective field sites and began to identify boundary spanners (both ex-combatant and community members), as well as individuals who I call “secondary participants,” including those who are socially close to each other, and socially distant from boundary spanners.

This project builds upon research conducted in collaboration with Joachim Savelsberg in Northern Ireland with three months of ethnographic work in 2017, supplemented by a week in 2018 (Soto and Savelsberg Forthcoming). This experience served as a pilot for the dissertation project. Additionally, it serves as a point of comparison as Northern Ireland also had armed groups who had laid down their weapons and faced the challenge of integration into mainstream society, just as mainstream society faced the challenge of receiving them.

The following subsections highlight my process of site selection, sampling, methods, operationalization, and analysis.

Site Selection

The FARC demobilized to 26 formal settlement camps, known as ETCRs[6], across rural parts of the country (See **Figure 1**). The colored squares indicate the locations of formal settlement camps distributed across 14 departments. The black dots are locations where the Colombian Agency for Reincorporation (ARN) has offices.

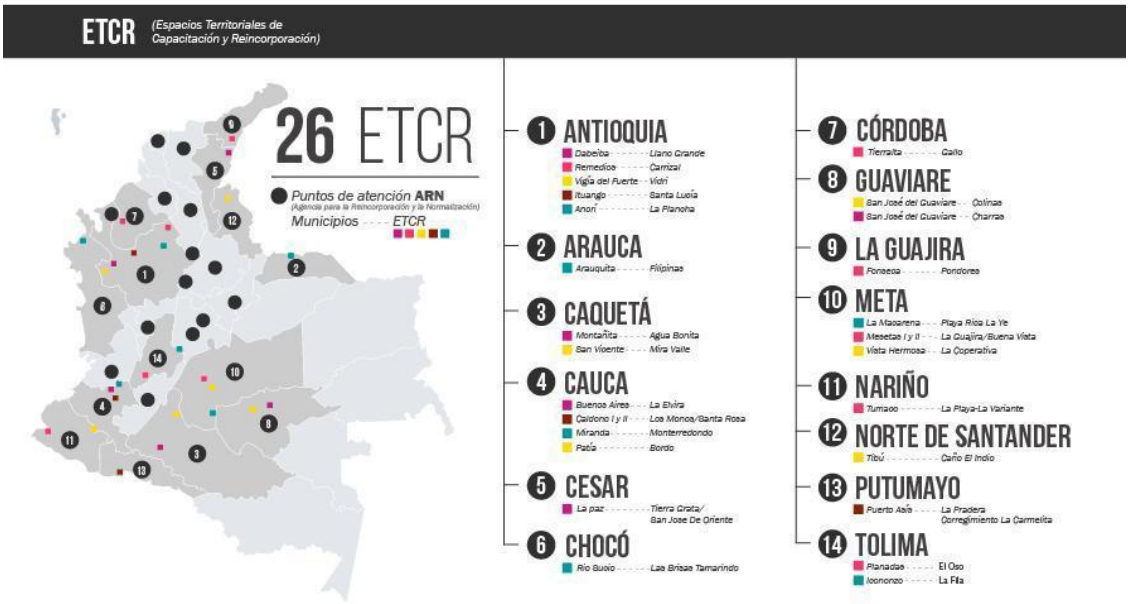

Figure 1: A map of the 26 formal settlement camps ("ETCRs")

The government is currently in the process of closing some of these and converting others into formally recognized urban centers. In 2023, the settlement camps of Mesetas and Vista Hermosa had significant security issues and were relocated. In addition to these formal settlement camps, some ex-combatants live individually in the cities.

[6] ETCR is the acronym for the FARC formal settlement spaces. It stands for Territorial Spaces for Training and Reincorporation [Espacios Territoriales para Capacitación y Reincorporación].

Each of these settings provides distinct opportunities and challenges for social reintegration across key dimensions such as in-group cohesiveness, frequency of out-group interaction, and visibility of ex-combatant identity. In the ETCRs, ex-combatants reside together, separated from their surrounding neighbors, and oftentimes an hour or more drive from the closest urban center. Consequently, their group identity and memories are reinforced through daily interactions with each other, they have a relatively limited opportunity for interacting with neighbors, and lastly the identity of ex-combatants is likely very visible.

By contrast, ex-combatants in metropolitan areas living independently are physically reintegrated. They are thus likely to have less in-group cohesiveness (living in the city, they spend less time with other ex-combatants). They instead tend to have more out-group interactions with community members than those who reside in ETCRs, although these interactions may be of mixed character, some with their ex-combatant identity explicitly visible and other times hidden in the anonymity of urban life.

The physical contours of these settings shape interactions (as discussed further in Chapter 4), both in terms of structural (frequency, in-group/out-group) but also cultural ways as individuals act differently towards each other given their assumptions of each other's past. Similarly, interactions shape cultural understandings of the past and present differently if they occur between individuals who 1) mutually see and cross boundaries together, or 2) cross symbolic boundaries but must hide or alter a significant part of their identity.

Examining these two types of sites is important for two reasons. First, they are a unique characteristic of the Colombian process of reincorporation and deserve attention for their own sake. Additionally, as the conflict has unevenly affected urban (less so)

and rural spaces (more so), sampling from both provides a means of incorporating this variation in the research study.

Second, these two types of sites are fruitfully aligned with the distinction Alexander (2006) makes between simple and complex society. The formal settlements exhibit more homogeneity and overlapping codes and identities compared to the greater anonymity and fragmentation of urban space in Villavicencio or Bogotá.

To examine these interactions up close, I have selected the department of Meta for my fieldwork. Colombia has 32 departments (like US States), but only 14 of them have ETCRs. Meta has three ETCRs (Macarena, Mesetas, Vista Hermosa) because the department was a stronghold of the FARC. Casa Verde, a covert headquarters for the FARC Secretariat was in La Uribe, Meta, for many years until it was bombed by the Colombian military in 1990. Mesetas was the site of the ceremony where the FARC symbolically relinquished their weapons[7]. This region was also part of the demilitarized zone of El Caguán in the failed peace negotiations of 1999-2002. In addition to the historic significance, the department of Meta also permits accessing different spaces of reintegration. From Villavicencio, the department capital, three of the department's ETCRs (Mesetas I, Mesetas II, and Vista Hermosa) are accessible within a two-hour drive. The fourth ETCR in the department (Macarena) is not easily accessible, as it requires a helicopter or a 12-hour drive around a mountain range.

I conducted fieldwork at four sites: two urban settings and two ETCRs. Villavicencio was my home base. There I examined the process of social reintegration in the department capital. I also had access here to government, multilateral, and NGO entities that work across the region. I also conducted fieldwork in Bogotá, the nation's

[7] Symbolic in the sense that it happened across the country, at each of the ETCRs.

capital. In terms of rural areas, I conducted participant observation and interviews at the two smaller municipalities (Mesetas and Vista Hermosa) that have ETCRs about an hour's drive; each municipality is in turn about two to three hours from Villavicencio.

Each of these sites provides drastically different settings for reintegration. Villavicencio has a population of 500,000 people. This includes an estimated 300 FARC ex-combatants living across the city in independent dwellings. The ETCRs are each a good one-hour drive from smaller municipalities with a population of about 3,000 to 9,000 inhabitants.

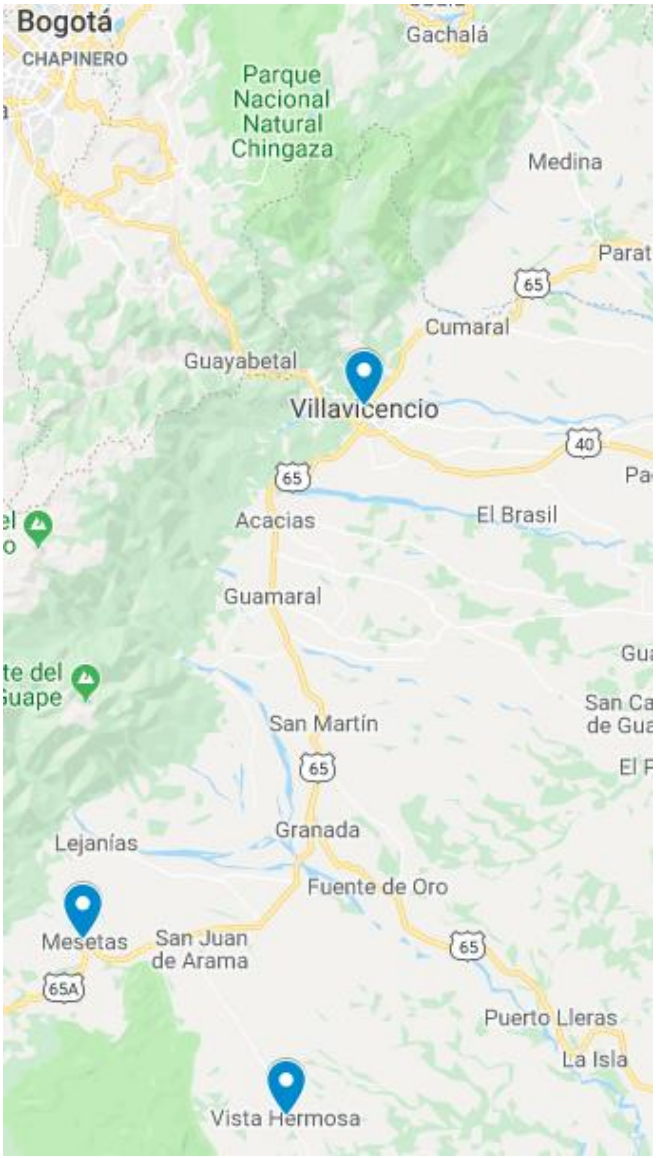

Figure 2: A map of my fieldwork sites

The immediate vicinity around the Mesetas ETCR is farmland and only has about 100 inhabitants. These population differences result in differences in how salient the ex-combatants are to other community members, but also to the variety of opportunities for involvement in the surrounding community. (See Table 2).

Table 2: Field Sites in Meta (Location and Population)

Municipality	Population	Distance from Villavicencio	ETCR nearby	Distance between ETCR and closest urban center
Villavicencio	520,000	0	0	0
Mesetas	3,600	3 hours	Mariana Páez	1 hour
Vista Hermosa	9,000	3 hours	Georgina Ortiz	2 hours

I chose these settings because they host concentrations of FARC ex-combatants, and each site presents different challenges and opportunities to reintegration. Further, while I hypothesized there was likely some communication and movement between them, they serve as quasi-independent settings. In addition to the FARC spaces, I also ensured to include adjacent community member spaces.

Before conducting fieldwork, I had imagined localized networks to be the focus of my dissertation. I suspected that places such as a bakery at Mariana Paéz would play a central role in facilitating cross-group interactions. And while I identified some localized networks, my dissertation revealed the unexpected significance of networks that crossed larger geographic distances. Pro bono medics travel from urban centers to remote rural areas for a weekend. Recent college graduates from the nation's capital travel by multiple bus transfers for over ten hours to teach at the rural settlement camps. In addition, FARC businesses sell products ranging from honey to beer to surrounding communities, while sharing their life experiences with civilians. Furthermore, my fieldwork also highlighted the significance of taking a life course approach to social reintegration.

In each of the settings I observed, a central point of interest was interaction between former FARC members and new actors in other settings. If neighbors went to

the FARC-settlement bakery, did they tell other neighbors, family, and friends about it? Did doctors share their experiences attending FARC ex-combatants when they returned home? How do transformed cultural codes travel beyond the initial interactional setting?

Sampling Procedures

I sampled research participants from both FARC ex-combatants and community members as research participants. This was important to ensure that I examined social reintegration as a social process involving both parties rather than see it as an activity ex-combatants do on their own.

Given that ex-combatants are a hidden population, I conducted purposive snowball sampling. I had an initial set of contacts in Villavicencio and Mariana Páez (the formal settlement near Mesetas) that facilitated access to FARC ex-combatants in both locations. I also sought to identify adjacent places marked as community member spaces to identify research participants from there.

I identified boundary spanners by two means. The first was through their actions, that is, I directly observed them interacting with individuals from the other group. The second was by asking informants who interacted with the other group. In addition to the boundary spanners, I included individuals within the interactional groups of the boundary spanners. I identified and documented the relationships between these participants. As for sampling criteria beyond this, I prioritized variation across the degree, and nature of boundary spanning as well as the demographics of the individuals. This variation among participants included: the spheres in which they cross boundaries (economic, political, community), personal demographic characteristics (age, gender, race), and motivation for cross-boundary spanning (assigned role or independent initiative). I interviewed 24

civilians, and 21 FARC ex-combatants, as well as 2 ex-police or ex-military. At least two of these individuals gave salient narratives of being FARC victims. My sample was 70% male. In terms of age, they ranged from 20-year-olds to 50-year-olds. For ex-combatants, there was also variation across the hierarchy in combat (commander or foot soldier).

After the onset of the pandemic, I began conducting interviews by phone. I had been skeptical that ex-combatants whom I had perceived as reserved and suspicious of strangers would be willing to participate without having had the opportunity to build rapport. However, they ended up being very receptive - both those I had met before the pandemic and even those I had never spoken with except by phone. It certainly helped that I had established a network of contacts who served as trusted intermediaries. Additionally, it is likely that the strict social isolation measures in Colombia provided an added incentive to participate as participation in interviews provided an opportunity for social interaction. Colombia implemented social distancing measures on a region-by-region basis. In Villavicencio, individuals were only allowed to leave their residences twice every ten days. Nearly all stores were closed except grocery stores, and these checked one's national ID to ensure that it was one's assigned day, if it was not then they would turn one away.

Participant Observation

A key first step as I entered the field was to build rapport with research participants. I leveraged my existing relationships from prior work in Colombia, and I also reached out to individuals in nonprofits, think tanks, universities, government, and multilateral agencies. Through ongoing conversations and interactions, I was able to win

the trust of individuals who would become research participants or provide a warm introduction to research participants. As this process advanced, I was attentive to boundary spanners and cross group interactions. The very path by which I was introduced to others became a data point which I tracked. As my research focuses on relationships, I was attuned to who actors introduced me to and the dynamics between them. Shadowing participants permitted me to see them across different settings and examine how meanings shift across social worlds (Trouille and Tavory 2019). A central concern was mutability: I asked if cross-group interactions of boundary spanners resulted in cultural codes across settings or if they were specific to the interactional setting?

Several months of participant observation before the onset of the pandemic gave me grounds to triangulate interview data. This was significant to be attentive to the "attitudinal fallacy" as described by Jerolmack and Khan (2014). Depending upon individual research subjects, this involved accompanying them to meetings they held (both internal community organization meetings and working groups with government and NGOs) or working alongside them in their productive enterprises such as at the bakery, or chicken roosts.

I examined boundary spanning interactions through a cultural pragmatic lens, focusing on the six elements of performance: Systems of Collective Representation (background symbols and foreground scripts), actors, observers/audience, means of symbolic production, mise en scène, and social power. (Alexander 2006)

Systems of Collective Representation (background symbols and foreground scripts) are the structured codes that actors present as motivation and meaning for their actions (Alexander 2006: 33).I identified representations in a similar manner as the

concept of memory, through interview and participant observation. I focused on how the conflict/post-conflict is narrated.

Actors are the individuals who perform the scripts. (Alexander 2006: 33-34)

- A "Boundary Spanner" can be either an ex-combatant or a community member who has sustained interactions with someone from the other category.
- "Group members" – individuals in close and/or frequent interaction with boundary spanners. A group may contain multiple boundary spanners, but "group members" are by my definition either not boundary spanners or only to a minor degree.
- "Remainers" are individuals who mostly interact with individuals from their same category (FARC-FARC, or Community Member – Community Member.) While "Group Members" have close relationships with a boundary spanner, "Remainers" do not.

Observers/Audience (Alexander 2006: 34-35) When conducting participant observation, I was attentive not only to boundary spanners but also to the actors with whom they interacted and others present. The central question was: Are the observers sympathetic and receptive or do they reject cross-category interaction?

Means of Symbolic Production – the objects and places used for symbolic projection (Alexander 2006: 35). Some places are marked as FARC spaces (the formal settlements) in contrast to public spaces. The central question for this element of performance was: How do boundary spanners engage with these places? How do they narrate the transgression of physical space?

Mise en Scène (Alexander 2006: 36) -- the set of physical and verbal gestures

used to temporally and spatially perform. How do boundary spanners represent themselves? How do they interact with the other?

Social Power (Alexander 2006: 36-37) -- whether social, economic, or political shapes the ability of actors to perform and be seen as legitimate. What are the external elements that shape the behavior of boundary spanners.

In short, the participant observation as part of my research provided a means to determine and further understand how individuals act in cross-group settings and the meanings ascribed to those interactions. Generally, participant observation means being involved in the activities of the participants of the study, which included spending time in the cooperative bakery, going on hikes, attending classes, and other activities at the ETCRs and in the cities. Being fully immersed in the context meant that I had limited time for jotting during the day. However, I took breaks during the day to permit episodic jottings and in urban settings where appropriate I was also able to take notes on my phone without standing out. I then spent several hours in the evenings writing up fieldnotes from my jottings. Each set of fieldnotes culminated with a brief analysis of the day and strategies for upcoming fieldwork. On a monthly basis, I wrote a digest focused on how the data was fitting or challenging theory, and strategies for next steps.

As my research progressed, my approach shifted away from observation to interviews. This occurred for two reasons. First, as my focus shifted from localized networks to those that spanned large geographic areas, there was less time for the observation of interactions in real time. Instead, I began to identify individuals who had cross-group interactions while at a particular site. I then arranged interviews with them at a later point, often interviewing civilians once they had returned to Bogotá or Villavicencio. Second, the pandemic in the second part of my fieldwork made participant

observation impossible.

Interviews

As part of the interviews, I employed an adapted instrument from the Grassroots Transitional Justice Toolkit, developed in Northern Ireland through a partnership between the Transitional Justice Institute at Ulster University, and a nonprofit, Bridge of Hope. Savelsberg and I used “Tool 1” from the Transitional Justice Grassroots Toolkit in our research project in Northern Ireland (Soto and Savelsberg *2023*). This form manifested the collective representations of the participants. I also adapted questions from Savelsberg’s (2015) interview guidelines listed in the appendix to *Representing Mass Violence*. The interviews further asked participants to indicate and reflect upon their cross-group interactions (e.g., whether transactional/affective, simplex/multiplex). Following Viterna (2013), interviews included sections on biography, network ties, and arenas. Following Lichterman (2005), the interviews also included questions on in-group customs and behaviors. Interviews with secondary participants provided insight into who the core group interacted with (what their collective representations are), and how the secondary participants perceived the core participants.

The subsequent table defines my project’s key concepts and describes how I operationalized each one of them through interviews.

Table 3: Operationalization of Key Concepts in Interviews

Concept	Operationalization
Social Reintegration	I conducted interviews inquiring about the relationships between FARC ex-combatants and neighbors, co-workers, and others they interact with. - Number of FARC – community member relationships - Nature of relationships and shared activities (work, social) - Warmth of greeting (smiling, hugging, laughing together) - Frequency of interaction - The alignment between systems of symbolic representation: vocabulary and narratives employed (similar or different from the prevailing ones)
Groups	The interview guide included questions about interactions with in-group and out-group individuals. I expected people may be reserved or provide an incomplete picture which is why I initially planned to prioritize group membership by observation. While this was interrupted by the pandemic, my initial participant observation gave me a foundational understanding of the settings of my research participants.
Memory	I primarily employed the interviews to document narratives of the past and future regarding the origin of the conflict, actors and their respective responsibility, nature of victimization, etc.
Symbolic Boundaries & Boundary Spanners	My research incorporated a multitude of interrelated viewpoints. In several cases I interviewed individuals who told me about experiences and situations that I had heard described by others, yet they did not know this. I was thus able to compare how people discussed these experiences with other narrations.

Data Analysis

Interviews were recorded and transcribed. Following the interviews, I draft notes recording main points, and contextual details that would not be in the audio recording. Upon returning to Minnesota, I used a qualitative data analysis program (NVivo) for coding and analysis.

The interviews elicited two types of narratives: one on boundary spanning experiences, the other on representations of the past. I employed the dimensions Savelsberg (2015) identified (types of victimization, responsible parties, causes of the conflict, and appropriate frames of interpretation) to examine the similarities and overlaps between the collective memories of my respondents.

Ethics and Safety

The identity of my research participants will remain confidential as specified in my consent form and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University of Minnesota. I used pseudonyms in fieldnotes and used the University of Minnesota's Box Secure Storage account for storing and securing sensitive data. My phone was password protected, and I set up fingerprint security to access the messaging service (WhatsApp), which is the dominant form of communication in Colombia.

In terms of my own safety, I consulted with a military liaison who oversees the reincorporation process of the region, and she has provided me with advice to stay safe. She also provides local contacts in the municipalities near the formal settlements for periods during which I traveled outside the city. Additionally, I was in contact with all major actors (government, UN, and universities) about my project.

Discussion

My research asks whether representations of the past differ in relation to boundary spanners. Do ex-combatants with significant relationships outside the FARC narrate the conflict differently than their peers? What about the inverse situation, for community members with relationships to the FARC compared to their peers? My research responds to these research questions by interviewing individuals (both ex-

combatants and community members) across the spectrum of boundary spanning. In addition, I conducted participant observation to validate what my participants say during the interviews and examine how individuals interact across the ex-combatant and community members divide.

Martha Minow (1999) highlights a debate in the memory literature of “the two dangers of wallowing in the past and forgetting it. Too much memory, or not enough...” (Minow 1999: 2). However, this debate underexplores how memory changes. It is not simply a question of more or less memory, but of changes in how individuals represent the past. Memory is shaped by present circumstances and tied to groups and group interactions (Halbwachs [1952] 1992).

These questions are important for the solidification of peace in Colombia, and the answers have implications for other post-conflict scenarios. They speak to individual and collective responses to the conflict and the current post peace-accord era. The process of social reintegration is a critical component to closing a chapter and commencing a new one. Following protracted periods of violence, it is easier to explain resentment, retaliation, and ongoing conflict.

4. CONTEXT SHAPING SOCIAL NETWORKS

The spatial setting of social reintegration influences the networks that ex-combatants form and affects how both parties give meaning to their relationship. In this chapter, I describe how urban and rural settings shape the social networks that ex-combatants form through the process of social reintegration, and how these in turn shape collective memories and the reintegration process. These processes are mutually constitutive; collective memories in previous moments have given form to the settings that this analysis takes as its starting point.

Following the signing of the 2016 peace agreement between the Colombian Government and the FARC, ex-combatants demobilized to designated areas across the country[8]. A government functionary explained to me that these areas were selected as part of the negotiation process as intentionally remote areas stemming from mutual fear and suspicion of the other negotiating party. The Government did not want them to be too close to cities, fearing that the FARC may use them to launch attacks. Similarly, the FARC preferred high ground and hard to traverse terrain which would give them an advantage should the Government decide to attack them. This site selection decision made from a wartime logic preferring remote, hard to reach areas, has made the social reintegration of the FARC ex-combatants more difficult in some ways. Especially, being physically isolated has made it hard to find work and take products to market.

[8] There were initially 20 “Transitional Normalization Zones” (ZVTNs) and 7 Points of Transitional Normalization (PTN). The former subsequently took on a different legal status as “Territorial Spaces for Training and Reincorporation” (ETCRs), and in 2020 this status dissolved, and the national government left it up to each corresponding municipality whether and how to incorporate them into local planning processes. For simplicity’s sake, I refer to these as “formal settlement camps” throughout my dissertation as the legal status and name changes are not significant for the topics at hand.

This chapter examines the role of space in shaping networks in two urban contexts (Bogotá and Villavicencio) and two rural settings (the settlement camps in Mesetas and Georgina Ortiz). Before turning to these empirical cases, I build on my previous literature review to zoom in on previous scholarship that addresses the relationship between networks and space.

Networks in space

A broad range of literature has elaborated on the role of space in shaping the social world. These have ranged from anthropological studies of the plaza (Low 2009; Low 2011), and sociological studies of the street corner (Whyte 1943), but also to business studies regarding the role of office space on social networks (Sailer and McCulloh 2012; Waber, Magnolfi, Lindsay 2014, Soto 2023).

In this chapter I focus on the three mechanisms that Small and Adler (2019) identify by which space influences social ties: spatial propinquity, spatial composition, and spatial configuration. I further add to this framework by considering how perceptions give meaning to space. At times this addition results in outcomes which are diametrically opposed to what one might expect from a spatial deterministic analysis.

The first mechanism Small and Adler (2019) describe is spatial propinquity, or proximity, as interactions are more likely to occur among individuals who are near each other. The second mechanism is spatial composition, which Small and Adler define as "the presence or absence of fixed places that make social interaction possible or likely" (Small and Adler 2019: 116). They provide a multitude of specific examples, such as "parks, plazas, community organizations, cafés, bars, barbershops, religious institutions, [and] childcare centers". Here the stress that simply being close is insufficient for

building social ties if there is not a place to congregate. The third mechanism is spatial configuration, which refers to the physical barriers and pathways which divide space. The authors argue that the "key is that boundaries undermine contact between two segments of a space; pathways facilitate it. By structuring movement, they both shape social interaction" (Small and Adler 2019: 120). The third mechanism has been highlighted to distinguish the linear distance between two points as the bird flies versus the "functional distance", which considers the specific pathways and boundaries an individual would face getting between the two points.

One illustration of these mechanisms is found in an analysis by Sudman (1988) who examines how well neighbors know each other in two metropolitan areas of Illinois. This study demonstrates both the importance of spatial propinquity as well as the need to consider functional distance. The author concluded that, "In single family dwellings, next door neighbors are known by more than 80 percent of respondents, and 75 percent know the neighbor directly across the street but only half know neighbors two doors away and only 10 percent know the neighbor in the house directly behind them" (Sudman 1988: 107). This highlights how a small distance, the equivalent of just one household, marks a significant decrease in the likelihood that neighbors know each other. Additionally, while the house directly behind one's dwelling may very well be closer via linear distance than the neighbors two doors away, functionally the respective pathways of the neighbors do not overlap when they leave their homes. Similarly, Sailer and McCulloh (2011) examined the role of distances in office spaces and social networks, contrasting multiple ways of measuring spatial distance.

The interplay of these three mechanisms is visible across several other studies between space and social relationships. Richard Sennett, in *Flesh and Stone: The Body*

and the City in Western Civilization (1996), describes how the spatial configurations of cities shape the way individuals interact and connect with each other. His examples include how the transition from the open-air Greek agora to enclosed government assemblies negatively affected the ability for broader participation. The change to an enclosed government building created a boundary preventing social interaction of a passersby, without changing the physical distance.

While a wall is a clear boundary, there are also spatial elements which serve contradictory purposes as both boundary and pathway. Dalakoglou and Harvey describe "the diverse ways in which roads gather events, and generate meaningful interactions (and separations) in the diverse rhythms and differential speeds" (Dalakoglou and Harvey 2012: 463). Roads serve to connect distant locations, and they facilitate mobility between them. However, they may disrupt links between intermediately neighboring locations (e.g., US Highway construction of the 1960s). A similar logic applies to planes and the denigrating term "fly over country."

Grannis (1998) further examines how roads can both connect and separate. He brings to the forefront the effect that small neighborhood streets have on segregating networks by race. He concludes:

> *Interactions occurring on "trivial" streets are closely bound up with larger social phenomena. While it is no revelation that segregation begins with one's neighbor, what is often overlooked is how these neighborly interactions, like links in a chain, form the backbone of racial housing segregation. Residents have face-to-face interactions on tertiary streets with their neighbors, who do the same with their neighbors a little farther away within the constraints of the tertiary street network. (Grannis 1998: 1560)*

Despite the importance of space in shaping the social world, Savelsberg (1984) warns us of exaggerating the impact that physical structures have on their own, and he expresses agreement with Simmel's position against spatial determinism. Savelsberg

highlights how the development of modern technologies has led to functional differentiation in the usage of space, giving examples of modern transportation, communication, and urbanization processes, and how these in turn impact crime and delinquency. But he also highlights the role of labeling in shaping perceptions of neighborhoods and the real impacts those can have on its residents.

> *A dramatic increase of the crime rate in a certain area may be the consequence of intensified, formal social control there, for example by increased police patrolling. This might result in previously unreported crime becoming reported crime. In this case, it is not only individual actions and single persons which are labelled criminal, but whole social areas and the lower class population which lives in them. Such an image of a quarter or neighborhood - often enforced by local media - results in stigmatization, and discrimination. This in turn results in attitudes and behaviors that make it harder for persons living there to gain integration into external institutions such as for example, schools or firms (Savelsberg 1984: 173).*

In the text that follows, I highlight how these three mechanisms (spatial propinquity, shape, spatial composition, and spatial configuration) shape social networks, while also considering cultural elements such as perceptions and labeling. Additionally, I focus on the ways in which economic resources shape an individual's ability to traverse space. With these additional considerations in mind, I focus on how physical space shapes interactions, specifically social reintegration through shaping networks both among ex-combatants and between ex-combatants and civil society, and how this in turn shapes the utilization of space.

Urban and Rural Spaces

My fieldwork stretched across both urban and rural areas nearly 200 miles apart. My field sites include Bogotá, the country's capital, and three sites in Meta which is one

of the 32 departments, akin to US states. This included Villavicencio, the department's capital, and three rural, formal reintegration settlement camps.

The broad geographic range of my research serves two purposes. First, my preliminary fieldwork made clear that the conditions of reintegration are vastly different in urban and rural areas. Due to the differences in population density, and the three mechanisms described above, people in rural areas are more likely to know their neighbors and recognize outsiders, whereas anonymity is the norm in cities. This is accentuated by the sudden installation of the settlement camps in rural areas, where several hundred ex-combatants arrived in a short period of time in otherwise sparsely populated areas and thus stood out.

Therefore, ex-combatants living in the settlement camps are easily recognizable by locals, whereas ex-combatants who have moved away, and particularly those who have moved to cities can fade into the anonymity of urban life. Thus, when ex-combatants from the settlement camps engage with neighbors, their past is more saliently visible than the background of those who reside on their own in other areas, especially in the cities. Those in urban areas by contrast can build relationships without this part of their biography needing to be the first thing people know of them, and ex-combatants can choose if, when, and how they tell others.

A second reason for the broad geographical scope is that my research is concerned with how social interactions between individuals shapes collective memories, and how these memories feed back into the process of reintegration. By interviewing ex-combatants and civilians across a broad geographic range, I can compare individuals and relationships between individuals within network clusters which are relatively

disconnected from each other, as well as identify individuals who have relationships across network clusters.

In the subsections that follow, I describe the geographic space of each of my field sites and highlight the spatial mechanisms that shape social networks.

Bogotá

Here, I discuss how the city's high density accentuates spatial propinquity, complimented by the spatial composition and configuration in some cases. Yet, in other cases, the density serves as a barrier to the development and maintenance of networks. Two additional criteria which shape the experience of the city are perceptions and socio-economic resources. The spatial analysis presented facilitates networks, mediated by these other forces.

My discussion of the three mechanisms of space is illustrated in two contexts: 1) networks between FARC ex-combatants, and 2) networks between FARC ex-combatants and civilians. In a city of over 11 million inhabitants, only 719 FARC ex-combatants who signed the peace agreements live in the nation's capital (ARN 2023). The juxtaposition of these numbers illustrates the sheer magnitude of the city compared to the subpopulation of focus. But even this relatively small number is often surprising to the typical Bogotá resident who assumes that the ex-combatants are exclusively in reintegration settlement camps in rural areas or have returned to armed groups in the countryside. This belief is reinforced by media representations, and the fact that many ex-combatants prefer not to openly discuss their past with strangers. Another contributing factor may be that FARC ex-combatants are not living together in Bogotá but are rather living independently spread out across the city.

And like other cities, Bogotá is full of strangers, and traffic. It can often take longer to cross the city from north to south than it takes to get from the southern tip of Bogotá to Villavicencio even though that is twice the distance. Residents within the same neighborhood of the capital benefit from spatial propinquity and a multitude of sites for congregating ranging from cafes to parks (spatial composition). However, the sheer size of the city signifies that if individuals are not in the same neighborhood, it can take time and money to traverse.

One ex-combatant I spoke with worked in a public sector role as part of the peace agreement. It has been agreed that some areas such as illicit drug substitution and the protection of ex-combatants were to be overseen by jointly formed teams. The ex-combatant I spoke with described how she kept a distance from her neighbors because she did not want to risk them learning about her past. At work her involvement with the FARC was known, given her role, but at home she preferred anonymity. Additionally, she emphasized that she barely saw her comrades because they lived in different parts of the city and just had time to commute to and from work.

My own experience with the city was very different from that of my research subjects. I lived in the north, the wealthier part of the city, and most of the ex-combatants I met in Bogotá were either in the downtown area, or southwestern parts of the city (from la Soledad west to Kennedy). I traveled between meetings by Uber, using the time to jot down field notes and reminders to follow up on certain points or by such and such a date. For much of my fieldwork, I took this as an inconsequential element of my fieldwork. It was the only way that I would have been able to meet so many people in a day across different parts of the city. Simultaneously, this illustrates the economic realities of how my research subjects were geographically restricted in ways that I was

not. This highlights how the spatial configuration mechanism discussed above of boundaries and pathways is contingent on the economic resources of each individual. Where I experienced highways and private transportation as pathways, my research subjects experienced them as boundaries due to their economic condition.

While ex-combatants in Bogotá lived in the same city, they often hardly saw each other. The city not only kept ex-combatants apart from each other. It also segregated social classes, which kept people from most parts of the city from interacting with ex-combatants. It should thus be no surprise that most residents of Bogotá that I spoke with did not realize there were FARC ex-combatants in the same city in which they lived. This was true even of some of my research participants who were very well connected with ex-combatants in the settlement camps.

With the relatively small number of FARC ex-combatants that signed the peace accord who live in Bogotá (700) compared to the whole population (11.5 million), while it is unlikely most Bogotá residents will interact with ex-combatants those who may have interacted with an ex-combatant likely do not know they have as many ex-combatants in Bogotá prefer anonymity.

As civilians in Bogotá tend to assume that they and their neighbors do not interact with ex-combatants, their view of ex-combatants is primarily shaped by the media. And those who hold negative views of the FARC state them openly, assuming they are not in mixed company. Given the relatively small number of ex-combatants in such a populous city such as Bogotá, the civilians tend to be right. By contrast, the ex-combatant has daily interactions with civilians and often hears their disparaging comments. Ex-combatants learn to cope in multiple ways, from hiding their past as best they can to playfully engaging with the unbalanced information.

One ex-combatant whom I will call Pablo shared his experience of passing while attending a youth leadership conference. He arrived early and, while waiting for the first session to start, struck up a conversation with the person next to him. A while later the announcer stated over the loudspeaker that today they were honored to have the presence of several youth leaders from the former FARC-EP. Immediately Pablo's new acquaintance turned to him and whispered, "Where do you think they are?" Pablo decided to play along, and they both began assessing people as they came into the hall and guessing whether they might be the ex-combatants. At one point, Pablo saw one of his comrades walk in and so he turned to his acquaintance and asked, 'What about her?" The acquaintance immediately rejected the possibility claiming she was too pretty. Pablo laughed, and said, "Of course, you are so right!" As the event began, the announcer asked the ex-combatants to stand for a round of applause. As Pablo stood, his acquaintance turned bright red. Pablo reassured him that it was fine, and they laughed it off.

Even those urban civilians who have positive or neutral views of ex-combatants tend to primarily build relationships with residents of the formal settlement camps rather than those in their same city. Many individuals I interviewed repeatedly make the multiple hours long trip to a formal settlement camp, but do not know any of the ex-combatants in their own city.

Across this chasm, an initiative such as *Amor A Tiempo* is significant. One of the individuals who started it helped manage the FARC party's social media accounts. He reports that there was a surprising number of people who sent private messages of support and admiration that they had put down their weapons and were working to build peace. At the same time, he was in communication with ex-combatants in the formal

settlement camps who had piles of harvested agricultural goods that were growing cobwebs and were likely going to rot as they were unable to get them to market. *Amor a Tiempo* sells gift boxes with a mix of FARC products including coffee, ham, and beer, born of necessity, bridging this structural hole. The initial idea was just to prepare and sell 20 boxes. A friend of the organizing group insisted they try to sell beyond their immediate network and so they decided to open an Instagram account. Before the first day had ended, they had sold the 20 boxes and had more people asking how they could get one. The *Amor a Tiempo* team was not prepared for this and did not know how they could go about fulfilling additional orders. But they learned on the go and continued to grow. Within three months, they were highlighted on a major national radio station and were getting endorsements by a range of social influencers.

I interviewed leaders from the *Amor a Tiempo* team, and they indicated that the primary initial motivation was to treat this as political work. Each of the boxes was hand delivered by someone who had been a part of the FARC organization whether ex-combatants or members of the Clandestine Communist Party of Colombia (PC3), and this was communicated to the recipient upon delivery. Often customers would initially have them meet at a café or local park for the delivery, but the next time they would order they'd give their home address and invite the delivery person in for coffee. As they explained it, they were initially a bit wary, and scared to let the former FARC member know where they lived. But this changed following the first conversation. This illustrates both social chasms between FARC and even those civilians who may be supportive of their transition to civilian status. Technology played a role in building network ties across distances, but hesitations persisted until the time of a face-to-face encounter. Technology and in person relationships both played a complimentary role, as the

connection could not have happened without technology but would have been incomplete without the face to face.

The case of *Amor a Tiempo* illustrates how social propinquity and social configuration can be leveraged to develop networks between ex-combatants and civilians in a large city like Bogotá. This would not be possible in a small town, as the number of civilians interested in exploring these interactions is relatively small and uneven. At the same time, the case of *Amor a Tiempo* was an exception at the point in time in which it emerged. By showing how the three mechanisms of space facilitated the development of new networks in the case of Amor a Tiempo, it also highlighted how the desire for anonymity and the media's focus on the settlement camps restricted the development of cross-group networks for sharing stories and experiences of the conflict.

Villavicencio

Villavicencio is the capital of the department of Meta, and about a two-hour drive from the Southern tip of Bogotá. It has an estimated population of over half a million people. The relatively small city can be traversed by car from one end to the other in under 20 minutes. But as was highlighted in the section above on Bogotá this is not an option available to all.

Additionally, this disparity in mobility is multiplied across larger distances. When I traveled from Bogotá to Villavicencio I would take a shared hired car, where the company sold individual seats, for about $25 per seat. From my US budget perspective this seemed very affordable. Yet conversations with teachers at the formal settlements made it clear that this would be exorbitant for them. They instead took the bus home at the end of their three-month stints at the formal settlement camps.

Most of the ex-combatants I met lived in the far eastern part of the city in neighborhoods with unpaved streets. While objectively closer and more easily able to meet than in Bogotá, I was told that here too ex-combatants often only saw each other at the workshops organized by the ARN, which they were required to attend to continue receiving their government benefits.

The city is still large enough that anonymity is possible, however, it is harder to maintain than in Bogotá. One ex-combatant shared his experience returning to live at home with his mother. He was taking classes at a vocational institute, and, in an illustration of social propinquity and functional distance, he would often see the instructor on his way to class because they lived along the same street. The ex-combatant was not sure why the instructor would often call on him to share his perspective, particularly on socio-political questions. That is until one day he learned his mother had told the instructor about his involvement in the guerrilla group. Upon learning this, it began to make sense – the ex-combatant's past was salient to him and that is why the instructor called on him. This is the result of the dense networks in the neighborhood, where overlapping relationships made visible what the ex-combatant might otherwise not have shared.

Villavicencio is also a central place for ex-combatants from the settlement camps across the department to meet. While Villavicencio and the settlement camps are not in close proximity, the spatial composition of the city, as the department capital, meant that ex-combatant leaders from the settlement camps make frequent trips for meetings at the governor's administrative offices. There are quarterly working groups that bring the leaders from across the department there. Additionally, the department administrative offices are on a corner of a large plaza with street vendors, benches, and chess tables.

These are elements of social composition which facilitate interactions before and after the formal meetings. Often, ex-combatants would suggest we meet by the governor's plaza as this was a central meeting point and provided them with easy access to the administrative buildings where they had either left or were waiting to enter.

Settlement Camps

In Meta, there were three locations with settlement camps (Mesetas, Vista Hermosa, and la Macarena)[9]. For my fieldwork, I made weekly trips to Mesetas and Vista Hermosa by bus. I did not go to la Macarena due to security concerns. It was approximately an 8-hour journey from Villavicencio to either settlement camp, including stops and transfers, and cost approximately $15. This was not a trip ex-combatants could afford to make frequently. Even so, at a further extreme are journalists, some of whom made day trips for a news story. In one example, a journalist who flew from Bogotá to Villavicencio and hired a car at $200 to drive to a settlement camp where she spent the morning, some three hours, and then returned to Villavicencio to catch a flight back the next day. As a comparison, a day laborer in this region makes about $10 per day.

Beyond the wealth disparities, the costs and logistics of transportation shape networks, and consequently the narratives exchanged, and the perceptions individuals have of each other. The journalist left in awe from her short experience at a settlement camp. She was impressed by the dedication despite the challenges ex-combatants face in their process of reintegration. But she was only able to speak to a small number of

[9] Due to security concerns La Macarena was abandoned, and as I write this chapter in 2023 the settlement camps in Mesetas and Vista Hermosa have had security threats leading the ex-combatants to be forcibly displaced .

people, and in a very direct fashion – all parties knew that she had to leave within a couple of hours. This shaped how individuals interacted with her, and what she was able to experience despite her intentions to be open and approachable, the known ephemeral nature of her presence makes interactions more superficial. And that is what gets conveyed to the country by major news outlets, as "in-depth coverage". Figure 3 below shows the geographic layout of the department of Meta, and I have underlined the municipalities where I conducted fieldwork. In addition to my primary sites (Villaviencio, Mesetas, and Vista Hermosa), I made a single trip to La Uribe where ex-combatants congregated in an informal settlement.

Figure 3: Municipalities in Meta, Colombia. Image Source: Wikimedia (underlining added to highlight areas of focus)

Each of the formal settlement camps has two names, their government given name was just its location followed by ETCR (which is the Spanish acronym for the Territorial Space for Training and Reintegration). Therefore, there were the Vista Hermosa, Mesetas I and Mesetas II ETCRs. Perhaps because these names were so impersonal, and as a form of commemoration, the FARC gave each of the settlements the name of key historical figures. Mesetas I is known by the FARC as Mariana Páez, who was a former commander of the Eastern Bloc. Mariana Páez was also active in the peace negotiation of El Caguan (1999-2001). Mesetas II is known by the FARC as Simon Trinidad, a high-ranking member of the FARC extradited to the US where he remains in a high security prison. The FARC have criticized his detainment and requested his repatriation as part of the peace agreement. Selecting his name for the settlement camp is significant as it helps to raise and maintain it in the collective consciousness (nearly 20 years after his extradition)[10]. This settlement camp is where those ex-combatants released early from prison went as part of the peace agreement to serve their remaining transitional sentences.

In FARC settlements as compared with urban living, ex-combatants tend to have more peer support as they live and work together. When ex-combatants decide to leave the settlement camps, they must instead fend for themselves. First, they no longer have the peer support of fellow ex-combatants. Second, the peace accord stipulated that government food stuff and housing are provided via the formal settlements. Ex-combatants who leave thus must find their own housing, begin paying rent and finding

[10] I do not know much about how the settlement camps were named but given the uniformity in names honoring fallen or captured individuals from the FARC, my suspicion is that these were decided centrally.

ways to feed themselves. Despite these added challenges, most of the ex-combatants have left the settlement zones. According to government records less than 20% still reside in the formal settlement camps (ARN 2023). Ex-combatants leave for a variety of reasons, including lack of job opportunities and safety concerns in the formal settlement camps. And yet, the popular imagination of civilians often assumes that ex-combatants either live in the formal settlement camps or have picked back their weapons and returned to the armed conflict. It is rarely mentioned by the press that more than 90% of ex-combatants continue engaging with the government entity overseeing their reintegration process (ARN 2023). Even many of my research subjects who traveled several hours to the formal settlements for volunteer or other support activities, often were unaware that many ex-combatants lived in the same city as them. They confirmed to me that they did not have any contact with ex-combatants residing in their cities.

Mariana Páez (Mesetas)

The two settlement camps in Mesetas, Mariana Páez and Simon Trinidad are about a two-hour drive from the small urban center in Mesetas which has a population of 3,000. The closest town is about half an hour walk distance. It is called Buenavista. Some of the children of the ex-combatant would go to school there, and an older boy would take them by motorcycle down the dirt roads.

Mariana Páez is one of the closer settlements to Bogotá. That, combined with the historical significance of the region, has led it to be one of the settlements most visited by dignitaries, including Prince Haakon of Norway. Proximity, however, is always relative to the mode of transportation. Prince Haakon arrived by helicopter, and prominent journalists traveled by hired car. While a select few ex-combatants have a car

or motorcycle, most ex-combatants, like the other residents of the region, were only able to leave the settlement camp by catching a ride in a pickup truck that passed through early each morning en route to Mesetas' town center. By car, one can travel from Bogotá in about two hours (southeast of Bogotá), and from Villavicencio to Mariana Páez is about five additional hours.

This pickup truck is an underappreciated venue for social contact between ex-combatants and the surrounding neighbors. It is a key component of the spatial configuration facilitating interactions between ex-combatants and civilians. The trip is over an hour's ride in close quarters, with little privacy. Conversations between acquainted parties are at the very least overheard by other travel companions, and—in some cases—others join in.

On one occasion as the sun rose, I was waiting for the truck to pick me up in Mariana Páez to return home to Villavicencio vía Mesetas. The truck seemed to be running late. I continued to wait patiently as I had arrived early, and it did not occur to me that it could have passed by earlier still. Then, a man I shall call Simon hurried over asking if I'd seen the pickup truck. He did not seem relieved to hear that I had not and continued to find someone else to ask. He later returned quite frustrated and informed me that it had in fact passed by very early this morning. Now we both walked around in distress, pacing quickly as if that would produce a vehicle that could take us to Mesetas. He indicated that he urgently needed to get to Mesetas even if that meant undertaking the multiple hour-long walk. We paced back and forth and asked any soul that happened to walk by that early morning. Finally, someone indicated that a supply vehicle was expected to pass through. Excitedly we asked when, but no one knew. We waited until we finally heard it in the distance. We rushed over and asked if the driver would take us,

to which he consented. The remoteness of the settlement camp and the existence of a single time for transport out of the settlement camp per day creates a bottleneck which funnels individuals together. Despite Simon residing a couple units from where I had stayed, I had never seen him until that morning. The shared experience of desperation trying to leave the settlement camp that morning served to create an initial bond between my travel companion and me which subsequently extended into additional conversations and ultimately an interview as well. This is illustrative of how geography and space shapes interactions and relationships.

I observed similar processes on other trips when taking the pickup truck from Mesetas to Mariana Páez. The vehicle had a makeshift roof made for cargo and the driver stacked it with luggage, groceries, and agricultural inputs ranging from chicken feed to machinery, often resulting in the cargo doubling the height of the original vehicle. He had lassos to tie things down, and occasionally a netting too, but the cargo was never fully secure, particularly as people boarded and descended in an ad hoc manner, undoing the driver's best intentions. Often a helping hand was required from a passenger willing to keep things from falling. On other occasions, bags fell off from the makeshift roof, spilling corn kernels or whatever else was inside. The pickup truck stopped, and several of us descended to pick up as many corn kernels as we could from the ten-foot stretch where they had scattered. These quotidian difficulties served to bond passengers who helped and received help, gratitude was expressed, and the ice broke for further conversation to continue.

Figure 4: En Route to Mesetas

In each of these cases, a degree of economic precarity and reliance on uncertain and challenging transportation options resulted in shared experiences of overcoming difficulties. These minor moments resulted in shifts, as individuals' interdependence became salient and the others' willingness to rise to the occasion opened doors to unforeseen relationships.

The density of Mariana Páez is in sharp contrast with its surrounding area, which is composed primarily of farmland. For instance, on the path between Mariana Páez and Simon Trinidad, one can walk several minutes in between each shack, in total there are perhaps less than a dozen along the half hour walk. The shacks are made of planks of wood, often constructed with visible gaps between planks.

This sharp contrast in density makes Mariana Páez stand out from its surroundings. While there is not a gate to enter the camp, the entrance is clearly demarcated by this change in land use and the large sign at the entrance.

Mariana Páez has rows of housing, each with half a dozen side by side residential units. Each row stands slightly removed from the next. They are separated by some brushes, and as they are built on an incline, the arrangement results in the

walkways of nearby rows being relatively separate. This contrasts with the design at Georgina Ortiz, where rows of units open onto a shared walkway, resulting in more frequent encounters and greetings among ex-combatants.

The official count of residents of Mariana Páez was about 200. Yet, at least during my time in the settlement, I never saw such a group together. I was told they were off working in different areas or in their respective residential units. It is also possible that some no longer lived in the camp. Yet they chose to continue including their names in the registry so they could return to pick up their monthly allotment of government issued foodstuffs, which were only available at the ETCRs.

Most of the mid-level commanders from the conflict who were initially placed at Mesetas left the space. Their departures felt like an abandonment, hurt morale, and contributed to the splintering of social ties at Mariana Páez. Prominent among them is Aldinever who appeared in a 2019 YouTube video (Pinzonoob 2019) with other prominent ex-commanders such as Ivan Marquez, Jesus Santrich, El Paisa, and Romaña, announcing they were re-arming in 2019.

The settlement has a central meeting space, which is occasionally used for meetings and workshops. Yet during my visits, I only saw such events take place about three times, and the attendance was only about 20 individuals. Socializing primarily took place within and around residential units. Given the size constraints, this meant there were hardly ever more than a handful of people talking to each other.

There are also two large social gathering spaces, but these tend to be relatively unoccupied. There was also a volleyball court and soccer field, which the younger residents often used in the late afternoon. These ludic spaces served the purpose of social integration within the community who lived at Mariana Páez.

One specific type of outside relations is with the Colombian military. One anecdote reveals the quality of this relationship. One day, military officers passed through the settlement and asked permission from a set of social leaders at the camp to charge their phones in their residence. They knew the social leaders from working groups or other meetings they had assisted. Yet they did not know much else about the settlement camps as they had just been rotated into the region. For instance, they expressed shock that the ex-combatants could vote in the upcoming elections, certainly oblivious to the fact that three of the ex-combatants were themselves candidates. A moment later, an ex-combatant walked by with a concealed weapon whose shape protruded her clothes out, which further startled the military officers. They asked the social leaders they were with if the ex-combatants were still armed. The social leader had to explain that they were not armed, except for those who had been trained and certified by the National Unit of Protection (UNP) as bodyguards. These blind spots in the knowledge of military personnel could significantly shape how they interact with ex-combatants. For example, as they do their rounds guarding the territory, they are more likely to be on alert and anxious around the ex-combatants if they thought they were still armed.

Simon Trinidad (Mesetas)

I only visited the Simon Trinidad settlement camp once as most of my time in Mesetas was spent in Mariana Páez. The walk between the two settlement camps took

about an hour along a dirt road, with only about a dozen or so wood shacks along the stretch.

While the estimated population size at Mariana ranged from 100-200, at Simon Trinidad it was closer to 50. Simon Trinidad residents formed a much more cohesive group since they woke up early in the morning to walk thirty minutes to a nearby farm, worked all day together, and walked back together. By contrast, residents of Mariana were split across different work projects and the larger number of residents made it harder to have a single cohesive group. This may also be in part due to their shared history. Many spent time in prison having been charged for rebellion and other crimes before the peace agreement and released early as a consequence of the peace agreement. They came from prisons across the country. Some had served 10 years or more. These shared experiences likely contributed to their cohesiveness, but a shared project to work on also helped. Residents of Simon Trinidad had secured access to a plot of land on the other side of Mariana Páez to raise pigs, where they had managed to convince the property owner to let them work the land. Each morning, they walked about 90 minutes to the pig farm together, spent the day working there and walked back in the evening. I believe there were some relationships between the settlements, but it was still an hour walk in the sun, so proximity likely drove internal relationships more. And while those from Simon Trinidad walked past Mariana Páez daily, they did so on their way to work early in the morning to avoid the brutal sun and came back tired. I do not know if they stopped, and if so, with what frequency. By contrast there were a multitude of productive projects at Mariana Páez which unintentionally divided residents into different groups reducing cohesion.

Georgina Ortiz (Vista Hermosa)

Vista Hermosa ETCR residents named their settlement Georgina Ortiz, after the first female combatant who died at the hands of the Colombian military in 1964 in Marquetalia, the site of the founding of the FARC. The Vista Hermosa urban center has a population of about 9,000. It is approximately a two-hour drive from where Georgina Ortiz was established. This site where I conducted fieldwork in 2018 and 2019 no longer exists, as its residents were forcibly internally displaced in July 2023 (Bonilla 2023).

There was a village a short ten-minute walk from the settlement camp called *La Cooperativa,* which has a population of 500 people. This proximity permitted ex-combatants to build relationships in different ways that are not available to those living in the formal settlements in Mesetas. The ex-combatants in Georgina Ortiz could easily walk to La Cooperative to purchase goods and supplies, as needed. These quotidian interactions allowed each party to gradually build understandings of each other, rather than just via occasional intentional spaces of reconciliation.

Figure 5: Shared walkways of Georgina Ortiz

As mentioned in the above discussion of Mariana Páez, the architectural space of the buildings in Georgina Ortiz were conducive to neighbors on both sides of the passageways encountering each other. By contrast, in Mariana Páez a greater number of passageways had sloped barriers which reduced the ease with which neighbors could interact.

Beyond the physical space, the settlement camp of Georgina Ortiz is full of colorful graffiti murals, in sharp contrast to Mariana Páez, which is mostly white, with the occasional wall splattered with colors. The Simon Trinidad settlement is also mostly white but does have a handful of murals depicting FARC heroes.

Figure 6: Graffiti Murals in Georgina Ortiz

In 2018, a FARC youth leader I will call Pablo helped host a graffiti festival at Georgina Ortiz with invited artists from Bogotá and other parts of the country. The idea came from a young artist who had gone to a settlement camp in a different region and had been welcomed to stay for an extended period. He organized the festival at the

other settlement camp, and when he went to Georgina Ortiz he collaborated with Pablo. The initiative was proposed by an artist who had come from another one of the settlement camps where he had also organized similar events. Beyond the aesthetics and lively feel the art gave the settlement camp, the festival led to new relationships and collaborations. Among them, a group of engineers/architects returned and helped the ex-combatants draw landscape designs as part of a 5-year plan.

Figure 7: Georgina Ortiz 5 Year Plan

The artist also helped recruit recent college graduates in design and communication to work as interns at the settlement camp. These ongoing relationships with outsiders did not exist at Mariana Páez or Simon Trinidad, beyond the teachers for Arrando La Educacion who went to each settlement camp (described in detail in the next chapter) . Similarly, another student went to conduct research for his undergraduate thesis, and he also stayed on for longer, because he just enjoyed being there.

In contrast to Mariana Páez or Simon Trinidad, Georgina Ortiz is a short walk from a town center called *La Cooperativa*. The town has a single intersection, with two stores and a couple of bars. However, this proximity to the settlement camp signified that

events and workshops can easily be organized in either space. The UN organized a community reintegration workshop in La Cooperativa. And medical services provided for the ex-combatants were also set up in La Cooperativa which facilitated access for civilians, and also presented additional opportunities for ex-combatants and civilians to meet more frequently than at Mariana Páez or Simon Trinidad.

Internally, each housing unit of the former FARC fighters consists of a kitchen and bedroom. The walls are made of drywall and have an open space near the roof. This style of construction is not typical in Colombia. It results from the Government believing these were temporary structures. Yet, as the 5-year anniversary of the peace accord approached, these temporary structures remained in place.

Discussion

The juxtaposition of these field sites has made visible the variance across them. Had I conducted fieldwork in any single location, the particularities of that place would have been naturalized and universalized. By contrast, the large geographic range of my fieldwork has allowed me to make comparisons and see these particularities.

In the two urban settings, Bogotá and Villavicencio, FARC ex-combatants lived independently and indicated that they did not see each other often due to the cost and time required to move around in the city. Another theme was that while there was increased interaction between ex-combatants and civilians, the anonymity of the city meant that civilians may often be unaware that they had interacted with ex-combatants. Whereas the ex-combatant's identity was more salient in rural settings.

The settlement camps by contrast were in rural areas, and upwards of 200 ex-combatants lived in close proximity. In these settings, ex-combatants interacted mostly

among themselves and interactions with civilians involved crossing the edge of the settlement camp. Additionally, these interactions were more salient to civilians since the low population density in the rural area made the ex-combatant's identity more salient. Despite the distance from the cities, the settlement camps are one of the primary destinations for civil society actors seeking to interact with the peace signatories. The ex-combatants in urban areas are closer in physical distance, however the popular imagination that they are just in the settlement camps contributes to those in urban areas being nearly invisible.

In addition to the relation between urban and rural sites, there were differences between the arrangements of the settlement camps themselves that shaped networks. In both cases, the volleyball courts, soccer fields and other leisure spaces served to facilitate congregating. At Georgina Ortiz this was complemented by a shared eating space and walkways.

The above examples illustrate how spatial propinquity, spatial composition, and spatial configuration shape networks as Small and Adler (2019) indicated. In addition, I have shown how economic power, perception, and labeling shape the perception of distance. Spatial settings contribute to the formation of networks, making some interactions more likely than others. However, this should not be viewed deterministically as these other factors mediate or accentuate the effects of physical distance.

5. EDUCATION AND REINTEGRATION

Towards the end of 2016, FARC ex-combatants in a formal settlement along the Caribbean coast celebrated New Year's Eve and the recent peace accord signed with the Colombian government. There was food and dance until the early morning, and the FARC ex-combatants sang, "I want to carry a flower in my hands rather than a rifle"[11] (Semana 2017b). A video recording of United Nations Mission for Verification staff dancing and celebrating with the FARC went viral, leading members on the political right to question the neutrality of the United Nations. After some consideration, the United Nations deemed the behavior of its participating staff as unprofessional and decided to let go of the three staff and supervisor involved (Semana 2017). The perceived magnitude of this dancing transgression is evidenced by international media reporting, including in *Al Jazeera*, *BBC*, *CBS News*, and *The Telegraph*.

While several representatives from across the Colombian political right demanded a greater degree of neutrality, the local Community Action Board[12] insisted that solidifying peace required new practices. It was better to see people dancing than fighting. The local community action council put out a statement indicating:

> *It pains us in this happy and festive territory that some media are judging the UN for having joined the celebrations and joy, not only because of the arrival of the new year, but also the end of a large war… We prefer to see everyone dancing; soldiers, police, observers, and antagonists, filling our territories with enthusiasm and fraternity, than to confront each other to death. This is how wars end, not with the dramas of Bogotá… We advise the UN not to fall for the trap being laid by the enemies of peace and their communication media* (Semana 2017).

[11] All translations from Spanish texts and interviews are by the author.

[12] In Colombia, "Community Action Boards" (*Juntas de Acción Comunal* or JACs) are social-civic organizations whose mission is "to promote development and collective well-being for the communities they represent and by law they have significant latitude in how they approach their mission, raise funds, and operate" (United States Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services 2001).

This debate highlights the range of norms and divergent meanings ascribed to interactions in the period following the peace accord. The pressure *to appear* neutral results in asymmetries, as it is unlikely that a video of United Nations staff celebrating the New Year with government officials would have provoked such a response. It also highlights a tension between knowledge from direct experience and knowledge filtered via media reports.

My dissertation project examines social reintegration with a focus on social networks and the meanings associated with the relationships between ex-combatants and civilians. Drawing from relational sociology and scholarship on collective memory, I am interested in how these relationships continually shape people's understanding of the past, present, and future. This chapter is part of my broader research agenda encompassing a wide range of social activities from business to medicine. Here, I focus on the social sphere of education, specifically a program called *Arando la Educación*[13]*,* which is tailored to ex-combatants and surrounding community members interested in achieving high school equivalency. I show how social reintegration occurs as part of and through quotidian activities, rather than just the community building initiatives specifically designed to promote social reintegration.

During my 13 month-long fieldwork in the eastern plains of Colombia, I observed an illustration of the asymmetrical treatment of FARC versus government to that described in the introductory paragraph. A United Nations official suggested that we get a drink sometime. They jokingly said to me, "I go out for drinks with everyone, from across all the different agencies. It is the best way to get information as to what is really

[13] *"Arando la Educación"* translates into "Plowing Education."

going on!" We both laughed, and then I asked, "So, do you get drinks with the FARC?" They immediately responded, "Absolutely not! I need to preserve a certain distance and want to avoid them seeing me in that way." The pressure to be perceived as neutral and to maintain a professional relationship hid unequal treatment across sets of actors. It was acceptable to socialize with government officials, bilateral aid agencies, academic researchers, and many others. But not with the FARC.

The above anecdotes related to the United Nations illustrate how interpersonal interactions with the FARC are influenced by the expectations that come with a job. They also show how a particular activity may carry different meanings depending upon the observer and the context of the activity. Symbolic boundaries are made visible in these transgressions as people mobilize to enforce distinctions between "us and them" (Lamont and Molnár 2002; Pachucki, Pendergrass, and Lamont 2007). As Edgell et al. (2019) show, these distinctions have material significance: in avoiding dancing or drinking with ex-combatants more than the nicety of social exchange is lost. These informal exchanges are key opportunities to trade stories, learn from, and about each other. The prolonged armed conflict has contributed to a polarized environment where distinct collective memories have developed in near isolation. In this study, I show how the sphere of education is not only a place for formal learning in the classroom, but also serves to structure, and contribute to the development of new relationships, and shared understandings.

By contrast, dominant lines of scholarship on the reintegration of ex-combatants focus on economic reintegration (Özerdem 2012: 52). Researchers claim that only once this has been accomplished can secondary aspects such as social and political reintegration be tackled more gradually (Bowd and Özerderm 2013: 457). I found this

position echoed in my conversations with government officials in Colombia who claimed that social reintegration was only possible after basic needs were met. They see social reintegration as a higher good built upon an economic foundation. They believe, by implication, that these prerequisite basic needs can be satisfied in a vacuum, without interactions or relationships.

These beliefs are mirror images of broader discussions, which similarly claim that civil society, market, and government can be cleanly separated. Related scholarship tends to depict civil society as the preeminent space for the development of personal relationships (Putnam 2000; Alexander 2006; Viterna, Clough, and Clark 2015). While incorporating insights from social capital theory (Jonah 2008; Özerdem 2012, Kaplan and Nussio 2015; Kilroy, and Basini 2018; Mouly, Delgado, and Giménez 2019), this literature has focused on defining social reintegration as participation in civil society organizations, an argument that is famously reflected in Putnam's seminal work *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (2000).

By contrast, my research draws from relational sociology (Emirbayer 1997; Erikson 2013; Mische 2011; Pachucki and Breiger 2010). I focus on the social networks, meanings, and norms of social spheres where relationships form between ex-combatants and civilians. I expand the scope beyond civil society and examine how social spheres structure the relationships of social reintegration. I focus on the patterns of representations to understand how these interactions shape conceptions of the past, present, and future, and—through them—advance peace.

My contribution engages with structural and cultural forces. Whereas scholarship on reintegration focuses on civil society, I show the significance of other social spheres in the process of social reintegration. I describe how the educational social sphere

shapes interactions between ex-combatants and civilians by the corresponding norms, values, narratives, and memories predominant in this sphere. In this chapter, I discuss relevant literature on reintegration, civil society, social capital, and relational sociology. I then focus on the role of the educational sphere in the reintegration process. Toward the end, I briefly provide examples from other spheres to convey that these findings are not particular to education, nor to Colombia. To do so, I draw from fieldwork I conducted with Joachim Savelsberg in Northern Ireland. I illustrate how post-conflict initiatives in Belfast shaped social interactions between ex-combatants from opposing sides, and with civilians.

Social Reintegration of Ex-combatants

Following protracted periods of conflict, ex-combatants face numerous challenges in their transition to civilian status. This transition is the final stage of a process typically known as Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR). While the corresponding literature has been primarily of concern to military and security research centers (Herrera and Gonzalez 2013: 276), Kimberly Theidon states correctly that "[b]y reducing DDR to 'dismantling the machinery of war,' these programs have failed to adequately consider how to move beyond demobilizing combatants to facilitating social reconstruction and coexistence" (Theidon 2007: 67). I aspire to move in this direction and argue that scholarship needs to better consider how the contexts in which interpersonal relationships develop affect the process of reintegration.

Scholarship on reintegration separates the process into its economic, political, and social aspects (Bowd and Özerderm 2013: 456; Kingma ([2002] 2013). Economic reintegration focuses on the challenges of income generation and livelihoods. Carranza-

Franco (2019) categorizes economic reintegration according to whether it is focused on short-term (such as cash transfers, see Willibald 2006; Dambaru 2014) or long-term needs (vocational training, education, and entrepreneurial support, see Sacristan 2020). She also includes appeals to the private sector's involvement through corporate social responsibility programs.

By contrast, scholarship on social reintegration focuses on self-assessments of social acceptance or participation in organizations within civil society. This takes a binary conceptualization of a tie (it exists or not), without a consideration of the nature of the relationship. In a key article, "Community Counts: The social reintegration of ex-combatants in Colombia," Oliver Kaplan and Enzo Nussio (2015) criticize that "[s]everal studies have used the indicator of self-reported acceptance of ex-combatants by their communities and families" (2015:4). They argue that the perceived acceptance by the ex-combatants is not a good measure of whether the "community" accepts them. They propose the alternative measure of ex-combatant participation in community organizations. Herrera and González (2013: 291) similarly describe community reintegration as requiring an identification of the needs of the community and as a preparation of ex-combatants to become actively involved in the community.

The focus on the "receptor community" into which ex-combatants demobilize is further developed in Mouly, Delgado, and Giménez (2019). They examine two "peace communities" in Colombia that declared themselves impartial in the conflict. Within these peace communities, they focus on established worker associations, which provided security and assisted in destigmatizing the ex-combatants. Mouly, Delgado, and Giménez emphasize the

significance of Putnam's social capital concept to guide subsequent research on social reintegration.

Scholarship on social networks deepens this interest in relationships and focuses more on the connected patterns that emerge. Two scholars who incorporate more of a social networks approach are Elisabeth Jean Wood and Jocelyn Viterna. Wood (2008) examines how six social processes leading up to war transform social networks, including political mobilization, military socialization, and polarization of social identities. This analysis provides useful conceptual tools that should also be applied to examine post-war contexts. Viterna (2006; 2013) employs a social movements approach and develops a micro-level theory of mobilization. She argues that instead of speaking of demobilization, we should think of the process as one of re-mobilization where ex-combatants are engaging in a new set of activities and fields. In assessing trajectories of ex-combatants in El Salvador, Viterna highlights the significance of the proximity to key leaders to open doors to unforeseen opportunities. In this chapter, I similarly incorporate a social network focus and build upon the work of Wood (2008) and Viterna (2013).

From Civil Society and Social Capital to Social Networks

The tripartite typology of social reintegration mirrors the state, market, civil society sectors in which social analysts often divide society. Jeffrey Alexander (2006) describes the civil sphere as the preeminent place for building a conception of "we," as the source of what binds societies together. He describes a long lineage of thinking that goes back to Tocqueville, and more

recently Putnam's *Bowling Alone*. Putnam (2000) decries the fall in membership numbers across a range of civil society organizations as indicative of a collapse in community. Viterna, Clough, and Clark (2015) argue for separating normative conceptions of "civil society" from the structural space in which these interactions take place. They propose that "third sector" is a more useful analytic term than "civil society" since some civil society organizations may promote a broadening of the "we" while other groups may have countervailing objectives. Nonetheless, this analysis continues the tripartite category of society. It also sees "the third sector" as the primary place for these relationships of solidarity to form, as other social spheres are tainted with their own motives.

By contrast, social network scholars emphasize how all activities bring people together "with the result (intended or unintended) of facilitating relationships" among those involved (Burt 2005: 12). In *Unanticipated Gains*, Mario Small examines the role of childcare centers in developing the networks of parents. He states that prior researchers have been guided by their "devotion to studying the consequences of social ties, [and this has resulted in] many researchers hav[ing] taken for granted the processes from which ties arise." (Small 2009:9) He emphasizes how networks develop through quotidian practices and organizations and focuses on how childcare centers develop parents' networks. Small broadens the traditional analysis that primarily focuses on individuals and relationships to also encompass the context in which these unfold. His research turns our attention to how organizations structure the networks of individuals. He indicates that to do this effectively one must,

> *… comprehend how interaction conditions social ties, one must first abandon the tendency, common in the study of urban*

> *processes and social inequality to examine organizations in light of their global purpose: the childcare center as a place for childcare, the recreation area as a place for recreation, the grocery as a place for groceries. (Small 2009: 179)*

In this chapter, I similarly show how education projects structure the networks of social reintegration. I examine an educational program in rural Colombia aimed at supporting ex-combatants and surrounding community members to achieve high school equivalency. I show how it facilitates key spaces where teachers and students can build and develop relationships that at times overflow beyond the classroom. This program is about much more than educational attainment, it also contributes to social reintegration.

This chapter builds upon these network ideas, but in line with relational sociology literature which differs from the traditional structural approach. Historically, network approaches have focused on the structural dimension of how individual relationships (dyads) connect to form a broader web. The concern in that literature is with terms like distance (the number of ties required to connect two individuals or "nodes"), density (the number of ties between individuals over the total number of possible ties), and structural holes (the gaps between otherwise relatively dense clusters of ties). A core notion of relational sociology is instead that the "tie" or relationship cannot be divested from the meaning that individuals associate with the relationship (Emirbayer 1997; Erikson 2013; Mische 2011; Pachucki and Breiger 2010). Connecting this consideration back to the earlier point about how social reintegration is examined in the literature, I strive to move beyond whether there is participation or not, to examine what kind of participation and how individuals understand their relationships.

I further connect this relational argument with the literature on collective memory. Building on the work of Maurice Halbwachs (1992 [1925]), I understand memory to be continually shaped and reshaped by present contexts and interactions. This presentist approach to memory focuses on how memories are socially constructed. As Savelsberg and King state, "This does not mean, of course, that the past did not happen. People did suffer pain, they cried, screamed, resigned, and many died. All of this is all too real. Yet the way we know about their suffering is never direct. It is always mediated and filtered" (Savelsberg and King 2007: 9-10).

The reintegration of ex-combatants provides an opportunity to examine how distinct collective memories transform in a historical period marked by new forms of encounters and network building. New interactions and relationships can either reinforce or transform how individuals see themselves and each other. My project builds upon Savelsberg's (2015) work, which analyzes the patterns of representations of the Darfur conflict from across social fields (human rights, humanitarianism, and diplomacy) in eight countries. In this chapter, I argue that social spheres have a similar role in shaping interactions and the development of representations.

Beyond examining whether a tie exists or not in a binary sense, my research examines the nature of interactions between ex-combatants and civilians. I expand the focus beyond civil society and examine how relationships form in other social spheres, specifically in education. In the process, I also examine how these social spheres shape interactions according to the norms

and values characteristic of each social sphere. Finally, I examine how these relationships appear to shape narratives of the past and present.

Arando la Educación

Universidad Nacional conducted a census of FARC ex-combatants shortly after the peace agreement that showed that 68% had only a primary level of education or less. In this context, the Universidad Nacional Abierta y a Distancia (UNAD) established a program, funded by the Norwegian Refugee Council, called “Arando la Educación” or “Plowing Education” to provide tailored education modules for ex-combatants and surrounding communities. These modules were intended to allow participants the completion of secondary education equivalency courses (UNAD n.d.). Recent college graduates travel to the settlement camps to teach a range of subjects from sciences to humanities. The teachers live in the settlement camps with the ex-combatants for three-month intervals, typically three to four teachers per camp.

The teachers came from similar backgrounds: low to middle income households from neighborhoods in southern Bogotá. Their employment arrangement with Arando la Educación was precarious, as the teachers are only hired for each term and then return to Bogotá for weeks and sometimes months waiting for the next term to start. One of the teachers told me that one year they spent five months waiting in between terms. During these off periods, they find odd jobs, ranging from bicycle mechanics to high school tutors. While many expressed being committed to the work they also said they would take a steady job in Bogotá if they could find it.

The teachers I spoke with told me that there did not seem to be a public recruitment call for Arando la Educación. Instead, prospective teachers heard about the

opportunity through word of mouth. These working conditions and recruitment processes shape the types of individuals that were recruited as teachers for the program, and consequently, whom ex-combatants interact with. Taken a step further, they also unintentionally direct the second-degree audiences to whom the teachers will later relay their experiences when speaking with friends or family after returning from spending a term at a settlement camp.

Classes involved civilians and ex-combatants, and in some cases, teachers offered classes outside of the settlement. This practice brought in a larger proportion of civilians. One teacher estimated that of the 90 students they had, about 30 were civilians. Importantly, this mix of ex-combatants and civilians provided opportunities for the formation of network ties.

Initial Expectations Transformed

The teachers I interviewed conveyed that their perspectives of the FARC were transformed because of their experience. This is an example of how collective memories, understandings of the conflict and the respective actors, are transformed through interaction. Additionally, this suggests two points: First, had these individuals not participated as teachers in this education program, they would have continued to hold their prior beliefs. Second, the predominant view among the teachers' networks is like that which the selected teachers held before going to the settlement camps. This latter deduction can be made given the surprise and unexpected transformation in the teachers' perspectives. Otherwise, they would have spoken about this as confirmation of a perspective they were familiar with; not one that was entirely new to them.

Upon returning to Bogotá, the teachers conveyed these new perspectives to their respective networks. In network terms, the teachers became boundary spanners or brokers across structural holes (Burt 2005) as there were minimal (if any) ties across the two clusters before the teachers began the program. These relationships were structured by the educational program, not only by making them possible – it is unlikely the teachers would have traveled to the remote areas otherwise – but also by structuring the broader context of who was selected and for how long they went to the settlement camps. This chapter highlights the experience of several teachers who went to the settlement camps.

While other civilians made short trips to the settlement camps for a variety of reasons including business, international aid, monitoring implementation of the peace accord, health services provision, only teachers stayed for three months at a time. This relatively longer period permitted teachers and ex-combatants to develop deeper relationships than other visitors who often went for just a day or two. By the same token, the program's decision to rotate teachers between camps interrupted relationships developing in the camps between ex-combatants and teachers. If the teachers were just transmitting subject matter knowledge in grammar or math, this would be less significant. But switching camps resulted in interrupting the development of relationships within the camps. Nevertheless, the experience of having been a teacher at a camp previously facilitated the development of networks at the new camp. In the following, I describe this transformation from the teacher's point of view. I start with their expectations, show how they began to develop relationships with their students, and illustrate the reaction from family and friends in Bogotá when they returned and shared their new insights from the

settlement camp. I finally step back and focus on the ways in which the education program shaped these relationships and social reintegration more broadly.

From Seen on TV to Knowing in Person

Most Colombians have never met someone from the FARC. As a result, Colombians develop an understanding of the organization and its members only through mainstream media outlets. It is common to hear the FARC referred to in subhuman terms. Even amongst much of the left, this image is diluted but not substantially different. One teacher, Pablo[14], described how the media shaped his understanding of the FARC growing up.

> *What happens is that I had some baggage, in the sense that I always had a dark image, particularly as a child based on the news.*
>
> *I don't know exactly when, but towards the end of the 80's and 90's, the national news was supercharged. I always remember the images of the FARC in columns. Because there was a lot of conflict, and very heavy stuff. So, they seemed to always show a column of guerrilla fighters, and then showed images of cars riddled with bullets, that sort of thing. So, one developed this very, very, very different idea of how someone could have joined or been part of the FARC….*

Without the opportunity of having direct contact, Pablo assimilated the narratives presented via mass media which displayed a militaristic image of the FARC and attributed the collateral damage to the guerrilla group. The repeated sequence of showing armed FARC fighters followed by bullet ridden vehicles likely resulted in thoughts like: "The FARC did that. What kind of person does that?" In the interview Pablo goes on to describe his shock when his media created expectations did not coincide with the reality of who he met at the settlement camps.

[14] I have given all the teachers and ex-combatants pseudonyms to protect their identity.

> *So, when I was [at the settlement camps] I realized that there was a man who farmed, or the one who had animals. Do you understand? And the women, are women with their own lives, for example, and I know what I am going to say sounds odd, but that they were people too. That they aren't quite like the mental construction I had, or how I imagined them, maybe like mercenaries… as aggressive and dangerous. No, nothing of the sort.*

Through the process of being a teacher at the settlement camps, he recognized the ex-combatants' humanity. Before the image evoked in his mind was that the ex-combatants were sub-human, and naturally violent for no reason. He concluded that, "With the passage of the days, that veil was removed."

Juan is another teacher who expresses a similar contrast between expectations and reality upon arriving at the settlement camps.

> *Well, I thought they would be a bit rougher, more distant, in other words that they would be a bit more cautious with outside people who went to their community. Precisely because war makes people distrust others, but when I arrived it wasn't like that. People opened up to tell one things. A lot of people took a liking for one. Let's say from my experience, there wasn't a single person that I saw who was distrusting or suspicious of strangers, of an outside person. So, in that sense, it completely changed the way in which I thought they would react to someone's arrival.*

Juan's expectations were also very different before arriving at the settlement camps. He assumed war had transformed the ex-combatant into unrecognizable forms, that they fought for riches, valuing money over human life. He was surprised that rather than being reticent, people at the settlement camps wanted to open up and tell him stories. This experience entirely transformed what he thought of the FARC, and consequently the conflict. In explaining this significant change of perspective, he says:

> *I always have thought that we in Bogotá live in a bubble… In the city we allow ourselves to be convinced and simply believe without inquiring, without researching. We believe everything that is said in the news about the guerrilla is true.*
>
> *So, we develop a vision of the reincorporation process and the guerrilla which is skewed because we believe blindly what is said on the news.*

> *And obviously the news speaks from a particular perspective which is part of the interest that they have at the moment of transmitting the message. That's why my friends and neighbors would say, "But, how are you going to go over there? Aren't you afraid that they do something to you? Aren't you afraid that they get upset and do something to you?"*

Juan's description of living in "a bubble" can be reinterpreted in network terms as within a cluster of ties with few links beyond the cluster. This leads to a form of group think, with perceptions of distant people and places primarily shaped by news outlets. This observation of the bubble is also a recognition that he has gone beyond it and can now see it from the outside.

A third teacher, Francisco, said that he hesitated to tell his father when he first got hired because his father had been in the military, and he expected his father might disapprove. Francisco was surprised his father did not object and only advised him to be safe. He recalled his father saying, "do not go and talk too much or for too long. Be careful of how you speak to people." This is sound advice for any setting but the emphasis on this preparation for engaging with the ex-combatants can lead to being more hesitant to engage, and less likely to converse with ex-combatants upon arrival.

Juan had a similar experience where his family advised him to be cautious and maintain a distance from the ex-combatants. He was told,

> *… not to ride with them on their motorcycles because one didn't know what might happen, or for example, not to ride in the cars of the bodyguards that sometimes offered one a ride. So, there is always this fear, but it is a fear that I believe is unfounded, based on what they heard on the news, because they are not in touch with reality, precisely because their entire lives have been here in Bogotá.*

The above interview excerpts were consistent across the conversations I had with many individuals from across social spheres regarding their preconceived notions before going to the settlement camps for the first time -- and, admittedly, with my own experience as well. This pattern of representations, of both the pre-conceived notions

and transformed perspectives, highlights how few individuals traverse across these distinct social worlds. The education program is not just about teaching math, sciences, and humanities. It is also a vehicle for connecting individuals who otherwise would not have met.

Beyond the novelty of connecting disparate clusters across the structural hole, the teachers interacted with students through a framework of class schedules and the teacher-student relationship. How teachers approached their roles as teachers shaped how relationships developed.

Another teacher, Lucia, described how open the ex-combatants were to discussing nearly all aspects of their lives. She said astonishing conversations inevitably emerged in unexpected forms. During one of the classes that I observed there was a sudden explosion heard in the distance. Lucia and I jumped, but the students were barely startled at all. They explained that there was a de-mining expedition underway, and the workers had likely set off an active land mine they had found. Still uneasy, Lucia explained several ideas rushing through her head, first that she had thought it was a grenade, and second, the realization that if she had seen a grenade thrown at us the teacher would not have known what to do. Here the pupils took on the role of instructors. They began to explain that one first needed to see where the grenade was along its arc, if it was still going up, then most likely one should run towards it so that it goes over one's head. But if it was on the descent then running away would be wiser. Additionally, one should never lie down with one's midsection flat on the ground as the reverberations from the explosions could burst one's internal organs. Instead, one should get on all fours, resting on one's elbows and knees and with one's mouth open to help reduce the tension.

This brief exchange that interrupted a Spanish grammar lesson made salient how divergent our respective life trajectories were. The ease with which this topic was discussed also signaled an openness to engage with difficult themes. Nonetheless, Lucia later said to me that she felt their teacher-student relationship required her to maintain a degree of distance and not to pry into their personal lives. Lucia actively avoided sensitive topics. She might engage with them if students brought them up, but otherwise she would not pry. This belief mirrors the attitudes of the UN official, and the norms evidenced by the transgressions of the dancing scandal.

These expectations about proper teacher-student behavior shaped the type of conversations between teachers and ex-combatant-students, as well as the types of social spaces they shared. The desire to follow norms of what is considered appropriate reduced the possibility for closer interaction. Other teachers who did not share this view emphasized that it was only outside the classroom, beyond the teacher-student relationship, that transformative conversations took place.

Francisco shared how he sometimes played soccer with the ex-combatants, "…and from there they began to invite me to other things." They went together on hikes and swimming in the river. And being the science teacher, Francisco says he "would begin telling them about a tree that I came across and they would also tell me about the guerrilla's stories with it." Through informal social spaces, Francisco's relationships with the ex-combatants developed outside the classroom.

Similarly, Pablo recalled how, when he first arrived at the settlement camp, his room did not have any electricity. He made do for a couple of days until he heard that one of the ex-combatants was good with electronics and electricity. Pablo asked the ex-

combatant if he might be able to help. Pablo went for a walk, and upon returning discovered the ex-combatant had fixed it.

> *So, for example, that anecdote of the electricity, right? It was because it wasn't his job per se. [And like where was I going to get an extension cord out there?] ...*
>
> *And I began to see a different face, and a very friendly one towards me, "teacher, are your lights working? Do you need another light bulb? Are all your sockets working?" Or, for example, in the restaurant, where we ate, "do you need dishware? Do you want a little more food?" It was things like that, which are the little daily things of living, right? That begins to generate a change in these situations, doesn't it?*

Pablo was especially impressed because the ex-combatant had no obligation to help him. He had gone out of his way to help Pablo and was genuinely concerned about his well-being. These mundane daily interactions began to shift how Pablo saw the ex-combatants: from dangerous mercenaries to helpful and considerate neighbors. The tension between his current experience and his preconceptions led him to reevaluate what he thought he knew about the conflict.

Juan also told me that the first time he connected with an ex-combatant was outside of work duties. The teachers were registering students for the start of the program but heard from superiors that they needed to halt registrations. The ex-combatants became upset, and word began to spread that they were not going to be allowed to study. Large numbers of ex-combatants started to complain.

> *Everyone came to complain, but it was because the ones that were sitting off to one side drinking beer told people to go back home that there weren't any spots. So, I went directly to them to clarify the situation, so they wouldn't continue to give bad information. And I said, "No, there are more spots. What is happening is that we are waiting for UNAD to let us open them up." So, when I went to make the clarification, one of them told me, well, sit down and we can drink a beer. And let's say that's how we began to get to know each other, and from there I began to talk with them more, and they told me some stories."*

Juan was occupied with his duties as a teacher and approached the group of ex-combatants to combat the spreading of misinformation impacting his job. Over time, one of these ex-combatants became one of Juan's closest friends at the settlement camp, but it is unlikely this would have happened had Juan turned down the invitation to maintain a professional relationship. Juan succinctly stated that one goes about one's work tasks, and "alongside them one continues in one's work dynamics but also develop a way of living together." He went on to say that "In general, these conversations always took place outside of the classroom. Because in class it is hard to sit down and speak to someone about their life."

At one of the settlement camps, the teachers did not have their own kitchens and instead their meals were cooked by an ex-combatant. This led to a particularly affective relationship.

> *The woman who cooked for us was an ex-combatant so every time that we sat down to eat, she would tell us a story of what she had lived there, or with the husband, also an ex-combatant, we would also sit down and play. He had an Xbox, and we would play and so with him we also talked. And he would tell us stories of what the war had been like for him."*

However, teachers who strove to maintain a professional relationship would primarily experience spaces that were less conducive to connecting with ex-combatants on a more personal level. Consequently, their preconceptions would not be as easily transformed. These transformations take place outside class, but became possible by the education program; otherwise, these young people from Bogotá would not be 10 hours away in rural Colombia at the settlement camp. And the secluded aspect of the settlement camp also served to encourage teachers to develop social relationships with the ex-combatants. Otherwise, they would have to spend three months isolated in their living quarters while not in the classroom.

The social proximity served to humanize the ex-combatants in the teachers' eyes. Not just because of their friendly demeanor, but because of the impactful stories shared. Francisco described how he had grown up hearing their father's battle stories, talking about the military tactics. And while his father had served in a different part of the country, there were parallels between the combat stories. But now he heard the other side of the stories. "And then, let's say, that one begins to put together the jigsaw puzzle between my father's story and theirs."

Francisco also described how he realized that his behavior shaped the way the ex-combatants responded to him. In a previous term, he had worked at another settlement camp where he learned some of the behaviors and vocabulary particular to the FARC. He said that greeting the ex-combatants by "comrade" was one small way of becoming part of the community. And similarly, using other FARC vocabulary showed that the teacher was familiar with their world and had had prior experience with the FARC. For instance, in the FARC, "*Vamos a trinchar*" means to go to bed as "*trinchera*" is the trench, where they would sleep during the conflict. Or "cancharina" is a meal which was commonly eaten in the FARC but not known by others. "So, they'd say, 'that guy is speaking like us.' That makes it so we have more in common, or that a more quotidian environment is created amongst us." The teacher's ability to use this language stemmed from previous contact and interaction with FARC ex-combatants. His relationships with other FARC ex-combatants in a previous settlement camp exposed him to colloquialisms, and those helped him assimilate in the new camp he went to.

Relationships take time to develop, through side conversations and downtime outside class. Individuals do not typically open up to strangers, but since the educational

program placed teachers for three months at a time within a camp, trust began to form, and stories were shared.

Juan indicated that one of the stories that affected him the most was of an ex-combatant named Maria who was in a wheelchair. She had been part of a special forces unit of the FARC on an intelligence operation when a military unit discovered her. They captured her and, once she was under their control, the commanding officer gave the order that she be shot but not killed. They shot her twice in the spine, and in her arm. She was hospitalized for six months, then sent to jail, but ultimately released because she was so ill. At the settlement camp she had a store and was a dedicated student. Juan explained why the story affected him so much as follows:

> *… that was a very difficult story because she says there wasn't any need to do that. They could have left her as she was because they already had captured her, and they could have just taken her prisoner, but they preferred to harm her, and to leave her like that before turning her in, and it was the army that did this.*
>
> *So that is one of those stories that has a greater impact, and more getting to know her, because let's say, she is a very good person. Always cooperative. In class, she is one of the first to arrive.*
>
> *It was a very tough situation to see, and to see how she… there were moments when she said to me, "teacher, my legs are hurting too much, I'm really sorry but I can't stay in class." And it was true because she really liked going to class. She was diligent doing her homework, but there were times that she couldn't stand the pain and she needed to leave."*

The fact that Maria was willing to share such a story in this level of detail is indicative of a considerable degree of closeness. It is unlikely that this happened the first day the teacher arrived. Furthermore, this story had an impact on Juan precisely because he knows Maria and sees her as "a very good person. Always cooperative." He sees how Maria wants to learn, she tries so hard in the classroom, but is still

suffering pain from years ago and needs to leave the classroom. He restates that it is true, that she is not faking the pain.

Additionally, this story tells the teacher the dark side of the armed forces, inducing changes to the collective memory of the violent past. One can contrast this experience with the media images described by Pablo earlier, which only showed the FARC and the bullet-ridden vehicles – as if they fought alone. Despite the well documented "False Positives" scandal of the military dressing up civilians to make them pass as ex-combatants to achieve recognition (New York Times 2019), it is different to hear a story of military abuse firsthand, from someone whom one respects. So, he states in shock, "And it was the army that did this," it is as if to say that he had expected more from the military. Similarly, Francisco shared what he learned about the peace negotiations of El Caguán.

> *"During that period, the FARC practically controlled 70% of the Colombian territory. They told me that big multinationals like Bayer, multinationals like Coca-Cola, no sorry, not Coca-Cola, they never came to negotiate with them. Well, they mentioned representatives from other multinational companies, some German, Swiss and from the United States went to a meeting with Marulanda so that he wouldn't expropriate their businesses in Colombia. In other words, that in that moment, Manuel Marulanda had the power to negotiate who would was going to stay in Colombia. For me that was, well I don't know if that was true, but for me that was like wow, in what moment did they negotiate the future of Colombia and no one told me.*

Here Francisco shares a new perspective of the failed peace negotiations that he only heard at the settlement camps. And even though he holds a degree of skepticism that it is true that the FARC leader Manuel Marulanda had these covert meetings, the story shocks him and destabilizes how he now thinks about the conflict.

As these relationships developed, the teachers began getting involved in other ways outside the classroom. They began supporting grant writing applications and sharing their knowledge to support FARC business ventures ranging from ecotourism to memory preservation initiatives. These collaborations were not part of their work as teachers, but they would not have been able to engage in them had the education program not sent them to live amongst the FARC ex-combatants for months at a time. This arrangement resulted in many teachers finding spaces outside the classroom where life stories were shared, and perspectives transformed.

Yet, just as the education program inadvertently created the conditions for these new relationships to develop, it also hampered them. In some cases, teachers returned to the same settlement camp for a subsequent term after their break, but in other cases teachers were moved to a different settlement camp due to administrative needs. Juan describes how he began developing a collaboration at one settlement camp, but his excitement was short-lived when he was unexpectedly moved to another settlement camp.

> *…we assumed that we would pause the work that we had been doing with him and resume after Christmas vacation and New Year's, when I was to return to the camp… We would continue working on the museum, but I don't know what it is going to be like since I'm going to a different camp… because I wasn't expecting them to change me to a different camp...*

Juan and other teachers told me, however, that they keep in touch with some of the ex-combatants by phone messages. Some have invited their combatants-turned-students to visit them in Bogotá. But the distance makes things difficult; teachers hope to return later to the settlement camp for a holiday.

The switching of teachers between camps also highlighted differences between settlement camps. One teacher, Pablo, talked about how the relationships between ex-

combatants and civilians differed across camps depending upon how remote the camps were.

> *Even if it is just once a day, but public transportation passes through here, which means that someone from the neighborhood and an ex-combatant might go together on the same transport. [Whereas at the other camp] that never happened, I suppose because less people live per square kilometer so there's a more distant relationship.*

Pablo directs our attention to the fact that, in addition to the education program, geography, and demographics structure relationships through shared services. A similar point is made by Francisco who highlights how the security concerns at a settlement camp shaped how open and receptive ex-combatants were to strangers. The settlement camp he was assigned to has been the site of long violent conflicts. He said, since in "…that region there were bloodthirsty paramilitaries… that killed many, many people because that is a mining territory," he expects people to be "more prudent, talk less, and less social." Just as the education program structures relationships, so do the local conditions of each settlement camp.

Second Degree Networks

The teachers have a unique network structure position, bridging distinct clusters across structural holes. Few, if any, of their friends and family have had direct experience with the FARC settlement camps. Upon their return to Bogotá in between terms, they reconnect with family and friends who are curious to learn what it was like. Francisco relayed how amazed and supportive his friends were upon hearing his stories from the settlement camp.

> *They tell me how interesting all these stories are, and the experiences that I have had. That not everyone has had the opportunity to participate in a*

> *world-renowned peace agreement. They say to me, one day in the future you'll be able to say, "I contributed to shape this peace agreement, to build this peace agreement."*

For Francisco it is an honor to contribute to the peace process, and his peers recognize that this is a one-of-a-kind experience. This unique network position of a boundary spanner allows him to transmit stories that his peers would likely otherwise not have heard. But Francisco is more than a conduit of information. It is not just that he transmits bits of information; his stories are interwoven with the affection and confidence that he has developed with the ex-combatants and his peers. His closeness with the ex-combatants exposed him to stories, which he would not have otherwise heard if he had maintained a purely professional teacher-student relationship. And similarly, Francisco's friends take what he says seriously and believe it to be true despite the incongruence with other knowledge they have from less personal sources.

Juan also talked about sharing his experience with his friends and more specifically, some of the points on which his perspective changed.

> *I told them about what I lived, what I experienced, living there. And so perhaps now they may have a different perspective, which leads them to think about the news and about reality.*
>
> *For example, on forced recruitment. Let's say that at the camp, I realized that there is no such thing as forced recruitment - there are contexts which lead people to join the FARC, socio-economic conditions, that make people join from a very young age, but that image of the guerrilla putting a weapon up to someone's head and saying "come with us you are going to join the FARC," it wasn't like that. At least in the conversations I had, with each one of the ex-combatants, there wasn't a single one that was there because they were forced. All requested to join the ranks.*
>
> *So, I came and told people here [in Bogotá], and they had an entirely different vision, because they believed that the guerrilla fighter pointed a weapon and took children off to war, but it wasn't like that. So, in relation to that perception there was change.*

Juan again refers to the news as the primary means by which people learn about the conflict and the FARC. He focuses on a frequently cited example of why the FARC are portrayed as monstrous: forced recruitment, specifically of minors. Juan, along with many others I spoke with (and myself included), have a transformed view on recruitment practices after having developed relationships with FARC ex-combatants. As Juan indicates, many FARC ex-combatants joined the organization when they were very young. But the stories of how they joined are not at all like what is presented in the media and labelled "forced recruitment." Many of these individuals indicate they tried joining the FARC even earlier but were turned away for being too young. Others have harrowing stories of having been left orphaned when paramilitaries killed their entire families, and they state they would surely have died of hunger had the FARC not taken them in.

In telling these stories to their friends and neighbors, the teachers are helping to make a distant world seem closer. A blurry abstraction begins to take shape with names and the stories that teachers tell. This fanning out via second degree networks expands the scope of the individual experience of teachers. Collective memories are partially transformed. However, this transformation is limited by the similarity of the teachers' networks, as they represent similar socio-economic strata, educational backgrounds, and neighborhoods.

Discussion

The teachers' experiences described above show how an educational program shaped their interactions with ex-combatants. The area surrounding the settlement camps also affected interactions between ex-combatants and other civilians. And, at an

interpersonal level, a teacher's preconceptions shaped how they interacted with ex-combatants. The combination of these factors influenced the nature of interactions between teachers and ex-combatants. They subsequently affected the likelihood that those interactions had a transformative effect on worldviews, reintegration, and the realization of peace.

Arando la Educación sent teachers to settlement camps to teach Spanish, math, sciences, and humanities. But this program also inadvertently structures relationships in new ways that contribute to social reintegration. The program structures these relationships by selecting the teachers, determining how long they stay at the settlement camps, and when the teachers are switched between camps.

Similarly, the teachers' beliefs and practices played a significant role through their individual-level preconceptions of the FARC and the degree to which they viewed professionalism as keeping social and affective distance from their students.

Both of these points, the context and nature of the interactions, are overlooked by scholarship on social reintegration that focused on a purely structural approach, taking a binary approach to examining participation. Organizations and contexts shape how individuals interact. And the preconceptions that people have when interacting shape interactions, as do the stories they share, and the degree to which their perspectives are or are not transformed.

Relationships can form across all contexts; this does not just happen in civil society through participating in nonprofits and social movements. The everyday encounters described in this chapter open up possibilities for relationships to develop beyond the sphere in which they begin.

This chapter has focused on the role of an education program, but my broader research project extends beyond the sphere of education. I observed similar dynamics in three different sets of activities: entrepreneurial support networks, business projects embracing fair trade principles, and medical pro bono volunteer trips. Each of these initiatives are outside the scope of traditional social reintegration scholarship which focuses on the participation of ex-combatants in nonprofits. Similar to the education program, the interactions between ex-combatants and civilians in these initiatives are partially determined by the overall norms and expectations of the initiatives.

In the case of the entrepreneurial initiatives, there was a recurring theme of, "we're here to make money. If we are not making money, there is no point." This attitude shapes how people interact, the stories people exchange, and the possibility of transformed perspectives. Yet some business initiatives took more of a fair-trade approach and focused on highlighting the ex-combatants' life experience and empowering them in both monetary and non-monetary ways. Within the business activities, the nature of interactions differed. While both focused on business ventures, the beliefs of how business should be shaped the discussions and relationships.

I observed similar processes for pro-bono medical initiatives, which involved doctors going to the settlement camps for 1-2 days. Physicians involved in these programs very quickly learned about the physical ailments and lack of medical attention of their patients, but it was not until the end of the day, at dinnertime over food and drinks, that they heard stories they too described in a transformative fashion. These contrast sharply with the three months that the teachers stayed in the settlement camps. This prolonged period set the conditions for social activities beyond the primary objective

of classroom learning. These experiences in turn led to the development of relationships, the exchange of stories, and the transformation of perspectives.

Many of the individuals who visited the settlement camps, regardless of their overt purpose, described how the experience transformed their perspectives of the FARC and the conflict. On occasion, they indicated that their friends and families' views had changed too. These new social networks shaped collective memories as individuals began to see each other differently and develop new shared understandings of the conflict. Yet more research is needed to understand the scale of impact on this second-degree network. Furthermore, while each of the teachers' perspectives changed dramatically, they were all open to going to work in the settlement camps with FARC ex-combatants. This results in a selection bias. It is unlikely that a person from the far right would choose to teach at a settlement camp, or how their views would be changed if at all. This is indicative of how collective memory is not just shaped by interactions, but in turn also shapes interactions.

For each of these initiatives, the primary objective (whether education or income generation) serves to structure the latent, often inadvertent, development of relationships. Turning the focus to social reintegration leads to comparisons such as the one that Mario Small makes in *Unanticipated Gains*, "…consider why a car repair shop might generate more friendships than a neighborhood restaurant (Small 2009: 179)." Each of the initiatives described in this chapter shapes social relationships and does so in different ways.

This approach is a significant departure from the scholarship on social reintegration. First, it opens new terrain to examine social relationships beyond civil society. Second it highlights the need to examine the broader organizational and

contextual forces that shape relationships. Thirdly, it demands a more nuanced attention to relationships, rather than the binary assessment of whether a tie exists or does not. When Kaplan and Nussio (2015) define social reintegration based on rates of participation in community organizations, they overlooked sectors outside civil society, how each shapes relationship building, as well as the nature of the interactions. This is in line with the social capital approach advocated by Mouly, Delgado, and Giménez (2019). Combining Small (2009) and scholarship on relational sociology, I build on the social networks perspective of Wood (2008) and Viterna (2013) to incorporate the organizational forces that shape relationships and examine the nature of relationships.

Network processes subsequently shape the possible transformations to collective memory. Halbwachs ([1952] 1992) focuses on the group as the core unit of analysis shaping collective memory. In this dissertation, I have chosen the related but distinct analytical concept of social networks. If we were to speak of the teachers in group terms, we could examine how their knowledge is shaped within the settlement camps, or among their friends and family in Bogota, but the social networks concept facilitates understanding their role connecting disparate groups or clusters. By consequence, it seems like the group concept may be better suited for understanding stasis or continuity in knowledge repertoires, whereas the social networks approach is better suited to understand how collective memory changes.

My approach examining Arando la Educación has focused on the ways relationships are structured through an education program. It has not been to examine the pedagogical practices, nor the lesson plans, but to understand how this education program has inadvertently contributed to social reintegration.

The power of these informal spaces is not restricted to the educational sphere, nor to Colombia. A similar process structures post-conflict relationships in Northern Ireland. Many ex-combatants I spoke with indicated that they went into peace building work because it was difficult with their records to find work in other sectors. 'Peace funds' inundated Northern Ireland following the peace agreement from the European Union and elsewhere. And many community organization staff were displaced as the profile of ex-combatant turned peace builder was attractive in several settings.

One community worker I interviewed in Belfast described the influx and exodus of money as follows:

> "We literally lived hand to mouth, as a community sector. And all of a sudden money was getting poured in. Peace money, to keep the peace, so it was to buy you off. But we used it wisely, in setting up an infrastructure around the community organizations, in that we put in proper practices, our services were monitored... There were other groups that never started the community sector, and when the peace money didn't come again, so the services got lost."

The influx of funds to support peacebuilding initiatives created a bubble of activity, which generated employment and structured relationships for a time, until the funds dried up. Many of these initiatives involved bringing together ex-combatants from opposing sides for "interface work", at the edge of unionist and nationalist neighborhoods. The biography and reputation of ex-combatants is desirable for organizations aiming to influence the next generation to reduce violence. These community worker roles consequently shape the networks of ex-combatants as they spend their working lives committed to discussion.

Some initiatives have survived by responding to the post-conflict tourism industry (Leonard 2011; Neil 2006). Ex-combatants from both sides have coordinated tours, so that a Republican ex-combatant can walk a tour group down Falls Road and hand the

group over at the wall gates on Lanark Way to a Loyalist paramilitary ex-combatant. The ex-combatants are selected as they can provide first-hand accounts of “the Troubles,” not to mention the awe-inspiring moment for tourists as they cross through the peace walls gates, and the ex-combatants that once fought against each other greet each other amicably. These roles shape who ex-combatants interact with and how. They shape what stories get told and retold. These shape the collective memories of the conflict; not just for the tourists, but for the ex-combatants themselves and the surrounding economy which is so heavily oriented towards this type of post-conflict tourism.

In sum, social reintegration occurs in parallel to everyday activities. Relationships can form through the process of other activities, not just those intentionally designed to cultivate relationships. Following periods of protracted conflict, significant chasms can form within society. Social reintegration begins from the first moment following a peace agreement; it is not a separate process that begins with ex-combatants participating in nonprofits. Similarly, the impact of interactions between ex-combatants and civilians are not equal, as ongoing social activities alongside other activities allow relationships to develop in a way that cannot be achieved in a designated time frame. Frequent interaction does not necessarily translate into a fruitful exchange of narratives and worldviews. Scholars and practitioners interested in social reintegration need to examine all the interactions taking place, regardless of the overt objective of the activity, rather than just focus on activities aiming to promote reconciliation or community building.

6. REINTEGRATION AND THE LIFE COURSE

Reintegration is often seen, in practice and scholarship, as a process of "dismantling the machinery of war" (Özerdem 2012: 59; Theidon 2017: 67) rather than "facilitating social reconstruction and coexistence" (Theidon 2017: 67). The questions of interest tend to revolve around whether ex-combatants will pick up arms again and how Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) measures adopted might reduce this risk. As Heideman indicates, "if the ex-combatants do not prove to be a security threat, their long-term reintegration into civilian life is ignored, both by policy makers and by academics" (Heideman 2015: 50). This security focus drives the scholarship towards instrumental questions like "What reduces the probability of ex-combatants re-arming?" These military-focused approaches frame the ex-combatant as a perpetrator of crimes, but they do not consider experiences or motivations that led to their involvement in the armed conflict. They also are not concerned with the life experiences of ex-combatants in other domains of life like the social, economic, educational, or cultural. Additionally, these analyses judge ex-combatants from the perspective of present-day post-conflict contexts rather than the highly precarious ones in which they lived at the time. Even the question of whether ex-combatants will re-arm should be informed by their past rather than just examining their present.

In this chapter I leverage life course theory to expand the analytical time horizon of reintegration scholarship. Life course theory encourages us to examine a broader historical context of an actor's decisions, placing them in the context of personal and historical time. This is particularly relevant in scholarship which often commences at the point of demobilization and reintegration. Such scholarship carries implicit social and moral evaluations of the past of ex-combatants.

Life course theory is an under-examined approach to reintegration. Yet a few scholars have undertaken studies on reintegration with life course theory as their primary framework (Florez-Morris 2005; Heideman 2015), and others have made passing references to life course theory scholarship (Nussio 2017; Özerdem 2012).

A life course approach also gives a fuller picture of who ex-combatants are. As Shöb (2016) indicates, ex-combatants are mostly presented in scholarship without their demographic characteristics and life experiences. In my conversations with ex-combatants, they repeatedly emphasized how the process of reintegration differs significantly depending upon the age, gender, and war injuries of the individual in question. As will be elaborated in the narratives below, some ex-combatants feel too old to take advantage of the education and training options provided as a part of reintegration. For example, a 15-year-old ex-combatant is better positioned to begin educational programs and explore new career opportunities in the post-accord context than an 89-year-old ex-combatant, who is unlikely to be able to embark on such a career change. Female ex-combatants face sexism and restrictive gender norms that shape their reintegration process. And ex-combatants with war injuries, ranging from missing limbs to a lost eye, must juggle ongoing health concerns, and the visible reminder of the past they are trying to leave behind. From a life course perspective, recognizing such variation also raises questions as to how the timing of events related to the conflict and peace process intersect with the varying age and other characteristics of each ex-combatant.

In this chapter I examine the life histories of ex-combatants and civilians beginning during the conflict and beyond the Peace Accord. Doing so brings to light the fundamental change in personal contexts which is often omitted by the reintegration

scholars whose analysis begins at the peace accord. I first introduce life course theory and key concepts such as the intersection of personal and historical events, as well as linked lives. Where applicable, I discuss how these concepts have been incorporated into the scholarship of reintegration. In the second part of this chapter, I employ this framework to structure how I narrate the life stories of ex-combatants and civilians.

Life Course Theory

Life course theory encompasses a broad range of methodologies and topic areas. A unifying thread is that "life course reflects the intersection of social and historical factors with personal biography (Elder 1985a). Hence, life course patterns are expected to vary across time, space, and populations" (George 1993). Applying this life course approach to the social reintegration of ex-combatants is particularly useful as scholarship on reintegration tends to take a shorter time horizon and homogenize ex-combatants. This section will introduce life course scholarship to subsequently connect it with my research on reintegration.

Carr elaborates these points and identifies four aspects to life course theory:

> "(a) lives are embedded in and shaped by historical context; (b) the meaning and impact of a life transition is contingent on when it occurs; (c) individuals construct their own lives through their choices and actions, yet within the constraints of historical and social circumstances, and (d) lives are "linked" through social relationships. (Carr 2018: 42)

In this chapter, I engage with two aspects of life course literature. The first is a subarea of the field which examines societal ruptures and the differential impact they have on individuals based on their age when the events occur. The second is the concept of linked lives which highlights the impact that relationships have on individuals.

Societal Ruptures

To examine the impact of the historical context on individual lives, a growing area of life course scholarship examines “life courses under conditions of societal ruptures” (Mayer 2009). Societal ruptures include a broad range of events, including wars or economic depressions. I argue, in line with Wood (2008) and Viterna (2013), that both the beginning and end of conflicts produce societal ruptures, as each results in transformations of the way of life of the people who live through them. In the case of the Colombian transition, the signing of the Peace Agreement and the transition from combatant to ex-combatant result in significant changes to the way of life of both ex-combatants and the civilians they interact with. These ruptures permit focusing an analytical lens on how these changes affect individual lives. The event becomes like a natural experiment, and the researcher can select cohorts before and after the event to analyze differences.

When examining the impact on individual lives, a key approach in life course theory is to examine how these societal ruptures affect groups differently based on age and life stage, as "[p]eople of different ages bring different experiences and resources to situations and consequently adapt in different ways to new conditions” (Elder, Kirkpatrick, Johnson, and Crosnoe 2006: 9).

An early example of this is Elder’s *Children of the Great Depression* (Elder 1974), where he contrasted cohorts of children born before the Great Depression with those born at the beginning of the Depression. His scholarship highlighted a range of differences between and within cohorts. The article “Sociological Perspectives on Life Transitions” summarizes the book’s findings as follows, “The younger cohort was more adversely affected by the Depression than the older one. Within cohorts, the strongest

effects were found among those whose families suffered the greatest economic losses, children in working – rather than middle-class families, and boys rather than girls" (George 1993: 362). This highlights how the impact of a historical event shapes individuals differently not just by age and life course, but also by socioeconomic class.

Elder, Shanahan, and Cipp (2016) further illustrate this intersection of historical events and individual lives through a discussion of how the age at which individuals joined the Second World War shaped their post-war life trajectories. One example they report is how a greater awareness of the need for medically trained staff in the later stages of the war shaped the experiences of recruits differently. Recruits joining later in the war were more likely to have a medical background and immediately became engaged in medical tasks. As a result, they experienced less disruption to their careers and in many cases benefited professionally from their involvement than earlier recruits. The large-scale event of World War II intersected individuals' lives at different points, and the timing of this combination had a differential impact on their experience during the war as well as how they conducted themselves once the war was over.

Similarly, Zhou and Hou (1999) examine children living through China's Cultural Revolution. They focus on how children were affected by the state's policy to send urban youth to live in rural areas and impacts later in their lives. They highlighted how different social groups, specifically bureaucrats, were able to reduce the negative effect for their children. Zhou and Hou emphasize how "A central issue in the sociology of the life course is understanding how dramatic social and political events (economic recessions, wars, and social movements) can affect different social groups differently" (Zhou and Hou 199: 14).

Linked Lives

The concept of linked lives emphasizes how individuals live alongside and in relationships with others. Scholars highlight that individuals do not have atomized lives but rather are embedded in social networks and structures. In a volume dedicated to integrating the life course and social networks traditions, Carr writes that, "The linked lives principle specifies the ways that one's life is embedded in a large network of social relationships – with parents, children, siblings, friends, coworkers, in-laws, romantic partners, and others" (Carr 2018: 46). Additionally, beyond these links between individuals, Carr specifies the importance of considering links between life domains, "Even within a single individual, work and family choices affect one another; working full-time may preclude one from being a stay-at-home parent, or intensive parenting demands may prevent one from working as many hours as one would like (Bianchi and Milkie 2010)" (Carr 2018: 47). This is also aligned with the findings of the previous chapter which examined the interrelationships between education, unrelated social activities, and reintegration.

The Handbook of the Life Course (Crosnoe and Johnson 2011) provides illustrative examples for youth in education spheres and between parent and child at different ages. "…young people move into and through school surrounded by other people who contribute to and are affected by their educational experiences. Understanding the educational life course, therefore, means examining it as part of the series of linked lives that characterize a person's complex matrix of social relations" (Crosnoe and Benner 2015: 189). The authors go on to describe the myriad of ways in which parents shape the lives of their children from selecting schools to scheduling activities to promote their success in life. Furthermore, the relationships between parent

and child evolve as they both age, and “early adult children’s own stressful situations create distress for their parents in the encore adult years as well (Milkie et al. 2008)” (Mortimer and Moen 2015: 118).

In summary, the life course literature brings to the forefront two important aspects of the social world which are often overlooked in scholarship on reintegration. The first is a focus on a broader historical view, with particular attention to how the timing of macro events intersect the lives of individuals at different points in their life course. Scholarship on reintegration by contrast tends to examine ex-combatants as a homogenous masse. The scholarship on societal ruptures within the life course literature is particularly relevant as a peace agreement and the process of reintegration following a protracted conflict are both societal ruptures to the way lives had been lived for so long, and as the associated changes affect individuals differently based on their life course. The second focus which the life course brings to the forefront are the interconnected lives that we all live, including ex-combatants. Despite the growing scholarship on social reintegration (Özerdem 2012, Nussio 2015), most reintegration scholarship tends to examine the ex-combatant in near isolation. The next section examines studies that have applied the life course perspective to the scholarship on reintegration.

Life Course and Reintegration

Several studies on reintegration take an explicit life course focus. Heideman (2015) examines the long-term consequences of ANC combatants’ involvements in revolutionary movements in South Africa. She introduces three novel approaches to the scholarship on ex-combatants, “distinguishing between families of origin and families of

destination; focusing on the ways in which both the combatant and the social environment were altered by the conflict; and examining how variations in combat experience, specifically exile and community-level violence, affect the reintegration process" (Heideman 2015: 49). Drawing on Elder's work, Heideman indicates that, "To understand the long-term effects, we need to pay attention to the nature of the combat experience, the lives of ex-combatants when they entered the struggle, and the different types of adaptations possible after the struggle ends." I build upon Heideman's approach, focusing not just on the ex-combatants but also their families and social environments in a manner that is distinctive in the literature on reintegration.

Florez-Morris (2005) interviewed ex-combatants from a range of left-wing guerrillas including M-19, ELP, and CRS. He analyzed ex-combatants' life courses through three stages: joining and becoming a member of the guerrilla, their time adopting and maintaining their identity as members of the guerrilla, and finally their reintegration transformation from guerrilla to civilian. Regarding reintegration, Florez-Morris highlights how a "cultural shock occurs when members leave the certainty of the guerrilla organization and begin experiencing the uncertainty of civilian life, where they have to solve their own problems and formulate their personal goal without the strong guidance of a guerrilla organization" (Florez-Morris 2005:193). He also refers to the parallels with the criminological life course approach to be discussed further down, "Sampson and Laub's life-history research on 500 men from a delinquent childhood up to the age of 70 (2003) … also indicates the strong influence that family and community have on the process of engaging in deviant activities, in this case, pulling men away from crime" (Florez-Morris 2005:194).

In contrast to Heideman and Florez-Morris, other scholars make only passing references to life course theory (Leeuwen 2018; Nussio 2017; Özerdem 2012). These tend to leverage life course theory via criminological literature, focusing on concepts such as desistence resulting from aging, marriage, and having children. For instance, in his analysis regarding whether ex-combatants tended to continue being a security threat, Nussio finds the following:

> *While younger ex-combatants without family obligations were generally more inclined towards some criminal activity after demobilising, older respondents and ex-combatants who were parents were more interested in a calm family life. This may be related to what Jonsson calls the 'rebel's life-cycle', which is based on a shifting risk perception, a weakening appetite for adventure, and a growing wish for a stable family life over the life course. (Nussio 2017: 7)*

While this type of argument makes reference to life stages and different dispositions an individual may have at various points in their life, it does not connect this with broader historical events central within life course theory cited above. In these approaches the past is frozen, and the present is atomized. There is not an examination into the ex-combatants' past, and their actions are depoliticized to be simply criminal acts.

In this chapter I incorporate a broader life course theory approach to the scholarships of reintegration. I am guided by life course scholar Moen when she indicates, "Too often data constraints and methodologies mean social scientists are holding structure constant, which means peering through a rear-view mirror in changing times, not examining the dynamics of social environments in flux" (Moen 2022: 86). This highlights a central claim I too assert: most reintegration scholarship has a relatively narrow temporal focus. Incorporating a life course lens to reintegration serves to highlight how changing societal dynamics of peace and war intersect with the ex-combatant's individual life.

Historical Events

Regarding the reintegration of FARC ex-combatants, their lives have been intertwined through experiences in times of conflict and following the peace accord. Their daily experiences, and the motivations they draw from as they make decisions are not independent from each other. While the peace accord is one of the most recent events that has shaped the lives of these individuals, other events in their lives are significant, starting with their own experiences in the conflict. One key inflection point is when actors joined the FARC. While it is often stated that the FARC were founded in 1964, this overlooks local variation and its significance for individuals. Over time, the presence of the guerrillas strengthened and waned in particular zones, while the presence of the paramilitaries and State also varied. So, while the conflict with the FARC may have begun in 1964, the impact that the conflict had for participants in particular localities varied over time.

The 2016 watershed moment when the peace agreement between the FARC and the Colombian government was signed intersects the life course of individual ex-combatants at different points. According to the official census of FARC ex-combatants at the time of demobilization, their ages ranged from 15 to 89 years of age, and the average age was 34 years old (Universidad Nacional 2017: 20). The average number of years that individuals were in the FARC was 14.7 years, and the range was from one year to 64 years (Universidad Nacional 2017: 30).

Educational backgrounds differed by gender, with male ex-combatants more likely to lack formal education. Of the men, 9.7% had no formal education, whereas for women only 1.7% had no formal education. Similarly, 44.6% of the men only had elementary level education, whereas this was the case for 12.1% of the women

(Universidad Nacional 2017: 61). These statistics however should be placed in context with the levels of education in rural Colombia. In 1997, individuals in rural areas received an average of 3.8 years of education, and this increased steadily through 2016 up to six years of education (Ministerio de Educación 2018: 18). Given these national average educational levels, (ex-) combatants' participation in the FARC was not the only reason for their low levels of formal education. Rather, formal education opportunities were scarce for many rural residents when these combatants grew up.

Nonetheless, following years or decades in these groups, ex-combatants have often missed the regular life course stages of civil society including formal education milestones, work, and family life. Many are now attempting to complete their formal primary and secondary education as adult learners, enter the labor force without being able to present professional experiences, and start families. One respondent provided the example of an ex-guerrilla commander in his fifties who had dedicated his entire life to the revolutionary cause. He had not accrued savings nor the material goods that most aspire to, including a home to retire in his old age. His entire productive life had been spent in the ranks of the guerrillas and re-training with less than a decade away from normal retirement age for Colombians would be difficult and add very little towards his pension fund given the limited time left in his final work years. His case differs from younger ex-combatants who have a lifetime ahead of them to benefit from new training and employment opportunities. Despite the evident importance of life course to reintegration outcomes, most of the scholarship on reintegration does not specify personal characteristics like age, gender, race, or health status (Schöb 2016).

Like the account provided by Elder, Shanahan, and Cipp (2016) for the Second World War veterans, the timing of the peace agreement affects ex-combatants differently

if they are younger or older. The transition for someone approaching retirement age does not leave much time to adjust, nor savings/assets to live from.

Many ex-combatants are working on high school equivalency programs as they are now adults and dropped out of school at the end of middle school on average (some 40-year-olds are learning to read for the first time). Although only the formal education statistics are included in the census (Universidad Nacional 2017), many ex-combatants were highly skilled in a broad range of fields through experiential learning. Ex-combatants developed a range of experiences in parallel to combat which are not recognized outside the FARC ranks. These range from construction to medical and dentistry. Without formal training and certification, their years of experience have lost value when moving into the formal labor market because of the peace agreement. Thus, the timing of the peace agreement has a significantly different impact for individuals in two respects.

First, the longer individuals were in the ranks of the FARC, the more time they had to learn and develop a skill which had currency among the guerrillas. These skills can be leveraged along with new training opportunities following the peace agreement to some degree. Yet as these were often not trained and certified in formal institutions their recognition is often not valued beyond the context of the conflict. Thus, individuals invested their time and energy into a system which dissolved, and in many cases their expertise also devalued, and many must start over. In this respect, younger individuals who had recently joined the FARC before the peace agreement lost less and conceivably have more time to begin life anew following the peace agreement. As will be illustrated via vignettes below, young individuals have their life ahead of them, whereas

older ex-combatants are likely approaching retirement and may now have a gap where their past work experiences are no longer valid.

Another life milestone that has been observed with the reintegration of ex-combatants is that there has been a boom in births, what has been called the "peace deal generation." Having children was not permitted in the ranks during the conflict, although there were some instances described to me of children who were raised by families close to the FARC. As a result, many saw the peace deal as an opportunity to start a family, and many were in a hurry to do so, either out of the simple desire to do so, or because the women felt they were quickly approaching the end of the biological window. So, there were many FARC babies born around the time of the peace agreement, very few older than that and some younger, but certainly a significant number right around the peace agreement. Some of these were born into traditional/nuclear families, but there are also many single mothers. And while most of whom I saw are couple where both partners had been members of the FARC, there is a methodological selection bias since I focused on FARC spaces, and the few intermarriage (FARC – civilian) couples that I did hear about mostly moved in with the community family rather than stay in the FARC settlement. I came across a single case of intermarriage where the civilian partner moved into the settlement.

While the FARC settlement camps have had a boom in births, these spaces do not have childcare facilities nor early education schools and programs. While beyond the scope of my analysis, the timing of these births in conjunction with the peace accord shape the lives of both their parents and the children. Had the children been born at a different point in historical time, the context in which they would have been raised would have been quite different. These differences include the broader historical societal

distinction pre- and post-peace accord to the physical settings of the settlement camp compared to wherever they would have lived otherwise.

The following three vignettes highlight the importance of incorporating a life course perspective when examining the reintegration of ex-combatants. I selected these three cases from my broader list of research subjects to convey the heterogeneity among ex-combatants. The first vignette of "the Dentist" is of an older man who had a long trajectory in the FARC developing expertise in medicine and dentistry before the peace agreement. The second vignette of "the Cook" is a younger man who demobilized individually before the peace agreement. He was thus able to learn his trade outside the ranks of the guerrilla and following the demobilization of his comrades went to share his experience and skills in a settlement camp. The third vignette of "the Writer" is of a woman who demobilized individually from the FARC before the peace agreement upon the birth of her son. She too has gone to live at a settlement camp.

The Dentist

An ex-combatant in his late fifties whom I will call Juan invited me into his home to share his life experience with me. He gave me his address and we agreed upon a date and time. I took a taxi, and we slowed down as the paved road ended as we approached the neighborhood. He lived a couple blocks off the main road where the streets only had gravel.

As Juan opened the door, I saw that his home also had the double function of being a store and storage. Juan had moved back in with his mother after demobilizing. She had a makeshift store on the first level of the house, and he had converted one of the upstairs bedrooms into an informal dental clinic.

The lights had been cut earlier so we sat by the door to benefit from natural light. A young woman explained how she had put clothes in the washer machine and then unplugged it when the energy had been cut. The energy had come back on, and as she plugged in the machine again, the energy went out again. That had happened multiple times until she had given up.

In his youth, Juan had been a part of "Juco," the young communist league, and later had held a community leader role in his town. The FARC paid him to participate in community committees, sports, and cultural events. He did this until armed individuals came around asking for his FARC pseudonym. Fortunately for Juan this name was only used within the FARC, and no one in the town could identify him. At this point he decided to take the next step to join the ranks of the FARC as a combatant.

Juan had an interest in medicine, and his first training was a one week-long course given by traveling FARC nurses that covered the basics, including identifying vital signs and administering stitches to wounds. He did not feel prepared to tend to war wounds after such a short course, but he was not left much choice as soon thereafter his unit was engaged in a confrontation and his newly acquired skills were in urgent demand. There were three dead and three injured, and his primary recollections from the training were to focus on avoiding hemorrhaging and infection. He did his best to tend to the wounded until they were able to receive attention from more highly trained nurses and doctors. His experience gradually grew on the job, as subsequent confrontations resulted in more injured combatants for him to tend to as best he could. He combined this experience with auto-didactic impulses, asking questions whenever someone more experienced was passing through and reading whatever textbooks he could get his hands on. He also participated in more structured learning opportunities

organized inside the FARC, particularly during the peace negotiations in el Caguan in the late 1990's where the FARC was able to establish a teaching clinic with eight attending rooms, x-ray machines, videos, and textbooks on a range of topics including how to apply prostheses.

While Cuba has offered scholarships for FARC ex-combatants to study medicine in Cuba, he feels he is too old to start over. Instead, he has opted to undertake formal certifications to bolster his similarly developed experience in dentistry. He operates an informal service where he tends to individuals who know of his expertise. But his prior knowledge is not recognized by the formal labor or education system, so he has undertaken the laborious process of training first as an oral technician. He relays that he has more experience than some of his instructors, but he understands the need to acquire formal certification.

This vignette illustrates how age and life stage shape the opportunities that individual ex-combatants can take advantage of based on their age and prior experience.

The Cook

There were a couple of places at the FARC settlement of Mariana Paéz to purchase food. Two canteens offered beverages and basic toiletries like soap and toilet paper. There is also a bakery and a restaurant.

The restaurant building had already been constructed when I first visited Mariana Paéz in 2018, but it did not seem to be in operation until I returned in 2019. The young cook, about 35 years of age, could often be seen there, checking his inventory, or preparing for upcoming meals.

When he told me he had arrived to Mariana Paéz just a couple months ago, I asked him if he had been an ex-combatant. He said that he had, but that he had demobilized many years before the peace agreement and had been abandoned by the movement. He had completed his individualized reintegration process and was not part of the collective process of reincorporation following the peace agreement.

He left his home at age 14 around the year 2000 and spent the next decade in the ranks of the FARC. Around 2010 he was imprisoned for about two years and released in 2012. While in prison his social network was limited by his status of being a prisoner, but on two occasions he reached out to guards for help.

In prisons people were able to sneak in weapons and all sorts of things; so he decided to smuggle in hair clippers so that he could cut hair. He convinced a guard to go buy him a set for about 200,000 COP ($45 USD). Once he had these items, he started cutting the hair of fellow inmates at 6,000 COP ($1.50) per cut. He had to do it in hiding otherwise the guards would confiscate the hair clippers. He was able to quickly pay back the guard for buying and smuggling the clippers and the Cook started saving his earnings.

When he was about to be released, he approached a different guard to help him sneak out the funds. He knew he would be searched upon release and that the money would be confiscated if he tried to take it out himself. The guard told him he would meet him outside once his turn was over at the end of the day. Even though the Cook did not know if he could trust him, he did not have any other choice but to take the risk.

He walked out with nearly nothing. He had a change of clothes, a watch, and a gold chain. He walked around the streets of the city for the entire day, waiting until 5pm when the guard was supposed to finish his turn. He asked in the town where he could

buy clothes cheaply and other necessities, imagining where he would go if the guard followed through with his promise. But he also looked for a good street corner to sleep on if the guard betrayed him. He knew there would be nothing he could do if that happened. He certainly could go back to the prison and file a complaint. In the end the guard came out and gave the Cook his money.

He now turned to buying basic necessities like clothing. He also bought a phone with the hope of connecting with his family. He had not spoken to his mother since he left home at the age of 14, and he did not have an easy way of getting in touch with her, but he assumed she still lived in the Department of Guaviare. He called up the local radio station there and paid for a social announcement that he was looking for Ms. *So and So*. He hung up and tried not to think about it, who knows if she would get the message or if she even still lived there or was alive at all. But about fifteen minutes afterwards his phone rang. No one else had his number so he answered wondering who it might be. It turned out to be his aunt who told him that his mother had moved to the city of Granada and no longer lived in their hometown. The radio station had served as a network hub, facilitating a connection to his aunt, who then was able to facilitate reestablishing contact with his mother, who in turn told him his brother was in Bogotá. As a result, the cook used what money he had left to travel to the country's capital.

At one point the cook turned back to his social network developed while in the ranks for the FARC. He searched on Facebook and found Romaña's profile. Romaña was a key leader of the FARC, who famously appeared later in a 2019 YouTube video (Euronews 2019) announcing that a prominent group of FARC ex-combatants was re-arming and abandoning the peace process. The cook reached out at some point before the peace agreement was even conceived, asking him where he was and telling him that

he had just been released and was in dire straits. Romaña responded coldly, “I appreciate your loyalty, but I do not know who you are.” He kept writing to Romaña but did not get a response and eventually he even stopped reading the messages.

He described the difficulty of finding work in Bogotá without having a traditional work history. He did not have a resume and knew that making one would be worse than not having one (“I spent 10 years in the FARC, responsibilities included...”). Here again his social network was crucial to helping him. His brother was a security guard and knew a bit about job hunting in the city and advised him that working informally in the plaza market was his best option. He did that for about six months and then started working elsewhere and studying.

Years later, after the peace agreement and the demobilization, Romaña wrote to him via Facebook asking him for a favor. There was a woman who was looking for her husband who had been in their ranks and deserted. Had the cook heard anything about him? The cook’s first response was, “I thought you did not know who I was.” To which Romaña responded, “Of course, I knew who you were you fool. Did you really think I could forget someone who marched alongside me for so long?”

In need of resolving a problem, Romaña had also resorted to his social network including weak and distant ties with the likes of the cook who he had not spoken with for years in the hope that the cook might have information that he did not. It is likely that Romaña feigned ignorance the first time since it was before the peace agreement, and he may have had suspicion that the cook might be an informant. On several occasions the government provided incentives for former combatants to leverage their FARC social networks to get information on active members. However, by the time Romaña reached out the peace agreement had changed this context.

Romaña invited him to go to the formal settlement, indicating that he would give him 300,000 COP ($80 USD) to pay for his travel expenses. Unfortunately, Romaña said he had already submitted the FARC lists so he could not add the Cook onto the list, but he said he would find other ways to help him. The Cook thought about Romaña's proposal for a while but decided against it because he would have to drop everything (work and study) that he was doing. Besides, he was still resentful that Romaña had turned his back on him when he needed his help. He gave his thanks but turned down the offer.

Later he talked with Aldinever (another important commander, who was originally in Mariana Paéz and also appeared in the 2019 video announcing the re-arming), and Aldinever told him that Romaña was not telling the truth. The cook tells me that he always perceived a rivalry between the two, nothing too overt but still noticeable. Aldinever said they had submitted the lists but that they could always add someone. If the cook wanted to be recognized as a FARC combatant and re-initiate his demobilization process, he could come to Mariana Paéz and Aldinever would include him in one of the lists. But, Aldinever advised, if the Cook was really doing what he said he was doing, working, and studying, he should stay put because that would be better than coming to the ETCR given the uncertainty of the fate of the implementation of the Peace Accord and, therefore, the ex-combatants.

The cook thanked him and decided to stay in Bogotá. In the end he had paid his debt to the state and had a clean slate. He worked in a restaurant in Bogotá where he learned how to be a cook. When he became unemployed, he moved to Granada where his mother was. He was able to buy a small house and to set up a corner store there. His dream is to open a restaurant but that requires a good amount of capital. Little by

little he has been buying kitchen supplies, tables, and chairs which in effect have left his home as a storage unit with a bed.

Someone from Mariana Paéz approached him in Granada and invited him to set up a restaurant in the formal settlement. He accepted but asked for a month to tie up loose ends. He needed someone to take care of the house and the store. He once again searched his network and identified someone from Mariana Paéz in Granada who was paying rent and might be a good fit. He met with her, and she agreed to do it. He would not charge her rent but asked that she take care of the store and the house, and she could use the profits from the store to pay for the utilities.

When he arrived in Mariana Paéz the restaurant had accumulated 20 million COP ($5,125 USD) in debt. The previous administrators had taken out loans in the form of groceries for an event with the understanding that they would be sold at the event and the loan repaid but due to mismanagement there was not enough money to pay them back. Over the course of the past couple months before meeting me, he had cut down that debt to about 1 million COP ($250 USD). The restaurant is owned as a cooperative, which he hopes to join, but for the time being he is a salaried employee. He uses his income to pay his mortgage in Granada, and he goes back once a month to check up on his home and store.

The cook contributed to the collective reintegration process with his skills and experience, that he developed when demobilizing individually years before the peace agreement. While others who were in prison when the peace agreement was signed had their sentences shortened, the cook and many others had to serve their full prison term. Thus, the timing of the peace agreement had varying impacts upon the lives of imprisoned FARC members. Additionally, for the cook his prison time served as an

inadvertent cleavage with the guerrilla. He had attempted to reconnect after being released but had not been recognized, perhaps because of the fear that he might have become a collaborator with the authorities in exchange for reduced prison time. This cleavage meant that he had to rebuild his life, reconnecting with family, developing a life in the capital, and learning a trade to fend for himself financially. When the peace agreement was signed, he was able to reconnect with his comrades from the guerrilla, and he eventually moved to one of the settlement camps to offer the skills and experience he had learned in the period between his imprisonment and the peace agreement. Had the peace agreement been signed while he was in prison, his sentence would have been reduced but he would have had little novel to offer different from the other 14,000 who demobilized then. The fact that the peace agreement was signed many years after his imprisonment gave him the time he needed to develop skills and experience. Many of his comrades who were just then demobilizing did not have that advantage.

The Writer

Maria[15] never met her father. He moved abroad, and she never had contact with him. Shortly after her birth, her mother also abandoned her, leaving her with Maria's grandparents. They grudgingly took her in out of concern for what others would say otherwise. They had raised eight children of their own and were tired of raising kids. From a young age Maria felt there was no place for her, "Instead of breastfeeding, my mother gave me her back."

[15] All names in this vignette are pseudonyms.

Maria grew up uniquely attuned to societal injustices from a young age. She joined the Young Communist League as soon as they accepted her, around the age of 11 or 12. She yearned to attend a nearby school that many of her comrades attended, but her grandparents enrolled her in an all-girl's school. She hated being there and felt out of place among wealthier students who looked down on her ragged clothes. Her grandparents were shocked to learn that she had not been going to class even though they left her at school every morning. Instead, she would hide in the bathroom or simply run off.

Upon hearing that she was expelled from the school in eighth grade, her grandparents said she was on her own to find another school if she wanted to continue. Maria took her binder under her arm and started going from school to school but kept being turned down for not having a guardian who could sign for her. She was presenting her documents at the last school in the city when they too asked for the whereabouts of her guardian. Maria began to cry; she had hated the school she attended, but she wanted to continue studying. As the thought dawned on her that she had nowhere else to go, she felt a hand on her shoulder and heard Ms. Ramirez say that she would sign for Maria.

Ms. Ramirez was her neighbor. Yet while Maria lived in "an unfinished home with dirt floors, Ms. Ramirez lived in the only three-story house in the neighborhood." Ms. Ramirez had a daughter in Maria's grade, but her peer had not spoken one word to Maria in three years in what Maria perceived to be class disdain. But Ms. Ramirez was different, Maria reflected on how one often misjudges people based on their appearance – Ms. Ramirez had a profound social consciousness.

Maria and the neighbor's daughter enrolled in the new school known colloquially as "Noah's Arc – because all *the animals*[16] rejected from the other schools ended up there." But the school began to transform, building the first theater and computer room among the city's schools. The timing of the school's rising reputation mattered in Maria's case because she was a student at the school at the time. If the school's rise had happened earlier, she might not have been accepted there, and if it had occurred after she graduated, she would have missed out on the new opportunities afforded to her as a student in a well reputed school.

She was recognized as one of the school's best students and secured a place at the National University to study engineering. But moving to Bogotá was difficult, mostly because at that time it was very hard for a teenage girl to get a job. Maria went hungry on many occasions for the first couple years, until she was able to secure a job monitoring projects. However, with two projects on opposite sides of the city she hardly had enough time to go to class. She would stop by whichever one she could in passing but missed most of them. She did well in the midterms but was not allowed to take the finals due to the large number of missed classes.

Soon after her grandfather passed away. These two events plunged Maria into a deep depression, and she tried to take her life twice. First, she took a bottle of pills and woke up two days later in the hospital. Later she jumped in front of a car but was disappointed to find that she only had a couple scratches to show for her attempt. "I was such a failure; I couldn't even kill myself!" It was then that she decided that if she was going to die, she might as well do it for a good cause. In 1998, she decided to join the FARC.

[16] Here "animals" refers to unruly, misbehaving youth that had been expulsed from other schools.

She spent nearly a dozen years in the guerrilla until she was forced to abandon the ranks. She was pregnant and was left at a safe house until giving birth. Her son was born with a congenital disease which required medical attention in the city. Her commander sent her word, “Leave that tadpole and return immediately.” But she could not abandon her child, she could not do to him what had been done to her. So, she decided to leave secretly in the middle of the night. She left in tears, because she “believed in the cause but the FARC existed before me, and they would exist after me. But my son needed me.”

As life course theory emphasizes, familial relationships and changes like becoming a parent can be pivotal in the lives of individuals. Maria did not want to leave the FARC; she was committed to their ideals and objectives. Yet becoming a mother had changed her priorities, especially given her son’s health issues. Maria fled with her son in the middle of the night because she did not want her husband to get into trouble. He, however, caught up to them and the three fled together.

Their first destination was Maria’s grandmother’s home. They did not intend to turn themselves into the authorities, but ultimately were advised to do so lest they put their son in risk of being taken in by family services since Maria’s grandmother was not mentally fit to be responsible for a child at her advanced age.

Maria and her husband went through the government’s individual demobilization process around 2010 and they began finding odd jobs to pay the bills. She had made *tamales* which she had sold to neighbors and high school acquaintances she reconnected with, while her husband worked grueling construction jobs. By the time the peace agreement was signed in 2016, Maria and her husband had their personal affairs in order. But as Maria indicated, “we were working just to get by, making enough just to

buy the bread we ate." This prompted her to move to the settlement camp where she encountered the only people she considered family. She was afraid initially of what they might say about them having abandoned the ranks years before, but everyone understood her situation.

Like the cook, Maria's time away from the guerrilla gave her newfound skills and experiences that she was able to offer to her comrades upon reconnecting with them. The pivotal life experience of becoming a parent had interrupted her relationship with the FARC, but it had also given her time to develop in new ways. From her time in the ranks, Maria had always enjoyed writing, ranging from poetry to short stories, but her literary products had not received significant attention beyond the FARC. Because the peace agreement changed the perceptions of FARC among many in civil society, Maria now had opportunities to have her work published in various anthologies and to be invited to speak about her experiences. Maria has become active on social media sharing her story and occasionally seeking support to travel to a conference or participate in cultural activities.

Civilians

In line with my relational approach, I examine the experience and contributions to reintegration of both ex-combatants and the civilians who interact with them. Just as the life stage of ex-combatants shapes their reintegration experience, the life stage of civilians shapes the likelihood and way they interact with ex-combatants. This section provides an overview of how age and life course generally shape the disposition of civilians for cross-group interactions and then focuses specifically on the experience of university students.

Youth brings new opportunities for cross group interactions to both ex-combatants and civil society members. While it provides ex-combatants with a longer time horizon for career development and reinvention, it offers civilians openness, curiosity, and hope of peace in Colombia. Among civilians, single and childfree recent college graduates are the ones most likely to go to live in the formal settlement camps for extended periods. There are older, married couples that interact with FARC ex-combatants, but their family and work commitments tend to limit their involvement. College students have less family and professional commitments which permit them to make extended trips to the FARC settlements, whereas married adults were more likely to make shorter, overnight trips.

The chapter on education highlighted how young college graduates from the capital went to teach in economically precarious positions in the settlement camps, multiple hours away from friends and their parents. These recent graduates expressed how they found the job meaningful, but they also confessed that they would take another job if they could find one, especially considering the compensation and extended period between contracts. The teachers explained to me that they were contracted per session, approximately three months at a time. Afterwards they would return home and wait an unspecified time, often months, until they were called back for the next session. During this time, teachers found odd jobs to hold them over financially. Traveling between two distant places every few months negatively impacted their ability to develop and sustain relationships in either. These working conditions were facilitated by the fact that all of them were young and single. It seems likely that this type of arrangement would be even less appealing to someone older, with more work experience, and with a family of their own.

Older civilians who interacted with the ex-FARC are often medical professionals and members of religious groups. One volunteer group of medical professionals established contact with the FARC via a serendipitous encounter while waiting in line to see the Pope during his 2017 visit to Colombia. The group began making short pro-bono medical trips to the FARC settlement camps, providing services to both ex-combatants and civilians. They often arrived early on Saturday and left on Sunday. They had their own patients to care for during the week, so they were only able to go on the weekends. The doctors I spoke with described how they began seeing patients nearly upon arrival until nightfall and to the point of exhaustion. They were told that patients often undertook two-hour walks to be seen because access to doctors was so limited in the parts of the country where ex-FARC are concentrated. Many physicians confessed that this grueling pace was more intense than their daily routine, but they gave their time and expertise willingly due to the dire need. A recurring theme in interviews with physicians was that their conversations during the day were naturally more focused on ailments and wounds. Yet, once the workday ended, they sat down for dinner with the ex-combatants and began to hear their stories. The doctors recognized that these were the most transformative moments of their trips, but due to the logistics of a weekend trip they were only brief.

The second set of older civilians to interact with ex-combatants were provided by religious groups. I interviewed members from a church who made monthly trips to the settlement camps to missionize. Simultaneously though, these individuals provided an important source of social and economic support to the ex-combatants. Such support took the form of renting the space for a church at the settlement camp or investing in one of their businesses. Volunteers who participated tended to be older. Their churches

encouraged them to go on these trips with their partner to “provide a positive moral example.” Here normative conceptions of an appropriate life course shaped who was encouraged to go to the settlement camps. And just as with the example above, related to medical professionals, church members primarily made weekend trips.

As will be seen below, the rhythm and duration of visits contrasts significantly with the experience of college students and recent graduates who would go to the settlement camp for weeks at a time, or—in the case of the teachers as described in an earlier chapter (who were also recent graduates)—months at a time. Their place in the life course is obviously associated with less personal and professional commitments tying them down to a place and schedule. The subsequent section illustrates this by the early involvement of college students going to the settlement camps.

University Students

Soon after the peace agreement was signed, the Federation of University Students (FEU) decided to organize volunteer trips for college students to visit the FARC settlement camps under the umbrella of a new initiative called *Volunteering for Peace*. This resulted in groups of upwards of 200 students being bussed from universities across the country to the nearest settlement camps. College students from a wide array of degree tracks participated with the intention of establishing a knowledge exchange with the ex-combatants. Physical education students went to run workshops on proper exercise, and so forth. Other university programs included a program run in conjunction with MIT, and another led by film students from Colombia’s National University also organized trips. Immediately after the signing of the peace agreement and the demobilization of ex-combatants, they congregated in the settlement camps. At that time, the government was in the process of registering and documenting the recently

demobilized ex-combatants, during this short period they were not allowed back out of the settlement camps nor were civilians allowed in. This was to avoid ex-combatants possibly having second thoughts on demobilizing, and to prevent civilians from attempting to pass as ex-combatants to receive the government demobilization benefits. The film students were able to facilitate the first interactions between ex-combatants and civilians by helping them make film shorts to exchange before ex-combatants and civilians were allowed to intermingle. These types of exchanges appear to have been part of the collective effervescence associated with the monumental peace agreement. Their informal structure led them to be short term. As student leaders graduated, these projects were not kept up by the next cohort of student leaders. However, these experiences opened the door for participants to engage in subsequent engagements with ex-combatants, leveraging the networks and experience developed through these trips.

One student had a side business selling clothes and went with the intention of sharing her experience with digital marketing. She went to a settlement camp with one of the FEU volunteer trips expecting to hold an informal workshop, but the trip did not go as expected. It was more focused on socializing than structured learning. Nonetheless the experience opened her eyes to a new world.

When she returned from the settlement camp, she continued operating her business but had the continued interest of involving ex-combatants. She contacted another settlement and traveled there, this time on her own, and now with a clearer conviction of proposing a partnership. Unfortunately, however, the person she was supposed to meet with was not available. Unknowingly, the trip coincided with a visit by President Santos to Mariana Páez, which was scheduled but did not end up

materializing. She left frustrated but told herself that if the ex-combatants were not interested in what she had to offer them there was not much she could do. Later at an event in Bogotá, she once again crossed paths with this ex-combatant, and they again scheduled a time for her to go.

From there they began developing a partnership, into which they entered as equal partners. Rather than the traditional maquiladora imbalanced relationships where one side was the producer and the other the vendor, she wanted to do as much as she could to engender more even relationships. They split the earnings and worked together on both production and sales.

This vignette illustrates several points. First, it shows how the life stage around college frees individuals to explore and partake in these sorts of activities where new relationships can form between ex-combatants and civilians. A mid-ranged professional would not as easily be able to leave work for a week at a time to participate in these volunteer trips. Second, as college students are stereotypically more idealistic, and open to the world, it is not just the scheduling logistics but also the frame of mine. Consequently, programs such as FEU's *Volunteering for Peace* were organized by and targeted college students.

Discussion

Throughout this chapter, I have shown the utility of incorporating a life course approach to the study of reintegration of ex-combatants. Oftentimes, ex-combatants' prior lives are opaque to researchers and the rest of society. In contexts of protracted conflicts, where the State has actively shaped collective representations of the insurgency for military aims (Fattal 2019), it is natural that an ex-ante moral judgment be

applied to ex-combatants. It is thus imperative for researchers to be cognizant of how these moral assumptions may shape our methodological and substantive research approaches. In the case of reintegration, scholarship and practice is solely concerned with military-focused questions of disarming and the risk of re-arming, not questions of securing enduring peace. While the former is a precondition of the latter, it is insufficient on its own without the kinds of transformations in social relations that this dissertation explores. The limited life course approach that has been applied to reintegration (Nussio 2017; Özerdem 2012) takes as given the questionable past of the ex-combatants and sees reintegration as the opportunity for a new beginning. In this chapter, I have taken a different, a life course approach. In doing so, I have extended the temporal lens and examined a broader array of social aspects to reintegration to develop a more holistic view. I have highlighted the range of diversity of experiences, and how the age and life course of ex-combatants and civilians are shaped by the point in which the peace agreement and other historical events intersect with their individual lives.

Ex-combatants tend to be portrayed as a homogenous mass. But some are young, and some are old. Not all ex-combatants are young, heterosexual men; some are female, LGBTQ, afro-Colombian, or indigenous. Their reintegration experience is shaped by their lives prior to the peace agreement, and the time in their lives when the peace agreement took place. Young ex-combatants have their entire lives ahead of themselves, and as part of the peace agreement they can get training and education that they may not otherwise have had access to in their lives before joining the FARC. Older ex-combatants have less time to reinvent themselves post peace agreement and may see that the skills and experiences they developed within the guerrilla are now devalued

in a credential-centric world which does not recognize their informally developed knowledge.

Additionally, while reintegration is often talked about individually, the vignette above of the writer highlights how the decision to demobilize is often interwoven with that of others they care for, namely one's partners and children. More research should be undertaken to examine the role of families in demobilization and reintegration. This can be further broken down into families that existed before demobilization, families formed among ex-combatants after demobilization, and families formed between ex-combatants and civilians after demobilization. Each of these likely shapes the experience of reintegration in unique ways, including a range of the ex-combatant's decisions, social networks, and opportunities.

Just as the life course of ex-combatants is shaped by the timing with which the peace agreement intersects their lives, the same can be said about civilians. This chapter has highlighted the differential impact that age and life course have on the propensity for civilians to interact with ex-combatants as well as the length of time they are able to spare for extended interaction. Youth in college and recent college graduates see an entire world for exploring and discovering. They are less tied down by personal, familial, and professional obligations. This led some of them to spend a week in a remote, rural FARC settlement camp, and others stayed even much longer. This opened the opportunity for a different kind of engagement and the forming of deeper relationships than is possible by the weekend trips, which are more common among older adults. Professional adults, like doctors, who go to the settlement camps do so on weekends in consideration of their work schedules. The individuals I interviewed talked about how their short stay was focused on seeing patients, the primary motivation for

their trip. But it was the short period of down time, eating, drinking, and sharing stories in the evening which allowed them to connect with ex-combatants personally.

This initial research has shown the need for more to be done examining the process of reintegration via the lens of the life course. Ex-combatants need to be seen holistically, both in terms of internal diversity and across time. The peace agreement in Colombia was signed in 2016, but this event intersected the lives of ex-combatants and civilians at different points in their life course. To develop a better understanding of ex-combatants and reincorporation, this needs to be taken into account better.

Many ex-combatants with whom I spoke stated that they joined the FARC as a survival tactic as their family had been murdered. Others pointed to the experience of corrupt state and police officials, and widespread injustices. When one focuses on the actions of ex-combatants but omits the context or the path which took them there, the judgment is more severe and likely misleading. While a core element of criminological approaches aim to understand motivations and opportunities, this focus begins with the position that involvement in the guerrillas was normatively negative and consequently talks about recidivism. This approach simplifies previous contexts, and unequivocally labels the FARC as the sole perpetrator despite the fact that there were perpetrators on all sides of the conflict.

These conflicting interpretations are illustrations of distinct collective memories, formed within different segments of society. The experiences and interactions that individuals within these groups have had have led them to create different narratives of the past, and how the present came to be. This also illustrates how collective memories shape the present and future. Different understandings of the past frame our current challenges in distinct ways. In the example above, one can imagine how government

policies and civil society interventions are different in these two framings: 1) emphasizing the context which led FARC ex-combatants to take up arms in the first place, including state corruption, injustices, and violence, versus 2) emphasizing the actions of the FARC which included kidnappings, murder, and bombings. It is possible for both framings to coexist, but in most cases, it seems that the general populace places greater weight on the former than the latter.

7. CONCLUSION

In this dissertation, I examined the relationship between networks, memory, and reintegration. Post-conflict studies have not focused on these social processes despite them being central to the solidification of peace. By contrast, scholars have examined the social processes related to the emergence of war (Arjona 2014, Wood 2008; Viterna 2006, 2013). I have here applied similar approaches to the study of post-conflict situations. Conflict generates a schism in society that begins with changes in interactional patterns and results in differences between the narratives and representations that each side has of the past, present, and future. To achieve peace, scholars and practitioners must go beyond 'dismantling the machinery of war' (Theidon 2007) and engage in the engineering of memory (Rigney 2002).

Two distinguishing aspects of my research have been the focus on networks and memory. While Viterna's work (2006; 2013) engages a network lens, it is focused on dyadic ties. My work instead focuses on network clusters. In this respect, I have drawn from the work of Small (2010) which examines how institutions routinely shape and facilitate the development of networks as opposed to intentional networking initiatives. I have also leveraged concepts from formalist network scholarship such as dyadic ties, triadic closure, network clusters, boundary spanners, and structural holes (Burt 2005). Additionally, I have engaged with relational sociology (Emirbayer 1997, Emirbayer and Mische 1998) and network scholars bridging formalist and relational approaches (Erikson 2013; Pachucki and Breiger 2010). The primary insight from this addition is that a social tie does not exist outside a context of meaning. Where formalist scholars describe culture or meaning as a packet of information that travels through networks as

“pipes” or “highways,” relational scholars emphasize how the tie itself is co-constituted by the cultural meanings associated with the relationship.

I have applied this network lens to the field of collective memory which has typically spoken about groups rather than networks. My approach fits well with calls from Olick “to rethink collective memory in a more thoroughly process-relational manner” (Olick 2007:90) and Rigney for more of a ‘'processual and relational' approach” (Rigney 2002:254). Nonetheless, most collective memory scholarship places heavy emphasis on groups as the key site where memory is transformed and maintained. This stems from the focus that Halbwachs’s seminal work placed on groups. For instance, Halbwachs argued that "Every collective memory requires the support of a group delimited in space and time" (Halbwachs [1952]1992: 22). Olick further stated that "It is not just that we remember as members of groups but that we also constitute those groups and their members simultaneously in the act, thus "re-member-ing" (Olick 2007:29).

The decision to switch my core analytical concept from groups to networks began during the early stages of my scholarship due in part to my prior interest in networks. However, the switch to a network lens became more salient as I began conducting fieldwork. I was primed for a focus on groups not just because of the scholarship on collective memory but also by other scholarship in cultural sociology, which focuses on groups (Eliasoph and Lichterman 2003; Fine 2010, 2012; Lichterman 2005). However, in my field, I did not find the well-defined group boundaries described in the literature. Instead, in line with Desmond (2014), I found most salient those relational processes that transcend blurry group boundaries. As it made more sense to examine these relational processes through a network lens than a group lens, I morphed the concept of

a group into that of a network cluster. This facilitated the identification of individuals who served as bridges between clusters, known in the scholarly literature as boundary spanners. The network approach also permits going beyond dyadic ties, and considering how a set of individuals may have a larger or smaller number of overlapping ties. Whereas a group lens could have evaluated this phenomenon via multiple group membership (in a kind of overlapping Venn diagram of group relations), doing so would obscure key network concepts such as paths and density.

These network theoretical concepts have illuminated my analysis of the reintegration of ex-combatants in Colombia. I spent thirteen months conducting fieldwork in the nation's capital and the department of Meta. I conducted 57 interviews and participant observations across four sites. My field research included a broad geographic range, including two cities and two rural sites. This facilitated identifying research subjects with varying degrees of connectedness, an important variation that allowed me to examine how network relations were associated with distinct collective representations. While I initially expected to focus more on localized networks within each of my four field sites, my fieldwork experience increasingly directed my attention toward networks that stretched from the cities to distant rural sites. What intrigues me most about these networks is how they are catalyzed and framed by a range of social institutions, just as Small (2010) found for childcare facilities.

In Chapter four, "Context Shaping Networks," I examined how spatial settings shape the development of networks, both within my research sites and also across sites. In examining rural and urban sites, I highlighted how the visibility in the former contrasted with the anonymity of the city. And similarly, I found how maintaining a sense of community is so much harder for ex-combatants dispersed across distinct living

arrangements within a city as compared to the relative ease in the formal settlements located in rural areas. I discussed how the concept of “distance” has varying implications, whether between linear or functional distance, especially when nuanced by socio-economic differences. My own experience as a researcher was very different from that of many of my research subjects whose more limited finances complicated traveling similar distances or speeds.

In Chapter five, “Education as a Vehicle for Reintegration,” I focused on one educational initiative that created a channel for recent college graduates from the capital to relocate to the settlement camps with the primary purpose of being teachers. I showed how this move had the unintended consequence of building social ties and transforming perspectives. The time spent outside the classroom was critical for the development of these relationships, whether that meant time spent eating together in shared spaces or engaging in leisurely activities from hiking to swimming. I highlight the importance of these activities outside of classroom experiences by the contrasting experience of teachers who chose to abstain from them out of beliefs that the proper relationship between teacher and student required affective distance. The experience of this educational initiative resembled what I observed across a range of other sectors as well, from medicine to business. In all these settings, I observed cases where participating actors narrowly engaged in their given activity versus cases where individuals were more open to informal and personal engagements. In the former set of cases, individuals interacted frequently and perhaps amiably but did not have the opportunity to share stories and experiences in the same way as in the latter cases. Consequently, individuals in the latter cases experienced more transformative changes in their perspectives of the conflict and its actors.

In Chapter six, “Life Course,” I examined how the life stages of ex-combatants and civilians shaped their propensity to building cross-group ties. As Schöb (2016) indicates, it has often been assumed that combatants are young men, and--with the exception of gender scholars--few have examined the characteristics of the target group of DDR programs. In this chapter, I examined the range of identities and life stages of both ex-combatants and civilians, and how identities and stages influenced the experience of reintegration.

My dissertation covered broad geographic and thematic areas. This is both a source of strength and limitation. Had I focused on one of the chapter topics I could have likely developed a much more nuanced understanding of it. However, it would have also been harder to generalize beyond the particular setting. Another limitation resulted from interruptions to my fieldwork ranging from the tragic murder of a key research subject to the onset of the pandemic in the middle of my fieldwork.

Nonetheless, through this dissertation I have shed light on the importance of networks and memory in the process of social reintegration. I have highlighted a range of different settings and social characteristics which shape the development of networks in post-conflict settings. And I have shown how network structures like that of the boundary spanner, in turn shape transformations in collective memory.

8. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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APPENDIX: Interview Guide

The guidelines vary somewhat for interviews with ex-combatants versus community members.

The following set of questions are meant to elicit stories of your experience over the past couple decades. If at any point, you would like to skip a question or end the interview you are free to do so. Please do not speak of any illegal activity.

Biography

Could you please tell me a bit about yourself?
- Follow up:
    - What department were you born in? What year?
    - Where did you grow up?
    - What was your family like (parents/siblings)?

What is the highest level of formal education you have had?

Can you describe your current household?
- Follow up:
    - Do you have a partner? Children?
    - Do you live with anyone else?

How do you spend most of your time?
- Follow up:
    - Working / studying, What kind of work?

How did you get involved in this activity?
- What made you choose this (over other options)? Why do you do it?
- Did someone encourage you to get involved in this? If so, who?

Group Characteristics
- *Note: Questions in this section are phrased for ex-combatants and would be inverted if asked to community members.*

- Who do you interact with the most frequently?
    - Follow-up:
        - In what context? Describe the activity?
            - E.g. We are family/neighbors/friends/coworkers
        - Ask for others, up to five individuals.
            - Are these individuals ex-combatants or former militants?

- Do you interact with people from outside the FARC?

- Follow-up:
  - Why do you do so, can you describe some of these interactions?
    - Frequency?
    - Meaningful / affective
    - Formal / work related
    - Informal / social

- Do you feel that these interactions are encouraged or discouraged by your peers?

- What are some of challenges that you face in interacting with individuals that are not members of the FARC?

- Are there things that makes it easier for you to do so, as compared to your peers within the FARC?

- I am interested in speaking with individuals who have significant interactions with people from outside the FARC. Who do you think I should speak with?

Tool 1

Please take a look at this worksheet, and for each cell tell me what was the main event(s) for the corresponding time period and category.

Key conflict events & experiences	PERSONAL / ORGANISATIONAL	POLITICAL	LOCAL	GLOBAL
1960s-70s				
1980s-90s				
2000s-10s				
Current				
Transitional				

Tool 1 from The Grassroots Transitional Justice Toolkit, also see Soto and Savelsberg (forthcoming)

Origin of the Conflict

- I have heard different explanations for the origin of the conflict, could you please share your perspective on the origins of the conflict?

- Please listen to the following frames, and tell me which (if any) best fits the conflict. Or let me know if different frames apply to different time periods:
    - Civil War
    - Drug War
    - Humanitarian catastrophe
    - Rebellion / insurrection
    - State crime
    - Terrorism
    - Other(s)

- Can you please describe the roles and motivations of each of the following entities with relation to the conflict:
    - The State
    - FARC
    - ELN
    - Paramilitaries
    - Victims
    - Civilians

Peace Agreement

- Can you please describe the time and events around the Peace Agreement?
    - Follow up:
        - What led up to it?
        - What followed?

- What were your expectations when the Peace Agreement was signed?
    - Follow up:
        - Hopeful? Doubtful?

- What was your reaction to when the "No" vote won the referendum on the Peace Agreement? Follow up:
        - Hopeful? Doubtful?

Post-Peace Accord

- How do you understand the term reintegration?
    - What about reincorporation?

- How would you describe the implementation of the peace accord?

- How do you anticipate matters progressing in the future?
    - Do you feel hopeful or not? Why?

Concluding Question
Is there anything else that that we have not covered that you would like to share or elaborate?