



HUMANISTISKA
OCH TEOLOGISKA
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How female victim-survivors of the armed conflict in Colombia are influencing peacebuilding

A semi-structured qualitative interview study of female victim-survivors of the armed conflict in Colombia and a content analysis of the Peace Agreement

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¹ The reason why an acknowledgment in Spanish is being present in this research is because people who exclusively speak Spanish will read this thesis.

Abstract

2016 was historic for Colombia since it put an official end to the fifty-two year long armed conflict. The peace was agreed when the Final Peace Agreement was signed by the two major actors, Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias and the Colombian Government. This research aims to investigate how female victims-survivors of the armed conflict in Colombia are influencing peacebuilding. The investigation focuses on agency work made by female victims-survivors, FVS, through artwork created by weaving. The weaving takes place in a group setting in 'Women of Memory' led by the Christian Non Governmental Organization Paz y Esperanza together with Shalom Church. Women of Memory is a support and memory group where female victims-survivors, FVS, of the conflict are given the opportunity to heal through sharing life stories while weaving. This study analyzes how FVS see themselves influence peacebuilding and how the Final Peace Agreement of the conflict recognizes FVS as influencers of peacebuilding. Two methods are being utilized in this research; semi-structured interviews of three FVS in Granizal, Medellín who all take part in the Women of Memory, and a content analysis of the Peace Agreement. The theoretical frameworks *Participation as power* and the *Imperfect Peace* are being applied to analyze and discuss the interviews, the Peace Agreement and the findings of the two. This study demonstrates that when FVS share experiences from the armed conflict in Colombia in group setting while weaving promotes healing which has a significant role for participation on peacebuilding in Colombia.

Keywords:

women, survivors, victims, peacebuilding, armed conflict, Colombia, participation, the Final Peace Agreement, healing, art, weavings

Hur kvinnliga offer för den väpnade konflikten i Colombia påverkar fredsbyggandet

En semistrukturerad kvalitativ intervjustudie med kvinnliga offer som överlevt den väpnade konflikten i Colombia och en innehållsanalys av fredsavtalet

Abstrakt (Swedish)

2016 var ett historiskt år för Colombia eftersom det innebar ett officiellt slut på den 52 år långa väpnade konflikten. Freden slöts när det slutliga fredsavtalet undertecknades av de två huvudaktörerna, Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias och den colombianska regeringen. Denna forskning syftar till att undersöka hur kvinnliga offer som överlevt den väpnade konflikten i Colombia påverkar fredsbyggandet. Undersökningen fokuserar på det arbete som utförs av kvinnliga offer och överlevare genom konstverk skapade med hjälp av vävning. Vävningen sker i grupp i 'Women of Memory' som leds av den kristna icke-statliga organisationen Paz y Esperanza tillsammans med Shaloms kyrkan. Women of Memory är en stöd- och minnesgrupp där kvinnliga offer och överlevare från konflikten ges möjlighet att läka genom att dela livshistorier samtidigt som de väver. Denna studie analyserar hur kvinnliga offer och överlevare ser sig själva påverka fredsbyggandet och hur det slutliga fredsavtalet i konflikten erkänner kvinnliga offer och överlevare som påverkare av fredsbyggandet. Två metoder används i denna forskning: semistrukturerade intervjuer med tre kvinnliga offer och överlevare i Granizal, Medellín, som alla deltar i Women of Memory, och en innehållsanalys av fredsavtalet. De teoretiska ramverken *Deltaende som makt* och *Den Ofullkomliga freden* tillämpas för att analysera och diskutera intervjuerna, fredsavtalet och resultaten av de. Denna studie visar att när kvinnliga offer och överlevare delar erfarenheter från den väpnade konflikten i Colombia i grupp och samtidigt väver främjar det läkning, vilket har en betydande roll för påverkansarbete med fredsbyggande i Colombia.

Nyckelord: kvinnor, överlevande, offer, fredsbyggande, väpnad konflikt, Colombia, deltagande, det slutgiltiga Fredsavtalet, läkning, konst, vävningar

Cómo influyen las mujeres víctimas-sobrevivientes del conflicto armado en Colombia en la construcción de la paz

Estudio de entrevistas cualitativas semiestructuradas a mujeres víctimas-sobrevivientes del conflicto armado en Colombia y análisis de contenido del Acuerdo de Paz

Resumen (Spanish)

El año 2016 fue histórico para Colombia, ya que puso fin oficialmente a cincuenta y dos años de conflicto armado. La paz se acordó cuando los dos actores principales, las Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia y el Gobierno colombiano, firmaron el Acuerdo Final de Paz. El objetivo de esta investigación es estudiar cómo las mujeres víctimas-sobrevivientes del conflicto armado en Colombia están influyendo en la construcción de paz. La investigación se centra en el trabajo de agencia realizado por mujeres víctimas-sobrevivientes a través de obras de arte creadas tejiendo. El tejido se realiza en grupo llamado 'Mujeres de memoria' liderado por la Organización No Gubernamental Cristiana Paz y Esperanza y la iglesia Shalom. Mujeres de la memoria es un grupo de apoyo y memoria donde las mujeres víctimas-sobrevivientes del conflicto tienen la oportunidad de sanar compartiendo historias de vida mientras tejen. Este estudio analiza cómo las mujeres víctimas-sobrevivientes se ven a sí mismas influyendo en la construcción de paz y cómo el Acuerdo Final de Paz del conflicto reconoce a las mujeres víctimas-sobrevivientes como influenciadoras de la construcción de paz. En esta investigación se utilizan dos métodos: entrevistas semiestructuradas a tres mujeres víctimas-sobrevivientes de Granizal, Medellín, que participan en Mujeres de la Memoria, y un análisis de contenido del Acuerdo de Paz. Los marcos teóricos *Participación como poder* y *la Paz Imperfecta* están siendo aplicados para analizar y discutir las entrevistas, el Acuerdo de paz y los hallazgos de ambos. Este estudio demuestra que cuando las mujeres víctimas-sobrevivientes comparten experiencias del conflicto armado en Colombia en grupo mientras tejen, promueven la sanación, lo que tiene un papel significativo para el trabajo de las agencias en la construcción de la paz en Colombia.²

Palabras claves: mujeres, supervivientes, víctimas, construcción de la paz, conflicto armado, Colombia, participación, el Acuerdo Final de Paz, sanación, arte, tejidos

² The reason why an abstract in Spanish is being present in this research is because people who exclusively speak Spanish will be invited to read this thesis.

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List of abbreviations and translations

Abbreviation	Definition
ELN	Ejército de Liberación Nacional, (National Liberation Army)
FARC	Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia, (The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia)
FVS	Female Victims Survivors
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN	The United Nations
Spanish word	Definition
Paz y Esperanza	Peace and Hope

1 Introduction

The armed conflict in Colombia took place between the 27th of May 1964 until the 23rd of June 2016 and was the cause of approximately 220 000 deaths, 25 000 disappearances and 5.7 million internally displaced people.³ One of the conflict's major actors were Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia, FARC (in English; The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia). FARC is a guerrilla group that officially was formed in 1966, and had its origin in the 1950s from organized farmers as an effect of the violence in the 'La Violencia'. La Violencia was a ten year long civil war between the people of the higher class from the Colombian Conservative Party and the Colombian Liberal Party. The civil war where the main issues were disagreements in political and economic interests lasted between 1948 to 1958. La Violencia was mainly fought in the countryside and caused death to 200 000 Colombian farmers. When the civil war had come to an end the liberals and conservatives agreed exclusively on political and economic interests by excluding all other political parties from the Government, which were an outbreaking factor of the armed conflict in Colombia. Besides FARC, ELN, Ejército de Liberación Nacional, (in English; National Liberation Army), were another prominent actor in the conflict and were formed in 1964 by revolutionary students inspired by the Cuban Revolution. Furthermore, paramilitaries contributed to the massive violence that took place in the armed conflict. These paramilitary groups joined together during the 1980s with drug cartels, the Colombian Army and elites such as landowners and leaders in business. The paramilitaries' and their allies' most significant goals was to fight the guerilla groups that were a risk for their desired economic growth.⁴

The conflict ended when the Colombian Government and FARC agreed to a cease fire. August 24th 2016 was a historic day in Colombian history when the final accord had been made. October 2nd 2016 the Colombian Peace Agreement referendum was held and ended with 49.78 % in favor of the peace and 50.22 % against. The votes consisted of a total of approximately 13 million votes, with an extremely low participation that consisted of only

³ Meernik J, DeMeritt JHR, Uribe-López M, "Introduction". In James Meernik, Jacqueline HR DeMeritt and Mauricio Uribe-López (eds.), *As War Ends: What Colombia Can Tell Us About the Sustainability of Peace and Transitional Justice*, Cambridge University Press. 2019, 3-5.

<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/343112299_Meernik_J_DeMeritt_J_H_R_Urbe-Lopez_M_2019_Introduction_As_War_Ends_1-21>, (accessed 19-05-2023)

⁴ ibid. p.2-4

37.4 % of the eligible voters. It was seen as a victory even though participation in the referendum was low. The rural population, that were more affected by the conflict, generally voted in favor of peace, and people from urban and inland regions against. As a result of the small marginals between those in favor and those against the peace, FARC and the Colombian Government decided to resolve the outcome themselves. Despite general concerns from the public regarding a perception that the worst perpetrators got off lightly, the Peace Agreement was signed on the 12th of November 2016 between FARC and the Colombian Government. The six main issues that were brought up in the peace negotiations were participation in politics, rural reform, the end of the conflict regarding disarmament, ceasefire, reintegration and demobilization, the strategy on how to work against drugs, victims of the conflict with a focus on the transitional justice system and implementation and verification mechanisms.⁵ A perspective on gender in peacebuilding and transitional justice in a post-conflict setting is being acknowledged in the Final Peace Agreement. Recognitions in the Peace Agreement of gender in the context of peacebuilding have been made through women's participation, land ownership, economic development and transformative justice. The Peace Agreement states how violent experiences from the armed conflict affect women, and therefore lead to contributions for a durable peace in Colombia.⁶ In this paper the Peace Agreement is being examined to demonstrate how this legal document recognizes women victims as influencers of peacebuilding.

Women were one of the groups that suffered the most from the armed conflict and its violence in all its forms. This research investigates how women survivors of the armed conflict in Colombia are influencing peacebuilding. Womens' experiences, opinions and processes of healing become a fundamental point when looking at peace transitions and long-lasting peace building in post-conflict approaches.⁷ In the context of healing from the conflict and influencing the peacebuilding process, women victims-survivors express their

⁵ *ibid.* p. 6

⁶ Meernik J, DeMeritt JHR and Uribe-López M, "Conclusion" in James Meernik, Jacqueline HR DeMeritt and Mauricio Uribe-López (eds.), *As War Ends: What Colombia Can Tell Us About the Sustainability of Peace and Transitional Justice*, Cambridge University Press. 2019: 404, <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/343112299_Meernik_J_DeMeritt_J_H_R_Urbe-Lopez_M_2019_Introduction_As_War_Ends_1-21>, (accessed 19-05-2023)

⁷ Rettberg, A. Salazar-Escalante, L. Vargas Parada, M. G. y Vargas Zabarían, L. El género en la intersección entre el conflicto armado y la construcción de paz en Colombia: un balance. *Colombia Internacional*. Vol. 112. 2022, <<https://doi.org/10.7440/colombiaint112.2022.06>>, p. 149, (accessed 19-05-2023)

experiences and life stories in different ways.⁸ One of the most frequently and concrete used approaches of healing and peacebuilding is through working with art, such as weaving. This method has proven to be a successful tool for agency work of peacebuilding.⁹ This paper investigates the processes of healing with female victims survivors in group settings while weaving, and how their work influence peacebuilding in Colombia.

1.1 Purpose, outline and research questions

During the fall of 2022 I completed a four and a half months long internship with the Christian human rights Non Governmental Organization, NGO, Paz y Esperanza in Medellín, Antioquia, Colombia. My internship was fulfilled through Lund University and during my time in Medellín I was part of the team of Paz y Esperanza Colombia. Throughout my time with the NGO I had the opportunity to get to know various different areas, communities and people, in particular women. The majority of my time as an intern with the NGO was spent in the district of Granizal, municipality of Bello. In Granizal I took part in an memory and support group that Paz y Esperanza together with Shalom Church monitored called “Women of Memory” (in Spanish; Mujeres de la Memoria). Women of Memory gather female victims-survivors in the Shalom church mutilpe occasions each week where they support each other while talking about life and its obstacles. This group is an safe space where those who wish to are given the opportunity to share their life stories including memories and traumas from the conflict. These sharings are a process of healing from the conflict and are both being practiced by talking, singing, but also through creating artworks by weaving which this paper will focus on. The women in the group are each one of them constantly working on art pieces in the gatherings held in the church including at their spare time. By their work of weaving and their healing processes they continuously contribute to peacebuilding in a post-conflict setting. In addition, their work in the weavings have an empowering effect on themselves and each other’s confidence and claim of rights and lives.

The usage of weaving for healing processes and peacebuilding was something I never had seen before my internship with Paz y Esperanza and was something that quickly impressed

⁸ Oion-Encina, Rakel. Arte y simbolismo en la triple resistencia de género en el conflicto armado en Colombia, Universidad Autónoma de Honduras. *Revista Latinoamericana*, Vol. 3, No 5, 395. 2022, <<http://portal.amelica.org/ameli/jatsRepo/335/3352276010/index.html>>, (accessed 20-05-2023)

⁹ Noma, Emiko, Dee. Aker, Freeman Jennifer. Heeding women’s voices: Breaking cycles of conflict and deepening the concept of peacebuilding. *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*. Vol. 7, no. 1. 16. 2012, <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/48603407>>, (accessed 01-05-2023)

and touched me. How the women constantly contribute to peacebuilding in these healing processes through weaving was something that increased my passion for women's rights including their role in peacebuilding and was the major reason why I chose to perform this thesis.

Women are consciously carrying-out a variety of meaningful work for peacebuilding in their communities, from a local perspective, and in their nations, from a global perspective. Their important work for peace takes place before, during and after periods of violent conflicts. Despite this, women are continuously being denied their legitimate seat in the official arena of peace processes and are solely seen as victims. Furthermore, womens' peace work generally continues to be invisible and unrecognized due to its informality and ad hoc.¹⁰ The United Nations (UN) Security Council established Resolution 1325 the 31st of October 2000 which explains womens' essential role in the work of peace that takes place through preventing and resolving conflicts, negotiations of peace, peacebuilding, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and their participation and efforts being made on protecting peace and security in post-conflict settings. Furthermore, Resolution 1325 encourages all actors to increase their numbers of women participating in all operating UN peace and security attempts.¹¹ As a result of the denied legitimate place that women are facing from the official arena of peace processes, in despite of what the UN's Security Council's Resolution 1325 demands, it is of high importance to contribute with academic research of women who influence peacebuilding. Furthermore, is it of highly matter to listen to women who take part in peacebuilding and their own stories for understanding both the obstacles and the opportunities they are in possession of with their participation. With that being said, it is essential from an academic point of view to investigate female victims-survivors' impact on peacebuilding, and not solely seeing them as victims. This research puts its focus on how female victim-survivors influence peacebuilding with their healing processes as they are weaving and sharing life experiences and opinions in a group setting. Furthermore, the paper investigate how the Peace Agreement recognizes female victim-survivors as influencers of peacebuilding.

¹⁰ Noma, Emiko, Dee. Aker, Freeman Jennifer. Heeding women's voices: Breaking cycles of conflict and deepening the concept of peacebuilding. *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*. Vol. 7, no. 1. 7, 16, 2012, <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/48603407>>, (accessed 01-05-2023)

¹¹ UN Security Council, *Security Council resolution 1325* 2000, 31 October 2000, S/RES/1325, <https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/SC_ResolutionWomenPeaceSecurity_SRES1325%282000%29%28english_0.pdf>, (accessed 27-07-2023)

This research reflects over two human rights in the context of female victim-survivors and agency work while discussing the result. The first right that was being thought of was Article 19 from the *United Nations's (UN) Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)* the 'freedom of opinion and expression' which include having the freedom to have opinions without intrusion and to being able to look, collect and pass on information and thoughts through all types of medias and without meeting obstacles. In addition, it is fully necessary to have UDHR's article 27 (1) in mind when reading this research, which states that everyone should have the right to voluntarily participate in cultural life that their community offers including appreciating the arts, and if wished contribute in science and to its benefits.

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate how female victim-survivors of the armed conflict in Colombia are influencing peacebuilding.

The thesis' research question is:

How are female victim-survivors of the armed conflict in Colombia influencing peacebuilding?

This thesis' supporting questions are:

- 1. How do female victim- survivors themselves see their influence on peacebuilding?*
- 2. How does the Final Peace Agreement recognize female victim-survivors as influencers of peacebuilding?*

1.2 Definitions

It is of importance to define how this research uses the concept of 'peacebuilding' along with the difference between the labels 'survivor' and 'victims' for a better understanding of the research and to avoid misconceptions.¹²

1.2.1 Peacebuilding

Traditional peacebuilding methods have tendencies to unsuccessfully include the full range of peacebuilding by seeing it as a process going from the top and down, rather than from the

¹² Noma, Emiko, Aker, Dee, Freeman, Jennifer. Heeding women's voices: Breaking cycles of conflict and deepening the concept of peacebuilding. *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*. Vol. 7, no. 1. 7. 16. 2012, <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/48603407>>, (accessed 01-05-2023)

down and up. With this Noma, Aker and Freeman clarifies how classical peacebuilding definitions have tendencies to forget about the importance of individual acts in peacebuilding processes. Individual acts broadly consists of profoundly actions such as creative acts by regular people that have been victims to conflict situations. This research emphasizes that peace is a dynamic social construct, rather than a precise moment in time or a specific condition. With this perception the approach have the ability to include all processes such as healing from conflicts, constructing positive relationships, restoring of self-esteem, recognition of rights, empowering moral agency, uniting combative differences, strengthening equality, engendering perceptions of security, achieving basic standards of living and holding a democratic, inclusive and lawful character.¹³

1.2.2 Survivor versus Victim

The term ‘victim’ frames the traumatic events, for instance sexual assault, violence, displacement or death of a loved one, frequently as the most dominant thing that have happened to the individual. With the use of the term victim sympathy and compassion is being created for the woman, in this context, who is labeled as a victim.¹⁴ Moreover, the label restrains elements as passivity and forgiveness, along with oppression.

‘Survivor’, on the other hand, generally tends to be described as someone that has suffered something more severe than the ‘victim’. In addition, ‘survivor’ is associated with concepts such as strength, empowerment, power, agency and responsibility. Moreover, a survivor has suffered victimization and could be suffering from trauma, compared to the victim who may still be involved in the event that is traumatizing them. Furthermore, a survivor can change between the status of victim and victim-survivor.¹⁵ It is significant to do this reflection regarding these two labels for transparency and awareness. This research uses both labels by putting them together as one, ‘victim-survivors’, when referring to the research participants since the participants themselves have stated that they identify themselves as both.

¹³ *ibid.*

¹⁴ Williamson, Celia, *Definition of Victim, Survivor, and Thriver*, University of Toledo, 2017, <<https://www.utoledo.edu/hhs/htsj/pdfs/flyers/PATH%20client%20definitions.pdf>>, (accessed 19-05-2023)

¹⁵ Aanchal. Setia and An. Sieun, Victim vs. Survivor: The Effect of Labels and Consensual Sexual Behaviour on Observers’ Perceptions of Sexual Assault. *Journal of Sexual Aggression*. Vol 28 (1). 104. 2022, <<https://doi.org/10.1080/13552600.2021.1936229>>, (accessed 19-05-2023)

1.3 Material, limitations and source criticism

The thesis examines three different types of materials for its analysis; oral semi-structured interviews and the Final Peace Agreement of the armed conflict in Colombia as its primary material, and academic sources as its secondary material. The academic sources consisted of academic articles and books selected with regard to their credibility and relevance.

It is of importance to criticize one's material when conducting research. In addition to presenting the thesis material, this part of the paper will explain the material's delimitations, limitations and source criticism. This presentation of the three is crucial since the former reflects the choices that were being made regarding focus and scope in material selection, the latter the shortcomings and potential complications of the selected material, and the final to discuss the material's credibility.

1.3.1 Primary material: Three interviews with three Colombian female victim-survivors

My primary material is based on three oral semi-structured interviews with three Colombian women that I got in touch with during my internship. Each interview lasted from twenty to thirty minutes, depending on how much the women wanted to express themselves. During these interviews nine questions were asked to each participant. The questions were about their experiences and opinions in the context of women's rights, women's participation with a focus on their own participation with their weavings, peace and peacebuilding.

In January when I still were in Medellín, one of my previous coworkers at Paz y Esperanza Yesica Castrillón Laverde, who still is working for the organization, told me that she would be happy to support me with this research's material if needed. Therefore, I decided to reach out to her after I had formed my purpose. Important to declare is that Yesica is a Social Worker with a specialization in Community Development and graduated 2019 from one of the top Universities in Colombia, Antioquia Institute of Technology.

The recordings of the interviews were made on site at a women's event, that had its purpose for women to share experiences with weaving in a post-conflict setting, between Yesica and the three selected women. Participation were voluntary and free and took place together with Paz y Esperanza and the majority of Women of Memory and was held in the area of Moravía

in Medellín. The reason why we chose to perform the interviews in connection with the event was because of the women's availability and comfort. After the oral interviews had been executed, the recordings were being emailed from Yesica to me directly as audio files, without anyone else having access to them. After the audio files had been received to me personally they were being transcribed through the transcription tool from *transkriptor.com*. Finally, the transcriptions were being translated by me from Spanish to English due to my fluency in Spanish for highest possible quality and credibility.

1.3.1.1. Sampling and respondents

One of the most important aspects of research design is sampling, the process of choosing items or participants that will take part of the material in a study. It is of great importance to be accurate when sampling, in this thesis case its people.¹⁶ The three women that were being interviewed were between 55-75 years old and had seven things in common in the context of this research by identifying as women, being Colombians, living in the neighborhood of Granizal, being in the lower socio-class, identifying as victim-survivors of the armed conflict, being internally displaced in the country due to the conflict and having an active role in peacebuilding in Women of Memory Group. The selection of the women were made based on their interest and availability to participate in this study and in being active members of peacebuilding in Women of Memory.

1.3.2 Primary material: the Final Peace Agreement of the Armed Conflict in Colombia

Apart from the three interviews, this paper utilizes the Final Peace Agreement of the armed conflict in Colombia as its primary material. The official translated version in English are being used, but made sure prior that it was identical to the original in Spanish. The reasoning behind this decision was that since the research is being written in English the document and therefore desire this document to be more easily accessible for the people who will read my thesis, since the majority of the readers of this thesis are English-speakers and non-Spanish speakers.

¹⁶ Greg Guest, Emily E. Namey & Marilyn L. Mitchell. *Collecting Qualitative Data: A Field Manual for Applied Research*. Vol. 0. London: SAGE Publications, Ltd, 2013, E-book, p. 41. <<https://doi.org/10.4135/9781506374680>>, (accessed 2023-05-03); Creswell, J.W. & Creswell, J.D. *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches*. (5th ed), Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications, 2018, E-book, <https://www.ucg.ac.me/skladiste/blog_609332/objava_105202/fajlovi/Creswell.pdf>, p.137, (accessed 2023-05-03)

The legal document was signed on the 12th day of November 2016 in Havana, Cuba between the National Government of Colombia with Juan Manuel Santos, President of the Republic of Colombia as their leader and the FARC-EP with Timoleón Jiménez as their Commander-in-Chief. The Spanish original document was published and signed on the 12th of November 2016 and the English Translation got published on the 24th of November 2016. This legal document was being written because of the peace negotiations between FARC and the Colombian Government and intended to prevent more people being victims of the armed conflict in Colombia and to accomplish a long lasting and stable peace. The document includes the objectives that Colombians will get out of the Peace Agreement such as a ceasefire and an official end to the conflict and kidnappings, a recognition of victims' rights to justice, truth and reparation, a comprehensive agrarian development plan, more efficient ways to fight the trafficking of drugs and criminal organizations, a strengthening of the country's democracy, a peaceful countryside with opportunities to development and an end to FARC as an armed movement.¹⁷ This legal document is being observed to investigate if the Final Peace Agreement recognizes female victim-survivors as influencers of peacebuilding.

This primary material was chosen to give a wider range of primary material for the highest credibility, including providing more perspectives on the topic. In the start of this writing process I solely reflected over doing the interviews. However, after two weeks in the writing process I realized how providing more primary material would contribute to a wider picture, instead of solely including three interviews. This document was quickly found by searching on Google on the document by using the keyword 'the Final Peace Agreement Colombia' and in Spanish 'el Acuerdo Final de Paz Colombia'. The document contributes with another perspective for the research and contribute to how female victims-survivors are being recognized by the Peace Agreement as influencers of peacebuilding. Through analyzing the Peace Agreement a perspective on how the primary operators of the conflict, the FARC and the Government of Colombia, expressed or not expressed in the document regarding how female victim-survivors influence peacebuilding. The legal document have a symbolic matter and value since the two mayor actors of the conflict have signed the legal document, and can

¹⁷ The Government of Colombia and FARC-EP. "Final Agreement". (2016), <<https://www.peaceagreements.org/viewmasterdocument/1845>> (accessed 2023-05-03)

therefore be used as a framework of how FVS and their peacebuilding are being perceived among the two main actors of the conflict.

1.3.3 Secondary material

My secondary material was selected to provide the thesis and its readers an overview over the armed conflict in Colombia, women's rights in Colombia and women's participation, in particular FVS. The secondary material is gathered from previous research, including academically written articles and books about the subject.

1.3.4 Delimitations and limitations

It is crucial in research to explain what, how and why delimitations in the material have been made and to criticize the used material by looking at its limitations.¹⁸

1.3.4.1 Primary material

The delimitations of my qualitative research were drawn due to my thesis's purpose, my possibility to gather information on distance with the support of Paz y Esperanza and my interest in the area of Granizal. In the beginning of the writing process I wanted to investigate women's experiences of victimhood, however further into the research I chose to focus on women's participation in agency work. The focus on women's agency was chosen due to my interest in the topic and its increased ethical correctness in research, when not solely perceiving the women as victim-survivors, but also their influence on peacebuilding. After executing the interviews I could see that this decision was important for the thesis and its outcome. Moreover, I planned to carry out an online survey with women from the group of Women of Memory in the beginning of the research process, however after considering ethical dilemmas I decided that it was not appropriate, due to the sensitivity of the topic. In addition, an online survey would not have been optimal due to illiteracy among the women, which could have contributed to an absence of depth in the research.

One could argue that the best option for my thesis would have been to include more semi-structured interviews to be able to analyze more voices and to get a bigger perspective. Although, by having three respondents the opportunity was given to have a another level of depth in these interviews. Another limiting factor was being positioned in another country

¹⁸ Rienecker, Lotte, and Peter Stray Jørgensen. *Att Skriva En Bra Uppsats*. Upplaga 3. Samfundslitteratur och Liber AB, 2014. p. 46

when gathering the primary material which could have been an obstacle for my research. Despite this, I had support from my former co-worker from Paz y Esperanza who had the opportunity to carry out the interviews for me. Due to my trust in this person and in the organization Paz y Esperanza the interviews were able to be made this way.

Furthermore, I personally worked with the interviewed women and had a supporting role for them. Therefore, one could assume that they felt obligated to answer in a particular way. On the other hand, one could argue that it was important for me to have a supporting role for them, since the questions could be perceived as emotional since they were regarding themes of the conflict which the women are victim-survivors of. Furthermore, Paz y Esperanza has a strong supporting role for these women which could both be beneficial and negative for this research. The work relationship between Paz y Esperanza and the three women could have impacted the respondents to feel pressured to answer in a particular way, possibly even more than in my case due to a stronger relationship. On the other hand, this supporting role that the interviewer has with these women is important for them to feel comfortable with their participation in this study.

Moreover, I chose to exclusively observe the Peace Agreement to delimit the material and to contribute with information with the highest credibility. Firstly, I used the keywords ‘female survivor’, ‘female victim’, ‘woman survivor’, ‘woman victim’, ‘victims peacebuilding’ and ‘victims participation’ in the search for phrases regarding how FVS are being recognized as influences of peacebuilding. By searching for these keywords in the Peace Agreement I quickly noticed that the words female, woman, victims, participation and survivors did not appear together directly after each other. Therefore, I changed the search phrases to ‘female’, ‘woman’, ‘victims’, ‘survivors’, ‘peacebuilding’ and ‘participation’ separately. With this change the number of findings of these keywords increased except for ‘survivor’, which did not appear in the document a single time. Moreover, ‘female’ and ‘women’ and were generally not mentioned in the context of peacebuilding and victims were non-gendered, will later will be discussed. In addition, the keywords ‘victimization’, ‘participatory’, ‘participate’ were added for potential higher encounters of the similar terms ‘victim’, ‘participation’ and ‘participate’. Therefore, the final keywords that were utilized in receiving the result to the question of the Peace Agreement recognizing FVS as influencers of peacebuilding were ‘victim’, ‘victims’, ‘victimization’, ‘participation’, ‘participatory’, ‘participate’ and

‘peacebuilding’. Limitations of this primary material were these keywords since I primarily wished to analyze the terms ‘female victims’, ‘women victim’, ‘victims participation’, ‘victims peacebuilding’ and ‘female survivors’. Despite this, I got interesting findings that I further analyzed and discussed.

1.3.4.2 Secondary material

The terms that firstly were being used when gathering my secondary material were ‘female victim survivors in peacebuilding Colombia’, ‘victim survivors Colombia women’ and “peacebuilding Colombia”. With these keywords the findings were not as broad as I wanted them to be, therefore the search phrases were changed to ‘women in peacebuilding’, ‘the armed conflict in Colombia women’, ‘Colombia and women’s rights’ and ‘Colombian agency women’. Similar to the primary material, the secondary material was being limited by not being positioned in Colombia. Speaking from experience I know that one can find much more more sources regarding this topic while being positioned in Colombia.

1.3.5 Source criticism

When searching for a research’s material it is important to follow five indicators of source criticism by thinking of who is saying it, what is being said, who the target audience is, what is the purpose of saying it and when it was being said.¹⁹ The primary material is a first-hand source since the women were interviewed by my former colleague, and therefore increases its credibility. Due to the direct contact with my former coworker, the trust in her and since the recordings were not edited the material was of full credibility. Furthermore, the second primary material, the Final Peace Agreement, is of highest possible credibility since it is the original translation of the legal document, gathered from the University of Edinburgh’s official database for Peace Agreements. The Final Peace Agreement attempts to prevent more victims in the armed conflict of Colombia and puts its focus on constructing a stable and durable peace. The Spanish original document is gathered from the Colombian Government’s website and is not being used in this research and is only taking place in the reference list for the ones that do not speak English that will read this thesis. For the secondary material of this research the sources were selected based on credibility from the five source criticism factors.

¹⁹ The University Library, Linnaeus University, *Source criticism*, 2021, <<https://lnu.se/en/library/search-and-evaluate/source-criticism2/>>, (accessed 10-05-2023)

1.4 Ethical considerations in research

In research it is of significant matter to consider the ethical concerns relating to the research context, the treatment of the research participants and the researcher's and other participating people or organizations's position in the study.²⁰ Prior to this thesis the ethical considerations of this study were evaluated in detail. My ethical guidelines throughout this research were reliability, honesty, respect and accountability. Reliability for securing the quality of the study, honesty for making sure to inform participants of the research in an objective and complete way, respect for everyone who participated and accountability for the idea of the thesis being published.²¹

1.4.1 Reflexivity & Positionality

Reflexivity refers to when the researcher is reflecting over how one's beliefs, practices and judgements may have affected the study. Positionality in research puts its focus on what we know and believe in. Who we are, what we reflect on and what we reflect over ourselves can affect how we gather material.²²

1.4.1.1 My position

For this research it is of great importance to state the obvious, that I am a western researcher who is executing a study regarding post colonial contexts in the Global South. As a privileged white, cisgendered, young, upper middle-class, heterosexual, female student from the Western world it is essential for me to criticize myself in doing this research. An open and accepting attitude towards one's own positioning and reflexivity increases the chance of avoiding misunderstandings and the chance of striving for an ideal ethical approach in research. In addition, it is of great importance for me that this research does not have any white saviorism in it. This was another reason why I chose to focus on the women's peacebuilding and agency work on peace, instead of their experiences as victims.

²⁰ Swedish Research Council. *Ethics in research and good research practice*, 2023
<<https://www.vr.se/english/mandates/ethics/ethics-in-research.html>>, (accessed 10-05-2023)

²¹ *ibid.*

²² Kelly, Martina, Joy de Vries-Erich, Esther Helmich, Tim Dornan, and Nigel King. Embodied Reflexivity in Qualitative Analysis: A Role for Selfies. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 18 (2). 2017. <<https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-18.2.2701>>, (accessed 18-05-2023);
Johnsen, Sarah, and Suzanne Fitzpatrick. "Faith, Values, and Metaphysical Positionality in Qualitative Research." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 47 (1), 2022: 2,
<<https://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/2701>>, (accessed 01-05-2023)

Moreover, it is important to mention that I met the interviewed women multiple times a week during my internship at Paz y Esperanza Colombia. This consistency built trust between me and the women and formed bonds which I recognize affected the study positively, since they knew they could trust me with their experiences and be completely honest in their answers. Although, one could argue that this bond could have affected their answers, on the other hand their constancy of taking part in interviews with Paz y Esperanza and other NGOs, regarding their experiences and participation in peacebuilding, have impacted their expression and being non-bias skills.

‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’ is Spivak Gayatri Chakravorty asking herself. A ‘subaltern’ individual is a person with a low ranking in a social, political, or other hierarchy that, generally, has been or are being a subject of marginalization or oppression. By utilizing the term ‘subaltern’ as an ‘identity-in difference’ two similar problems are being addressed, the issue of othering regarding narratives and the politics of identity and the contemplating an ethics of alterity. There is the perspective of women and victims as ‘subalterns’. Moreover, Spivak explains how women’s and FVS voices and their agency regularly can be forced and portrayed as other voices.²³ As a result of the possibility of forced participation from other actors and their impact on the ‘subalterns’ it is crucial to carefully investigate and criticize participation work made by ‘subalterns’, something that this paper is examining.

For this study it was essential to look at the postcolonial perspective, since I am a white Western woman who is doing her research in a post colonized country and being conscious of not labeling the participating women as the ‘Other’. Furthermore, it was significant to make sure the women participated voluntarily and that they were not being affected by others, to avoid other voices being heard. To prevent these issues from occurring the method of open-ended questions were being used in the semi-structured interviews.²⁴ This was something I reflected on before performing this study and was one of the reasons I selected the method of semi-structured interviews for the participants to be more free in their answers.

²³ Birla, Ritu. “POST COLONIAL STUDIES, NOW THAT’S HISTORY”. In Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. Rosalind C. Morris (ed.). “Can the Subaltern Speak? Reflections on the History of an Idea”. Columbia University Press, 2010. p. 87-89

²⁴ Alcoff, Linda. The Problem of Speaking for Others. *Cultural Critique*, no. 20 (1991): 12, <<https://doi.org/10.2307/1354221>>, (accessed 10-04-2023)

1.4.1.2 Paz y Esperanza's role

Paz y Esperanza is a human rights NGO that are working for people with poor living conditions in Latin America so that they can have the opportunity to be free from different types of violence and injustice. The NGO focuses on various themes and issues such as post-conflict, reconciliation, victims' rights of the armed conflict in Colombia, protection of children and adolescents, women, citizenship, sustainable development, the Christian Church, diakonia and integral mission.²⁵

It is of significant matter to reflect regarding the role of Paz y Esperanza and the interviewer Yesica in this study since this research was dependent on them for my primary material. Due to their Christian belief one could argue that they could have tried to influence the women's answers by implementing their faith. Although, the women who were interviewed have all confirmed that they are Christian. In addition, the questions were carefully written by me personally, with guidance of my supervisor, before they were utilized by Yesica in the interviews. Furthermore, this research does not include the impact of religion in the women's participation due to lack of time. From another point of view, one could assume that the NGO could have tried to victimize the women rather than recognize them as influencers of peacebuilding, therefore the question regarding if they identify themselves as victims was essential. Furthermore, the women might have felt pressured to answer in a certain way since the NGO was being part of the study due to a possible hierarchy. On the other hand, one could argue that if the supporting relationship between the NGO, Yesica and the women in Women of Memory did not exist this research could not have been completed. Furthermore, the participants are used to participate in interviews with Paz y Esperanza and other NGOs, and therefore have the ability to be non-biased. Finally, it is crucial to mention that the women are voluntarily participating in the group Women of Memory and are never forced to do or say anything.

1.4.2 Informed Consent and Confidentiality

Informed consent is of high priority when conducting research and is one of the main principles of research ethics. The principle explains that participants should partake in research voluntarily, with complete knowledge of the study's methods, purposes and aims and that they give consent before they take part as participants of the research. Furthermore, there

²⁵ Paz y Esperanza. *Paz y Esperanza*. 2023, <<https://www.pazyesperanza.org/co/>>, (accessed 05-05-2023)

should not exist any undue influence on the participants for them to agree to give their consent.²⁶ Confidentiality is the definition of when the researcher knows the identity of the subject of matter, in my case the women. Furthermore, when being confidential in research the researcher does not reveal the identity of the participants in the thesis for others to discover.²⁷ Both the interviewed women, Yesica including Paz y Esperanza gave me informed consent over participating in this research and got opportunities to ask questions.

To begin with Yesica's, Paz y Esperanza Colombia's and the Church of Shalom consent was agreed on in written form through a form, through email and the application *Whatsapp*. In the consent it clearly stated what the purpose of the research was and informed them that they with no further notice and without any further questions asked could withdraw with their participation in this research. Furthermore, the three parties agreed on me mentioning their names in this paper. In the appendix the written forms that were agreed on can be observed both in a translated version in English and the original in Spanish.

Furthermore, Yesica informed the women that they were going to be interviewed, what the thesis purpose was and got the participants' oral consent for being a part of this study before and during the interviews. In addition, the women who participated in the interviews were informed that they were able to cancel their participation without any further notice or any further questions asked from both me and Paz y Esperanza. Moreover, the participants were informed and agreed that their identities were being treated confidentially by me, Yesica and Paz y Esperanza.

Furthermore, it is important to reflect on whether the questions asked could be perceived as sensitive. Therefore, it was crucial to revise them carefully before sending them to Yesica and making sure the respondents were feeling comfortable during the interviews. As a result of this, one could argue that the research was being more ethically correct with interviews, than if the first idea of using an online survey with questionnaires would have been pursued.

²⁶ University of Oxford. *Informed Consent*. 2021, <<https://researchsupport.admin.ox.ac.uk/governance/ethics/resources/consent#:~:text=What%20is%20informed%20consent%3F.before%20they%20enter%20the%20research.>>, (accessed 2023-05-03)

²⁷ The Evergreen State College. *Understanding Confidentiality and Anonymity*. 2023, <<https://www.evergreen.edu/humansubjectsreview/confidentiality>>, (accessed 2023-05-03)

2 Literature overview and previous research

When carrying out research it is significant to be in possession of updated knowledge about the most important previous research in this field. After an observation of previous research within the context of FVS in peacebuilding in Colombia, I confirm that this study in some senses are confirming earlier findings such as Alejandra Toro Calonje's explanations of art as a tool for participation and Elvira Maria Restrepo's justification of female victims as leaders of peacebuilding. However, this study is analyzing peacebuilding both by putting its focus on how women survivors of the armed conflict see themselves influence peacebuilding and how the Final Peace Agreement recognizes FVS as influencers of peacebuilding. This combination of perspectives is something I have not seen in previous research and could possibly be the first time someone combines these materials and methods with these two materials. The following four perspectives on previous research on this topic have contributed with background information for this research, significant thoughts regarding this topic of research and have provided a steady foundation of this thesis.

2.1 Art as a tool for peace construction

Personal experiences from conflict related violence can be an effective tool for peace construction according to Alejandra Toro Calonje, doctor in History and Arts, with a specialization in Peace and Conflict Management from the University of Granada.²⁸

Toro Calonje writes about different processes of communication to construct peace in the aftermath of the armed conflict in Colombia in her academic article "Procesos de Comunicación Para La Paz".²⁹ The research puts its attention on FVS of the conflict and argues how art can be a method of peace construction when violent life stories and experiences are being told. Women who participated in Toro Calonje's study were all victim-survivors who created their own art from already existing art. The artpieces that they interpreted in their specific ways represented their own traumatic experiences from the

²⁸ Toro Calonje, Alejandra. "Procesos de Comunicación Para La Paz." *Revista Anagramas* 18, no. 36. 2020: 115-116, <<https://revistas.udem.edu.co/index.php/anagramas/article/view/3162>>, (accessed 13-05-2023)

²⁹ *ibid.*

conflict. This study demonstrates how artwork based on violent and traumatic experiences has the ability to foster mourning along with the resilience of victims through a personal empowerment essential to peace.³⁰

Why utilize art as a tool for peace construction? Art has the second most prominent ability to capture symbolisation. Toto Calonje explains that when expressing painful memories they are telling their victory of death and of a better future with themselves in it. Art, including dancing and music, contributes to an empowered mindset for its participants as they are taking control over their own lives. This study explains how the elaboration of art affects the victim-survivors' pain, grief and the reconstruction of their identities as victim-survivors. When painful stories and experiences are being told through artworks the creators are being seen and heard while at the same time the participants' right to express themselves is being exercised. Toro Calonje argues therefore how and why art can be used as a tool for peacebuilding.³¹ This academic article provides this research with previous research of how art can contribute to peacebuilding while healing victim-survivors. .

2.2 Women supporting women victims in the construction of peace

“By enabling victims-survivors to become agents in the process of rebuilding their lives, their livelihoods, and their wider ecologies the work of these organizations promotes gender-transformative change and is central to peacebuilding and transitional justice processes.”³²

After an observation of the quote above one can see how Yoana Fernanda Nieto-Valdivieso, doctor in Sociology and Anthropology and gender studies at the Hull University, reflects over FVS and their agency and role in peace construction in her academic article “Women as Embodied Infrastructures: Self-Led Organisations Sustaining the Lives of Female Victims of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence in Colombia”.³³

³⁰ *ibid.*

³¹ *ibid.* p. 133-135

³² Nieto-Valdivieso, Yoana Fernanda. Women as Embodied Infrastructures: Self-Led Organisations Sustaining the Lives of Female Victims of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence in Colombia. *Journal of Peacebuilding and Development*. 17, no. 2. 2022:194, <<https://doi.org/10.1177/1542316622110042>>, (accessed 13-04-2023)

³³ *ibid.*

Nieto-Valdivieso analyses organisations led by women as ‘embodied infrastructures’ that have a supporting role of victim-survivors of the conflict related sexual violence in Colombia. The focus in Nieto-Valdivies’s academic article is regarding three different elements when referring to women as ‘embodied infrastructures’. Firstly, Nieto-Valdivies explains how the role of women as mentors is a crucial factor for other women in post-conflict healing processes. Secondly, Nieto-Valdivies explains the important issue of doing work for women in services, organisations and networks for women. Thirdly, Nieto-Valdivieso argues how radical care has a high value in the construction of women's organizations and women as ‘embodied infrastructures’. Finally, Nieto-Valdivieso argues that women as ‘embodied infrastructures’ create a safe space with an acceptance of learning and listening from each other regarding important issues. This space is described as an arena where all women who consider themselves as victims and or survivors of conflicited related violence are welcome. An arena where they can revitalize their self-love in an empowering way, exercise their political understanding of their victimhood, receive support if desired, gain different types of civic skills and start the healing process.³⁴

Nieto-Valdivieso explains how organizations of women are important for the construction of women leaders and agency work, both for those who consider themself as victims of the conflict and for those who do not. Furthermore, she explains how having women as ‘embodied infrastructures’ has a high potential of gender transformation processes regarding equality as they contribute to important participation for women and FVS in questions regarding solidarity, agency, issues regarding gender and the self-esteem of one another.³⁵ Nieto-Valdivieso's findings support my research with a perspective on the importance of women supporting women in peacebuilding.

2.3 Women victims as leaders for peacebuilding

Elvira Maria Restrepo, doctor in Politics from the Oxford University and professor in the Department of Geography and Regional Studies and in the Department of International Studies of the University of Miami describes women victims of the conflict in Colombia as

³⁴ *ibid.* 194

³⁵ *ibid.* 203-204

‘leaders against all odds’ in her academic article “Leaders against all odds: Women victims of conflict in Colombia”.³⁶

Restrepo explains how women were the majority of the civilian victims in the armed conflict in Colombia. Furthermore, she describes how it has previously been discussed that the scope and sustainability of lasting peace will increase with women involved in peacebuilding. Despite this argument, the majority of the female victims of the conflict do not get their voices heard or get their voices heard but in a victimization approach, with putting focus on their suffering rather than their contribution as sources, agents and constructors of peace. Moreover, Restrepo explains the lack of the voices of those who see themselves as female victim and the victimization approach towards them as an effect of simply being a women and victims. Restrepo’s research argues how female victims of the conflict affect peacebuilding by frequently overcoming their victimhood and by appearing as important leaders for the construction of peace in Colombia, regardless of high personal risks that comes with peacebuilding work in the country. Restrepo performed interviews and did research on female victims in Colombia.³⁷

The doctor’s results of her interviews were that female victims of the conflict are significant builders of peace in Colombia as they heal themselves, empower themselves, inspires for a social change and for the reconciliation societies. Furthermore, Restrepo explains how female victims of the conflict, who work in peacebuilding and agency work, have improved their own position as leaders in peacebuilding, along with enforcing concrete victims rights. Moreover, the article explains that female victims of the conflict are the optimal peacebuilders since they have unique roles as victims and leaders with personal experiences.³⁸ Finally, Restrepo’s perspective on how female victims of the armed conflict influence peacebuilding is contributing with a valuable perspective for my research regarding how they work in leader positions.

³⁶ Restrepo, Elvira Maria. Leaders against all odds: Women victims of conflict in Colombia. *Palgrave Communications*. 2, 16014. 2016: 1,9,10 <<https://doi-org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/10.1057/palcomms.2016.14>>, (accessed 18-04-2023)

³⁷ *ibid.* p.1,9,10

³⁸ *ibid.* p.9-10

2.4 Decolonial feminism and women in agency

Laura Rodriguez Castro, Doctor in Philosophy with a specialization in Feminism, Rural and Latin American studies at Griffith University, argues how decolonial feminism are captured in the daily life issues of the women in the region of the Darién Gap, the area between northwest Colombia and southeast Panama. By analysing these rural women Rodriguez Castro recognizes how rural Colombian women work to demolish the coloniality of power and gender.

Rodriguez Castro explains that decolonial practice has not reached its goal and that it is an ongoing process. Furthermore, Rodriguez Castro clarifies that feminism is an essential part of the decolonial practice as long as the approach is done properly without Western women trying to 'homogenize' the 'category of woman' by influencing or taking control of the 'subaltern women', as Rodriguez Castro describes it. A free space for emotions and thinking should be mandatory for the colonized women, where they can speak freely without Western women trying to maintain their power.

Furthermore, there is an obligation that voices and actions of rural women are being heard, legitimized and supported in their municipalities not as victims, but rather as women that are communicating and advocating new positive ways of living, re-existing and resisting. Moreover, Rodriguez Castro explains that rural women in Colombia are building stable alliances that can contribute with establishment and support of social justice. The women have been visible and have made themselves heard by expressing pro-peace narratives and knowledge that condemn the conflict that took place in their territories.³⁹ Finally, Rodriguez Castro's book contributes with a feminist colonial perspective to this thesis on the agency of women survivors which is crucial for this thesis since it is investigating women in a post-colonist country.

³⁹ *ibid.* p.178-180

3 Theoretical framework

This research has used two theories, ‘participation as power’ and the theory of ‘imperfect peace’ and were selected to be utilized based on their relevance for the thesis purpose.

Participation as power and Imperfect peace provide this paper with two different perspectives on female victim-survivor’s participation in peacebuilding for a more peaceful Colombia.

The two theories have a strong connection with each other since they both put attention to the importance of focusing on agency work made from the bottom and up, in this research’s context from a local level with individuals. Both of the theories further focuses on the power participation has in conflict and post-conflict contexts and the how ‘subaltern’ voices have a tendency to be silenced due to other actors’ power over them.

3.1 Participation as power

The major reason why this theory is being applied is due to the importance of analyzing power structures and relationships in participation when investigating the participation of female victim-survivors in peacebuilding.

‘Power’ is one of the most important concepts when analyzing participation and is mainly about relations between actors with more power and those with less. Actors with more power in this context can consist of NGOs, their leaders, employees or volunteers or major actors such as Governments or bigger organisations. In contrast, people with less power can include the people that the NGOs or the major actors are providing aid for such as victims of different kinds. The theory analyzes the power relationship and power structure between three different parties, firstly between Paz y Esperanza and the interviewed women, and secondly between the authors of the Peace Agreement, two major actors in the conflict FARC and the Colombian Government, and FVS that are being mentioned in the legal document.

Participation as power is being utilized in this context to analyze how the power relations and the structures between these actors affect the women’s processes of participation in in their peacebuilding agency work. Power relationships and power structures points out which individual or which individuals in a group or between groups that have the power, including which norms or rules that apply in that context. An analysis of power relations and power

structures between the four different actors, the interviewed women, Paz y Esperanza, the authors of the Peace Agreement and the FVS mentioned in the Peace Agreement, are crucial since structures and relations of power always are present and impact how results of participation turn out. Furthermore, the theory argues that knowledge of participation and how to participate can challenge deep-rooted inequalities of power, which this thesis will demonstrate and analyze by the interviews of the FVS and with the Peace Agreement's content. Furthermore, the concept of 'participation as power' argues that it is of great importance that everyone's voices are being heard in agency work and that they get to empower and act for themselves, without being affected or influenced by the ones that already are in the possession of power.⁴⁰ It is crucial, according to the theory, to put attention to 'subaltern' voices in agency work so that everyone get the opportunity to empower and act for themselves.⁴¹ This is exactly what this paper strives for with the semi-structured interviews, to make the voices of the 'subaltern', FVS of the armed conflict, to be heard. Furthermore, this research aim to provide with evidence from the Peace Agreement on how FVS participate in peacebuilding to give the thesis another point of view of the importance of hearing everyone's voices heard in agency work, as the concept of 'participation as power' advocates.

To sum up, the theory puts its focus on challenging power structures and relations by encouraging people to participate in change with making their own voices being heard, without the impact of others. On one hand, the theory argues that participation can contribute positively for more democratic and just society communities, and on the other hand it explains that participation can negatively affect the power structures and relations and that it will lead to more influence for the people who already have the power. Therefore, it is crucial for the 'subaltern' and the ones with less power to participate in the participation voluntarily and in their own ways, without other actors' impact.⁴²

⁴⁰ Chambers, R. *Ideas for Development*. London: Routledge, 2005, p. 113-114
<<https://www.routledge.com/Ideas-for-Development/Chambers/p/book/9781844070886>>, E-book, (accessed 04-05-2023)

⁴¹ Cleaver, F. Paradoxes of participation: questioning participatory approaches to development. *Journal of International Development*, Vol. 11. 1999: 604,
<[https://doi.org/10.1002/\(SICI\)1099-1328\(199906\)11:4<597::AID-JID610>3.0.CO;2-Q](https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1099-1328(199906)11:4<597::AID-JID610>3.0.CO;2-Q)>, (accessed 20-05-2023)

⁴² Chambers, R, Managing Rural Development. Ideas and Experiences from East Africa. *Scandinavian Institute of African Studies*, Uppsala, 1974: 108, <<http://nai.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:278970/FULLTEXT01.pdf>>, (accessed 06-05-2023)

3.1.1 Criticism of theory

A possible critique of a usage of this theory could be that it is primarily made for the field of development, not peacebuilding. To answer this critique I defend my usage of this theory with the argument that participation and peacebuilding are dependent on each other.⁴³

3.2 The theory of Imperfect Peace

The theory of ‘imperfect peace’ is a theory of high relevance for this paper since it discusses peacebuilding and its constant on-going process. Since the Second World War new theories of peace have been developed. One of the most recent and well known theories is the historian Francisco A. Muñoz’s theory of the ‘imperfect peace’. Muñoz explains how the theory of ‘imperfect peace’ recognizes the existence of conflict by demonstrating that peace never is perfect and finished. The conception of peace as something that never is perfect and finished is something that will be analyzed in this thesis, how FVS constantly are working for peace with their participation in peacebuilding. Muñoz demonstrates that peace is never perfect or finished since there always are aspects of peace to criticize from different perspectives, as an effect of corresponding to conflicts and its violence. By a use of Muñoz’s theory the voices of the ‘subaltern’ including their contributions that take shape in different forms of expressions of experiences and opinions regarding peace, conflict and its consequences. In this context the ‘subaltern’ are FVS of the armed conflict due to being These contributions are made to end conflicts with characteristics of war that affect civilians’ everyday life.⁴⁴ To put an end to the conflict including its following consequences is something that the interviewed women and the FVS influencers of peace, mentioned in the Peace Agreement, are intending to achieve through their different forms of participation in peacebuilding, such as expressing thoughts and telling life experiences through weaving as a part of their healing processes. Muñoz further explains how humans’ desire for peace have led to a production of different theories related to peace and because of this it is fundamental to design distinct premises regarding peace. With a use of the ‘imperfect peace’ one includes all different types of peace, constructed by individuals and groups, small and big, local and

⁴³ Atkinson, Kelly E. Policy and Possibilities of Humanitarian Development: Displaced Women and Peace-Building Features of the UNHCR. *REFUGEE SURVEY QUARTERLY* 37, no. 4. 2018. 411-412, <<https://eds-p-ebSCOhost-com.ludwig.lub.lu.se/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=7&sid=68b739f5-c673-4909-892a-29b95c3b472e%40redis>>, (accessed 24-05-2023)

⁴⁴ Toro Calonje, Alejandra. “Procesos de Comunicación Para La Paz.”. *Revista Anagramas* 18, no. 36 (2020), <<https://revistas.udem.edu.co/index.php/anagramas/article/view/3162>>, p. 119-120 (accessed 13-05-2023)

national and finally, the relationships between the mentioned. This interpretation is being utilized in this research for analyzing the participation that FVS contribute with on peacebuilding and how the relation between their participation is as individuals and as groups. Moreover, the theory removes labels such as ‘bad’ and ‘good’ actors and intends to put its focus on recognizing different components such as values, previous experiences and attitudes of the people involved in the conflict. This concept is being utilized to analyze the answers of the FVS in the interviews including how the Peace Agreement are describing FVS. Muñoz further explains how one of the central factors of the ‘imperfect peace’ is on ‘a conception of power, of the change of power’⁴⁵, which implies the theory’s goal about making the world a more just and peaceful world.⁴⁶ This final point that the theory explains is being applied in this paper for analyzing what FVS intent to affect and create, a conception of power of the change of power where more voices get heard and are given the opportunity to influence, such as FVS in peacebuilding.

3.2.1 Criticism of theory

Critics of the theory argue that pacifistic theories without any violence, like this one, are difficult to use if the goal is a prolonged peace. Although, this critique of pacifistic peace theories have gained a more clear role within humanities and social sciences. It is of high importance to analyze conflict and peace from different perspectives and to see it both as something that is being constructed on individual, group, local, national and international level.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Muñoz, Francisco. A. *Imperfect Peace*. Institute of Peace and Conflicts, University of Granada. 2001.

<<http://www.ugr.es/~fmunoz/documentos/ImperfectPeacepisa.pdf>>, (accessed 15-05-2023);

Telleschi, T. The Philosophical and Sociological Extent of Imperfect Peace Theory. A Critical Refocusing. *Revista de Cultura de Paz* 2, no. 0. 2018: 45–48,

<<https://doaj.org/article/638660165ab941c68a5520de9326cc84>>, (accessed 20-05-2023)

⁴⁶ *ibid.*

⁴⁷ López Becarra. M, H. TEORÍAS PARA LA PAZ Y PERSPECTIVAS AMBIENTALES DEL DESARROLLO COMO DIÁLOGOS DE IMPERFECTOS. *Luna Azul*. No. 33, Universidad de Caldas. Manizales. 2011: 94.

<<http://www.scielo.org.co/pdf/luaz/n33/n33a08.pdf>>, (accessed 15-05-2023)

4 Methodology

4.1 Methods and method criticism

The two methods that this study utilizes are semi-structured interviews for the interviews of the FVS and a content analysis of the Final Peace Agreement. These methods were selected for this paper due to being the most suitable methods for the purpose of this research and for achieving the highest possible credibility. Furthermore, the methods were chosen due to being connected with the two theories this investigation is applying. Both of the methods and the theories are putting attention to the importance of focusing on agency work made from the bottom and up, which in this research's context is the voices of the female victim-survivors both in the interviews but also in the Peace Agreements. The reason why a method that puts its focus on individuals, the interviews, are being used together with a method that analyses a group, female victim-survivors that are being mentioned in the Peace Agreement are due to the importance of both including a individual and group-setting when investigation women's participation.

4.1.1 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were selected as the primary method due to its range of possibilities of different answers, including being the most optimal ethical option for the interviews. The method of semi-structured interviews is generally in a position of varying its use of its questions, which allows the person who has constructed the questions more freedom in the performing of the interviews.⁴⁸ The interviews were conducted with open ended questions to have the opportunity to create a free, comfortable and acceptable environment for the respondents. In addition, this interviewing technique was being selected for most possible clarity for the respondents and depth for me. Each question asked in the interviews had a clear relation to the purpose of the research and its questions, and were carefully selected prior the operating of the interviews.

The process of constructing and translating the questions was carefully made by myself with support of Yesica, my previous coworker at Paz y Esperanza, and my supervisor. Aspects

⁴⁸ Galletta, A, E. Cross, W. *Mastering the Semi-Structured Interview and Beyond: From Research Design to Analysis and Publication*. NYU Press, 2013, p. 45, 47, E-book, (accessed 20-05-2023)

such as relevance and ethical considerations were carefully considered throughout the process. The questions were formed based from the purpose of this paper. Once the questions were finalized, they were sent to Yesica via email in text format and were ready to be used by Yesica in the one-on-one interviews. The one-to-one method of the interviews was used to make it easier for the women to answer the questions that I, together with the interviewer's judgement, determined. With the questions that were being utilized I looked for the women's own thoughts regarding their participation with their healing processes and artwork of weavings, human rights and peace. The women's answers were being sorted by each question, which this paper is putting the attention to the most relevant quotes in line with my purpose.

4.1.2 Criticism of method

It is of great importance to criticize the methods used in research for highest possible credibility. The most prominent critical with semi-structured interviews is that the researcher constantly has to be ethically mindful and maintain the highest possible confidentiality. When executing semi-structured interviews the interviewer has to be in possession of the correct personality traits for being suitable to assess the interviews.⁴⁹ Because of these reasons I chose my former coworker Yesica since she has years of experience in this field and is in the position of the required personality traits which an interviewer should have in these types of interviews. Although, one could argue that I do not have the knowledge regarding how the women felt and how Yesica felt prior, during and after the interviews. To answer this critique, I personally asked both the women and Yesica before the interviews how they felt about doing it, after they had been given the information and given me the consent. In addition, I asked them how they felt after the interviews and they all responded that they were satisfied and felt happy to have been able to contribute to this research.

4.2 Content analysis

This research put its primary focus on the semi-structured interviews as its material, but chose to analyze the Peace Agreement, through a content analysis, due to a wider range of primary material and relevance of the thesis' purpose. The Peace Agreement was analyzed by

⁴⁹ Buys, Tania, Daleen Casteleijn, Tanya Heyns, and Hannelie Untiedt. A Reflexive Lens on Preparing and Conducting Semi-Structured Interviews with Academic Colleagues, *Qualitative Health Research* 32 (13), Sage Publications, 2022: 2036, <https://journals-sagepub-com.ludwig.lub.lu.se/doi/pdf/10.1177/10497323221130832>, (accessed 01-05-2023)

a qualitative content analysis as this was suitable for this research. This qualitative content analysis analyzed the Peace Agreement with a focus on complex perceptions of what the text's content stated from parts of the text I manually chose.⁵⁰ A brief notation of the whole document and its content was made for general knowledge. Later on, the terms 'victims', 'victimization', 'participation', 'participate', 'participatory' and 'peacebuilding' were used to analyze, due to the notation that term 'women' generally were used in other contexts than describing victims participation in peacebuilding. For highest relevance quotes or paragraphs when both the object of 'victim', in its different mentioned forms, and 'peacebuilding' or 'participation', in its different mentioned forms, were being used for the analysis. When analyzing paragraphs where the previously mentioned terms were occurring they were carefully being read through to make sure they were of the right context, describing women, victims' participation and peacebuilding.

In the content analysis the answers consisted of quotes where the chosen terms were being mentioned in a participation context. The selection of the quotes from the Peace Agreement were being selected due to relevance for this investigation. In the answers I searched for how the legal document recognizes FVS as influencers of the armed conflict.

4.2.1 Criticism of method

Criticism of the content analysis is that the perceivers of the method occasionally have a tendency of being biased when observing texts and what they are trying to mediate.⁵¹ To answer this critique, this thesis was unbiased since it wanted to have an objective point of view. Although researchers argue that they are executing research unbiased, it is generally common to find the investigators' opinions in texts. Because of this reason I personally made sure to review attributes of my thesis such as my usage of language, for an unbiased research.

⁵⁰ Bergström, Göran och Kristina Boréus. *Textens mening och makt*. Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2012, tredje upplagan, p. 50

⁵¹ *ibid.* p. 85

5 Findings and analysis

5.1 Findings

5.1.1 How the Final Peace Agreement recognizes women survivors as influencers of peacebuilding

Important to note in this section, is that the term ‘victims’ in the Peace Agreement were generally not being identified as in which gender it was about. Therefore, a general view of victims is being pursued in this context. ‘Victim participation’ is thus including all genders, due to its non existing separation in this context. In addition, the Peace Agreement utilizes the term ‘victims’ and not ‘survivors’, therefore in this context the terms have the same meaning.

“**Victim participation:** The discussion on the realization of the rights of the **victims** of serious human rights violations and breaches of international humanitarian law during the conflict necessarily involves the **participation** of the **victims**...”⁵²

The Peace Agreement states in the quotes above that the realization of the rights of the victims of the armed conflict in Colombia are necessary to be made through victims’ participation.

“Promotion of agreements for peaceful coexistence within communities, which include **victims** and persons who may have **participated** directly or indirectly in the conflict...”⁵³

“For this, the National Government will set in motion an effective process with the broadest possible **participation** of **victims** and their organizations...”⁵⁴

Furthermore, seen in the citation, the document argues that it should promote agreements that have been made for a peaceful coexistence in communities that includes victims that have participated either in a direct or indirect way in the conflict. In addition, the following quote

⁵² The Government of Colombia and FARC-EP. “Final Agreement”. (2016), p.132, <<https://www.peaceagreements.org/viewmasterdocument/1845>>, (accessed 2023-05-03)

⁵³ *ibid.* p.193

⁵⁴ *ibid.* p.195

states that the National Government will promote processes for victims to participate including their organizations.

“At the same time, we broadened the mechanisms for **participation**. More than 3,000 **victims** took part in four forums held in Colombia, organized by the United Nations and the National University, and sixty **victims** traveled to Havana to deliver their testimonies directly to the Negotiation Table and offer their recommendations, with the support of the Episcopal Conference, the United Nations and the National University of Colombia. In addition, more than 17,000 proposals were submitted by the **victims** and other citizens, by various means, to the Negotiation Table. All the proposals that we received from the **victims** were essential for achieving the agreements.”⁵⁵

Furthermore, the legal document explains how more than 3000 victims of the conflict had an important role in the forums that were being held in Colombia, with support from the UN and the National University. In addition, the Peace Agreement put its attention to how sixty victims of the conflict were being positioned in Havana to contribute to the peace negotiations by delivering their testimonies as victims, of which 60 % of them were women.⁵⁶ The Peace Agreement clearly states how these contributions to peacebuilding were crucial for the achieved peace.

“Lastly, we want to thank the **victims** for their resolute **participation**, their noble testimonies and their proposals, without which it would not have been possible to construct this Agreement, and we encourage them to actively **participate** in its implementation and in **peacebuilding**.”⁵⁷

“Comprehensive reparation measures for **peacebuilding**: These measures seek to ensure the comprehensive reparation of the **victims**...”⁵⁸

Moreover, the Peace Agreement expresses their gratitude on the contributions, testimonies and proposals that victims of the conflict had on the peacebuilding and how these contributions of influence have an impact on the reparations of the victims. The document further states that the achieved peace would not have been possible without these contributions and encourages them to further continue their participation in peacebuilding.

⁵⁵ *ibid.* p.135

⁵⁶ Winstanley, Louise. *Women's Participation in the Colombian Peace Process*. Latin American Regional Report, AB Colombia. (2018), <<https://www.abcolombia.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/ABColombia-LatinNews-Women-Participation-Peace-Process-.pdf>>, (accessed 24-05-2023)

⁵⁷ The Government of Colombia and FARC-EP. “Final Agreement”. (2016), p.135, <<https://www.peaceagreements.org/viewmasterdocument/1845>>, (accessed 2023-05-03)

⁵⁸ *ibid.* p.138

“Focus on **victims**: The Commission's efforts shall be focused on guaranteeing the **participation** of the **victims** of the conflict...”⁵⁹

“**Participation**: The Commission will set in motion a broad, pluralist and balanced **participatory** process where different voices and views will be heard; in the first place, those of the **victims** of the conflict, who are considered as **victims** due to their relationship with any kind of circumstance of the conflict, both individual and collective...”⁶⁰

“...the National Government will set in motion an effective process with the broadest possible **participation** of **victims** and their organizations, promoting spaces for the discussion of their proposals with the competent authorities. This process will be carried out in the framework of the existing forums for **victim participation**, which will be expanded upon and strengthened for this purpose, so that **victims'** organizations and **victims** not involved in these forums can **participate** in this process. In order to implement this, an event with broad-based **participation** will be announced and held with **victims'** organizations and **victims** including those who are not involved in these forums for **participation**...”⁶¹

“The process for the adaptation and **participatory** strengthening of the policy of caring for and comprehensive reparation of **victims** will be overseen by the existing forums for **participation** of **victims**, at local and national level. For this purpose these forums will be expanded and strengthened by means of the **participation** of other **victims** and **victims'** organizations and human rights organizations”.⁶²

In the quotes above one can see how the Peace Agreement states that victims’ freedom to participate should be guaranteed and encouraged. In addition, the document argues that different voices of victims should be heard both as individuals and groups. Furthermore, one can see that the Peace Agreement states the concrete responses that the actors of the conflict will complete to enable victims’ participation.

“In particular, it implies the need to guarantee affirmative measures to promote that equality, active **participation** by women and their organizations in **peacebuilding** and recognition of the **victimization** of women as a result of the conflict”⁶³

⁵⁹ *ibid.* p.141

⁶⁰ *ibid.*

⁶¹ *ibid.* p. 195

⁶² *ibid.*

⁶³ *ibid.* p.204

As observed in the citation above, the Peace Agreement explains that womens' equal participation in peacebuilding will be promoted and to recognize the victimization of the women due to the conflict.

“To contribute to realizing **victims'** rights, mark a symbolic new beginning and create a favorable environment for **peacebuilding** in the context of the end of the conflict...”⁶⁴

Finally, the Peace Agreement states that with contributions to recognition of victims of the armed conflict's rights is a new beginning which can construct a positive space of peacebuilding, as to the end of the armed conflict in Colombia.

5.1.2.1 How the interviewed women reflect over their own participation in peacebuilding

The analysis of how the Final Peace Agreement recognizes women survivors as influencers of peacebuilding is significant, however this research put its focus on how the interviewed women reflect over their own participation in peacebuilding to answer the research's purpose of how women survivors of the armed conflict in Colombia are influencing peacebuilding and are exercising their rights to freedom of opinion and expression and the right to participation in cultural life.

The three interviewed women are being called by the pseudonyms 'Gabriella', 'Anna' and 'Sofia', this study is confidential and these names are randomly selected for utilization.

5.1.2.1.1 How the women reflect over peace

I would say that we build peace, not participating in the wrong doings, not helping those people who are doing so much damage. Peace is something that comes from the heart and is something that we put into practice (Gabriella).⁶⁵

For me peace is tolerance and humility. Peace is built by the people who are willing to contribute. The community is also peaceful for me (Anna).⁶⁶

⁶⁴ *ibid.* p.188

⁶⁵ Woman “Gabriella”, Interview of Woman ‘Gabriella’, (interviewed by Yesica Castrillón Laverde in person), 02-05-2023, Womens Weaving Event, Moravia, Medellín, Colombia

⁶⁶ Woman “Anna”, “Interview of Woman ‘Anna’, (interviewed by Yesica Castrillón Laverde in person), 02-05-2023, Womens Weaving Event, Moravia, Medellín, Colombia

Peace is something we generate through daily life as long as we have that possibility or find that genuine tranquility in us. It can also be the sound we know from war, right? It can also be my own self. Because if I don't have peace within myself, I don't have peace in the world, I won't find peace anywhere. First of all, Jesus is my true peace and will be the true peace of the world, because without him there is nothing but with him I find everything. The peace is because of him (Sofia).⁶⁷

After asking the women about what they think of when they hear the word “peace” one can observe that peace to them is participating in what is considered good actions that are put into practice, tolerance and humility, people who are willing to contribute and the community. The women also describe peace as something we generate through daily life, the sound of war, our own selves and their religion and faith.

5.1.2.1.2 How the women reflect over human rights

Human rights are work for each one of us. Or well which human rights do we really have? Some rights must be fulfilled. There are some Human Rights offices where one can go. To claim the rights of each person. Of every one to which we are entitled and have not yet given them as victims. I have not been recognized yet, but everything is in the hands of the Lord and he knows until when. The rights that must be fulfilled are what we have been denied, both the right to healing and the right to be heard, and the rights that we have as humans. In Granizal we don't have a drinking water service, the water in Granizal is not drinkable, we have rights to good roads, there aren't any, there are no good roads. We have the right to better health, we don't have it either. Yes, in all types of ways the services are very bad. The people in the neighborhood where we live are vulnerable (Gabriella).⁶⁸

Human rights are human beings who have a work, a decent life and housing (Anna).⁶⁹

Human rights, is a complicated word. Because they say human rights, but you can see that those rights are not so human, they don't give them to you. For me, human rights are many, they are worldwide. It's not dogs, it's not cats, it's not birds, it's not just anything, it's humans. People and body. But what does it say about human rights? Where are they? What is happening with them? Because they violate them so much. Because we, as human beings, can not enjoy what other human rights say. You have the right to life, you have the right to health and you have many other rights according to the Colombian Constitution or according to the constitutions of any other country. The first thing is the right to life.

⁶⁷ Woman “Sofia”, “Interview of Woman ‘Sofia’”, (interviewed by Yesica Castrillón Laverde in person), 02-05-2023, Womens Weaving Event, Moravia, Medellín, Colombia

⁶⁸ Woman “Gabriella”, “Interview of Woman ‘Gabriella’”, (interviewed by Yesica Castrillón Laverde in person), 02-05-2023, Womens Weaving Event, Moravia, Medellín, Colombia

⁶⁹ Woman “Anna”, “Interview of Woman ‘Anna’”, (interviewed by Yesica Castrillón Laverde in person), 02-05-2023, Womens Weaving Event, Moravia, Medellín, Colombia

What is that if it is not being respected? Because nowadays, unfortunately an animal is worth more than a human being. I should have the right to all of the human rights, to good food, to a dignified life, to dignified housing, to a job, to a well-paid job, to health, to education, that would be right, right? The first right that I will give is respect for the other, for others. I believe that we all should have the same rights as people (Sofia).⁷⁰

When reflecting over human rights the women argue that human rights are something everyone should have, despite this they are constantly being denied theirs. The respondents express how they, women victim-survivors of their community Granzial, are not in possession of their rights such as being heard, healed, work, education, decent housing and living conditions such as roads, water, food and health. Gabriella explains how they have not been recognized and been given their rights as victims until this day.

5.1.2.1.3 How the women reflect over their participation in peacebuilding, through their artworks in forms of weavings with the Memory Group

My experience with Women of Memory is that when I do not agree with something, I say it. I speak up and things happen. I also get listened to. One should have the right to get listened to and to claim things in order to have something (Gabriella).⁷¹

The Women of Memory group has rescued many values that were lost, the meetings and weaving with these women has helped me a lot to overcome and heal from the victimizing event from which I was displaced. So a lot of anger, a lot of pain that we have, we let it out in the weaving and as we are getting together and sharing ideas with one another. We are healing and as we tell each other what happened to us and that we are all from the same group, that we are all victims of violence and displacement, then that also makes us more united and that unity contributes a lot to peace. Also, I am exercising rights to life, to health, to gathering, to housing and to decent employment. To all these rights. The group of women of memory has contributed a lot (Anna).⁷²

As a Woman of Memories, by displacement and with hope, I would say I exercise my rights in the Memory Group, you know why? Because there I have a very stable communication with Paz y Esperanza and Shalom Church. I am making myself visible as a woman. We want to go abroad, not only in Medellín, we also want to go to other departments and countries. Because we can do it, we have the capacity to speak. We can not speak English, French or Swedish for example but there are

⁷⁰ Woman “Sofia”, “Interview of Woman ‘Sofia’”, (interviewed by Yesica Castrillón Laverde in person), 02-05-2023, Womens Weaving Event, Moravia, Medellín, Colombia

⁷¹ Woman “Gabriella”, “Interview of Woman ‘Gabriella’”, (interviewed by Yesica Castrillón Laverde in person), 02-05-2023, Womens Weaving Event, Moravia, Medellín, Colombia

⁷² Woman “Anna”, “Interview of Woman ‘Anna’”, (interviewed by Yesica Castrillón Laverde in person), 02-05-2023, Womens Weaving Event, Moravia, Medellín, Colombia

translators. We want peace and to speak for all those who have memories. I create peace in the Memory House through threads, because when we weave we tell each other stories of our sad past and turn it into a past, into a friendly present, full of tranquility and security. I believe we are going to make peace and we are going to generate peace and we are going to see the impact (Sofia).⁷³

As one can observe from the quotes above, Gabriella shares that she feels listened to in the Memory Group and that she can speak up in the space. Anna explains how the group have saved many values that had been lost and that practice of art in the form of weavings and their shared Christian belief have helped her overcome and heal from victimizing events that she was displaced from. In addition, Anna points out how the weaving helps with anger and pain when they weave and tell each other what they have been through. Furthermore, Anna clarifies how the sharing and that they all are victims make them more united and that the unity that they are in possession of contributes to peace. Sofia explains how she feels that she exercised her rights in the Memory Group since she had good communication with the people from Paz y Esperanza and Shalom Church. Moreover, Sofia argues how they want peace and to speak for the ones that have memories but are unable or prohibited to. Furthermore, Sofia clarifies that with their participation in the Memory House they tell their stories through working with threads, and with this have an impact of peace.

The women described the *Book of Life* to the interviewer continuously when they were speaking about the artworks that they have constructed in the Memory Group. The Book of Life is a book that each woman in the Memory Group has done and consists of weavings that capture different things about themselves and their life. Each spread of the book obtains a weaving and a description of it. Every book includes a weaving about who they are as a person, their family, their dreams, a quote they like, a memory and a fear they have. The women expressed that the Book of Life, the artwork that they have done, are contributing with attributes such as participation, being listened to, exercising their right as women survivors, bondings with the other women and to healing from the pain that the violence have brought them. Below one can observe three quotes where the women state what the Book of Life matters to them in their own words.

A right I am capturing in the Book of Life is to participate and again to participate. That they really listen to us, because they don't want to be listened to and sometimes they don't

⁷³ Woman "Sofia", "Interview of Woman 'Sofia', (interviewed by Yesica Castrillón Laverde in person), 02-05-2023, Womens Weaving Event, Moravia, Medellín, Colombia

(Gabriella).⁷⁴

In the Book of Life we exercise our rights as surviving women. To rights is with the book of life, because in it we were able to express from childhood our experiences of the past in the present and the expectations we have for the future. When we weave and form bonds with the other women, we have rights. We have been very successful because we have begun to heal all the pain that the violence brought us (Anna).⁷⁵

I have done my book, the Book of Life in the Memory House which represents my life. To always talk about what is needed is what is indispensable for us as victims. We as victims need to be listened to because they want to silence you immediately. We want spaces where we can speak where we do not get interrupted, because when we start to speak we have a lot to say. We want to use our voices and to tell the whole world that our rights have been violated because they have violated our right to life, to a decent home, they have violated too many of our rights as victims. Many want to silence me. There are many who want to silence the voices of those who speak and I want to be the voice for those who can not speak, for those whose voices have already been silenced, for those children, for those young people, for those adults, for those old people who can not speak, who are not allowed to speak, that's what I want to do. I want to mediate their messages with my voice (Sofia).⁷⁶

The book I did first of all started with me. Yes, my self-portrait with the flower, a red rose that I really liked since I was a little girl. I have liked roses very much since I was a little girl. And in Uramita, Antioquia, where I am from there always were roses. So, I liked them very much and I still like them very much. Well, I was a very shy girl. Very obedient and with a lot of fear. This girl in the self portrait was very afraid of the screaming, dad yelled at us hard, so that was the fear that I maintained. And, in that book there are many nice things of mine and things that I didn't have. I studied very little for example, but today I am doing it. This year I graduated in November and took degrees and have the right to study (Gabriella).⁷⁷

The book was first of all my face and the flower, a sunflower. The predominant one is the page of where I capture Segovia, where my family is from. So I captured that, the games we had at that time, the childhood that at that time, the games we played, the places where we had, the house we had, the sayings, what we believed in. They didn't let us play because work was the most important. As well as the longings and dreams that we have, that has been what has dominated my Book of Life. The book captures the rights of decent housing that we don't have in Granizal because we lack drinking water,

⁷⁴ Woman "Gabriella", "Interview of Woman 'Gabriella'", (interviewed by Yesica Castrillón Laverde in person), 02-05-2023, Womens Weaving Event, Moravia, Medellín, Colombia

⁷⁵ Woman "Anna", "Interview of Woman 'Anna'", (interviewed by Yesica Castrillón Laverde in person), 02-05-2023, Womens Weaving Event, Moravia, Medellín, Colombia

⁷⁶ Woman "Sofia", "Interview of Woman 'Sofia'", (interviewed by Yesica Castrillón Laverde in person), 02-05-2023, Womens Weaving Event, Moravia, Medellín, Colombia

⁷⁷ Woman "Gabriella", "Interview of Woman 'Gabriella'", (interviewed by Yesica Castrillón Laverde in person), 02-05-2023, Womens Weaving Event, Moravia, Medellín, Colombia

access roads of the neighborhood, decent schools, decent parks and decent jobs. We lack many rights (Anna).⁷⁸

My book contains a lot of things. For example, a memory I don't like is the one with the dagger that I have weaved. The one with the dagger is very strong to me because it scares me and is one of my fears, my fear of knives (Sofia).⁷⁹

When talking about the meaning of the Book of Life one can see that the women are very passionate about this book captures their lives from a point of view that puts its focus on their experiences as victim-survivors. The women further shared what their books are trying to mediate and what rights they were exercising while constructing it.

5.2 Analysis

5.2.1. With the 'Participation as power' as framework

From the theory of Participation as Power one could argue that the Peace Agreement is promoting and recognizing victims' participation and is seeing their participation as something positive and important for peacebuilding. Furthermore, the theory would argue that the Peace Agreement promotes victims' participation since it explains concrete plans for it to happen, seen in the following quote. *"Participation: The Commission will set in motion a broad, pluralist and balanced participatory process where different voices and views will be heard; in the first place, those of the victims of the conflict"*.⁸⁰ On the other hand, based on the theoretical framework, one could argue that through the participation of victims in peacebuilding the people with the most power, the two primary actors of the conflict FARC and the Colombian Government, have an increased power over them and the country since the structures and relations of power always are present, according to the theory, and have a high impact on how the results of the participation will turn out. From this point of view, people in power could speak for the subaltern, in this context the women victim-survivors of the conflict. Lastly, the reason why victims are not being labeled as women more than one time in the Peace Agreement could be as a result of the existing power relations.

⁷⁸ Woman "Anna", "Interview of Woman 'Sofia', (interviewed by Yesica Castrillón Laverde in person), 02-05-2023, Womens Weaving Event, Moravia, Medellín, Colombia

⁷⁹ Woman "Sofia", "Interview of Woman 'Sofia', (interviewed by Yesica Castrillón Laverde in person), 02-05-2023, Womens Weaving Event, Moravia, Medellín, Colombia

⁸⁰ The Government of Colombia and FARC-EP. "Final Agreement". (2016), p.141, <<https://www.peaceagreements.org/viewmasterdocument/1845>>, (accessed 2023-05-03)

This research made sure to make the voices of the ‘subaltern’ heard, including that they got to empower and act for themselves, without other actors, including myself, interfering for influence. The theory of participation as power encourages people to participate to change and develop societies. By an implementation with the theory in this research’s context one can see that it is what the Memory House and its peacebuilding women victim-survivors are constantly intending to achieve, by telling their experiences and opinions through expressing themselves with weavings.

5.2.2 With the ‘Imperfect peace’ as framework

*“The meetings and weaving with these women has helped me a lot to overcome and heal from the victimizing event from which I was displaced.”*⁸¹ In this citation from the interview with ‘Anna’ one can see how the meetings when they meet, weave and share their belief have contributed with healing for her from her victimizing events from the conflict. From the theory of imperfect peace one could argue that these spaces are a step in the right direction for a more just world with peace constructed from both individuals, such as in this case, and bigger groups. With applying the theory of imperfect peace as framework for peacebuilding, spaces for women who identify themselves as victims and survivors of the armed conflict in Colombia, are being created. This space is being created so that their mediations of non violent methods in their peacebuilding can be taken into consideration for peacebuilding in Colombia. With this attitude of analyzing peace as an inclusive arena, imperfect in its condition, opens up for all civilians, ‘subaltern’ or not, and recognizes womens’ experiences from violence, and other conflict related effects, as one of its priorities for peace and healing.

By analyzing the Peace Agreement with the theoretical framework for the imperfect peace, one can see how it, similar to the theory of participation as power, intends to encourage victims of the conflict to speak up. Furthermore, the Peace Agreement intends to create spaces from the victims to participate with their peacebuilding through healing which one can see demonstration of in this citation from the Peace Agreement; *“The process for the adaptation and participatory strengthening of the policy of caring for and comprehensive reparation of victims will be overseen by the existing forums for participation of victims”*.⁸²

⁸¹ Woman “Anna”, “Interview of Woman ‘Anna’”, (interviewed by Yesica Castrillón Laverde in person), 02-05-2023, Womens Weaving Event, Moravia, Medellín, Colombia

⁸² The Government of Colombia and FARC-EP. “Final Agreement”. (2016), 61, <<https://www.peaceagreements.org/viewmasterdocument/1845>>, (accessed 2023-05-03)

6 Discussion

6.1 How female victim-survivors influence peacebuilding

6.2 The right to freedom of opinion, expression and to participation in cultural life

*“Human rights is a complicated word. Because they say human rights, but you can see that those rights are not so human, they don't give them to you.”*⁸³ ‘Gabriella’ explains her experience with the Memory House and states that *“..I speak up and things happen. I also get listened to. One should have the right to get listened to and to claim things in order to have something”*.⁸⁴ With this quote Gabriella expresses how she is being in possession of her right to free opinion and expression. Furthermore, ‘Sofia’ argues that *“We want peace and to speak for all those who have memories. I create peace in the Memory House through thread”*.⁸⁵ With what ‘Sofia’ states in the previous quote, one can see how she is influencing peacebuilding through contributing with art with weaving, and fulfilling the rights of free expression, opinion and participation in culture life.

“Participation: The Commission will set in motion a broad, pluralist and balanced participatory process where different voices and views will be heard; in the first place, those of the victims of the conflict, who are considered as victims due to their relationship with any kind of circumstance of the conflict, both individual and collective...”⁸⁶

After analyzing the Peace Agreement, and quotes such as the one above, one can see that the Peace Agreement continuously promotes victims' participation and agency both for individuals and for groups. As a result of the advocacy of participation of victims' one can demonstrate that the Peace Agreement promotes the right to freedom of opinion and expression, and to participation in cultural life. Important to be aware of is that this is solely

⁸³ Woman “Sofia”, “Interview of Woman ‘Sofia’”, (interviewed by Yesica Castrillón Laverde in person), 02-05-2023, Womens Weaving Event, Moravia, Medellín, Colombia

⁸⁴ Woman “Gabriella”, “Interview of Woman ‘Gabriella’”, (interviewed by Yesica Castrillón Laverde in person), 02-05-2023, Womens Weaving Event, Moravia, Medellín, Colombia

⁸⁵ Woman “Sofia”, “Interview of Woman ‘Sofia’”, (interviewed by Yesica Castrillón Laverde in person), 02-05-2023, Womens Weaving Event, Moravia, Medellín, Colombia

⁸⁶ The Government of Colombia and FARC-EP. “Final Agreement”. (2016), p.141, <<https://www.peaceagreements.org/viewmasterdocument/1845>>, (accessed 2023-05-03)

the theoretical side of the Peace Agreement, to further be in possession of the practical implementation another type of investigation needs to be done.

6.3 In relation to previous research

Firstly, my findings regarding the effective tool of art in peacebuilding are confirming Toto Calonje's arguments. The interviewed women in this research have pointed out the impact creating art in form of weavers has for them and how it helps them to heal, to express themselves, to restrict their identities as victims-survivors, to feel empowered, and to symbolize both positive and negative things they have experienced in their lives.

Furthermore, after conducting this research one can see how Nieto-Valdivieso's study about how the importance of women victims' agency in peacebuilding are confirming my findings. Similar to Nieto-Valdivieso research one can prove the importance of women victims' agency in peace construction and how it generates self-love, exercise their political understandings of their victimization, receive support if wished, gain various types of citizenship skills and start their healing process. Moreover, Restrepo's research confirms some of the findings I had with this research, such as that women victims contribute to social change and for reconciliation. Lastly, Rodriguez Castro's point of view on the topic was valuable from a postcolonial aspect of this research. While conducting this research Rodriguez Castro's ideas regarding 'homogenizing' and the 'category of woman' were being well thought of when conducting the interviews for not contributing to these attributes. It was of significant matter that this research made the victim-survivors' voices heard and that they were not being affected by other people.

7 Conclusions and final thoughts

7.1 Conclusions

After observing this research one can identify the importance female victim-survivors have with their participation in peacebuilding in Colombia through their participation. FVS influence peacebuilding in Colombia in various ways. This paper putted its focused on how the women's healing processes including their expression of experiences and opinions have an essential point for the building of a long-lasting peace. Furthermore, the research puts a further focus on how their healing process including expressing experiences and opinions are being made in their weaving art pieces. By speaking up through their works of art they heal at the same time as they contribute to agency work for a more peaceful Colombia where more voices are being heard.

The Peace Agreement demonstrates how the violent experiences that have affected women from the armed conflict lead to contributions for a durable peace in Colombia. This paper utilized the Peace Agreement to explain how this legal document recognizes female victim-survivors as influencers of peacebuilding. FVS, mentioned under female victim-survivors', are consistently being acknowledged as important peacebuilders for a durable peace in the Peace Agreement. The research demonstrates in detail with the content analysis how the legal document is explaining the essential role for a durable peace that FVS have with their participation with their experiences, opinions and healing processes in being victims.

To conclude, female victim-survivors influence peacebuilding in Colombia with their participation in agency work through weaving can by an observation of how FVS heal and share truths about conflict related experiences see how they not only affect themselves, but also their communities in Colombia and the country as a whole. The Final Peace Agreement of the armed conflict recognizes victim-survivors' participation in peacebuilding and argues that their agency work has a great impact on the continued work for a more peaceful Colombia. The healing and truths of FVS expressed in weaved artpieces have an impact on a local level, in communities, and on a national level, in the country, since it contributes with attributes of solidarity, unity and trust. Solidarity, unity and trust are three key concepts in

improving relationships that have been damaged by the armed conflict within the country. Therefore, the study provides evidence of how female victim-survivors play a significant role in Colombia's peacebuilding in a post-conflict setting.

Female victim-survivors of the armed conflict of Colombia demonstrate how peace is being achieved in more sustainable ways in a long-term perspective by their methods of expression of experiences and opinions as a part of their healing process. With this being said, women use their important unified power of participation in an imperfect peace setting and agency work through using art methods, in forms of weavers, to influence peacebuilding.

7.2 Final thoughts

Female victim-survivors and their participation in peacebuilding in means such as in art through weaving processes is a big passion of mine and has therefore been interesting to research. In my opinion this topic does not receive enough attention and is essential to pursue research over. The method of semi-structured interviews was captivating to perform and made me realize I wish to utilize this method for my future Master's thesis. However, I recognize that I would then prefer to myself conduct field work on site and include a larger number of interviews due to the possibility of being less complicated and more interesting.

The topics that this research is engaging in are massive and can therefore be reflected and discussed in countless points of views. This thesis focused itself on how female victim survivors of the conflict are influencing peacebuilding in Colombia through making three female victim-survivors voices be heard and by a content analysis of how the Peace Agreement recognizes FVS of the conflict as influencers of peacebuilding. Another fascinating perspective to investigate is how it differs from countries and regions how much and in what ways female victim-survivors of conflicts influence peacebuilding and the meaning of religion in the context of agency work in these contexts.

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9 Appendix

9.1 Informed Consent

9.1.1 Informed Consent for the interviewed women

Consentimiento / Consent
Consentimiento para participar en el estudio: <i>Cómo las mujeres sobrevivientes del conflicto armado en Colombia están incidiendo en la construcción de paz.</i> El estudio es el final tesis de licenciatura de Elin Blomstedt Larsson en Derechos Humanos. - Por la presente confirmo que he recibido información oral sobre el estudio y aceptó participar en él. Se me ha dado la oportunidad de hacer preguntas sobre el estudio. - Se me ha informado de que los datos que se recojan sobre mí serán tratados confidencialmente, de forma que mi identidad no será revelada a personas no autorizadas. - Soy consciente de que mi participación es totalmente voluntaria y de que puedo cancelar mi participación en cualquier momento y sin más explicaciones.
Consent to participate in the study: How women survivors of the armed conflict in Colombia are influencing peacebuilding. The study is Elin Blomstedt Larsson's final bachelor thesis in Human Rights. - I hereby confirm that I have received oral information about the study and agreed to participate in it. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the study. - I have been informed that the data collected about me will be treated confidentially, so that my identity will not be revealed to unauthorized persons. - I am aware that my participation is entirely voluntary and that I can cancel my participation at any time without further explanation.

9.1.2 English and Spanish informed consent for interviewer the NGO Paz y Esperanza itself



Consent form

Consent to participate in the study: How women survivors of the armed conflict in Colombia are influencing peacebuilding. The study is Elin Blomstedt Larsson's final bachelor thesis in Human Rights.

I hereby confirm that I have received written information about the study and agreed to participate in it. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the study.

I am aware that my participation is entirely voluntary and that I can cancel my participation at any time without further explanation.



Formulario de consentimiento

Consentimiento para participar en el estudio: *Cómo las mujeres sobrevivientes del conflicto armado en Colombia están incidiendo en la construcción de paz.* El estudio es el final tesis de licenciatura de Elin Blomstedt Larsson en Derechos Humanos.

Por la presente confirmo que he recibido información escrita sobre el estudio y aceptó participar en él. Se me ha dado la oportunidad de hacer preguntas sobre el estudio.

Soy consciente de que mi participación es totalmente voluntaria y de que puedo cancelar mi participación en cualquier momento y sin más explicaciones.

9.2 Interview guide, translated from Spanish to English

1. Di tu nombre, de dónde vienes y por qué te desplazaron. 1. State your name, where you come from and why you were displaced.
2. ¿Te consideras víctima del conflicto armado? 2. Do you consider yourself a victim of the armed conflict?
3. ¿Qué es para ti la paz? ¿Cómo puedes describir la paz? Con una palabra, un recuerdo, entre otros. 3. What is peace for you? How can you describe peace? With a word, a memory, among others.
4. ¿Cómo construyes la paz en tu comunidad? ¿Cómo te afecta tu forma de construir la paz? ¿Qué significa para ti tener un impacto? 4. How do you build peace in your community? How does your peacebuilding affect you? What does it mean to you to have an impact?
5. ¿Qué piensas cuando oyes las palabras: paz y derechos humanos? 5. What do you think of when you hear the words: peace and human rights?
6. ¿Qué derechos tienes y cuáles crees que son importantes para ti y por un proceso de paz? 6. What rights do you have and which ones do you think are important for you and for a peace process?
7. ¿Crees que los derechos de la mujer son importantes en un proceso de paz? Por favor, explica. 7. Do you think women's rights are important in a peace process? Please explain.
8. ¿Sientes que ejerces tus derechos con lo que haces en el grupo de las Mujeres de la Memoria? 8. Do you feel that you exercise your rights through what you do in the Women of Memory group? - Cuéntame un poco de algo que hayan hecho en el grupo para ejercer sus derechos como sobrevivientes del conflicto armado, ejemplo: el performance (allí levantan la voz para mencionar de dónde fueron desplazadas, el lugar donde viven con diversas necesidades y sus formas de resistencia) - Tell me a little bit about something you have done in the group to exercise your rights as survivors of the armed conflict, e.g. performance (where you raise your voice to mention where you were displaced from, the place where you live with different needs and your forms of resistance).

9. ¿Cuáles crees que son los retos de las mujeres para hacer más fuerte la paz? ¿Qué hacen las Mujeres de la Memoria para aportar a una paz fuerte?

9. What do you think are the challenges for women to make peace stronger? What are Women of Memory doing to contribute to a strong peace?