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THE IMPACT OF CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT ON SUPPORT FOR THE  
COLOMBIAN PEACE ACCORD

By  
Victoria Gallegos

A thesis submitted to the faculty of The University of Mississippi in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College.

Oxford, MS  
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Approved By

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## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the nearly three million people who have been the ultimate victims of the coronavirus pandemic. May this past year teach us all to hold our loved ones a little tighter when we can.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge my thesis advisor Dr. Love, for his continual guidance and patience over this difficult and challenging year. Similarly, I would like to acknowledge Dr. Dinius, Dr. Allen, and Dr. Schenck for their patience and support during this time. The global pandemic has upset everyone's lives in unexpected ways, and I am endlessly thankful for these professors and readers making the time to support me throughout this process.

## ABSTRACT

VICTORIA GALLEGOS: The Impact of Civil Society Engagement (Under the direction of Gregory Love).

This thesis asks the impact of someone's civic engagement and civil society organization involvement on support for the 2016 Colombian peace agreement. Additionally, discussed is the impact of conflict exposure on engagement and involvement. Through an analysis of several variables taken from Vanderbilt University's LAPOP data set, there is a positive association between conflict exposure and one's civic engagement and civil society involvement. Civil society engagement then positively associates with support for the peace process.

## PREFACE

I became first seriously interested in the Colombian peace process and peace negotiations after studying abroad in Bogota, Colombia and witnessing first-hand a nation still recovering from, and reckoning with its recent conflict. My days at school were frequented with discussions and debates about the FARC, paramilitary groups, and the Colombian government, and my classmates passionately argued over the peace agreement (its successes and failures) many times in our political science and law classes.

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## *Introduction*

Are people who are more disengaged from civil society more likely to be critical of the government and attempts for peace negotiations? Or is it those who are most engaged who are more critical of the government? The understanding of these questions can be very valuable in real-life situations and provide important information to policymakers and peacemakers; understanding areas of support or lack thereof for peacemakers can help shape media campaigns, create areas for discussion, and more. In the context of Colombia, a nation that only recently formally ended its civil war, knowing factors which may [or may not] contribute to a citizen's likelihood of supporting peace can be beneficial to those that negotiate peace. The answers to these questions can have real world applications on peace negotiations, and therefore are important to study.

Civic engagement and engagement with society are just two variables of many which should be analyzed with respect to support/nonsupport of peace negotiations. However, these two are especially important given the role of civil society in peace negotiations. As will be discussed further, the role of civil society is to be representative of the interests and needs of the public; thus, in peace negotiations, civil society organizations can and do serve as the voice of the people and vote or negotiate on behalf of the people whom they represent.

Since 1945, civil conflict has impacted more than half of the world's nations, with more than a fifth experiencing 10 or more years of war (Blattman and Miguel). Several of these afflicted nations likely engaged in peace negotiations at some point.

In Colombia, civil society has played an important role in both sides of the conflict, and various civil society organizations (CSOs) were often--and still are--violently targeted by the state, paramilitaries, and guerilla groups like FARC (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de*

Colombia) and ELN (*Ejército de Liberación Nacional*)<sup>1</sup>. Because of civil society's large role in the conflict, and its integral place in Colombian and Latin American life, studying the connection between a person's involvement in his society and his support for peace can have important implications.

In addition to examining the relationship between civil society engagement and support for the peace negotiations, a person's individual civic engagement will also be looked at. Table 1 will summarize the differences between civic engagement and civil society participation. This latter data will provide some insight into the individual-level of interaction with government and politics a person has.

It is always important to understand the public's opinion in a peace negotiation since logically peace should be sought in a society and benefit the greater good, and evermore so in the Colombian context, when the Colombian public shocked the world and voted to reject the peace accord in a nation-wide referendum in 2016. Although the vote was close, it signaled the public was unsure about the best ways to achieve peace, with many believing there would be no retribution for the atrocities committed by FARC rebels. Despite this public signal, the Colombian Congress approved a revised peace agreement in December 2016, never putting it to another national referendum, and President Juan Manuel Santos (2010-2018) was awarded a Nobel Peace Prize. This peace agreement, brokered between Santos and leaders of the FARC, known as the *Acuerdo de Paz*, is the specific negotiation studied in this paper.

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<sup>1</sup> Almost ironically, both the FARC and ELN formed because of exclusion from a power-sharing agreement in the aftermath of *La Violencia*. Certain groups of society (students, Catholic radicals, left-wing intellectuals, militant communists and peasant self-defense groups to name some) (Felter and Renwick 2017) believed they had been ignored by the Colombian government and took up arms in response. These two groups contributed to the terrible violence which left 220,000 dead, 25,000 disappeared, and 5.7 million displaced.

In the immediate aftermath of the 2016 peace accord between the Colombian Government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), short-term commitments were honored and implemented. These included the stipulations such as the definitive cease-fire, laying down of arms, and the creation of a framework for institutional peacebuilding (Kroc 2019). As of 2020, the peace accord is transitioning into its second phase involving greater medium to long-term commitments, including but not limited to: “reducing socioeconomic gaps between rural and urban areas, ensuring the long-term reincorporation of ex-combatants, guaranteeing the rights of victims, and advancing cross-cutting measures regarding ethnicity and gender.” (Kroc 2019). Despite progress being made (such as the immediate cease-fire and laying down of weapons), and the peace accord continuing to be upheld, albeit to a degree, there has been disparity in the implementation of security and protection accord mechanisms; “violent attacks on community leaders, human rights defenders, and peace activists have soared,” (Matallana 2018). The power gap left by the FARC demobilization allowed new cycles of violence to occur, with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) guerilla group occupying the space, in addition to other non-state armed actors. There are several challenges to implement peace on the ground, and “as such, human rights defenders, grassroots organizations, civil society networks, and other peace building initiatives continue to endure,” thereby facing pressure from armed actors at the local level (Matallana 2018).

In 2019, former FARC commander Ivan Marquez called for the guerilla group to rearm, stating that “the state has not fulfilled its most important obligation, which is to guarantee the life of its citizens and especially avoid assassinations for political reasons.” In the background of the speech, stood more than 20 armed fighters in front of a sign which read “As long as there is a will to fight there will be hope for victory.” (Ingber 2019). Some believed the reaction was due

to “the lack of political will to implement all aspects of the peace accord and a troubling violence over the last year...that has undermined the transformative promises of the accord...” (WOLA, 2019), but there are several possible motives which likely played into the call to rearm, such as the Santrich Affair (State 2020). As evidenced, the peace accord does have several issues, and the current Duque administration, the Colombian public, and current & former FARC rebels all have competing interests.

With the demobilization of FARC, ELN remains the largest active terrorist organization in Colombia. Peace talks with ELN were held in Havana during 2018 but have been slow to progress. Part of this can be attributed to the decentralization of the organization (in comparison to the hierarchical structure of the FARC), and to the political differences between the Duque and Santos administrations. Currently, the peace talks between ELN and Colombia are at a standstill, formally suspended by President Duque after a bombing attack in Bogota in January 2019.

Soon Colombia will be heading into a presidential election, and early polling has already shown that the public will likely favor candidates who support the implementation of the peace agreement, and future agreements (Alsema 2020). The question remains, who are the people who support the peace agreement and want to see it fully implemented? What factors may contribute to a person’s support or nonsupport of the peace agreement? These questions and their answers are important, especially for a presidential candidate trying to garner support or tap into potential voter blocs.

### *Literature Review*

This literature review will look to two general questions. First, what predicts someone's participation in civil society? Second, how does someone's participation in civil society affect his/her support for the peace process?

In the aftermath of the unexpected referendum failure to confirm the peace accord in 2016--with 50.2% of the public voting against it--numerous studies and academic papers were written in an attempt to explain the surprising results. Many of these papers seek to understand and explain public support for the peace process, measured by a few specific variables and their direct relationship to peace perception. This thesis is no different in that respect, as it too will primarily focus on the impact of civil society participation and civic engagement on support for the Colombian peace accord. A comprehensive review of the relevant literature will focus on four points: **i) defining civil society and civic engagement ii) the relationship between conflict experiences and civil society participation, iii) conflict experiences and support for the peace process iv) the factors which make someone more likely to participate in both, and v) the effect of general civil society engagement on supporting peace.**

### *Defining Civil Society and Civic Engagement*

The concepts of civil society and civic engagement have been studied separately and together, however this thesis will treat the two as separate concepts--albeit intertwined--since they both potentially matter differently in support of the peace agreement.

When describing civil society, Barnes (2009) writes "[t]his self-mobilization often occurs through the existing forms of social organization, ranging from faith-based institutions and traditional/customary structures to modern NGOs, women's organization and academic networks." This is a grand definition but captures the variety of organizations that all qualify

under the umbrella of civil society. Similarly, Wanis-St. John and Kew (2008) point out the lack of uniformity among civil society, stating “it [civil society] comes in many organizational forms, it can have varying degrees of autonomy from the state, and comes it can even serve as a substitute for the state when government’s fail to serve their population.” However, Wanis-St. John and Kew go further, defining the supposed opposite of civil society, that is, “uncivil society”: “civil society can also decay into ‘uncivil’ society, political militancy, and can even blend into insurgency, especially in conflicts where little or no attention is paid to gaining popular support for peace.” This is an important distinction, defining which social organizations are included in the term “civil society.” To be considered a civil society group it must be civic-minded, “in that their purpose is to promote the interest and perspectives of a particular sector of society, but not all issues for all sectors” (Wanis-St. John and Kew 2008). Especially in the context of Colombia, there are plenty of social organizations which may have begun as CSOs but traversed into the “uncivil” realm. To generally qualify a group as civil or uncivil, one should consider whether the group uses violence or destructive methods; although the boundaries of civil society are murky, civil society groups use pacific means rather than military ones to promote and achieve their goals (Barnes 2009).

Political parties differ from civil society groups, in that while CSOs may promote one issue, or possible a range of issues for a sector of the population, “they do not seek to articulate the universal range of issues or appeal to the scope of population that political parties do, nor does civil society seek to capture the state like political parties” (Wanis-St. John and Kew 2008). Principally, civil society organizations (CSO) are local efforts often located within a greater network of likeminded groups, and they may receive inspiration or donations from outside groups, such as non-governmental organizations.

It is important to note that civil society organizations are not, inherently peacebuilding organizations. Peacebuilding civil society organizations do exist and are plentiful throughout Colombia both historically and in contemporary terms (Matallana 2018), but the majority of CSOs are not formed with the purpose of peacebuilding. When using the term “civil society organization,” this thesis shall refer to the entirety of CSOs, regardless of a peacebuilding goal.

In a theoretical sense, civil society can be envisioned as the web of organizations operating in the political space between the state and individual citizens (Wanis-St. John and Kew 2008), whether they be community organizations, religious institutions, business, professional, etc. A three-part model suggested by Arato and Cohen (1992) explains civil society as the social interaction in-between two separate economic and state spheres.

Civil society is a collective engagement with an issue or issues, while civic engagement is an individual-level engagement with issues. One does often lead to the other; civil society engagement and social participation, such as volunteering, often leads to political participation (Gauthier 2003). Given this related nature, what is civic engagement, and how is it similar or different from civil society engagement?

Unfortunately, academic definitions do overlap these two concepts. For example, Checkoway & Aldana (2013), define civic engagement as “a process in which people take collective action to address issues of public concern.” Cicognani et. al (2012) also lists examples of civic engagement, looping together political participation, in the forms of boycotts, strikes, or by signing petitions, and non-political ways such as volunteering, community service, sports clubs and cultural associations. Some of these activities coincide with civil society organizations, such as sports clubs and cultural associations, while some are more individual level based such as the decision to boycott or sign a petition. Seemingly, civic engagement and civil society

engagement do overlap when it comes to collective actions, but civic engagement alone includes individual-level actions. Because of the considerable overlap, the majority of analysis will focus specifically on the relationship between civil society organization involvement.

For the purposes of this thesis, the term civil society will reference collective-level engagement, while civic engagement will reference individual-level engagement. To examine the relationship between both concepts and support for the Colombian peace accord, group and individual level variables will be analyzed accordingly. This thesis will consider and measure civic engagement and civil society participation by the breakdown of the table below.

Civic Engagement (Individual-level)	Civil Society Participation (Collective-level)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participation in a protest</li> <li>• Voting in local or national elections</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attending a religious organization</li> <li>• Attending a parent association</li> </ul>

*Table 1: Examples of how civic engagement and civil society participation can be measured*

#### *Conflict Exposure on Civil Society Participation*

An important variable to study in the greater context of the Colombian conflict is the impact of conflict experiences on participation in civil society. This variable is of particular interest because of the theory that those who experience and live through conflict are more likely to engage in civil society and that ultimately helps shape support for the peace process. However, the violence and destruction caused during the Colombian conflict was not spread equally throughout the country, and certain groups and regions experienced the effects of the conflict far more than others. This difference will be accounted for in the quantitative analysis.

It is important to distinguish between conflict exposure and a similar variable, victimization. By using the term conflict exposure, this will mean someone’s personal experience witnessing, or living through the armed conflict. This can be measured by participation in the conflict, losing a family member to the conflict, or becoming displaced due to the conflict.

Victimization shall be taken as a person's individual experience with victimhood, such as being the victim of a crime or personal loss.

Experience with violence will lead to higher engagement in social and political activities, according to numerous academic studies on both real-world situations and controlled experiments. In a comprehensive multi-nation analysis, the paper "Can War Foster Cooperation," (2016) analyzed 23 post-conflict papers about global conflicts, including Sierra Leone, Uganda, Nepal, Israel, and Tajikistan, to name a few. In its analysis, the authors found that across all case studies, people exposed to war violence (real or experimental) tend to exhibit more "prosocial behavior," which can be evidenced by participation in local social and civic groups, or by taking community leadership roles. Bauer et. al also found no evidence that the effects of war violence on prosocial behavior decline over time.

In a case study of the conflict in Sierra Leone, researchers tested for very specific variables, finding that people in households which had directly experienced war violence [when compared to people in households that had not] were 6.5% more likely to attend a community meeting, 2.6% more likely to vote in elections, and were more like to join in social and political groups, as well as participate in school committees (Bellows and Miguel 2009).

In another experiment with allocation games, Bauer et. al 2014 found that when compared to "nonvictims," people who were directly exposed to conflict-related violence were less selfish by 23 percentage point, and more inequality averse by 25 percentage points. In a natural experiment in Darfur, researchers found that on a micro-level conflict experiences and exposure to violence did correlate with more pro-peace attitudes and lower want to execute enemies. Conflict experiences bring both resilience and war-weariness, both of which are channeled into pro-social behavior and a want for peace (Hazlett 2019).

Branton et. al focused specifically on these variables in the context of Colombia and found that violence positively affected an individuals' level of civic and political engagement in society, meaning that people exposed to violence are more likely to become cooperative, participate in social activities, and take leadership roles in the community. By this logic, the authors argued that individuals living in conflict-affected areas would more likely develop pro-social attitudes and have a greater level of personal investment in the community.

All of these studies, whether they be on real post-conflict situations or experimental allocation games, confirmed that those who are exposed to real or experimental conflict demonstrated more "prosocial" behavior, which was seen through an increase in likelihood to engage with civil society organizations, such as community meetings (Bellows and Miguel 2009) and local social or civic groups (Bauer et. al 2016). Prosocial behavior also included individual-level civic engagement, such as increased likelihood of voting in elections.

These findings are all confirmed and further explored by Christopher Blattman (2009), in his natural study of post-violent conflict in northern Uganda. There, he studied survey data and qualitative interviews with ex-combatants of the conflict to understand the social and political participation of abducted and non-abducted Ugandan youth. Blattman found that forced recruitment resulted in a 27% increase in the likelihood of voting, and a 100% increase in the likelihood of becoming a community leader among other abductees.

Blattman measured political participation through survey questions which included questions about voting in the most recent referendum, being a community mobilizer (elected member of the community), and holding a political job (e.g. elected local councilperson). To measure community participation, the survey asked questions about membership in a community group, such as a peace group, water management committee, cultural groups, sports clubs, school

clubs, religious groups, and more. His results find that “[a]bductees who witnessed the most counts of violence are the most likely to participate politically later in life. Each additional act of violence witnessed is associated with a 4.2 percentage point increase in the probability of voting and a 2.3 percentage point increase in the probability of being a community mobilizer.” Blattman also found a significant relationship between witnessed violence and community group membership (each act of violence witnessed was associated with a 5.2 percentage point increase in group membership).

The theory he presents is that witnessed violence leads to positive political engagement because of three possible reasons: first, the aftermath of a traumatic experience can result in “post-traumatic growth,” second, individuals who experienced violence value the act of political expression, and third traumatic experiences provide real information and experience which help shape perspective of conflict and the need of collective action.

Thus, for the purposes of this thesis, I can expect to see that experience with conflict will likely be positively associated with both engagement in civil society organizations and positively associated with individual-level civic engagement.

### *Conflict Exposure and Support for Peace Processes*

Specific to conflict exposure and support for peace processes, there are two important gaps in the literature on the question of how conflict exposure impacts support for peace. First, there is a lack of consensus on “how conflict exposure might shape preferences for specific conflict-termination policies and outcomes in societies undergoing peace processes,” (Tellez 2019). The key word being “specific” since there is plenty of research on general attitudes about peace processes. Second, “there has been little systemic analysis of the specific role of civic

engagement and civil society in the context of armed conflict, and even less regarding its potentials, limitations, and critical factors” (Paffenholz and Spurk 2016). The latter gap is more of an issue, since this paper will focus on the specific roles of civic engagement and civil society, in the context of the Colombian conflict.

There is some research on this relationship, such as Branton et. al (2019), who found that support for the 2016 Colombian peace referendum increased as violence exposure increased and that support the peace agreement was higher among those who had exposure to the violence, when compared to individuals living in areas less affected by the Colombian conflict. In their recent article, Montoya and Tellez (2020) analyzed civilian preferences in Colombian peace negotiations, including variables made with “data related to victimization, conflict proximity, and attitudes towards the warring actors” (p. 260) The authors constructed an indicator used to designate different locations as “conflict zones,” and additionally looked at variables which measured different levels of personal or indirect conflict-related violence. The results of Montoya and Tellez’s study find a very significant difference between victimization variables and conflict proximity. Conflict proximity (i.e., physical proximity to armed combat) was a strong predictor of civilian attitudes on peace negotiations (could explain 25% of the attitude), whereas “victimization experiences--such as whether the respondent or those close to them were harmed, forced to leave, etc. in response to the conflict--seem to offer very little predictive power, with none breaking 10 per cent in permutation importance.” (p. 266).

Both Branton et. al and Montoya and Tellez found a positive relationship between support for the peace process and conflict exposure, and Montoya and Tellez also confirmed that the variable of victimhood had no effect on likelihood of supporting the peace process. If those who experience conflict are more likely to be involved in civil society and more likely to support

peace negotiations, then what are the opinions of other sectors of civil society on support for peace?

### *Participation in Civil Society & Civic Engagement*

What type of people or specific factors make someone more inclined to engage in civil society or become a member of a civil society organization? Similar questions worth considering are the restrictions and barriers some may face to joining civil society organizations.

Naturally, people come together with shared interests, but civil society organizations offer formal and informal methods, which cannot be replicated by government or business, for people to express their concerns, interests, and wants (Radon and Pecharroman 2017). Three possible roles of civil society include “addressing a citizen’s day-to-day need; second, by providing feedback to public authorities and thereby informing government decision makers; and third, by ensuring respect and promotion of the rights of a nation’s citizens” (Radon and Pecharroman 2017 p. 33). Not all civil society organizations must have a larger, serious, political goal in mind. As defined earlier, the CSOs come in many sizes with a variety of objectives and purposes. Nevertheless, if civil society is a way for a nation’s citizens to contribute to public discourse and democracy, and shape a community, then the people who are involved in it are those who have interest in bettering their situation. Technology and increased globalization have created “millions of civil society organizations around the world, giving rise to exciting models for citizen expression both online and offline, and generating increasing involvement in global government processes” (World Economic Forum 2013).

There are real limitations on the operations of civil society, worth mentioning. According to CIVICUS, an international non-profit dedicated to strengthening civil society, only four

percent of the world's population live in countries that have open civic space (defined as the space needed for civil society to function freely). "Restrictions on civic space disproportionately affect already vulnerable and excluded groups, such as migrants and refugees, women, indigenous people and LGBTQI people, among others" (CIVICUS 2019). These restrictions to civil society organizations are suppressed by states and non-state actors, such a paramilitary or vigilante groups. Restrictions, such as controlling web content and free speech restrictions, are increasingly occurring in countries governed by autocratic regimes but sometimes democracies swell and can be explained by "governments feeling threatened by civil society; a government's desire for order, and its fear that civil society movements or opposition could take advantage of weakness within states." (Radon and Pecharroman p. 38).

### *Civil Society Participation and Civic Engagement on Support for Peace*

Civil society can play a significant role in both the development and resolution of a conflict. These roles can range, from raising awareness of situations of injustice, to creating conditions conducive to peace talks, to setting policy agendas, securing sustainability, and treating conflicts constructively (Barnes 2009, Paffenholz 2010). Ongoing conflict makes it difficult for civil society to operate (Spurk 2010). During times of war "general security drops, impunity rises and respect for basic human rights is challenged, making civil society work more dangerous," (Losnegård 2017).

The involvement of civil society in peace negotiations or armed conflict does face resistance in governments and international organizations; historically speaking, the keeping of peace and security was a matter for the states, not substate or local groups. In the twenty-first century however, war and conflict has clearly evolved from being solely inter-state, and "the

complexity, scale and diversity of violent conflict means that no single entity, on its own, can hope to adequately address the challenge of ensuring sustainable peace” (GPPAC 2005). In fact, Nilsson’s study (2012) of inclusion of civil society actors show that nearly one third of all peace agreements in the post-Cold War period have formally included civil society actors. Other research echoes similar sentiments about governments alone lacking the ability to end conflicts (Barnes 2009). While modern governments may advocate for citizen and organization participation in peace processes, the process and negotiations themselves are often secretive and exclusive, limiting the public’s knowledge (Losnegård 2017).

Previous studies do indicate that when civil society organizations are included in peace negotiations, peace agreements are more sustainable (Nilsson 2012, Wanis St.-John and Kew 2008), and that the exclusion of non-armed, non-state actors contribute to peace agreements failing in implementation phases (Zartman 2008). Part of this failure is because without CSO engagement, then people do not have a stake in the agreement (Wanis-St. John and Kew 2008). Opportunities for civil society organizations to have a place in negotiations is extremely important for marginalized groups who may typically lack representation (Barnes 2002), and in the case of Colombia, those groups may be disproportionately affected by the conflict.

As defined above, civil society can take on a variety of forms, and represents diverse interests and values. While this diversity of interest can make it difficult to reach a peace agreement, research overwhelmingly speaks of its benefits and long-term contributions to sustainable peace. Why specifically, might engagement in civil society encourage support or a peace process?

Wanis-St. John and Kew argue that civil society groups can be democratic ““safe areas,” providing a political space where democratic values are protected and propagated to some degree,” (2008). They further state:

“The civic values promoted by civil society are important not only for supporting democracy, but as the basis of promoting peace-oriented norms across war-torn societies. If we compare democratic political-cultural values with the norms underpinning many transformative conflict resolution models, we find that they are virtually identical, such that efforts to promote one promote the other, providing the basis for the normative consensus that healthy politics require that disputes should be settled peacefully.”

In other words, Wanis-St. John and Kew theorize that civil society inherently promotes democratic values, and that democratic values go hand-in hand with promotion of peace.

Colombia has an active and vibrant civil society striving for peace. Since the conflict began several decades ago, community leaders have been targets for both the government and guerilla forces. This history is outlined in a report published by Centro de Memoria Histórica (2013), which describes the use of massacres by paramilitary groups to dissuade social mobilization. Over and over again, violence is used against important local community leaders, specifically in rural areas. The victims of the Colombian conflict are mostly civilians, and an estimated 82% of the 220,000 people killed between 1958 and 2012 were civilians.

In the 1970s and 1960s, leading Colombian civil society actors were worker’s unions and peasants’ movements (Rojas Rodríguez 2004), in the 1970s indigenous mobilizations took place (Benavidas 2009), and later in the decade and early 80s Afro-Colombian peasant associations formed (Wouters 2001). By the end of the century, NGOs and civil society peace activism were growing as well (Rojas Rodriguez 2004).

There were numerous peace attempts to end the conflict in Colombia well-before the Santos administration. The first noted attempt was under the administration of President Betancur (1982-1986), followed by the Barco administration (1986-1990). During these years, civil society discussed alternatives to violence, and marches and forums took place (Erlingsson 2013). Yet talks with FARC and ELN failed under the Gaviria administration (1990-1994), and the military solution was used. Matallana (2018) follows the development of two major peace societies during this time period, Redepaz (Rede Nacional De Iniciativas Ciudadanas por la Paz y Contra la Guerra) and Ruta (Ruta Pacifica de las Mujeres), which were given rise after FARC and ELN abandoned negotiations in the 90s. Redepaz was successful as a national civic pact of peace, and it used bottom-up peacebuilding strategies to “consolidate civic resistance against violence and enable people to engage in democracy and participate in politics at the local level” (Matallana 2018). Unfortunately, members of the organization were violently attacked in “a wave of murders, forced displacements, and kidnappings” in attempts to disrupt its successful participatory democratization processes. Ruta members also faced threats and pressure from armed actors but remained adherent to their work on local mobilization on anti-violence despite the risks. Possibility of assassination is very real for human rights defenders, leaders of civil society, and members of victim organizations. Nevertheless, the Redepaz network and Ruta and played a significant role in the current peace process with the Santos administration through organization of parades, advocating for the negotiations, and served as an alliance between the government and civil society (Matallana 2018). These two organizations are among many in Colombia which focus on local bottom-up initiatives. Do the plethora of civil society organizations hold up to frameworks of peacebuilding?

In her work, Erlingsson (2013) tests a seven-part model of peacebuilding against the Colombian case. Her model, originally developed by Paffenholz and Spurk (2012) uses interviews to argue that Colombian civil society performs all the functions of peacebuilding-- "protection, monitoring, advocacy and public communication, in-group socialization, social cohesion, facilitation/mediation and service delivery

The initial preamble of the cease-fire (General Agreement for an End to the Conflict and the Construction of a Stable and Long-Lasting Peace) actually underscored the importance of civil society in the conflict's end, stating that "peacebuilding concerns society as a whole and requires participation by all those involved, without distinctions, including other guerilla organizations whom we invite to join in this effort" (Zambrano and Isa 2013). The ceasefire agreement mentioned civil society at multiple points, and FARC representatives were the most supportive of civil society presence at the negotiation table (Zambrano and Isa 2013). There are also notable successes in the agreement, stemming from civil society participation which include references to rights of LGBTI groups and emphasis on women's representation (Cóbar et. al 2018).

Clearly, civil social organizations clearly played a role in the peace process, but countless academic research argues the level of engagement was not enough, and in consequence was one of the reasons why the referendum embarrassingly failed.

There are several explanations pertaining to civil society and the failure of the 2016 referendum. One explanation argued it was polarization and regional dynamics and distrust between civil society and the state which hampered real efforts for peacebuilding (Erlingsson 2013). Another popular theory argues the peace negotiations were too secretive for too long, and

the confidentiality between the Santos government and FARC allowed a public information vacuum to be filled with disinformation (Amaral 2019).

Part of the complexities of the Colombian conflict can be attributed to the number of actors involved, which partially explains the difficulty for a negotiation to be reached (González 2004). The diversity of actors, including the wide range of civil society organizations, reflects the diversity of Colombia. Imagined in *El Espectador*, “It is no use participating in a forum composed of 1,200 members, each of whom holds a different opinion regarding rural development. That is a Pandora’s box.” (Zambrano and Isa 2013).

### *Research Design*

The research question then, asks if the people who are disengaged from civil society more likely to be critical of the government and attempts for peace negotiations? Or is it those who are most engaged who are critical of the government?

### *Hypotheses*

#### *Conflict Exposure*

- a. Exposure to conflict is positively associated with engagement in civil society organizations.
- b. Exposure to conflict is positively associated with personal civic engagement.

#### *Civic Engagement*

- a. Civic engagement is positively associated with attitudes towards the peace process.

#### *Civil Society Involvement*

- a. Civil society involvement is positively associated with attitudes towards the peace process.

### *Data and Measurement*

The data I use is from Vanderbilt University's Latin American Public Opinion Project, specifically the Americas Barometer 2016/2017 set. This public survey data set was collected between August 3, 2016 and October 29, 2016, which is within the time frame of the Colombian peace referendum, which occurred on October 2, 2016. LAPOP researchers used a probability sample design of voting-adults, conducting a total of 1,563 face-to-face interviews conducted in Spanish. The survey was asked across the entire country, and it was stratified across Colombia's six main geographical regions--in this survey data specifically 1,232 respondents were sampled from urban areas whereas 331 were from rural areas.

After selecting which households, one respondent from each household was chosen based on a frequency matching program which considered gender and age, and the permanence of the members living in the house (excluded visiting person).

My analytical approach will be to use a regression analysis to model the causal relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variable. A linear regression is used to measure the effect of each independent variable on the dependent variable. For all three hypotheses I use separate linear regression models.

The variables “Conflict Exposure,” “Civic Engagement” and “Civil Society Engagement” are additive scales. In other words, for each concept multiple questions are relevant, and rather than have several independent or dependent variables, the possible scaled scores are all added together, comprising a larger scale for measuring one’s exposure to conflict or one’s engagement with civil society.

The variable “**Conflict Exposure**,” will be measured on a 6-point scale, ranging from 0 (no exposure to conflict) to 5 (highest exposure to conflict). The scaled survey questions incorporated in the making of this new variable are:

- “Have you lost a family member or relative to the armed conflict?”
- “Have you had a family member leave the country due to the conflict?”
- “Was a family member displaced due to the conflict?”
- “Have you had a family member kidnapped due to the conflict?”
- “Have you had a family member stripped of land due to the conflict?”

Each of these questions was responded to with a simple yes or no. In this additive scale, a “no” answer will equate to 0, while a “yes” will equal 1.

The variable “**Civic Engagement**” will be measured on a 3-point scale, ranging from 0 (no civic engagement) to 2 (high civic engagement). The scaled survey questions incorporated in the making of this new variable are:

- “In the last 12 months, have you participated in a protest?”
- “Did you vote in the last presidential election in 2014”
- “Did you vote in the last local elections in October 2015?”

Each of these questions was responded to with a simple yes or no. In this additive scale, a “no” answer will equate to 0, while a “yes” will equal 1.

The variable “**Civil Society Engagement**” will be measured on a 21 point scale, ranging from 0 (no engagement with civil society) to 20 (maximum engagement with civil society) . The scaled survey questions incorporated in the making of this new variable are:

- “How often do you attend meetings for religious organizations?”
- “How often do you attend meetings for parent associations?”<sup>2</sup>
- “How often do you attend meetings of community involvement groups?”
- “How often do you attend meetings of political movements or parties?”
- “How often do you attend meetings of women’s groups?”
- “How often do you attend meetings of community action boards?”
- “How often do you attend meetings of groups that promote peace?”

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<sup>2</sup> Whether or not to incorporate this question was discussed. Initially, there were concerns over how age fit into this question, such as someone of old age may not have children in school, or in contrast, someone of young age may not be old enough to have children. Technically if someone has no children, they will score a 0 on this variable alone, which is not incorrect.

Each of these variables separately was initially coded on a scale of 1 = never, 2 = once or twice a year, 3 = once or twice a month, and 4 = once a week. However, all were re-coded into a scale of 0-3, with 0 meaning never.

The variable “**Support of the peace agreement**” is measured on a seven-point scale ranging from 1 to 7, intended to measure peoples’ attitudes toward peace. Survey respondents were asked this question:

- “The government of President Juan Manuel Santos and the FARC signed a peace agreement. To what extent do you support this peace agreement?””

Their answers were coded 1-7 based on their response signifying 1 = Not at all; to 7 = A lot.

In each separate analysis, the control variables of gender, age, skin color, income, and urban/rural will be accounted for.

Control Variable	Survey Measurement Scale
Gender	1 = Male; 2=Female
Age	Measured in years of age the respondent is
Skin tone	1= “Very Light” to 11= “Very Dark” * <i>skin tone is measured by placing the respondent’s hand next to a measuring color palate.</i>
Income	Measured on a scale from 0 (no income) to 16 (highest income)
Urban/Rural	1 = “Urban”, 2= “Rural”

*Table 1: Survey measurement scale for each control variable*

*Issue I: Conflict Exposure & Civil Society Engagement*

1) Dependent variable: Civil Society Engagement

Independent variable: Conflict Exposure

Control variables: Gender, Age, Skin tone, Income, Urban/Rural

2) Dependent variable: Civic Engagement

Independent variable: Conflict Exposure

Control variables: Gender, Age, Skin tone, Income, Urban/Rural

*Issue II: Civic Engagement & Support for Peace*

Dependent variable: Support for Peace

Independent variable: Civic Engagement

Control variables: Gender, Age, Skin tone, Income, Urban/Rural

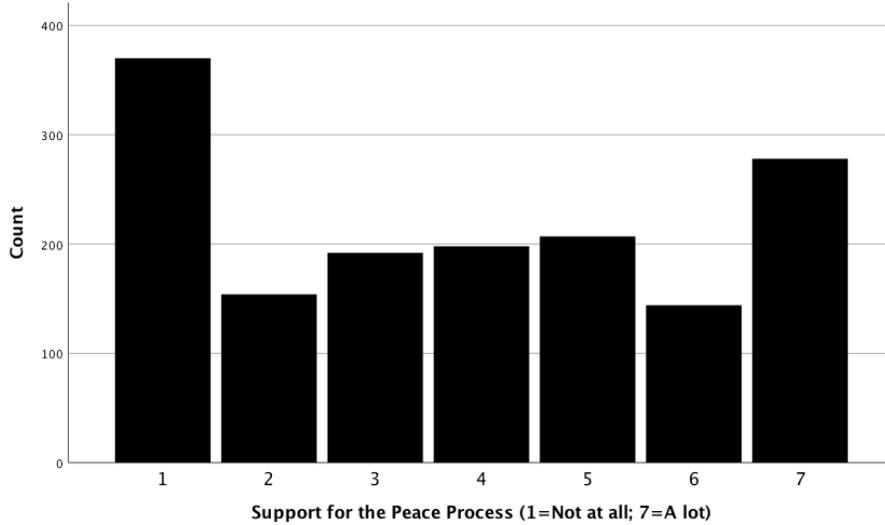
*Issue III: Civil Society Engagement & Support for Peace*

Dependent variable: Support for Peace

Independent variable: Civil Society Engagement

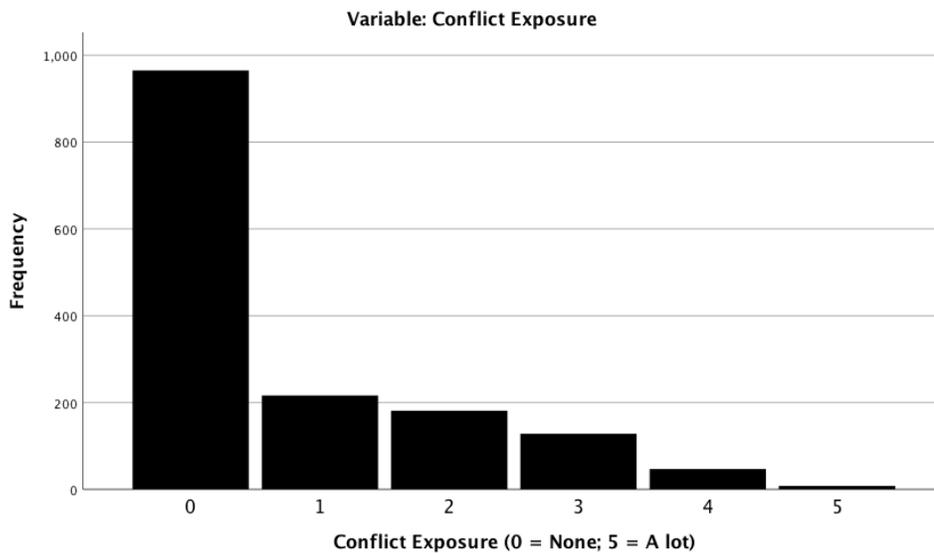
Control variables: Gender, Age, Skin tone, Income, Urban/Rural

Before conducting the regression, I thought useful to see central tendency and degree of variation among the dependent variable. Included below is a simple bar chart of the dependent variable, Support of the Peace Agreement, depicting the survey respondent's support for the peace process (Fig. 1). As seen in the chart, there is not a significant skew either way, although several respondents chose the strongest answers (either in support (7) or nonsupport (1)).

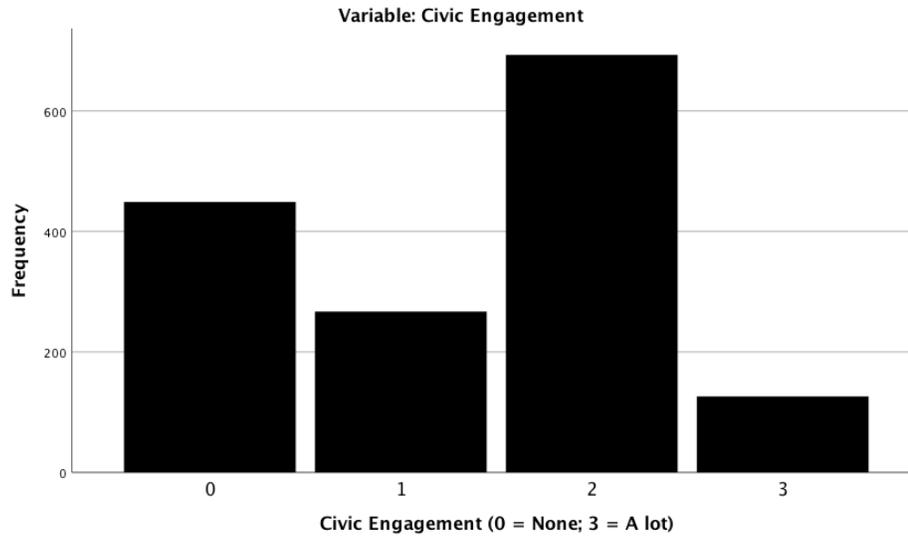


*Fig. 1.: Support for the peace process by count*

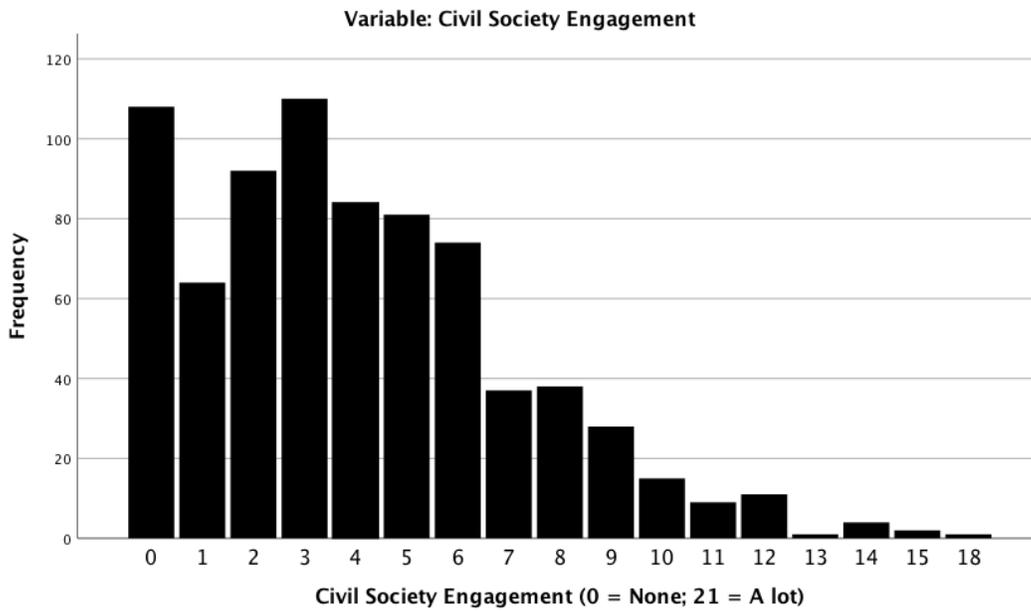
Additional descriptive statistics may be useful to understand just how strong or weak conflict exposure, civic engagement, and civil society engagement was among the survey respondents. Below are the frequencies of three variables: Conflict Exposure, Civic Engagement, and Civil Society Engagement:



*Fig. 2: Conflict exposure by count*



*Fig. 3: Civic engagement by count*



*Fig. 4: Civil society engagement by count*

These frequency charts give a clearer picture about trends among respondents. Figure 2 reveals that the majority of respondents had little to no conflict exposure based on the five questions used to compose the additive scale. Overwhelmingly, respondents answered no to all 5 questions,

and the frequency graph skews heavily right. Figure 3 shows no clear pattern, showing that a majority of respondents scored 2 on the 4-point scale measuring civic engagement, with the second largest category being 0 (no civic engagement), while Figure 4 shows a right skew, with the majority of respondents within the 0-6 range when measured on civil society engagement. Although the scale measured to 21, no respondents scored that maximum.

*Analysis: Issue I*

The linear regression model produced when measuring the impact of conflict exposure on civic engagement was:

$$[\text{Civic Engagement}] = \beta_0 + \beta_1*[\text{Conflict Exposure}] + \beta_2*[\text{gender}] + \beta_3*[\text{age}] + \beta_4*[\text{skin tone}] + \beta_5*[\text{income}] + \beta_5*[\text{urban/rural}]$$

The results of the regression analysis can be seen below:

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Coefficient estimate</b>	<b>Standard Error</b>
(Constant)	0.648***	0.178
Conflict Exposure	0.129***	0.022
Gender	-0.024	0.054
Age	0.013***	0.002
Skin tone	-0.015	0.015
Income	0.003	0.006
Urban/Rural	0.130*	0.068
*: p<0.1; **: p<0.05; ***p<0.01		

*Table 2: Regression Results Measuring Conflict Exposure on Civic Engagement*

The linear regression model produced when measuring the impact of conflict exposure on civil society engagement was:

$$[\text{Civil Society Engagement}] = \beta_0 + \beta_1*[\text{Conflict Exposure}] + \beta_2*[\text{gender}] + \beta_3*[\text{age}] + \beta_4*[\text{skin tone}] + \beta_5*[\text{income}] + \beta_5*[\text{urban/rural}]$$

The results of the regression analysis can be seen below:

Variables	Coefficient estimate	Standard Error
(Constant)	2.930***	0.697
Conflict Exposure	0.414***	0.102
Gender*	—	—
Age	0.012	0.009
Skin tone	0.057	0.068
Income	-0.074***	0.028
Urban/Rural	0.664**	0.317
*: p<0.1; **: p<0.05; ***:p<0.01		

*Table 3: Regression Results Measuring Conflict Exposure on Civil Society Engagement*

So, what do these results mean?

Both Tables 2 & 3 show the regression results when measuring the impact of conflict exposure on one’s civic engagement and one’s civil society engagement respectively. In other words, the regression measures how great (or little) a dependent variable has on the independent variable. According the results of the first regression, shown in Table 2, the additive variable “Conflict Exposure,” measured by the six-point scale is statistically significant at the highest level (p< 0.01). Of the control variables, age was also statistically significant at the 0.01 level, while urban/rural location was statistically significant at the 0.1 level. This specific regression

equation reveals that the variable Conflict Exposure does positively impact one’s Civic Engagement (the positive correlation can be seen via the positive coefficient estimate, meaning that an increase in Conflict Exposure will positively increase one’s Civic Engagement level). This supports the first hypothesis, which states that “exposure to conflict is positively associated with engagement in civil society organizations.”

Table 3 shows the impact of Conflict Exposure on Civil Society Engagement. In this regression, the variables Conflict Exposure and Income were statistically significant at the lowest level ( $p < 0.01$ ), while urban/rural location was statistically significant at the  $p < 0.05$  level. There was an issue with the data in analyzing the impact of gender, and the SPSS software used in this analysis rejected the variable in this analysis. However, conflict exposure was positive and statistically significant, meaning that the second hypothesis was also supported: “exposure to conflict is positively associated with personal civic engagement.”

*Analysis: Issue II*

The linear regression model produced when measuring the impact of civic engagement on support for the peace process was:

$$[\text{Support for Peace}] = \beta_0 + \beta_1*[\text{Civic Engagement}] + \beta_2*[\text{gender}] + \beta_3*[\text{age}] + \beta_4*[\text{skin tone}] + \beta_5*[\text{income}] + \beta_5*[\text{urban/rural}]$$

The results of the regression analysis can be seen below:

Variables	Coefficient estimate	Standard Error
(Constant)	2.664***	0.400
Civic Engagement	0.298***	0.061
Gender	-0.211*	0.121

Age	0.012***	0.004
Skin tone	0.076**	0.033
Income	-0.006	0.014
Urban/Rural	0.328**	0.152
*: p<0.1; **: p<0.05; ***p<0.01		

*Table 4: Regression Results Measuring Civic Engagement on Support for Peace*

This regression shows that civic engagement and age were statistically significant variables on support for the peace process at the most significant level ( $p < 0.01$ ), while skin tone and urban/rural were significant at the second level ( $p < 0.05$ ) and gender was significant at the highest level. These results show a positive and statistically significant relationship between civic engagement and support for the peace process, thus supporting the third hypothesis: “civic engagement is positively associated with attitudes towards the peace process.”

*Analysis: Issue III*

The linear regression model produced when measuring the impact of civil society engagement on support for the peace process was:

$$[\text{Support for Peace}] = \beta_0 + \beta_1*[\text{Civil Society Engagement}] + \beta_2*[\text{gender}] + \beta_3*[\text{age}] + \beta_4*[\text{skin tone}] + \beta_5*[\text{income}] + \beta_6*[\text{urban/rural}]$$

The results of the regression analysis can be seen below:

Variables	Coefficient estimate	Standard Error
(Constant)	1.097**	0.481
Civil Society Engagement	0.193***	0.027
Gender*		

Age	0.014**	0.006
Skin tone	0.116**	0.047
Income	0.036*	0.020
Urban/Rural	0.504**	0.218
*: p<0.1; **: p<0.05; ***p<0.01		

*Table 5: Regression Results Measuring Civil Society Engagement on Support for Peace*

Additionally, included is a regression analysis of each individual variable which was incorporated into the additive “Civil Society Engagement.”

Variables	Coefficient estimate	Standard Error
(Constant)	1.163**	0.499
Attending religious org.	0.157**	0.068
Attending parent org.	0.148	0.092
Attending community involvement org.	0.240*	0.137
Attending political org.	0.190	0.193
Attending women’s org.	0.210*	0.111
Attending community action org.	0.144	0.134
Attending peace org.	0.340**	0.157
Gender*	—	—
Age	0.014**	0.006
Skin tone	0.119**	0.047
Income	0.035**	0.020
Urban/Rural	0.509**	0.221

*: p<0.1; **: p<0.05; ***p<0.01		
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*Table 6: Separated Regression Results Measuring Various Civil Society Engagement on Support for Peace*

In this final regression, no variable was found to be statistically significant at the 0.01 level, however attending a religious organization, attending a peace organization, age, skin tone, income, and urban/rural were all found to be statistically significant at the 0.05 level. Attending a community involvement organization and attending a women’s organization were both found to be statistically significant at the 0.01 level. Table 5 was used to show the combined effect of civil society organization involvement, while Table 6 broke down that additive category to show the individual effect of each organization, giving a better picture of the true effect, since clearly the impact of each type of organization differs. Based upon the results in Table 5, with the more broad “civil society engagement” variable being statistically significant at the 0.01 level, the fourth and final hypothesis is also supported: “civil society involvement is positively associated with attitudes towards the peace process.”

## *Conclusion*

All four hypotheses were supported, after creating additive variables to combine multiple survey questions on the 2016 Colombian LAPOP data set. Based upon the analysis section, greater conflict exposure positively impacts one's engagement in civic society and in civil society organizations, and both those engagements in turn positively impact one's support for the 2016 Colombian peace accord.

This analysis is but a brief beginning on variables which have been, and can be, studied far more in-depth specific to the Colombian peace accord. As stated earlier, understanding which social groups have positive (or negative) impact on a group's opinion of peace processes can be useful in implementing future peace strategies, such as helping a peace maker further explore the concerns or hesitations of that group.

The data set studied had plenty of useful variables to consider, however if running these analyses again, I would look to find other data sets about civic engagement and civil society engagement to complement this set. The topics are undoubtedly broad and would be more beneficial to narrow down types of organizations or other forms of civic engagement, to better understand the actual impact on support for the peace process.

It would additionally be worth studying the change in these variables after the next set of LAPOP data comes out, or more generally, the impact of civil society engagement. In Colombia, assassinations of social movement leaders have been increasing at unexpected rates (in 2016, lethal violence took the lives of approximately 166 social movement leaders, in 2017 the violence took the lives of 185 leaders, and by 2018 an estimated 284 social movement leaders were killed (Rozo and Ball 2019). This targeting of social leaders has not gone unnoticed and is a

source of protests and public discontent. It is possible that this phenomenon has not affected the variables in this study at all, although it is worth discussion.

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