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The Role of Education in the Reintegration of Ex-Combatants in Colombia

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FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

THE ROLE OF EDUCATION IN THE REINTEGRATION
OF EX-COMBATANTS IN COLOMBIA

By

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ARN	Agencia Colombiana para la Reincorporación y la Normalización (Colombian Agency for Reincorporation and Normalization), former Agencia Colombiana para la Reintegración (ACR)
AUC	Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia)
CNMH	Centro Nacional de Memoria Historica (National Center for Historical Memory)
CONPES	Consejo Nacional de Política Económica y Social (National Council of Economic and Social Policy)
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration
ELN	Ejército de Liberación Nacional (National Liberation Army)
EU	European Union
FARC	Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia)
GTZ	German Organization for Technical Cooperation
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MAPP-OEA	Misión de Apoyo al Proceso de Paz de la Organización de los Estados Americanos (OEA) (Mission to Support the Peace Process in Colombia of the Organization of the American States (OAS))
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
ODDR	Observatorio de Procesos de DDR (Observatory of DDR processes)
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PPR	Programa de Paz y Reconciliación de la Alcaldía de Medellín (Peace and Reconciliation Programme of the Medellín Mayor's Office)
PRSE	Política Nacional de Reintegración Social y Económica de Grupos Armados Ilegales (National Policy of Economic and Social Reintegration of Illegal Armed Groups)
SENA	Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje (National Training Service)
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNDPKO	United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations
UNESCO- UNEVOC	International Center for Technical and Vocational Education and Training of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
USAID	US Agency for International Development

ABSTRACT

Reintegration programs promote technical and vocational education and training (TVET) for ex-combatants, with the aim of helping them develop skills, assume new social roles, and gain community acceptance. This in-depth interview study with ex-combatants from Colombia participating in TVET examined the reasons and motivations they had for enrolling in technical education, and their perceptions of whether and how TVET contributed to their social reintegration, a critical factor in preventing further violence. Findings about ex-combatants' reasons and motivations illustrated that through education, participants seek to be respected and recognized, set an example for their children, experience a moral transformation, and develop autonomy. These findings suggest that TVET's assumptions that ex-combatants are only motivated by material factors such as money and employment are too reductionist. Further, findings about the role of education in the social reintegration of ex-combatants illustrated that some forms of TVET promoted psychosocial recovery, and built social support. Conversely, other types reinforced isolation and segregation. This study further found that TVET overlooked ex-combatants' feelings of stigmatization and limitations to socializing imposed by violent contexts. These findings suggest the need to complement educational programs for economic development with approaches that develop social bonds and trust between ex-combatants and their communities.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In any post-conflict contexts and fragile states, one of the main challenges to achieving stabilization is the reintegration of ex-combatants with low education levels into civilian society. In Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) processes, reintegration is the phase through which ex-combatants should acquire civilian status, gain sustainable employment and income (United Nations, 2006), shift from their combatant identities and behaviors into civilian identities and peaceful behaviors (Torjesen 2013), and gain community acceptance (Bowd & Özerdem 2013). This long-term process is considered critical to sustainable peacebuilding, but also the most difficult part of DDR (Humphreys & Weinstein, 2005). To respond to this challenge, international development agencies and governments have implemented technical and vocational education and training (TVET), with the idea that employment-focused education will foster pro-social attitudes, relieve poverty, and contribute to political stability (United Nations, 2014).

Overview of the Literature

In DDR, there is little agreement about the conceptual definition of social reintegration. However, various empirical studies have interpreted it as reconciliation (Theidon, 2007), economic reintegration (Özerdem, 2012), ex-combatants' involvement in community organizations (Kaplan & Nussio, 2015), and acceptance of ex-combatants by families and neighbors (Pugel, 2007). Educational programs for reintegration presuppose that TVET has the capacity to contribute to each of these aspects of social reintegration. Support for these programs is based on various arguments. The first is that in educational institutions and workplaces, ex-combatants will interact with different social groups, and contact and dialogue will foster mutual

understanding, examination of stereotypes, and build trust (ILO et al., 2016). Second, employment programs will help address grievances that were root causes of conflict, such as injustice and exclusion. The third assumption is that legal livelihoods will decrease ex-combatants' incentives to re-engage in violence and crime (ILO et al., 2016; Simpson, 2018). Finally, if ex-combatants contribute to economic development, the assumption is that local communities will accept them (UN, 2006).

Despite optimism about the potential of TVET programs, scholars have problematized each of these arguments. Some have explained that to achieve reconciliation, contact alone is insufficient, because reconciliation requires addressing past truths, present tensions, and setting up systems for transitional justice, forgiveness and psychosocial healing (Novelli, Lopes-Cardozo, & Smith, 2017). Regarding expectations that TVET will contribute to the redistribution of resources and address grievances, researchers have shown that on the ground, and with limited exceptions like in Liberia (Blattman & Anna, 2016), programs have often reproduced the inequalities they intended to address. For some, the educational policies are sound, but poor design and implementation lead to failures (Colleta, Kostner, & Wiederhofer, 1996; Jennings, 2007). For others, policies that seek to reduce poverty and adapt ex-combatants to the existing economic order, but do not address structural inequalities and exclusions, are the real problem because they reproduce injustices and frustrations (McMullin, 2013; Lopes-Cardozo & Shah, 2016). For still others, challenges lie with the environmental constraints that characterize post-conflict contexts such as state weakness, a destroyed economy, and lack of functional institutions (Paris, 2004; Porto, Parsons, & Alden, 2007). Scholars have also questioned if legal employment actually decreases recidivism, showing that some forms of violence, including ideological, do not respond to income and employment (Blattman & Ralston, 2015). Some studies have revealed

that ex-combatants and disengaged youth are motivated more by sociocultural aspirations such as being recognized and respected (Mercy Corps, 2015; King, 2018), or embodying violent masculine identities (Theidon, 2009), than by money. Community-based reintegration scholars and practitioners have also argued that reintegration programs should target both ex-combatants and communities affected by conflict to promote development on both sides, and to dispel the idea that fighters are rewarded while victims are left behind (SIDDR, 2006).

Despite these studies, little is known about individual-level factors, such as reasons and motivations, that influence ex-combatants' decisions to engage in TVET, and whether ex-combatants find access to TVET useful in building new social networks. Extending Torjesen's theory of ex-combatant reintegration based on the perspectives and trajectories of stakeholders (2013), this in-depth interview study focused on ex-combatants' individual perspectives and experiences to examine the perceived effects of TVET interventions on their socialization.

Torjesen (2013) calls to conceptualize reintegration as an issue of identity, behavior, and network transformations that are influenced by socio-cultural, economic, and political contexts. This scholar has problematized the UN's definition of reintegration as the provision of assistance to help ex-combatants acquire civilian status and gain sustainable employment and income (UN, 2006), because it emphasizes the institutional support instead of ex-combatants' transformations.

Description of Proposed Study

Drawing on six months of fieldwork, and through in-depth, qualitative interviews (Creswell, 2013), this dissertation sought to address this gap. Centering in the voices of ex-combatants in Colombia at various stages of TVET engagement—including those in training and graduated—this research illuminated the different meanings they attributed to their education, described how these meanings influenced decision-making and behaviors (Hall, 2003), and

investigated what role, if any, access to and participation in a TVET program played in developing new social networks.

The specific questions this study answered were:

(1) What meaning does access to education have for ex-combatants who are participating in or graduated from a Colombian technical and vocational (TVET) institution, specifically regarding their reintegration process?

(2) What role, if any, does participation in TVET as an institution play in developing ex-combatants' new social supports and networks to facilitate their reintegration?

This study is a response to the growing need to put ex-combatants at the center of research to better understand their diverse perspectives, challenges, and trajectories as a way to identify how to improve programs (Torjesen, 2013), and how to better support reincorporation processes.

Colombia has been selected as the context for this research because its civil war has been the lengthiest armed conflict in the western hemisphere (CNMH, 2013). In addition, over the last sixteen years the government has demobilized more than 70,000 ex-combatants from guerrilla and self-defense militias (ARN, 2018). The 2008 Colombian reintegration policy includes remedial education, and establishes TVET training as a condition to receive grants for microbusiness (CONPES 3554, 2008). This dissertation will inform policy and practice aimed at preventing recidivism and repairing past marginalization through education.

Significance of the Study

There are different reasons why a better understanding of how ex-combatants respond to TVET interventions, and how they do or do not establish social links through education, is important in countries transitioning from war to post-conflict. First, TVET programs have the

potential to rehabilitate ex-combatants, open opportunities to them for legal work, and deter them from crime and violence (Blattaman & Annan, 2016). Participation in TVET programs can also help to develop feelings of inclusion in the community. Therefore, exploring ex-combatants' goals, how to motivate them to enroll in and finish TVET programs, and how to shape these programs to make them relevant to participants is of utmost importance.

Effective social reintegration of ex-combatants may limit the recurrence of conflict. Social networks with community members may help ex-combatants feel accepted, envision a positive future, open possibilities to engage in civilian activities, and reduce risks of re-engagement in armed groups as a means of protection and inclusion (Kaplan & Nussio, 2015; Özerdem, 2012; Nussio, 2011). Despite TVET implementation efforts, programs have not had the expected results in facilitating ex-combatants' reintegration (Humphrey & Weinstein, 2005). The bottom-up approach of this study, often missing in policy-centered DDR literature, helps illuminate the drivers and obstacles of ex-combatants' social reintegration and contributes information useful in shaping educational programs to better respond to participants' needs.

At the educational level, this focus on the social sphere of TVET brings a new perspective to reintegration, because studies about education's potential for contributing to socialization, peacebuilding, political participation, and reconciliation following conflict have mostly been focused on schools (Bellino, Paulson, & Worden, 2017); studies on TVET have instead focused on evaluating whether the programs raise income and employment (UNESCO-UNIVOC, 2007). By connecting TVET goals with social reintegration, this study offers a more holistic approach, and makes a call to explore the potential of TVET to contribute to social cohesion in divided societies.

In terms of the impact of education in post-conflict, this study of the role of education in the reintegration of ex-combatants in Colombia is context-specific. However, the Colombian experience could provide valuable information for future reintegration programs around the world. As McMullin (2013) explains, in the realm of reintegration, each new case is influenced by the case that preceded it. In Colombia, reintegration programs have been implemented during an ongoing armed conflict. Findings under these conditions could be useful to nations such as Afghanistan and the Philippines, which are implementing reintegration processes during ongoing hostilities (Kaplan & Nussio, 2018).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study examined how ex-combatants understand their reintegration process via educational programs. It addressed the gap in the literature by identifying the different meanings ex-combatants, at different stages of TVET engagement, attributed to their education. It described how these meanings influenced decision-making and behaviors and investigated what role, if any, access to and participation in a TVET program played in developing new social networks.

This chapter is organized into five sections: (1) main concepts, (2) the role of TVET in reintegration and post-conflict reconstruction, (3) TVET in reintegration processes worldwide, (4) TVET in reintegration processes in Colombia and comparison with other countries, and (5) theoretical framework. I start the first section defining four main concepts: DDR processes, ex-combatant, social reintegration, and TVET. Then, the section will explain the arguments that support TVET in reintegration processes around the world, the criticism to those arguments, and empirical studies that support both sides. The third part of the chapter will describe some of the TVET programs that have been implemented worldwide during the last two decades. The fourth section will introduce the characteristics of TVET programming for reintegration in Colombia, and will end discussing similarities and differences with other countries. This chapter will conclude by introducing the theoretical framework and explaining the definition of reintegration from Torjesen's perspective.

Defining Main Concepts

Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Processes

From the end of the Cold War in 1989 to the present, civil wars have emerged worldwide as the most recurrent type of conflicts (Kaldor, 2007). From 1999-2008, 35 countries across multiple regions experienced armed conflicts that resulted in the deaths of 2 million children (UNESCO, 2011). In 2017, 68.5 million people were forcibly displaced by persecution, conflict, or generalized violence (UNHCR, 2017). Civil wars destroy social cohesion, create barriers to personal and collective development, affect economic growth, reinforce inequalities and poverty, and become serious obstacles to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (UNICEF, 2011). In the current context of global political, economic, military, and cultural interconnectedness, these wars threaten international security and political stability (Collier, Elliot, Hegre, Reuna-Querol, & Sambanis, 2003). However, civil wars also present opportunities to reshape the future by restructuring sociopolitical hierarchies, redistributing power, rectifying inequalities, recognizing cultural diversity, and including marginalized groups (Dupuy, 2008).

To transition from war to peacebuilding, combatants from illegal armed groups should lay down their arms and reintegrate into society. Over the past 30 years, disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programs have been designed and implemented to respond to these challenges (UN, 2006, 2014, 2016). The United Nations Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration standards defines disarming as the collection, documentation, and control of weapons; demobilization as the planned discharge of active combatants from armed forces; and reintegration as the provision of support to help ex-combatants “acquire a civilian status and gain sustainable employment and income” (UN, 2006, p.2). In 2007, nineteen reintegration programs were implemented in Africa, Latin America, and

Asia, 1.1 million ex-combatants participated in those programs, and \$1,599 billion were invested (ECP, 2008). Reintegration involves a network of international and local actors, and interactions among them. By 2011, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations (UNDPKO) were supporting reintegration efforts in 22 countries, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in nine, and the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) in fifteen. Other international actors that participate in the design and implementation of reintegration processes are the World Bank, the European Union (EU), the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and the International Labour Organization (ILO). These processes also include state development agencies, such as the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and the German Organization for Technical Cooperation (GTZ). At the local level, actors such as community leaders, the private sector, and government leaders also play important roles (McMullin, 2013).

In the past, DDR were implemented after the signature of peace agreements, and in transitional and post-conflict phases. Currently, DDR is increasingly undertaken during ongoing conflicts (CCDDR, 2009). Over the past years, DDR policies and programs have changed in scope and focus. At the beginning, short-term interventions were only focused on ex-combatants and sought to achieve stabilization. Today, policies promote longer interventions, and recognize the need to involve communities within the process, making them beneficiaries of reintegration programs (DPKO, 2010). Regarding the reintegration component of DDR, there is a debate about the scope of programs. For some, reintegration should be a period to assist ex-combatants in their transition to society; this requires, at first, provisional economic support and short-term allowances to cover food, clothing, and shelter, access to health services, and provision of short-term education. Here, education is considered a central component to equip ex-combatants with

skills that allow them to gain legal employment (Porto, Parson, & Alden, 2007). For example, some countries have allowed TVET to prepare ex-combatants to contribute to the reconstruction of state infrastructure. For scholars, policymakers, and implementers that share this idea of reintegration, deep social change addressing the root causes of conflict are beyond the scope of DDR programs (CCDDR, 2009). Presently, the majority of the programs are designed around short-term assistance and disarmament (UN, 2014). However, for other scholars, programs should not focus solely on ex-combatants, but promote development through economic, social, and political transformations. For them, reintegration should include structural reforms such as land reforms, an equal distribution of resources and income, and the creation of a representative political system in which ex-combatants could participate (McMullin, 2013). Despite different approaches, there is an agreement that reintegration is the most difficult phase of DDR processes (Humphreys & Weinstein, 2005), but also the most critical process for achieving a successful transition from conflict to peacebuilding, and to prevent a relapse into violence (UN, 2014).

Ex-Combatants

The UN defines ex-combatants as people who, after having been a member of a national army or an irregular military organization, decide to lay down their weapons in participation with Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reincorporation processes (UN, 2006). This category includes a heterogeneous group of people who played different roles during the war, such as active participation in military activities and hostilities, involvement in recruiting or training military personnel, and those who held a decision-making position within an armed organization. The category also includes fighters from various contexts, types of military organizations, ideologies, ages, genders, levels of post-war disability, ethnicities, and levels of educational or professional attainment (McMullin, 2013). Beyond UN parameters, some academics have

expressed the need to include irregular members of armed groups in this category in order to offer more opportunities for reintegration. Women without weapons who have been involved in the armed groups as cooks, porters, administrators, spies, partners, and sex slaves (Bouta et al., 2005) would particularly benefit from inclusion in this category. However, other academics have argued that the needs of this second group differ from the needs of ex-combatants and their families, thus, specific reintegration processes should be crafted for them (Nilsson, 2005).

After disarmament, ex-combatants face multiple challenges such as human capital loss, because the skills they developed for war are not helpful to thrive socially and economically in peacetimes, and because this population is usually characterized by low education, low market skills, and lack of working experience. Ex-combatants also face eroded social capital and cohesion. Broken links between ex-combatants and their broader community are due to resentment and social stigma. A third challenge ex-combatants experience is insufficient productive asset after losing their source of income, and lacking access to capital, land, technology, or markets (CCDDR, 2007). Ex-combatants who were exposed to violence could also have mental health problems such as post-traumatic stress disorder (Betancourt et al., 2010a; Maedl et al., 2010), anxiety (Betancourt et al., 2010b), and substance abuse (Odenwald et al., 2009), as well as physical impairments. Educational programs for reintegration presuppose that TVET has the capacity to contribute to each of these aspects, developing in ex-combatants the needed skills to enter into the job market, helping them establish new social networks and supports, facilitating employment to have a legal source of income, and facilitating individual psychological healing with appropriate forms of counseling alongside training (UN, 2006).

In the literature, ex-combatants are usually discussed in two ways: as victims or as threats. The first category addresses ex-combatants as victims of forced recruitment (Betancourt

et al., 2010b), or as being driven to join armed forces by poverty or persecution (Jennings, 2018). The second category understands ex-combatants as people who, due to war experiences, have developed a predisposition toward aggression, immoral attitudes (Hecker et al., 2012), or difficulty establishing social relationships outside the armed group (Nussio & Oppenheim, 2014). Each concept will determine a different approach to reincorporation. If ex-combatants are defined as victims, interventions are designed to provide them with opportunities to compensate for past exclusions, involve communities in the reintegration process, and build new and inclusive social contracts in which both former combatant and community needs are met (Özerdem, 2012; Porto et al., 2007). This proposal requires long-term assistance to support a continuous socioeconomic and political process of development (UNDPKO, 2010). In the case of ex-combatants as threats, the proposal is to provide short-term assistance to cover their basic needs when transitioning from war to peace, while emphasizing disarmament and dismantling criminal organization structures (Humphreys & Weinstein, 2007; Muggah, 2005). Recently, scholars and international organizations have started to recognize ex-combatants' heterogeneity, and to discuss the roles ex-combatants could play as contributors to reconstruction and as potential agents of change (McMullin, 2013; Simpson, 2018). In agreement, calls have emerged to include ex-combatants' voices and experiences in policymaking and program implementation (Lopes-Cardozo, Higgins, & Le Mat, 2016).

Social Reintegration

This study sought to better understand how ex-combatants respond to technical and vocational education and training (TVET) interventions, and how they do or do not establish social links through education. In countries transitioning from war to post-conflict, this information is important because effective social networks with community members may help

ex-combatants feel accepted, envision a positive future, find employment opportunities, engage in civilian activities, and reduce the risks of their re-engagement in armed groups.

Social reintegration is the essential building block of reintegration processes because economic and political reintegration will depend on it (CCDDR, 2009). However, in DDR, there is little agreement about the conceptual definition of social reintegration. The DDR standards specify that reintegration takes place in communities at the local level (UN, 2006), but do not define the concept. However, various empirical studies have interpreted it as: social acceptance (Bowd & Özerdem, 2013), ex-combatants' involvement in community organizations (Kaplan & Nussio, 2015), development of new social support (Putman, 2001), breaking ties with former comrades (UN, 2014), reconciliation (Novelli, Lopes-Cardozo, & Smith, 2017; Theidon, 2007), and economic reintegration (Özerdem, 2012).

In civil wars, social networks are usually damaged by the atrocities committed by the armed groups. As a result, receptive communities often react by stigmatizing, rejecting, and isolating ex-combatants (UN, 2014). For Bowd and Özerdem (2013), social reintegration can be defined as social acceptance and is achieved when ex-combatants perceive they are welcome by their neighbors, people have positive attitudes towards them, and they can envision a positive future in their community. In contrast, for Kaplan and Nussio (2015), ex-combatants' behavior is more important than perceptions because it shows the level of engagement with the community. Therefore, they propose ex-combatants' participation in social, ethnic, religious, sporting, cultural, and civic groups within their communities as a better indicator of social reintegration. Social interaction is critical, because through it ex-combatants and communities can develop social capital, defined as shared worldviews, reciprocity, and trust (Putnam, 2001). Also, the

development of mutual trust opens opportunities for cooperation and engagement, facilitating collective action, economic growth, and development (Colletta & Cullen, 2000).

Other scholars have defined social reintegration as the reconstruction of family ties. In civil wars, ex-combatants are separated from social support networks such as family. When returning home, family members may fear and view ex-combatants with suspicion (Annan et al., 2009). Ex-combatants, and particularly sexually abused women who experienced unwanted pregnancies, could suffer stigmatization (Annan & Brier, 2010) or be expected to return to their traditional family roles. Others could return to abusive households (Bjorkhaug, 2010). In all these cases, social reintegration requires restoring social ties with family members. Family acceptance has been identified as a protective factor that mitigates aggressive behavior, anxiety, and depression resulting from war experiences, and as a link that could facilitate community acceptance (Betancourt et al., 2010c).

For international organizations such as the UN, breaking ties with comrades and factions is another indicator of social reintegration because it shows ex-combatants' commitment to renounce violence. However, some scholars have pointed out a lack of empirical evidence demonstrating that cutting links with commanders and comrades facilitates a successful reintegration into communities (Humphreys & Weinstein, 2007); others have argued that maintaining militia networks help ex-combatants navigate challenges together and open opportunities to organize around the creation of common socio-economic initiatives (De Vries & Wiegink, 2011).

Other scholars have argued that to restore social cohesion, ex-combatants should respond to social clamors for justice. From this perspective, reconciliation and peaceful coexistence

require addressing past truths and setting up systems for transitional justice, reparation, forgiveness, and psychosocial healing (Novelli, Lopes-Cardozo, & Smith, 2017; Theidon 2007).

For scholars such as Özerdem (2012), acceptance of ex-combatants within communities is a pre-condition and a catalyst of employment and economic security; and at the same time, employment is an indicator of successful social reintegration because employment increases attachment to the community and provides ex-combatants with a sense of self-worth and a new identity. Moreover, legitimate income-generating activities enable ex-combatants to gain self-reliance, support their families, and plan for the future (UN, 2014).

TVET and Entrepreneurship Education

To assist ex-combatants in their transition into civilian life, and help them overcome the human and social capital lost, and the lack of productive assets, the reintegration phase of DDR includes TVET programs. For international organizations and governments, TVET and entrepreneurship education foster pro-social attitudes, relieve poverty, and contribute to political stability (UN, 2014). For example, the World Bank alone invests nearly \$1 billion a year in skill-training programs in poor and fragile states (Blattman & Ralston, 2015); and in countries such as South Sudan and Liberia, these programs target specifically demobilized soldiers to increase their employability (Ralston, 2014).

TVET is defined as a process that involves general education and the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, and knowledge relating to occupations in socio-economic sectors (ILO-UNESCO, 2002). Academically, TVET is considered an adequate option for individuals who have had little or no access to formal education due to its emphasis on practical skills instead of theoretical knowledge (Karpinska, 2009). TVET is considered a key means of preparing ex-combatants to participate in the labor market and assume new social roles. The technical

education seeks to develop ex-combatants' occupational abilities, to facilitate gainful employment and generate new livelihoods. However, for the UN (2007), the training should not be an end in itself but a strategy to help ex-combatants find a vocation in which they could develop their capabilities and personality.

Despite the desire to engage ex-combatants in the formal economy, the unstable macro-economic conditions of countries emerging from war, and the limited capacity of the business sector to employ ex-combatants, have shown that on the ground, most program participants end up relying on the informal economy for employment. To respond to this challenge, and encourage the recovery and expansion of the private sector, international organizations and governments have decided to accompany TVET with entrepreneurship education to help ex-combatants create micro-enterprises. Self-employment—achieved through business skills training in topics such as accounting, stock management, market analysis, development of business plans, and access to micro-credits—is expected to offer those ex-combatants with entrepreneurial drive and effective means to succeed independently (UN, 2007).

To facilitate the economic independence of ex-combatants, technical, vocational, and entrepreneurship training usually come with access to micro-finance and start-ups grants. The idea behind it is to facilitate micro-business for self-employment, or in the case of precarious employment, add new income streams to the portfolio of work and expand activities to have additional earnings. Putting capital in the hands of the ex-combatants is also based on the assumption that they should know better the local demands than international or local organizations, therefore could have a better sense of where to direct the investment (Blattman & Ralston, 2015).

Theoretical Underpinnings of TVET

International organizations and governments around the world include TVET in reintegration processes because they see TVET as a pragmatic strategy to address ex-combatants' immediate need for income, and as an element to address root causes of conflict (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2007). The following section will describe the three primary theories of conflict and the arguments that support the idea that TVET can contribute to conflict's roots: TVET as a tool to address grievances, TVET to offer opportunities different than violence, and TVET to connect opposing group (Simpson, 2018; ILO et al., 2016). The section will then address the psychosocial arguments that support TVET interventions, such as the idea that TVET could allow people to re-establish a sense of normalcy and could give people a purpose and a reason to believe in the future. The second part of this section will explain the criticism those theories face from studies on the ground.

Inequality as the Root of Violence

The structural inequalities theory explains that violence is caused by grievances originated by social, economic, and political inequalities (Dryden-Peterson, 2016). From this perspective, the anger and frustration generated by injustices incentivize people to participate in armed groups (Blattman & Ralston, 2015). Understanding conflict as caused by structural inequalities leads educational policy interventions to increase education opportunities for the groups that have been historically marginalized as a way to rectify inequalities and restore rights (Dupuy, 2008). Providing TVET to ex-combatants is expected to diffuse social tensions, ensure a degree of redistribution, and prevent future re-engagement in armed groups (Lopes-Cardozo & Scotto, 2017). Governments also use education for employment as a tool to generate trust, showing ex-combatants that there is an interest in improving their lives (Thyne, 2006). In Sierra

Leone, for example, one study found that RUF combatants decided to join the fight to express their dissatisfaction with corruption and to bring down the existing regime. However, after the reintegration process and training, and despite concerns about limited access to education, most ex-combatants believed they were better off after reintegration and training than they were before, and had a more positive perception of the government (Humphreys & Weinstein, 2004).

Human Greed as the Root of Violence

From the opportunity theory, human nature, inherently greedy, is the root of conflict (Dryden-Peterson, 2016). This theory sees humans as economic agents who make cost-benefit calculations and engage in conflict or illegal activities if it pays well. From this perspective, the provision of TVET seeks to deal with greed and increase the opportunity cost to engage in violence. The assumption is that TVET will facilitate access to job markets, and that legal livelihoods and increased income will decrease ex-combatants' incentives to re-engage in violence and crime (ILO et al., 2016). One of the few field experiments that evidences the opportunity cost view comes from ex-combatants from Liberia. There, a combination of provision of TVET in agriculture, a cash subsidy, and counseling increased ex-combatants' agricultural outputs and incomes, improved their living conditions, decreased ex-combatants' participation in illegal mining activities, and reduced their interest in mercenary work. However, almost none of the participants exited illegal work completely (Blattman & Annan, 2015).

Irreconcilable Differences between Groups as the Root of Violence

The theory of clash of groups argues that irreconcilable differences among groups, due to stereotypes and ideological and cultural differences, are the main root of conflict (Dryden-Peterson, 2016). To address this problem, it is argued that educational institutions can offer spaces to eliminate radical intolerance, reconcile opposite groups, and facilitate positive peer

interactions. Also, contact and dialogue between different social groups will foster mutual understanding, the examination of stereotypes, and will build trust (ILO et al., 2016). This argument relies on Allport's theory of group contact, according to which interaction between enemies can contribute to conflict transformation, respect for differences, mutual understanding, and dialogue if the groups have equal status, have a deep engagement, and are organized to cooperate toward common goals (Bekerman, 2016). We did not find empirical studies that examine interactions between opposite groups in TVET institutions. However, a mixed methods study about the community integration of former child soldiers in Sierra Leone found that schools fostered tolerance and reconciliation and facilitated positive peer interaction between ex-child soldiers and children who did not participate in the war (Betancourt et al., 2008).

TVET to Gain Community Acceptance and for Psychosocial Recovery

Beyond theories of conflict, two more arguments support prioritizing educational opportunities during reintegration processes. One is related to community acceptance, and promotes the idea that communities will be more prone to accept ex-combatants and trust them if they are earning a living through legitimate means, are perceived as agents of change, and contribute to community development (UN, 2007). It is expected that in learning an occupation, ex-combatants would engage in civilian activities and new social interactions and participate in community life. Politically, work is seen as an instrument of social cohesion, integration in society, and a generator of organic solidarity (Durkheim, 1933). The second is the link between education and psychosocial recovery. According to this argument, educational institutions can become protective environments offering routines that help with the return to normality and structured life, encouraging psychosocial support and resiliency, and changing attitudes and behaviors toward violence (Smith, McCandless, Paulson, & Wheaton, 2011). Studies in Sierra

Leone have shown that psychosocial interventions in schools can contribute to improving former child soldiers' mental health issues, and develop resilience (Zuilkowski et al., 2016). Also, the provision of psychosocial support could help improve post-traumatic stress and other negative consequences of war such as depression, anxiety, and hostility (Zuilkowski & Betancourt, 2014). Studies in Uganda have also shown that educational institutions can provide spaces to develop connections to peers, teachers, and members of a larger community, offering safe places in which ex-combatants can re-establish community membership (Veale & Stavrou, 2007).

Despite optimism about the potential of TVET programs to help reintegrate ex-combatants, overcome roots of conflicts, and contribute to more peaceful societies, scholars have problematized each of these arguments.

The limitations of TVET to address grievances and structural inequalities. The idea that the provision of TVET will address grievances, redistributing resources and contributing to more equitable socioeconomic systems, has been questioned by multiple researchers; they have revealed that on the ground, and with limited exceptions, programs have been unsuccessful at creating employment and raising incomes, and often have reproduced the inequalities they intended to address.

For some, the educational policies are sound, but poor design and implementation lead to failures. For Blattman and Ralston (2015), evidence shows that, in general, skill-training programs around the world have had difficulties designing programs people want, and educating trainees in skills that the private sector needs. They have also estimated that training alone, without capital, ends in low returns. As a result, they have recommended that international organizations and governments switch to more effective capital-centric programs, and cash for work to stimulate self-employment. For Barakat, Kane, and English (2009) who assessed TVET

training in Northern Uganda, the mismatch between educational offer and market demands is due to lack of appropriate data to identify the contextual economic opportunities. Nations in the aftermath of conflict share this problem. For other scholars, lack of resources, such as trained personnel, adequate locations, and equipment, have challenged the implementation of TVET programs, affecting education quality. For example, Colletta, Kostner, and Wiederhofer (1996) found that in Ethiopia there were not enough local and qualified individuals to undertake training activities, while in Namibia, unqualified trainers provided low-quality education. In contrast, in El Salvador, Verhey (2001) found that the academic level of the courses was so high that participants felt discouraged from attending. Regarding physical conditions and resources, in places like South Sudan, the destruction of the infrastructure left some zones isolated and without training services (Karpinska, 2009). Equipping classrooms for specialized subjects has been an additional challenge. TVET materials generally costs three times more than providing materials for academic courses. The lack of resources devoted to equipment limits the scope and the quality of specialized training. To illustrate, in Namibia and Sierra Leone, some training was entirely classroom-based and theoretical rather than applied, and ex-combatants attended computer-training centers that did not have a single computer (Colletta et al., 1996). In South Sudan, skills-training centers focused on skills that did not require heavy materials investment, such as carpentry and agriculture, rather than computer training or car mechanics (Karpinska, 2009). The lack of appropriate resources and materials resulted in low-quality education that did not prepare ex-combatants for real jobs or respond to ex-combatants' needs. Finally, the lack of coordination among multiple donors with different demands, and multiple institutions with varied agendas, has made execution and sustainability difficult. In South Sudan, for example, the lack of coordination among donors' practices resulted in chaotic and contradictory programming

(Karpinska, 2009). And in Namibia, the TVET curriculum was not compatible with government vocational training directives, which meant that ex-combatants received certificates but the private sector did not accept them (Colletta et al., 1996).

Beyond programmatic problems, other scholars have argued that reintegration programs that seek to reduce poverty and adapt ex-combatants to the existing economic order, but do not address structural inequalities and exclusions, are the real problem because they reproduce injustices and frustrations. These structural exclusions are described as social and institutional dynamics used to deny groups their basic needs (Lopes-Cardozo & Shah, 2016). After examining reintegration processes in Namibia, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, and Liberia, McMullin (2013) concluded that programs are meant to minimize and manage the security threats that ex-combatants—framed as dangerous—represent. Therefore, short-term programs such as TVET are designed to buy time while dismantling criminal structures, but do not seek to achieve ex-combatants' welfare, because development requires long-term projects such as land reforms, or provision of higher education. As a result, programs end up reintegrating ex-combatants into poverty. Similarly, Matsumoto (2011) found that in post-conflict Sierra Leone, the education system continued excluding the economically disadvantaged populations from accessing education, perpetuating the elitist education that was at the root of the civil war.

For still others, challenges lie with the environmental constraints that characterize post-conflict contexts such as state weakness, a destroyed economy, and lack of functional institutions (Paris, 2004; Porto, Parsons, & Alden 2007). After long-term conflicts, economies are weak, infrastructure is affected, and formal jobs are scarce even for non-combatants and skilled persons. Economic reintegration depends to a large extent on the diversification of sources of income through the creation of productive and domestic assets that require broader processes and

strategies for economic recovery, and cannot be achieved only through short-term training (Porto et al., 2007). Moreover, after civil wars, countries are characterized by weak or inexistent state structures and institutional capacity to provide services, control, and follow-up programs. Therefore, strategies such as the provision of TVET that seek to increase economic opportunities for ex-combatants and develop the economy will only work if political and economic institutions are strengthened first (Paris, 2004).

Summarizing, studies have revealed that when analyzed on the ground, there is a disconnect between what TVET programs are expected to achieve to overcome grievances and contribute to build more equal societies, and what they actually do. TVET programs raise ex-combatants' expectations that studying will improve their lives; but problems with program design, implementation, and environmental constraints fail to lead to employment, creating disillusionment among this population (Paulson, 2009). Ex-combatants' difficulties in finding formal employment and earning a living after finishing the training, or settling for employment in the informal sector where salaries are low and unstable, lead to persistent poverty, and do not contribute to a redistribution of resources in society. Academics have warned that these unfulfilling promises of a better life are unethical, and frustration could push some ex-combatants to re-engage in armed groups, perpetuating circles of violence (Jennings, 2007).

Criticism to the opportunity theory, human greed theory, and TVET as response.

The opportunity theory argument that TVET training will reduce the incentive to selling labor as fighters by increasing incentive to legal labor has also been challenged. A growing body of research has found no clear evidence to support the causal relationship between youth unemployment and violence (Mercy Corps, 2015; Simpson, 2018), and has questioned that for years programs have been supported on the assumption that training will lead to jobs and

stability without rigorous research that proves it (Blattman & Raltson, 2015). Scholars have also drawn attention to the different motivations that people have to engage in armed groups, showing that in many cases fighters were not motivated by economic gains and greed, but engaged in violence looking for status, esteem, and social ties of belonging (Mercy Corps, 2015; Theidon, 2009). For example, young men in Colombia decided to participate in paramilitary groups as a way to develop a violent masculine identity that helped them overcome the disempowerment and marginalization characteristic of their low socioeconomic background (Theidon, 2009). Under this logic, offering ex-combatants education only to achieve material gains will not address their needs to build new, non-violent identities. Similarly, a study with disengaged youth in Kenya showed that youth manifested interest in education not only to find jobs, but to build social connectedness and gain social respect (King, 2018). A final argument on the limitations of the opportunity theory and of TVET training to avoid recidivism is that some people engage in violence for ideological reasons (Blattman & Ralston, 2015). Therefore, offering them an education for the sole purpose of increasing income and employment will be insufficient to reintegrate them.

Criticism to the contact theory and TVET as space for reconciliation. The clash of groups theory that explains conflict as the result of negative perceptions, and proposes contact as a solution to foster understanding, has also been questioned. For Novelli, Lopes-Cardozo, and Smith (2017), contact between opposite groups is insufficient to achieve reconciliation. For them, reconciliation is a complex process that requires addressing past truths, present tensions, and setting up systems for transitional justice, forgiveness, and psychosocial healing. The limitations of social interaction to achieve reconciliation have been illustrated by research in schools in countries such as Israel, South Africa, and Ireland, where group contact programs

have decreased prejudice and increased cultural knowledge, but have not improved intergroup relations (Bekerman, 2016) nor generated systematic change (Duffy & Gallagher, 2016). Moreover, scholars have pointed out the disconnection between transitional justice processes and education. They have shown that the mechanism used in post-conflict contexts to come to terms with a legacy of abuses—in order to ensure accountability, justice, and reconciliation such as judicial trials, truth commissions, and restorative processes—have worked in isolation from education (Bellino, Paulson, & Worden, 2017).

Limitations of individual interventions to achieve community acceptance and the psychosocial healing capacity of educational institutions. Regarding the argument that through TVET ex-combatants will become productive members of society and gain social acceptance, the UN revised this minimalist approach, focused only on ex-combatants' economic needs and short-term support, after realizing that the programs were not having the expected results in facilitating ex-combatants' reintegration. As part of the revision, the UN upgraded to more community-oriented programs associated with long-term development (UN, 2014). For community-based reintegration scholars and practitioners, the social acceptance of ex-combatants is facilitated if reintegration programs target both ex-combatants and communities affected by conflict, and if programs promote development on both sides, showing the benefits of peace for the whole population and dispelling the idea that fighters are rewarded while victims are left behind (SIDDR, 2006). Finally, some researchers have made calls to be cautious about the healing capacity of educational institutions, showing that in some cases large classrooms of traumatized, aggressive, and unmotivated students, and teachers ill prepared to cope with these problems and who are also war survivors, limit the healing capacity of formal schooling and the quality of teaching and learning (Akulluezati et al., 2011).

TVET Implementation in Reintegration Processes Worldwide

TVET has remained a somewhat neglected area of study despite governments' and international organizations' acknowledgment of its importance in post-conflict settings. Therefore, literature in the field is scarce. The following section will analyze eleven cases of reintegration around the world where TVET was implemented to impart new skills or upgrade ex-combatants' existing skills that could lead to livelihoods and social inclusion. (See Table 1 for more information).

Available studies report that TVET for reintegration has been implemented mostly in African countries, including Namibia (Colletta et al., 1996), Ethiopia (Colletta et al., 1996), Mozambique (McMullin, 2013), Sierra Leone (Paulson, 2009; Humphreys & Weinstein, 2004), Angola (Porto et al., 2007), Burundi (Uvin, 2007), Liberia (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2007), South Sudan (Karpinska, 2009; UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2007; Atari & McKague, 2015), and Uganda (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2007). TVET for reintegration has also been implemented in Kosovo (Özerdem, 2003) and El Salvador (Verhey, 2001). The number of beneficiaries targeted varied between 100,000 in Liberia and Angola (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2007; Porto et al., 2007) and 25,000 in Kosovo (Özerdem, 2003).

Despite some general trends in TVET implementation, the level of development of the country before the war, the characteristics and length of the conflict, the peace agreements, the institutional capacity, and the political and economic situation of each country make each context and each TVET implementation unique. For example, the participants' conditions in Kosovo differ from most African participants. In Kosovo, before the war, most ex-combatants were educated and had jobs. Twelve percent of ex-combatants had started but not finished university education, 34% had high school degrees, 19% had finished a trade school, and 6% had a

university degree (Özerdem, 2003). Moreover, due to the characteristics of this war, the community perceived these ex-combatants as heroes and accepted them, which facilitated reintegration. In contrast, in Sub-Saharan African countries, ex-combatants in general had low literacy rates, and the brutality of civil wars made it more difficult to gain community acceptance (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2007).

Characteristics of Programs

Most of the studied programs focused on ex-combatants alone, instead of offering training opportunities to ex-combatants and broader communities to promote collective development (UN, 2014). In Liberia, this exclusion caused resentment among the civilian population (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2007). This situation could be explained because much of the published literature is dated, and at that time (1990-2006), the reincorporation processes operated with a traditional DDR focus, which only worked with ex-combatants and sought to break down military structures. Only after 2010 did the UN define the Second Generation Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Practices in Peace Operations (UNDPKO, 2010), and programs shifted towards the larger communities that were affected by armed violence.

Regarding the delivery mechanism, three types of institutions offered training: public or national training sponsored by the government, private institutions that usually charged for the services, and training sponsored by NGOs. In places such as Uganda, that despite the war maintained a relatively stable government, the public sector delivered TVET with funding from the private sector. In contrast, in places such as South Sudan and Liberia almost completely destroyed by the war, local and international NGOs provided the training. Programs were delivered within a few years of the peace agreements. In all the analyzed cases, programs were designed as short-term projects, not as part of a long-term development plan. Depending on

contextual needs and implementers' decisions, the length of training was between three months and one year. Program designs were attached to donor and institution capabilities, ideas about how reintegration should be handled, and the immediate needs of the ex-combatants after finishing demobilization (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2007). In general, implementations were top-down, and excluded ex-combatants' perspectives. Designers and implementers did not request ex-combatants' input to define the curricula or target services. In some extreme cases such as in El Salvador, ex-combatants did not have the freedom to select programs according to their interests and skills, but were assigned to training by their military leaders (Verhey, 2001). In other cases, such as in Sierra Leone, programs emphasized agricultural training even though ex-combatants desired training in computers and vehicle driving and maintenance (Paulson, 2009).

Regarding course content, some programs privileged courses that facilitated reintegration in rural areas, while others privileged urban reintegration. Among the former was South Sudan (Colleta et al., 1996; Karpinska, 2009; UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2007), while Kosovo was among the latter (Özerdem, 2003). In other places such as Ethiopia, Angola, Sierra Leone, and El Salvador, programs differentiated populations' needs and offered training for both rural and urban reintegration (Colletta, 1996; Paulson, 2009; Porto et al., 2007; Verhey, 2001).

Agricultural reintegration programs offered agricultural training, toolkits, and in cases such as El Salvador, loans to buy land (Verhey, 2001). In Ethiopia, rural programs included agricultural training in cattle herding as well as crops such as coffee and corn (Colletta et al., 1996). In South Sudan, programs sought to train ex-combatants in pastoralist techniques to improve animal husbandry practices (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2007). Programs designed to facilitate urban reintegration included industry and service training. In Sierra Leone and Kosovo, training was on auto mechanics, computer technology, plumbing and hydro-installation, post mounting,

telephone connection, and electrical installation (Özerdem, 2003; Paulson, 2009). In Sierra Leone, Kosovo, and Liberia, programs also provided general training in masonry, roof tiling, carpentry, bicycle repair, metalwork, and road maintenance (Özerdem, 2003; Paulson, 2009; UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2007). In El Salvador, industry and service programs were complemented with administrative training on micro-enterprise creation, cost analysis, and credit management (Verhey, 2001). In terms of inclusion, Namibia and Ethiopia designed programs to train disabled ex-combatants (Colletta et al., 1996). In Sierra Leone and Liberia, the curriculum was differentiated according to gender, reinforcing gender roles. For example, in Sierra Leone, women were trained in soap making and tie-dying (Paulson, 2009), while in Liberia, women were trained in cooking, domestic skills, and small business management (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2007). The analyzed cases did not incorporate life (or soft) skills training in topics such as health awareness, teamwork, communication, and conflict resolution. Psychosocial support was not mentioned either, indicating a narrow focus on skills instead of on a comprehensive formation.

Regarding the links between TVET and employment, implementations took place within severe environmental constraints, insufficient resources, and limited institutional capacities. Often, TVET programs prepared ex-combatants for jobs that did not exist, or for informal or marginal employment. As a result, after training ex-combatants usually faced high rates of unemployment, informal and exploitative jobs, low wages, and persistent poverty (McMullin, 2013; Paulson, 2009; Pugel, 2007). The disconnects between reintegration promises of sustainable employment and income, ex-combatants' expectations, and reality generated dissatisfaction, frustration, bitterness, mistrust in national and international organizations, as well as risk of recidivism among some ex-combatants (Jennings, 2007). One of the few exceptions to the negative results of TVET for reintegration came from Burundi, where a national agency

offered a reinsertion allowance of \$60 to \$370 per month, for 18 months, with the amount depending on rank. The program also included a business start-up grant of \$1,200. A comparison between ex-combatants who received the package with the ones who did not showed a large reduction in poverty among those who received the start-up grant (Blattman & Raulson, 2015). In most of the analyzed contexts (Ethiopia, Kosovo, Burundi, Liberia, South Sudan, and Uganda), studies took place only a few years after implementation. According to Fowler (2013), these types of studies magnify the proportion of failures, and could show different results if analyzed over the course of a decade. However, for Allais (2015), education to develop skills and facilitate self-employment and home-based enterprise will not solve the job gap problem while solutions do not target macroeconomic policies focused on job creation, social welfare systems, and industrial policies. Without these structural reforms, ex-combatants will be responsible for finding a livelihood and sustaining themselves and their families in adverse contextual conditions.

This section has shown how cases of reintegration differ around the world where TVET was implemented, due to the specific characteristics and needs of ex-combatants in those countries. These programs were primarily focused on imparting new skills or upgrading ex-combatants' existing skills, but generally did not focus on the need for community integration. (See Table 1 for more information).

The following section first describes the Colombian context, its conflict, and its main illegal armed groups. Then, the section explains the characteristics of the DDR in Colombia over the past sixteen years, emphasizing the reintegration process and its educational component. The section finishes by describing the implementation of TVET for reintegration and the role of *Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje* (SENA) as the main provider of TVET.

Table 1.*Cases of Technical and Vocational Education and Training in Reintegration Processes Around the World*

Country, Peace Date	Targeted Population	Implementers	Characteristics of TVET	Studies
Namibia 1990	People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN) and South West African Territorial Force (SWATF)	Development Brigade Corporation (DBC). Originally a government office but later parastatal Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELCIN) NGOs	UN and new government did not plan any reintegration assistance to ex-combatants. After ex-combatants' protest, government offered vocational training. NGOs offered TVET to disabled ex-combatants (10% of the population).	Colletta, Kostner, & Wiederhofer (1996) Case studies: Ethiopia, Namibia, and Uganda
Ethiopia 1991	Ethiopian Popular Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) that seized power and established the Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE). The Derg army fighters of the Oromo	GTZ Archdiocesan Catholic Secretariat (ACS) USAID Government of Italy ILO NGOs	TVET envisioned enabling ex-soldiers to achieve the same social and economic status as average civilians. Rural programs: sedentary agriculture and cattle herding. All beneficiaries received technical and material support to engage in small-scale agriculture production. Many received access to collective lands. Urban reintegration programs: employment, education, and training. Revolving Credit Fund (RCF) established. GTZ implemented vocational training for disabled ex-combatants.	Colletta et al. (1996) Case studies: Ethiopia, Namibia, and Uganda

Table 1. - continued

Country, Peace Date	Targeted Population	Implementers	Characteristics of TVET	Studies
Mozambique 1992	Resistencia Nacional Moçambicana (RENAMO) opposition and the ruling Frente de Libertação de Moçambique (FRELIMO) government	UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOHAC) UNDP IOM ILO	Short-term approaches that emphasize vocational training over employment.	McMullin (2013) Case studies: Namibia, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, and Liberia
Sierra Leone 1999	Sierra Leone Army (SLA) Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) Civil Defense Forces (CDF) Revolutionary United Front (RUF)	Sierra Leone's National Committee on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (NCDDR) in partnership with the UN	TVET for livelihoods. Skills training targeted the informal sector. Courses: car repair, carpentry, computers, masonry, bicycle repair, building, plumbing, metalwork, road maintenance, tailoring, agriculture, and (primarily for women) soap making and tie-dying. Duration: 3 months -1 year. Micro-credit loans: not provided following training.	Paulson (2009) Qualitative comparative analysis of Sierra Leone Reintegration from three data sources: -Gov. sponsored "Tracer Study," n=250. Stavrou et al. (2003) -Quantitative study, n= 1,043 ex-combatants who went through the DDR process and n=200 non-combatants who did not. Humphreys and Weinstein (2004, 2005) -Qualitative interviews Richards et al. (2003)

Table 1 - continued

Country, Peace Date	Targeted Population	Implementers	Characteristics of TVET	Studies
			In Sierra Leone, 80% of ex-combatants participated in vocational or skills training. Remainder took part in agriculture (7%), apprenticeships (3%), and formal education (9%). TVET Participants largely located in the East and North. Training duration: 7 months	Humphreys and Weinstein (2004) Quantitative study Survey: n= 1,043 ex-combatants who went through the DDR process and n= 200 non-combatants who did not.
Kosovo 1999	Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA)	International Organization for Migration (IOM) in charge of the Information Counseling and Referral Service (ICR)	Most ex-combatants expressed training needs to change their profession, finish education, do better at the old job, or start a new business. 32 centers destroyed, 11 re-built. Courses: auto mechanics, machinery, electrical installation, computer, etc. Length of courses: 3 months.	Özerdem (2003) Qualitative study In-depth interviews: n=80 ex-combatants, and representatives from international funding and implementing agencies
Angola 2002	União Nacional para la Independência total de Angola (UNITA) and Government forces	UNDPKO The Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC) NGOs	Technical training in diverse areas: agriculture, infrastructure rehabilitation, and business skills. Training provided without a developmental vision. Absence of mechanism to control and follow up projects.	Porto, Parsons, & Alden (2007) Mixed methods: Survey: n = 603 (574 male, 29 female, UNITA DDR participants and non-participants). Self-report instrument, 26 focus groups, and 16 key informants' interviews

Table 1. - continued

Country, Peace Date	Targeted Population	Implementers	Characteristics of TVET	Studies
Burundi 2003	National Council for the Defense of Democracy- Forces for the Defense of Democracy (CNDD/FDD) National Liberation Forces-Icanzo (FNL)	NGOs (i.e.: Care)	Professional training, support for self-employment, access to national reconstruction and employment creation programs.	Uvin (2007) Qualitative study In-depth interviews: n = 63 (60 male, 3 female, DDR participants and non-participants)
Liberia 2003	National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD)	UNDP sub-contracted local and international NGOs to provide training: Don Bosco, Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD), Liberia Opportunities Industrialization Centers (LOIC), and United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) USAID European Commission	Training on construction skills (masonry, roof tiling, plumbing), agriculture, and business skills. TVET for women: cooking, domestic skills, and small business management. Civil population excluded from training.	UNESCO-UNEVOC (2007) Discussion paper to conceptualize a holistic approach of TVET in Sub-Saharan Africa Case studies: Liberia, South Sudan, and Uganda

Table 1. - continued

Country, Peace Date	Targeted Population	Implementers	Characteristics of TVET	Studies
South Sudan 2005	The Government of Sudan (GoS) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A). South Sudan Defense Force (SSDF) and the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) were excluded	9 NGOs 12 governmental authorities, including Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST)	<p>Informal vocational education, non-formal vocational education in programs such as improvement of animal husbandry practices, farming, and carpentry. Life-skills training is rarely incorporated into the curricula.</p> <hr/> <p>Livelihoods skills training at the community level in pastoralist techniques that improve animal husbandry practices and farming. Short trainings over a period of weeks or several days per month during an entire year.</p> <hr/> <p>TVET envisioned as strategy for employment and community reintegration. Aid and development projects initiated without participation from local communities. Lack of organized and standardized TVET programs.</p>	<p>Karpinska (2009) Content analysis of governmental documents (MoEST), NGOs [i.e.: Veterinaries sans frontiers-Belgium (VSF), and Catholic Relief Services (CRS)]. Reflection of author's experience as practitioner in South Sudan for 2 years.</p> <hr/> <p>UNESCO-UNEVOC (2007) Discussion paper to conceptualize a holistic approach of TVET in Sub-Saharan Africa Case studies: Liberia, South Sudan, and Uganda</p> <hr/> <p>Atari & McKague (2015) Grounded Theory focus groups: n=40 In-depth interviews: n=27 Participants: government officials, NGO representatives, community members, job seekers, entrepreneurs, high school teachers and students</p>

Table 1. - continued

Country, Peace Date	Targeted Population	Implementers	Characteristics of TVET	Studies
Uganda 2006	Ugandan government and the Lord Resistance Army (LRA)	29 government technical and farm schools/institutes. 187 private institutions 4 public vocational training institutes and 400 private training providers: industrial training	Training focused on construction, carpentry, joinery, and driving. Limited public financing. Private sector responsible for both delivery and financing of programming. Industrial training: too academic.	UNESCO-UNEVOC (2007) Discussion paper to conceptualize a holistic approach of TVET in Sub-Saharan Africa Case studies: Liberia, South Sudan, and Uganda
El Salvador 1992	Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front Rebel (FMLN)	UNDP: 49 centers Government USAID NGOs GTZ EU	5 months agricultural training, toolkits, and land transfer. Practical activities and administrative training in credit management. Government: to FAES. Urban option: Industry and service program (6 months). 360 hours vocational preparation and 60 hours administrative training on micro-enterprise creation, cost analysis, and credit management.	Verhey (2001). The demobilization and reintegration of child soldiers: El Salvador case study

TVET in Colombia

Colombian Context and Conflict

Colombia is a middle-income country (World Bank, 2017a), and over 80% of its population resides in cities (Moncada, 2016). It is considered one of the oldest democracies in Latin America, but persistent poverty and inequality constrain opportunities for large segments of the population. While the richest 10% earn 39% of the country's income, 27% live below the poverty line (World Bank, 2017b). The perception of high levels of public sector corruption has reduced public trust in state institutions, undermining the rule of law (Transparency International, 2018). Socioeconomic disparities and political exclusions have been root causes of the conflict.

Colombia's civil war has been the longest armed conflict in the western hemisphere. Fifty years of conflict has resulted in over 220,000 deaths, 25,000 disappearances, 5-6 million people internally displaced by violence, and countless other human rights violations by guerrilla and paramilitary groups (CNMH, 2013). Unarmed civilians have suffered most of the casualties (Theidon, 2007).

In the 1950s, Marxist guerrilla groups emerged to fight against the absence of agrarian reform to provide land to peasants displaced during colonization, as well as an exclusive political system that only shared power between the liberal and conservative parties. Guerrilla groups were fueled by the success of the Cuban revolution and the absence of a state presence in massive swaths of the country (CNMH, 2013). Though the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, FARC), the oldest and largest guerrilla group, had roots in rural self-defense groups influenced by Marxist ideology, its influence extended to the cities (Guzman, Fals Borda, & Umana, 2005). After the collapse of the Soviet

Union, which had supported FARC with weapons and ideological training, FARC financed itself through kidnapping, extortion, drug trafficking, and taxing drug dealers in exchange for trade protection. Through these strategies, FARC gained military strength, territorial control, and wealth (Theidon, 2009; Chernick, 2007). The *Ejército de Liberación Nacional* (National Liberation Army, ELN), still in operation, emerged from university unrest in urban centers but extended to rural areas. ELN differentiates from FARC in its ideology, which is based on the Cuban revolution and Christian liberation theology. It is characterized by its opposition to foreign investment and attacks on the infrastructure of the country, and particularly to the oil pipeline. ELN fights in urban and rural settings against poverty, political exclusion, and corruption, but is also financed through extortion, kidnapping, and trade in drugs (Theidon, 2009; Nussio & Oppenheim, 2014).

In response to guerrillas' aggression, regional elites, multinational actors, and powerful landowning drug dealers formed a counter-insurgent military organization in the 1980s, called the *Auto-Defensas Unidas de Colombia* (United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia, AUC)—commonly referred to as the paramilitary because of the support it received from government armed forces. Between 1997 and 2002, AUC units were the main group responsible for war atrocities, especially against alleged collaborators of guerrilla groups (CNMH, 2013; Nussio & Oppenheim, 2014).

Economic and political interests are at the roots of the Colombian conflict, differentiating it from other conflicts where ethnicity or religion has triggered violence. Most fighters joined the group by “a voluntary forced recruitment” (Bjorkhaug, 2010). As Theidon (2009) found, 57% of ex-combatants from FARC and ELN, and 46% of paramilitary fighters joined because they lived in a zone controlled by an armed group, and entering the ranks was quasi-natural or the norm, or

because an acquaintance convinced them to join. Only 9% of guerrilla and 27% of paramilitary ex-combatants mentioned economic motivations for joining, while 9% of guerrilla fighters and 17% of paramilitaries were recruited by force (Theidon, 2009). Bjorkhaug (2010) found similar results when interviewing Colombian child soldiers about their motivations to join and to leave the armed groups. People voluntarily enrolled, but they lived in contexts that offered few options other than joining the armed groups. Nevertheless, these conditions differ from ex-combatants in other contexts such as Sierra Leone or Liberia, where many of the combatants were enrolled through coercion (Betancourt et al., 2008; Bøås & Hatløy, 2008).

Demobilization and Reintegration

Over the last sixteen years, the Colombian government has demobilized more than 70,000 ex-combatants from guerrilla and self-defense militia groups (ARN, 2019a). However, Colombia also hosts simultaneous conflict, transition, and post-conflict conditions (McFee, 2016). The first collective demobilization in rural and urban centers began in 2003, following peace negotiations between AUC and the government. Although 36,000 soldiers demobilized, new armed structures appeared. Some NGOs believe these new groups have a close relationship to former paramilitary groups (CNAI, 2017), while the government claims they are independent criminal gangs (CNRR, 2007; Nussio, 2011). Moreover, in cities like Medellín, studies have shown that AUC connections to criminal organizations were not addressed in the process of demobilization. As a result, demobilization decreased homicides, but merely reconfigured new structures of criminal armed groups in the popular neighborhoods (Rozema, 2008).

The second collective demobilization took place in 2016, after a peace agreement between the FARC and the government that ended with 13,000 guerrilla fighters giving up arms (ARN, 2019a). After negotiations, the government called for a plebiscite in which Colombian

voters could support or reject the agreement. More than half refused it, though Congress later approved it after renegotiation of some points. Colombian voters' rejection of the agreement was the result of a right-wing campaign that suggested the negotiations would threaten private property and offer fighters impunity, engendering anger and fear in an important sector of the population, and ultimately creating an emotional anti-peace mindset (Gomez-Suarez, 2017). At present, the country is polarized between those who support the peace agreement with the FARC and those who do not. In 2019, some FARC leaders decided to re-arm, claiming government failure to implement the accords and protect the demobilized. However, 90% of the former fighters are still committed to the reintegration process (Janetsky, 2019).

Parallel to collective demobilizations, another 19,000 fighters, mostly from guerrilla groups, have demobilized individually. In those cases, individuals or small groups chose to desert in exchange for government benefits (ARN, 2019a). From 2002 to 2016, those benefits became an important counterinsurgency strategy (Kaplan & Nussio, 2015). Studies have argued that ex-combatants who demobilized individually could be more committed to reintegration than the ones who did it as part of a collective agreement in which individual choices were not taken into account (Alonso-Espinal & Valencia-Agudelo, 2008). After demobilization, ex-combatants from all factions face safety threats. Some experience harassment, displacement, and murder at the hands of the newly-emergent structures or for reprisals (MAPP-OEA, 2019). Moreover, community members view ex-combatants with fear and distrust (Kaplan & Nussio, 2015).

Reintegration policy. The 2008 Colombian reintegration policy includes accelerated education, vocational training, grants for micro-businesses, psychosocial support, healthcare, and a monthly stipend conditioned on the ex-combatants' participation in reintegration activities. The policy also defines economic and social benefits for the families of ex-combatants (CONPES

3554, 2008). Following the UN DDR standards (UN, 2006), the policy defines reintegration as the process by which ex-combatants acquire civilian status and gain sustainable employment and income (CONPES 3554, 2008).

The budget to implement the policy comes from the Colombian government and international contributions. From 2003-2006, the government contributed around \$302 million (75%) to the reintegration of the AUC, and the other 25% came from donors. These donors included USAID (64%), UNICEF (13%), the EU (8%), the Netherlands (6.9%), ILO (4.2%), and Japan (3.1%), among others. In 2005, the World Bank also approved a wide-ranging assistance program for Colombia. On average, the government invested \$9,567.10 per person demobilized in a collective manner (EPC, 2008). In the case of the collective reintegration of the FARC guerrilla fighters, until June 2018 the total budget was \$675 million, from which 42% came from the government, and the remaining from a collective fund between the Inter-American Development Bank, Sweden, Norway, and Switzerland (29%), as well as the EU (15%), the UN (12%), and the World Bank (1%) (Semana, 2018).

The Colombian Reincorporation and Normalization Agency. Usually, the UN implements DDR initiatives worldwide; however, in Colombia, the national government directs the process. Since 2006, the *Agencia Colombiana para la Reintegración* (Colombian Agency for Reintegration; ACR) manages, implements, coordinates, and evaluates the plans and programs to reintegrate all demobilized fighters. The ARN delivers its services through 37 local service centers spread throughout the country, and uses service provider professionals, called “reintegrators,” to manage caseloads (40-100 per person) (McFee, 2016). Recently, and as part of the FARC reintegration process, the agency changed its name to *Agencia para la*

Reincorporacion y la Normalizacion (Colombian Reincorporation and Normalization Agency, ARN) (ARN, 2019b).

To implement reintegration, the ARN has designed a ten-step route through which all the ex-combatants must go to be considered fully reintegrated into social and economic life.

However, the route is shaped to respond to the particular needs of each individual, and the characteristics of the context. Each ex-combatant has up to seven years to complete the whole process (ARN, 2019c). The route consists of the following ten steps:

- (1) Documentation and fulfillment of requirements to start the process.
- (2) Stabilization: provision of housing, food, healthcare, clothing, and a monthly stipend of about \$200/month, for 24 months, conditional on participation in program activities.
- (3) Registration of ex-combatants and their families into the health system.
- (4) Psychosocial care that is offered throughout the process.
- (5) Education for ex-combatants and their families, which includes remedial courses in literacy (6 months), primary education (2 years), middle school (2 years), and high school (2 years). ARN also helps to find funding for continued higher education.
- (6) Training for work, which includes technical (1 year) and technological education (2 years), as well as complementary courses. ARN provides a monthly stipend of about \$60 to support education and vocational training. The support is provided for up to six and a half years.
- (7) Economic insertion: connects ex-combatants with employers and provides grants for microbusiness projects. In the case of individual demobilization, the start-up capital is about \$2,800, while ex-combatants in a collective demobilization can receive up to \$700 as a strategy to motivate collective productive projects. To receive this capital, the demobilized person must

have sufficient education, a business plan, experience in the proposed business, and have attended psychosocial reintegration programs.

(8) Social service, consisting of 80 hours of participation in mandatory community service, such as sporting events and restoration of public spaces, as symbolic initiatives to promote social acceptance.

(9) Legal support to verify that ex-combatants do not have pending issues with justice.

(10) Graduation and voluntary monitoring during a six-month period (CONPES 3554, 2008; Kaplan & Nussio, 2015). Currently, the ARN and the demobilized FARC guerrilla fighters are revising and making changes to the route to respond to the particular needs of FARC's population (ARN, 2019c).

Education for reintegration. Based on a census, the majority of ex-combatants are characterized as functionally illiterate and lacking life skills (CONPES 3554, 2008). To help ex-combatants overcome this vulnerability that challenges reintegration, the reintegration policy includes an educational component that has both preventive and remedial functions. The former seeks to prevent ex-combatants from rejoining criminal groups and allow them to contribute to the security of the country and lasting peace through legal employment. The remedial function of education seeks to promote human and social development by preparing them to secure decent jobs or become entrepreneurs, attempting to eradicate the intergenerational transmission of poverty, and closing equity gaps that were at the heart of the conflict (CONPES 3554, 2008). In 2017, 45.4% of the 48,554 ex-combatants in the process of reintegration were pursuing primary school, 16.5% middle school, 32.3% high school, and 5.8% post-secondary education. Of the 2,826 ex-combatants at the post-secondary level, 79.87% were in technological education and 2.8% were in technical education (ARN, 2018).

Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje (National Training Service, SENA). Employment and self-reliance—the purpose of education within reintegration programs—is addressed through formal job training via TVET. The government selected the National Training Service (SENA) as the main institution overseeing ex-combatants’ training (CONPES 3554, 2008). SENA is a publically accredited institution with 60 years of training people in different industries. SENA offers two-year *technological*, one-year *technical* postsecondary education programs, and shorter-term *complementary* trainings (40-80 hours) (SENA, 2015).

Technological programs combine skills training with theoretical foundations, and include eighteen months of practical courses and six months of internship. Technological formation includes programs such as marketing, business management, systems administrative management, agricultural production, occupational health, business administration, mechanical automotive maintenance, gastronomy, analysis and development of information systems, logistics management, and assembly and maintenance of computers and networks, among other programs (ODDR, 2013). *Technical programs* focus on skills training in specific productive sectors, including nine months of practical courses and three months of internship, and offer programs such as systems, nursing assistance, cooking, car and motorcycle mechanics, marketing and sales, garment operator, vermiculture, hygiene and industrial security, furniture-making, computer analysis and programming, sales of products and services, computer maintenance, construction, nursing, welding, food and beverages, bakery, and hairdressing, among others (ODDR, 2013). *Short-term complementary training* does not require a high school diploma and focuses on entrepreneurship education (SENA, 2015). As a way to stimulate self-employment and raise earning potential, the policy also includes a micro-credit support of \$2,600 after finishing training in any program. Once the students finish the training, SENA’s

employment agency supports ex-combatants interested in developing entrepreneurship projects and connects ex-combatants searching for jobs with potential employers (SENA, 2015).

From 2007 to 2013, the Colombian government provided one-year technical and vocational education to 5,586 ex-combatants, two-year technological education to 1,174 ex-combatants, and college education to 631 ex-combatants (ODDR, 2013). During this period, Medellín had the highest number of students, with 951 ex-combatants in technical programs and 355 ex-combatants in technological programs, followed by Bogotá with 638 ex-combatants in technical programs and 136 in technological programs (ODDR, 2013). From 2014 to 2017, 9,341 ex-combatants received training in vocational, technical, technological education, and complementary courses around the country (ARN, 2018).

Regarding results, in a survey study with 1,485 ex-combatants from different illegal armed groups in Colombia, interviewees recognized the benefits of education. Fifty-six percent answered that having the opportunity to study was the most helpful aspect of the reintegration program. When ex-combatants mentioned education, 28% were referring to basic education, and 11% were referring to technical training (Kaplan & Nussio, 2018).

Reasons given in support of these answers include that education helped them to transition into society, provided lasting skills that stay with them despite unemployment, and helped them find jobs (Kaplan & Nussio, 2018). The study also found a statistically significant difference in recidivism rates among the ex-combatants who received education vs. the ones who did not receive it, with those obtaining a diploma 44% less likely to commit crimes (Kaplan & Nussio, 2018).

Despite ex-combatants' perceived value of education, and the Colombian government's efforts to provide TVET, ex-combatants still face high rates of unemployment and job

informality. Ex-combatants' 15% unemployment is six points above the national rate of 9%. Moreover, 66% of ex-combatants have informal and low-paying jobs. Also, 45% of the business community is skeptical of reintegration processes. Business owners often choose not to employ ex-combatants, due to a perceived lack of government support and safety concerns, as ex-combatants are perceived as having violent and unstable behaviors (Derks et al., 2011).

Comparisons between TVET Programs for Reintegration in Colombia and Around the Globe

A salient similarity between the TVET programs implemented in Colombia and around the world was the focus on ex-combatants, and the exclusion of the receptive communities, despite UN suggestions to involve communities in the educational processes to increase sustainability and acceptance of newcomers (UNDPKO, 2010). A second commonality was that, in general, all ex-combatants who accessed TVET had low educational levels, and scarce time to catch up with education, which challenged the provision of education. Despite contextual differences, skill-training programs were accompanied by microfinances, or injections of capital, and in many places training in specific skills also included entrepreneurship education to stimulate self-employment. Programs focused on developing skills for jobs and excluded the development of soft skills such as teamwork or peaceful resolution of conflicts. Another commonality among the cases was that, in general, TVET did not promote ex-combatants' inclusion in the world of formal and dignified employment. Programmatic problems and environmental constraints generated disconnect between training and employment opportunities. As a result, it was common that after finishing training ex-combatants continued to be unemployed or underemployed, and living in poverty.

Despite similarities, each reintegration process is unique, so the programs have

differences in implementation. In Colombia, national actors dominated the planning and implementation of programs, while international actors took a supportive role. This stands in contrast to many other processes around the world where international organizations lead DDR processes. In contrast to many other conflict and post-conflict settings, Colombia maintains established institutions and a relatively stable government and a stable economy, which gave local authorities the managerial capacity and the resources to implement the TVET programs. This capacity was reflected in the provision of training by an experienced institution, longer periods of training compared to other post-conflict contexts where courses were usually between three months and one year, and the provision of psychosocial support in addition to education. Another difference was that courses were inclusive in terms of gender. Women and men received the same training opportunities, and the same funding for the start-up, which differentiated these programs from those in Sierra Leone and Liberia, where the curriculum varied according to genders. Finally, and different from other countries in post-conflict and peacebuilding periods, Colombia still hosts conflict and post-conflict, which limits the reintegration opportunities of the educated ex-combatants.

Summary

In summary, the existing academic and policy-oriented literature on education for reintegration presents education, and particularly TVET, as a key element to overcome ex-combatants' motivations to enroll in armed groups such as grievances, greed, and ideological differences. The literature also presents education as a strategy for psychosocial recovery, and a pathway to gain community acceptance. However, empirical research suggests that often there is a disconnect between what educational programs are expected to do and what they actually achieve, and shows that sometimes education reproduces the inequalities and exclusion it was

intended to solve. The existing literature pays attention to specific dimensions of the implementation process, while overlooking the experiences of ex-combatants; it focuses on the economic aspect of education and its capacity to raise income and employment while disregarding the social dimension of education, and the capacity to generate social connectedness and reconciliation.

This literature review reveals that there is a pressing need to understand reintegration processes, and education for reintegration, from the perspective of the participants, and to explore the potential of TVET to contribute to social cohesion in divided societies. In order to address this gap in the literature, this in-depth interview study with ex-combatants from Colombia listened to ex-combatants' voices and focused on their experiences to examine their ideas and expectations about education, and the perceived effects of TVET interventions on their socialization and development of new social support.

Theoretical Framework: Torjesen's Theory of Ex-Combatant Reintegration

This study builds on Torjesen's (2013) theory of ex-combatant reintegration. For Torjesen (2013), reintegration is a process through which former fighters transform their combatant identities and behaviors into civilian identities and peaceful behaviors aligned with community rules and norms.

This definition is an initial effort toward a theory, and a call to continue developing a theoretical framework to study ex-combatants' reintegration, more than a completed and tested theory. This initial step in theorizing reintegration is due to the fact that for years, DDR processes focused on the two first components—disarmament and demobilization that were directly related with security—while the reintegration component was left understudied and underfinanced (Torjesen, 2013).

Torjesen's (2013) theory is also an effort to understand reintegration from the perspective of participants instead of the policies and programs designed to assist them. This framework challenges the UN definition of reintegration built around institutional support. For the UN, reintegration consists on providing food, health, education, and monetary assistance to ex-combatants to help them acquire civilian status and gain sustainable employment and income (UN, 2006). Following the UN definition, many studies have focused on exploring policy designs, and the characteristics of program implementation, leaving aside ex-combatants' experiences and what happen in their lives when reintegrating. In contrast, Torjesen (2013) proposes to interconnect categories of power, group belonging, context, and individual decisions to explain ex-combatants' diverse reintegration trajectories. These interconnections are relevant to identify the perceptions, ideas, feelings, and motivations that ex-combatants have to participate in education, how these meanings regulate their behavior and decision-making (Hall, 2003), and how access to education contributes or not to their social reintegration, which is the purpose of this study.

Disciplines that Contribute to the Theory

In order to understand the reintegration process, the challenges ex-combatants face when reintegrating, and the resources they have, Torjesen (2013) uses a political economy perspective to analyze the system of power, protection, and profit in which ex-combatants are embedded. The political economy approach argues that wars are not only chaotic situations, but also events in which ex-combatants develop networks and achieve gains. When people engage in armed groups searching for respect, wealth, and social connection, and found them, reintegration is challenging because it requires renouncing power and breaking up with comrades. In agreement with this rationale, Humphrey and Weinstein (2007) show how wealthier and more educated

fighters face greater difficulties reintegrating, and ideologues face greater difficulties cutting ties with their factions. The political economy also identifies how the alternative systems of power developed during the war and shaped the economic and political spheres in post-conflict, helping to make sense of the context in which ex-combatants are living (Torjesen, 2013).

Torjesen's (2013) theory of ex-combatant reintegration also introduces sociology to consider issues of identity formation and social capital development. In sociology, she explains, social groups are defined as a collection of people who share a common identity and agree to conform to certain ways of thinking and behaving. Since identity emerges through social affiliation, Torjesen (2013) expects that reducing contact with and reliance on militia networks, and opportunities to interact with other social groups—such as ethnic, religious, sporting, cultural, civic groups, and family—will help ex-combatants transform their identities. This identity transformation is also challenging. Theidon (2009) discusses how some male combatants have constructed their masculine identity around weapons, uniforms, physical force, and violence. This militarized identity has allowed them to attract women and protect their families. Moreover, the military training of their bodies and minds to be physically and emotionally impenetrable makes it difficult to establish new social interactions. Despite challenges, the establishment of new social connections is critical to achieving reintegration because the development of social capital, understood as a relationship of reciprocity and trust (Putman, 2001), is only possible through social interactions.

The present research focuses on the role that TVET institutions play in socializing ex-combatants. For analyzing if access to and participation in TVET contribute to the development of new social supports and networks, the sociological concepts of social capital and social groups as spaces for identity formation are useful. To evaluate educational institutions as political and

economic institutions, where power is exercised and generated, the political economy is useful too. However, to better understand the mechanisms through which schools socialize and education operates as a practice of cultural production, reproduction, and enculturation, the political economy and sociology need to be complemented with philosophy of education.

For Biesta (2010), education is a social practice that has three purposes: socialization, qualification, and subjectification. Socialization is the role education plays in inserting newcomers into the social, cultural, and political orders that already exist. One of the main purposes of socialization is to continue traditions. For this reason, education defines what a student should become, before listening to students' desires (Biesta, 2010). Qualification is the acquisition of knowledge and skills to do something, and the develop skills to insert into the productive system (Biesta, 2010). Lastly, subjectification is the educational process through which a person becomes autonomous and develops independent thinking and acting, and a process where individuality and plurality are allowed to emerge (Biesta, 2010). These are also the three areas of reintegration in which education plays a role.

Goal: Understand Complexity

For Torjesen (2013), a theory of reintegration should be able to identify the processes and challenges ex-combatants experience when moving into social, economic, and political spheres, cutting ties with militia and establishing new links, trying to obtain legal employment, and making efforts to achieve political goals through peaceful means. For Torjesen (2013), the provision of causal relationships, and the process to identify variables and test hypotheses, is less important than understanding how the different components of the social, economic, and political spheres interconnect and influence each other. Mapping the interplay between the three spheres is useful in understanding why and how the process of reintegration unfolds in different ways for

segments of ex-combatants. The use of inductive reasoning to find connections among phenomena is also useful in studying the different trajectories that ex-combatants undertake when they decide to leave an armed group and enter into the civilian sphere, the different strategies they use to transform identities, and the patterns that may emerge.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

This chapter, organized into eight sections, provides a description of the research design, the context and site of the study, the study's participants, the data collection, data analysis, and procedures implemented to produce valid and reliable knowledge in an ethical manner. First, I will explain why an in-depth qualitative interview study design was an appropriate approach to understanding ex-combatants' experience of reintegration and their motivations for pursuing education. Second, I will explain why Medellín and its SENA were selected as the context in which to implement the study. Third, I will describe the characteristics of the ex-combatants who participated in the study and the sample procedures that were used. Fourth, I will describe the in-depth individual interviews that were undertaken. Fifth, I will explain how the data were analyzed. Sixth, I will describe my role as researcher. Seventh, I will describe the implemented procedures to achieve trustworthiness. This chapter will conclude by explaining how the research was conducted in an ethical manner.

This study answered the following research questions:

1. What meaning does access to technical and vocational education have for ex-combatants who are participating in or graduated from a technical and vocational institution in Colombia as part of their reintegration process?
2. What role, if any, does participation in TVET as an institution play in developing ex-combatants' new social supports and networks to facilitate their reintegration?

Research Design

In order to deepen the understanding of the different meanings ex-combatants attribute to their education, how these meanings influence decision-making and behaviors, and what role, if

any, access to and participation in TVET programs play in developing new social networks, this research used an in-depth qualitative interview study. Previous studies have used in-depth interview designs to understand the lived experiences, internal drivers, and contextual situations that lead young people to join armed groups (Bjørkhaug, 2010; Brett & Specht, 2004). This approach has also been used in studies that analyze the links between conditions of vulnerability, internal processes, decision-making, and behaviors in the health field (Bell & Aggleton, 2014; Capurchande et al., 2017; Chi et al., 2015; Ferrey et al., 2016).

This inductive, exploratory approach helped illuminate the multiple realities and the different ways in which ex-combatants experienced and interpreted education, and shaped their reintegration processes (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009). Information came from the ex-combatants themselves, rather than from people who knew about them, or perceived ex-combatants' situations from an external point of view. This approach also provided a means of getting closer to the participants being studied (Creswell, 2013). Usually, little is known about ex-combatants' perceptions, experiences, interpretations, goals, motivations, interests, and emotions because ex-combatants are not easy subjects to study. They are often located in places that are hazardous to visit or they may be hesitant to talk because of threats from their past organizations if they reveal sensitive information (Brett & Specht, 2004). Some ex-combatants avoid talking about their past in order to protect their identity, and protect themselves from retaliations and stigmatization (Nussio, 2011). Another strength of this in-depth interviewing was that research was conducted in the field where participants study, live, and work (Creswell, 2013), elucidating how individuals interact with social structures and organizational forces. As Bourdieu (1977) explains, the history of the individual is strongly connected with the collective history of his group or class. Listening to ex-combatants in the process of reintegration revealed

not only their particular processes, but also the environment in which they operated. This information was critical to identify both the challenges and successes of reintegration, and the context in which education took place. Finally, this methodology established a respectful and collaborative relationship between participants and researcher, in which the interpretation of the meanings of education and the experiences of socialization were negotiated together (Creswell, 2013).

Research Context

Medellín, the second largest city in Colombia, was selected as the site to conduct this study because its local authorities have worked for more than 30 years in the implementation of innovative and structured reintegration programs (Rozema, 2008). Moreover, Medellín's reintegration programs include technical and vocational education, mostly provided by SENA, which offers an appropriate context in which to understand the educational experiences of ex-combatants (ACR, 2016). To illustrate, from 2007 to 2013, 355 ex-combatants received *technological* training in the city, and 951 ex-combatants received *technical* programs training (ODDR, 2013). Medellín reincorporation processes differ from other processes around the world where reintegration has taken place mostly in rural areas (Rozema, 2008). However, its experience could be valuable in other contexts and in the current world characterized by a rapid urbanization.

Medellín's experience reintegrating ex-combatants begun in the 1980s with guerrilla militias and gang members connected with drug cartels (Rozema, 2008). In 2003, Medellín was the first city to start DDR with the AUC paramilitary groups (Alonso & Valencia, 2008). From 2003 to 2006, Medellín and Bogotá—the capital of the country—became the main centers of reincorporation and the points of convergence for a heterogeneous population composed of

paramilitary and guerrilla combatants from urban and rural backgrounds, who demobilized both individually and collectively (ODDR, 2012). Currently, the local authorities are reintegrating more than 300 FARC ex-combatants (Francisco Cardona, personal communication, October 20, 2019). For the last fourteen years, Medellín's local government has included reintegration programs in its local development plans, and allocated resources coming from local taxes and from the profits of its public utilities company for implementation (Devlin & Chaskel, 2010). To monitor processes, in 2004 the local administration created the Peace and Reconciliation Program—*Programa de Paz y Reconciliación*—that is still in place, and served as an example for the ARN (ODDR, 2012).

However, in this city, reintegration experiences co-exist with re-armament of illegal armed groups (Rozema, 2008). The reorganization of illegal groups poses security threats for ex-combatants and creates conditions favorable to recidivism. According to Kaplan and Nussio (2018), ex-combatants are 158% more likely to return to illegal activities if they are in the vicinity of re-emergent criminal bands that can offer lucrative employment opportunities. In the early 2000s, when paramilitary groups decided to reincorporate, half of the members kept their arms for protection or to continue with illegal activities such as drug trafficking and extortion. In some cases, the legal system confirmed these irregularities, and ex-combatants lost the benefits of reintegration and started criminal prosecution (Alonso & Valencia, 2008). Today, multiple groups fight over Medellín as a territory, including drug dealers involved in organized criminal structures, rearmed paramilitary groups, and new criminal groups. When needed, these groups create alliances and reconfigure their organizations (Moncada, 2016), creating a complex criminal network that threatens the security of ex-combatants who want to reincorporate and distance themselves from illegality (Muggah, 2005). The complexities of rearmament dynamics

offered an appropriate context to understand some of the challenges faced by ex-combatants when trying to adapt to communities.

Technical and vocational education and training provided by the National Training Service (SENA) in Medellín. In Medellín, SENA's headquarters have been actively involved in the reincorporation of former paramilitaries and guerrilla combatants since the 2000s. This headquarters has been recognized for its successful experiences within the national context (ODDR, 2012). In Medellín, SENA has nine centers, and each one is focused on a single employment sector: health, commerce, business, construction, textiles, manufacturing, design, furniture making, and leather/shoemaking (Milligan, Fuentes, & Amorin, 2016). In Medellín, as in the rest of the country, SENA offers two-year *technological* training, one-year *technical* programs, and *shorter-term complementary training* (40-80 hours) (SENA, 2015). After finishing the training, SENA's employment agency supports ex-combatants interested in developing entrepreneurship projects and connects ex-combatants with potential employers (SENA, 2015). From January to August 2017, four ex-combatants pursued technical education: two in the food and beverage industry, one in motorcycle mechanics, and one in marketing. In addition, three were enrolled in technological programs: two in accounting and finance and one in construction. Another 111 participated in complementary training (Francisco Cardona, personal communication, October 27, 2017). This small group was part of the 2003-2016 DDR cycle. Then, in 2017, SENA began training FARC ex-combatants who demobilized after the 2016 peace agreement (Francisco Cardona, personal communication, May 17, 2018).

Participants and Sampling Procedures

To facilitate the close association with respondents and enhance the study validity, I worked with a purposive sample of 20 ex-combatants (Crouch & McKennie, 2006). Ten were

currently enrolled in TVET programs and were taking complementary courses on entrepreneurship. Ten were recent (within one year) graduates of TVET programs. Among them, six finished 400 hours of complementary courses (between five and ten short-term entrepreneurship courses), and four finished technical programs. One of the technical program graduates also finished a technological program. I included these two groups with the idea that ex-combatants in each group should have different experiences and interpretations of the reintegration and education processes, which could facilitate capturing different perspectives (Creswell, 2013).

I used a purposive sampling to select participants, and selected strategic participants to answer the research question (Bryman, 2012). The sample included ex-combatants who chose to enter a formal reintegration program offered by the government, and excluded ex-combatants who decided to auto-reintegrate or move into civilian life without institutional support. Ex-combatants in formal reintegration processes are the ones to whom the government offers education. The sampling procedure created a maximum variation (Bryman, 2012) in terms of program type (technological, technical, and short-term courses), previous armed group affiliation, time in the reintegration process, family, and job situation (See Table 2). All interviewees but one had demobilized individually. Nineteen were former guerrilla fighters, and one had belonged to the AUC. All were young adults between 18 and 35 years old.¹ Twelve were female and eight were male. The purpose of the varied sample was to identify differences among

¹ Following current global policy interest in youth, as expressed by the UN Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace, and Security (2015), and the Sustainable Development Goal 4 (UN, 2017), I focused on youth and young adults. The UN and World Bank define youth as those between 15 and 25, while the African Union and many African nations define youth as those aged between 15 and 35 (Lopes-Cardozo & Maber, 2019). For this research I followed Lopes-Cardozo and Maber (2019) who broadly defined youth as those within the second and third decade of life.

the population that could help understand diverse reintegration trajectories, and identify common patterns among participants in relation to educational experiences (Merriam, 2009).

Most interviewees began reintegration with less than a complete primary school education, and received accelerated education during the program. When comparing this sample with the broader population of FARC guerrilla ex-combatants, where 77% were male and 23% were female (CONPES 3931, 2018), this study oversampled female participants to determine whether they face particular challenges and if these challenges have given them a different perspective on the role of education. Previous studies have found that in other contexts, females experienced more social stigma than males during reintegration (Bouta et al., 2005). The participants of this study had a lower educational level, on average, than the general FARC population, in which 57% completed at least one grade of primary school and 21% completed at least one grade of secondary school (CONPES 3931, 2018), and had a lower educational level than the Colombian general population where 83% of the population finished high school (OECD, 2016).

Data Collection

Ex-combatants were the unique data source, as the purpose of this study was to understand how reintegration and education look from the perspective of ex-combatants themselves—their subjective reality—rather than capturing an external perception about the process from technical and vocational institution staff members or policymakers.

I conducted individual, in-depth interviews during a six-month period in Medellín, Colombia. Interviews were individual to facilitate the expression of personal points of view that may be difficult to share in a focus group, to protect the anonymity of participants, and to be

considerate of ex-combatants' time. Interviews were semi-structured and conducted in Spanish, the native language of interviewees and the researcher.

Table 2.

Aggregate Characteristics of Interviewees According to Information Provided in the Interviews

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Values</i>	<i>Number</i>
Ages	18-23	2
	24-29	6
	30-35	12
Gender	F	12
	M	8
Armed Group	FARC	7
	ELN	3
	Guerrilla not specified	9
	AUC	1
Time in the Armed Group	1-5 years	9
	6-10 years	4
	11 or more years	6
	Not specified	1
Time in the Reintegration Process	1-3 years	5
	4-6 years	8
	7 or more	5
	Not specified	2
School Level	5th grade (Primary)	3
	6th-9th grade (Middle)	6
	10th-11th grade (High school)	11
SENA Formation	Short-term courses (less 400 hours)	10
	Short-term courses (400 hours)	6
	Technical program	3
	Technological program (*Also had technical program)	1
Civil Status	With partner	13
	Single	4
	Divorced	6
Children	No children	3
	1 child	6
	2 children	6
	3 children	3
	4 or +	2

Each ex-combatant was interviewed twice. The 40 interviews were conducted between October 2018 and April 2019. Seventeen interviewees were selected with the help of the ARN staff. The other three interviewees were identified through a snowball approach. Participation was voluntary, and no compensation was provided, except the cost of the transportation to go to the interview and one snack that was required by the ARN. These expenses were covered by the College of Education Travel Scholarship I was awarded in Spring 2018.

The interviews took place in two different ARN locations in Medellín. Interviews lasted between 45 minutes and 3 hours. After the first interview, I analyzed the topics that emerged, and identified significant unexpected themes and topics to clarify and deepen in the second interview (Chi, Bulage, Urdal, & Sundby, 2015).

Focus of Interview Protocol #1

This interview protocol, equal for all the participants, included three parts. In *background of the participants*, questions focused on life in the armed group, reasons to reintegrate, and the decision to study at SENA. In *meaning of education*, I asked about ex-combatants' perceptions and feelings about their education at SENA, expectations for the future, motivations to study, and how education connected with their reintegration. In *role of education in the social reintegration*, questions focused on how ex-combatants linked education with family connection, community interaction, development of social networks and roles, and whether ex-combatants experienced SENA as a community. Please see the Appendix for interview protocols.

Focus of Interview Protocol #2

The second interview sought to explore commonalities of the previous interviews and particular topics in more detail. Therefore, the protocol had some shared questions for all the participants, and some questions specific for each interviewed. In *meaning of education*, I asked

if courses met ex-combatants' expectations, and what did access to education mean for them. I also asked about lessons learned in the armed group that could have been useful in the educational process, their experiences as adult students, the importance of the governmental stipend in their motivation to study, and how they overcame challenges to finish TVET programs. In *role of education in the social reintegration*, questions focused on the meaning of reintegration for them, their experiences reintegrating into the city, and their relationship with teachers and classmates. In *specific questions*, topics revolved around family relationships and links with education, and the particular ways they perceived their educational processes and social dynamics.

Memos

After each interview, I wrote separate memos with my own impressions of the interview, reflections about the content of the interviews, ex-combatants' behavior and body language, and interaction with me.

Data Analysis

The analysis of data was concurrent with data collection to identify gaps that should be covered in future interviews, as well as to incorporate new information that could test assumed notions. The process included data examination, development of codes using two-cycle coding to establish patterns (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014), and comparison of details against propositions (Yin, 2014). To develop codes, I used a combination of *emergent* codes that came from the participants, and *a priori* codes from the literature. I used NVivo 12 to facilitate analysis. For the data examination, I listened to the recordings, paid a professional transcriber to transcribe them, revised the transcriptions, and analyzed the data. Translation of the transcribed interviews from Spanish to English took place in later stages.

First Cycle of Coding

I analyzed each interview separately to determine emerging themes. I used *emergent* codes that labeled the key points being made by each participant (Creswell, 2013). The purpose of this stage was to identify ex-combatants' ideas and expectations about education, and personal experiences with education and social reintegration.

Codes about the meaning of education were organized around the ways ex-combatants defined education, their motivations to study, and the expectations, goals, and emotions they attached to education. Preliminary codes were: diploma to have a better job, means of personal transformation, opportunity to become an entrepreneur, way to gain respect from others, acquisition of knowledge, source of money, and requirement to be met. For example, interviewees who were employed as construction workers and janitors and were studying to earn a diploma to work on less physically-exhausting and better-remunerated jobs generated the code "diploma to have a better job." The code "means of personal transformation" referenced interviewees who said they were studying to do "what is right," in opposition to the wrong things they did in the armed group, or to be an example to their children.

Codes about social reintegration were organized around interactions with family, classmates, teachers, co-workers, and ARN staff. Preliminary codes were: friendship with former comrades, distrust in classmates, respectful relationship with teachers, fear, isolation, and family support. To illustrate, classrooms include ex-combatants from different armed groups. The code "friendship with former comrades" references interviewees who explained that in the armed group, comrades were like "brothers" and they were happy to rejoin them in the TVET institution. In contrast, the code "distrust in classmates" referenced interviewees who suspected that classmates could be working in counterintelligence to kill them for defecting, or

interviewees who said that some classmates were still involved in illegal activities and they preferred to keep a distance.

In this stage, I also identified and coded novel themes, such as lack of clarity about the content of short-term courses, difficulties to earn a living during and after training, and isolation, which were useful for disconfirming evidence and contributing to the trustworthiness of the study.

Second Cycle of Coding

In this cycle, I analyzed across cases to find similarities and differences among the participants. I reviewed *emergent* codes, comparing and contrasting them to capture common features among participants, in order to cluster them into a smaller number of categories around significant topics (Creswell, 2013).

Some *categories about the meaning of education* were: a) education to earn a living, b) education to be an employer or an entrepreneur, c) inheritance for children, d) process of moral transformation, e) strategy to solve legal processes, and f) empowerment.

Some *categories about education and social reintegration* were: a) conflicting relationships with classmates, b) friendship with closer comrades, c) educational institution as a transition between war and civilian life, d) educational institution as a ghetto, e) isolation as protection, as self-decision, and as a result of domestic violence, f) social acceptance, g) social stigma, h) threats, i) family as a support network, and j) working relationships. I selected the most prevalent and relevant categories to answer the research questions.

Analyzing commonalities among ex-combatants' novel themes that appeared were related to the contexts in which they lived and their experiences reintegrating in an urban setting. Some shared categories were: a) challenges to reintegrate into society, b) advantages of

reintegration, c) dangerous neighborhoods, d) violent contexts, e) offers to re-join armed groups, f) fears of social rejection and attacks, and 9) children as incentive to persist in the reintegration process.

From Coding to Claims

The third step consisted of identifying the most significant themes imbedded in those conceptual categories. To do it, I determined the categories that were predominant in the data, and the categories that appeared only minimally. Then, I determined the arguments behind those categories to create themes (Harry, Sturges, & Klinger, 2005). Those themes were then compared to a theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) that defines the role of education as certification, socialization, and subjectification (Biesta, 2010); and social reintegration as development of new social networks and supports (Porto et al., 2007), acquisition of civilian identities and behaviors (Torjesen, 2013), participation in community organizations (religious, cultural, civic, political, sports) (Nussio & Kaplan, 2015), feelings of inclusion in the community, and resisting re-engagement in illegal activities (Bowd & Özerdem, 2013). Critical literature about reintegration was also useful to identify the structural constraints that ex-combatants faced, such as violent contexts and unequal socioeconomic systems that hinder the success of TVET programs and reintegration.

Two central themes emerged from the analyses about the meaning of education: education as a strategy to achieve economic aspirations (i.e., employment), and education to fulfill psychosocial aspirations (i.e., respect and recognition, example for children, moral transformation). Three central themes emerged from the analyses regarding TVET and social reintegration: TVET institutions as a transitional place, TVET programs as limited spaces to build new social networks and supports, and structural constraints to social reintegration.

Trustworthiness

To ensure the quality and trustworthiness of the study, I used five procedures: (1) a prolonged engagement in the field, (2) member checking, (3) an audit trail, (4) thick and rich descriptions, and (5) researcher reflexivity (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Regarding the engagement in the field, I collected data over a six-month period with the purpose of giving interviewees time to feel comfortable and safe telling me their stories. This time also helped me as a researcher to become familiar with the participants (Miles et al., 2014), and the ARN and SENA staff. In 2016, I began establishing contact with ARN and SENA staff, including national sub-directors, the general director in Medellín, and the coordinator of programs for ex-combatants who have explained to me the institutional dynamics and the work they do with ex-combatants.

To ensure the credibility of the study, I used member checking (Merriam, 2009). This was a critical procedure because the participants validated the analysis of data (Creswell & Miller, 2000). In November 23rd of 2019, I conducted a focus group with the participants of the research. I tried to contact all the participants, but five changed phone numbers and could not be reached, three moved to other places outside Medellín and could not attend, two did not respond to the invitation, and ten attended the meeting. Among the participants, six were women, and four were men, five were in training at the time of the interviews, and five were graduates. To check the themes, I selected some quotes from the interviews that reflected the main ideas, gave a quote to each participant, and we read and discuss together the themes and their content. During the focus group that lasted 2 hours, participants had the opportunity to comment on the findings and confirm that the material was accurately quoted, reflective of what they said, and adequately represented their views. Some male ex-combatants agreed with the education policy

expectations that provision of education opened opportunities to find jobs, and employment prevented recidivism. The main disagreement was with the category of the meaning of education as a “strategy to gain respect and recognition.” Some of them were explicit in explaining that despite studying, the civilian population continues to see them as dangerous and unreliable people, and mass media continue depicting them as criminals. Therefore, despite accessing education, they preferred to hide their pasts to avoid rejections or situations that could put them at risk. However, others talked about their experiences at work where, after revealing their condition as demobilized, they were accepted. This discussion was useful in confirming the limits of education to overcome the social stigma mentioned in the findings, as well as to confirm some progress in the attitudes of the receptive communities (also mentioned).

The second theme that generated a long discussion was the comparison between the dynamics of the short-term courses, only for ex-combatants, and the technical programs where ex-combatants interacted with the general population, and the effects of these differing dynamics in the development of new social networks. After the discussion, all the students from segregated short-term courses affirmed that to facilitate social reintegration, ARN should locate them in different educational institutions around the city where they could meet different people and avoid social stigma and safety concerns. This feedback served to confirm that the suggestion to revise the provision of education in institutions exclusively for ex-combatants, proposed in the implications for practice, was accurate.

For the audit trail, I contacted Agustin Munoz, an external researcher and expert in the field of reintegration of ex-combatants in Medellín, to review the process and the product of the analysis (Patton, 2002). This person is a local researcher in the program of Psychoanalysis and Social Networks at the University of Antioquia, one of the main public research universities in

the Antioquia state where the research took place. To make this work possible, I provided documentation about the inquiry process by showing him the interview questions, some memos, some codes and categories, and explaining to him the ways in which I collected and analyzed the data. I asked him to identify if the inferences were logical, if there was congruence between the research design and the analysis, and if the category structure was appropriate. He double-coded a portion of some interviews of ex-combatants in training for peer review (Johnson & Christensen, 2000). He gave feedback toward distinguishing different categories of reintegration, taking into account the types of personal transformations experienced by ex-combatants, and clarifying the meaning of education based on those personal transformations. After receiving his feedback, I went back to the analyses and created new categories such as reintegration as rebirth, as adaptation, and as a change in activity, that were key to organizing the introduction of the findings in which I reveal the different meanings of reintegration for ex-combatants, and the expectations toward education within them.

Thick and rich descriptions were achieved by describing ex-combatants and their experiences, contextualizing their situations, and providing as much detail as possible, while avoiding including identifying information that could put them at risk. Details included their experiences, actions, living situations, and renderings of how they felt (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Since the primary aim of in-depth interviewing was to generate data that gave an authentic insight into people's experiences (Crouch & McKennie, 2006, p.485), I extensively used direct quotes in the write-up.

To ensure transparency of research findings, I self-disclosed my assumptions, beliefs, and biases (Merriam, 2009; Creswell, 2014). I brought into dialogue preconceived beliefs such as socioeconomic inequalities as roots of conflict and barriers to reintegration, and the power of

education to create positive transformation, rather than seeking to omit or ignore them. With this exercise, I sought to be aware of my own biases to question them. Also, I informed readers about my position.

Role of the Researcher

I am from Colombia, previous studies of Colombian violence have familiarized me with the context, and Spanish is my native language. In that sense, I interviewed my own “cultural community,” which gave me an insider perspective and personal proximity that foreign researchers might not have. Being an insider facilitated the establishment of contacts in institutions such as the ARN and SENA, acceptance by interviewees, and a better understanding of participants’ narratives and cultural idiosyncrasies (Ganga & Scott, 2006).

The disadvantage of being an insider was my subjective bias against armed groups that comes from working with victims of those groups. From 2000 to 2002, I worked as a social psychologist in a community with victims of guerrilla and paramilitary groups, where I heard first-hand about the human rights violations committed by both groups. As a result, I have a negative perception of both groups. I started out mistrusting and fearing ex-combatants, but the interviews changed my preconceived ideas. I knew about their reasons to join the armed groups, the vulnerable childhood most of them experienced, and the efforts they are making in the present to change their lives and integrate into society. After this research, I continue to support, as half of the Colombian population does (Semple & Casey, 2016), the peace agreement signed between the government and the FARC in 2016. I consider that a negotiated solution, and offering opportunities to rectify inequalities and provide reparation to victims are better solutions to achieve peace than defeating the guerrillas through armed confrontation or incarcerating ex-combatants for years.

In this research I was also an outsider. My position as an educated person living in the U.S. created awareness of the social division that exists between ex-combatants and me, leading to a power imbalance. However, being perceived as a foreigner also helped to build trust because, as happened with Rozema (2008), people assumed that I did not have links with armed groups or the government and I was not an informant, which facilitated communication. Finally, gender could have restrained male ex-combatants from sharing some information with me, as a female researcher, but facilitated communication with female ex-combatants. To mitigate power imbalance, I tried to establish trust through honest conversations (Ganga & Scott, 2006). I self-reflected on my biases while analyzing the data to try to mitigate the interference of my subjective positions in the analysis.

Ethical Considerations

The protection of subjects from harm was ensured and their exposure to unsafe situations mitigated by receiving an IRB approval at FSU and at the ARN, and with the use of an informed consent form. Before each interview, the participants were informed about the research's purpose and scope, the voluntary character of their participation, their right to withdraw at any time, the use of recording devices, and the management of confidentiality making explicit that their identities and names will be changed in all reporting, for their protection. Following this information, participants who voluntarily agreed to take part signed the informed consent form. In each meeting, I repeated that confidentiality would be respected and that they could ask me questions and clarify doubts at any time.

In this study, the risk to subjects under study was minimized because even if the ex-combatants I interviewed were exposed to violence, and perpetuated violence, and some suffered from mental health problems associated with their participation in the war, this was not the focus

of this research. This research explored their present life and their educational processes. I did not ask about sensitive topics such as killings during their time in the armed group, sexual abuse, or drug addiction. Stories about their traumatic past came up when asking them to describe a day when they were in the armed group, or through other moments during the interviews, and some of them cried remembering the things that happened to them. However, no one had an emotional crisis that could have required my training as a clinical psychologist, or use of the ARN psychologists who were previously identified. The risk could have been mitigated because the ex-combatants I interviewed have previously received psychosocial support as part of the reintegration process, and have passed ARN evaluation before pursuing education.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The following section reports on findings from in-depth interviews with twenty ex-combatants (ten in training and ten graduated from TVET programs). To understand the impact of ex-combatants' education on their social reintegration, this section will start by describing the communities where ex-combatants are trying to reintegrate, and how participants understand reintegration. Then, the analysis will show the individual assumptions about education that motivated ex-combatants to engage in TVET. Later, the analysis will explain how, in practice, different TVET interventions had different socialization effects. The section will finish by showing that beyond educational programs and processes, ex-combatants faced environmental constraints that limited their possibilities to reintegrate. The data are organized following a logic that moves from the individual expectations of ex-combatants, to the socializing effects of TVET programs, to finish with the environmental challenges faced by the former fighters during training or after graduation. The individual, programmatic, and contextual elements provide three different but complementary perspectives that help illustrate how access to education can facilitate but also hinder social reintegration. These perspectives also reveal the complex social dynamics present in the Colombian context, in which conflict and post-conflict co-exist, limiting the scope of what education can achieve.

The answers to research question (1)—What meaning does access to TVET have for ex-combatants who are participating in or recently graduated from a TVET institution in Colombia as part of their reintegration process?—were used to identify the assumptions and motivations of ex-combatants to study. The answers to research question (2)—What role, if any, does access to and participation in TVET as an institution play in developing new social supports and networks

to facilitate their reintegration?—helped identify the socialization effects of TVET as well as their limitations.

Understanding the Context: Community Characteristics from Ex-Combatants' Point of View

Two critical elements to understanding how the social reintegration of ex-combatants from armed conflicts is achieved are the individual processes and experiences of former combatants and the characteristics of the receptor communities. Scholars have argued that well-organized and safe communities may support ex-combatants' participation in social groups, and that communities with active social organizations and absorptive capacity could foster ex-combatants' feelings of inclusion (Kaplan & Nussio, 2015). However, during the interviews, ex-combatants described the neighborhoods where they lived as dangerous settings, where social cohesion and cooperation were scarce.

After demobilizing, all the participants of this study moved from rural and isolated areas to a big city, and settled into peripheral neighborhoods. During the interviews, it was common to hear interviewees describe their neighborhoods not as peaceful places organized around rule of law, but as unsafe territories controlled by criminal gangs or paramilitary groups. As one ex-combatant described:

Where I live is very dangerous. There, if you have a problem you cannot talk to the police, you have to talk to “the boys” [gang members] who supposedly rule the neighborhood. The problem will always be fixed with them, not with the police.

(Graduate #10)

In their communities, these criminal groups were the authority and the organizers of social dynamics, and these circumstances made ex-combatants feel constantly at risk for

assassination or re-recruitment. Some of the participants have experienced threats, forced displacement to other neighborhoods, and killings of demobilized neighbors. For instance, the same ex-combatant who described the dangerous place where she was living notes that she was exposed to displacement in a previous neighborhood after her drunk ex-partner revealed her past. She said:

They [gang members] came to my house, threatened me, it was horrible! The boys came and told me, "you cannot be here. You have three days to leave." In those days, I reported the situation to the authorities, left my house, sold everything, and traveled. (Graduate #10)

Others also moved to another neighborhood as a protective measure against attacks, after knowing that there were rumors they were demobilized. Others have not been threatened but were constantly afraid of stigmatization and attacks. As a response, they opted for hiding their pasts and avoiding contact with neighbors or social groups.

Ex-combatants also characterized the communities where they were living as spaces that lacked social cohesion. For them, people in the civilian life did not think in terms of the collective, but lived individualistic lives, only taking care of themselves and their families, and working to survive. One ex-combatant expressed, "Here, in civilian life, each one has to rely on [himself] and do as he/she can. That was very hard for me. There [in the armed group], if someone needed something, comrades helped him" (Graduate #3). This perception reveals a contrast between civilian society and memories of the armed group, in which comrades were united, supported each other, and shared everything. For ex-combatants, reintegration into society required transforming the armed group mindset, in which the individual had to think and

behave as part of a collective, to the civilian mindset, in which they have to think and behave as an individual, be responsible for their fate, and not expect help from others.

Among all the interviewees, only two mentioned the existence of social organizations within their communities, and their participation in the church, and the soccer team. The other participants did not perceive their communities as places where people bounded together, trust each other, and were willing to help each other, but as places where neighbors were meddlers, gossipers, and liked to judge without foundations. As a result, most ex-combatants preferred to avoid interactions with community members as a strategy to stay away from trouble. Under these circumstances, how do they understand reintegration?

What Does Reintegration Mean for Ex-Combatants?

When asked what reintegration means to them, ex-combatants with varying characteristics shared the idea that reintegration was an individualistic process of internal changes. It was also a personal adaptation to existing norms, to find a place in society and gain social acceptance. Reintegration was perceived as a one-way process in which all the changes should come from ex-combatants, while society would stay the same.

Participants explained that reintegration required a mindset transformation that went beyond restraining aggressive and illegal behaviors. Ex-combatants also indicated that reintegration involves the capacity to formulate and undertake personal projects. For them, having aspirations was critical to envisioning a future and distancing themselves from their positions in the armed group when the immediacy of death forced them to live in the present. One participant illustrated these points:

Many times, I wanted to do bad things [to kill], but it's like having the ability to say no, I shouldn't do it, because I already have motivations, things to fight for, finish my studies,

and goals. So it's like refusing those bad thoughts. If I don't do it physically, I also should try to deny it mentally. I imagine that if you can exclude those thoughts from your mind, reintegration is completed. (Student #1)

For many interviewees, reintegration also meant adapting to urban life by learning to behave as others did in the city. Ex-combatants said they observed the way people walked and copied them to unlearn the military march that could be identified by people familiarized with war, such as military and former fighters, putting them at risk of attacks. Copying urban mannerisms, they wanted to hide their past as combatants. They also observed and followed the ways people talk, eat, and dress. With these changes, they wanted to gain social acceptance but also hide their rural roots that some of them found shameful.

Many participants also viewed reintegration as a process of personal adaptation to new social norms such as living without guns, cutting ties with active armed groups, and finding legal employment to earn a livelihood. For them, following this process was a way to gain a place in society. These ideas were consistent with international reintegration parameters, and the different steps that the Colombian government has designed for them in the reintegration route they have to follow as a requirement to become active citizens. For others, adapting to new social norms implied accepting injustices, or learning to live with them instead of fighting them through violence. A mid-rank ex-guerilla fighter spoke about the difficulty of adapting to this situation:

I see a lot of injustices, a lot of abuses by the state, and the police. I fought against that, I had a different ideology, so I have to control myself. I have to adapt to the policies here, I have to adapt to these laws because they are different [...] I have to adapt, but the truth is that it is very hard [...] to adapt to this life seeing so many injustices when I was so much against that. (Graduate #1)

In contrast to participatory approaches that define social reintegration as a two-way process, in which ex-combatants actively participate in civil life and the context also transforms (Buxton, 2008), the interviewees defined reintegration as one-way process. From their perspective, they have to fit into the status quo, without participating in reshaping social conditions, while society stays the same. For them, reintegration meant learning to deal with marginalization. One ex-combatant who identified the roots of the Colombian conflict as socioeconomic inequality, but who did not believe he had a role to play in the transformation of those conditions, explained:

I am not one of those who studied to run the country; So, I don't know if [what I am going to say] it's right or wrong, but there are things that could be improved [...] for example, to have a country without stratification, where everybody is in a single social stratum [...] I was in Panama and in Panama there is no socioeconomic division and you do not see a conflict there. (Graduate #5)

He understood that social stratification and socioeconomic exclusions were the roots of the civilian war in Colombia, but he also understood that the educational options he was receiving would not give him the opportunities and power to transform the system. Accepting injustices and adapting to the status quo shows that, for ex-combatants, the responsibility for change should come exclusively from them, while the existent structural conditions stay untouched. Ex-combatants were not expecting structural or institutional changes; they were resigned to adapt.

Despite commonalities among ex-combatants' beliefs, notions of reintegration diverge according to their particular experiences, which can be divided into three main categories: ex-

combatants who believed they lost their human dignity in the armed group, those who accommodated to the armed group life, and those who saw militia life as a job.

Ex-combatants who believed they lost their human dignity were generally forced to be in the armed group. For these participants, who felt reduced to a “thing” or an “animal” made to follow orders and forced to commit illegal activities and crimes against their will, reintegration was a process to transform from criminals to citizens. One ex-combatant who felt guilty about his actions stated, “To reintegrate is to stop being criminals, as we were, but normal people, like every human being. We are free” (Student #7). For ex-combatants in this group, reintegration was a way to recover the possibility to make choices, take control of their lives, and follow moral norms. Feeling free and behaving guided by values and without harming others helped these excombatants recover their worth as humans.

For ex-combatants who accommodated to life in the armed groups, reintegration meant breaking from the past, forgetting it, and re-adapting. The majority of interviewees fit into this category. These ex-combatants decided to join armed groups for reasons ranging from disrupted or nonexistent families to discrimination and abuses by security forces and illegal groups for living in areas where armed groups were dominant. Once in the armed group, they realized it was not the best solution to their problems, but leaving was not an option because it was forbidden; so they had to adapt. Some of the participants who fit into this category deserted from the armed group, risking being killed in the attempt, because of exhaustion, homesickness, after reaching a personal limit, or after identifying an opportunity to escape. Others wanted to stay, but were captured by the Colombian army and convinced to reintegrate.

Some of these ex-combatants described a lack of contact with the external world while in the armed group, which made them united and homogeneous, following the same strict rules and

working toward common goals. For them, reintegration required learning to co-exist with diverse people and learning new rules. One participant noted, “[in the civilian life] I have found different kind of people or people with different behaviors, so I have had to learn how to live with all of that, with good and bad peoples' behaviors.” (Graduate #5)

For the ex-combatants who adapted to the armed group, but also saw their time there negatively due to living at a distance from their family, reintegration involved restoring relationships with family members. As one ex-combatant explained, “to reintegrate is to live again with the family because I was away from them ... My family even thought the worst of me, that I had become bloodthirsty or bad, but no, I was not” (Graduate #7). For some, that meant returning to supportive families and restoring trusting relationships, while others faced obstacles in going home, as their families were not open to them, or still faced the same disruptive dynamics from which they had escaped.

Additionally, for many participants who belonged to this second group, reintegration meant forgetting the past, choosing not to feel nostalgic about the good times in the group, or choosing not to dwell on negative and traumatic experiences. One ex-combatant expressed that reintegration was “to forget the life there [armed group]” (Student #5), which required time. In general, with all these processes, ex-combatants were trying to have a peaceful life.

Finally, two of the interviewees viewed participation in the armed group as a job; for them, reintegration was simply a change in activity. The following quote by an ex-combatant who worked in construction illustrates this position:

I have been integrated all the time! Reintegrate to what? I was not an animal, I was a human being who understood things, and who distinguished good from bad. We were in a place and we simply had a change of life; it is like leaving a job. There [armed group] I

had to follow orders that were from there; Here, I have to work and I follow orders too.

(Student #2)

For these two men, participation in the armed group was not a degrading activity, but a way of life that allowed them to make some profit; reintegration was merely having the opportunity to work a job that did not place their lives at risk.

The element that distinguished people in these groups from each other was the implication that reintegration had in their lives. For the ex-combatants in the first group who recovered their dignity, the transition from the armed group to the civilian life meant becoming another person, somebody else who was a better version of themselves. They associated their process with images such as “born-again,” or “start from scratch.” Their positive transformation also made them feel that they had something to bring to society, and that their life experience could serve as an example for others. Their conviction was such that two members of this group accepted ARN invitations to participate in public events to build civic awareness about the peace process and the positive results of ex-combatants’ reintegration. In contrast, ex-combatants from the second group experienced reintegration as a change in their socialization, more than as a personal transformation. For them, belonging to an armed group required assimilating and being characteristic of an armed group, while belonging to the civil society required learning new cultures and habits. They changed behaviors, but they did not feel that they were another kind of person. Finally, ex-combatants from the third group were distinguished from people in the previous two groups because for them, reintegration was just a change in occupation that did not have an existential meaning, and did not offer a significant change in the direction of their lives.

To summarize, most ex-combatants shared the idea that reintegration was an internal transformation, and a process of adaptation into existing socioeconomic orders. However, among

the interviewees there were also divergences in the meanings and pathways of reintegration. The differences came from personal characteristics, experiences lived in the armed group and during the transition into society, and contextual factors. Within this framework, it is important to understand the assumptions and motivations ex-combatants have to engage in education as part of their reintegration.

Individual Assumptions about Education and Motivations to Study

The UN (2007) defines reintegration as a process by which ex-combatants acquire civilian status and gain sustainable employment and income. Accordingly, educational programs for reintegration, and especially TVET, seek to develop skills to facilitate ex-combatants' participation in the job market. These programs focus on the economic dimension of ex-combatants, see them as potential agents for economic development, and make presumptions about their interests. However, there is an absence of the ex-combatants' perspectives in programming, making it difficult to know if program discourses and goals align with ex-combatants' aspirations. With the idea that before teaching any lesson, it is critical to know the people at whom the educational program is directed (Serres, 2012), this research asked ex-combatants what their assumptions were about education, and what motivated them to engage in TVET. In their responses, ex-combatants explained that education was important to find employment, but also because they perceived it as a source of respect, recognition, moral transformation, and empowerment.

TVET to Achieve Employment Aspirations

Almost all ex-combatants had rural childhoods marked by socioeconomic marginalization, and limited access to education. After demobilizing and relocating in an urban setting, they realized that their low educational level was an obstacle to finding employment, the

skills achieved as soldiers were not useful in civilian life, and their involvement in the war had left them without assets and experiencing economic hardship. In the interviews, ex-combatants manifested that one of their main motivations to study was to earn a diploma that would help them to find a job and earn a salary. One ex-combatant argued: “There are jobs where you do not have the chance to enter if you do not have a diploma, a training” (Graduate #8). The diploma, as a symbolic piece of paper that could open opportunities for employment, was mentioned more often than studying for learning or developing skills.

Some ex-combatants engaged in TVET because they aspired to work as employee in a company that could offer them social protection and good wages. For these participants, TVET was a means to develop both professional and soft skills necessary to meet the demands of the job market. They recognized the need to acquire theoretical and practical knowledge to perform specific jobs, and to learn how to behave in job interviews and corporate environments, as well as how to relate to co-workers and supervisors.

Other ex-combatants were motivated to study because they wanted to become entrepreneurs. One female ex-combatant currently in training was an example. She said, “I come here because I want to learn. In the future I may have a business, so now I can take note of things that may help me later” (Student #5). These participants had the hope that learning basic accounting, cleaning practices, customer service, information about supply chain, and basic marketing strategies would help them start their own micro-business and prosper.

For ex-combatants already employed in non-skilled and casual labor, one of their motivations to study was to escape from “bad jobs.” They described these jobs as low-paying and physically exhausting (e.g., construction), or low in prestige (e.g., street sweeper). One male ex-combatant who worked in construction, and was in training at the time of the interview,

explained: “I'm working in construction, and construction is a tough job, I can't deny it. I do not want to stay there, in the same place killing myself. For this reason, I decided to study at SENA.”

(Student #7)

For some ex-combatants who in the armed group received training and worked as dentists and nurses, accessing TVET offered them the opportunity to have a more formal education, that in the future could help them enter into professional programs in those areas.

In agreement with education for reintegration discourses, ex-combatants were motivated to study because they wanted to have employment and decent wages, and they had the idea that education was a pathway to achieve those aspirations. Ex-combatants' aspirations were in part driven by material concerns. However, behind those economic interests, they manifested psychosocial aspirations such as being respected and recognized.

Education to be Respected and Recognized

Almost all the interviewees had childhoods marked by exclusions, injustices, violence, and poverty. After joining an armed group, some of them gained power and respect, and all found an organization that covered basic needs. However, after demobilization, they felt they became “nobody.” To find a place in society, they understood they had to become part of a hierarchical social structure based on income, and satisfy their individual needs through work. Within this transition, they saw education as the preparation for performing market-based economic roles, and a tool for social adaptation and social positioning. For ex-combatants, TVET was valuable not only for its connection with employment and income, but because it was inextricably tied to social status and respect. A male ex-combatant currently in training explicitly articulated how education will help him recover the respect he lost after leaving the armed group:

There [in the armed group] you feel powerful, but when you leave, you feel humiliated. Sometimes I think, "If I had a weapon they would not humiliate me like that!" Then I think that if I can have a good job where I can sit down in an office with a diploma, I would have subordinates who will respect me. It's like studying is the weapon I have. With education I can gain respect from others, and people will value me. (Student #1)

For him, as well as others, education was associated with social mobility and social recognition. The importance of education in climbing the social hierarchy was particularly relevant for half of the male ex-combatants interviewed, perhaps because they associated social status with respect. The need for recognition also appeared in previous research showing that young males enrolled in the FARC guerrilla group were motivated by status and the allure of rebel life, compared to a life in agriculture (Simpson, 2018). One of these male, former guerrilla fighters, who was one of the few interviewees with formal employment as a janitor, explained:

I am working in a company where I am earning the minimum wage. But, I am focused on earning more money, and going into a company to occupy a leadership position. That is my goal. I do not want to get stuck there. I want to progress. That is my goal. If I would not have a goal or dreams I would not be studying. (Student #8)

Behind male ex-combatants' aspirations to find well-remunerated jobs and leadership positions was an effort to build a new masculinity and earn respect through the achievement of cultural aspirations shaped by the capitalistic system, instead of through combat.

The association between education, employment, and social respect was not exclusively of ex-combatants interested in becoming employers. Participants in short-term entrepreneurship courses found this type of education appealing because, as independent workers, they could earn a livelihood without associating with or relying on others such as unjust employers. For some of

the participants who had bad experiences working in businesses due to delays in payment, low salaries, long working hours, and rude supervisors, becoming their own boss was perceived as a good strategy to protect themselves from unstable and exploitative jobs. A female ex-combatant who was in training and, due to her personal history of abuses, was very sensitive to situations in which she could be humiliated, found in entrepreneurship an option to escape from subservient positions. She noted:

If you finish high school, and do [short-term] courses or a technical program that is very useful. You can work on your own business ... Have your own things, you don't have to serve anyone, you work on your own. (Student #6)

Following the logic of the capitalistic system, ex-combatants also recognized that through TVET and preparing to work, they could in the future buy their “own things,” and through those things “be somebody in life.” Education, jobs, and purchasing power were desirable not for their materialistic value, but because through them ex-combatants expected to gain social recognition, gain symbolic existence, and be perceived as valuable persons in society. A female ex-combatant who graduated after overcoming many challenges articulated:

If you want to be someone in life, you have to finish education ... With a good job you become someone in life, you get a small house, you have a degree... To be someone in life is to progress and being recognized. (Graduate #6)

Many others echoed this expectation, highlighting the importance of psychosocial needs embedded in the ex-combatants’ motivations to study, and the factors that matter to them.

Despite the high regard ex-combatants had for education, and their hopes that TVET would contribute to righting past marginalization, climbing the social stratification, and improving their present and future lives, the reality of many of them was different. Poverty was still a recurring

challenge mentioned by almost all of the participants. Several were unemployed, others were underemployed, and the ones with formal employment occupied low-pay and low-status positions. However, they were also resilient, able to adapt to different circumstances, and creative to find ways to earn a living.

Regarding respect and recognition, some ex-combatants explained that instead of having positions in which they were treated as equals, they had realized that to keep a job and achieve promotions they have to assume humble and subservient positions with bosses, adhere to workplace norms such as showing a good disposition when performing tasks, and avoid manifesting disagreement.

Moral Transformation

For some ex-combatants, the value of education existed in its capacity for moral transformation. For these participants, education was not merely a process of qualification and training for jobs, or a pathway for social adaptation, but a transformative experience at the personal level. For former fighters who felt guilty for their past wrongdoing, the suffering they inflicted on others, the negative actions they were forced to do or they decided to do, and people they became in the armed group, education offered the possibility of focusing on beneficial activities, distancing themselves from harmful choices, and becoming a better person. A male ex-combatant who regretted what he did in the past argued:

[Having a diploma and a job makes people different] because you are doing the right thing, doing what you should do. Having a weapon is different because you are taking lives. But, with a diploma, you will get your job and teach others what they do not know.

(Student #7)

For him, education was tied to morality and acquiring knowledge tied to helping others. Similarly, for ex-combatants who decided to transform their lives before entering into TVET, education was a supportive tool to succeed in their purposes. For some ex-combatants, the personal transformation began when, tired of war, they decided to escape from the armed group and start a new life; while for others, it was when they had children. Motherhood and parenthood appeared among ex-combatants as one of the most transformative experiences.

Some ex-combatants escaped from the armed group while pregnant, others after having children within the group, and others started their own families at the beginning of the reintegration process. Seventeen out of twenty participants had children. Having a child made them realize they had a new life to take care of, and that this new person—who was a “piece” of them—offered the opportunity to partially repair their own past or at least avoid the repetition of their negative childhood experiences. Those goals made education meaningful. A female graduate of short-term courses who was separated from her first son while in the guerrilla group, and who lived at the time of the interviews with her other three children, described her change:

I'm another person, I have my children, I have someone to fight for. There [in the armed group], I did not fight for anyone. I did not even understand why I was there. Now it's very different; I even want to study. I want to progress; I want to give my children a future. There [in the armed group] they told you what to do, and that was it. (Graduate #10)

Having children gave meaning to her life and the life of other ex-combatants, both women and men, and education was seen as a tool to realize their new goals and family projects. Sometimes, the educational experiences were not positive, and felt like obligations as stated by this female ex-combatant, currently in training: "I do not like studying, I'm too lazy, I hate to

study, but I have to do it for my son” (Student#3). Education, whether enjoyable or burdensome, was meaningful because through it ex-combatant parents could offer their children a more promising future, despite the challenges of the present.

Many ex-combatants also believed that education was a protective factor against negative behavior, poor decision-making, and recruitment into armed groups. Afraid that their children will repeat their mistakes and will experience their hardships, they decided to study and to graduate to become role models to their children. One interviewee who graduated from short-term courses and high school while also taking care of her two children said, “I have that authority to tell my children that they have to finish their education” (Graduate #6). Ex-combatants’ desire to become positive examples for their children, and offering them a protective environment in which to grow up, motivated them to study.

Female Empowerment

Female ex-combatants reported that in the armed group they were treated like men. They received the same military training that men did, carried the same military equipment, and participated in combat. In the armed group they were fighters. In civilian life, the female participants were confronted with the need to build femininity, which in many cases they associated with becoming a good housewife and a good mother. However, when their relationships with partners started to have problems, they divorced, or were abandoned; becoming independent and self-sufficient women was seen as an alternative to being a woman. For female ex-combatants who could not count on their partners’ support, accessing education meant they could take control of their circumstances and gain economic independence.

Guerrilla groups allowed the conformation of couples within the organization, but forbid pregnancies. Some of the interviewees escaped from the group with their partners; others met

former fighters in the reintegration process and started a family, and others married civilians. At the time of the interviews, eleven ex-combatants lived with a partner, five were divorced, and four were single. Relationships with partners were unstable, and almost all the interviewed women reported conflict with their partners. Female participants reported relationship problems such as absence of their partner due to work, infidelity, and extreme domestic violence. Under these circumstances, accessing education was perceived by many female ex-combatants as a way to take control of their own lives and support their children without relying on their spouses. One ex-combatant, who had three children at the time of the interviews, had a husband who worked outside the city and was waiting on the funds to start her business after graduating, articulated:

[I want to] finish well, as a good student, and feeling that I learn something for the business [...] I have to succeed with my [microbusiness] project because my livelihood depends on it. My quality of life and the food for my children depend on the project because you never know, today you have a husband, but tomorrow you do not know.

(Graduate #6)

For her, as well as for other women, education to improve their economic prospects and become independent was important because it decreased her vulnerability. Following the logic of autonomy, some female ex-combatants also associated education with freedom of choice. By accessing TVET, they were able to select the programs and courses they wanted to take, and decide if they wanted to develop a microbusiness plan and in what sector to focus. Through this process of choice, they learned about themselves. In that sense, a female ex-combatant pointed out:

[Studying] I learned a lot about myself, about my values, how I should live in society. It is not like there [armed group] where I lived like a pig, doing what they ordered me to do.

Now, I rely on me, I know what I want, and what goals I have for the future. (Graduate #2)

The possibility to make decisions about their education and what to do with their education in the future gave ex-combatants the sense that in civilian life, and despite constraints, they could decide what to do with their lives. This position contrasted with the alienation experienced in the armed group where they had to follow orders and behave as a collective.

For one exceptional female ex-combatant, education opened the possibility to channel her leadership capacity into the promotion of peace. In the armed group she had a mid-ranking position and was in charge of indoctrinating civilians into the guerrilla ideology. She was captured by the army while she was pregnant and decided to change her life and reintegrate. For her, education became a tool to develop civilian skills, find a job, earn a livelihood, and inspire and support others to change. Through TVET, she learned tailoring and entrepreneurship skills, became economically independent, and supported her children after divorcing a partner because he continued his involvement in illegal activities. Sharing her experiences and success as an example, she inspired neighbors, co-workers, family members, the general population, and ex-combatants who were starting the reintegration process and were living in concentration zones in rural areas. She explained:

I like to give interviews. I have given many, many interviews. I had the opportunity to be with Pearl, the guy who invented peace education [...] We had a way of thinking. Now, being outside, we are spreading awareness, transmitting what we have been receiving [...] Right now, I talk to many comrades who are in the concentration zones, and I explain them why education for peace is better. Education for peace is like generating awareness,

teaching values, tolerance, which many of us do not have [...] I think that [education for peace] could be a great contribution, especially for youth. (Student#10)

By her own initiative, she was in contact with former comrades and tried to convince them to demobilize, or motivated them to persist with the reintegration process. She also promoted the peace process and the education for peace in public events. This empowerment also allowed her to reject proposals to rejoin armed groups. For her, education was not only a process to learn market skills, but also an empowering process in which she learned new values and tools to transform herself and others into good citizens.

To summarize, TVET programs for reintegration focus on the economic dimension of ex-combatants, conceptualize education as a driver of economic participation, and assume that former fighters engage in education because they want to develop skills to access the job market. When asked ex-combatants about their ideas on education and their motivations to participate in TVET programs, they explained that, in agreement with program assumptions, they wanted to improve their economic situation and find a source of income. However, beyond monetary interests, there were also motivated to study because they saw in education a way to gain social status, develop virtues and confidence, and become independent. The realization of these economic and psychosocial aspirations of ex-combatants required social connections, and social acceptance. Therefore, it was important to explore if access to and participation in TVET as an institution helped them develop new social supports and networks to facilitate their social reintegration.

Socialization Effects of Different TVET Interventions

The support that educational interventions receive to facilitate the social reintegration of ex-combatants during reintegration processes is informed by theories of change. Those theories

promote the idea that educational institutions can serve as spaces for mental healing, revise negative perceptions and achieve understanding through the contact of opposite groups (ILO et al., 2016; Simpson, 2018), address grievances originated by injustices and exclusions, and provide legal means to livelihoods (ILO et al., 2016; Simpson, 2018). Educational support is also linked to the widespread idea that if ex-combatants become workers, communities will perceive them as contributors of development and will accept them (IDDRS, 2007). When ex-combatants were asked if and how TVET has contributed to their social reintegration, they explained that participation in TVET institutions contributed to regaining control of their lives and achieving a feeling of normalcy in the civilian life. However, access to different TVET programs had different socialization effects. Short-term entrepreneurship education constrained ex-combatants' possibilities to develop new social networks, while technical programs facilitated the development of new social supports. The following section will explain, through ex-combatants' eyes, their educational experiences in TVET programs.

TVET Institution as a Transitional Place for Psychosocial Recovery

Defecting made most of the interviewees targets for retaliation from armed groups, while the move from the jungle or rural and isolated areas to a large city was disorienting. All ex-combatants described the beginning of reintegration as a difficult time, characterized by economic struggles and fear of being killed or sent to prison. Some also felt angry and irritable, distrustful of all people, and ill-prepared to interact with strangers. For them, access to and participation in TVET, particularly the interactions with a support team of reintegrators, counselors, and teachers, contributed to psychosocial recovery. A female ex-combatant expressed the importance of that support:

People from the technical team are the only ones who take us out of that blinded world we had, and [help us overcome] that shyness, that fear. For me, the technical team was the most important thing when I left that life; otherwise, I would be locked in a house.

(Graduate #4)

Like her, many ex-combatants felt that the ARN support, psychological services, and education, as a package, were critical to overcoming fears, adapting, and developing new social relationships. Reintegrators—ARN mentors responsible for monitoring compliance and supporting each ex-combatant during the reintegration process for up to seven years—were described by many ex-combatants as trustworthy people, offering guidance in defining goals, navigating institutional requirements, understanding the benefits of education, and staying motivated. One ex-combatant who was finishing the short-term courses described:

When I arrived, the reintegrator told me about the [entrepreneurship] project, and to study the 400 hours in SENA for the project. At first, I did not want to do it, [...] but she explained to me that this was useful to find another job. In the beginning, I did not know anything, but she explained to me and then I started. (Student #7)

Reintegrators were also described as supporters in finding employment opportunities and overcoming personal challenges. As a result of this continuous support, most ex-combatants established relationships of trust with their reintegrators.

For ex-combatants, counselors were also helpful in addressing and overcoming fear, anxiety, and distrust that were obstacles to establishing new social links. Psychological interventions also helped participants adjust to new social roles and start transforming their mentality from soldiers to civilians. One ex-combatant highlighted:

After four and a half years without studying, picking up a pencil again and being among people again was too much. The psychologist had to help me a lot because when I went out, I could not stand people. [...] I was too nervous. I heard people and I thought everybody was going to kill me. (Student #3)

Access to TVET and the psychological interventions provided during a sustained period of time helped them to face the challenges of adjusting to new social roles and transforming their mentality from soldiers to civilians.

The majority of interviewees depicted teachers as kind, close, patient, supportive, and helpful in their explanations. Ex-combatants entered into the educational institution afraid of judgment because of their pasts, and wary of being treated with impatience for being adults with low educational levels. In contrast, they found respectful teachers who were willing to teach them and treat them well. One male ex-combatant currently in training stated, “teachers are very tolerant, and look for strategies to be heard and to make students learn something. I have not had any teacher who was rude or impolite. All are very good teachers” (Student #8). Those teachers' attitudes developed their students' feelings of trust, admiration, and affection.

Ex-combatants also perceived the TVET institution as a transitional place for establishing normalcy and learning new norms. For many interviewees, reintegration meant a mindset change—forgetting the past, adapting to new rules, adopting urban manners, and finding a place in society through employment. Access to TVET created routines that helped interviewees occupy their minds and establish normalcy. As a young, male ex-combatant who is studying at SENA and working in the garment industry said,

[When I am] studying, I do not think of anything because I do not have time [...] I think I have a homework I have to do, I think that on Sunday I have to study, I think on Tuesday

I have to come here [TVET institution], that in the month I have an appointment with the psychologist who sees me. Thousands of things, so you do not feel the temptation, [...] I do not think about silly things such as going back there [armed group]. (Student #4)

Access to TVET also helped ex-combatants locate themselves geographically in the city, and familiarize themselves with urban dynamics. Simply going to class at different educational centers pushed them to leave their houses and learn bus routes, sectors of the city, and street names, as well as gave them a chance to observe behavior in daily urban life. Through TVET, participants also learned to discipline their bodies to sit down for long periods of time, control impulses, follow orders, and be humble. One ex-combatant who was finishing short-term courses and had experience working as a janitor in a bank explained,

Before [when I felt humiliated], I wanted to kill the person, whoever he was. I have resentment, anger and I exploded with bad words, as it shouldn't be. Education has given me a way of shaping myself, and to be someone else in life. (Student #1)

Other interviewees echoed the sentiments of change, explaining that through course content, particularly that of the customer service class (offered as an elective in short-term entrepreneurship courses and required in some technical programs), they acquired manners and pro-social behaviors such as negotiating fair deals, honesty, and developing strategies to make people feel comfortable and satisfied. Learning about different kinds of personalities and how to deal with them were useful lessons to help ex-combatants respond politely and avoid conflict with difficult and rude people, not only when making commercial transactions, but also with family members and people in society. Through customer service lessons, they also realized that they needed to improve their characters and temperaments, reduce the rudeness developed as fighters, develop their capacity to listen, and express themselves more clearly. One female ex-

combatant described how she was able to apply the customer service lessons in different social situations: “You need to implement customer service with the clients, but also with family, and with other people that you hardly know, like you and me. There are many things I did not take into account before” (Student #10). The customer service class helped students develop prosocial dispositions, because understanding the client required a shift in perspective from the personal and individual to the perspective of another.

Segregated Short-Term Entrepreneurship Courses

Short-term entrepreneurship courses were taught in an educational institution only for ex-combatants, did not require a prerequisite schooling level, and did not follow a specific sequence. Ex-combatants selected courses according to their interest in the topics. As a result, the class comprised of former fighters of diverse ages, genders, time in the reintegration process, previous armed group affiliations, and educational levels. This program design facilitated contact among former comrades and the re-establishment of networks that aided some ex-combatants’ reintegration into society. When fighters defected, they broke ties with the armed group; studying with close former comrades in the TVET institution made some of them feel safe, happy, and in a familiar environment. One female ex-combatant, who stayed in the armed group eleven years, described these strong connections:

I will not change with them [former comrades], because they were practically like my family. Comrades that I had there and came long before or after me and I met in class - Ah, what a joy! It was so good to see they left [the armed group] - I will never stop sharing with them, and that will never change. (Graduate #9)

After reestablishing relationships, close former comrades tended to work on class activities together and established peer mentor relationships to clarify class content. A few

reported meeting outside classes to have dinner, go to church, or visit each others' homes. This socialization was always linked to civilian activities and created space to talk about their shared past, new lives, and future plans. Those networks were particularly valuable at the beginning of reintegration, when everything felt strange and chaotic outside of the TVET institution, but also provided important support to face multiple challenges during the whole reintegration process. Former comrades' support went beyond academy issues and involved help through difficult life events. One example of this support came from a woman who graduated from short-term courses, was struggling to earn a livelihood from her entrepreneurship project, and was abandoned by her husband during her pregnancy with her second child. She articulated:

[My classmates] were great because we already knew each other from before [armed group]. One who became a very close friend of mine was Rosa [...] We tell each other everything, and she calls me -how are you doing? - And that makes me feel happy.

Sometimes we meet in downtown; she tells me, "come with me to buy a blouse or to see things, I invite you." Right now, we are the best friends. (Graduate #7)

Short-term entrepreneurship courses allowed ex-combatants at different points in their reintegration and training to mix. Through conversation, they exchanged information and experiences about their processes and how to develop business projects. These contacts helped newcomers clarify expectations, learn how to navigate the bureaucracy, and develop microbusiness plans. They also motivated participation and generated trust in the ARN and SENA.

However, friendship with close former comrades coexisted with distrustful relationships toward other classmates who belonged to other guerrilla groups or even to the same guerrilla group but from different factions. All ex-combatants in training shared an overarching concern

for their safety and were skeptical of the intentions of some classmates. "You do not know who is who" was a phrase repeated often by almost everyone. The phrase meant that some classmates could appear to be regular students while secretly performing counterintelligence jobs or maintaining involvement in illegal activities. These fears and suspicions were supported by real events, such as the assassination of one classmate at the entrance of the TVET institution some years ago, an incident mentioned by several interviewees. Mistrust and distance were also the result of receiving offers from classmates to re-join armed groups. One male ex-combatant who received a classmate's invitation to re-engage in illegal activities explained:

I told him "no brother [I will not do it] if you want to go, go ahead"- so, this is why I avoid [interacting with classmates]...I do not talk to everybody because I do not know.

Here we meet, and we are good, but outside, I do not know what are they doing. (Student #2)

To protect themselves, ex-combatants did not exchange phone numbers with unknown classmates, reveal their home address, meet classmates outside the TVET institution, or give details about their lives. These measures hindered the development of new links and the preservation of connections after finishing courses. The segregation was also problematic for people who wanted to cut all ties with their pasts, and did not want to have contact with former fighters. Having all ex-combatants segregated in the same place also made them an easy target for re-recruitment offers from criminal organizations, which easily contact them outside the TVET institution. Some ex-combatants explained that they refused attractive economic offers regardless of their current low-paying jobs because they had decided to change, they felt recognized and accepted in their workplaces, and they valued the peaceful life, family, and projects they had as civilians.

Some graduates also reported that mistrust and confrontations were worse in the past, when the contact between people who belonged to different armed groups did not foster mutual understanding and dialogue, only reproduced the confrontations of the outside war within the TVET institution. One of the alumni explained:

At the beginning [the institution] was horrible [...] in the bathrooms people were stabbed. Here several groups studied together, not only FARC or paramilitary [...] I do not know if teachers believed that because they were here, they were going to like each other, but they are different groups, they have their quarrels, their pending grievances. (Graduate #10)

Beyond relationships inside the TVET institution, short-term courses designed to develop microenterprises at home and self-employment did not facilitate the development of new social networks or supports with the broader population. Instead, they reinforced the isolation and marginalization that the reintegration program attempted to ameliorate. These courses did not require internships, which limited participants' opportunity to connect with companies, formal employment, and people with different backgrounds and involved with different social groups.

The \$2,600 start-up funds that were attached to the culmination of training were barely sufficient to start microbusinesses at home. The money was not enough to rent a place outside the house. Almost all of the women interviewed decided to take short-term courses focused on entrepreneurship education, because for them it was convenient to have a business at home and simultaneously to take care of children. However, this option limited socialization. Four female graduates who were waiting for the micro-credit, one who had started her entrepreneurship project, and two in training reported staying at home focused on their children, communicating only with close family members, and not interacting with neighbors. One of these women

expressed, “I do not leave my house often. I take care of my children, [and] their school. I spend my days at home. I only go out if I have to” (Graduate #6). These women’s isolation was the result of many factors, but access to TVET did not address or transform them. Factors included fear, mistrust of neighbors, the belief that a good and respectable woman should stay at home, unemployment, and poverty. In some cases, domestic violence worsened seclusion. The women’s isolation contrasted with the men's situation. All five men in short-term courses and one graduate socialized and worked outside home as janitors and construction workers. They expected to have the entrepreneurship project as a side source of income, and hire somebody to manage it, but they planned to continue working outside home.

Inclusive Technical Programs

Ex-combatants who pursued technical programs attended TVET specialized centers around the city. These courses were open to the general population, required a high school diploma to enroll, lasted one year, included an internship period, and had cohort structures. The two women and two men who completed technical education at SENA were able to interact with people from civil society who had different experiences than those of war, higher educational levels than average for ex-combatants, and broader social networks and activities. Exposure to this different background opened new perspectives and facilitated trust. A female ex-combatant graduate from a technical program in business management who opened her own store said:

I still talk with classmates. Yesterday I met and talked to one. She does not know about my [past] life. [I keep the links] because they are people that I could need to work. I already know her; I know she is respectful, responsible. (Graduate #2)

Beyond business interests, she also mentioned meeting former classmates to share special occasions such as children's birthdays and baptisms, and to visit each others’ homes. After

graduating, family and job responsibilities, lack of time, and lack of money were obstacles to meet. However, she kept contact with former classmates through social media such as WhatsApp and Facebook.

In technical programs, each ex-combatant was the only demobilized person in their group, and only the director of the program and the teacher knew they were in the reintegration process. This situation allowed them to hide their pasts and assume new identities. A male ex-combatant who finished the technical program in motorcycle mechanics and a technological program in industrial mechanics said, when asked about the relationship with classmates, "I was normal, we hung out, we played football, we met to do homework" (Graduate #8). For him, being "normal" meant behaving like a regular citizen. His interaction with people outside class contrasts with the restricted relationships of students in short-term courses. After graduating, he kept in touch with former classmates to play soccer and fix their motorcycles.

In technical programs, ex-combatants studied with motivated people who were interested in learning, such as employed workers who wanted to continue their education and people with higher educational levels than regular ex-combatants. In some cases, these classmates helped ex-combatants with the classes in which they felt weaker, such as mathematics or information technology. One female ex-combatant, who graduated from an administrative assistant program and who had difficulties with math, expressed, "I had very good classmates, so they helped me" (Graduate #9). Thanks to this academic support, she was able to graduate.

Technical and technological programs also offered safer spaces than short-term courses. None of the four interviewed mentioned receiving proposals to join armed groups from classmates, meetings with illegal organizations near the TVET institution, or threats. However, as were the participants in entrepreneurship courses, they were cautious and selective in their

interactions with classmates and kept their pasts a secret. One male ex-combatant who graduated from a technical program in records management and who only talked with one classmate explained, “there [in the armed group] we had to fight for survival, we had to be together [...] I really knew who we were. By contrast, here I do not know who is who, that's the big difference (Graduate #1). Similar to ex-combatants from short-term courses, he only trusted closer comrades.

The technical programs required a six-month internship in a company, which served as a bridge to the job market. Before and after internships, SENA prepared ex-combatants for interviews, interactions in the workplace, and connected them with employers. For participants, internships connected them with new people, familiarized them with productive environments, and helped them to adjust to social norms. One interviewee noted:

[Working in] the company shapes you. As human beings, we are rebels, and we want to do all that we want. However, when you start working in a company you learn that there are norms, rules, schedules, restrictions. (Graduate #8)

This male technician, as well as another male ex-combatant, mentioned that employment helped them to learn to respect rules and shaped their personalities. During internships, the four technical program participants developed new social networks and, after finishing, they found legal employment through classmates, supervisors, or teachers' references. One ex-combatant explained how the participation in a technical program, and the contact with SENA people, gave her the social connections she lacked in the city to find a job:

I got my first jobs through the program [...] That's very good because it is easier to find a job through them [SENA]. Many times when you are not there, you do not have influences, you send your CV, and they take a long time to call you. Sometimes they do

not even call you. So I think that through the program, there is more chance to get a job.

(Graduate #9)

Employment allowed interviewees to become the providers of their families, and feel they could have a place in civilian life, achieve economic stability, and overcome feelings of marginalization. However, their employment and living conditions were very fluid. At the time of the interviews, two of them were again unemployed and struggling to meet their basic needs.

Access to technical programs helped ex-combatants build new social networks. However, only four out of the twenty interviewees were able to participate in this level of education, and only two of the four wanted to continue on to college. These two believed a technical diploma was not enough to climb through the country's social stratification. One of these participants expressed her frustration with the training she received:

They should help us to go to the university and not distract us with a technical program [...] What I learned helped me a lot in terms of the work I am doing now, but talking about what will happen in the future, if people have a high school diploma, the program should help them to go to college right away. (Graduate #2)

The reintegration program promotes the idea that having a technical diploma and a job will allow ex-combatants to save money and pay for higher education if they want to continue studying. However, the two ex-combatants who wanted to pursue a college degree were frustrated because they realized that with the economic limitations they face and the lack of ARN support to enroll once the reintegration process was concluded, going to college would be a challenging task.

After finishing the technical program, ex-combatants were allowed to develop a business plan, in agreement with the education received, and apply to the \$2,600 start up fund. Three out

of four ex-combatants did this process and started their microenterprises. Two of these projects failed, and one was working well. The mechanic quit his job to open his own shop, but profits were insufficient to make a living. He kept the shop as a hobby and searched for employment again. The administrative assistant started a micro grocery shop at home, but the business lost money when she gave credit to too many customers. After this failure, she also sought employment. The woman working in the retail company started a miscellaneous shop at home where she applied what she had learned in her job. She and her son managed the shop, but she continues in her formal job. After receiving the capital, the ex-combatants were expected to manage the business on their own. Lack of institutional follow-up and assistance, along with the structural constraints of a precarious economy and the lack of social connections to attract enough customers may have contributed to these failures, and to the lack of socioeconomic mobility even in ex-combatants who finished technical programs.

Environmental Constraint to Reintegration: Social Stigma

Contrary to reintegration policies and programs that expect communities will be more receptive to ex-combatants who go through educational processes (UN, 2006), most ex-combatants felt that going through TVET had not helped them gain social acceptance and had not decreased stigmatization or discrimination. Ex-combatants considered that no matter what they did, people would continue to see them as dangerous, unreliable fighters, despite their belief that their behaviors have changed. When asked whether giving people information about their educational process could contribute to changing this negative perception, most were skeptical. Their opinions were supported by perceptions of discriminatory treatment during internships, and their experiences with rejection when applying for jobs after finishing TVET programs. One ex-combatant who decided to become an entrepreneur said, “When there were job fairs, I went and

took my CV, but one day I felt rejected because right there they said ‘ah, are you from the ARN? We will call you later’ [but they never did it]” (Graduate #7). Ex-combatants also perceived social stigma in their daily lives, when listening to conversations on mass transit, and hearing mass media in which they were depicted as killers, kidnappers, and terrorists. One female ex-combatant noted:

Many times, traveling in the subway or on the bus, I have heard people giving opinions, talking. They depict us [ex-guerrilla fighters] as the worst, and I say, "oh my God, if they knew that we are people like them. (Graduate #3)

Some participants felt frustrated after exclusions because they felt the urban population was unaware of the conflict in the rural areas and the experiences of abuses and violence that pushed those living there to join armed groups. They also felt discouraged because the civilian population did not recognize their efforts to change and denied them the opportunity to build another life. For some ex-combatants, the overgeneralized negative perceptions about them excluded their human side with which the population could have identified. Some ex-combatants also felt stigmatized in their neighborhoods. In response, they opted to hide their previous life and avoid contact with neighbors, social groups, and even in-laws. However, not all participants thought stigmatization was undeserved. Some recognized the suffering that armed groups to which they had belonged had caused in the civilian population.

A few ex-combatants were optimistic about the possibilities of gaining social acceptance and about changes they saw in society. Some of the participants recognized ARN’s efforts in raising awareness among employers about the positive impact they could generate by giving ex-combatants opportunities. A few participants were aware of ARN activities to reduce social

stigma by meeting employers and ex-combatants to dialogue, question biases, and share positive stories of working ex-combatants. One woman described the results of those activities:

When the reintegration program began, companies did not receive them [ex-combatants], under any circumstance. So, what did the government and the professionals have to do? Talk to these companies, and [...] make them realize what was happening in the country. [Now] thanks to God, people like us have many opportunities. (Graduate #4)

However, these participants recognized that those were just emerging results, and more work had to be done to inform the community about ex-combatants' efforts to change. While some participants thought the government should take greater steps to reduce stigmatization, the exceptional female leader ex-combatant believed she had the power to transform marginalization into acceptance. She shared her stories as a guerrilla fighter, the psychological, behavioral, and spiritual transformation she experienced through reintegration and motherhood, and gave testimony to challenge negative stereotypes, gain acceptance at work, and become an example for her co-workers. Another male ex-combatant accepted an ARN invitation to share his positive social reintegration experience in a public talk with people from the international community. Another two interviewees expressed their desire to work on reparation activities and youth violence prevention, but they did not know how to engage in it. For the other participants, going unnoticed and hiding their pasts were the best survival strategies.

To sum up, access to and participation in TVET as an institution facilitated psychosocial adjustment of ex-combatants. However, different TVET courses and institutional dynamics had different socialization effects. Ex-combatants who graduated from technical programs were able to develop new networks, study with diverse classmates in safe spaces, and smoothly transition to the job market. These experiences contrasted with the limitations that ex-combatants from

segregated short-term entrepreneurship courses confronted in developing new social supports. Despite education, participants still perceived that communities stigmatize and exclude them. As a response, all but two interviewees decided to live in anonymity and isolation, perpetuating the social distance between ex-combatants and the receptive communities.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to explore the meaning of education for ex-combatants and examine if access to TVET contributed to their social reintegration, placing ex-combatants' voices at the center of the analysis. In the study, ex-combatants revealed that they valued education and were motivated to study because they believed they could gain social positioning, social acceptance, and empowerment in addition to improving their employment opportunities and economic situation. Findings also illustrated how access to and participation in TVET provided opportunities for individual psychosocial recovery and adaptation to civilian life. Ex-combatants' experiences highlighted that different TVET institutions have different socialization effects, and that TVET programs have the potential to enhance, but also to undermine, processes of social cohesion. The study also indicates the limitations of TVET to address structural conditions such as violent environments and social stigma that hinder the social reintegration of ex-combatants into communities. The following chapter provides a discussion of key findings of the research while highlighting main conclusions that this study has reached. The chapter concludes with the study limitations, implications of the study, and future research agendas.

Discussion

Psychosocial Aspirations Motivate Ex-Combatants to Study and Reintegrate

Ex-combatants framed education as a factor able to contribute to their needs of social connectedness and positive personal transformation. While participants were concerned with employment and decent wages, their primary motivations for education were to be respected and recognized, to set an example for their children, to experience a moral transformation, and to develop autonomy. These personal motivations and the hope for a better future were the main

reasons to study and to stay in civilian life. These findings show that TVET's assumptions that ex-combatants are only motivated by material factors such as money and employment are too reductionist. These findings mirror other research findings that disengaged youth, and youth who engaged in armed groups to protect themselves against abuses and injustices, want to build social links, achieve social inclusion, and overcome marginalization (King, 2018; Mercy Corps, 2015).

Ex-combatants had high expectations that education could positively impact their lives, help them build a new identity, and establish their place in society. The participants were committed to studying because they found in TVET a way to fulfill their aspirations. Interviewees' decisions to start a different life, their desire to take care of their family, and their desire to develop a sense of belonging and recognition were the main reasons to reject attractive economic offers to re-join criminal organizations. This finding offers a more nuanced understanding of ex-combatants' motivations than TVET policy assumptions that addressing grievances and offering job opportunities is enough to reduce ex-combatants' incentive to re-engage in illegal activities (ILO et al., 2016).

In concordance with UN parameters (UN, 2006), the participants of this study believed that being able to earn a livelihood and provide for their families were ways to gain social respect, build new identities, and develop self-esteem. Ex-combatants had high hopes that going to TVET would help them find dignified jobs or start productive micro-businesses, allowing them to cover personal and family needs, and build worker and civilian identities. Despite these modest expectations, most of the interviewees were living in precarious conditions and working in unstable and low-paying jobs or unemployed. Economic disempowerment affected ex-combatants' sense of well-being and personal development. In the case of self-employment and entrepreneurship, half of the participants were still in training and it was too early to know if

their projects would succeed. However, the experiences of a few graduates who tried and failed to start microbusinesses showed that as entrepreneurs, ex-combatants did not have the social protection of a formal job and faced the psychological and economic tolls of job precarity. As other research has shown, ensuring that TVET interventions help to overcome poverty and the structural conditions that generate inequality continues to be a challenge (Blattman & Ralston, 2015; Simpson, 2018). For some scholars, the failure of education to contribute to employment is that it targets poverty, but ignores inequality, and leaves untouched the model of development focused on growth-oriented policies (Bonal, 2016).

Contrary to studies that have shown that unrealistic expectations about educational outcomes and lack of job opportunities following TVET interventions exacerbated ex-combatants' frustrations and grievances toward educational, sociopolitical, and economic systems (Jennings, 2007; Matsumoto, 2011); this study found that when ex-combatants analyzed their circumstances and the obstacles to reaching their goals, they often blamed themselves for the failures, and believed that their mistakes or specific environmental conditions prevented their progress. The analysis of ex-combatants' attributed meaning to education revealed a paradox. On the one hand, ex-combatants had high expectations that accessing TVET would help them gain recognition and become autonomous, and those hopes motivated them to access education. On the other hand, ex-combatants realized with passivity and acceptance more than with frustration that education was a mechanism for adapting them to the existing dynamics, the requirements of a hierarchical social structure, and the demands of the occupational marketplace that only offered them unstable jobs, and lower wages. They understood that to find a place in society they have to become workers and consumers, learn to satisfy their individual needs, and learn to deal with poverty and injustices without violence. For some ex-combatants, these conditions to fit into

society became an obstacle to developing a sense of social belonging, and reproduced feelings of social exclusion.

For Biesta (2010), this type of education that is only interested in inserting new people into the existing sociocultural, economic, and political orders, but that does not have an interest in transforming those orders, making people independent, or establishing processes of recognition of what the newcomers have to teach, is “uneducational.” To support the social and economic reconstruction needed in post-conflict contexts, education should “include” ex-combatants instead of “integrating” them. Inclusion implies a process of mutual recognition in which both ex-combatants’ voices and community needs are heard to build new conditions of co-existence. In contrast, (re)integration implies a returning to the status quo. The return to normality or the order that already existed is problematic because, as Davies (2003) explained, this status quo led to the crisis in the first place.

TVET Institutions as Transitional Places for Psychosocial Healing and Adaptation

At the individual level, ex-combatants expressed that going through TVET and receiving support from a team of reintegrators, counselors, and teachers contributed to addressing their mental health needs, including overcoming fears, learning to socialize with strangers, and adjusting to civilian and urban life. For some, TVET also helped them transform mindsets and behaviors, learn values, control impulses, and learn how to express themselves and relate with others, which contributed to social adaptation. These findings are consistent with reintegration policies that recognize the importance of psychosocial assistance (UN, 2006), and empirical studies that have shown that educational institutions can become protective places able to facilitate psychosocial adjustment (Betancourt et al., 2008). Also, in agreement with Dryden-Peterson (2016) who argues that education provides more than protection, ex-combatants

explained that access to and participation in TVET helped them identify hopes for the future and goals that drove them to move forward.

Ex-combatants did not constitute a homogeneous group. Each ex-combatant had different lived experiences and personal aspirations, and was exposed to different factors that required multiple reintegration trajectories. This diversity indicates the need to move beyond the binary that defines ex-combatants as either perpetrators of violence or victims, to recognize their singularities and their potential to become agents of change. In an applied sense this means that education interventions should consider ex-combatants as people able to shape their own lives and generate social transformations, and not only as security threats or people who need assistance. Some of the participants in this study expressed their feelings that they could give back to society, become role models for their children, and contribute to social change and conflict prevention by sharing their experiences. Ex-combatants' peacebuilding potential should be used to empower them, enhance their peacebuilding capacities, and facilitate relationships with social groups. This finding is in agreement with other cross-country research on youth that has revealed their potential for positive change and peacebuilding in conflict contexts (Lopes-Cardozo et al., 2016a; Simpson, 2018). The question is then how to mobilize TVET to support ex-combatants' engagement in peacebuilding and conflict resolution processes, beyond developing their productive capacities.

Different TVET Interventions Had Different Socialization Effects

At the programmatic level, the analysis of the experiences of ex-combatants attending different TVET institutions revealed that entrepreneurship education programs with participation limited to ex-combatants reinforced social exclusion instead of facilitating the establishment of new social networks, while technical programs with diverse student populations encouraged

social reintegration. These findings support policymakers and scholars' calls to reduce segregation in educational institutions as a means of addressing mistrust and increasing social cohesion in divided societies (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000; Simpson, 2018).

Short-term entrepreneurship courses reinforced social exclusions. Short-term entrepreneurship courses designed exclusively for ex-combatants that segregated former fighters from non-ex-combatant students strengthened ties among former comrades, but did not foster understanding between ex-combatants from different armed groups or between ex-combatants and the broader community.

Contrary to the theory of contact, which suggests former enemies can contribute to conflict reduction (ILO et al., 2016), this study showed that placing ex-combatants from different armed groups within the same institution did not foster respect, mutual understanding, or dialogue, but reproduced social divisions and in some cases led to violence. This could be because simply putting groups together is not enough to improve co-existence. To achieve understanding, scholars have identified that it is necessary to have prolonged social contact, curricula and pedagogies that foster deep engagement, and organized cooperation toward common goals (Bekerman, 2016). In the short-term courses, all ex-combatants from different factions had the same status and were treated by teachers as equals, which is an important condition to promote intergroup contact. However, the development of sustained interaction between participants—which is considered another condition to self-disclosure—and friendship building was difficult because courses had a short duration, and each course mixed new students. Moreover, lack of contact among ex-combatants had roots in suspicion about the real intentions of some classmates and fears of retaliation rather than in divergent political or ideological ideas.

To better know others, deconstruct false conceptions, and build trust, the contact theory suggests engagement in meaningful shared tasks in which different individuals and groups could question negative perceptions and discover the advantages of cooperation (Duffy & Gallagher, 2016). However, the class activities mentioned by ex-combatants were limited to specific workshops about course content and did not include projects that would require deep relationships. Moreover, the curriculum was focused on cognitive content more than emotional or relational content. The curriculum sought to prepare ex-combatants to become entrepreneurs and teach them specific knowledge related to micro-business development; it was not designed to improve relationships or model different forms of living together.

Short-term courses designed to help ex-combatants develop micro-enterprises at home limited opportunities to develop contact with external groups because they did not include internship experiences. Internships could have promoted opportunities to develop new social networks or establish cooperation between groups, which could help participants build trust or feelings of inclusion in their new urban communities. Moreover, while waiting for the micro-credits, ex-combatants remained isolated at home. This situation was particularly prevalent among female ex-combatants who preemptively withdrew from society to avoid rejection, hide the domestic violence some of them experienced, avoid neighbors' judgments, or to conform to what they perceived should be their new social roles as women. This situation differs from what was found in contexts such as Northern Uganda, Sierra Leone, and Mozambique, where female ex-combatants were trying to gain social acceptance and build social networks but communities actively rejected them (McKay & Mazurana, 2004). As Annan and Brier (2010) have shown, female ex-combatants experience multiple levels of gender-based violence and inequalities after

war. Further research to understand the different effects that TVET interventions have on women and men is needed.

With entrepreneurship projects, many ex-combatants planned to cover individual needs, assist family members, and build an inheritance for their children. These goals showed that for ex-combatants, family was an important social network. In general, ex-combatants who had good relationships with family before joining the armed group reestablished links with relatives, while the ones who had difficult relationships with family before joining an armed group maintained distance during reintegration. In that sense, family support and family acceptance was not the development of a new social network, but the recovery of past ties. Having children and starting their own family could be a positive indication of social reintegration as well; however, these social bonds were generally restricted to the closest relatives and did not extend to the broader community.

Contrary to policies that warn against the risk of preserving hierarchical structures and ties among ex-combatants, as they may increase the risks of recidivism (UN, 2006), this study found that re-establishing ties with former and close comrades was a constructive social support in their transitions to civilian life. This finding is in agreement with those of De Vrais and Wiegink (2011), who found that the bonds developed during war could contribute to social rehabilitation. However, these relationships are old social ties in a different context and with different purposes, and may or may not serve ex-combatants well in their new lives.

Technical programs facilitated new social networks but limited social mobility.

Contrasting the experiences of ex-combatants in short-term entrepreneurship courses with those who attended technical programs, this study found that technical programs helped ex-combatants build new identities, relate to civilians, and smoothly transition into the job market. Factors that

facilitated this socialization were exposure to civilians, internships in companies, and being able to “play double” which, as McFee (2016) explains, is a practice in which ex-combatants have two kinds of selves. The demobilized identity allows the individual to access education, while the other is a new identity in which the past is hidden to avoid social stigma. This strategy worked to build new social networks, but did not help create spaces for accepting ex-combatants, questioning stereotypes, or facilitating reconciliation, because classmates and co-workers did not know that they were participating in education with people who were in the process of reintegration.

Studying by cohorts, and sharing spaces in classrooms and internships with people from the broader community, facilitated the development of social capital—defined by Putman (2001) as networks and trusting relationships. These social networks that were informal and emerged organically influenced ex-combatants’ social and economic outcomes. While studying, the participants in technical programs felt more socially connected than students in short-term courses, and after graduating most of them found employment through the new networks. Over time, commercial transactions such as fixing the motorcycle of a former classmate or plans to hire a former classmate also showed the development of reciprocity links, and capacity to return benefits.

Despite technical programs facilitating the establishment of new social networks and supports, only a few ex-combatants reached this level of training due to the high school education prerequisite. Moreover, access to technical education was not sufficient to fulfill the aspirations of some of the ex-combatants, who wanted to access higher education to achieve the educational credentials they needed in order to get ahead in the social structure and gain social mobility. For ex-combatants interested in pursuing higher education, lack of economic resources

and lack of social support to navigate the administrative requirements to enroll in college were main obstacles.

Despite differences, both types of TVET programs (short-term and technical) were preparing ex-combatants to live as individuals, compete for social positions, and become workers able to support themselves without relying on or helping others. TVET programs did not focus on preparing citizens to live with others and orient toward the common good. Rather, education was a mechanism for adapting ex-combatants to the requirements of the hierarchical social structure and the logic of the capitalist system that promotes the satisfaction of private wants and individual interests. This process of social adaptation through education shows a paradox. In the armed groups, the confrontation against a common enemy created strong ties among combatants and the influence of Marxist ideologies organized individuals' lives around collective purposes. By contrast, reintegration into society required shifting to an individual way of thinking and behaving, and the construction of a new subjectivity in which the search for private goods was the priority.

TVET Programs Failed to Help Ex-Combatants Overcome Environmental Constraints

At the macro level, this analysis reveals that TVET programs are insufficient to help ex-combatants overcome social limitations due to the violent contexts where they are currently living and their perception of social stigma. In the interviews, it was common to hear that ex-combatants lived in neighborhoods controlled by armed groups, placing them at risk of re-recruitment or attacks. To protect themselves, they avoid interaction with strangers, assume passivity as a strategy, decline participation in community organizations, and live in anonymity. As Kaplan and Nussio (2015) demonstrate, the social organization of the receptive communities and their absorptive capacity are critical factors to understanding the social reintegration of ex-

combatants. This study found, in alignment with previous research, that unsafe environments and the fear of being stigmatized push ex-combatants to either stick together as a safety-seeking strategy (Kaplan & Nussio, 2015), or to isolate, avoiding civic engagement and contact with other ex-combatants perceived as threats (Nussio, 2011). In contrast, participatory communities facilitate the social reintegration of ex-combatants.

This study also elucidates that, in general, ex-combatants perceived that access to TVET did not transform the civilian population's belief that they were dangerous and unreliable. Individual reintegration is inseparable from community status. However, this challenge for social reintegration has been left unaddressed by TVET. Similar to King's (2018) findings, when analyzing the limitations of employment programs to overcome the structural factors that affected the socialization of disenfranchised Kenyan youth, this study shows that making ex-combatants totally responsible for the social reintegration, while overlooking the social contexts, is unjust. TVET programs need to not only focus on ex-combatants, but on community frameworks that both support the occurrence of violence and hamper the reintegration of ex-combatants (Porto et al., 2007; UNDPKO, 2010).

As a result of violent contexts and the perceived social stigma, ex-combatants understood reintegration as a process of demilitarization, psychosocial recovery, and personal adaptation to new social norms and urban life. They did not perceive reintegration as a two-way process in which they were changing while society was also transforming to be able to receive them. This one-way interaction did not introduce new patterns of social relationships. This situation may decrease violence because fewer people are exercising force through guns, but it hinders the possibility of developing a better society and transforming the conditions that generate violence. A democratic society defined as “a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated

experience, and not exclusively as a form of government” (Dewey, 1916) requires organizing individuals toward cooperative activities, deliberation, and collective decision-making to achieve collective goods (Biesta, 2010). This union is only possible through the development of social trust and social networks. Similarly, peaceful coexistence requires agreements to respect collective norms, the ability to place confidence in others, even in strangers, and the desire to cooperate with others in pursuit of common objectives (Green & Janmaat, 2015).

In societies divided by war, such as Colombia, social cohesion also requires reconciliation processes. The participants of this study mentioned the utility of the customer service lessons to learn how to interact with others in the civilian life. Applying strategies to negotiate and solve conflict in peaceful ways could be a first step to establishing good relationships with others. However, reducing human interaction in pursuit of individual self-interests is a utilitarian way to relate with others, and a type of relationship that fails to appropriately face the complexities of reconciliation. Exchange interaction with market purposes does not provide the tools to accept wrongdoing, ask for forgiveness, and deal with the pain, grievances, and depression of victims.

The limitations of TVET to facilitate socialization in violent contexts and to help overcome social stigma show that this educational strategy ignores the social contexts in which ex-combatants live. It also demonstrates the shortcomings of an education for individual economic development to address social problems and build social cohesion. Finally, it also reveals that education cannot solve conflict on its own, embedded as it is within sociopolitical and economic contexts.

Implications

Implications for Research

The findings of this study have implications for how research is conducted in reintegration processes, what role education can play in ex-combatants' transition to civilian life, and how future approaches could contribute to building a theory of reintegration.

Methodologically, there is a need to include participatory research strategies to narrow the gap between ex-combatants' individual needs and institutional processes to develop more sustainable and effective educational programs (Lopes-Cardozo & Scotto, 2017; Novelli & Lopes-Cardozo, 2008). This research, which sought to better understand ex-combatants' perspectives and motivations for pursuing educational programs, is the first step toward more inclusive research in which ex-combatants should be part of research projects' designs and execution. Incorporating the voices, interests, ideas, and proposals of TVET stakeholders, who are often left out of policy and programmatic discussions, is critical to understanding how to better align TVET programs with ex-combatants' expectations and how to respond to their aspirations.

This research explored the role TVET played in developing ex-combatants' new social supports and facilitating their reintegration. In post-conflict contexts, education can have contradictory faces. On the positive face, it can open spaces for understanding, transforming attitudes and behaviors, and improving relationships between people who had been antagonists (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000). This study showed that TVET contributed to helping ex-combatants set goals, develop capabilities, and facilitate individual psychosocial healing. Technical programs also contributed to the development of ex-combatants' social capital. However, education can also have a negative face and contribute to perpetuating inequalities and exclusions, helping to reproduce divisions (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000). On the negative face, this

study showed how short-term segregated courses encouraged mutual suspicion among classmates, preserved divisions between ex-combatants and the civil society, perpetuated ex-combatants' feelings of discrimination, and put ex-combatants at risk of attacks and invitations to re-join armed groups. This division between ex-combatants and their communities was unintentional, but kept participants isolated. As a result, there is a need to identify how educational programs challenge or perpetuate exclusions to continue implementing practices that positively impact social relations, and transform those that maintain inequality and divisions among groups. Further research should also explore the limits of education in reincorporation processes when countries do not introduce political transformations to run in parallel with educational programs.

There is a need to continue researching to develop a theoretical framework of reintegration. Torjesen's (2013) theory of ex-combatant reintegration is an initial effort toward a conceptualization of reintegration as a process where the personal experiences, perspectives, values, beliefs, and identities of ex-combatants are at the core, instead of the policies or services provided to them. To develop a grounded approach to reintegration, and to find connections between ex-combatants' experiences and sociocultural, political, and economic contexts that enable and constrain civilian life, Torjesen (2013) suggests using concepts from political economy and sociology. For her, both disciplines contribute elements to the understanding of issues of power and group belonging. The political economy identifies the systems of power, protection, and profit, as well as the networks that combatants gained while in the militia and how this social capital is used or left behind in peacetime. Moreover, sociology offers conceptual elements to analyze how processes of group belonging operate, which illustrate ex-combatants' transitions from an armed group to civilian community and family groups. These two disciplines

help to make sense of context, social dynamics, and constitution of networks. However, political economy and sociology do not explain the practices used to structure identities and power relations, and how these practices influence ex-combatants' experiences. To understand how identities and social dynamics are formed, Torjesen's (2013) proposal should be complemented with anthropological studies, and specifically with the anthropology of education that demonstrates how educational institutions transmit cultural values and norms that shape individual and collective identities (Levinson, 1999). This research, exploring how ex-combatants understand their reintegration processes via educational programs, was a contribution toward this effort. However, more empirical and theoretical research is needed to build a solid theory that helps interpret how ex-combatants are socialized through formal and informal educational processes, and how these processes coincide or diverge in post-conflict contexts.

Implications for Policy

Reintegration policies should include the psychosocial aspirations of ex-combatants. While underlining the importance of TVET for the economic empowerment of ex-combatants, educational policies for reintegration should include a broader framework to incorporate psychosocial aspirations of ex-combatants and needs for social acceptance and inclusion. Economic aspirations are just one determinant of human action. Understanding ex-combatants only as human capital for economic development, and education as a means for economic participation and economic growth, is a limited perspective to achieve ex-combatants' desire for social belonging and respect. An exclusive focus on the economic perspective also overlooks ex-combatants' potential to contribute to peacebuilding. More holistic educational policies that formulate channels for economic participation, but also strategies to achieve ex-combatants'

personal hopes, desires, and psychosocial aspirations, could facilitate the challenging task of reintegration.

To help build community, educational policies should promote the creation of common interests and common goods instead of only promoting education for employment and to satisfy individual needs. Educational policies should also consider how to include communities to facilitate reintegration. Social reintegration is the foundation of all other forms of reintegration, including economic and political (CCDDR, 2009). The low impact of TVET on reducing social stigma and establishing new social links shows the limits of education when the policies only target ex-combatants while disregarding the other constituents of society. These findings extend the scholarship that conceptualizes the need to implement educational policies that not only focus on ex-combatants but also involve the needs and perceptions of local communities (UN, 2007; CCDDR, 2009). TVET policies should continue to increase contact and interaction between ex-combatants and their communities, not with the reductionist purpose of providing opportunities for mutual material development alone, but for the more complex task of opening possibilities for the development of mutual trust and cooperation. To make social inclusion possible, ex-combatants should demobilize and societies should also transform to include them (Porto et al., 2007).

In the case of Colombia, one way to connect ex-combatants with communities is articulating different educational policies, such as the 2008 reintegration policy and the 2015 peace education policy. On the one side, the 2008 reintegration policy includes directives to provide TVET to ex-combatants and requires ex-combatants to perform 80 hours of mandatory community service to implement reparation activities. Usually, to fulfill the reparation requirement and gain social acceptance, ex-combatants perform symbolic activities such as

restoration of public spaces and participation in sporting events (Kaplan & Nussio, 2015). On the side of community participation, the 2015 peace education policy requires mandatory peace education courses in all public and private schools of the country from Pre-K to 11th grade, and suggests that higher education institutions implement the course as well (Order 1038, 2015). The peace education seeks to “rebuild the social fabric” of the country by promoting knowledge about the national territory, developing a historical memory about the conflict to avoid repetition, and developing competencies for living together in a peaceful way (Order 1038, 2015). Both the reintegration policy and the peace education policy aim to promote peace, reconciliation, and peaceful resolution of conflict, but are disarticulated. One way to connect them could be to ask ex-combatants to complete the 80 hours of community service by going to schools to contribute to the peace education program, by giving testimonies, helping younger generations understand the characteristics of the conflict, and asking for forgiveness.

The reintegration policy should continue promoting and providing psychosocial assistance through a support network and coordinated services from governmental institutions, mental health specialists, and the education system. Given that reintegration is anchored in individual psychosocial healing, and ex-combatants mentioned the positive outcomes from the support they received from reintegrators, counselors, and teachers, this teamwork should continue.

Achieving social acceptance, sustainable peace, and preventing recidivism require long-term processes. Since many of the participants in this study expressed their desire to continue studying, the policy should increase the scope of the ARN assistance to provide career advice, referral services, and support even after the conclusion of the reintegration route. Governmental resources are limited, and it may be difficult to fund ex-combatants’ education beyond seven

years, but information and support in navigating the bureaucracy of educational institutions could be useful to facilitate higher levels of education among this population. The policy should also consider how to continue connecting the positive experiences of ex-combatants that have gone through TVET with a broader number of employers and other stakeholders to keep working toward social acceptance.

Implications for Practice

Before designing and implementing programs it is important to engage actors, listen, understand, and make a diagnostic of the community to adjust the content to participants' needs. Educational program designers and implementers should have a more contextualized understanding of ex-combatants' lives, the environments where they live, and the limited opportunities for social participation when living in dangerous settings (Kaplan & Nussio, 2015) to better prepare ex-combatants to overcome the challenges they may face.

A better knowledge of stakeholders also serves to evaluate whether the assumptions on which programs are based are correct, which is crucial to a program's success (Blattman & Ralston, 2015). A better understanding of ex-combatants' motivations and their abilities and skills is also useful to design suitable programs and respond to their needs and aspirations. As Torjesen (2013) explains, wars are not only chaotic situations but also events in which combatants can gain power, profit, and skills. In the interviews, ex-combatants often stated that they wanted to study to certify the knowledge they acquired in the armed group—while working as nurses and dentists, for example—to be able to practice their professions in civilian life. However, in general, participants were receiving pre-designed courses, and their interests, motivations, goals, and previous knowledge were largely excluded. That homogeneity is doing them a disservice because some of them could find a vocation and an easier pathway for social

reintegration if their previous knowledge and talents were considered. While shaping programs to each participant individually is impractical, programs could offer more meaningful content.

Following UN calls to provide inclusive education (UN, 2006), the experiences of ex-combatants in short-term courses reveal the need to reconsider the provision of education in institutions exclusively for ex-combatants. Having ex-combatants segregated instead of studying in institutions where they could mix with the general population reproduces the isolation programs are intended to solve. It serves to maintain the division between ex-combatants and communities, unintentionally perpetuating antagonisms. Moreover, having all the ex-combatants studying together made them an easy target for re-recruitment and attacks, increasing their vulnerability.

Social cohesion between ex-combatants and the civilian population could be promoted through initiatives such as the “shared education” in Ireland, in which schools are seen as part of a network and different schools develop joint projects to promote sustained and regular shared learning and collaboration among students of different institutions (Duffy & Gallagher, 2016). In the case of Colombia, TVET institutions that work with ex-combatants and those that work with the general population should integrate, or design projects to promote prolonged collaboration between the populations. This collaboration around topics of mutual interests should be intentional and capable of changing ideas and practices. The TVET curriculum should include, in addition to content for developing working skills and economic strategies, spaces for collaborative inquiry and reflection, in which people could address anxieties about classmates and self-disclosure while developing trust and friendships. Joint programs could also be encouraged between TVET institutions that serve ex-combatants and community/voluntary organizations. A sustainable contact with this type of organization could help diversify ex-

combatants' social networks, reduce prejudice and stigmatizing labels, develop mutual trust, and transform mentalities that perpetuate violence. The curriculum also could include strategies that facilitate reconciliation, such as learning how to deal with past events and resentments, and the material and psychological effects of conflict (Lopes-Cardozo et al., 2016). The curriculum should transform individual preferences into common interests, and orient ex-combatants and communities toward the public good (Biesta, 2010).

Regarding peacebuilding, former combatants are often treated as risks rather than resources, when they could be vehicles for conflict prevention and transformation (CCDDR, 2009). In this study, some participants expressed their desire to repair past wrongdoing and help prevent youth engagement in armed groups by sharing their experiences. Others mentioned that they voluntarily decided to support comrades who are starting the reintegration process, because of their own credibility after going through a similar process. These predispositions to be constructive change agents could be combined with conflict transformation and conflict prevention training, as has been done in other contexts (CCDDR, 2009), to offer ex-combatants alternative means of engagement and opportunities to support peacebuilding efforts.

Access to and participation in technical and technological programs facilitates connection with civilian people, and provides contacts and referrals that later helped participants find jobs. However, the low educational level of ex-combatants is a barrier to entering into these programs. This finding has implications for program implementation. It is necessary to identify how reintegration programs could offer more accelerated programs to help ex-combatants earn high school diplomas sooner, evaluate whether some technical programs could be shaped for those without high school diplomas, or explore the possibility of removing prerequisites, with tutors assigned to support ex-combatants in their training process. No information was found about

these approaches being used elsewhere. The educational level of ex-combatants varies in different post-conflict contexts and this difference pushes implementers to shape the programs to participants' needs. To illustrate, in Liberia, South Sudan, and Uganda, the educational level of ex-combatants was so low that the NGOs in charge of TVET provided short-term vocational training in trades like construction and carpentry that did not require an academic component. They did not implement accelerated programs (UNESCO-UNIVOC, 2007). On the other hand, in places like Kosovo, the ex-combatants who received training had high school diplomas before the war, and could receive technical formation (Özerdem, 2003).

Limitations

There are a number of limitations to this study. First, this in-depth interview study focuses on a relatively small sample that poses limitations for drawing implications for policy and practice. However, as Torjesen explains (2013), the subjective content brings a more contextualized knowledge of ex-combatants' lives, their environments, and the limited opportunities for social participation they face, which is critical to understanding how programs could better prepare ex-combatants to overcome challenges and to acknowledge the limitations of education.

Second, the purposive sample is not representative of the broader population of ex-combatants. However, the experiences of demobilized individuals who decided to move to the city and are finishing the reintegration process could illustrate some of the challenges that the new FARC ex-combatants, who moved from the jungle to the cities and who are now starting reintegration, are facing.

Third, practical restrictions to accessing the population could have introduced biases into the sample. Only a few ex-combatants were finishing TVET, and graduates of the programs were

difficult to reach due to work and family responsibilities, resistance to talking about their past, and fear of talking with strangers. ARN staff participated in the selection of ex-combatants and may have recommended the most committed participants and excluded those who had negative experiences, or those who were more critical and might have different characteristics, perceptions, motivations, values, and needs than those interviewed. Also, the ex-combatants finishing training could be especially resilient individuals. However, the experiences of ex-combatants who persisted in the reintegration process provide unique and valuable information on the role of education in their social reintegration.

Another source of bias could have come from the institutional channels used to identify participants. ARN personnel introduced the researcher, and interviews were conducted in the ARN headquarters as well as the educational institution. This procedure created trust and provided a safe environment, but also could have created the idea that the researcher had links with ARN, which could have encouraged ex-combatants to present themselves and their experiences with the education program in a positive light. Answers could have been influenced by the perceptions, assumptions, feelings, and personal interactions that emerged in each of the interviews between the researcher and the interviewees. However, having the opportunity to meet twice and to talk in Spanish also helped to build trust. This trust was evidenced when ex-combatants started to talk openly about sensitive issues such as proposals to join illegal activities, family problems, and childhood. Also, at the end of the interviews, some participants expressed feeling relieved after talking openly about their lives and experiences as combatants, demobilized and reintegrated people, which were topics they avoided even with relatives.

Future Research Agenda

This research provided an understanding of the meaning of education for ex-combatants, and the role of TVET in the social reintegration of ex-combatants. However, there are some specific topics that need further exploration. This study captured ex-combatants at one particular moment in time. Taking into account that the environments in which ex-combatants live, learn, and work are dynamic (i.e., From the beginning to the end of the research, a referendum, the signature of the peace agreement with FARC, a presidential change that affected the implementation of accords, and re-arming of a faction of FARC guerrilla group all took place), and that ex-combatants' life challenges, identity transformation, learning experiences, and life projects are fluid phenomena, it would be important to do a longitudinal study to identify the role of education in the long term, and to examine the lives of the twenty interviewees in five years.

This study focused on interviewing ex-combatants who were finishing the educational processes and those who have graduated, and therefore did not explore the experiences of ex-combatants who have dropped out and who could have negative educational experiences or different points of view about TVET. Future research should try to target this population to have complementary perceptions and experiences, and to compare the lives of ex-combatants who finished education with those who did not.

Regarding programs, there is little systematic evaluation of the effects of short- and long-term formal and non-formal education programs in the lives and choices of young people in conflict-affected contexts (Lopes-Cardozo, Higgins, & Le Mat, 2016). This gap extends to the impact of TVET in the lives and choices of youth ex-combatants. Future research should focus on mixed methods analysis to identify if different programs (technical vs. short-term focused on entrepreneurship) lead to different outcomes, and to understand what interventions have been

most successful in facilitating the social reintegration of ex-combatants. This research should use a gender-sensitive approach. This approach, promoted by the UN (2017), recognizes that men and women are affected differently by conflict and that gender roles influence post-conflict recovery. The present study showed the need to research the different effects that TVET interventions have on women and men, how to design programs that could better support isolated women, and how to monitor and adjust programs for gender considerations. Since 2000, the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security called to consider the special needs of women in post-conflict contexts, and declared that women must have the power to participate equally in efforts to promote peace and security (Kuehnast, Oudraat, & Hernes, 2001). Since then, efforts have been made to provide women equal access to resources such as education and economic opportunities, but those efforts have not been necessarily translated into improvements in women's well-being. In this study, the short-term entrepreneurship courses offered to ex-combatants were inclusive: both women and men had the same opportunities to access education, received the same curriculum in the same institution, were treated with respect by teachers, and had the same access to credit. However, the results were different. For male ex-combatants, the entrepreneurship courses were a strategy to broaden their portfolio of work and boost income, while for women it was a strategy to start an informal business to earn a living while staying at home and taking care of children. It is important to understand how, beyond equal access to education, social inequalities, cultural norms, transformation of gender relations in the transition to civil society, and constraints to accessing formal employment could negatively affect women's reintegration.

This study revealed a gap in the research on education for reintegration. Education's potential for contributing to socialization, peacebuilding, political participation, and

reconciliation following conflict has mostly been focused on schools (Bellino et al., 2017), while studies on TVET have focused on evaluating whether the programs raise income and employment (Ralston, 2015). More research is needed to identify how to connect TVET with social cohesion—how to include ex-combatants’ aspirations of respect and recognition, and their peacebuilding capacities, in programs designed to promote economic participation. Also, it is important to identify how to include within TVET curricula a reconciliation component that can repair broken trust and improve the co-existence between ex-combatants and receptive communities.

This study revealed that for ex-combatants, interacting with respectful and kind teachers who manifested an honest interest in their learning helped them to transition from the armed group to civilian life. Continued research is needed to understand teachers’ experiences. Equally important is to research how teachers are selected and trained to work with ex-combatants, to contribute positively to peacebuilding, and to deal with vulnerabilities and challenges. Research is also needed to analyze how teachers are delivering the curriculum: whether they are promoting the participation of students, developing critical skills needed in democracy, fostering tolerant attitudes and collaborative relationships among students, and avoiding the reproduction of violence.

In the realm of reintegration, each new case is influenced by the case that preceded it. Colombia has more than sixteen years of experience reintegrating ex-combatants. In contrast with African contexts, where international organizations have been in charge, Colombia’s local authorities have designed, implemented, and coordinated processes; and despite the long-term conflict, governmental institutions are functioning. Given these characteristics, further research should explore how ARN staff interpret and translate reintegration policies, how they design and

evaluate the programs, and their perceptions of the implementation and effects, lessons learned, and the main challenges they have faced.

Conclusion

This in-depth interview study with ex-combatants from Colombia participating in TVET unpacked ex-combatants' claims, motivations, and beliefs about education, and examined participants' perceptions of whether and how TVET contributed to their social reintegration. Findings illustrated that at the individual level, reintegration has been effective. Ex-combatants felt they have been able to transform their mindset. They have established new goals for their lives, and accept socioeconomic inequalities as a condition with which they have to live. Ex-combatants also perceived their present lives as better than their pasts because they are able to make decisions. Those decisions are restricted by the circumstances in which they have to live, but give them a feeling of individual freedom because they have more choices. At a personal level, education has played an important role in transforming ex-combatants' ways of thinking and behaving. In contrast, at the social level reintegration has been ineffective. Ex-combatants have been confronted with the challenge of developing new social networks. They have found that in civilian life, and in the capitalistic system in which they are trying to enter, there is not a community but rather people living individualistic lives. TVET programs focused on the individual and designed to develop ex-combatants' skills to enter into the job market, and entrepreneurship projects to transform them into self-employers, have helped ex-combatants understand citizenship exclusively as economic production and acquisition of material goods. The social reintegration through economic participation has excluded the political and social dimensions of citizenship. At the environmental level, reintegration has also been ineffective. The move from the armed group to society has not meant the move from violence to peace, but

the move from the violence of war in rural areas to the violence of urban crime, social stigma, social exclusions, and poverty. At the environmental level, education has not questioned the intertwined inequality of economic, social, and political structures that limit ex-combatants' opportunities and are roots of the civilian war in Colombia.

Findings have also shown that education with the primary goal of employment is based on assumptions about ex-combatants that overlook their social interests and focused solely on economic factors. Findings also revealed that some forms of TVET promoted psychosocial recovery and built social support. Conversely, other types reinforced isolation and segregation. These findings suggest the need to shape programs to include ex-combatants' aspirations and to complement TVET with approaches that develop social bonds between ex-combatants and their receptive communities.

Currently, policymakers and researchers advocate for entrepreneurship education accompanied by injections of capital as a cost-effective strategy to stimulate self-employment and raise income in poor and fragile states. They also suggest reassessing skills training, such as technical programs, due to their limited impact on poverty alleviation and social stability (Blattman & Ralston, 2015). Examining the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education for the economic development of ex-combatants was beyond the scope of this study. However, the analysis of ex-combatants' experiences and perceptions shows that entrepreneurship education can have unanticipated negative effects on the social reincorporation of ex-combatants, particularly for female ex-combatants. More research must be done to determine the effects that this type of intervention has on the demobilized population.

This study shows the limitations of segregated TVET institutions and programs focused on individual economic development to overcome social stigma and contribute to social

cohesion. This finding extends the scholarship conceptualizing the need to implement educational programs that not only target ex-combatants but also involve broader communities, and use educational institutions to integrate opposing groups.

Education for reintegration is embedded in complex local, national, and global sociopolitical and economic contexts that both shape education and are shaped by education. Despite international reintegration standards and governments' needs to be informed of best practices, educational policies and programs should not follow templates, and should avoid reproducing pre-conceived assumptions. The different characteristics of each conflict, the peace negotiations' content, the institutional capacities, and the characteristics and needs of participants should be considered when formulating goals and program implementations.

Comparative education is useful to understand what has been done, how, and why; to develop theoretical frameworks to analyze educational phenomena; and to support plans for educational reforms (Phillips & Schweisfurth, 2014). Given Colombia's complex context for social reintegration, the findings of this study may be relevant to other post-conflict settings and fractured environments around the world, and countries such as the Philippines and Afghanistan where reintegration of ex-combatants is taking place in the midst of conflict. Comparative studies can provide greater insight about whether the drivers and limitations of TVET programs to reintegrate ex-combatants are specific to Colombia, or shared across contexts.

APPENDIX A

INFORMED CONSENT FORM – ENGLISH VERSION

The purpose of this study is to better understand the educational experiences of people who are going through reintegration processes. Your voluntary participation is requested so we may learn more about the perceptions that people in process of reintegration have about the programs at SENA, the reasons you have or had for studying, and the challenges you have face during the reintegration process. This study is being conducted by Paulina Arango from the Florida State University's Department of Education Leadership and Policy Studies.

The interview will take anywhere from thirty minutes to one hour to complete. Your name and other identifying information will not be attached to the interview, so all of your responses are confidential to the extent allowed by law. You will receive a transport allowance, but no direct benefit or compensation for participation.

Again, your participation is voluntary. You are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time. Your decision not to participate, or to end participation at any time, will not affect your relationship with Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje (SENA) or Agency for the reincorporation and the Normalization (ARN), and will not affect any rights that you have to services

You may ask any questions you have now. If you have a question later, you are encouraged to contact Paulina Arango *****

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact Dr. Stephanie Zuilkowski (szuilkowski@lsi.fsu.edu or +1850-644-8165).

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), you are encouraged to contact the FSU IRB at 2010 Levy Street, Research Building B, Suite 276, Tallahassee, FL 32306-2742, or 850-644-8633, or by email at humansubjects@fsu.edu

Thank you for your assistance.

Are you willing to participate? Yes No

Participant Signature: _____

Date: _____

FSU Human Subjects Committee approved on 09/12/2018, void after 09/11/2019. HSC #2018.25408

APPENDIX C

IRB APPROVAL LETTER



Office of the Vice President for Research
Human Subjects Committee
Tallahassee, Florida 32306-2742
(850) 644-8673 · FAX (850) 644-4392

APPROVAL MEMORANDUM

Date: 09/13/2018

To: Maria Arango

Address: [REDACTED]

Dept.: EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

From: Thomas L. Jacobson, Chair

Re: Use of Human Subjects in Research
The Role of Education in the Reintegration of Ex-combatants in Colombia

The application that you submitted to this office in regard to the use of human subjects in the proposal referenced above have been reviewed by the Secretary, the Chair, and two members of the Human Subjects Committee. Your project is determined to be Expedited per 45 CFR § 46.110(7) and has been approved by an expedited review process.

The Human Subjects Committee has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval does not replace any departmental or other approvals, which may be required.

If you submitted a proposed consent form with your application, the approved stamped consent form is attached to this approval notice. Only the stamped version of the consent form may be used in recruiting research subjects.

If the project has not been completed by 09/11/2019 you must request a renewal of approval for continuation of the project. As a courtesy, a renewal notice will be sent to you prior to your expiration date; however, it is your responsibility as the Principal Investigator to timely request renewal of your approval from the Committee.

You are advised that any change in protocol for this project must be reviewed and approved by the Committee prior to implementation of the proposed change in the protocol. A protocol change/amendment form is required to be submitted for approval by the Committee. In addition, federal regulations require that the Principal Investigator promptly report, in writing any unanticipated problems or adverse events involving risks to research subjects or others.

By copy of this memorandum, the chairman of your department and/or your major professor is reminded that he/she is responsible for being informed concerning research projects involving human subjects in the department, and should review protocols as often as needed to insure that the project is being conducted in compliance with our institution and with DHHS regulations.

This institution has an Assurance on file with the Office for Human Research Protection. The Assurance Number is IRB00000446.

Cc: Stephanie Zuilkowski <szuilkowski@lsi.fsu.edu>, Advisor

HSC No. 2018.25408

APPENDIX D

IRB RENEWAL LETTER

FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY
OFFICE of the VICE PRESIDENT for RESEARCH



APPROVAL

August 7, 2019

Maria Arango

Dear Maria Arango:

On 8/6/2019, the IRB reviewed the following submission:

Type of Review:	Expedited (6) Voice, video, digital, or image recordings; (7)(a) Behavioral research; (7)(b) Social science methods
Title:	The Role of Education in the Reintegration of Excombatants in Colombia
Investigator:	Maria Arango
Submission ID:	STUDY00000128
Study ID:	STUDY00000128
Funding:	None
IND, IDE, or HDE:	None
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The IRB approved the modification and continuing review, effective from 8/6/2019 to 8/5/2020 inclusive. Before 8/5/2020 or within 30 days of study close, whichever is earlier, you are to submit a completed continuing review and required attachments to request continuing approval or closure. You can submit a continuing review by navigating to the active study and clicking Create Modification / CR.

If continuing review approval is not granted before the expiration date of 8/5/2020, approval of this study expires on that date.

You are advised that any modification(s) to the protocol for this project must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to implementation of the proposed modification(s).

Federal regulations require that the Principal Investigator promptly report any new information related to this protocol (see Investigator Manual (HRP-103)).

You are required to submit a Continuing Review at least 60 days before the protocol expiration date of 8/5/2020 to request continuing approval or closure. If the continuing review approval is not granted before the expiration date, approval of this protocol expires on that date.

In conducting this protocol, you are required to follow the requirements listed in the Investigator Manual (HRP-103), which can be found by navigating to the IRB Library within the IRB system.

Sincerely,
Human Subjects Research Office humansubjects@fsu.edu

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL #1 FOR EX-COMBATANTS CURRENTLY IN TRAINING - ENGLISH VERSION

Background

1. Please tell me about how you came to study at SENA.
2. What program are you in and how long have you been studying here?
3. What has been your favorite part about being a student here?
4. Can you tell me what your life was like when you were part of an armed group?

Q1. Meaning of education

5. Please tell me about your first day attending SENA. How did it feel?
6. What do you hope to achieve from this program?
7. Some ex-combatants reintegrate easily, while others struggle. In your opinion, what do you think an ex-combatant needs to learn to be able to reintegrate?
8. What changes, if any, have you observed in other ex-combatants who are studying at SENA?
9. When you think about the person *you* were in the armed group and the person you are now studying at SENA, do you see changes? If yes, what changes do you see? If not, what things do you see are the same?
10. Could you tell me about a time when you used something that you learned in SENA?
11. For some people wearing a uniform and having a gun give more respect than having a diploma and a job. What do you think about that?

Q2. Role of education in reintegration

Development of social networks in SENA (as a community)

12. Please tell me about your classmates here at SENA.
Probes: Are they approachable? Do they keep separate from ex-combatants? How different are they from your peers in the armed group?
 13. What is your relationship like with peers who were not part of armed groups?
 14. Have you met anyone here at SENA that you see outside of classes? If yes, what do you do with this person?
 15. Have you met other ex-combatants here at SENA? If yes, what have you done together?
 16. Please tell me about your instructors at SENA. Do they know that you are an ex-combatant? Do they treat ex-combatants differently from other students? If so, how?
- ##### *Development of social networks with community/ family*
17. What does your family think about your training at SENA? Are they supportive?
 18. Has studying at SENA changed your relationships with family members? If so, how?
 19. When people ask you what do you do, and you say that you are studying at SENA, how do people react?
 20. Have you ever experienced stigma as an ex-combatant? Do you expect to experience this after graduating from SENA?
 21. Do you maintain friendships with any of your former colleagues from the armed group?
If so, how do you feel about those relationships? Are they supportive in reintegrating, or do they make it harder?

APPENDIX F

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL #1 FOR EX-COMBATANTS CURRENTLY IN TRAINING - SPANISH VERSION

Protocolo de entrevista #1 para personas en proceso de reintegración actualmente estudiando en SENA

Antecedentes

1. Cuénteme por favor cómo fue su ingreso al SENA
2. ¿En qué programa está? ¿Hace cuánto está estudiando ahí?
3. ¿Qué es lo que más le ha gustado de ser un estudiante del SENA?
4. ¿Cómo es su vida hoy? Describame un día cualquiera (si lo siguiera un día cualquiera, qué vería) ¿Cómo era su vida en el grupo armado? Describame un día como lo recuerde.

P1. Sentido de la educación

5. Cuénteme por favor cómo fue su primer día en el SENA, ¿cómo se sintió?
6. ¿Qué espera del programa en el que está?
7. ¿Qué cree que una persona en este proceso necesita aprender para ser capaz de reintegrarse a la sociedad?
8. ¿Qué cambios ha observado, si es que los ha visto, en otras personas en proceso de reintegración que están estudiando en el SENA? ¿Qué dificultades ha tenido usted?
9. Cuando piensa en la persona que *usted* era cuando estaba en el grupo armado y la persona que usted es ahora, estudiando en el SENA, ve cambios? Si si, ¿qué cambios ve?, si no, ¿qué cosas ve que son iguales?
10. ¿Podría contarme sobre alguna circunstancia en la que ha podido poner en práctica algo de lo que ha aprendido en el SENA?
11. Para algunas personas tener un uniforme y un arma inspiran más respeto que tener un diploma y un trabajo. ¿Qué piensa de eso?

P2. Role de la educación en la reintegración

Establecimiento de vínculos sociales en el SENA

12. Por favor cuénteme sobre sus compañeros de clase del SENA. ¿Cómo son? ¿saben que usted está en proceso de reintegración? ¿Qué diferencia les ve con los compañeros que tenía en el grupo armado?
13. ¿Cómo es su relación con los compañeros del SENA? (que no están en el proceso)
14. ¿Ha conocido a alguien en el SENA con el que se vea por fuera de clase?, si si, ¿Qué hace con esa persona?
15. ¿Ha conocido a otras personas en proceso de reintegración en el SENA? Si si, hacen cosas juntos?
16. ¿Cómo se siente con los profesores del SENA? Saben que usted está en proceso de reintegración? ¿Cómo lo tratan con respecto a los otros compañeros?

Establecimiento de vínculos sociales con la comunidad y la familia

17. ¿Qué piensa su familia de que usted esté estudiando en el SENA? ¿lo apoyan?
18. ¿Estudiar en el SENA ha cambiado de alguna manera la relación con los miembros de su familia? Si si, ¿cómo?

19. Cuando la gente le pregunta usted que hace y usted contesta que estudia en el SENA, ¿cómo reaccionan?
20. ¿Podría contarme alguna experiencia en la que se haya sentido juzgado o rechazado por estar en proceso de reincorporación/reintegración? ¿Cómo cree que lo va a ver la gente después de graduarse del SENA? (cree que va a seguir siendo estigmatizado)
21. ¿Qué piensa de las personas en proceso de reintegración que mantienen relaciones de amistad con los antiguos compañeros y jefes del grupo? ¿Cree que esas relaciones hacen la reintegración más fácil o más difícil? ¿Usted mantiene relaciones de amistad con la gente del grupo?

APPENDIX G

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL #1 FOR GRADUATE EX-COMBATANTS - ENGLISH VERSION

Background

1. Please tell me about how you came to study at SENA.
2. What program was you in and how long did you study there?
3. What was your favorite part about being a student here?
4. Can you tell me what your life was like when you were part of an armed group?

Q1. Meaning of education

5. Please tell me about your first day attending SENA. How did it feel?
6. What did you hope to achieve from this program?
7. Some ex-combatants reintegrate easily, while others struggle. In your opinion, what do you think an ex-combatant needs to learn to be able to reintegrate?
8. What changes, if any, have you observed in other ex-combatants who studied at SENA?
9. When you think about the person *you* were in the armed group and the person you are now after finishing at SENA, do you see changes? If yes, what changes do you see? If not, what things do you see are the same?
10. Could you tell me about a time when you used something that you learned in SENA?
11. For some people wearing a uniform and having a gun give more respect than having a diploma and a job. What do you think about that?

Q2. Role of education in reintegration

Development of social networks in SENA (as a community)

12. Please tell me about your classmates at SENA.
Probes: Were they approachable? Did they keep separate from ex-combatants? How different were they from your peers in the armed group?
13. What was your relationship like with peers who were not part of armed groups?
14. Did you met anyone here at SENA that you see outside of classes? If yes, what do you do with this person?
15. Did you met other ex-combatants here at SENA? If yes, what have you done together?
16. Please tell me about your instructors at SENA. Did they know that you are an ex-combatant? Did they treat ex-combatants differently from other students? If so, how?

Development of social networks with community/ family

17. What does your family think about your training at SENA? Are they supportive?
18. Has studying at SENA changed your relationships with family members? If so, how?
19. When people ask you what do you do, and you say that you studied at SENA, how do people react?
20. Have you ever experienced stigma as an ex-combatant? Did it change after graduating from SENA?
21. Do you maintain friendships with any of your former colleagues from the armed group?
If so, how do you feel about those relationships? Are they supportive in reintegrating, or do they make it harder?

APPENDIX H

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL #1 FOR GRADUATE EX-COMBATANTS - SPANISH VERSION

Protocolo de entrevista #1 para personas graduadas en SENA

Antecedentes

1. Cuénteme por favor cómo fue su ingreso al SENA
2. ¿En qué programa estuvo? ¿Hace cuánto estudió ahí?
3. ¿Qué fue lo que más le gustó de ser un estudiante del SENA?
4. ¿Cómo es su vida hoy? Describame un día cualquiera (si lo siguiera un día cualquiera, qué vería) ¿Cómo era su vida en el grupo armado? Describame un día como lo recuerde.

P1. Sentido de la educación

5. Cuénteme por favor cómo fue su primer día en el SENA, ¿cómo se sintió?
6. ¿Qué esperaba del programa en el que estaba?
7. ¿Qué cree que una persona en este proceso necesita aprender para ser capaz de reintegrarse a la sociedad?
8. ¿Qué cambios ha observado, si es que los ha visto, en otras personas en proceso de reintegración que estaban estudiando en el SENA? ¿Qué dificultades ha tenido usted?
9. Cuando piensa en la persona que *usted* era cuando estaba en el grupo armado y la persona que usted es ahora, después de graduarse del SENA, ve cambios? Si sí, ¿qué cambios ve?, si no, ¿qué cosas ve que son iguales?
10. ¿Podría contarme sobre alguna circunstancia en la que haya podido poner en práctica algo de lo que aprendió en el SENA?
11. Para algunas personas tener un uniforme y un arma inspiran más respeto que tener un diploma y un trabajo. ¿Qué piensa de eso?

P2. Role de la educación en la reintegración

Establecimiento de vínculos sociales en el SENA

12. Por favor cuénteme sobre sus compañeros de clase del SENA. ¿Cómo eran? ¿sabían que usted estaba en proceso de reintegración? ¿Qué diferencia les veía con los compañeros que tenía en el grupo armado?
13. ¿Cómo fue su relación con los compañeros del SENA? (que no están en el proceso)
14. ¿Conoció a alguien en el SENA con el que se vea por fuera de clase?, si sí, ¿Qué hace con esa persona?
15. ¿Conoció a otras personas en proceso de reintegración en el SENA? Si sí, hacen cosas juntos?
16. ¿Cómo se sentía con los profesores del SENA? Sabían que usted está en proceso de reintegración? ¿Cómo lo trataban con respecto a los otros compañeros?

Establecimiento de vínculos sociales con la comunidad y la familia

17. ¿Qué piensa su familia de que usted haya estudiando en el SENA? ¿lo apoyaban?
18. ¿Estudiar en el SENA ha cambiado de alguna manera la relación con los miembros de su familia? Si sí, ¿cómo?

19. Cuando la gente le pregunta usted que hace y usted contesta que estudió en el SENA, ¿cómo reaccionan?
20. ¿Podría contarme alguna experiencia en la que se haya sentido juzgado o rechazado por estar en proceso de reincorporación/reintegración? ¿Cree que la gente lo ve distinto después de graduarse del SENA? (cree que va a seguir siendo estigmatizado)
21. ¿Qué piensa de las personas en proceso de reintegración que mantienen relaciones de amistad con los antiguos compañeros y jefes del grupo? ¿Cree que esas relaciones hacen la reintegración más fácil o más difícil? ¿Usted mantiene relaciones de amistad con la gente del grupo?

APPENDIX I

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL #2 FOR EX-COMBATANTS CURRENTLY IN TRAINING - ENGLISH VERSION

Q1. Meaning of education

1. If you were in charge of designing SENA's short-term courses for your classmates, what would you change? (Think about the structure of the program, the courses, and how classes are implemented)
2. What did you learn in the armed group that could be helpful in this new educational process?
3. Do you think difficult war experiences affect education? How?
4. How do you feel when you realize that you do not understand what the professor is explaining? How do you feel if you think your classmates notice that you do not know about the class topic?
5. Some people believe studying is something you do when you are a child or young, and working is something you do when you are an adult. What do you think about that idea?
6. Let's imagine that the government stops paying the subsidy for studying. What could be done to motivate people in the reintegration process to continue studying?
7. What makes some people drop out of SENA's programs? What makes some people stay in SENA's programs? What makes some people finish SENA programs?
8. If you could summarize your experience in SENA in one sentence, or one word, what would you say?

Q2. Role of education in reintegration

9. What does it mean to be reintegrated?
10. When can reintegration be considered successful?
11. Try to define in a word what you were before joining the armed group? What did you become in the group? What are you now in the reintegration process? How important has been accessing education in these changes? How important have other people been in these changes?
12. In the past interview, many people responded that they have a very good relationship with classmates and that classmates are awesome. However, at the same time, they say they prefer to stay alone or avoid interacting with others outside of class. How would you explain that?
13. What challenges have you faced in reintegration into civil society? Has education helped to overcome these challenges?

Specific to S10

14. How do you think people in the reintegration process could be motivated to study? Or, what could be done to help people enjoy studying?
15. In the first interview, you said you would like to be an example to others. What do you want to teach? What could you bring to society?
16. What role does your daughter play in your educational process? What role does your daughter play in your reintegration process?

APPENDIX J

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL #2 FOR EX-COMBATANTS CURRENTLY IN TRAINING - SPANISH VERSION

Protocolo de entrevista # 2 para excombatientes actualmente en formación.

P1. Sentido de la educación

1. Si fueras la encargada de diseñar los cursos cortos del SENA para las personas en proceso de reintegración ¿qué cambiarías? (Piense en la estructura del programa, los cursos y cómo se implementan las clases)
2. ¿Qué aprendiste en el grupo armado que podría ser útil o ha sido útil en este nuevo proceso educativo?
3. ¿Crees que las experiencias difíciles que se viven en la guerra afectan la educación? ¿Cómo?
4. ¿Qué te genera sentir que no sabes algo o que los otros se dan cuenta de que no sabes algo de lo que están explicando en clase?
5. Algunas personas creen que estudiar es algo que haces cuando eres niño o joven, y trabajar es algo que haces cuando eres adulto. ¿Qué piensas de eso?
6. Imaginemos que el gobierno decide dejar de pagar el subsidio para estudiar. ¿Qué se podría hacer para motivar a las personas en el proceso de reintegración para que continúen estudiando?
7. ¿Qué hace que algunas personas abandonen los programas del SENA? ¿Qué hace que algunas personas terminen los programas del SENA?
8. Si pudieras resumir tu experiencia en el SENA en una oración o una palabra, ¿qué dirías?

P2. Role de la educación en la reintegración

9. ¿Qué significa reintegrarse?
10. ¿Qué requisitos se deben cumplir para uno poder decir que ha logrado una reintegración social adecuada?
11. Intenta definir en una palabra ¿qué eras antes de ingresar al grupo armado? ¿Qué llegaste a ser cuando estabas en el grupo? ¿Qué eres ahora en el proceso de reintegración? ¿Qué importancia ha tendido el estudio en esos cambios? ¿Qué importancia han tenido otras personas en esos cambios?
12. En la entrevista anterior, muchas personas respondieron que tienen una muy buena relación con los compañeros de clase y que los compañeros son excelentes. Sin embargo, también dijeron que preferían estar solos o evitar interactuar con ellos fuera de clase. ¿Cómo explicas eso?
13. Cuéntame una cosa que te haya parecido difícil del proceso de reintegración a la sociedad civil. ¿La educación te ha ayudado para superar esta dificultad? ¿Cómo?

Específico para S10

14. En la entrevista anterior hablaste de las motivaciones que tenías para estudiar, sin embargo no todo el mundo es como tú. ¿Cómo crees que se podrían motivar tus compañeros para estudiar? ¿Qué se podría hacer para ayudar a las personas a disfrutar del estudio?
15. En la primera entrevista, dijiste que te gustaría ser un ejemplo para otros. ¿Qué quieres enseñar? ¿Cuál es el aporte que tienes para darle a otras personas?
16. ¿Qué papel juega tu hija en tu proceso educativo? ¿Qué relación hay entre haber tenido una hija y estar estudiando? ¿Qué papel juega su hija en su proceso de reincorporación?

APPENDIX K

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL #2 FOR GRADUATE EX-COMBATANTS - ENGLISH VERSION

Q1. Meaning of education

1. If you were in charge of designing SENA's short-term courses for your classmates, what would you change? (Think about the structure of the program, the courses, and how classes are implemented)
2. What did you learn in the armed group that could have been helpful during your educational process?
3. Do you think difficult war experiences affect education? How?
4. How did you feel when you realized that you did not understand what the professor was explaining? How did you feel if your classmates noticed that you did not know about the class topic?
5. Some people believe studying is something you do when you are a child or young, and working is something you do when you are an adult. What do you think about that idea?
6. Let's imagine that the government stops paying the subsidy for studying. What could be done to motivate people in the reintegration process to continue studying?
7. What makes some people drop out of SENA's programs? What makes some people stay in SENA's programs? What makes some people finish SENA programs?
8. If you could summarize your experience in SENA in one sentence, or one word, what would you say?

Q2. Role of education in reintegration

9. What does it mean to be reintegrated?
10. When can reintegration be considered successful?
11. Try to define in a word what you were before joining the armed group? What did you become in the group? What are you now in the reintegration process? How important has been accessing education in these changes? How important have other people been in these changes?
12. In the past interview, many people responded that they had very good relationship with classmates and that classmates were awesome. However, at the same time, they said they preferred to stay alone or avoid interacting with others outside of class. How would you explain that?
13. What challenges have you faced in reintegration into civil society? Has education helped to overcome these challenges?

Specific to G1

14. In the first interview, you said that studying opens up the possibilities of getting a job. Why is getting a job important to you?
15. In the previous interview, you told me that when you were in the armed group, you interacted with many people (working with communities). However, now you prefer to be alone and at home despite having met some nice fellows. How do you explain this change?
16. In the first interview, you said that one of the most challenging things about reintegration has been to live amid injustices? Do you think that there are ways to fight against injustice through education? If yes, how. If not, why?

APPENDIX L

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL #2 FOR GRADUATE EX-COMBATANTS - SPANISH VERSION

Protocolo de entrevista # 2 para excombatientes graduados.

P1. Sentido de la educación

1. Si fueras la encargada de diseñar los cursos cortos del SENA para las personas en proceso de reintegración ¿qué cambiarías? (Piense en la estructura del programa, los cursos y cómo se implementan las clases)
2. ¿Qué aprendiste en el grupo armado que podría ser útil o ha sido útil en este nuevo proceso educativo?
3. ¿Crees que las experiencias difíciles que se viven en la guerra afectan la educación? ¿Cómo?
4. ¿Qué te genera sentir que no sabes algo o que los otros se dan cuenta de que no sabes algo de lo que están explicando en clase?
5. Algunas personas creen que estudiar es algo que haces cuando eres niño o joven, y trabajar es algo que haces cuando eres adulto. ¿Qué piensas de eso?
6. Imaginemos que el gobierno decide dejar de pagar el subsidio para estudiar. ¿Qué se podría hacer para motivar a las personas en el proceso de reintegración para que continúen estudiando?
7. ¿Qué hace que algunas personas abandonen los programas del SENA? ¿Qué hace que algunas personas terminen los programas del SENA?
8. Si pudieras resumir tu experiencia en el SENA en una oración o una palabra, ¿qué dirías?

P2. Role de la educación en la reintegración

9. ¿Qué significa reintegrarse?
10. ¿Qué requisitos se deben cumplir para uno poder decir que ha logrado una reintegración social adecuada?
11. Intenta definir en una palabra ¿qué eras antes de ingresar al grupo armado? ¿Qué llegaste a ser cuando estabas en el grupo? ¿Qué eres ahora en el proceso de reintegración? ¿Qué importancia ha tendido el estudio en esos cambios? ¿Qué importancia han tenido otras personas en esos cambios?
12. En la entrevista anterior, muchas personas respondieron que tienen una muy buena relación con los compañeros de clase y que los compañeros son excelentes. Sin embargo, también dijeron que preferían estar solos o evitar interactuar con ellos fuera de clase. ¿Cómo explicas eso?
13. Cuéntame una cosa que te haya parecido difícil del proceso de reintegración a la sociedad civil. ¿La educación te ha ayudado para superar esta dificultad? ¿Cómo?

Específico para G1

14. En la primera entrevista decías que estudiar abre las posibilidades de conseguir empleo ¿Qué te parece importante de conseguir empleo?
15. En la entrevista anterior, contaste que cuando estabas en el ELN te relacionabas con mucha gente (trabajo con comunidades), pero que afuera preferís estar sólo y en la casa a pesar de haber conocido algunos compañeros de estudio amables. ¿A qué se debe ese cambio?
16. ¿En la primera entrevista dijiste que una de las cosas más difíciles del proceso de reintegración ha sido tener que vivir en medio de tantas injusticias. Crees que estudiando y/o

trabajando podrían encontrarse maneras de luchar contra la injusticia? Si si, cómo. Si no, por qué?

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

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