



UPPSALA
UNIVERSITET

Approach, Adjust or Avoid?

A descriptive case study on how women human rights defenders in
Colombia cope with political violence

Karin Carlsson

Department of Government

Master Thesis

Supervisor: Johanna Söderström

2020-12-29

Word Count: 19 750

A las mujeres lideresas y defensoras que contribuyeron con su tiempo, sus testimonios, su conocimiento y su compromiso – mil y mil gracias. Nuestras conversaciones me han servido no solo para la tesis, pero también mucho más allá.

A big thank you to my supervisor Johanna who provided valuable input and support throughout both plan A and B that made this a great learning process. To the people who provided me with contacts, starting points and feedback – I am grateful for your time and help.

Abstract

Violence targeting politically active women is increasingly researched and recognised as a barrier to gender equal political participation. Previous studies on political violence targeting women have tended to focus on women in formal politics and mostly on the prevalence of violence rather than the impact it has on actors who continue to navigate violent political contexts. This case study uses semi-structured, digital interviews with eighteen Colombian women human rights defenders, focusing on their appraisal of (gendered) political violence and the coping strategies they use to navigate their political space. It finds that both strategies that involve taking up more political space *and* strategies with a silencing impact are used. For women human rights defenders in Colombia, their geographical conditions and access to resources, especially networks, are important factors to take into account when describing their possibilities to cope with political violence. Their perceptions of where and how gendered political violence occurs indicate that disproportionate impacts of political violence can be underestimated if research and policy does not account for the experiences of different groups of women. The thesis finds that studying lived experiences and micro-level mechanisms can contribute to the literature on macro-level phenomena such as barriers to participation, political violence and marginalisation.

Key words: Women human rights defenders, political violence, Colombia, coping strategies.

Content

- 1. Introduction** 4
 - 1.1 Objective and disposition 5
 - 1.2 Case study: Colombia..... 6
- 2. Theoretical Starting Points**..... 8
 - 2.1 Civil society and women’s political space 8
 - 2.2 Previous research on political violence targeting women 9
 - 2.2.1 Gender, peace and security 10
 - 2.2.2 Violence against women in politics..... 11
 - 2.3 Addressing the gaps..... 12
- 3. Theoretical Framework: Coping with Political Violence** 13
 - 3.1 Behavioural perspectives on coping strategies..... 13
 - 3.2 Macro-perspectives on coping strategies..... 16
 - 3.3 Analytical framework..... 17
- 4. Research Design**..... 19
 - 4.1 Approaching the subject: epistemological and methodological outlook..... 19
 - 4.2 Data collection and selection of participants..... 20
 - 4.3 Limitations 22
 - 4.4 Ethical considerations..... 24
 - 4.5 Processing the results 25
- 5. Analysis** 26
 - 5.1 The appraisal of violence targeting women human rights defenders 26
 - 5.2 The choice of coping strategies 29
 - 5.2.1 Visibility 30
 - 5.2.2 Agenda..... 35
 - 5.3 Approaching, adjusting or avoiding? 38
 - 5.4 Comparing different groups of women 39
- 6. Conclusions** 42
- References** 46
- Appendix 1: Participating Organisations**..... 57
- Appendix 2: Interview Guide** 58
- Appendix 3: Quotes in original language**..... 59

1. Introduction

Civil society and international organisations alike voice concerns that the shrinking civic space is becoming a global problem as violence against human rights defenders is increasing at alarming rates. Colombia stands out globally as an extreme case (Wassholm, 2018; Amnesty International, 2019; Front Line Defenders, 2020). In 2019, 106 murders of human rights defenders in Colombia were reported. The shocking number has already been surpassed in 2020, with figures from mid-December showing 292 murdered activists (259 men, 33 women) and 12 murdered family members of activists (7 boys/men, 5 girls/women) (Indepaz, 2020)¹. While all human rights defenders are targets of violence, some challenges seem to be gender specific. More men have been killed. However, the increase in violence targeting women human rights defenders in Colombia has been proportionally larger in the last year, despite the fact that they tend to be targeted by forms of violence that more often go underreported. For example, men are more often subjected to physical violence, while women are more often targeted by sexual and psychological violence (Sanchez Lara et al, 2020; Front Line Defenders, 2020; LIMPAL, 2020). Moreover, rates of violence against women are believed to be underestimated as some acts of violence are written off as domestic rather than political violence (Sisma Mujer, 2020). Women human rights defenders tend to be threatened not only for being activists, but for challenging traditional gender norms by speaking out - acting 'inappropriately' as 'bad women' in traditionally male dominated spheres (Wassholm, 2018; OHCHR, 2019; Protection international, 2018). Activists working on LGBT+ rights and belonging to minority groups are targeted to a larger extent (Wassholm, 2018; Front Line Defenders, 2020; Sanchez Lara et al, 2020; LIMPAL, 2020; Sisma Mujer, 2020). Consequently, human rights defenders can be exposed to political violence on several different grounds: because they are activists, because of their gender *and* because they belong to minority groups. This makes it clear that an intersectional analytical perspective is required (Crenshaw, 1991). Most importantly, it raises a critical question: is political violence disproportionately marginalising for groups whose political space is already more limited?

The political space of women human rights defenders, especially from minority groups, is particularly urgent to address. Apart from facing specific challenges connected to their identity and their activist role, civil society has traditionally provided space to advocate for their rights when they have been denied political rights and equality in formal politics² (Burns, Schlozman & Verba, 2001; Strolovitch & Townsend-Bell, 2013; Wassholm, 2018). With a global representation in parliament below 25 percent (IPU 2020), it is clear that extra-representational channels are particularly important when researching

¹ However, the numbers include 11 union leaders (10 men, 1 woman), who are not classified as human rights defenders in this study.

² Formal politics is defined as participation within the frame of political institutions happening through representational channels, while informal politics is defined as citizens who try to influence political decisions through extra-representational channels, for example through civil society campaigning and activism (Deth et al, 2007).

women's political space. Surprisingly, most of the research so far focuses on violence against women parliamentarians and politicians. Having gained access to formal politics, they have already overcome certain barriers to political participation. It is likely that this limits the perspective to certain groups of women. This is particularly alarming given that surveys conducted with women parliamentarians show that belonging to a minority group seems to be associated with increased exposure to political violence. In addition, the issues on the agenda, particularly taking a clear stand in defending women's and minority rights, seems to increase the risk of being subjected to violence (IPU, 2016; Krook, 2017; Håkansson, forthcoming). If political violence targets women from marginalised groups to a larger extent, but researching violence in the spaces where they tend to participate most is not prioritised, the impact of political violence for these groups is likely to be underestimated.

Researching political violence as a barrier to participation is not only relevant from the perspective of equal participation as a goal in its own right (not to mention a human right), but also because of the symbolic and democratic value of who has access to the political sphere and who is excluded from it. Consequently, research on (gendered) political violence needs to expand its perspective beyond the formal arena to informal political spaces. Recognising the political nature of personal experiences and making sense of individuals' appraisal of and reactions to political violence (micro-level mechanisms) can contribute to understanding macro-level phenomena such as barriers to participation and marginalisation. Further exploring lived experiences and reactions of individual women – and different groups of women- could add new perspectives on the impacts of political violence. This study hopes to contribute to this endeavour.

1.1 Objective and disposition

The study is rooted in previous research and continuous, critical (self)-reflection (Ackerly & True, 2020). It centres on the importance of perceptions, considering that individuals interpret their realities differently and make meaning accordingly (Yanow, 2014). What is considered 'true' and 'non-partial' is closely connected to (gendered) power structures. This confirms the need to hear individual and diverse voices in research (Tickner, 2005; Ackerly & True, 2013; Enloe, 2014; Wibben, 2016; Woodiwiss, 2017; Krystalli, 2019).

The contribution of this thesis, a single case study on the perceptions of different groups of women human rights defenders in Colombia, is twofold. First, it aims to shift the perspective from the *prevalence* of political violence, which has tended to be the main focus in research, to its *impact* on actors navigating politically violent contexts. Second, it aims to look beyond politically active women in formal spaces to informal spaces, or extra-representational channels. The study will adopt an intersectional perspective and a bottom-up approach, attempting to contribute with a new perspective on violence against women in politics. More specifically, it will focus on coping strategies that different

groups of women human rights defenders in Colombia use to *navigate their political space*, focusing on the experiences of rural and urban women and minority and non-minority women. The term *navigating* is here understood as how they manoeuvre the arenas where they participate politically by using strategies to cope in their role as activists. In essence, it aims to unpack the mechanism that lies between exposure to political violence and its effects on actors' political space by capturing perceptions of and reactions to the politically violent context.

Bardall, Bjarnegård & Piscopo state that political violence can be gendered in its motives, forms and impacts, where “*Gendered impacts* capture the subjective meaning making processes that occur as different audiences react to political violence” (2019: 1). This study aims to contribute with further knowledge in this dimension by exploring how individuals react to political violence and make meaning around its impact on their political space. This narrows down to the following research question:

What coping strategies do women human rights defenders use to navigate a violent political space?

To answer the research question, the introduction proceeds to specify the motivation behind the case selection. In section two, previous research on violence targeting politically active women is presented, while section three is dedicated to constructing an analytical framework based on previous literature from the political and behavioural sciences. Section four addresses the choice of research design before the results and analysis are presented in section five. In its conclusions, the study finds that women human rights defenders consider their political space to be limited by political violence, which they often perceive to be gendered. They use a variety of strategies to manage this, where some strategies involve taking up more political space and some strategies have a silencing impact. The possibility to resort to different kinds of strategies is connected to geographical factors and access to resources, such as networks and connections. This indicates that different groups of women have different possibilities to cope with political violence. Furthermore, it shows that studying micro-level mechanisms, individuals' coping strategies, can be useful in order to understand the impact of political violence and its large-scale democratic consequences.

1.2 Case study: Colombia

In Colombia, decades of war have made the experience of political violence omnipresent, with high homicide rates, high rates of gender-based violence and impunity for crimes of violence against women (Human Rights Watch, 2019). Moreover, Colombia stands out as an extreme case when it comes to violence targeting activists. Between 2018 and 2019, violence against human rights defenders in the country increased by 50 percent. Apart from targeting women and men differently, political violence in Colombia has disproportionately targeted already marginalised groups such as indigenous, Afro-Colombian and LGBT+ activists, who are subjected to forced displacement, massacres and systematic killings of their leaders (Sanchez Lara et al, 2020; Front Line Defenders, 2020; LIMPAL, 2020; Nilsson

& Gonzalez Marín, 2020). The level of poverty is higher among indigenous and Afro-Colombian groups and their access to education and health care is lower than the rest of the population. People living in rural and more conflict-affected communities are also more exposed to political violence (Minority Rights Group International, 2008; NIMD, 2016). While the rights of LGBT+ people are relatively strong on paper, impunity for acts of violence against LGBT+ Colombians and counter movements criticising the so called “gender ideology” persist (Bocanumeth, 2020)

The gender ideology resistance was prominent during the recent peace process between the government and the FARC-EP³. The gender perspective in the peace agreement has become internationally renowned, a development largely attributed strong women’s civil society organisations and their mobilisation (Bouvier, 2016; Rojas, 2004, Joshi et al, 2020; Nilsson & Svensson, 2020). However, the implementation of the gender stipulations in the agreement is lagging behind (Joshi et al, 2020). In 2018, a bill proposal to sanction violence against women politicians and a plan of action for protection of human rights defenders (a short version of a proposal presented to the government by civil society actors in 2016) were presented respectively. However, connections are yet to be made between gendered political violence and women’s political space in extra-representational channels. Impunity remains high. In general, legislation supporting women’s rights to political participation is strong but men are still overrepresented in formal politics in Colombia (NIMD, 2016; Bouvier, 2016). Currently, 18.3 percent of parliamentarians are women (IPU, 2020).

In summary, Colombia has a strong civil society, high rates of political and gender-based violence, an alarming increase in violence against women human rights defenders and high levels of marginalisation. The relevance of studying the issue in this context is clear from a policy-perspective. While not attempting to generalise or claiming a *most-likely* case, Colombia is a suitable case for an exploratory study focusing on mechanisms. They are particularly likely to be observable in an extreme case (Patton, 2002). Using a new framework, this study can contribute to theory-developing endeavours, encouraging continued research on the impacts of political violence in other contexts.

³ Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) is a Marxist- Leninist guerrilla group active from 1964 until their demobilisation following the peace agreement in 2016 when they became a political party. Since demobilisation, a few factions of the FARC have taken up arms again.

2. Theoretical Starting Points

The literature presented in this section provides a theoretical starting point for the study. The section will start with an overview of literature of civil society and women's political space, followed by a review of previous research on violence targeting politically active women. Finally, it will identify the contributions that could be made by a single case study of women human rights defenders in Colombia.

2.1 Civil society and women's political space

Whether the approach to civil society is liberal, seeing its purpose in that it fosters citizens to participate democratically; or revolutionary, where civil society is seen as a force capable of holding the state accountable, the value of civil society to democracy has long been emphasized by democratisation researchers. Some argue that a strong and free civil society is one of the main conditions for sustainable democracies (Fraser, 1990; Linde & Ekman, 2006; Strolovitch & Townsend-Bell, 2013) and spaces for political activism are considered "sites of the enactment of democracy" (Wedeen, 2004: 286).

With men systematically overrepresented in political elites on a global scale, the conception that 'real politics' is limited to formal political institutions is not only elitist but also gender biased (Waylen, 1994). The relevance of civil society as a space for women's political engagement is often emphasized by feminist scholars, practitioners and activists as "it is primarily within the arena of civil society that women find the space to act and demand their rights, since formal power structures are often closed or inaccessible to women" (Wassholm, 2018: 23). In peace negotiations, formal 'Track I' processes have often excluded women, who instead played a big role in parallel civil society driven informal 'Track II' processes (Dayal & Christien, 2020; Nilsson & Svensson, 2020). Informal political spaces are particularly important because they occupy space that bridges the private sphere (traditionally women's sphere) and the public sphere⁴ (a traditionally male dominated sphere) (Fraser, 1990; Dean, 1996; Burns, Schlozman & Verba, 2001; Tripp, 2003; Lovenduski, 2005; Dahlerup, 2018). Although civil society is by no means gender neutral or gender equal, communal action has tended to be more accessible and acceptable for women. Informal structures have provided space when they are continually denied their political rights and equality in formal politics (Burns, Schlozman and Verba, 2001). Women organising themselves through peace, suffrage and feminist movements have paved the way to increase access to formal political spaces (Dean, 1996; Tripp, 2003; Strolovitch & Townsend-Bell, 2013; Eduards & Jansson, 2017; Dahlerup, 2018; Wassholm, 2018; Dayal & Christien, 2020). Moreover, civil society has tended to be more inclusive of women from marginalised groups such as indigenous women, rural

⁴ The public sphere is understood as "the social space in which different opinions are expressed, problems of general concern are discussed, and collective solutions are developed communicatively" (Wessler & Freudenthaler, 2017). Stemming from Habermas conception of the public sphere, it is understood as an arena for deliberation essential to democratic societies (Fraser, 1990).

women, poor women and LBT women who tend to have even less access to formal politics (Tripp, 2003; Strolovitch & Townsend-Bell, 2013).

More inclusivity aside, civic activism as a form of political participation also remains male dominated and citizens with access to resources such as higher education are overrepresented in civil society, too. (Fraser, 1990; Dean, 1996; Inglehart & Norris, 2003; Lovenduski, 2005; Dahlerup, 2018). Gendered power structures are simultaneously contested and upheld in civil society, where women from marginalised groups remain underrepresented. Some civil society organisations shy away from intersectional approaches, LGBT rights and gender equality in order to be seen as less controversial. As a sphere for women's political engagement, it is therefore "both constraining and empowering" (Strolovitch & Townsend-Bell, 2013: 383). Nevertheless, women's level of access to extra-representational political spaces compared to formal politics makes civil society, and violence with the motive of limiting the space of civil society actors, an urgent object of study to gain perspectives on the political space of different groups of women.

2.2 Previous research on political violence targeting women

Political violence targeting women is often studied as a form of *gender-based violence* (NIMD, 2016). Whether violence is gender based or not is determined by whether it is directed towards someone *because* of their gender. It can target people of all genders; be physical, sexual, psychological or economic and happen in both public, digital and private spheres. Women and girls tend to be disproportionately targeted by gender-based violence (SAP International, 2010; EIGE, 2020). Not all political violence targeting women is necessarily gender based, but can be if it is gendered in its motives, forms or impacts (Bardall, Bjarnegård & Piscopo, 2019). One definition of *violence against women in politics* (VAWIP) is that it consists of:

- 1) aggressive acts aimed largely or solely at women in politics; 2) because they are women, often using gendered means of attack; and 3) with the goal of deterring their participation in order to preserve traditional gender roles and undermine democratic institutions (Krook, 2017: 78).

By this definition, it is clearly considered to be gender based. The definition remains partly contested in the literature, mainly regarding what forms of violence should be encompassed by the concept. To improve validity and conform with international law,⁵ this thesis uses a definition of political violence including physical, sexual, psychological and economic forms of violence. Some argue that concept should also include symbolic, semiotic and structural violence, but these forms are not recognised by legal frameworks and seldom recognised by victims or perpetrators. Thus, they are difficult to measure by scientific standards (Bardall, 2019). For this reason, while not unimportant, these forms of violence

⁵ Mainly, the 2011 Istanbul Convention and the CEDAW 19th and 35th general recommendations.

were not included in the definition used in this study. The thesis defines “women in politics” as women who participate in politics through both formal and informal or extra-representational channels.

Despite the conceptual debate, researchers and practitioners agree that political violence targeting women is a threat to sustainable democracies and one of the main barriers to women’s political participation (SAP, 2010; Krook & Restrepo Sanín, 2016; Krook, 2017; NDI, 2017). It is often attributed to a global “backlash effect” following women’s increasing participation in the political realm (Krook & Restrepo Sanín, 2016). Especially when movements with women participating on the front lines fail, the likelihood of a patriarchal backlash against women’s participation tends to be bigger (Marks & Chenoweth, 2020). Threats, attacks, online harassment and hate speech against women who engage in politics – as politicians, citizens or activists - with the intention of forcing women to abstain from participation “should be interpreted as attacks on women’s right to be in the public sphere” (Dahlerup, 2018: 8). This poses a threat to the right to equal participation, but also to the symbolic and democratic value of who is granted access to the political sphere and who is excluded from it (Lovenduski, 2003; Krook & Restrepo Sanín, 2016; NDI, 2017; Dahlerup, 2018). As recent trends in violence against human rights activists show, the backlash is equally alarming in informal political spaces. While there are many institutional and structural constraints deterring women from engaging in political life such as lack of resources, limited opportunities for work-life conciliation and male bias embedded in political institutions (Fraser, 1990; Dean, 1996; Inglehart & Norris, 2003; Lovenduski, 2005; Dahlerup, 2018), few other barriers are such outright and direct acts aimed at silencing women as political violence.

Research addressing political violence from a gender perspective tends to come from two different but interconnected research fields. First, from policy and research on gender, peace and security in the peace and conflict field (for example; Moser & Clark, 2001; Moser, 2001; Cockburn, 2004; Eriksson Baaz & Stern, 2013; Enloe, 2014; Tickner, 2014; Kennedy & Dingli, 2016; Matfess, 2017; Kishi & Olsson, 2019, Meger, 2019; Nagel, 2019). The second field, violence against women in politics, combines international relations theory on political violence with concepts from gender in politics and gender-based violence (Archenti & Albaine, 2013; Albaine, 2014; Boesten, 2012; Bjarnegård et al, 2015; Bjarnegård, 2016, Krook & Restrepo Sanín, 2016, 2019; Krook, 2017, 2019; Ballington, 2018; Biroli, 2018; Bardall, 2018, 2019; Bardall, Bjarnegård & Piscopo, 2019, Håkansson, forthcoming).

2.2.1 Gender, peace and security

Early peace and conflict research on armed conflict and political violence tended to be gender blind. When research first started to recognise women in armed conflict, it was often as victims of violence or as ‘peacemakers’ (Moser & Clark, 2001; Tickner, 2014; Kennedy & Dingli, 2016). The gender, peace and security field has quickly evolved during the last 30 years in policy and research, and the fact that violence and conflict is gendered is now widely recognised, not least through the legal framework provided by the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda (Meger, 2019).

Traditionally, research as well as policy on violence in relation to the WPS agenda has put emphasis on war-time violence targeting women irrespective of whether they are involved in politics or not (Kishi et al, 2019; Meger, 2019). However, the continuum of political violence and its prevalence in post-conflict contexts is increasingly acknowledged (Cockburn, 2004; Al-Ali & Pratt, 2016; Kennedy & Dingli, 2016; Matfess, 2017; Wimpelmann, 2019). Research has given ample attention to sexual violence (Moser & Clarke, 2001; Eriksson Baaz & Stern, 2013; Kishi & Olsson, 2019; Meger, 2019; Nagel, 2019). However, recent research finds that other forms of conflict related and post-conflict political violence strategically targeting women are far more common (Kishi & Olsson, 2019).

Political violence targeting women has often been addressed using a quantitative approach (Bardall, 2018). In 2019, The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) published the first comprehensive data set on political violence targeting women, showing a global increase in recent years (Kishi et al, 2019). However, the data set only includes physical violence in the public sphere. In general, while recognising that different forms of violence are interconnected, peace and conflict research often seems to confine political violence to the public sphere (Moser, 2001; Moser & McIlwaine, 2001, Cockburn, 2004; Kishi et. al 2019; Kishi & Olsson, 2019). In doing so, it does not include violence happening in private spaces—which can also be gender motivated and political in nature—and also ignores harassment in digital arenas. While this thesis does not focus on the prevalence or types of violence, it assumes a definition of political violence that comprises public spaces (e.g., offices, streets), private spaces (e.g., at home or between spouses) and digital spaces (e.g., on social media, text-messages or via email).

2.2.2 Violence against women in politics

Researchers who study violence against women in politics (VAWIP) and electoral violence take their starting point in political violence as a barrier to political participation, and have tended to study *how* and *why* political violence targets women from two different angles:

First, some of the literature tends to focus on how gender plays a role in the exposure to different forms of political violence. Even though more sex disaggregated data is needed, this research indicates that men are more frequently subjected to some forms of political violence, such as physical violence, while women tend to experience more psychological and sexual political violence (Bardall, 2011 2018; Boesten, 2012; Archenti & Albaine, 2013; Bjarnegård et al, 2015; Bjarnegård, 2016, 2018; Bardall, Bjarnegård & Piscopo, 2019; Bjarnegård, Håkansson & Zetterberg, 2020). Therefore, women and men also face different security threats related to their political participation: a reflection of traditional power structures, norms, expectations and roles related to gender (Krook & Restrepo Sanín, 2016; Bardall 2018; Bardall, Bjarnegård & Piscopo, 2019). This confirms the need to study men's and women's experiences separately and adopt a definition of political violence that includes different forms of violence in different spaces.

Second, researchers address political violence with a gendered motivation, targeting women who participate in politics *because* they are women involved in a traditionally male dominated sphere, going against traditional gender norms and power hierarchies. Rising levels of violence against women in politics is sometimes attributed to a backlash reaction to an increasing number of women in the public sphere, with the intention of limiting women's political space and maintain men's hegemonic control of the political arena (Archenti & Albaine, 2013; Albaine, 2014; Cerva Cerna, 2014; Krook & Restrepo Sanín, 2016; IPU, 2016; Bardall, 2018; Biroli, 2018; Krook, 2017, 2019). Håkansson (forthcoming) conducted a study with Swedish politicians and found that while both men and women are subjected to political violence, the exposure to violence tends to increase disproportionately for women as they reach higher positions of power and become more visible in the media. In addition to a correlation with increasing (perceived) power and visibility, those who represent minority groups are also likely to be more exposed to violence. This indicates that challenging hegemonic power structures is associated with greater exposure to political violence.

2.3 Addressing the gaps

A relatively new field, more research on violence targeting politically active women is still needed on all levels. The National Democratic Institute (NDI) states that “collecting data at any level, from local to global, can be a programmatic goal for practitioners in and of itself it: is an essential part of beginning to raise awareness and identifying solutions” (NDI, 2017:10). Studying the experiences of women and men separately is needed to understand gender-differentiated impacts of political violence. Even less explored, however, are diverse perspectives of *different groups of women*. Within the frame of this study, the latter comparison will be prioritised. In addition to this, two dimensions remain unexplored:

First, while defining concepts, mapping acts of political violence and collecting more sex-disaggregated data is necessary; more qualitative studies and contextual narratives on the *experiences* or *impact* of political violence targeting women are also needed. The literature often focuses on the conceptual debate, the prevalence and forms of political violence targeting women. When experiences are studied, it is mainly regarding the exposure to different forms of violence. A people-centred approach focusing on lived experiences and, most of all, reactions to violence, could contribute with new perspectives on its impact. It would also be a step away from victim-heroine binaries by focusing on the agency of actors navigating violent contexts. More case studies could provide in-depth perspectives required to proceed in this direction.

Second, bearing in mind the importance of civil society as an arena for women's participation, especially with increasing rates of violence targeting civil society actors, it is evident that research needs to expand its lens beyond formal political processes and political elites. Researching violence against women in politics and failing to recognise civil society as an important area for participation maintains a blind spot

regarding women's political space, especially concerning marginalised groups who are also targeted by political violence to a larger extent. Consequently, a theoretical framework aimed at, first, exploring whether political violence is experienced as gendered and marginalising, and second, how different groups of women human rights defenders navigate violent contexts, could be a way of making sense of the *impact* of gendered political violence on civil society actors. This study proceeds by constructing an analytical framework focused on coping with perceived political violence, aiming to make a contribution in this direction.

3. Theoretical Framework: Coping with Political Violence

This section draws on previous research from political science, peace and conflict studies and the behavioural sciences to construct an analytical framework for the study. Focusing on strategies to cope with violence, it will explore how previous research on individual perceptions of violence and coping strategies can be used to describe aggregated impacts on political space.

3.1 Behavioural perspectives on coping strategies

In literature on behavioural sciences, coping strategies are defined as: "behaviour directed towards the resolution or mitigation of a problem, with the aim of changing the situation or its perceived implications, or of combating the negative emotions generated" (Ray, Lindop & Gibson, 1982: 394). Alternatively, they are described as "the cognitive and behavioral forces employed to manage (reduce, minimize, dominate, or tolerate) personal needs and the external demands of one's environment" (Palomar Lever, 2008: 230). In the context of this study, coping strategies are understood as the strategies that women human rights defenders resort to in order to navigate their own political space, mitigate risks and protect themselves in a politically violent context.

While there is little agreement on styles of coping with stressful events in psychology research (Skinner et al, 2003), the most recognized conceptualisation is to divide coping strategies into *problem focused* or *emotion focused* strategies, categories coined by scholars Lazarus and Folkman (1984). Problem focused strategies are reactive strategies that tend to be task-oriented, focused on solving problems or changing the situation. Emotion focused coping strategies are more oriented towards handling the emotions associated with stressful experiences (Shannon et al, 2006). In a previous study from the Colombian context, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF or the Spanish acronym, LIMPAL) used Lazarus and Folkman's categorisation to understand the psychosocial effects of violence on Colombian women human rights defenders and social leaders, but the focus in the report is strictly on psychosocial effects without connecting it to changes in the participants' political space or participation.

When Skinner et al (2003) reviewed literature in psychology, a total of 400 coping strategies were identified. The authors find problem focused and emotion focused coping to be useful as broad families of strategies, but emphasize that other distinctions could also be made such as *approaching* and *avoidance*, *control* and *escape*, *direct* and *indirect* or *social* and *solitary* coping strategies (Skinner et al. 2003). In general, some strategies are directed towards escape from the threat, while some are directed towards taking control of the situation. Approaching or control-oriented strategies tend to be problem focused to a larger extent in contrast to avoidance-oriented or escape-oriented coping (Ray, Lindop & Gibson, 1982; Boxer & Sloan-Power, 2013; Sousa, 2013). In relation to marginalisation and political space, these opposing directions of coping – approaching/controlling or avoiding/escaping – can be argued to be particularly important. Avoidance-oriented strategies tend to entail retreating from the political arena, while approach-oriented strategies often involve continuing or even increasing participation. Consequently, understanding how actors navigate their political space through mechanisms such as coping strategies can say something about the democratic impacts of political violence.

Previous studies on psychological effects of experiences of political violence are most common in the intersection between the political sciences and psychology (Punamäki, 1990). Emerging literature focusing on *everyday peace* emphasizes the importance of people-centred perspectives, studying how collectives and individuals navigate violent contexts in their personal lives (MacGinty, 2014; Nilsson & Gonzalez Marín, 2020). Yet few political scientists have taken an interest in coping strategies per se. Hinfelaar and Kaaba (2019) explore how increasing political repression affects civil society organisations in Zambia which, like Colombia, has a traditionally strong civil society. Their study explores organisations' strategies to counter increasing government repression and find three main strategies adopted; *adjusting*, *resisting* or *disbanding/disappearing*. This categorisation is similar to psychologists Wolfer's (2000) and Jenkins' (2008) research on how black women in the US cope with high levels of community violence, finding that coping strategies are either focused on *getting away*, *getting along* or *getting through*. Moreover, 'everyday peace' literature identifies five main behaviours: *avoiding*, *ambiguity*, *ritualized politeness*, *telling* and *blame deferring* (MacGinty, 2014). The large number of categorisations in existing research indicates that refining and developing theory in this field is needed. Grouping the strategies using behavioural research categories, all the everyday peace strategies along with, *disbanding*, *getting away* and *getting through*, can be considered more avoidance-oriented while *adjusting*, *getting along* and *resisting* are more approach-oriented. With implications of different coping strategies on political participation in mind, this thesis attempts to converge strategies used in previous research, sorting them into three main categories: *approaching*, *adjusting* and *avoiding*.

3.1.1 Approaching

Organisations choosing to *resist* in Hinfelaar and Kaaba's study decided not to register under a national NGO act as required by the government, and instead found ways to manoeuvre around legal requirements. They also tended to organise themselves to drive legal action or use their platforms to speak out against repression (Hinfelaar and Kaba, 2019). Both Sousa (2013) and Punamäki (1990) find that political violence led Palestinian women to cope by becoming more engaged in political activities. Other examples of strategies found in the literature under this category are planning ahead, seeking instrumental support, making plans to confront the problem or trying to change the situation (Skinner et al, 2003; Shannon et al, 2006). Restrepo Sanín (2020) describes how activists adopted several successful approach-oriented strategies in order to raise awareness of political violence targeting women in Bolivia and Mexico, the first countries in the world to implement legislation on the matter. Activists organised themselves in networks with other civil society organisations, raised public opinion and lobbied among politicians. They also sought support from international actors and relied on international policy on women's rights and violence against women to present bill proposals to policymakers (Restrepo Sanín, 2020).

3.1.2 Adjusting

Located between approaching and avoiding; organisations that *adjust*, in the words of Hinfelaar and Kaaba, may choose to change the focus of their work to less controversial issues but remain at the same level of engagement. They also tend to adapt to work in spaces and fora where they are more accepted and adapt their communication with the perpetrators of violence. In addition, the organisations interact with other organisations facing the same issues – locally or internationally – seek advice and learn from their strategies in order to be able to continue their work. These strategies conform with Wolfer and Jenkin's strategies aimed at *getting along*: finding ways to minimise the exposure to violence by managing interpersonal relationships with perpetrators, identifying dangerous people or trying to stall or resolve ongoing conflicts (Wolfer, 2000; Jenkins, 2008). MacGinty (2014) identifies the same strategies, but calls them *ritualized politeness* (stalling conflict) or *telling* (identifying dangerous people). While not focused on coping strategies per se, Restrepo Sanín's study shows that the women's movement in Latin America has previously *adjusted* by strategically framing political violence as a violation of democratic norms rather than a women's rights issue in order to avoid controversy (Restrepo Sanín, 2020). In general, these examples involve an adjustment in work strategies while remaining at the same level of engagement.

3.1.3 Avoiding

Regarding avoidance oriented-strategies, organisations who *disband* decide to move out of the public sphere. They either stay silent or avoid actors that could be seen as provocative to work with or pose a threat (Hinfelaar and Kaaba, 2019). Some of the literature shows that political violence can also lead actors to leave the political arena altogether (Herrera et al, 2011; IPU, 2016). MacGinty suggests that actors can *avoid* sensitive topics, *avoid* high risk people or places, and *avoid* drawing attention to themselves. *Ambiguity* strategies, such as concealing signifiers of identity (MacGinty, 2014), also fit into the avoidance-oriented category. Drawing on Wolfer and Jenkins' studies, both *getting away*, finding ways to avoid the violence by leaving the community or avoiding dangerous areas, and *getting through*, focusing on handling their own emotional distress caused by the experience of violence, could be said to fit into this category. Some examples of avoidance-oriented coping strategies from psychology research are distancing oneself psychologically or physically through escape or avoidance and internally oriented strategies such as self-isolation and inhibition of action (Skinner et al, 2003; Shannon et al, 2006; Boxer & Sloan-Power, 2013). Examples of *getting through* the situation could include seeking emotional support, venting or turning to religion or spirituality (Shannon et al, 2006; Jenkins, 2008). In opposition, MacGinty (2014) states that instead of seeking support, individuals may turn to blaming individuals within their own group: *blame deferring*.

3.2 Macro-perspectives on coping strategies

In general, studies on *perceived* and *lived* security threats are still scarce (Nilsson & Gonzalez Marín, 2020), but some research has been done on how violence impacts individuals' political behaviour. For example, Getmansky and Zeitzoff (2014) show that fear of terrorism in Israel makes voters more inclined to vote for hard-liners, and Söderström (2018) finds that fear of electoral violence can impact voters' political knowledge negatively. Also, Jarstad and Höglund's (2015) research shows that experiencing political violence may lead actors to decrease political participation, if they are scared, or increase participation if they react with anger. The mobilising effects of violence are supported by Blattman (2009), who finds that experiences of war-time violence can increase motivation to engage in politics and Söderström (2019) who finds that actors continue to mobilise in order to avoid invalidating the sacrifices they already made. Further, in an Inter-Parliamentary Union global survey from 2016, 80 percent of women parliamentarians consider that violence strengthened their determination to stay in office and continue their mission to run for office again (IPU, 2016). On the other hand, Dean (1996) finds that women activists being targeted by violence, intimidation and threats display lower levels of trust and self-esteem, decreasing their likelihood to engage in politics. In summary, studies show that perceptions and emotional reactions to violence at the micro-level have political consequences at the macro-level, but diverging findings indicate a need for further research. Also, more attention could be paid to the *mechanisms*, such as coping strategies, involved in micro-level actions. This confirms the

relevance of researching individual reactions to political violence and coping strategies in relation to political space, and also calls for more qualitative case studies on reactions to political violence.

In addition to individual emotional reactions, previous studies indicate that researching the impact of political violence requires attention to how individuals coping with political violence are situated within their socioeconomic context. Factors such as access to social connections and ethnicity need to be taken into account. How actors cope with stressful situations depends both on personal and contextual conditions (Shannon et al, 2006; Palomar Lever, 2008; Sousa, 2013). This is particularly important in relation to marginalising impacts, as actors with higher levels of access to resources such as political power, connections and economic resources seem more likely to use problem focused coping strategies. High self-esteem also facilitates coping styles that can be classified as approaching. For example, Jenkins' study finds that poor women with less access to education tended to cope by avoidance. Women with more access to economic and educational resources also used avoidance to some extent, but tended to engage in their community and use political activism to a larger extent (Jenkins, 2008).

Rational choice theory also adds a relevant theoretical perspective. While feminist researchers tend to criticise the assumption that individuals are selfish and calculating, Meyer (2012) finds that victims of intimate partner violence's decision to stay with their abuser is a choice informed by weighing the risks and financial conditions for leaving against the risks of staying – both for themselves and for dependent others, such as children. The conclusion that victims weigh the risk of retaliatory violence against the benefit of leaving is shown in several studies on intimate partner violence (Fleury et al, 1998; Felson et al, 2002; Meyer, 2012). Thus, weighing costs and benefits of different strategies in relation to their personal relations and context could be relevant when describing how individuals cope with violence - on the condition that is put in the context of social conditions and takes a relational approach. Considering this, exploring how different groups of women's socioeconomic conditions play into their possibilities to use different coping strategies is also relevant to understand potentially different impacts on their political space.

3.3 Analytical framework

This thesis will analyse strategies used to cope with political violence and whether they are oriented towards taking up more or less political space with regards to two different dimensions: *visibility* and *agenda*. Since research shows that increased visibility and perceived power are seen as key contributors to an increase in experienced violence (OHCHR, 2018; Håkansson, forthcoming); visibility in the public sphere is considered an important dimension to include in the study. As the visibility parameter does not take into account any potential shifts in the issues in focus, the study will address the *agenda* of the organisations as a second dimension. In the conceptualisation, *visibility* is understood as being seen and heard in different arenas, for example being active or expressive on social media, participating in

external meetings with different actors, displaying personal information (such as name or contact details) publicly, participating in public events or moving freely on the streets in your role as a human rights defender. *Agenda* is understood as the specific issues promoted by the organisation.

Within the two dimensions, the analytical framework will categorise coping strategies as *approaching*, *adjusting* or *avoiding* (see Table 2). Strategies that involve taking up more political space are categorised as *approaching*. *Avoidance-oriented* strategies involve taking up less political space. *Adjusting* is located between the other two categories. It is considered important as an analytical category to differentiate merely altering forms of participation or framing issues differently, but staying at the same level of participation, from completely abstaining from participation. However, having to adjust their work strategies is also arguably a limitation in political space. Consequently, organisations’ coping strategies – categorised as *approaching*, *adjusting* or *avoiding* - in relation to their *visibility* and *agenda*, are understood as the impact of political violence on women human rights defenders’ *political space* which, in turn, is understood as citizens’ perceived opportunities to take political action or influence political processes and outcomes (National Democratic Institute, 2015; Stigum Gleiss, 2017).

Based on previous research presented in this section, coping strategies will be categorised using a new framework with the conceptualisations summarised in Table 1:

Table 1. Conceptualisation

	Approaching	Adjusting	Avoiding
Visibility	Taking new action to increase visibility of the organisation.	Changing how the work is done, but keeping the same level of visibility.	Withdrawing or decreasing visibility of the organisation.
Agenda	Intensifying the focus on the same issues or adding more controversial issues to the agenda.	Keeping the same focus but framing issues differently.	Staying silent or keeping a low profile. Avoiding controversial issues.

When categorising different strategies as *approaching*, *adjusting* or *avoiding* based on the above conceptualisation, the following operationalisation (see table 2) was used when developing interview questions and during the analysis. The indicators are based on previous research and the summary of coping strategies presented in section 3.1.

Table 2. Operationalisation

	Approaching	Adjusting	Avoiding
Visibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in presence on digital platforms. • Increase in the visibility of the logo/name of the organisation. • Increase in level of organising/mobilising together with other organisations • Increase in seeking instrumental support from other (national or international) organisations. • Increase in activity focused on raising public opinion or awareness of political violence • Increase in lobbying and/or taking legal action to confront political violence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change in type of participation – but keeping same level of visibility. • Change in fora for participation – but keeping the same level of visibility. • Change in actors they interact or cooperate with. • Adapting their communication. • Reading the context • Managing relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decrease in presence on digital platforms. • Decrease in visibility of the logo/name of the organisation. • Decrease in participation/visibility during public events. • Decrease in presence on the streets in the activist role. • Decrease in participation in meetings with other actors. • Decrease in cooperation with other targeted organisations. • Decrease in engagement within the organisation. • Seeking emotional support. • Avoiding high-risk people or places. • Avoiding attention.
Agenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intensified focus on controversial issues. • Adding more controversial issues to the agenda 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Framing issues differently. • Guarding their language regarding certain issues (but still addressing them). • Focus on non-controversial issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Withdrawing engagement in certain issues. • Keeping a low profile regarding certain issues. • Staying silent on certain issues.

4. Research Design

4.1 Approaching the subject: epistemological and methodological outlook

This study is interested in perceptions and interpretations. It does not seek to explain causal mechanisms, but to *describe* how individual perceptions relate to actions at micro-level, which in turn can have macro-level consequences. It aims to make conclusions that are specific, rather than general. More specifically, it is exploratory; providing a contextual understanding of how different groups of women human rights defenders navigate a violent political landscape. A single case study is suitable for this endeavour, providing a more in-depth understanding of reactions to political violence and favouring internal case comparability between different groups. The choice of a single case study limits the possibility to

compare with other cases, seek causal effects or causal inference (Gerring, 2004). However, descriptive analysis makes important contributions to our understanding of reality by classifying and analysing social phenomena and providing a piece of the picture (Esaiasson et al, 2007; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2014; Toshkov, 2018). A descriptive study can contribute with knowledge about a group of women human rights defenders' appraisal of political violence and its perceived impact on their political space "with the goal of making certain women's lives more visible" (Tickner, 2005:14). Individual women human rights defenders' choices to participate or abstain are likely to be shaped by how they make meaning of their context. The importance of exploring individual processes of meaning making is supported by behavioural research arguing that individual *appraisal* influences choices of coping strategies more than objective levels of threat (Cairns & Wilson, 1989). Thus, developing theoretical and empirical knowledge from one context on how the impact of political violence can be studied through micro-level mechanisms can contribute to the development of frameworks focused on lived experiences and perceptions to be used in other contexts.

4.2 Data collection and selection of participants

The study used semi-structured interviews, suitable to its descriptive purpose and a common choice for single case studies. A qualitative method was chosen because it can give more information about the context and provide a deeper understanding of the issue at hand (Bronéus, 2011; Ackerly & True, 2013; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2014). The possibility to ask follow-up questions and ask for clarifications or explanations suits the purpose of understanding meaning-making processes and increases the validity of the study (Shapiro et al, 2004; Esaiasson et al, 2007; Teorell & Svensson, 2007; Mosley, 2013). The participants are Colombian women human rights defenders connected to civil society organisations. Reflective listening and letting the participants lead the way during interviews was important to better understand the perceptions and experiences from their point of view (Bronéus, 2011).

The definition of political violence was discussed at the beginning of the interviews to gain a common understanding of the concept, using the definition presented in section 2 of this thesis. In order to increase the reliability, the interviews were recorded. They were conducted in Spanish without an interpreter, which removes barriers of communication and reduces the risk of information being lost in translation (Bronéus, 2011; Mosely, 2013). In a few cases, for indigenous participants, Spanish was their second language. This may have put them in a different position than native Spanish speakers. Despite this, Spanish was considered the best available option and no difficulties were noted in the interviews. At the end of each interview, the main takeaways from the conversation were summarised as a member-checking tool (Birt et al, 2016).

The selection of participants for the study was based on several criteria. First, it considered the centrality of the respondents as women activists representing human rights organisations. In this case,

organisations advocating for one or more of the universal human rights as defined in the UN declaration of human rights were considered eligible. Because of the study's focus on civil society actors, only CSO's were selected. Second, the study focuses on women human rights defenders as defined by OHCHR "both female human rights defenders, and any other human rights defenders who work in the defence of women's rights or on gender issues" (A/HRC/16/44). Comparing the experiences of violence of women and men is important for further studies, not least to avoid perpetuating the misconception that gender equals women. However, this study takes its starting point in that, fundamentally, "women's experience of gender oppression is different from men's experience of gender oppression: women experience it as oppression and men as privilege" (Ackerly & True, 2013: 142). Also, recognising how *different groups of women* are situated within their socio-political context, allows for deeper insight and avoids perpetuating a hegemonic representation of women (Crenshaw, 1991; Wibben, 2016). Therefore, to favour an intersectional approach and allow for comparing the experiences of different groups of women, this study limited its focus to human rights defenders who self-identify as women, narrowing the definition down to female human rights defenders (cis-women and LBT women).

In the comparison between different groups of women, the thesis takes into consideration first whether they belong to minority (M) or non-minority (N) groups and, second, whether they work in urban (U) or rural (R) areas. For example, a rural minority organisation is labelled (MR) in the analysis. These categorisations are based on conclusions from previous studies that these groups are differentially marginalised, differentially targeted by violence and tend to have different levels of access to resources. The selection attempted to include a similar number of activists who belong to Afro-Colombian and Indigenous groups as well as participants who do not. Activists representing LGBT+ groups were also categorised as a marginalised group in the study. However, it turned out to be more difficult to reach especially LGBT defenders, affecting the representation of marginalised groups in the study negatively. The one LGBT organisation interviewed, however, is an umbrella organisation who shared the results of a comprehensive study they conducted on violence against LGBT defenders from several organisations in different territories. One other organisation also works with LGBT rights, but it is not their main focus. In total, this thesis has a sample with an underrepresentation of women from minority groups, seven out of eighteen, but a slight overrepresentation of rural organisations, eleven out of eighteen (see Appendix 1: participating organisations).

In requests for new connections during the interviews, specific criteria were requested (such as age, area, ethnic group) seeking a quota selection (Teorell & Svensson, 2007:87) that would account for an intersectional perspective and seek maximum variation among participants. The principle of maximum variation is commonly used in respondent interviews to allow for as many different perspectives as possible (Esaiasson et al, 2007). The risk of selection bias and dependence (Höglund & Öberg, 2011), was mitigated by connecting with participants starting from several different previous connections and

international organisations or by contacting some organisations directly. In total, the selection started from eight different starting points. After this, a snowballing strategy was used to get in touch with more participants. While covering all 32 *departamentos*⁶ of the country was not possible in this study, it sought regional diversity to the largest extent possible. In total, 14 *departamentos* were covered, considering that one participant regularly works in two. In cases where the organisation worked in several regions, the area where the participant works was the main focus of the interview.

4.3 Limitations

Originally, the thesis was awarded a Minor Field Study scholarship that would have allowed for in person-interviews with women human rights defenders in Bogotá. However, Covid-19 changed the conditions. First, the mobility of human rights defenders has decreased and violence against them has been reported to increase during the pandemic (Estupiñan, 2020; UN Press, 2020), and second, it required the study to resort to digital interviews. A field study would have given better possibilities to build rapport with the participants and provided important contextual information. It would also have allowed for a combination of interviews and more ethnographic methods like participant observation, adding value to the study and possibly making it easier to approach and connect with participants. Reaching out to organisations digitally was challenging and time consuming. Around twenty percent of the contacted organisations responded. Despite the limitations, one advantage that came out of the change of plans was that conducting digital interviews allowed for an expansion of the target group beyond Bogotá, which in itself would have been a limitation.

There were several limitations in the selection. Since the study could not be conducted in the field, it was easier to access activists who had connections to bigger, sometimes international, organisations or had their own online presence. By definition, these groups are not the most marginalised, even if they represent minority groups who are marginalised in Colombia. This is a limitation in a study addressing marginalisation. In some cases, the participants had other political roles than just through their organisation, for example they belonged to several organisations or had previously been local political candidates. None of the women interviewed were currently political candidates or holding political office, but their previous engagement may have affected the results.

Digital interviews also proved to be challenging. Some of the literature points out the disadvantages and security risks, like compromised safety online, lack of rapport building and limited possibilities to read non-verbal cues (for example: Bronéus, 2011; Mosely, 2013; Janghorban et al, 2014; Van Baalen, 2018). However, the need to explore digital ways of conducting qualitative studies is reiterated and examples of studies conducted online also show several advantages and opportunities, such as flexibility, cost efficiency and climate friendliness (Gibson; 2004; Janghorban et al, 2014; Salmon, 2015).

⁶ Colombian regional administrative entity consisting of several different municipalities.

Some further disadvantages became clear in this study. First, the selection was limited to participants with access to sufficient quality of internet connection, possibly limiting the group of participants to individuals with access to more resources and bigger platforms. Also, Janghorban et al (2014) suggest that digital meetings are more easily cancelled. It is unclear whether this was due to using digital platforms or not, but cancellations and last-minute changes were frequent during the data-collection. In order to reach participants with less access to internet connection, the study required flexibility regarding means of communication. While several interviews could be conducted using digital meeting tools such as Zoom, it proved that WhatsApp was the easiest way to get hold of participants initially. In total, eight interviews were conducted on Zoom, one on Skype, five using WhatsApp calls and four using WhatsApp audio messaging. In the cases where interviews had to be conducted by sending WhatsApp voice messages back and forth, the internet connection was simply not good enough for anything else. While not ideal, the need to include diverse perspectives, also from individuals with less access to the internet, was favoured over conducting semi-structured interviews by the book. In fact, sending voice messages and texts to answer questions proved to have some advantages. First, voice messages allowed time for reflection and the possibility to take some time to answer more difficult questions, possibly allowing for a greater sense of control over the situation for the participants. Also, communicating for a longer time over WhatsApp and combining text, voice message and images allowed for some rapport building and allowed the conversation to continue when the participant had the time and possibility to talk – an advantage when communicating with activists managing busy schedules and a lot of field work. Mixing voice and text messages over time allowed for follow up questions and clarification. Above all, this method made it possible to reach a different target group than would have been possible in a field study in Bogotá or using only video call interviews. However, interviews conducted using video calls tended to achieve greater depth and rapport, and had it been an available option, this would have been the preferred tool for all interviews. Would it have been an option, combining rapport building and longer-term communication over WhatsApp with a longer video conversation could have made use of the advantages of both methods.

While digital interviews remove some safety risks for the participants, such as potentially being seen doing an interview, digital meetings can be recorded and potentially accessed by outsiders (Van Baalen, 2018). In order to address safety risks in the digital space, platforms considered safer and virtual meeting rooms protected by password were used to the largest degree possible. For example, WhatsApp uses end-to-end encryption and Zoom allows for closed, password protected meetings. Recorded interviews and transcripts were stored on an external hard drive and anonymised, and participants were informed of precautions taken to protect their confidentiality.

Also, creating a comfortable atmosphere, building trust and rapport is very important during in-depth interviews, but can be more difficult in a digital space (Bronéus, 2011). In order to make up for the lack

of rapport-building in person, information and communication before the study was prioritised. Participants were given a choice of different digital platforms in order to make the atmosphere as safe as possible, considering that answers may have been affected by how comfortable they feel using digital tools. It became clear that there was a divide in preference of platforms: the bigger, urban and internationally connected organisations could use Zoom while rural activists' preferences tended to be WhatsApp audio messages, or calls if the connection was good enough. Finally, while reflective notes were taken on emotions and atmosphere during the interview, some of the meta-data from body language that could have been collected was probably lost, particularly in interviews on WhatsApp.

4.4 Ethical considerations

Because of the sensitivity of the subject and the vulnerability of the participants in their role as human rights defenders, reflection on the ethical implications of the study was essential. Taking the *do no harm* principle into account, talking to individuals connected to organisations was prioritised over variation in the sample. Organisations in themselves can provide a safety net that independent activists may lack. The balance between what kind of information was needed to answer the research questions and how the interviews would impact the activists was also given special attention both in the development of the interview guide and during interviews in order to keep the depth of the interview at an appropriate level (Bronéus, 2011). Researchers have acknowledged that merely discussing experiences of violence could impact participants negatively (Ellsberg & Heise 2002; Spongaro, 2019). The *do no harm*-principle, again, provided an ethical foundation to carefully guide the conversation during interviews in order to avoid having the activists revisit experiences of political violence. This was important to avoid the risk of re-traumatization and stay clear of exploiting experiences of violence (Bronéus, 2011; Krystalli, 2019; Ackerly & True, 2020).

The study relied on the WHO publication 'Putting women first: Ethical and Safety Recommendations for Research on Domestic Violence Against Women' (Watts et al. 2001) providing guidelines for doing research on intimate partner violence that are also relevant in studying political violence. In similarity to the guidelines from Vetenskapsrådet (2017), Watts et al emphasize the need for confidentiality and safety for the respondents. A particularly large emphasis was placed on the criteria of information and consent, since knowing that you have the power over the situation and can withdraw at any time can decrease the risk of re-traumatization (Bronéus, 2011). These ethical challenges could partly be avoided since the focus of the study is the *agency* of the activists, taking an interest in their behaviour and use of coping strategies in response to a context of violence rather than whether they have personal experiences or not. The collective coping strategies of their organisations, not at the individual level, were the focus of the study. For the same reasons, discussing perpetrators was avoided.

Staying reflective regarding positionality (Tickner, 2005; Wibben, 2016; Ackerly & True, 2013, 2020) also provided an ethical guideline throughout the study. For example, identity traits that associate me with being an ‘outsider researcher’ may have made me seem like a possible channel to express demands, especially since organisations in the donor community were used as gatekeepers. Even though I am a student and the participants are experienced professionals, an interview situation is always a situation of power asymmetry when the interviewer controls the agenda (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2014). Reflection on the insider-outsider perspective, also considering that I have not personally lived the challenges of the same violent context but still feel entitled to study it (Höglund & Öberg, 2011; Wibben, 2016; Krystalli, 2019), raised questions on how to stay true to the participants’ own interpretations. Bearing in mind my own personal engagement in the issue, a balance had to be found between making responsible use of the results, reflecting on how to make activists’ voluntary and non-remunerated participation in my study worth their while, and yet avoiding ‘going native’ and failing to maintain a certain critical distance to their stories when conducting the analysis. Here, the trade-off between protecting confidentiality and still offering recognition to their organisations had to be addressed. During the interviews, it became clear that most of the activists were keen to raise awareness of their situation outside of Colombia. Although clear information on the outreach of the study was provided, some saw the interview as a possibility to reach out to the international community. Sharing the results with participants, and inviting them to collaborate or comment on a summary in Spanish was discussed as a way of making the results accessible.

4.5 Processing the results

In the interpretation of the results, strategies were coded into *approaching*, *adjusting* and *avoiding* in the transcripts, using the operationalisation presented in section three. The interviews were recorded and transcribed, then coded and summarised. The analysis focused on the content of the answers rather than the discourse. Also, interpreting the meaning of the interviews more holistically and staying faithful to the participants’ stories was considered equally important as coding answers, being aware that the narrative is not “collected” by the researcher but created together during the interview (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2014:233). Reflective notes were taken during the interviews, including notes on emotions, and a short summary of the main points of the conversation was done at the end as a member checking-strategy and an attempt to decrease the power of the researcher as a “knowledge producer” (Clough & Nutbrown, 2012; Wibben, 2016). Due to time and language limitations, the participants were not asked to comment on the results of the thesis, but will be involved in producing a summary of the results a later stage. This also provides an opportunity for member-checking the synthesised, analysed data (Birch et al, 2016).

5. Analysis

This section starts by presenting the participants' appraisal of political violence in order to understand how they make meaning of their context regarding (gendered) political violence. Subsequently, the coping strategies in the dimensions *visibility* and *agenda* are presented respectively before discussing the large-scale impacts of the findings for different groups of women human rights defenders in Colombia.

5.1 The appraisal of violence targeting women human rights defenders

Throughout the data collection process, it became clear that all participants perceived levels of violence targeting women human rights defenders to be on the rise. Some of them experienced violence as very prominent during the 90's and early 2000's, but temporarily deescalating in the years leading up to the peace agreement between the government and the FARC in 2016. One participant remembers the 80's as the most violent decade, a period which many are not old enough to have experienced in the role as activists. Unanimously, participants mention the period following the peace agreement in 2016 as a clear marker of increasing violence targeting women human rights defenders. Some mention the shift in government in 2018. An increase in violence against women human rights defenders, and particularly domestic violence, during the Covid-19 pandemic is also mentioned (NU1, NR3, MR5, NU6). The practically consensual view of increasing violence since 2016 among participants is supported by studies on increasing armed violence since the peace agreement, and particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic (Fundación Ideas Para la Paz 2020; UN, 2020; Sisma Mujer, 2020), in addition to increasing levels of violence targeting women human rights defenders (Sanchez Lara et al, 2020; Front Line Defenders, 2020; LIMPAL, 2020; Sisma Mujer, 2020). All participants in this study consider themselves to be limited by political violence in their activism, sometimes by personal experiences of violence, or otherwise by constantly being on their guard and adapting their behaviour to manage the violent context. Throughout the study it is clear that the levels of violence and how much it limits political space varies in different regions, where activists in more conflict affected territories with paramilitary presence experience a different violent context compared to organisations in less conflict affected territories with more state presence. However, urban and rural, non-minority and minority organisations alike, in all *departamentos* covered in the study, are all very aware of the risks of being a woman human rights defender and being involved in the issues they are advocating for. Both anger and fear are frequently expressed explicitly during interviews:

So, the fact is that one put one's life in danger and every day one is living with the fear that they are going to kill me, that they are going to hurt me, or that they are going to kidnap one of my children or myself. It comes back every day. Each and every one of the women who belong to this organisation are constantly living with these thoughts (MR1).

When asked about whether the situation is different for men and women, the answers are more varied. Organisations who do not work directly with gender issues were more prone to recognise a difference but remain less elaborate on why the situation is different, or attribute the difference to women's role in their families. "Women have a double or triple role. We don't only have to lead the community, but also on the personal level [...] for us the family is also fundamental and sometimes... when they threaten us it's one thing, but when they threaten a family member... it gets more complicated" (MR2). Organisations working with gender issues were more likely to explicitly attribute the difference to gender structures and power hierarchies: "Because women also face a double risk: It's being a woman in a patriarchal society, and also being a leader. Like, leaving those private spaces and exercising a public leadership" (MU1). In essence, the explanations tend to come back to taking up space in the public sphere and assuming roles of leadership that women have not traditionally had.

Furthermore, participants seem to perceive that the motives and forms of violence experienced are often gendered (MR1, MR2, NR2, NU2, MU1, MR3, NU3, NR4, MR4, NU6, MR6). Several of the participants explain that in attempts to silence them, their families have been threatened or targeted. While it is outside the frame of this study to discuss whether men and women face the same kinds of threats against their families, some participants seem to perceive the targeting of family members as a strategic move towards them because they are women. Threats are often explicitly gendered, using humiliating and sexist language, and sexual violence or threats of sexual violence specifically targets women's and LGBT organisations *because* they are women and LGBT activists. Several participants explain that threats tend to manifest differently for women and men: "And there, I feel there is a difference in what kind of threats women face. Because still, they use threats focused on morality. Attacking the morality of the woman" (NR4).

The interviews indicate that women human rights defenders can be exposed to political violence on several different grounds. First, simply by being a human rights defender or social leader, a dangerous vocation in Colombia regardless of sex or gender identity. Second, by being a woman in a patriarchal society. Third, by belonging to a minority and/or stigmatised group, such as LGBT, Afro-Colombian or indigenous groups. Fourth, by the type of human rights on the agenda, where some issues are considered more dangerous than others:

If the woman is first: a woman, indigenous – double forms of being at risk. But if the woman is also defending a land area, if she is defending that there shouldn't be mining and extraction of resources... like all those things that have to do with the land... the risk is even worse (NU3).

Rural, indigenous and Afro-Colombian women tend to work in more remote areas with less state presence, often defending their rights to the land. This makes them more exposed to violence, but also more vulnerable to forced displacement and forced recruitment. In addition, higher levels of illiteracy and poverty among rural, Afro-Colombian and Indigenous women are described as factors that inhibit

their political participation (MR6, NR5). This suggests that an intersectional perspective is needed to account for the different conditions and risks faced by different groups of women human rights defenders.

Moreover, being a woman or belonging to a minority group can expose activists to violence in different spaces, at times from actors whose role is to offer support (MU1, NU3, MR6, NR2, NR4, NU4, NU6). Several organisations express that while the state is supposed to have a protective function, it is sometimes the oppressor. A few organisations explain that being infiltrated by state actors or framed as insurgents is a challenge for human rights defenders (NR2, NU2, NR4, NU4, NR5): “In the [municipal] council they even called me ‘La Camarita’. ‘Camaritas’ were from the FARC- guerrilla” (NR5). Furthermore, women human rights defenders may be discouraged from participating or from reporting sexual harassment or violence by men within their own organisation or put at risk of violence through other support functions and institutions: “Many of the women went to church to seek spiritual support because of all the violence they had been through. And the priest took advantage [of them]” (NU3). Also, participants explain that control and limitations by their own family members in order to stop them from participating politically is also common (MU1, NU6, NR4, NR2, NU3, MR4, NU4, NU5). Clearly, the line between private and public is not always easy to draw, and organisations advocating against domestic violence may face heavy resistance from armed groups because of this connection: “For example, there are very complex territories like Tumaco in Nariño where women human rights defenders say ‘no, the sexist and violent man in the home is also part of an armed group’” (NU6). Hierarchic family structures can also lead women activists to be subjected to economic political violence by their spouses:

The majority of the women don’t have the autonomy to go out. Even less so to go to, for example, a meeting. [...] It’s not often permitted in these rural or semi-urban areas. So, there, we have a difficulty because they don’t have the resources at hand. The men say ‘we are going to a meeting; we are going to an assembly’ and they leave with the money in their pocket. But women have to ask to go (NR4).

Political violence is not considered to be limited to the public sphere. This is made clear in the frequent critique of the state’s limited protection efforts (limited to the public sphere and ‘hard’ security). Also, the perception that families, homes and offices are often targeted and that colleagues and family members can also be perpetrators confirm that political violence happens in different spaces (MR1, NR1, MU1, MR2, MR3, NU3, NR3, NR4, NU5, MR4, NU6, MR6). Some of the participants recount having received threats online, but when asked about digital violence, many of them are unsure and say that they have not thought about it. Whether it is because the organisations have varying internet presence, because they have not experienced digital violence as a problem or because they have simply

not defined it as violence is not clear. In any case, the participants' experiences indicate that the public sphere is not the only space where political violence occurs.

Finally, all interviews indicate that increased visibility, in line with the findings of Håkansson (forthcoming) is associated with a higher risk of exposure to violence. This supports the theoretical argument that increasing violence targeting women human rights defenders can be a backlash to their visibility in the public sphere. Three participants attribute the backlash to women's increasingly visible role in peace process (NU3, NU6, MR6), supporting the argument made by Marks & Chenoweth (2020) about patriarchal backlashes to movements with women at the frontlines. However, the power vacuum left in many territories after the peace agreement and demobilisation of the FARC-EP is a more frequent explanation to increasing violence given in the interviews. Emphasising that this analysis does not seek to explain the rise in levels of violence or its prevalence, it becomes clear that increased visibility is perceived as something that may increase the risk of political violence against women human rights defenders. Violence seems to be perceived by several, if not all, participants as a backlash reaction to taking up more political space:

Women have also kept advancing despite the rejection that was first a moral rejection, from the state and the political power of the state, and the political power of the masculinist society. Still, women advanced, we didn't care, we kept going. And well, now the threats are much more direct (NR4).

In conclusion, the interviews clearly show that participants often *perceive* violence against them to be gendered in its motives and forms, if not always. Participants also perceive that political violence targeting women takes place in private and public spaces and that the line between protectors and perpetrators is not always clear. Also, they indicate that apart from factors such as sex and gender identity, sexual orientation and belonging to minority groups; geographical location and access to state institutions are important factors in order to understand the context of political violence. Finally, both the issues on the agenda and the visibility of women human rights defenders as political actors are perceived as important elements that shape their experiences of political violence. The majority of the participants explicitly express fear in the interviews, but they also express anger and commitment to the issues they are defending.

5.2 The choice of coping strategies

All organisations gave several examples of coping strategies that can be considered *approaching*, *adjusting* or *avoiding*. By discussing their appraisal of political violence in parallel to changes in their human rights work, including potential changes in visibility and issues on the agenda, the connection between violence and coping strategies is clear throughout the interviews.

5.2.1 Visibility

Throughout the interview process, a clear pattern is that increased visibility in a politically violent context is perceived as having both advantages and disadvantages. In short, all organisations tend to be seeking visibility by approaching certain actors while simultaneously avoiding others. Most organisations use both approaching, adjusting and avoiding coping strategies. What kind of visibility is sought after or avoided seems to depend on the situation, where for example the same human rights defender expresses that women in her territory are more exposed to violence than men because they are “less visible” and therefore have fewer protective eyes on them. When she explains that urban women in her territory are more exposed than rural women, it is also because “they make more noise, they are more visible” (MR5). To navigate the trade-off between seeking and avoiding visibility, women human rights defenders are required to adjust by reading their environment. They must be hyper-aware of conflict dynamics, actors and interests in order to decide whether to speak up or keep a low profile. Table 3 shows an overview of the organisations’ use of strategies. Organisations marked in bold are those who clearly used more strategies from one particular category.

Table 3. Visibility

Approach	Adjust	Avoid
MR1, MR2, MR3, MR4 , MR5, MR6	MR1, MR2, MR3, MR4, MR5, MR6	MR1 , MR2, MR3 , MR4, MR5, MR6,
NR1 , NR2, NR4, NR5	NR2 , NR3, NR4, NR5	NR1, NR2, NR3 ,
MU1	MU1,	MU1 ,
NU1, NU2, NU3 , NU4, NU5, NU6	NU2, NU3, NU5, NU6	NU2, NU3, NU4, NU5 , NU6

For details on organisations, see appendix 1.

First, organisations seem to use approach-oriented coping strategies (mainly: seeking instrumental support, increased visibility in the media, mobilising together with other organisations, taking legal action, raising public opinion, planning to confront the problem) when they believe that this can grant them support from other organisations, from the state or from international actors (MR1, NR1, MR3, NR2, NU3, MR4, NR4, NU4, MR5, NU6, MR6, NR5). For example, one organisation increased their visibility in the last year, which in some ways made them more exposed to violence but, more importantly, gave them a larger platform and better opportunities for cooperation with national and international actors.

We think that communication can serve as a protection strategy, too. So, we try to use communication for impact and to have protection. So, in the last few years, especially in the last year, we have intensified our work with making use of networks (MR2).

In fact, many organisations seem to make the same conclusion about visibility being an advantage when seeking support from networks of cooperation and international organisations. This becomes clear when some express their motivation to participate in the study. Even though I tried to be very clear with my position as a student and the limited outreach of the study before and during the interviews, it was clearly associated with an outreach that was considered positive for many organisations. Therefore, it is possible that the emphasis on international networks and reaching out could also partly be attributed to an interviewer effect and social desirability bias. Nevertheless, the emphasis on seeking visibility to receive support from international actors is a recurring theme. On several occasions it is described as “vital” and “fundamental”. Access to international protection, including being accompanied to the field, is mentioned by two participants who both belong to well-connected NGO’s, confirming that it is a reason why they can keep working in certain areas (MR5, NU6). “International cooperation, having international support, like from the European Union in Colombia, like having possible relations with financiers, with embassies... it helps you. It gives you a sense of protection and attention” (NR2).

In addition to seeking cooperation, approach-oriented strategies are used to access legal routes of action. For this, increasing visibility is considered an advantage. It is accomplished by organising in networks, raising public opinion and mobilising to make demands and seek support. Especially organising in networks is a common strategy. Many participating organisations have chosen to take legal action, reporting crimes or making demands from the state at national level in the light of increasing levels of violence targeting women human rights defenders – taking up more political space in the process. Openly criticising the government’s protection efforts is a common strategy, and some organisations in the study are part of processes where demands for more inclusive and gender sensitive protection from the state have been presented, becoming more visible through this process (NR2, MR3, MU1, NU3, MR4, NR4, NU4, NU5, MR6, NR5).

In general, participants seek instrumental support from existing state protective mechanisms. At the same time, their critique of state protection efforts is frequent (NU1, MR1, NR1, MU1, MR3, MR4, NR4, NU4, NU5, NU6, MR6, NR5). Being part of networks is perceived as a way to open up routes to receive state protection and access to justice. How this coping strategy should be classified with respect to the framework is not entirely clear. Seeking instrumental support is classified as an approach-oriented strategy based on the literature, but it could be argued to be an adjusting strategy. While it is clearly problem-solving, it is arguably not a strategy that involves taking up more political space, but rather a way to remain active in the same spaces despite high levels of political violence. Also, while many participants have sought state protection, the increased visibility associated with *receiving* it is not only considered advantageous. Several participants mention that the state protection offered is very clearly material protection: attainable services include body guards, armed vehicles, a cell phone, a panic button and a security vest. This type of protection serves against physical violence in the public sphere, which

is generally not the kind of violence that different groups of women human rights defenders consider themselves most likely to face. The view that state protection is more adapted to male human rights defenders is expressed by several participants. Through their organisations, participants have criticised the security services publicly:

Often that just makes us more visible – like if you are walking with a life guard and you go from neighbourhood to neighbourhood with this guy at your side...It puts you at more risk because people know who you are and when the lifeguard isn't there is when they can attack you (MU1).

Adjusting strategies are also prominent among the organisations, mainly: reading the context, managing relationships, a shift in participation in some types of events in favour of others (MR2, MR3, MR4, MR5; NR2, NR3, NR4, NR5; MU1, NU2, NU3, NU6). Above all, the importance of knowing the context and managing the relationships with different actors is emphasised, a strategy categorised as adjusting in the literature (Wolfer, 2000; Jenkins, 2008; MacGinty, 2014). Women human rights defenders must be constantly aware of what and whose interests are at stake and find ways to tread carefully in what they describe as a minefield of actors, interests and controversies – a labour described as demanding in resources. This is clearly the reality for all the organisations interviewed, but several organisations mention reading the context as a very conscious strategy:

It's like it's a cold war all the time [...] And you have to figure out: in which area are you? Who are the actors? Why are they doing this?... You have to understand the scenario well in order to be able to act [...] it's like you're constantly treading on eggshells (NR2).

Also adjusting, several participants manage the way they work in order to be able to do the same thing as before, but adjust their visibility when needed. For example, one organisation for indigenous women victims of conflict did not stop reporting human rights violations in their communities or decrease their activity, but they changed their strategy to be less visible: “Well, before, we spoke more with our own names. We also named places. But that changed, right? [...] We still report crimes, but not in the same way” (MR3).

Also, participants emphasize the importance of building trust, strength and continuity within their organisations and with partners in order to continue working in a politically violent context (MR1, NR2, NU2, MU1, NU5, MR4, MR5, NU6, MR6). Consolidating their organisations and creating internal support systems is not a strategy found in previous literature, but in this study, it is evident that it is a way of changing the focus from campaigning to internal work in order to build strength. Again, participants conclude that networks are important for this strategy. The networks can also function to help each other read the context – and three participants give examples of networks communicating in code in order to spread messages to each other about safe and unsafe areas (NR2, MR4, MU1). In addition, two participants mention that shifting focus from individual leaders to the collective is a way to mitigate the risk of political violence (MR3, MR4) and two participants mention that women's

organisations can offer better support systems than mixed organisations (NU3, NR4). Here, the boundary between *adjusting*, seeing this as a way of changing how you work but remaining at the same level of participation, or *avoiding*, by focusing on internal work instead and retreating from the public political space, is unclear. For example, two participants refer to “un trabajo de hormigas”, understood as a kind of meticulous and thorough teamwork, focusing their work on mobilising women within their organisation instead of campaigning, which is difficult to interpret as either adjusting or avoiding: “We have been doing more a kind of hard team work, organising women, being there and accompanying them” (NU5). This involves retreating from the public sphere in one sense. On the other hand, mobilising and strength-building facilitate continued political participation.

The occurrence of avoidance-oriented strategies in this study may be underestimated as all participants belong to organisations and have therefore decided to keep being human rights defenders. They also belong to organisations who decided to take part in the study and were visible enough to find. Despite this, several participants explain that they use avoidance-oriented strategies in certain cases. Mainly, they resort to decreasing the visibility of the logo or name of the organisation, a decrease in participation or visibility during public events, decreasing their presence on the streets in their activist role or a decrease in engagement within the organisation (MR1, MR2, MR3, MR4, MR5, MR6, NR1, NR2, NR3, MU1, NU2, NU3, NU4, NU5, NU6). They also emphasize that not all women human rights defenders remain active – some choose to keep a very low profile or stop participating:

Leaders also keep a lower profile; not taking on so much responsibility, so much visibility, in order to avoid all those situations where they can identify who is leading us [...]. Many of our colleagues have had to stop...they have had to leave. Displaced, or simply staying at home to not create, well, tension (MR4).

Furthermore, participants express the view that sometimes they can only advocate for human rights in certain safe places, with the right safety measures and among the right people: “When we are going to speak somewhere, we have to assess: ‘in what place are we speaking’. Of course, we cannot talk everywhere” (MR6).

Regarding the avoidance-oriented strategies, it also becomes clear that violence persists beyond the public sphere. Several participants in this study are limited in their physical space both in public places and their homes and have to take measures to keep a low profile as a consequence of political violence targeting their organisations. Especially in rural and more conflict-affected territories, they explain that they are limited in which routes they take and avoid certain places (MR1, NR1, MR3, NR3, MU1, NU5, MR6). Some have been displaced and some have to constantly change their daily routines. One participant explains that at one point she slept in different bedrooms each night because of fear (MR1). In general, political violence can be isolating:

I'm limited from going out, from being in certain places, from having a daily routine, instead I frequently change when I go out, my schedule, etc. All these things. Yes, of course, they isolated me. First, obviously, we are in a pandemic, and second, well, because of this situation. And well, now, basically I work from my home. (NR3).

It is an experience shared by various participants, one stating that in the last three years, because of increasing political violence “LGBT leaders have shut themselves in” (MU1). Apart from consequences for their political voice, it is important to note that this also limits participants in their personal life. Activist work is often unpaid, and with many women and LGBT people working in the informal sector, being limited in how they engage in public spaces can have marginalising impacts beyond political participation.

Evidently, there are two main approaches regarding how to cope with political violence in terms of visibility. All organisations agree that in some cases, being visible means risking your life, or the lives of your family members. However, in line with previous studies on emotional effects on political participation, several participants (MR1, NR 1, MR3, NU3, MR4, NU4, MR6, NR5) state that the anger caused by acts of violence in general, or political violence targeting them personally, and the sense of commitment to their communities means that they cannot stay silent: “If you lower your profile, it’s practically like isolating yourself. Or not isolating yourself: ceasing to speak – and that would be a pity because women have already stayed silent for so many years” (NU3). Connecting back to previous studies on emotions and reactions to violence (Dean, 1996; Blattman, 2009; Getmansky and Zeitzoff, 2014; Jarstad & Höglund, 2015; Söderström, 2018, 2019) fear and anger are often expressed in the interviews and anger seems to be a motivation to engage despite the danger of doing so (NR1, NU3, MR4). Some participants express that being women – sometimes victims of conflict, sometimes part of marginalised groups – in a society where political and gender-based violence persists, staying silent does not liberate you from political violence: “If we know that they are going to kill us anyway and we are at risk whatever we do, well, we speak up in order to create a protective mechanism” (MR4). Possibly, some interviewer effect leads participants to stress this aspect. The participants deciding to increase visibility often motivate this choice with commitment and anger, but also with an instrumental argument: hoping to be heard, receive more support and protection.

On the other hand, some participants seem to view increasing visibility as too much of a risk: “Silencing voices also silences our processes, in a way. Because we can’t lie: nobody wants to die. What we are defending is *life*” (MR6). The organisations who are more hesitant regarding visibility (MR1, MU1, NR2, NR3, MR3, MR5, MR6, NU5) notably include five out of seven minority organisations. They are more often rural and work in more conflict-affected territories. Out of the two urban organisations taking this stance, one has been exposed to very high levels of political violence, and the other is a minority organisation. For example, one participant explains that she would have preferred to live without the

increased visibility that being labelled a human rights defender brought her: “They profiled me as a human rights defender and instead of feeling calmer, or feeling protected, it’s like they put you straight in the bullet’s eye” (NR3). Other examples, mostly given by rural and less well-connected organisations, include participants who have practically had to go into hiding or at times had to stay silent. It is possible that for them, in difference to some of the other activists, increased visibility and recognition by state authorities does not grant more attention or protection from national networks or the international community. Hence, it does not serve the same purpose as for more well-connected organisations. It appears that not only emotional reactions and appraisal of violence, but perhaps also the perception of the advantages that visibility can provide, seems important to take into consideration. Attention to the socioeconomic context as explained by Jenkins (2008) and the weighing of opportunities as risks as suggested by Meyer (2012), seem relevant in order to understand women human rights defenders’ use of coping strategies in the visibility dimension.

Finally, one factor that participants have to take into account in the visibility trade-off is: *visibility to whom?* Regarding visibility to the international community and, in certain cases, the state, organisations seem to resort to approaching strategies if they consider it possible. Regarding visibility to other actors, such as armed groups, organisations are more often using avoidance-oriented strategies. Seemingly, the access to state institutions, access to networks and international actors and the presence of armed groups all play in to how much organisations perceive that they can gain or lose from increasing their visibility. Thus, organisations have to constantly read the context and evaluate actors and interests to be able to decide what strategy is advisable depending on the situation. In essence, approaching with regards to visibility is considered a necessary strategy, but is also perceived to increase the risk of political violence depending on what kind of visibility, where and to whom.

5.2.2 Agenda

In general, the coping strategies used regarding the agenda of the organisations were slightly more difficult to interpret in the interviews. It seemed that while the visibility trade-off was very conscious for most participants, many were not equally aware of how or if the issues on their agenda had changed in relation to political violence. Nevertheless, they agreed that certain issues are more dangerous to talk about and patterns of *approaching*, *adjusting* and *avoiding* in this dimension can be found for most, if not all, organisations.

Table 4. Agenda

Approach	Adjust	Avoid
MR3, MR4 , MR6; NR1, NR2; MU1; NU3 , NU4, NU6 ;	NU1 NR2, NU2, NR4, NU5	MR1, MR3, MR6; NR2; NU1, NU5

For details on organisations, see appendix 1.

Some organisations have chosen to tackle increasing levels of violence by speaking out more about it and, through this, adding a sensitive issue to their agenda (NR1, NR2, MR3, MU1, NU3, MR4, NU4, NU6, MR6). These organisations resort to an approach-oriented strategy as a reaction to increasing levels of political violence. For example, several organisations have sought international attention by speaking out about the violence their organisations have been subjected to. Some express that they would like to share their experience more in international contexts if they had the resources to do so. Six organisations have put their critique of hard-security state protection at the head of their agenda, taking legal action to advocate for more comprehensive protection of women human rights defenders as a result of increasing levels of political violence (MR3, MU1, NU3, MR4, NU6, MR6). Others have published reports on increasing levels of violence and increasingly spoken out in news media about the issue. The study indicates that the approach-oriented strategy is dominant in the agenda-dimension. However, some caution in the interpretation of this result is required as, probably, the organisations who have raised the issue on their agenda are also more likely to want to participate in a study on political violence targeting women human rights defenders.

Another prominent result in the study is that organisations keep advocating for the same issues, but choose their words carefully, frame issues and evaluate when and where they can speak about what – resorting to adjusting coping strategies (NU1, NR2, NU2, NR4, NU5). When asked about what language they use and issues they promote, several participants speak of “guarding their words” and “minding their language” and one participant explains that they have changed their form of straightforward advocacy for women’s rights to using more “symbolic language” (NU5). Even when raising the issue of increasing violence against women human rights defenders, it has to be done “carefully” and “without too much detail” (NR2). Thus, the agenda remains the same but they adjust to the context in a way that is still very much a limitation of their political space:

Of course, we have had to reframe a lot of things. For example, there are times when you can’t even talk about human rights. Or areas where if you say a single word about human rights, you are at risk [...]. You have to guard the words that you use. There are many things neither I nor anyone else can say. But then, it’s difficult because of course, there are things that you cannot stay silent about. There are things we have to promote. Then, it’s like: how do we highlight this situation without being attacked? (NR2)

Avoidance-oriented strategies are also used by some organisations, like staying silent altogether, leaving certain topics in favour of others or avoiding to speak in certain fora (NU1, MR1 NR2, MR3, NU5, MR6). Both in regions with and without presence of armed groups, controversial issues are sometimes avoided. Although more organisations seem to adjust by changing *how* they talk about certain issues rather than changing focus completely, one participant expresses that they changed their line of work as a result of being exposed to too much political violence:

We have lowered our profile when it comes to reporting crimes, and strengthened other areas of work: like the green one, the environmental one. We focus more on self-care and cultural change from the women's perspective than on reporting [violence] (NU5).

While they are a minority in this study, a few organisations explain that, at times, they have been completely silenced by political violence:

There was a time when, yes, we had to completely stop talking about the issue [the rights of indigenous victims of conflict] because we couldn't anymore. It was a time of threats; it was a time of prosecution. It was a time of fear. (MR3).

In sum, while less frequent and clear in the interviews, organisations use all three categories of coping strategies in the agenda dimension. In general, it seems like women in more conflict-affected territories have to guard their words to a larger extent. One common denominator for the organisations who say they have been silenced, gone into hiding or lowered their profile is that they operate on a local level, or in one case regional, and are less connected to bigger national networks and the international community. Irrespective of area, group or organisation, however, participants agree that some topics are more dangerous than others. For example, LGBT+ rights are considered controversial. In the areas with presence of armed groups, forced recruitment of children, land rights and growing illicit crops (interests of the armed groups, but occasionally also international corporations) were considered more dangerous than criticising human rights violations by state institutions. Abortion also comes up in a few interviews as a topic that particularly women's organisations might do better to avoid in order to be able to advance in other issues. One participant explains that they choose to focus on gender-based violence as their main issue, but refrain from expressing their views on issues like same sex marriage, gender identity, abortion and surrogacy: "we don't meddle in any of that [...] I don't want backwards thinking people to say 'no, what are they doing'. *No, no*. So, we don't touch those subjects" (NU1). Within the organisation, she continues, they read and discuss articles on controversial topics, but they refrain from communicating this externally.

With regards to political space, it appears as if some organisations choose to stay silent on certain issues in order to be able to talk about others. While clearly a limitation of their political space, talking about certain issues within the organisation can still have an important democratic function if the democratic purpose of civil society is seen as creating space for discussion and educating citizens. However, the

group of citizens educated remains limited if issues cannot be expressed publicly. The controversy of topics important to LGBT persons, but also minority and rural women who are particularly dependent on the land, indicates that political violence could have the impact that some voices are more silenced than others.

5.3 Approaching, adjusting or avoiding?

While the framework indicates that organisations might be categorised as either *approaching*, *adjusting* or *avoiding* regarding their visibility and agenda– it quickly became clear that this is a simplistic assumption. Instead, most participating organisations use a variety of approaching, adjusting *and* avoiding coping strategies, even if some tend to use strategies from one category with more frequency. All participants are very conscious of the complex political landscape that they have to constantly navigate, evaluating the trade-off between increasing or decreasing visibility and promoting certain issues or staying silent.

During the analysis, some challenges of the framework became evident. While the category *adjusting* was considered important to account for changes in the work of the organisation that are neither *approaching* nor *avoiding*, the boundaries between different categories were not always clear. For example, should seeking more international support be defined as an approaching or adjusting strategy, and can creating a stronger organisation be seen as avoidance-oriented, or is it more adjusting? Is seeking state protection really approaching, or would it be better placed in the adjusting category? Whether organisations primarily sought advice, instrumental or emotional support was sometimes difficult to determine through interviews. Perhaps complementing interviews with participant observation could have made it easier to make the distinctions between approaching, adjusting and avoiding in these cases.

Moreover, the categorisation did not fully account for the ways in which different coping strategies can be interconnected. For example, many organisations explained that seeking emotional support, spiritual and ancestral protection and creating their own self-care and self-protection protocols, strategies Wolfer (2000) and Jenkins (2008) would categorise as *getting through*, were essential in order to keep participating. In this framework, the strategies are categorised as avoidance-oriented as they could be seen as taking up less political space and working internally. However, many participants explain that this type of strategies enable their organisations to use other approach-oriented strategies, especially since consolidated organisations and strong support systems are seen as an important protective factor.

This study finds that while coping strategies from behavioural research are helpful in order to understand the impact of political violence on individual actors' political space, the framework needs to be refined for future use in the political sciences. Primarily, the framework would need to take into account the ways in which strategies are interconnected, possibly evaluating their impact on political participation over time. Also, the importance of solid organisations, networks and relations is clear in the results of

this study. Therefore, adding a relational dimension, or bringing in theories of behaviour at the organisational level rather than individual styles of coping, would be an important next step in developing the framework.

5.4 Comparing different groups of women

This study aimed to compare non-minority and minority, urban and rural women human rights defenders. The analysis does not show a clear difference in their use of coping strategies in a way that can sufficiently describe whether they are differently impacted by political violence in terms of how they navigate their political space. However, participants agree that different groups of women are targeted by political violence on different grounds. In the majority of the cases, participants were very well aware, or reflective during the interviews, of how their work and their strategies were connected to political violence. There was a minor difference between urban and rural participants, where participants in rural and conflict-affected territories seem more conscious of the strategies that they use to navigate their context. However, it does not seem that they necessarily use more avoidance-oriented strategies, but rather that they spend more time reading their environment and mapping actors and interests (also, arguably, a barrier to participation). Some have withdrawn for periods of time because of violence, others who face a similar situation have increased their visibility instead. Visibility in relation to some actors is generally avoided (e.g., armed groups) while others are approached (e.g., international actors). Most of the minority groups were hesitant regarding the advantages of visibility, but the size of the sample requires a careful interpretation of this result. While some patterns can be seen for all organisations, it is also clear that the different nature and characteristics of the organisations is important to consider. For example, some organisations have started their work *because* of rising levels of violence (NU1, NR2, NU6). In some cases, participants have personally decided to become more visible and engaged as a reaction to personal experiences of violence targeting their families. Here, their personal reaction to violence cannot be entirely separated from the reaction of their organisation as a whole, which is the focus of this study. Neither being minority or non-minority and working in urban or rural territories nor the appraisal of violence seem sufficient when describing how women human rights defenders cope with political violence. This may be partly because of the limits of this study, but also because other factors are important to take into account.

Notably, *in what conditions* women human rights defenders cope with political violence appears to be important when describing how they navigate a violent context. First, women human rights defenders in remote locations with presence of armed groups and limited access to state institutions appear more limited in their possibilities to cope with political violence. Thus, the within Colombia-variation in access to state institutions and protection is important. Equally, the power vacuum left after demobilisation of the FARC-EP in certain territories and what actors are trying to fill that void seem to play a part in how much political space women human rights defenders feel that they have and what

strategies they can use to navigate it. In territories that are not reached by the state or by international actors, it is probably less likely that seeking increased visibility has the same positive effects as in Bogotá. If the same territories that lack state presence have a stronger presence of armed groups, seeking visibility becomes more dangerous than advantageous. All participants agree that the geographical component is important when describing the situation of women human rights defenders in Colombia:

It's not the same being a leader in Bogotá as in Popayán, or in Popayán as on indigenous land. Right? Or doing it in Bogotá as it is doing it in the Amazon or in la Guajira. It's not the same. Even if they are women leaders, even if they are indigenous... it's very different (MR4).

Considering this, the fact that this study could not be conducted in Bogotá and expanded to different regions turned out to be important for the results. While participants in more rural and conflict-affected territories were included, the most remote areas could not be reached. Therefore, considering this geographical difference, it is possible that the results may have underestimated the impact of political violence on women human rights defenders' political space if women in remote areas do not have the same possibilities to cope. The consequences for their political space may be more severe.

In addition to the geographical component, women human rights defenders' access to networks, consolidated organisations and resources seem to be important factors when describing their possibility to cope with political violence. Being organised is considered vital for the use of approach-oriented coping strategies because networks facilitate the process of seeking visibility to national and international actors. Also, it is perceived as key to access justice, cooperation, state protection and increase possibilities to assess risks. Having a strong organisation or network to rely on is seen as a protective mechanism and coping strategy:

Having a more consolidated organisation helps you gain routes to help if something happens to you, and the vulnerability of being a woman alone in the street or a woman leader decreases a bit because you have an organisation behind you that supports you. [...] Definitely, the organisation, and the consolidated movement within the organisation – I would say yes – this is a capacity (MU1).

To a certain extent, access to solid organisations and networks also seems important for the possibility to use avoidance-oriented strategies that are helpful but still do not involve taking up more political space (MR1, NU4, MU1, MR4, NR4, NU6, MR6). For example, all indigenous participants and one of the Afro-Colombian participants mention their ancestral knowledge and spiritual protection as important strategies accessible through their strong communities and organisations. Frequently, networks are described as an important safety mechanism in offering emotional support:

Recognising that at times it is too much, it affects us emotionally. And being able to count on a network also allows us to say: I'm tired, I'm overwhelmed, I'm not sleeping, I'm not doing well, I'm sad, I'm depressed... That is also a way of protecting ourselves (NU3).

Consequently, women human rights defenders' access to support systems is an important factor to take into consideration when describing their possibilities to cope with political violence.

The conclusion is that Colombian women human rights defenders' access to resources and geographical conditions are important factors to consider when studying their possibility to cope. This indicates that it is important to keep researching the impact of political violence on different groups of women. Questions like '*who lives in remote territories?*' and '*who has access to networks?*' need to be asked in order to understand differential and marginalising macro-level impacts of political violence. Especially for indigenous groups, but also a large part of the Afro-Colombian population, it is more common to live in remote territories and be dependent on the land. Also, many indigenous groups live in the most conflict affected territories (DANE, 2018). The view that marginalisation plays a role in the possibility to reach out to networks and international actors as a strategy is supported by the four bigger NGO's interviewed, who all consider themselves less exposed than smaller organisations, having greater opportunities to reach out for protection because they have larger platforms with more visibility and offices in Bogotá (NR2, MU1, MR5, NU6). There is also a difference between different groups of minority women. For example, an LGBT+ human rights defender explains that the women's movement and groups of indigenous and Afro-Colombian women have better opportunities to seek support and protect themselves because they are more well-connected and community based while LGBT+ human rights defenders tend to be less organised because of the stigma associated with being an LGBT+ person in Colombia. Thus, their organisations and networks tend to be less consolidated. In addition, stigma sometimes causes LGBT+ defenders to be estranged from their families and lack support systems outside of their organisations, making them more vulnerable and isolated when exposed to political violence. The view that indigenous and Afro-Colombian women have stronger support systems than LGBT+ defenders is confirmed by the Afro-Colombian and indigenous participants, who all talk about their communities and families as important protective mechanisms: "As women from the indigenous communities, the collective is what guarantees your protection, but also your survival." (MR4). In addition, several rural organisations claim that access to networks is more available in cities and for bigger organisations (NR1, MR3, MR4, NR3, NR4, MR5). Consequently, the conditions to cope with political violence are potentially different for different groups of women in Colombia. The implications for what voices are silenced, and whose political space is limited, need to be further explored.

6. Conclusions

This case study used semi-structured, digital interviews with 18 women human rights defenders from 14 *departamentos* in Colombia, contributing with experience on conducting digital interviews. The study relied on previous research on gender and political violence and used coping strategies from the behavioural sciences to develop a framework for assessing the impacts of political violence targeting women. It finds that the majority of the participants perceive that political violence is often gendered both in its motives and forms and that it disproportionately targets rural, indigenous, Afro-Colombian and LBT women because of racism, stigma and marginalisation. Political violence is perceived as prevalent in public and private spaces. In the interviews, the connection made between coping strategies and how meaning is made regarding the politically violent context is clear.

To answer the question *what coping strategies* women human rights defenders use: they resort to a variety of approaching, adjusting *and* avoidance-oriented strategies. Visibility is sought in certain contexts, but avoided in others. Certain actors are approached, others are avoided. Women human rights defenders speak out about certain issues, but many either frame their message carefully or choose to stay silent regarding issues perceived as controversial. The constant trade-off regarding visibility and agenda requires time and resources dedicated to reading the context, building trust, mapping actors and interests. This, in itself, is a democratic cost.

Different groups of women – cis or LBT, minority or non-minority, urban or rural – face different risks connected to their identity. However, rather than finding clear differences in coping strategies between different identity groups, *perceived possibilities* to use different coping strategies seem important to take into account. Understanding *who* has access to networks and state institutions and *who* is located in remote territories- using an intersectional approach – can improve the understanding of potentially disproportionate impacts of political violence. A key finding of the study is that different groups of women human rights defenders' geographical conditions and access to resources and networks are important to consider in order to understand how they cope with and are impacted by political violence. This highlights the need to continue researching political violence targeting women *because* they are women and active in politics, but also to keep researching political violence targeting *different groups of women* in order to fully comprehend the marginalising impacts and democratic consequences of (gendered) political violence.

It is evident that several additional perspectives can enrich research on violence targeting politically active women. First, moving beyond formal politics is important. Second it is equally important to start considering violence in the private sphere as potentially political. Not considering that violence in the private sphere can be political can contribute to depoliticising women who are leading or taking part in political processes. Not taking into account that for women and LGBT+ human rights defenders,

perpetrators of violence may be found within the same families, organisations or institutions they reach out to for protection may result in an underestimation of the cost of participating politically for these groups. Consequently, if protection measures that could enable continued participation cover the public sphere, but not the private sphere, they do not fully correspond to the security needs of women human rights defenders. This may aggravate the risk of disproportionate impacts of political violence. Third, this study clearly shows that mapping individual perceptions, lived experiences and reactions of women human rights defenders can be a helpful approach to uncover gaps and understand the full democratic consequences of political violence from a gender perspective. The knowledge provided by hearing individuals, understanding their behaviour and reactions, can contribute with new perspectives for further research on political violence and the political space of activists in Colombia and beyond.

The results are strengthened by the variation in the sample. The geographical spread of the sample also accounted for some of the within-Colombia variation, where women in conflict-affected and rural territories tended to be more conscious of their coping strategies and risk-aware. Coping strategies were recurring throughout the data collection irrespective of the study's different starting points or characteristics of the organisations. Regarding *what strategies* are used, specifically, the study managed to reach theoretical saturation within the sample, but a larger number of organisations and more diversity would have added strength to the results. The selection was biased towards women who are part of organisations. This limitation was necessary for practical and ethical reasons, but may have contributed to the salience of the strategy of organising in networks. However, the emphasis on networks and mobilisation by so many participants indicates that, regardless, it is an important factor to consider. The bias may also have contributed to an underestimation of the silencing effect of political violence. Furthermore, escalating insecurities as a result of Covid-19 may have affected the results of the study, both regarding conditions of participation and perceptions of violence.

Moving forward, using coping strategies in research on the impact of political violence could be a useful approach when continuing to explore how actors navigate their political space. The categories *approaching*, *adjusting* and *avoiding* are helpful in assessing whether actors take up more or less political space, but further refining and developing the framework is required. Efforts to bring together literature on individual perspectives and reactions to violence need to continue, as previous research is diverse in conceptualisations, categories and conclusions. Further development of the framework would also need to take into account how and if strategies are interconnected. Studying coping over time would contribute with perspectives on the democratic consequences of different styles of coping in the long term. Adding organisational theory and lifting the framework to the organisational level could account for the relational dimension. Quantitative data on the strategies of women human rights defenders in Colombia could complement and strengthen the conclusions of this thesis. It would also be important to explore the strategies used by women leaders and human rights defenders who are not connected to

organisations. As a next step, comparing the strategies used by different groups of *women and men* is required in order to understand if there is a gender differentiated impact of political violence targeting human rights defenders. Continuing to explore lived experiences and micro-level mechanisms has an intrinsic value in the political sciences, not least because personal experiences are also political. The results of this study show that perceptions and reactions of actors who navigate violent contexts is an important perspective in order to understand their actions and political participation. Aggregated individual experiences can contribute to the literature on macro-level phenomena such as barriers to participation, political violence and marginalisation. More importantly, it affirms the importance of using bottom-up approaches to avoid making certain lives- especially those denied access to the top and the formal arenas – invisible. Future questions to be asked are what conditions are important for women human rights defenders coping in other contexts, and whether the same conditions are important for men who are human rights defenders in Colombia and beyond. Do they use the same, or other types of coping strategies? What are the democratic consequences? Studies on different groups of women and men navigating formal political arenas could also make use of frameworks focusing on perceptions and reactions to political violence.

To conclude, this study finds that political violence targeting women participating politically through civil society in Colombia has severe democratic consequences. Some women human rights defenders are silenced, some have to go into hiding, and some are displaced because of their political engagement. The symbolic consequences regarding what is considered ‘the cost’ of political participation may discourage women from engaging in defending human rights on a larger scale. Moreover, political violence impacts Colombian women human rights defenders’ freedom of movement, causing limitations in their personal and professional lives. This does not only silence political voices, but can contribute to further economic and social marginalisation. Some women human rights defenders avoid certain subjects to be less exposed to violence, ultimately limiting their freedom of speech. For those who continue to participate despite high levels of violence, the time spent seeking protection and reading the environment forms a barrier to their political participation. It takes time and resources that could have been spent elsewhere. Because family members, the security sector, members within the same organisation or other societal support functions can also be perpetrators, the opportunities to cope with political violence or receive support may also be gendered, especially if the support offered is not adapted to the specific needs of different groups of women human rights defenders. Without continuous intersectional analysis, the wave of political violence targeting human rights defenders in Colombia is at risk of worsening existing inequalities, not only because different groups are differentially targeted and because violence is often gendered, but also because the possibility to cope with political violence is closely tied to factors such as access to resources. Differential impacts of political violence could consequently limit the political space disproportionately for groups whose political space is already limited. Considering the importance of civil society as an arena for different groups of women’s political

participation, the democratic consequences could also be disproportionate. Undoubtedly, an intersectional approach is needed in future studies of political violence. As this study shows, taking an interest in individual perceptions and experiences is one way of learning more about the impacts of political violence in Colombia as well as in other contexts.

References

- Ackerly, B. & True, J. (2013). Methods and Methodologies in G. Waylen, K.Celis, J. Kantola & S.L.Weldon (eds) *The Oxford Handbook on Gender and Politics* New York: Oxford University Press. pp.135-159.
- Ackerly, B. & True, J. (2020). *Doing Feminist Research in Political and Social Science*. London: Macmillan Education UK.
- Al-Ali, N. & Pratt, N. (2016). Positionalities, Intersectionalities and Transnational Feminism in Researching Women in Post-Invasion Iraq. In Annick T.R. Wibben (ed) *Researching War*. pp. 76-91. New York: Routledge.
- Albaine, A. (2014). Acoso y violencia política en razón de género, un estudio sobre América Latina: Nuevas Normas, Viejas Prácticas. In N. Archenti & M. I. Tula (eds), *La representación política imperfecta: Logros y desafíos de las mujeres políticas*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Eudeba
- Amnesty International. (2019). *Challenging Power, Fighting Discrimination: A Call to Action to Recognize and Protect Women Human Rights Defenders*. Amnesty International Ltd. London, UK.
- Archenti, N., & Albaine, A. (2013). Obstáculos y desafíos de la paridad de género. Tensión normativa y violencia política en Bolivia y Ecuador. *Revista Punto Género*, 3, pp.195–219.
- Ballington, J. (2018). Turning the Tide on Violence against Women in Politics: How Are We Measuring Up? In *Politics & Gender* 14 (4): 695–701.
- Bardall, G. (2011). *Breaking the mold: Understanding gender and electoral violence*. IFES White Paper Series. Washington, DC: International Foundation for Electoral Systems
- Bardall, G. (2018). Violence, Politics and Gender *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*, pages
- Bardall, G. Bjarnegård, E, & Piscopo, J.M. (2019). How is Political Violence Gendered? Disentangling Motives, Forms, and Impacts *Journal of Political Studies* pp 1-20.
- Bardall, G. (2019). Symbolic Violence as a Form of Violence against Women in Politics: A Critical Examination. *Revista Mexicana de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales* pp. 379-389.
- Biroli, F. (2018) Violence Against Women and Reactions to Gender Equality in Politics. In *Politics & Gender*. 14 (4) pp.681 -685.

- Birt, L. Scott, S. Cavers, D. Campbell, C. Walter, F. (2016) 'Member Checking: A Tool to Enhance Trustworthiness or Merely a Nod to Validation?', *Qualitative Health Research*, 26(13), pp. 1802–1811.
- Bjarnegård, E. (2016). Gender and election violence: The case of the Maldives. Annual Convention of the International Studies Association (ISA). Atlanta, Georgia.
- Bjarnegård, E. Melander, E. Bardall, G. Brounéus, K. Forsberg, E. Johansson, K. (2015). Gender, peace, and armed conflict. In *SIPRI Yearbook 2015*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bjarnegård, E. (2018). Making Gender Visible in Election Violence: Strategies for Data Collection. in *Politics & Gender* 14 (4): 690–95
- Bjarnegård, E. Håkansson, S. & Zetterberg P. (2020) Gender and violence against political candidates: Lessons from Sri Lanka. In *Politics & Gender*. pp. 1-29
- Blattman, C. (2009). From Violence to Voting: War and Political Participation in Uganda in *The American Political Science Review*, 103(2), pp. 231-247
- Boesten, J. (2012). The state and violence against women in Peru: Intersecting inequalities and patriarchal rule. *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State, and Society*, 19(3), 361–382.
- Bocanumeth, M. (2020-07-03). LGBT+ Rights and Peace in Colombia: The Paradox Between Law and Practice. For *Washington Office for Latin America (WOLA)* Available at: <https://www.wola.org/analysis/lgbt-rights-and-peace-in-colombia-the-paradox-between-law-and-practice/> [Accessed 2020-10-02]
- Bouvier, V. (2016). UN Women Background Paper: Gender and the role of Women in Colombia's peace process. United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women).
- Boxer, P & Sloan-Power, E. (2013). Coping with Violence: A Comprehensive Framework and Implications for Understanding Resilience. In *Trauma, Violence and Abuse*, 14 (3) pp. 209-221
- Brounéus, Karen. (2011). In-depth Interviewing: The process, skill and ethics of interviews in peace research. In K. Höglund and M. Öberg (eds) *Understanding Peace Research: Methods and Challenges*, London: Routledge pp. 130-145.
- Burns, N, Schlozman, K, and Verba, S. (2001). The private roots of public action: Gender, equality and political participation. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

- Cairns, E & Wilson, R. (1989). Coping with Political Violence in Northern Ireland. In *Social Science and Medicine* 28 (6) pp 621-624.
- Cerva Cerna, D. (2014). Participación política y violencia de género en México. In *Revista mexicana de ciencias políticas y sociales*, 59(222), pp. 117–140
- Clough, P. & Nutbrown, C. (2012). *A Student's Guide to Methodology*. 3rd Edition. London: Sage Publications
- Cockburn, C. (2004) 'The continuum of violence: A gender perspective on war and peace', in W. Giles & J. Hyndman (eds.) *Sites of violence: Gender and conflict zones*. pp. 24–44 Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics and Violence Against Women of Color. In *Stanford Law Review* 43 (6) (July 1991) pp.1241 -1299.
- Dahlerup, D. (2018). *Has Democracy Failed Women?* Polity Press, Cambridge: UK.
- Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística (DANE) (2018). Estadísticas y grupos étnicos. Available at: <https://www.dane.gov.co/index.php/estadisticas-por-tema/demografia-y-poblacion/grupos-etnicos/estadisticas-y-grupos-etnicos> [Accessed 2020-12-15]
- Dayal, Anjani & Christien, Agathe (2020). Women's Participation in Informal Peace Processes. In *Global Governance* 26 (1). Pp. 69-98.
- Dean, J. (1996). *Solidarity of Strangers: Feminism After Identity Politics*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Deth, J.W. Montero, J.R. & Westholm, A. (2007). *Citizenship and involvement in European democracies: a comparative analysis*, London: Routledge.
- Eduards, M. & Jansson, M. (2017). Introduktion till internationella relationer in *Politik och kön: feministiska perspektiv på statsvetenskap* L. Freidenvall & M. Jansson (eds), 1:1 Lund: Studentlitteratur AB.
- European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) (2020). What is gender based violence? Available at: <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-based-violence/what-is-gender-based-violence> [Accessed 2020-11-26]
- Ellsberg, M. C., & Heise, L. (2002). Bearing witness: ethics in domestic violence research in *The Lancet*, 2002 (359), pp. 1599–1604
- Enloe, C. (2014). *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* 2nd Edition (2014) University of California Press. Los Angeles: CA

- Eriksson Baaz, M & Stern, M. (2013). *Sexual Violence as a Weapon of War? Perceptions, Prescriptions, Problems in the Congo and Beyond*. London: Zed Books.
- Esaiasson, P. Giljam, M. Oscarsson, H. Wägnerud, L. (2007). *Metodpraktikan: Konsten att studera samhälle, individ och marknad*. 3rd Edition. Nordsteds Juridik AB. Vällingby.
- Estupiñan, D (2020-06-18) A las y los líderes sociales nos siguen matando durante la cuarentena. Published in La Semana, June 2020. Available at: <https://www.semana.com/opinion/articulo/a-las-y-los-lideres-sociales-nos-siguen-matando-durante-la-cuarentena/680599/> (Accessed 2020-11-13).
- Felson RB, Messner SF, Hoskin AW and Deane G (2002) Reasons for reporting and not reporting domestic violence to the police. In *Criminology* 40(3): pp. 617-648.
- Fleury, RM. Sullivan, CM. Bybee, DI. Davidson, WS. (1998) "Why Don't They Just Call the Cops?": Reasons for Differential Police Contact Among Women with Abusive Partners. In *Violence and Victims*, 13(4) 1998 pp. 333-346. Springer Publishing Company.
- Fraser, N. (1990). Rethinking the Public Sphere. in *Social Text* 25-26, pp. 56-80.
- Front Line Defenders. (2020). *Front Line Defenders Global Analysis 2019*. Front Line, the International Foundation for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders; County Dublin. Ireland.
- Fundación Ideas Para la Paz (FIP) (2020) En los cuatro años de la firma del Acuerdo de Paz: Un nuevo ciclo de violencia organizada en Colombia Available at: <http://ideaspaz.org/especiales/infografias/cuatro-anios-conflicto.html> [Accessed 2020-11-26].
- Gerring, J. (2004). What Is a Case Study and What Is It Good for? In *the American Political Science Review*. 98 (2), pp. 341–354.
- Getmansky, A. & Zeitzoff, T. (2014). Terrorism and Voting: The Effect of Rocket Threat on Voting in Israeli Elections. In *American Political Science Review* 108 (3). pp. 588-604 American Political Science Association.
- Herrera, M. Arias, M. & García, S. (2011). *Hostilidad y violencia política: Develando realidades de mujeres autoridades municipales - Sistematización de experiencias de violencia política que viven mujeres electas en Gobiernos Municipales en El Salvador*. ONU Mujeres, Gobierno de España, Andrysas y Colectiva Feminista; Santo Domingo.
- Hinfelaar, M & Kaaba, O. (2019). Adjust, Resist, or Disband: How Does Civil Society Respond to Repression in Zambia? *PRIO Paper*. Oslo: PRIO.

- Htun, M. and Weldon, L.S. (2012). The Civic Origins of Progressive Policy Change: Combating Violence against Women in Global Perspective, 1975–2005. in *American Political Science Review* 106 (3): 548–69.
- Human Rights Watch (2019). World Report 2019: Colombia. Retrieved at: <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/colombia> [Accessed 2020-09-09]
- Håkansson, S. Forthcoming. Do women pay a higher price for power? Gender bias in political violence in Sweden. in *Journal of Politics*.
- Höglund, K. & Öberg, M. (2011). *Understanding Peace Research: Methods and Challenges*. London: Routledge.
- Indepaz (2020), Líderes sociales y defensores de derechos humanos asesinados en 2020. Available at: <http://www.indepaz.org.co/lideres/> [Accessed 2020-12-14]
- Inglehart, R. & Norris, P. (2003). *Rising Tide: Gender Equality and Cultural Change Around the World*. New York: Cambridge University Press
- Inter-Parliamentary Union. (2016). Issue Brief: Sexism, harassment and violence against women parliamentarians. Geneva.
- Inter-Parliamentary Union. (2020). Women in Politics 2020. Retrieved at: <https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/infographics/2020-03/women-in-politics-2020> (Accessed 2020-09-09)
- Jarstad, A. & Höglund, K. (2015). Local Violence and Politics in KwaZulu-Natal: perceptions of agency in a post-conflict society. In *Third World Quarterly*. 36 (5) pp. 967-984
- Janghorban, R. Roudsari, R.L. & Taghipour, A. (2014) Skype interviewing: The new generation of online synchronous interview in qualitative research, in *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-being*, 9 (1)
- Jenkins, E.J. (2008). Black Women and Community Violence – trauma, grief and coping, in *Women & Therapy*, 25 (3-4), pp. 29-44. Routledge.
- Joshi, M. Olsson, L. Gindele, R. Echavarría, J. (2020) Understanding the Implementation of Gender Stipulations in Peace Agreements. In the Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA), Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) and UN Women *Joint Brief Series: New Insights on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) for the Next Decade* (November 2020)
- Kennedy, C & Dingli, S. (2016). Gender and Security. In A. Collins (ed) *Contemporary Security Studies* 4th edition. New York: Oxford University Press.

- Kishi, R., & Olsson, L. (2019). How Does Political Violence Target Women? New Data from ACLED, in *GPS Policy Brief, 2*. Oslo: PRIO.
- Kishi, R., Pavlik, M. & Matfess, H. (2019). Terribly and Terrifyingly Normal: Political Violence Targeting Women. Retrieved: https://acleddata.com/acleddatanew/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/ACLED_Report_PoliticalViolenceTargetingWomen_5.2019.pdf.
- Krook, M-L. (2017). Violence against women in politics, in *Journal of Democracy* 28 (1) pp. 74-88. Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Krook, M-L. (2019). Global feminist collaborations and violence against women in politics in *Journal of International Affairs* 72 pp. 77-94.
- Krook, M-L & Restrepo Sanín, J. (2016). Gender and political violence in Latin America: Concepts, debates and solutions. In *Política y Gobierno* 23 (1), pp. 125-157.
- Krook, M-L & Restrepo Sanín, J. (2019). The Cost of Doing Politics? Analyzing Violence and Harassment against Female Politicians, in *Perspectives on Politics*, pp 1-16. Cambridge University Press.
- Krystalli, R. (2019). Narrating violence: feminist dilemmas and approaches in L.J Shepherd (eds.) *Handbook on Gender and Violence* (2019) pp.173-188. London: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited.
- Kvale, S. & Brinkmann, S. (2014). Den kvalitativa forskningsintervjun. 3rd edition. Lund: Studentlitteratur AB
- Lazarus, R.S & Folkman, S. (1984). *Stress, Appraisal and Coping*. Springer Cop: New York.
- Liga Internacional de Mujeres por la Paz y la Libertad (LIMPAL). (2020). *Sintonías corporales: Memoria y resistencia de defensoras, un seguimiento a la Resolución 1325*. Bogotá DC, Colombia.
- Linde, J. & Ekman, J. (2006). *Demokratiseringsprocesser: Teoretiska ansatser och empiriska studier*. Studentlitteratur. Denmark: Narayana Press.
- Lovenduski, J. (2005). *Feminizing Politics*. Polity Press. Cambridge: UK.
- MacGinty, R. (2014). Everyday Peace: Bottom-up and Local Agency in Conflict-affected Societies. In *Security Dialogue* 45 (6) pp. 548–564.
- Marks, Z. & Chenoweth, E. (2020). *Women’s Participation for Peaceful Change*, In the Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA), Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) and UN Women

Joint Brief Series: New Insights on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) for the Next Decade (November 2020).

- Matfess, H. (2017). *Women and the War on Boko Haram: Wives, Weapons, Witnesses*. London: Zed Books
- Meger, S. (2019). Gender, violence and the Women, Peace and Security agenda. in L.J Shepherd (eds.) *Handbook on Gender and Violence* (2019). pp. 279-294 London: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited.
- Meyer, S. (2012) Why women stay: A theoretical examination of rational choice and moral reasoning in the context of intimate partner violence. In *Australian and New Zealand Journal on Criminology*, 45(2) pp. 179-193. Sage Publications.
- Minority Rights Group International. (2008). World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples – Colombia. available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/4954ce5dc.html> [Accessed 23 September 2020]
- Mosley, L. (2013). Introduction. "Just Talk to People"? Interviews in Contemporary Political Science. in Layna Mosley (ed.), *Interview Research in Political Science* pp. 1-28. Ithaca: Cornell University Press
- Moser, C. (2001). The Gendered Continuum of Violence and Conflict in Moser, C. & Clarke, F. (Ed.) *Victims, Perpetrators or Actors - Gender, Armed Conflict and Political Violence* (2001), pp. 30-52. London: Zed Books Ltd.
- Moser C. & Clarke, F. (2001). Introduction. in Moser, C. & Clarke, F. (eds) *Victims, Perpetrators or Actors - Gender, Armed Conflict and Political Violence* (2001), pp. 3-12. London: Zed Books Ltd
- Moser, C. & Mcilwaine. C. (2001). Gender and Social Capital in Contexts of Political Violence - Community Perceptions from Colombia and Guatemala in Moser, C. & Clarke, F. (Eds.) *Victims, Perpetrators or Actors - Gender, Armed Conflict and Political Violence* (2001). pp. 178-200. London: Zed Books Ltd.
- Nagel, J. (2019). Gender, violence and the military. in L.J Shepherd (eds.) *Handbook on Gender and Violence* (2019), Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, London, UK. pp.295-307
- National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (2015). "NDI launches global campaign to address violence against women in elections". Retrieved from <http://www.ndi.org/violence-against-women-elections>. [Accessed 2020-08-30]

- National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (2017). #NotTheCost: Stopping Violence Against Women in Politics Program Guidance. Washington, DC
- Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD). (2016). *Mujeres y Participación Política en Colombia: El fenómeno de la violencia contra las mujeres en política*. Bogota DC: Colombia
- Nilsson M. & González Marín, L. (2020). Violent Peace: Local Perceptions of Threat and Insecurity in Post-Conflict Colombia, in *International Peacekeeping*, 27 (2), pp. 238-262,
- Nilsson, D. & Svensson, I. (2020) Women's Organizations in Peace-making. In the Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA), Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) and UN Women *Joint Brief Series: New Insights on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) for the Next Decade* (November 2020)
- Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). (2018). Violence Against Women in Politics: Expert Group Meeting Report & Recommendations. 8-9 March 2018. New York, NY.
- Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). (2019-03-11). "Attacked because of who they are and what they do" Retrieved at <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/AttackedBecauseWhoTheyAre.aspx> [Accessed 2020-08-18].
- Palomar Lever, J. (2008) Poverty, Stressful Life Events and Coping Strategies. In *the Spanish Journal of Psychology*. 11 (1) pp. 228-249.
- Patton, M.Q. (2002). *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*. 3rd Edition, Sage Publications: Thousand Oaks. Pp. 230-242
- Plan International. (2020-05-19). Surge in Violence Against Women in Latin America and the Caribbean. Available at: <https://plan-international.org/news/2020-05-19-surge-violence-against-girls-and-women-latin-america-and-caribbean> [Accessed 2020-09-28].
- Protection International. (2018-06-07). Women on the Frontlines: How the closing space for civil society impacts women activists and sustainable development for women and girls Retrieved at: <https://www.protectioninternational.org/en/news/women-frontlines-howclosing-space-civil-society-impacts-women-activists-and-sustainable> (Accessed 2020-08-20).
- Punamäki, R-L. (1990). Relationships Between Political Violence and Psychological Responses Among Palestinian Women. In *Journal of Peace Research* 27 (1) (February 1990), Sage Publications Ltd. pp. 75-85.

- Ray, C. Lindop, J & Gibson, S. (1982). The Concept of Coping. In *Psychological Medicine*, 1982 (12) pp. 385-395. Cambridge University Press.
- Restrepo Sanín, J. (2020). Criminalizing Violence against Women in Politics: Innovation, Diffusion, and Transformation. in *Politics & Gender*. pp. 1–32. Cambridge University Press,
- Rojas, C. (2004). In the Midst of War: Women’s Contributions to Peace in Colombia. Hunt Alternatives Fund 2004, ISBN 1-932679-04-9.
- Salmon, J. (2015) *Qualitative Online Interviews: Strategies, Design and Skills*. 2nd edition. London: Sage Publications
- Sanchez Lara, D. Muñoz Murillo, S. Ulcué Campo, G. Pinzón, S. Díaz Morales, L. Herrera, S. & Llanos, C. (2020). La Ceguera: Informe Anual 2019: Sistema de Información sobre Agresiones contra Personas Defensores de Derechos Humanos en Colombia SIADDHH. *Programa Somos Defensores*, Bogota D.C, Colombia.
- Shannon, L., Logan, T.K., Cole, J. & Medley, K. (2006). "Help-Seeking and Coping Strategies for Intimate Partner Violence in Rural and Urban Women", in *Violence and victims*, 21 (2) pp. 167-81.
- Shapiro, I. Smith, R.M. & Masoud, T.E. (2004). *Problems and Methods in the Study of Politics*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Sisma Mujer (2020-11-29) Boletín N° 24: Lideresas y defensoras durante la pandemia: entre la violencia sociopolítica de género y el Covid-19. Available for download at: <https://www.sismamujer.org/2020/11/29/boletin-n-24-lideresas-y-defensoras-durante-la-pandemia-entre-la-violencia-sociopolitica-de-genero-y-el-covid-19/> [Accessed 2020-11-30]
- Skinner, E A. Edge, K. Altman, J. Sherwood, H. (2003). Searching for the Structure of Coping: A Review and Critique of Category Systems for Classifying Ways of Coping. in *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol 129(2), American Psychological Association. pp. 216-269.
- Sousa, C.A. (2013). Political Violence, Health and Coping Among Palestinian Women in the West Bank. In *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 23 (4) pp. 505-519
- South Asia Partnership International (SAP). (2010). *Violence Against Women in Politics (VAWIP) Defining terminologies and concepts*. Kathmandu; Nepal: SAP-Nepal Publishing House.
- Spongaro, J. (2019). Intimate Partner Violence. In *Handbook on Gender and Violence* (2019), L J. Shepherd (ed). pp. 265-278. London: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited.

- Stigum Gleiss, M. (2017). Discourse, political space and the politics of citizenship. *Norsk Geografisk Tidsskrift - Norwegian Journal of Geography*, 71 (4), pp. 233-242.
- Strolovich, D.Z. & Townsend-Bell, E. (2013). Sex, Gender and Civil Society in G. Waylen, K.Celis, J. Kantola & S.L. Weldon (eds) *The Oxford Handbook on Gender and Politics* Oxford University Press: New York. pp.367-389
- Söderström, J. (2018). Fear of Electoral Violence and its Impact on Political Knowledge in Sub-Saharan Africa. In *Political Studies* 66(4) pp.869–886.
- Söderström, J. (2019). Seeking recognition, becoming citizens: Achievements and grievances among former combatants from three wars. In *Conflict and Society*, 5(1), pp. 168-185.
- Teorell, J. & Svensson, T. (2007). *Att fråga och att svara: samhällsvetenskaplig metod*. Stockholm: Liber.
- Tickner, A.J. (2005). What is Your Research Program? Some Feminist Answers to International Relations Methodological Questions. In *International Studies Quarterly* 49:1 (March 2005) pp 1-21.
- Tickner, A.J. (2014). A feminist voyage through international relations. Oxford Scholarship Online (E-book).
- Toshkov, D. (2018). Research Design. in Vivien Lowndes, David Marsh, and Gerry Stoker (eds.), *Theory and Methods in Political Science* Chapter 13, pp. 219-230; 234-236. London: Palgrave.
- Tripp A.M. (2003). Women in movement: transformations in African political landscapes. in *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 5:2, 233-255.
- UN General Assembly (UNGA) Human Rights Council: (2010-12-20). A/HRC/16/44. Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders on her visit to Armenia. Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Margaret Sekaggya.
- UN Press (2020-04-04) Increased Attacks against Community Leaders, Human Rights Defenders Pose Gravest Threat to Colombia Peace Process, Special Representative Warns Security Council. Available at: <https://www.un.org/press/en/2020/sc14252.doc.htm> [accessed 2020-11-26].
- van Baalen, Sebastian. (2018). ‘Google wants to know your location’: The ethical challenges offieldwork in the digital age. in *Research Ethics* 14(4): pp. 1-17.
- Vetenskapsrådet. (2017). *Forskningsetiska principer inom humanistisk-samhällsvetenskaplig forskning*. ISBN:91-7307-008-4.

- Wassholm, C. (2018). Suffocating the Movement – Shrinking Space for Women’s Rights. the *Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation*. Stockholm.
- Watts, C. Heise, L, Ellsberg, M & Garcia Moreno, C. (2001). Putting women first: Ethical and Safety Recommendations for Research on Domestic Violence Against Women. World Health Organization (WHO), Geneva: Switzerland.
- Waylen, G. (1994). Women and Democratization: Conceptualizing Gender Relations in Transition Politics in *World Politics* 46 (April 1994) pp.327-354
- Wedeen, L. (2004). Concepts and Commitments in the Study of Democracy. In I. Shapiro, R.M Smith, T.E. Masoud (eds) *Problems and Methods in the Study of Politics*. pp.274-306 New York: Cambridge University Press
- Wessler, H. & Freudenthaler, R. (2017). Public Sphere. *Oxford Bibliographies*; Retrieved at: <https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199756841/obo-9780199756841-0030.xml> [Accessed 2020-09-11].
- Wibben, A.T.R. (2016). Introduction. in *Researching War: Feminist Methods, Ethics and Politics*. Annick T.R Wibben (ed). pp. 1-15. New York: Routledge.
- Wimpelmann, T. (2019). Gender and violence in post-conflict settings in L.J Shepherd (eds.) *Handbook on Gender and Violence*. pp.308-319 London: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited.
- Woodiwiss, J. (2017). Challenges for Feminist Research: Contested Stories, Dominant Narratives and Narrative Frameworks. In J. Woodiwiss, K. Smith & K. Lockwood (eds) *Feminist Narrative Research: Opportunities and Challenges* pp. 13-37. UK: Palgrave Macmillan
- Wolfer, T.A. (2000). Coping with Chronic Community Violence: The Variety and Implications of Women’s Efforts. in *Violence and Victims*, 15 (3) Springer Publishing Company. pp. 283-301.
- Yanow, D. (2014). Thinking Interpretively: Philosophical Presuppositions and the Human Sciences in Yanow, Schwartz-Shea (eds.), *Interpretation and Method: Empirical Research Methods and the Interpretive Turn*. Chapter 1, pp. 5- 26.

Appendix 1: Participating Organisations

	Type of organisation	Departamento	Minority group	Rural/urban	Code
Organisation 1	Local organisation of young women working against gender-based violence	Meta	No (N)	Urban (U)	NU1
Organisation 2	National organisation comprised of and advocating for the rights of rural, indigenous and afro-Colombian women.	Caldas	Yes (M)	Rural (R)	MR1
Organisation 3	Local organisation for women victims of the conflict	Bolivar	No (N)	Rural (R)	NR1
Organisation 4	Local organisation advocating for the rights of afro-Colombian women	Cauca	Yes (M)	Rural (R)	MR2
Organisation 5	International organisation advocating for inclusive peacebuilding and accompanying human rights defenders (NGO)	Nariño	No (NI)	Rural (R)	NR2
Organisation 6	Indigenous women's organisation defending their rights to the territory	La Guajira	Yes (M)	Rural (R)	MR3
Organisation 7	Local organisation advocating for gender equality, non-violence and environmental rights	Huila	No (N)	Urban (U)	NU2
Organisation 8	Local foundation focusing on land rights and campaigning against extraction of natural resources	Magdalena	No (N)	Rural (R)	NR3
Organisation 9	National umbrella organisation focusing on LGBT+ rights in all of Colombia (NGO)	Cundinamarca (Bogotá)	Yes (M)	Urban (U)	MU1
Organisation 10	Regional organisation for women victims of conflict related sexual violence	Cundinamarca (Bogotá)	No (N)	Urban (U)	NU3
Organisation 11	Regional organisation for indigenous women	Cauca	Yes (M)	Rural (R)	MR4
Organisation 12	Local organisation for rural women defending land rights	Santander	No (N)	Rural (R)	NR4
Organisation 13	Local women's rights organisation	Santander	No (N)	Urban (U)	NU4
Organisation 14	Regional women's rights organisation	Santander	No (N)	Urban (U)	NU5
Organisation 15	Regional organisation coordinating indigenous groups to defend land rights in the Amazon (NGO)	Amazonas/ Vaupés (Bogotá based)	Yes (M)	Rural (R)	MR5
Organisation 16	National women's rights organisation (NGO)	Cundinamarca (Bogotá)	No (N)	Urban (U)	NU6
Organisation 17	Network of Afro-Colombian Women present in several regions	Antioquia	Yes (M)	Rural (R)	MR6
Organisation 18	Local organisation for young peacebuilders (working with youth, peace and security; LGBT rights and women's rights)	Caquetá	No (N)	Rural (R)	NR5

Appendix 2: Interview Guide

Introduction

Information and consent: Brief introduction and the purpose of the study. Explain what I mean by political violence. Ask to confirm consent to participate in the interview and explain that it can be withdrawn at any time, also after the interview. The participant can choose not to answer any question they prefer not to answer.

Permission to record the interview (stored on an external hard-drive and deleted after the thesis has been finished)

Do you have any questions or comments before we start?

Warm up questions.

1) Can you start by telling me a bit about the work of your organisation and your role

Potential follow up questions:

- what issues are the main focus for your organisation?
- What issues are the main focus in your work? (has it changed during your time at the organisation)
- how visible are you in your organisation (in external meetings and activities, in public events, on a website, on social media)

Theme: Political Violence

2) Can you describe the situation for human rights defenders in Colombia?

3) Are some activists more targeted by political violence than others? (old, young, different ethnic groups, women/men?)

- Why do you think so?
- How does this show?

4) Has political violence targeting human defenders changed in Colombia during the time you have been a human rights defender?

Theme: Coping strategies

5) Has your organisation changed anything in how you work in order to manage/cope with political violence?

Potential follow up questions:

- are there any changes in how you work now and how you have previously worked?
- are there any other safety measures or activities you have taken or put in place to manage levels of political violence?
- are there any changes in the issues you focus on in the work of the organization?
- have you changed how you frame the issues you work with?
- are there any changes in the arenas/spaces you use for the work of your organization?
- have you changed the way you promote your organization publicly?
- are there any changes regarding which actors you cooperate with?
- are there any changes regarding your online presence?
- are there any changes regarding your participation in public events or activities?

Theme: Political space

6) Do you think that political violence affects the political space of human rights defenders?

7) Would you say that your own political space has been affected?

Finish the interview:

Is there something I have not asked about, that you think it is important that I know?

Member checking: Summarize key takeaways from the interview.

Give information about the publication of the results

Appendix 3: Quotes in original language

Page 26:

“Entonces el hecho que se coloque su vida en peligro y que día a día uno ande con temores de que me van a ir a matar, de que me van a ir a estropear de que de pronto van a secuestrar un hijo o que me van a secuestrar a mí. Esto se vuelve cada día. Todas y cada una de las mujeres que pertenecen a esta organización vivimos pensando siempre eso.”

Defensora, Organización 2 (MR1)

Page 27:

“las mujeres tenemos doble o triple papel. No solo nos toca liderar con todo de la comunidad sino nos toca también en nivel personal. [...] también para nosotras la familia es fundamental y a veces... cuando nos agreden a nosotras es una cosa, pero cuando se agreden a un familiar también... el asunto se complejiza”

Defensora, Organización 4 (MR2)

“Porque las mujeres también enfrentan un doble riesgo: Es ser mujer en una sociedad patriarcal, y también ejercer un liderazgo. Como salir de estos espacios privados y ejercer un liderazgo público.”

Defensora, Organización 9 (MU1)

“Y en eso se siente que hay una diferencia en términos del tipo de amenaza que se hace a la mujer. Porque todavía sigue haciéndose uso de la amenaza por vía de la moralidad. De atacar la moralidad de la mujer”

Defensora, Organización 12 (NR4)

“Si la mujer es primero mujer, indígena: doble forma de vivir el riesgo. Pero si además la mujer está defendiendo un páramo, si la mujer está defendiendo que no haya extracción minera... como todas estas cosas que son del territorio...el riesgo es peor todavía.”

Defensora, Organización 10 (NU3)

Page 28:

“A mi incluso en los concejales me decían “la camarita”. La camarita era de la güerilla de las FARC”

Defensora, Organización 18 (NR5)

“muchas de las mujeres acudieron a las iglesias a buscar apoyo espiritual por todas las violencias que han vivido. Y el pastor se aprovechó.”

Defensora, Organización 10 (NU3)

“Por ejemplo hay territorios muy complejos como el Tumaco en Nariño donde las defensoras dicen, no, el hombre machista maltratador del hogar también es parte de un grupo armado.”

Defensora, Organización 16 (NU6)

“La mayoría de las mujeres no tienen la autonomía para salir. Y menos para salir, por ejemplo, a una reunión. [...] No está muy permitido en estos sectores campesinos, en estos sectores suburbanos. Entonces allí vamos a tener una dificultad porque a mano no tienen los recursos. Los hombres dicen “vamos a una reunión, vamos a una asamblea” y se van con la plata en el bolsillo. Pero las mujeres para salir tienen que pedir.”

Defensora, Organización 12 (NR4)

Page 29:

“Las mujeres también hemos seguido avanzando a pesar del rechazo que inicialmente era más un rechazo moral, un rechazo desde el estado y el poder político del estado, y del poder político de la sociedad masculina. Ahora ya se avanzó, las mujeres dejaron, no importó, las mujeres seguimos. Y pues las amenazas ahora son mucho más directas,”

Defensora, Organización 12 (NR4)

Page 30:

“Hacen más ruido. Están más visibles”

Defensora, Organización 16 (MR5)

“Creemos que la comunicación puede servir de estrategia también para la protección. Entonces intentamos utilizar la comunicación para la incidencia y para tener protección. Entonces en los últimos años, especialmente en el último año, hemos intensificado este tema aprovechando las redes.”

Defensora, Organización 4 (MR2)

Page 31:

“Hacer cooperación internacional, tener el respaldo internacional, como de la Unión Europea en Colombia. Como tener relaciones posibles con financiadores, con embajadas... eso te brinda. Eso te da un escenario de protección, de cuidado.”

Defensora, Organización 5 (NR2)

Page 32:

“Muchas veces eso resulta visibilizándonos aún más – como cuando caminas con una escolta, y vas de barrio a barrio con un tipo al lado... Ya te pone más en riesgo porque la gente sabe quién eres y cuando no está el escolta es cuando pueden atacarte.”

Defensora, Organización 9 (MU1)

“Es como todo el tiempo es como una guerra fría [...] Y tú tienes que configurar: ¿en qué zona estás?, ¿qué actores son? ¿por qué están haciendo eso?... Tienes que intentar a entender bien el escenario para poder actuar. [...] estas como caminando en un panal de huevos constantemente.”

Defensora, Organización 5 (NR2)

“Pues anteriormente hablábamos más con nombres propios. También decíamos lugares. Pero eso fue cambiando ¿no? [...] Seguimos haciendo la denuncia, pero no de la misma forma.”

Defensora, Organización 6 (MR3)

Page 33:

“hemos venido haciendo más un trabajo de hormiguitas, de organizar las mujeres, estar allí con las mujeres acompañando.”

Defensora, Organización 14 (NU5)

“Los liderazgos también bajan el perfil, de no asumir tanta responsabilidad, tanta visibilidad, para evitar todas estas situaciones también de identificación de quién nos está liderando [...] muchas compañeras nuestras han tenido que dejar... se han tenido que ir. Desplazadas o simplemente quedarse en casa para no generar, pues también la tensión”

Defensora, Organización 11 (MR4)

“Cuando vamos a hablar en un espacio tenemos que mirar ¿en qué espacio estamos hablando? ¿Cierto? No podemos hablar en todas partes.”

Defensora, Organización 17 (MR6)

Page 34:

“me limita a salir, a estar en ciertos lugares, a no tener una rutina diaria sino por el contrario cambiar muy frecuentemente mis salidas, mis horarios, etc. Todas esas cosas. Si claro, me aislaron. Por lo uno, obviamente estamos en lo de la pandemia, y pues lo otro ahora pues esa situación, y pues ahora básicamente trabajo desde mi casa”

Defensora, Organización 8 (NR3)

“Lideres LGBT se han encerrado mucho.”

Defensora, Organización 9 (MU1)

“si tú bajas el perfil prácticamente es como aislarte. O no aislarte: dejar de hablar – o eso sí que es una pena porque las mujeres ya hemos callado por muchos años.

Defensora, Organización 10 (NU3)

“Si sabemos que igual nos van a matar igual estamos en riesgo, pues hablemos y generemos un mecanismo de protección.”

Defensora, Organización 11 (MR4)

“el hecho de silenciar voces también va silenciando de alguna manera los procesos. Porque no nos podemos echar mentiras, nadie se quiere morir. Que lo que nosotras defendemos es *la vida*.”

Defensora, Organización 17 (MR6)

Page 35:

“Me colocaron dentro de un perfil llamado líder social que más que sentirse uno tranquilo, o sentirse uno protegido, es como si te colocaron a uno como en un tiro al blanco.”

Defensora, Organización 8 (NR3)

Page 36:

“Claro, nos hemos tenido que replantear muchas cosas. Por ejemplo, hay momentos que tú no puedes hablar de derechos humanos. O zonas, donde si solo dices una palabra sobre derechos humanos estas en riesgo [...] Hay que guardar las palabras que se utilizan. Hay muchas cosas que ni yo ni nadie puede decir. Pero entonces es difícil porque claro, es como, la cuestión es que hay cosas que no se pueden silenciar. Hay cosas que hay que visibilizar. Entonces es que: cómo visibilizamos esta situación sin que a nosotras nos ataquen “

Defensora, Organisation 5 (NR2)

Page 37:

“Hemos bajado el perfil de denuncia, hemos venido fortaleciendo otras líneas de trabajo, como la línea verde – la línea ambiental. Más desde el cuidado y más desde el cambio de cultura desde las mujeres que de la denuncia”

Defensora, Organización 14 (NU5)

“hubo un tiempo que sí toco parar completamente la visibilización de la problemática porque no se podía más... era un escenario de amenazas, era un escenario de seguimiento. Era un escenario de miedo”

Defensora, Organización 6 (MR3)

“No nos metemos en nada de eso [...] No quiero que haya personas con pensamientos retrogradadas que digan “no, que es lo que ellas están haciendo”. *No. No.* Es decir, no tocamos estos asuntos”

Defensora, Organización 1 (NU1)

Page 40:

“No es lo mismo hacer liderazgo en Bogotá que hacerlo en Popayán, o en Popayán hacerlo en tierra indígena. ¿Sí? O... hacerlo en Bogotá como hacerlo en Amazonía o la Guajira. No es lo mismo. Aunque sea liderazgos femeninos, aunque sean mujeres, aunque sean indígenas... Pero es muy distinto.”

Defensora, Organisation 11 (MR4)

“Tener una organización un poco más consolidada te ayuda con vínculos de apoyo si algo te viene a pasar, y como lazos de apoyo, y como esa vulnerabilidad de ser una mujer sola en la calle o una mujer lideresa se disminuye un poco porque ya tienes una organización detrás que te apoya [...] Definitivamente la organización, y el movimiento consolidado dentro de la organización - yo digo que sí – es una capacidad”

Defensora, Organización 9 (MU1)

“El reconocido que eso también a veces nos desborda, a veces nos afecta emocionalmente. Y poder contar con una red nos permite también poder decir: estoy cansada, o estoy desbordada, o no estoy durmiendo, o estoy mal, o estoy triste, o estoy deprimida... Entonces eso es una forma también de protegernos”

Defensora, Organización 10 (NU3)

Page 41:

“Como mujeres de los pueblos indígenas, lo colectivo es lo que genera la garantía de protección, pero también de pervivencia”

Defensora, Organización 11 (MR4)