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# Local Media Representations of the Colombian Women's Peace Movement La Ruta Pacífica De Las Mujeres

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FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Miami, Florida

LOCAL MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS OF THE COLOMBIAN WOMEN'S PEACE

MOVEMENT *LA RUTA PACÍFICA DE LAS MUJERES*

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN STUDIES

by

Elizabeth Anna Kersjes

2013

To: Dean Kenneth G. Furton  
College of Arts and Sciences

This thesis, written by Elizabeth Anna Kersjes, and entitled Local Media Representations of the Colombian Women's Peace Movement *La Ruta Pacífica De Las Mujeres*, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this thesis and recommend that it be approved.

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Vrushali Patil

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Ana María Bidegain

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Astrid Arrarás, Major Professor

Date of Defense: July 24, 2013

The thesis of Elizabeth Anna Kersjes is approved.

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Dean Kenneth G. Furton  
College of Arts and Sciences

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Dean Lakshmi N. Reddi  
University Graduate School

Florida International University, 2013

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to the women of *La Ruta Pacífica de las Mujeres*, past, present, and future, and to all the women of Colombia, whom the movement tirelessly represents.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you and *mil abrazos* to my kind and supportive thesis committee. Dr. Astrid Arrarás, you have been my rock. Your enthusiasm, warmth, optimism, and belief in me always inspired me to keep working and to never give up, and for that I can never thank you enough. To Dr. Ana María Bidegain, thank you for pushing me to do better work, and for sticking with me along the way. To Dr. Vrushali Patil, your courses made me a better academic and a better person. I regularly recommend authors you assigned to friends. Thank you for being a truly great teacher.

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

LOCAL MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS OF THE COLOMBIAN WOMEN'S PEACE  
MOVEMENT *LA RUTA PACÍFICA DE LAS MUJERES*

by

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Florida International University, 2013

Miami, Florida

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The purpose of this research is to analyze how the media in Colombia covers the events and campaigns of the pacifist women's movement *La Ruta Pacífica de las Mujeres*. The movement was formed in 1996 to draw attention to violence against women and to call for a negotiated end to Colombia's internal armed conflict through peaceful demonstrations. The study uses a series of semi-structured interviews with members of the movement and a content analysis of major print media stories about the movement to analyze press coverage and forms of representation. The analysis finds that large, powerful media outlets based in the country's principal cities largely ignore the movement, while smaller, local media outlets based in provincial regions and alternative media outlets cover the movement's activities and campaigns. *La Ruta Pacífica* has developed media strategies to foster friendly media relations when possible and to work without any media attention when necessary.

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## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

### *La Ruta Pacífica de las Mujeres por la Solución Negociada al Conflicto Armado*

(The Women's Pacifist Route for a Negotiated End to the Armed Conflict) is a pacifist women's movement in Colombia that calls for an end to entrenched violence in the country through peace negotiations. Made up of more than 300 women's organizations and thousands of participants, *La Ruta Pacífica* formed in 1995 and has a presence in nine Colombian departments (states) – Santander, Bolívar, Valle, Risaralda, Bogotá, Putumayo, Antioquia, Chocó y Cauca – many of which, because of guerrilla presence and traditional underrepresentation, have not been included in national peace dialog. The organization cuts across racial/ethnic and social lines, as indigenous, Afro-Colombian, *mestizo*, white, rich, poor, rural, urban, academic, and illiterate women work alongside each other (Parra-Fox 2010).

Despite the diversity, size, and public nature of *La Ruta Pacífica* mobilizations and events, scholars allege that the movement is not acknowledged or recognized by public and political actors within Colombia (see Parra-Fox 2010). The objective of my study is to investigate how *La Ruta Pacífica* views, relates to, and works within the media landscape at the local, national, and international level. The investigation encompasses the movement's media relations strategies and forms of self-representation, as well as coverage by mainstream and alternative media outlets.

### **Significance of Study**

This study will contribute significantly to English-language peace studies scholarship and international feminist scholarship on Colombia. It analyzes and builds

upon the existing research of scholars in the field, and draws academic focus to an area and topic of research that has not yet received in-depth investigation. Because violence in Colombia is current and peace has not yet been achieved, recognition and analysis of groups who fight for peace in the country are timely and pertinent.

Colombian feminist peace scholar Virginia M. Bouvier argues that English-language scholarship published about Colombia focuses overwhelmingly on violence and its actors, with the effect that peace efforts and peace actors go unrecognized. According to Bouvier, “the literature on peace initiatives has largely been in Spanish and has tended to focus on the Colombian government’s repeated and largely unsuccessful efforts ... little scholarly research has emerged yet that focuses on the role of [poor and minority] groups ... in seeking nonviolent change” (Bouvier 2009: 6-7, 9). A review of the literature proves this theory true for *La Ruta Pacífica*. Of the few sources available about women’s movements or women participating in peace building, most only reference *La Ruta Pacífica* in passing (See Blandón 2006; Gruner 2003; Restrepo Yepes 2007; Rojas 2009). There is some literature with extended analysis of *La Ruta Pacífica*; the literature is ethnographic in nature (See Colorado 2003; Montealegre 2008; Parra-Fox 2010), and as theorized by Bouvier, mostly published in Spanish (See Bautista Revelo 2010; Carvajal 2005; Forero Acosta 2009; Wills Obregón 2004). Thus, there reveals a lack of scholarly analysis of public reactions to, or perceptions of, *La Ruta Pacífica*. An analysis of this large and diverse peace movement is timely and important, as it will move academic scholarship beyond ethnography and toward socio-political analysis and contextualization.

## **Positionality**

I have never lived in Colombia. I am not a Colombian woman; I am a white, Western academic. Of course my position, as all scholars' positions, affects my viewpoint, my understanding, and my research in ways I actively work to recognize, and undoubtedly in ways in which I am not conscious. Lata Mani (1990) addresses such research as the "dilemma of post-colonial intellectuals working on the Third World in the West" (396) – a Western positionality can offer the academic an acute understanding of Western imperialism, hegemony, and "deadening essentialism" of "Western representations of the Third World" (397), but, of course, scholarship from the metropolises is guilty of creating and perpetuating essentialism and intellectual hegemony in the first place.

Such essentialism is apparent in Western discourse on Colombia. As a youth in the 1990s and 2000s, I grew up understanding Colombia as the place I saw in the U.S. news – as a violent and dangerous place that one should never visit, lest they be kidnapped in the streets by armed guerrilla fighters. I did not know there were paramilitary organizations, too. I did not know the depth of U.S. involvement in Colombian politics or economics; indeed, I did not know the U.S. had any presence in Colombia whatsoever. While in Ecuador in 2008, I began hearing a different story about Colombia, about an undiscovered backpacker's paradise where violence was a thing of the past and the streets and beaches were welcoming to tourists and investors. My research and my trips to the country complicated both of these essentialist narratives.

However, my aim is not to speak on behalf of the people of Colombia, but to create a space in which Colombian voices may speak on their own behalf. Throughout

my research I have sought and utilized the work of Colombian authors, academics, and materials printed by Colombian presses whenever possible. Also, in my analysis of my field interviews with members of the women's organization I employ a method that relies heavily on direct quotes from interviewees, to allow the women of the movement to speak for themselves.

## CHAPTER II: BACKGROUND

### **Introduction**

To properly contextualize and understand my research question and findings, it is imperative to look at the social, economic, and political conditions that have shaped women's movements and media coverage of those movements in the country. Colombia has a tragically violent history that continues today, a society that is often hostile to movement politics and calls for change, and a mainstream media run by political and economic elites who actively silence critical dissent. The present chapter opens with a review of Colombian history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century through the implementation of Plan Colombia, followed by a focused look at the effects of decades of violence on Colombian women and the birth of the *La Ruta Pacífica* movement. The chapter will close with an evaluation of media and press freedom in Colombia.

### **Politics, Plan Colombia, and Inter-state Violence**

The 20<sup>th</sup> century is remembered in Colombia for its turbulence, with an unbridgeable political divide between liberals and conservatives that dissolved into street violence; the ensuing death of approximately 250,000 people during the infamous *La Violencia* period; the formation of the notorious Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* or FARC) and other guerrilla and paramilitary groups; the rise of drug production and trafficking; and one of the highest murder rates in the world (Cardenas 2010: 39; Cárdenas, Junguito and Pachón 2008: 204-5, Kline 1999: 154-5).

Politically, much of the country has long been characterized by conflict, as corrupt regimes have traditionally ruled in a self-serving manner that “excluded large portions of the populace and ignored a socially explosive reality” (Murillo-Castaño and Gómez-Segura 2007: 3). In 1961, U.S. President John F. Kennedy’s Alliance for Progress (a foreign aid program aimed at reducing poverty and, hence, the possibility of Communist revolutions) initiated several high-visibility humanitarian assistance programs in the country. These programs, which included food, shelter, and education aid and a call for land reform, were created under the rationale that “the high-visibility projects would create quick wins that would then generate goodwill among the population until the impacts of reforms could take root” (Elhawary 2010: 390). Later program adjustments by President Lyndon Johnson changed the Alliance for Progress’s focus to macroeconomic stability, which contributed to a reversal of land reform initiatives and kept large swathes of land in the hands of wealthy landowners. The program ended in 1973, but peasant migrants had already been pushed into remote areas of the country beyond the state’s control, which, according to Samir Elhawary, “effectively produced the conditions for guerrillas and other armed actors, including organised crime entities, to emerge, thrive and expand” (Elhawary 2010: 394).

By the 1980s, leftist guerrilla groups had indeed emerged onto the national stage with increasing numbers of killings and kidnappings. Two prominent guerrilla groups, the FARC and the National Liberation Army (*Ejército de Liberación Nacional* or ELN), formed in the 1960s as Cuban Revolution-inspired, socialist-leftist armed groups. The formation of leftist guerrilla groups occurred alongside the formation and political legitimization of paramilitary forces that carried out “dirty war” tactics that could not be

traced back to the state or its armed forces (Palacios 2006). A third prominent guerrilla group, the M-19, formed in the 1970s as a splinter group from the FARC. While the FARC and other guerrilla groups worked primarily in rural areas, the M-19 focused on urban organization within slum neighborhoods of Bogotá and Cali.

Violence erupted on the national stage in 1985, when the M-19 stormed the Palace of Justice in central Bogotá, killed two doormen, and held the Supreme Court hostage. The M-19 intended to stage an act of armed theater in which then-President Belisario Betancur would be tried for betraying a peace process that the president began after his 1982 election. However, within 30 minutes of the seizure, army tanks crashed into the front doors and mounted a 72-hour campaign to retake the building. The Palace was set on fire, and more than 100 people died, including 11 Supreme Court justices (Palacios 2006).

The people of Colombia were poised to demand complete institutional overhaul that would increase justice and democracy. In 1990, Colombia rewrote the national constitution, a hopeful response to political and social unrest (Murillo-Castaño and Gómez-Segura 2007). The constitutional convention, formed in 1990 and sanctioned by the Supreme Court, was supported by 90 percent of the population (To read the arguments against the formation of the constitutional convention, including debates on its legitimacy, see Banks and Alvarez 1991). It was made up of a socially inclusive delegation of indigenous people, members of ethnic and religious (i.e., non-Catholic) minorities, demobilized guerrillas, and other representatives of socially marginalized groups traditionally excluded from Colombian politics. After five months of debate, the convention produced a constitutional document with a prominent section dedicated to



human rights and a strengthened judiciary to ensure the protection of those rights (Cárdenas et al 2008: 205; Banks and Alvarez 1991). The new constitutional document, which replaced the “rights-poor constitution” of 1886, was an attempt to use policy to adjust the imbalances of the Colombian political system and to “broaden democracy to confront violence and political corruption” (Wilson 2009: 69).

The new constitution of Colombia was optimistically adopted on July 4, 1991. It espoused principles of social democracy and was proclaimed by Colombia as the first constitution in the Western hemisphere to include a full index of social rights (Murillo-Castaño and Gómez-Segura 2007: 2).

However, the new constitution did not solve the guerrilla problem in the country, nor did it sufficiently strengthen state institutions to battle intrastate violence. By the late 1990s, Colombia was faced with unstable democracy, discredited political institutions, and extreme violence between warring factions of the thriving narcotics trade.

Colombia’s largest and most successful guerrilla force, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*, FARC) had organized into a network of small, de-centered bands that were raiding, ambushing, taking over towns in the countryside and seriously threatening the defensive strength of an under-trained and neglected state military. In response, right-wing paramilitary groups had formed to check guerrilla power, and were themselves participating in the drug trade as a major source of funding (Solaún 2002, Thoumi 2002).

Eager to restore a long-forgotten peace in the country, newly elected President Andrés Pastrana (1998-2002) began drafting in 1998 what would become Plan Colombia, a bilateral assistance program between the U.S. and Colombia. Utilizing U.S. military

and economic assistance, the Plan sought to reduce violence, stop drug trafficking, and expand state power through a combination of military operations and social programs.

Francisco Thoumi argues that most Colombians were apathetic toward the existence of the drug industry in their country until homicides and violent crimes exploded in the 1980s. In the 1990s it was evident that those crimes were caused by the illicit drug trade, that “the illegal industry was a catalyst in a process of social decomposition” (Thoumi 2002). However, by that time Colombia had become the biggest coca grower and cocaine producer in the world and a major heroin producer, and actors in the illegal industry had developed social and political networks to protect themselves from imprisonment and extradition to the U.S. The new drug industry left the Colombian political system vulnerable to the illegal industry’s influence, even at the highest levels – President Ernesto Samper (1994-1998) was discovered to have run a campaign financed by drugs (Solaún 2002).

The desperate desire for a foreign assistance program like Plan Colombia was further precipitated in the late 1990s by a severe economic crisis, with unemployment topping 18 percent and poverty rising to 57.5 percent by 1999. Several banks and financial institutions failed, GDP fell by 4.2 percent that same year, and foreign debt jumped to 41.3 percent of GDP, up from 34 percent the year before (DeShazo, Primiani and McLean 2007).

Plan Colombia was first envisioned in 1998 by President Andrés Pastrana as a program of emergency foreign assistance and political support to help the destitute Colombian state combat violence, end drug trafficking, and regain legitimacy. Originally billed as a new Marshall Plan, the program focused on political and social reform and

reaching peace accords with guerrilla groups, not on engaging in counterinsurgency warfare (Otero Prada 2010). However, in order to secure U.S. funding, Pastrana had to accept a rewriting of the Plan that more closely matched U.S. objectives. Thus, the final version of the U.S.'s Plan Colombia made counter-narcotics and counter-insurgency key goals, with social and judicial reform programs receiving much smaller funding allotments.

In July 2000, a bipartisan United States Congress approved the Plan, which pledged an aid package of \$7.5 billion over six years to reduce the flow of narcotics into the U.S., expand Colombian state presence into historically ungoverned zones, speed up the peace process with armed groups, and revive the Colombian economy, all with a finite military commitment from the U.S. (Solaún 2002; DeShazo, Primiani and McLean 2007; Isacson 2005). The aid package made Colombia the third-highest recipient of U.S. military aid in the world and the highest recipient in Latin America by a significant margin (Zuluaga Nieto and Stoller 2007). Colombia had also become the world's top recipient of U.S. direct military training, as about 80 percent of the \$4.7 billion that actually reached Colombia in the first six years of the program went to the military and police forces, for training, supplies (including the supply of 46 military helicopters), and surveillance and intelligence. The remaining 20 percent, about \$1 billion, went to programs for alternative development, assistance to displaced persons, human rights protection, and judicial reform (Rochlin 2007).

Plan Colombia has been a relative success. The state has regained control of key oil-producing regions from guerrilla forces and has increased security for foreign mining companies. Violence has been conspicuously reduced in urban centers, including in

Bogotá, which has sparked a wave of foreign direct investments in the country. Exports and imports have risen steadily since 2002 (Rochlin 2007).

Unfortunately, these achievements have not solved the problem of Colombian violence. Disarmed paramilitary leaders left a power vacuum in the organizations, and mid-level paramilitary members have seized the opportunity to advance in rank. New, smaller paramilitary organizations are appearing, building upon narco-trafficking routes and political ties that have proven nearly impossible to eliminate. These new organizations, whose forces number between approximately 4,000 and 9,000, are more interested in organized crime and local power than on fighting the FARC. The FARC, too, was not eliminated, only disadvantaged. Communities formerly under FARC control still live in fear of the guerrilla group and are reluctant to partake in any state-sponsored ID programs for fear of FARC retaliation (Isacson 2009; Ramirez Parra No date).

Despite the ideological shift in focus toward counterterrorism, curtailing cocaine and heroine production remained a key objective of Plan Colombia. The Plan was intended to reduce by half the growth, production, and export of illegal narcotics by 2006, primarily through the aerial fumigation and manual eradication of coca and poppy crops. This was a resounding failure. One year after its implementation, coca and poppy (used to produce heroin) cultivation had increased, guerrilla and paramilitary attacks had intensified, and Colombian police and military forces remained unable to secure and control Colombian territory (Cope 2002). By 2005, coca and poppy fumigation still had not yet affected price, purity, or availability of Colombian cocaine or heroin in the U.S. In fact, three years into Plan Colombia the price of street cocaine was less than it was in 1998, and U.S. officials reported no change in the amount of drugs leaving Colombia.

Furthermore, while coca cultivation dropped by 16 percent within Colombia from 2000 to 2003, by 2004 growth rates stopped declining. During that time, coca growth had moved back to its original source countries, Peru and Bolivia, and coca growth within Colombia simply shifted to other parts of the country. Growers, by now familiar with aerial eradication techniques, were growing smaller plots of coca closer together to avoid detection and were cultivating fast-growing, herbicide-resistant strains of coca with higher cocaine yields (Isacson 2005). By 2006, poppy growth and heroine production was successfully curbed by 50 percent, but Colombians grew 15 percent more coca leaf in 2006 than in 2000, and produced 4 percent more cocaine. In 2008, 90 percent of the cocaine in the U.S. came from Colombia (United States 2001).

### **Violence Against Women in Colombia**

Armed men from all sides of the conflict in Colombia – paramilitaries, guerrillas, and military – commit sexual violence against women. Both the FARC and the AUC recruit young girls and women to work as sex and domestic slaves, and both impose obligatory contraception and forced abortions. Armed actors impose control over women's clothing, behavior, curfews, and relationships. Women are raped, sexually abused, sexually mutilated, sexually exploited, and threatened, and a single woman can experience all of these things (Restrepo Yepes 2007). Women of all ages and ethnicities have been targeted, irrespective of marital or pregnancy status. However, the majority of victims are from vulnerable populations – peasant farmers, indigenous, Afro-Colombians, displaced persons. While men have been targeted in sex crimes as well, usually for sexual

orientation or gender presentation, women constitute the overwhelming majority of victims (Restrepo Yepes 2007; Amnesty International 2004; Montealegre 2008).

Armed men rape women to impose fear-based control over a community or to spark a mass exodus to clear desired land, to claim populations as “theirs,” to punish women for perceived collaboration with guerrillas, to attack the family members of rival groups, to get revenge against the victims’ male relatives, to collect war trophies, or to exert basic sexual control. Victims are murdered, often mutilated, and survivors are silenced by fear. This silence ensures that rape and sexual violence remains severely under-reported. For example, even the clearest signs of sexual violence on corpses are not recorded in autopsy reports, though the National Institute of Forensics Medicine and Sciences found references to possible sexual offences in more than 40,000 forensics reports between 2000 and 2002 (Restrepo Yepes 2007; Amnesty International 2004), and in more than 34,000 reports between 2007 and 2008 (Bautista Revelo 2010). The United Nations Development Programme (2000) last reported on violence against women in Colombia in a 2000 Human Development Report, which estimated some 60-70 percent of women in Colombia have been victims of some form of physical, psychological, or sexual violence. However, less than a tenth of these women ever lodge an official complaint.

Internal displacement is another grave problem in Colombia. The country has 4.9 million internally displaced people, about 6-10 percent of the population (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre 2010). Women make up 55 percent of internally displaced persons in Colombia, a disproportionate number of which are single mothers. Illiterate women are likewise disproportionately present in internally displaced

populations. Problems with reporting sex-based crimes are exacerbated by displacement, though by one account, 20 percent of displaced women are believed to have been raped. By another account, 36 percent of displaced women have been forced into sex with unknown men. Women are more likely than men to flee their homes to avoid violence, yet once displaced, women face a greater risk of becoming victims of sexual violence (Alzate 2008).

While all sides commit atrocities, survivor testimonies told to Amnesty International (2004) indicate that paramilitary groups commit the majority of atrocities. Following the widely lauded AUC demobilization process, sex crimes and threats against women by paramilitary groups continues unabated. Disarmed paramilitaries also receive more legal recognition and support than the victims of their crimes – social programs help train and employ former paramilitary soldiers, they receive financial assistance and political appointments, and are never questioned about or prosecuted for crimes they committed against women while armed. Meanwhile, survivors of sexual violence, often shunned by family and community or displaced, receive neither financial aid, nor legal justice, nor political recognition for their malaise (Bermúdez, Henifin, Suárez, and Valencia 2006).

Major barriers to the movement's legitimatization are the invisibility of crimes committed against women, the normalization of violence against women during war, and the impunity enjoyed by perpetrators. The fear-driven silence of survivors after rapes and assaults is briefly mentioned above; in addition, cultural and societal factors combine to further quell public discussion of the issue. Sexual violence is considered to be part of the private sphere, even when committed at the community level. Culturally driven gender

inequality shames women for experiencing sexual violence and convinces women they are at fault – for example, they brought on attacks by wearing a skirt or by being out late. A society that views women as inferior treats the Colombian female body as a subhuman or “third” space, as “territory to be fought over by the warring parties” (Amnesty International 2004: 3). This same society considers sexual violence an inevitable, even acceptable aspect of warfare, which helps secure its effectiveness as a weapon (Wilches 2010).

For all of these reasons, sexual violence is rarely reported or brought to court, and few perpetrators are ever convicted. When neither victim nor perpetrator admits the crime, the crime ceases to exist. Low reporting rates have led to a dearth of accurate and reliable data about the number of women who have experienced sexual violence or the type of violence they experience. Women’s groups and human rights organization thus face the double challenge of having to first convince state actors that the problem even exists before convincing them to take action. Since the numbers don’t exist, these groups often rely on compiled personal survivor narratives, which lack the authority of official data but compensate with horrifying and heartbreaking detail. This tactic presents a third challenge – breaking through survivors’ walls of silence and convincing them to speak on the record.

Above all, though, the gravest challenge to the success of the Colombian women’s movement is the danger faced by those women who speak out. Leaders of women’s and human rights organizations and community leaders are routinely threatened, assaulted, kidnapped, robbed, disappeared, and killed (Alzate 2008). Human rights activists are labeled as obstructionists or are accused of collaborating with guerrilla



groups, and whistleblowers risk losing their jobs and careers for denouncing abuse (Isacson 2005, Restrepo Yepes 2007). Thus, the systems working against women are deeply engrained, as, according to Alzate (2008), most Colombian women are disempowered, if not through the armed conflict, then through economic equality, underrepresentation, or the inability to participate in democracy and development.

Women in Colombia, however, are not silent. Facing danger to fight the danger of indifference, hundreds of grassroots women's organizations have joined together in movements across Colombia to speak out, loudly, against a status quo that neither respects nor serves them.

### ***La Ruta Pacífica***

*La Ruta Pacífica de las Mujeres por la Solución Negociada al Conflicto Armado* (The Women's Pacifist Route for a Negotiated End to the Armed Conflict) is a pacifist women's movement in Colombia that speaks out. Made up of more than 300 women's organizations and thousands of participants, *La Ruta Pacífica* calls for an end to Colombian violence through peace negotiations. The group argues that the Colombian war is a profoundly masculine conflict between leftist and rightist expressions of patriarchal power. Few women participate as combatants in the war, yet women and children are its main victims (Ruta Pacífica de las Mujeres 2011).

*La Ruta Pacífica* has a three-part foundation: the group is feminist, pacifist, and anti-military. Often, women's movements built outside the Western world, or movements built by non-hegemonic groups within the Western world, eschew the use of the word feminism because the history of the word is steeped in a history of colonialism, racism,

and unequal power dynamics of representation (see Lugones 2008; Mohanty 1998; and hooks 1984). However, women of *La Ruta Pacífica* deliberately choose to employ the language of feminism for their purposes, as feminism is an immediately recognizable word that encompasses clear tenets of anti-patriarchy. In an interview with me, one member of the movement clarified that the women of *La Ruta Pacífica* are not feminist only because they are women, and they are not pacifist only because they are women. Rather, *La Ruta Pacífica* is pacifist, feminist, and anti-military as a reaction to the militarization of Colombian culture that has invaded women's everyday lives. Another member interviewed clarified that the movement is not radical feminist. Instead, as many members clarified, the movement is educational, and the movement uses feminist language to teach about women's rights and to create messages and campaigns that serve the women of Colombia.

The organization is located in nine Colombian departments (states) – Santander, Bolívar, Valle, Risaralda, Bogotá, Putumayo, Antioquia, Chocó, and Cauca – many of which, because of guerrilla presence and long-time underrepresentation, have not been included in national peace dialog (Parra-Fox 2010). These departments are also the site of much extreme fighting and paramilitary and/or guerrilla activity. By simply residing in these regions, women already must continuously fight for autonomy over their bodies (Bautista 2010). The organization cuts across racial/ethnic and social lines, as indigenous, Afro-Colombian, mestizo, white, rich, poor, rural, urban, academic, and illiterate women participate alongside each other.

*La Ruta Pacífica* spreads its message through mass gatherings and demonstrations in the regions of Colombia hardest hit by violence and war. These so-called

“mobilizations” aim to break through the silence surrounding violence against women, by peacefully marching in the name of feminism, pacifism, and antimilitarism. They are the voice of female empowerment (Montealegre 2008: 56).

The first mobilization took 40 busloads of women to Urabá Antioquia, a region on the Caribbean coast in northwest Colombia, on November 25, 1996. November 25 is the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, and *La Ruta Pacífica* often holds mobilizations on this day for its symbolic significance. The group chose the region for its violent notoriety – in one town visited, it was reported that 95 percent of women had been raped. About 2,000 women congregated to demonstrate publicly and peacefully against rape, and to show solidarity with survivors in the region (Montealegre 2008). Many of the women were locals or had friends or family living in the region, and nearly all had heard horrible stories of violence against rural women (Parra-Fox 2010).

In another act of public demonstration, *La Ruta Pacífica* has organized mock trials, where women protest the impunity enjoyed by perpetrators by recounting their experiences from the decades-long armed conflict. The first mock trial, held in Cartagena, drew 3,000 observers. Women shared stories of rapes, harassment, and the death and disappearance of friends and family members (Parra-Fox 2010).

The organization utilizes symbols and language to reconstruct the woman’s role in war and in social discourse, and to transform women from silent victims to political actors demanding the recognition of their rights. Some women march in black, in solidarity with war victims and the disappeared. Other women, defying the sociocultural policing of the female figure, march topless with slogans painted across their breasts. Common slogans include “el cuerpo de las mujeres no es botín de guerra” (“women’s

bodies are not war plunder”) and “Las mujeres no parimos hijos e hijas para la guerra” (“women won’t give birth to children for the war”). Protestors also utilize large hand signs with crossed-out pistols. Thus, the movement has subverted the language and symbols of war to create its own voice with its own symbolism (Forero Acosta 2009).

Today the movement is a registered nongovernmental organization with a formal, institutional core leadership based in the movement’s nine regions. The movement also has a national office in Bogotá, which handles national-level media communication and international organizing, while sharing office space and resources with the Bogotá regional leadership. Each region is semi-autonomous – regional leaders organize and participate in local campaigns, communicate through local media, forge relationships with other local peace and human rights organizations, and recruit and organize local volunteers. However, the organization comes together at least once each year for national events and mobilizations, and regional leaders meet regularly to collaborate, share ideas, and brainstorm events and messages. Moreover, while each region acts independently for the majority of the time, as a group, *La Ruta Pacífica* carefully coordinates its messages and language across the movement, so that members in Risaralda and in Antioquia have the same mission and use the same expressions of antiviolence and of women’s rights.

In 2001, *La Ruta Pacífica* received the Millenium Peace Prize for Women for the Americas region from the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). *La Ruta Pacífica* also has forged connections and alliances with regional and international organizations, including Women in Black and the Global Fund for Women. These international connections help to garner international recognition and legitimacy for the movement, which helps the movement spread its messages and also helps protect the

movement from threats and violence by armed actors in Colombia, according to interviews with members of *La Ruta Pacífica* with the author in 2013. The movement continues to maintain close relationships with the more than 300 women's organizations within Colombia that contributed to the formation of *La Ruta Pacífica* (Parra-Fox 2010; Ruta Pacífica de las Mujeres 2013).

### **The Media in Colombia**

The constitution of Colombia guarantees freedom of expression and freedom of the press to all citizens, with no censorship (República de Colombia 2008: Artículo 20). However, in practice journalists in Colombia face security threats and political and economic obstacles that prevent the realization of press freedom in the country.

Rincón (2002), a Colombian journalist and media scholar, asks a question that sits at the core of a struggle journalists face in Colombia: Is it worth dying to report the news and inform the public? For many decades, Colombia has been a perilous place for journalists to work. The country is especially unsafe for investigative journalists and anyone who speaks on the record about violence, corruption, drug trafficking, rights violations, or criminal impunity committed by any side of the Colombian conflict – guerrillas, paramilitaries, cartels, or the government (Bonilla and Montoya 2008).

Reporters Without Borders, an international advocacy organization for press freedom that publishes an annual report ranking all the countries of the world by level of press freedom, in 2012 ranked Colombia 143 out of 179 countries for freedom of the press. The low ranking was assigned because one journalist was murdered for his work that year, and because “because journalists were repeatedly threatened, forced to stop

working or forced to flee abroad (or to another region), particularly journalists operating in areas where there is fighting” (Reporters Without Borders 2012: 10). The report also noted that journalists in Colombia still face smear campaigns, wiretapping, and sabotage, despite judicial system improvements. In the organization’s 2013 report, Colombia was ranked 129 out of out of 179. Reporters Without Borders cited peace talks between the FARC and the Colombian government and a reduction in physical attacks against journalists as hopeful steps toward better press freedom. However, one journalist was killed again in 2012, and paramilitary groups, which the organization calls “the enemies of all those involved in the provision of news and information,” are still active (Reporters Without Borders 2013: 9).

Freedom House, another international organization that advocates for press freedom around the world (the organization addresses many other issues related to politics and human rights), reported in 2012 that there were some improvements in Colombia’s media environment in 2011, but threats, attacks, and defamation campaigns continued against Colombian journalists, especially in provincial regions. Other persistent hardships that plague journalists in Colombia are death threats, harassment of media outlets and individual journalists, and break-ins and theft of computers or files to prevent publication of sensitive stories. One journalist was killed in 2011 –Luis Eduardo Gómez, known as the “father of journalism” in Antioquia, was shot by a motorcyclist. The freelancer had investigated local political corruption and paramilitary groups. As a result, many journalists practice self-censorship, especially when addressing topics related to corruption, local crime groups, and murders (Freedom House 2012).

My research project looks at the two manifestations of media coverage that exist in Colombia –the mainstream media, and alternative media. The mainstream media consists of large media organizations with wide audiences, social influence, and extensive resources – cultural, political, and social as well as financial. Alternative media consist of smaller, less-connected media projects that often promote messages of counter-hegemony or anti-establishment.

### **Mainstream Media**

The media in Colombia has been used as an expression of political power for the duration of the modern nation-state’s history, as politicians and political parties began working as journalists, buying or starting newspapers, and establishing media space to advocate their ideologies since the first regularly published newspapers began circulating the then-Spanish colony in the late eighteenth century (Bonilla and Montoya 2008). Politicization of the media became normalized into the foundation of the contemporary Colombian press model. The contemporary press model emerged in the mid-nineteenth century in the form of single, family-owned newspapers. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century to now, print media grew into a profitable industry, and ownership became concentrated in the hands of large multimedia conglomerates and economic powerhouses. What has remained constant through the history of mass media in Colombia is an ideology-driven journalism that follows the prevailing political line of the time or of the media outlet’s owners (Bonilla and Montoya 2008).

Today, mainstream Colombian media outlets continue to be used as propaganda arms of the economic and political elite, as “media, political and economic power are

essentially one and the same to the extent that the media identifies with the same political project that defines corporate interests ... the news agenda is deeply compromised by the political ambitions of some of the most powerful economic elites in the country” (Bonilla and Montoya 2008: 95-6). In a 2011 analysis of the cultural influence of *El Tiempo*, the Bogotá-based main national newspaper, and *El Colombiano*, the regional newspaper of Colombia’s second largest city, Medellín, Garzón and Oñate find that the discourse used by the two major newspapers reinforces powerful political and economic ideologies. Political and judicial coverage stays within the institutional bounds of the political system, and effectively represses the formation of a critical citizen consciousness (Garzón and Oñate 2011).

Radio and television are important mediums for news transmission in Colombia. Radio has achieved a level of national penetration not possible for print media, as Colombia’s geography of mountains and jungles made national distribution of newspapers impossible. In the 1920 and 1930s, radio acted as the primary source of daily current affairs and breaking news, while newspapers offered more in-depth reports on radio broadcasted news for readers with the financial and educational resources to access newspapers. This pattern of media consumption remains relevant today – mainstream newspapers reach 26.6 percent of Colombians, while 97.5 percent of homes in the country receive FM radio signals (Freedom House 2012). In terms of daily use, more than 90 percent of media consumers in Colombia watch television, more than 65 percent listen to the radio, and about 25 percent read newspapers (Forero et al 2009).

Television and radio have both contributed significantly to national integration in the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Colombia. Television began as a government initiative to broadcast



educational and cultural content to geographically remote regions of the country. Radio, though also born under government control, “revealed an alternative manifestation of power” that “quickly became highly popular since the medium was able to find the technological link that facilitated the circulation of national, regional, and local expression” (Bonilla and Montoya 2008: 86; Forero et al 2009). Culturally, radio remains an important vehicle of both cultural and counter-cultural expression and mobilization (Bernal and Acosta 2011).

Both radio and television remained under government control until the 1990s, when new regulations in the rewritten constitution opened the airwaves to private companies. Media ownership concentration today is visible in radio broadcasts as in print media – Colombia’s two main radio companies, Radio Cadena Nacional (RCN) and Caracol, own more than 40 percent of all radio stations in Colombia, including the majority of the 20 most listened-to radio stations in the country (Forero et al 2009; Bonilla and Montoya 2008). Community and public interest radio stations account for a majority of the total number of radio stations in Colombia; however, such stations are defined by low signal strength and limited broadcasting hours. Community and public interest radio stations are produced and broadcasted by social organizations such as schools, the Catholic Church, city councils, the national police, and the military; broadcast content includes public education and community information (Forero et al 2009; Bonilla and Montoya 2008).

### **Alternative Media**

The development of the internet has made writing, recording, and disseminating information much easier for non-mainstream media outlets, in Colombia as in the rest of

the world. In fact, the arrival of the internet has played such an important role in the advancement of alternative media forms that many scholars credit internet access with the development of alternative media. However, as people have always challenged the ideas, words, and actions of those in power, alternative media has always existed alongside mainstream media. The formation of a printing industry in Europe in the 16<sup>th</sup> century was pivotal for the development of alternative media, as it gave people who opposed the hegemonic power of the church or the state the ability to print and disseminate information, despite the antagonism and censorship efforts of church and state powers (Medina and Moreno 2011).

In Colombia, the first alternative forms of media appeared during the region's transition from Spanish rule to independence in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Mainstream media at the time was overtly supportive of the Spanish monarchy and Spanish interests in the Americas – the founder of the *Papel Periódico de la ciudad de Santa Fe de Bogotá*, the prominent paper of the 1790s under Spanish colonial rule, was a personal friend of José Manuel de Ezpeleta, Viceroy of New Granada from 1789 to 1797 (Bonilla and Montoya 2008, Medina and Moreno 2011).

Today in Colombia, Medina and Moreno (2011) characterize alternative media as small, hyper-local, non-commercial platforms that, in general, work to generate public opinion, advocate for a political stance, and reflect the true diversity of Colombian society. The authors argue that the internet has indeed become the most useful tool for the development of alternative media voices in Colombia, and more than 80 online-only news organizations exist in the country so far. However, in 2011 only 40 percent of the Colombian population had regular access to the internet (Freedom House 2012).

## CHAPTER III: LITERATURE REVIEW

### *La Ruta Pacífica*

Scholarly work on *La Ruta Pacífica* has been relatively slow in forthcoming, both in English and Spanish. Perhaps this is because the movement focuses on achieving peace in Colombia. Colombian feminist peace scholar Bouvier (2009) argues that English-language scholarship published about Colombia focuses overwhelmingly on violence and its actors, with the effect that peace efforts and peace actors go unrecognized. According to Bouvier (2009: 6-7, 9), “the literature on peace initiatives has largely been in Spanish and has tended to focus on the Colombian government’s repeated and largely unsuccessful efforts ... little scholarly research has emerged yet that focuses on the role of [poor and minority] groups ... in seeking nonviolent change.”

A review of the literature proves Bouvier’s theory true for *La Ruta Pacífica*. Of the few sources available about women’s movements or women participating in peace building, most only reference *La Ruta Pacífica* in passing (See Blandón 2006; Gruner 2003; Yepes 2007; Rojas 2009). There is some scholarship with extended analysis of *La Ruta Pacífica*; this literature is ethnographic in nature (See Colorado 2003; Montealegre 2008; Parra-Fox 2010), and as theorized by Bouvier, mostly published in Spanish (See Revelo 2010; Carvajal 2005; Acosta 2009; Obregón 2004).

*La Ruta Pacífica* is most often cited within literature on global and local women’s movements and peace initiatives, which indicates the movement is considered a legitimized expert source. Many scholars interview members of *La Ruta Pacífica* or use data published by *La Ruta Pacífica* in research projects not related specifically to the movement. Braucher (2010: 98) conducted a series of semi-formal interviews with

members of *La Ruta Pacífica* and other “reputable and often cited” Colombian NGOs and organizations. Braucher’s methodology utilized these key informants to explore vulnerability and coping mechanisms of displaced women in Bogotá. Thompson, Toro, and Gómez (2007: 436) quote a member of *La Ruta Pacífica* once in a journal article about feminist media coverage of women in war around the globe. Galeano and Zapata (2006) cite *La Ruta Pacífica* in references to social movements, in a study of the processes of citizen formation in Colombia over time. Salazar (2010) uses a publication produced by *La Ruta Pacífica* as a source in an article arguing that forced displacement affects women and children disproportionately.

Other scholars include *La Ruta Pacífica* in literature about peace movements or women’s movements in Colombia, as one part of a larger movement of Colombians working for peace. In an article about the invisibility of sexual violence against women during armed struggles, Yepes (2007) mentions *La Ruta Pacífica* alongside other Colombian and international organizations as groups that denounce the violation of the human rights of women during war. Later in the article, Yepes cites data on paramilitary violence published by *La Ruta Pacífica*. Lamus (2007) likewise uses *La Ruta Pacífica*-published data in an article on counter-hegemonic women’s and feminist movements in Colombia. Lamus argues that though *La Ruta Pacífica* and other such Colombian movements are not widely reported on in commercial media nor highly visible on the national scene, such movements have brought women’s demands into some national discourse through artistic representation and new technology. Méndez (2008) groups *La Ruta Pacífica* with other women’s movements and feminist movements in a similar fashion, in an article about the progress of women’s rights and the development of

women's movements since the implementation of the 1991 constitution. Méndez points to the development of several women's movements such as *La Ruta Pacífica* in the 1990s in Colombia, following a constitutional convention that promised broad rights to Colombians yet in the midst of extreme internal violence.

Pineda-García (2007), in an article about women seeking peace negotiations in Colombia, mentions *La Ruta Pacífica* as a participating part of a mobilization of 60,000 women in Bogotá on July 25, 2002. Pineda-García argues that *La Ruta Pacífica* and other movements such as La Iniciativa de Mujeres Colombianas por la Paz and the Red Nacional de Mujeres have carried out the most important peace mobilizations in the country in recent years. In a post-colonial critique of the effect of neoliberal globalization on the rise of the U.S. prison industrial complex, Sudbury (2004) places *La Ruta Pacífica* alongside the Brazilian movement Movimento Sim Terra. Sudbury points to the successes of both movements in mobilizing, presenting alternatives to neoliberal reforms, and developing “a sophisticated intersectional analysis” (27), and the author calls on anti-prison movements to learn from *La Ruta Pacífica* and from Moviment Sim Terra. The author lauds both movements for their grassroots-level incorporation of diverse viewpoints, including indigenous, Afro-Latin American, and poor women, and for their work in connecting national issues to broader systems of globalization and neo-imperialism. Gruner (2003) cites *La Ruta Pacífica* as one of several organizations backing the National Constituent Assembly of Women, a national political movement first convened in November 2002 to give strategies for peace negotiations and to create political space for activist women from popular communities.

Other authors give more scholarly space to the movement, but still only include cursory biographical information. A basic account of *La Ruta Pacífica* is incorporated into Blandón's (2006) book chapter on women's movements for peace in Colombia from 1985 to 2000. Blandón focuses on the movement's use of symbolism and language to give hope to survivors of violence and to restore hope in peace processes. The author calls the group extensive, diverse, and loaded with the possibility of life within the atmosphere of death in which all Colombian women live (221-2). Magallón (2004), in an article about women as collective subjects of peace, cites *La Ruta Pacífica* as one of many organizations working for peace internationally. Like Blandón (2006), Magallón (2004) focuses on the movement's construction and use of symbolism and language to construct new social and political practices. Magallón highlights an August 2000 mobilization in which the movement, with the Organización Femenina Popular, wore all black to protest violence and the Colombian armed conflict.

While in other cases such passing references to a topic would not warrant inclusion into an anthology of work on that topic, in the case of the movement *La Ruta Pacífica* I include these references to illustrate that the total body of scholarship on the movement is still small, yet the movement has become recognized as legitimate and an authoritative source of information.

Some scholars have contributed more in-depth and nuanced research on *La Ruta Pacífica*. In particular, works by Acosta (2009) and Parra-Fox (2010) have made significant contributions to the literature. Others, such as Montealegre (2008), Colorado (2003), and Revelo (2010), write from the perspective Escobar (2008: 306) calls the "activist articulation." Escobar stands in favor of "seeing social movements as important

spaces of knowledge production about the world and of recognizing the value of activist knowledge to theory” (306). The three authors noted above are all members of *La Ruta Pacífica*, and their scholarly contribution on the topic derives in large part from personal knowledge gained as activist-scholars within the movement.

Montealegre’s (2008) short article about the movement gives a historical account of the movement’s creation, contextualized in a history of violence in the country in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The author is a member of *La Ruta Pacífica*, and much of the information is based on the author’s first-hand accounts and experiences with the movement.

Montealegre first looks at human rights abuses and women’s issues in the country, then introduces mobilizations by *La Ruta Pacífica* as one of the country’s “main political actions of resistance” (52), and concludes with challenges the movements faces. The tone of the article is very positive and hopeful, and the article focuses on the movement’s development of a feminist ideology amongst Colombian women. Like other authors, Montealegre focuses on how the movement has used symbolism and public demonstrations as “a methodological political process and a process of reflection, alliance-building, and active mobilization, which contribute significantly to the quest for peace and a peace culture in Colombia” (56). In another very brief article, Colorado (2003), an exiled Colombian activist and member of cross-national women’s group Women in Black, writes a first-person account of the movement that reads similarly to a press release. Because of the author’s personal participation in the group Women in Black, the author focuses on the involvement of the Colombian Women in Black group in *La Ruta Pacífica* mobilizations. Like other authors, Colorado focuses on the language

and symbols used by the group, and offered highly optimistic visions for the future of the movement.

Beginning from a discussion of violence against women and the Colombian armed conflict, Revelo (2010) writes about *La Ruta Pacífica* from the position of social reform. Revelo, who is also a member of *La Ruta Pacífica*, focuses on the feminist reform goals of the movement. Like other authors who are also members of the movement, Revelo writes in a very positive, hopeful tone. Colombian scholar Carvajal's (2005) study is formatted differently than other articles reviewed here – the author expands the narratives of five indigenous Colombian women from Cauca, whose stories originally appeared in a publication about the effects of armed conflict on women and forms of resistance, which was originally published by *La Ruta Pacífica* (*La Ruta Pacífica* 2003). Carvajal includes a detailed history of *La Ruta Pacífica*, and frames the movement in terms of its feminist goals.

Rojas (2009), like other authors mentioned above, includes *La Ruta Pacífica* within an analysis of peacebuilding efforts by women's groups in Colombia. Like other authors, Rojas makes the movement's messages, goals, and use of symbolic language and imagery the focal point of the section on *La Ruta Pacífica*, and offers a brief history of the movement's formation and trajectory over 11 years. However, after introducing various women's movements and organizations working for peace, Rojas highlights the limitations women's movements and other social movements face in Colombia. Leaders of peace movements face threats, harassment, and assassination from all sides of the conflict, a fact Rojas argues has intensified since the election of President Uribe in 2002. Rojas notes too that movements such as *La Ruta Pacífica* have trouble maintaining



momentum after and between mobilizations, and women's groups in particular have had difficulty incorporating a gender perspective into national peace dialogs, despite certain token women serving in various commissions and limited gender considerations being added to laws. Finally, Rojas argues that like in any movement or organization, internal conflicts and lack of a clear, unified message have sometimes halted the progress of Colombian women's movements for peace.

Obregón's text (2007), built upon the same scholar's dissertation (Obregón 2004), is a study of women's efforts to gain greater inclusion into academics and politics in Colombia from 1970 to 2000. The author uses these measures to represent the quest of Colombian women for more equal representation and citizenship rights. Obregón finds that though the number of women leaders has increased in academics and especially in politics, issues raised by gender discrimination still were seldom addressed within politics or the academy. Like Galeano and Zapata (2006), Obregón (2007) looks at women's movements as alternative sites of resistance and political involvement, and cites *La Ruta Pacífica* as a central source of action. The author draws information from interviews with movement leaders, and it is possible but not explicitly stated that Obregón is a participating member of the movement. Obregón argues the birth of *La Ruta Pacífica* marked in Colombia a split in the women's movement between those lobbying the government for representation and those fighting within the social, public sphere from the grassroots level, such as *La Ruta Pacífica*. The movement succeeded in forcing the public to see women, and especially mothers, as political subjects, and illuminated the falseness of the social divide between the private and public spheres. Obregón situates the birth of *La Ruta Pacífica* within a broader era of increasing feminist action and consciousness in

the country, which she notes gained some political traction but also garnered apathy by many and earned the hostility of armed actors in the country.

Acosta (2009), Parra-Fox (2010), and Cockburn (2007) have developed the most in-depth and sophisticated literature available about the movement. Acosta (2009), a Colombian political scientist, uses *La Ruta Pacífica* as a case study to analyze processes of identity construction and resistance for Colombian women. Acosta conceptualizes an “identity of resistance” from a gender perspective, which the author argues *La Ruta Pacífica* has developed. Acosta analyzes processes of identity formation within the movement through the use of language and symbols, with an emphasis on the similarities and differences between collective and individual identity. The chapter on the movement opens with a history of the movement’s formation. The study also explores how work by the movement has questioned the distinctions between the public and private spheres in Colombia. The author gathered information about the movement through interviews with group members and with the movement’s leader, Olga Amparo Sánchez. Like other scholars, Acosta argues the birth and work of *La Ruta Pacífica* in the 1990s was part of a larger push by feminist and women’s groups that expanded and diversified the political landscape of the country to include feminist discourse. Acosta argues that the effects of war in Colombia on women in particular pushed Colombians to become involved publicly in new ways.

Parra-Fox’s (2010) dissertation is arguably the most detailed account of the formation and activities of the movement. Like Montealegre (2008), Colorado (2003), and Revelo (2010), Parra-Fox was a member of the movement before beginning her study, and writes “from the perspective of a woman scholar-activist” (iii). The study

focuses on trauma faced by displaced women, and the author's ethnography of the movement was gathered through participatory action research. Parra-Fox gives a first-hand account of the movement's first mobilization and subsequent early demonstrations from the author's position as a member of the group, which provides an unprecedented look into the movement's formation, preparation, training, struggles, and successes. It places the reader on the bus with women from the Colombian Pacific Coast travelling to meet for the first mobilization in Mutatá in northwest Colombia, and therefore offers a perspective unavailable to other scholars. Along with the detailed account of the movement's early years, Parra-Fox also focuses the study on symbolism, the formation of communal memory, and also the movement's connections to international human rights and women's rights organizations.

Cockburn (2007) uses *La Ruta Pacífica* as part of a case study to analyze women's peace and antiwar activism around the world. As Cockburn's book takes a global approach, it includes case studies from India, Palestine, Sierra Leone, and elsewhere, and Cockburn writes from materialist feminist and Marxist perspectives. Cockburn opens the first chapter with a discussion of *La Ruta Pacífica*, which the author calls "the largest and internationally best-known women's organization for peace in Colombia" (18). The chapter gives a few pages of biographical information about the formation and general messages and goals of the movement, and goes on to compare it to other Colombian women's peace movements. Parra-Fox (2010: 73-4) critiques Cockburn's work for having unclear conclusions, as Cockburn calls for a change in masculinity from a feminist perspective but then, from a Marxist perspective, states that history indicates such progress is unlikely.

## **Social Movements**

As has been made clear, *La Ruta Pacífica* is not the only women's movement within Colombia. Nor is it the only women's movement in Latin America, of course. Modern social movements, and in particular women's movements, have developed across Latin America since the 1970s (Jelin 1990b; Jaquette 1991). *La Ruta Pacífica*, with its first public demonstration in 1996, is both a product and continuation of other regional women's and social movements. To understand *La Ruta Pacífica*, it is necessary to explore the theories and ethnographies by scholars of other Latin American social movements. Of course there are social movement theorists who do not work on Latin America, but often social movement theories coming out of politics science or anthropology, for example, have tended to be narrowly confined by their discipline in a way that curtails broader contextual questions about social movements that incorporate various planes of analysis. The body of work by Latin American social movement scholars I review below have been particularly effective at creating interdisciplinary social movement analyses with a unique Latin American perspective (Alvarez, Dagnino and Escobar 1998b).

Many social movement scholars in Latin America point to neoliberal economic and political policies that swept across the region in the 20th century as major contributors to the rise of social movements (See Alvarez, Dagnino and Escobar 1998). In this argument, political and economic processes of restructuring of states that began at the international level and work down to the level of the individual. Economic austerity shrunk the size of the state and also, as Schild (1998) argues, restructured the parameters of political action. For this reason, many social movements, especially women's

movements, that developed in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century incorporated anti-capitalist and anti-politics positions (Alvarez 1998). Social movements offered disenfranchised citizens a way to challenge the territoriality of the state and restructure social and political life (Slater 1998, Jelin 1998). However, Alvarez, Dagnino, and Escobar (1998a) warn against over-estimating the effectiveness of social movements, especially as politics of neoliberalism reshape the meaning of democracy and citizenship. To overcome such tendencies, it's necessary to ground any analysis of social movements within broader questions of politics, citizenship culture, and history.

One way to study social movements is to look at what they produce – e.g. what effect social movements have on social, political, and cultural landscapes. At arguably the most basic level, Escobar (2008) argues social movements produce knowledge. Drawing from Holland and Lave, Escobar argues that “knowledge is embedded in local contentious practices and in larger historical struggles” and is “produced in dialogue, tension, and interaction with other groups” (2008: 25). This insight is useful for studying *La Ruta Pacífica*, since the movement draws from the participation of hundreds of Colombian women's organizations, and also utilizes the language of local and international feminist theory. *La Ruta Pacífica* also produces new knowledge through the movement's public demonstrations and through reports and first-person stories published in blogs and on the movement's website. According to Escobar (2008: 306), such productive practices blur the boundaries between academia and activism, recognize the importance of activist contributions to theory, and unsettle the “megastructure of the academy” by “multiplying the landscape of knowledge production.”

## **Feminism and Women's Movements**

An understanding of certain feminist theoretical perspectives is important to contextualize the rise of modern women's movements in Latin America, which many authors recognize as gender-focused movements arising since the 1970s (Jelin 1990b; Jaquette 1991, Alvarez 1998). In particular, many self-described Third-World feminists have helped shift international feminist discourses away from the liberal feminist portrayal of "Third World" i.e., non-Western women as helpless victims oppressed by their culture and/or religion. According to Lugones (2008), European colonization in the past, and European-style hegemonic modernity in the present, have shape and complicated ideas about race, gender, and sexuality. This is true even for feminist theorists and other subaltern theorists, because even the standard narrative of dominant patriarchy and heteronormativity assumes the Western constructs of gender and sexuality are a historical and universal fact. Lugones breaks down the history of colonialism to illustrate how "universal" constructs of gender and sexuality were forcibly imposed onto the subjugated world.

Mohanty (1998) analyzes the discourses of liberal feminism and contrasts it with a Third World feminist perspective. According to Mohanty, the writings about women in the Third World tend to construct those women as victims of culture, religion, and patriarchy. Non-white/non-Western women are viewed as a monolithically oppressed group, devoid of local context, sociological situation, or history, while scholarship about the West tends to be much more contextualized. Mohanty argues that "[t]here can, of course, be no apolitical scholarship" (62), and points out that the same type of monolithic Othering can happen when Third World/ non-white people write about the Third World

as well. Basically, when writers make broad assumptions about a group of people without grounding their analysis in class, race, caste, gender, sexuality, nationality, and history, they can easily fall into essentialist thinking and writing.

hooks (1984) offers an interesting take on the idea of a unified feminist movement that is also multi-perspectival. The author does not hold back from critiquing the mainstream feminist movement as it existed in the 1980s – indeed, hooks blames much of the disinterest, confusion, and misconception about feminism on the white, bourgeois authors of the mainstream movement. The author grapples with the idea of feminism meaning equality with men, for it forces the question “which men?” hooks then calls out class- and race-privileged women for using this definition as a cop out, as it allows them to feel progressive and revolutionary without having to critically assess their own privilege and access to resources. hooks forces the discourse beyond the “men as enemy”, gender-binary-perpetuating, faux-universal language of the “second wave” of feminism toward a more inclusive politics that is more difficult in both understanding and execution, but that, if followed, would move toward a better feminist discourse.

Kandiyoti’s main thesis is that patriarchy is a complex and deeply ingrained phenomenon, and women in all patriarchal societies make “patriarchal bargains” in order to maximize their own best interest within the confines of their societal structures. The text explains the mechanisms behind women who continue to act in a way that feminists would consider to be against their own self-interest because those women have been socialized to understand their role in that way, and because feminist movements have not offered a viable alternative to the safety and social acceptability of the existing gender structure.

Feminist movements in Latin America have tended to follow the same trajectory as feminist movements in the West: modern feminist discourses arose with suffrage campaigns led by upper- and middle-class women in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Colombia was the last Latin American to grant women the vote, in 1957) (Jaquette 1991). Through the 1970s and 1980s Latin American feminist movements began to de-center and incorporate issues not specifically related to gender, such as labor and human rights. Likewise, leftist movements began to integrate women's groups into their ranks to gain supporters; however, many leftist movements often dismissed women's issues such as domestic violence and reproductive rights as low priorities, leading women organizers to eschew traditional movements and hierarchical movement structures in favor of more decentralized and democratic movement structures in which women spoke for only themselves. By the 1990s, like in the U.S. and elsewhere, feminist movements had expanded in Latin America to include more diverse voices – Afro-Latin American women, lesbian women, indigenous women, rural women, and urban women began articulating identities and concerns distinct from those of the predominantly white, middle-class, university-educated early feminists (Alvarez 1998).

Grassroots women's movements in Latin America fall naturally within the scope of Third World feminism, since women involved in movements are agents and political actors fighting various forms of local and global oppression. Like most other places in the world, women have always been involved in collective struggle in Latin America, but women's participation often has gone unnoticed or unrecognized (Jelin 1990b; Jaquette 1991). Two examples of women who are now historically recognized for their involvement are Manuela Sáenz, who fought alongside Simón Bolívar in South



America's wars for independence in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (see Murray 2008), and fighter Bartolina Sisa, who accompanied Tupac Katari in indigenous uprisings against Spanish imperialists in Bolivia in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century (Jelin 1990a: 200). Urbanization in South America since World War II led women to articulate demands for housing and public services through neighborhood associations and mother's clubs (Jelin 1990b; Jaquette 1991).

An important theoretical framework used by scholars of Latin American women's movements is a feminist challenge of separate spheres ideology, which states that women's natural place is within the private sphere, which includes the home, domestic work, and childcare. Men interact within the public sphere, where they work outside of the home, earn a wage, and participate in politics. Feminist critiques argue that a society structured upon separate spheres of interaction based on gender lead to the devaluation of women's contribution to society because a woman's labor does not earn a wage, and because men control politics, men hold significantly more social power. Furthermore, such social ideologies are heteronormative in that they are predicated upon monogamous relationships between men and women, and are class-based in that only the middle and upper class can afford to support a family on just one man's paycheck (see De Groot 1989, Lockwood 1997, Woollacott 2006).

De Groot (1989) argues that in colonial era Europe, gender, race, and class categorizations developed in part as deliberate political and pragmatic attempts by powerful men to establish their power and define their own masculinity. The author notes that scientific inquiry reflects the hegemonic culture of its time. "Scientific" work essentialized women as naturally/biologically predisposed to nurture and obedience

because men needed a well defined “other” to fill that societal role. The European male’s role was strictly defined as well – men were natural leaders, the only humans biologically able to govern. Lockwood (1997) also writes about Europe in the colonial era, when social expectations that equated femininity with motherhood kept women in the domestic sphere to raise children and limited women’s’ opportunities outside of the domestic.

The colonial legacy of separate sphere ideology is still relevant in Latin America today, and Latin American women’s movement scholars have illustrated how the public/private divide has shaped women’s participation in movements and women’s movements. Jelin (1990a) points out that women are often involved in struggles that arise out of their daily lives, and gives as an example the rise of urban poor women organizing into neighborhood movements. Díaz-Barriga (1998) follows Jelin’s argument with a comparable example of women creating urban movements from within their neighborhoods in Mexico. Díaz-Barriga points out that women involved in social movements often must still perform family duties within the private sphere of their own home; women involved in movements thus operate within and across both the public and private sphere every day. For Díaz-Barriga, the reality of the public-private divide exists alongside possibilities for its transformation.

Jelin (1990a) notes that women’s movements are catalysts to move women into the public sphere, which Jelin argues is important because “it is in the public sphere that solidarity links are established with others sharing similar social positions, that awareness of common interests is acquired, and that networks of communication and information set up “ (185). In a later argument by Jelin (1998), the author points out that women have always practiced forms of resistance – Kandiyoti’s patriarchal bargain rings true here –

but it is only as social movements emerge are those acts of resistance are thrust into the public sphere and thus recognized. Beyond movement formation, when women enter the public sphere physically and politically through movements, they are contesting their exclusion from that sphere as well. The movement of women among spheres creates what Alvarez, Dagnino, and Escobar (1998: 20) call the “proliferation of multiple public spheres.” However, women participating in public movements in gendered ways – for example, as groups of mothers – their discourse can reinforce predefined gender roles as they defy them.

Some scholars of Latin American women’s movements frame the development of movements in relation to the rise of authoritarianism within various countries. The framework is especially relevant in the Southern Cone countries of South America, such as Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, and Peru (see Jaquette 1991, Schild 1998). According to Jaquette (1991), feminist groups emerged in these countries when middle-class women within the political and academic left grew frustrated by leftist parties’ refusal to take women’s issues seriously. The emerging feminist identity grew alongside similar movements elsewhere in the world such as the “second wave” of feminism in the Western world. Feminist groups gained a foothold with women as they reacted to military authoritarian governments shutting down democracy and eliminating state-sponsored social programs: “ironically, military authoritarian rule, which intentionally depoliticized men and restricted the rights of ‘citizens,’ had the unintended consequences of mobilizing marginal and normally apolitical women” (5). Alvarez (1998) argues that many women joined feminist groups and women’s movements during this time while still remaining affiliated with party or class-based organizations. The author calls this dual affiliation

“double militancy” and argues the phenomenon points to “the sharp boundary constructed between the distinct Latin American feminist political identity and nonfeminist identities and practices” (298).

While the framework of authoritarian military rule cannot be applied to Colombia because the country has maintained democratic rule in the country (at least technically), certain applicable similarities allow for comparisons. Extreme internal violence in Colombia that includes threats, assault, and murders of human rights activists and social movement leaders, extreme inequality, and a physical geography and elitist political system that leave large swaths of the populace disenfranchised have created what I argue is a comparable level of suppression and fear. Alvarez, Dagnino, and Escobar (1998a), too, recognize the similarities between the shrinking democratic state under neoliberalism and under authoritarian rule. The authors argue that “the exclusionary organization of Latin American societies and culture” have led to the development of what they call “social authoritarianism” (10). This framework points to the same effect on questions of citizenship as does the framework of the new neoliberal state – Latin American political culture became hostile to democracy, which led to social movements that redefine concepts such as democracy and citizenship.

Another way to frame the study of women’s movements is to look at how those movements interact with themselves and with outside social, political, and economic forces – what Escobar (2008) calls social movement networks, and what Harcourt and Escobar (2005) call meshworks. Escobar (2008: 277) theorizes actors within social movements form networks of action and discourse that “constitute a wave of confrontational social engagement.” However, Escobar cautions against falling into

standard good-vs.-bad, oppositional conceptions of social movements in which social movements are assumed singular entities. Rather, social movements, like any other group or organization, have power dimensions within that shape the movements' formation and actions. Escobar posits that social movement networks operate in two ways: as subaltern-actor-networks (SANS), in which elements of self-organization predominate over elements of hierarchy, and as dominant-actor-networks (DANS), in which hierarchies outweigh self-organization. The conceptualization of the SANS can be applied to feminist theoretical movements discussed above – Third World feminists have taken on a subaltern, self-organizing standpoint that stands in contrast to the hegemonically hierarchal structure and influence of Western, liberal feminism. Of course, both Third World and liberal feminism are branches or perspectives of similar core feminist beliefs and goals; Escobar (2008) notes that SANS and DANS often overlap within movements. *La Ruta Pacífica*, like other Third World feminist movements, falls in line with the SANS framework, as it is a decentered, grassroots movement that is the collaboration of more than 300 women's groups and organizations from across the country.

Finally, an aside about the use of the word “woman” and “women” throughout this manuscript: Many recent feminist theorists, especially poststructuralists, have argued that woman is not an assumed category but is socially constructed through hegemonic discourses about the body. Butler (1997: 419) argues the category of gender is “a constructed identity, a performative accomplishment which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief.” Butler argues that the categories of “man” and “woman” are social classes constructed along relations of power, which each individual consciously and unconsciously reinforces

through every action, whether that action is rebellious or conformist. Because conformist acts are rewarded, people continuously practice those acts, which gives the appearance of normality or natural gender.

I accept this argument wholeheartedly, as do members of *La Ruta Pacífica*. However, both this study and the movement use such gendered language as “woman” and “masculine.” Jelin (1990b) points out that women are not a homogenous group, and Escobar (2008) argues that social movements, too, are heterogeneous and continuously shaped. Drawing on a Gramscian framework, Escobar and Harcourt (2005) argue that they are not talking about all women, but about subaltern women and women mobilized on behalf of subaltern women. The subaltern woman is one of many “groups that, in a given hegemonic formation, occupy subordinate positions vis-à-vis the dominant groups in relation to questions of work, exploitation, racism, ethnicity, and other forms of cultural subordination” (2-3). The authors argue that the women involved in Latin American women’s movements, who tend to be poor, at times rural and at other times urban, indigenous, Afro-Latin American, and so on, fit this definition. Jelin (1990b) agrees, and adds that through feminist movements women have gained a sense of identity based on their gender. Jelin argues that gender is articulated within society as one system of dominant and subordinate classes, and women have joined groups to question such forms of social organization and domination.

## CHAPTER IV: METHODOLOGY

### **Research Objectives:**

Despite the diversity, size, and public nature of *La Ruta Pacífica* mobilizations and events, scholars allege that the movement is not acknowledged or recognized by public and political actors within Colombia. According to Adriana Elisa Parra-Fox, the movement's messages are delivered "often alone, frequently opposed by the established power structure, and generally ignored by the media" (2010: 109). Parra-Fox's study of the movement was qualitative and based on participatory action research, and the author's claim was observational in nature and not quantified. The observation by Parra-Fox serves as the launch point for this study's primary investigation.

The objective of this study is to investigate how the pacifist women's movement *La Ruta Pacífica* interacts with the Colombian media landscape to communicate the movement's activities and messages. The hypothesis, derived from a review of the literature already written on the movement, is that the Colombian mainstream media has failed to accurately represent *La Ruta Pacífica* in scope and style when compared to alternative media, alternative modes of representation, and the movement's own representation, despite *La Ruta Pacífica* being a major, organized women's movement with thousands of members and participators. Therefore, *La Ruta Pacífica* has had to utilize different media strategies to communicate through different outlets, in different regions, and at different levels of media visibility.

The study uses a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods in the form of interviews with leaders and members of *La Ruta Pacífica* and a textual analysis of stories

about *La Ruta Pacífica* in the largest and most influential newspapers and news magazines in Colombia, as well as in alternative media outlets.

### **Methodology, Part One: Field Interviews with Members of *La Ruta Pacífica***

The first part of this study involved conducting interviews with members of *La Ruta Pacífica* in order to understand how the group works with the media in Colombia, how the group views media coverage of its messages and events, and how the group builds public awareness through the media and through its own efforts. The interviews provide an opportunity for leading members of the movement to speak firsthand about the media's representation of their movement, and their experiences getting media coverage for events and campaigns. The project gives voice to the movement, allowing its members to give background and insight into media coverage of the movement that goes beyond the scope and ability of content analysis. The results of the interviews augment and enrich the following content analysis, and provide for more nuanced and sensitive findings and conclusions.

The study employed semi-structured interviews with members and leaders of *La Ruta Pacífica*. The semi-structured interview was chosen as the interview method because semi-structured interviews allow for the researcher to have a set of topical guidelines in hand to help direct questions toward the research topic, and the open-ended answer format of semi-structured interviews allows the interview subject to shape and contextualize answers in ways that are not constrained inside the confines of pre-determined responses. The semi-structured interview format also creates the opportunity for the researcher to formulate new questions on the spot and to take the interview in



unexpected directions if the interview subject's responses stimulate new ideas on the topic. This methodology was chosen deliberately for this study, in order to facilitate a more conversational interview setting that gave members of the social movement space and freedom to express their viewpoints and to focus on what they consider important – i.e., the interview format allowed the women to tell their own stories. The semi-structured interview format was also chosen so each interview could be tailored naturally toward each interview subject's area of expertise and work with the movement.

The study sought to conduct interviews with representatives and involved members of *La Ruta Pacífica*. Therefore, a snowball sampling method was appropriate to find interview subjects. Dr. Ana María Bidegain, a member of the thesis committee for this project, lived in Colombia for many years, where she worked as an academic and built personal connections with many social movements, women's rights groups, and human rights organizations. Dr. Bidegain provided contact with Olga Lucía Ramírez Ramírez, former head of a women's organization located in Medellín and longtime close associate with *La Ruta Pacífica*. Ms. Ramírez facilitated contact and organized interviews with *La Ruta Pacífica*.

Interviews were conducted in person in the cities of Bogotá and Medellín, Colombia. Bogotá was chosen because it is the capital and largest city of Colombia, and is home to *La Ruta Pacífica's* national headquarters. Medellín was chosen as the second interview site because it is the second largest city in Colombia and the capital of the department of Antioquia. The regional headquarters of the Antioquia branch of *La Ruta Pacífica*, a large and active branch of the movement, is in Medellín. Antioquia is also the region where *La Ruta Pacífica* was born, as the movement's first mobilization was to a

town in the north of Antioquia. My time in Bogotá fortuitously coincided with a multi-day conference meeting between leadership of *La Ruta Pacífica* from all nine regions, which made it possible to meet members of *La Ruta Pacífica* from regions to which I would not have been able to travel, due to time and financial restrictions.

My trip resulted in two group interviews and four individual interviews, with a total sample size of 13 interview subjects. Each interview lasted between 30 and 90 minutes, and began after all Institutional Review Board protocol for informed consent was carried out and after each interview subject provided oral consent to be part of this project. Because of the danger faced by human rights activists in Colombia, all participants chose whether they wished to provide their full name, their first name only, or if they preferred to be given a pseudonym or to remain anonymous. All participants chose to use their names – those working as national and regional leaders authorized use of their full names, while several non-leader members of a theater group opted to provide only their first names.

The first interview was a group interview with members of a theater group in Medellín that performs theater events and public performance art events as part of *La Ruta Pacífica*. Nine women sat in the interview group, and seven women chose to participate in the interview – the director of the theater group, Celmy Castro, and theater group members Teresa García, Carmen Rosa, Beatriz Elena, Teresita Gallo, Carmen Rosa Jaramillo Henao, Marina Zapata, and Valeria. The theater group is focused more on artistic forms of self-representation, and the group performs pieces based on victim narratives gathered by the group. Therefore, this interview focused on *La Ruta Pacífica*'s activities in the streets and the group's the deliberate use of powerful language and

symbols to shape public discourse, more than the group's work with the media. The women interviewed in this group also shared stories of talking to victims of violence, and shared their own stories of loss, sacrifice, and struggle while living and working in the midst of violence.

The second interview was a group interview with two members of a three-person coalition that coordinates the regional Antioquia branch of *La Ruta Pacífica* in Medellín, Kelly Echiverry and Teresa Aristizaboil Sánchez. As regional coordinators, these two women organize local events and work with all other regional branches to plan national events and build national campaigns. They are responsible for local and regional media relations, and our interview focused on the lack of media coverage of *La Ruta Pacífica* Antioquia, the cultural context of media coverage in Colombia, and how the regional branch of the movement operates without broad media support.

The third interview was with Olga Lucía Ramírez Ramírez, my main contact while in Colombia. Ms. Ramírez worked as director of the Medellín-based women's rights nongovernmental organization *Vamos Mujer* for 22 years. *Vamos Mujer* is one of the 300 organizations associated with *La Ruta Pacífica*. Ms. Ramírez participated in the formation of *La Ruta Pacífica* in 1996 and worked as part of *La Ruta Pacífica*'s national coordination until 2012. During our interview, Ms. Ramírez drew upon her long experience with *Ruta Pacífica* to describe the group's development alongside other pro-peace movements, and to explain media coverage of the group in terms of shifting socio-political landscapes.

The fourth interview was with Shima Pardo, National Communication Coordinator of *La Ruta Pacífica*, based in Bogotá. Ms. Pardo maintains communication

between the national and regional branches of *La Ruta Pacífica*, and also maintains archives of all the media coverage the movement receives. Ms. Pardo has an extensive knowledge about the Colombian media. During our interview, Ms. Pardo went into great detail about how the media in Colombia operates, how it covers *La Ruta Pacífica*, how *La Ruta Pacífica* has grown over time, and how the movement works with and around different media outlets.

The fifth and sixth interviews took place during the *La Ruta Pacífica* conference in Bogotá, with regional coordinators from two remote regions on opposite sides of centrally located Bogotá. Sandra Liliana Luna Delgado is Regional Coordinator of *La Ruta Pacífica* of Santander, a department in the central north region of Colombia with a large oil refinery. Alejandra Miller is Regional Coordinator of *La Ruta Pacífica* of Cauca, a department in the southeast of Colombia that is notorious for very high levels of violence related to the armed conflict. The populations in these regions are smaller, and the media outlets are also smaller and are very localized. In both regions, the coordinators experience very different media relationships than do the coordinators from the large cities. These unique dynamics are discussed at length in Chapter Five.

The sample size of interview is small, but the interviews represent a wide variety of perspectives and experiences that compliment each other and tell a complex and nuanced story about the movement and the media's coverage of the movement. The interviews represent both leaders and members of *La Ruta Pacífica*, hailing from four markedly different regions. Represented is the voice of a woman who has been with the movement since its formation, women who talk to politicians and women who talk to

rape victims, and women who have traveled by bus for days across active war zones to publicly demonstrate for peace in some of Colombia's most dangerous cities.

### **Methodology, Part Two: Content Analysis of Colombian Newspapers**

The study's focus on media coverage offers a directly operationalizable way to investigate the claim posed in Parra-Fox's observation. My study employed a structural content analysis of major Colombian print media and alternative media, to assess what is written about *La Ruta Pacífica*, how much is written, and how the story is presented. The following sources were utilized:

1. *El Tiempo* – Most widely circulated newspaper in Colombia, published in Bogotá, leans liberal
2. *El Espectador* – Second most widely circulated newspaper in Colombia, published in Bogotá, leans liberal
3. *El Colombiano* – newspaper published in Medellín, leans conservative
4. *El País* – newspaper published in Cali, leans conservative
5. *Revista Semana* – Weekly current affairs magazine, published in Bogotá
6. *Cromos* – Weekly variety magazine, published in Bogotá
7. *Cambio* – Weekly current affairs magazine, published in Bogotá (Lugo-Ocando 2008)
8. Alternative media: Blogs, Youtube videos, alternative television and radio stations, self-published work by *La Ruta Pacífica*

The unit of analysis was each article, with units divided into two categories: Articles about a *La Ruta Pacífica* event or about the organization, and articles in which *La Ruta Pacífica* leaders are quoted or cited as expert sources.

The study analyzed the data quantitatively and qualitatively. Data was analyzed by type and volume over time, to determine the total type and quantity of articles written. A qualitative analysis assessed the length, prominence in publication, and article tone of a representative sample of articles, in order to infer the nature of media representation of the movement.

In order to allow for a comparative analysis, this study compared stories in mainstream print media outlets to stories and representations in alternative/non-mainstream media outlets and other outlets of public and/or collective communication, such as alternative television stations, blogs/new media, Youtube videos, art, graffiti, and the movement's own public protests and events. This evaluation illustrated the contrast between the information ingested by the literate middle and upper classes that have physical and cultural access to newspapers and news magazines, and the information available at both the local and international scale through nontraditional, non-mainstream, and at times oral (i.e. available to the non-literate) mediums.

## CHAPTER V: FINDINGS

### **Findings, Part One: Field Interviews with Members of *La Ruta Pacífica***

The launching point of this study was field interviews with members of the women's movement *La Ruta Pacífica*. The six interviews with 13 participants focused on questions of media coverage, representation, and self-promotion of the movement. Interview subjects were leaders and members of the movement representing Colombia's two largest cities and two provincial regions. Each woman interviewed had unique expertise and had a different story to tell. It is important to note that while many of the women interviewed are representatives and leaders of the movement, each woman's responses reflect her own personal viewpoint, and each woman's thoughts and opinions are situated within a context of race, class, gender, sexuality, geography, and leadership status within the movement. While a deeper analysis of how the positionality of each interviewee affects her views and opinions is beyond the scope of this study, an acknowledgement that such positionality exists is important to note. Still, important themes regarding media coverage of the women's movement emerged. My study investigated four main themes: mainstream mass media coverage of the movement, local media coverage of the movement in the provincial regions, coverage by alternative forms of media, and communicating without the media.

One issue brought up in several of the interviews was the problem of agenda-driven media outlets filtering the words and messages of the movement after interviewing *La Ruta Pacífica* representatives. In the introduction to this study, I committed to favoring methodologies that allowed the women of *La Ruta Pacífica* to speak for themselves. The words of the interviewees have already been altered by the necessary

translation from Spanish to English. In this section, I take the opportunity to remove the filter with the deliberate use of long, uninterrupted quotes. The story of the movement belongs to the movement, and is best told by its own members.

### **Mainstream Media Coverage**

The leadership working in the large cities, and in particular the women based in Medellín, view the mainstream media as corrupted by power and wealth and unconcerned with covering social issues that run counter to regional and national political discourse.

“The media in Colombia has two sides – there are big elites who control massive organizations, like in many parts of the world, and the media is privately owned. They don’t focus on our issues, they don’t care about us.

I believe they only care if the issue is related to politics in this country.

The owners of these media outlets are very rich, powerful people with powerful families.” – Kelly Echiverry, Member of the Regional Coordination Coalition of *La Ruta Pacífica* of Antioquia.

“In this country, it’s in the interest of the state and the media to see the conflict continue. And groups like *La Ruta*, women’s social movements, and Mujeres de Negro, they don’t want us to stay afloat.” – Marina Zapata, Member of *La Ruta Pacífica* theater group in Antioquia.

A concern brought up by many of the movement leaders is that when mainstream media outlets do cover the movement, they fit the interviews and coverage of events



within a certain politically and socially acceptable script, even when fitting to the script means changing the words, intentions, or meanings of *La Ruta Pacífica*.

“It’s hard to get to the mainstream media, and when we get there they condition and cover the news in the way they want to. And this is not only with *La Ruta*, in the way the media treats women, and indigenous people. Indigenous men and women get no coverage in the country.” – Teresa Aristizaboil Sánchez, Member of the Regional Coordination Coalition of *La Ruta Pacífica* of Antioquia.

“Now, El Tiempo, the most important newspaper in Colombia, recognizes *La Ruta*, contacts and covers *La Ruta* and seeks its opinion. It’s desirable that the traditional media with a very wide reach covers us. But this media does not have solidarity with the cause of *La Ruta*. They have very different creative interests.” – Olga Lucía Ramírez Ramírez, former Director of *Vamos Mujer* and former member of *La Ruta Pacífica* national coordination.

One topic that seems to garner mainstream media attention, often in a sensationalized way, is the murder of a young woman. *La Ruta Pacífica* uses the word “femicide” to draw attention to the fact that women are often murdered because they are women, and to point to a systematic, pervasive pattern of deadly aggression aimed specifically at women in the country. Members of *La Ruta Pacífica* object to the fact that they are only used as quick-quote references in these stories, and that the mainstream

media presents each new murder as a singular event and not as part of a larger pattern of violence against women.

“The coverage by the media in Antioquia is minimal. In only very specific topics, *La Ruta* is used as a reference. If a woman is murdered for reasons related to gender, then they come to *La Ruta* – for the femicides, for November 25 [International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, and the date *La Ruta Pacifica* typically holds an annual mobilization], that’s when we exist to the media.” – Kelly Echiverry, Member of the Regional Coordination Coalition of *La Ruta Pacifica* of Antioquia.

“Because of the patriarchal culture of the country, violence against women is not considered a social and political problem. It is seen as a domestic issue in the private sphere, not a topic of public interest. Only when a woman is burned, or has an atrocious death, when femicides are increasing, is it covered by the media. It appears as facts, as a one-day article of facts. The coverage is isolated, and there is no consistent campaign about the defense of the rights of women. They cover the assassination of women as acts of passion. They don’t pay attention to rape, or the sexual assault of boys and girls.

“To the media, we don’t have any value, we don’t exist. On the radio, women are made fun of, women are the butts of jokes. The media is disastrous for women. And that’s hard, because despite the fact that it’s

been 30 years since feminism began, we see women join in making fun of other women. It's a very difficult fight. We need alternative media to be handled by women to get more attention." – Celmy Castro, Director of *La Ruta Pacifica* theater group in Antioquia.

Still, the movement has gained a level of national legitimacy over the last 17 years. The fact that *La Ruta Pacifica* is called for an interview when a woman is violently murdered illustrates that the movement is viewed as a knowledgeable resource on topics related to violence against women. Some members of the movement view this as a positive result of the movement's work.

"Our exposure has grown over time. Since the mobilization in 1997, the coverage of our movement has increased. We've achieved the position that *La Ruta* is an important reference for certain very specific issues. For example, one issue is violence against women within the context of the armed conflict – we are a source of reference at the national and regional levels, and with international media too. It didn't happen in 1996 – we have had to gain space in the media because beyond our data, we have met the victims, we have seen how they've been directly affected." – Shima Pardo, National Communication Coordinator of *La Ruta Pacifica*.

"*La Ruta* has gained legitimacy and recognition by the media. *La Ruta* has become a valid interlocutor with the media. When there are events or when something happens, the media goes to *La Ruta* because we have something to say on the topic. But in general I think the media does not

give much attention to the peace mobilizations or to *La Ruta*. That has to do with the fact that the media is not committed to the peace process. “ – Olga Lucía Ramírez Ramírez, former Director of Vamos Mujer and former member of *La Ruta Pacífica* national coordination.

The coordinators for branches of *La Ruta Pacífica* in regions with an unresponsive media, or with media outlets that distort interviews and don't critically analyze stories, have learned to not rely on getting media coverage. These regional branches have developed grassroots strategies for connecting with the public, disseminating information, and fight for political recognition. Meanwhile, the attitudes of these coordinators toward media coverage has grown flippant, even defiant.

“The media has been in the hands of people from different sides of the spectrum. When they're on the right and they cover us in the news, it might affect us negatively. For us, it's not a central point to be in these media outlets.” – Teresa Aristizaboil Sánchez, Member of the Regional Coordination Coalition of *La Ruta Pacífica* of Antioquia.

“We're not going to die because *El Tiempo* doesn't cover us. There are a lot of challenges, because the media is a pro-government media – not because they are good or bad, but because they twist the truth. They can play that game because they're the most powerful media outlet, the most seen. If they call us for an interview, we'll do it, even if we know they're going to twist our words. We don't stop doing the interviews. We are not subordinate to them – they can invite us to do an interview, we'll go, but if

they don't cover us we won't die. We've learned to calm ourselves down about this.” – Shima Pardo, National Communication Coordinator of *La Ruta Pacífica*.

### **Local Media Coverage**

“The local context is very important – there are different types of media perceptions, the groups of women in different areas work differently and approach the media differently. In Chocó, you can see how the media covers *La Ruta* differently. In Chocó, there are enough women that they have their own correspondent who works with the media. The organization itself works differently there. These differences unite us, they don't divide us. Our differences are strengths.” – Shima Pardo, National Communication Coordinator of *La Ruta Pacífica*.

The coordinators of the more provincial regions of Cauca and Santander experience very different responses from local media outlets. *La Ruta Pacífica* events are covered consistently by the mainstream media as well as by alternative media sources, and the women maintain close personal relationships with local journalists.

“In Santander, we have a very good relationship with the media. We have good coverage. They consult us. The people in the media know who we are and know what we do, and that helps us a lot. There are two reasons for this – One is the level of recognition the group has and the closeness we have with the media, and the other is that there are not many people or

groups in the region they can ask about these issues. In Bucaramanga, there are not many people who work on these issues. We are the experts on these topics.

“It’s not about the political line the newspaper may have, but who works for the newspaper and what type of relationship they have with *La Ruta*. That’s what counts, that is what determines how and when we’re covered.

“For example, my sister is a journalist. When we have an event, I call my four journalist friends and they come and cover the event. It will never be the same if I couldn’t call my friends, and if my friends weren’t part of the media. What counts is the close relationship that you have with the members of the media. I can make a call and ask for a favor from my sister, and they know us well. Maybe that happens in other regions – the themes of the closeness, and of the personal, are very important, very Colombian.” – Sandra Liliana Luna Delgado, Regional Coordinator of *La Ruta Pacífica* of Santander.

“We have been doing well in Cauca, but there’s an important reason for this. We have credibility with the media in the region. We have been disciplined with the production of information on what has happened to women, on women’s issues, and the media has paid attention to us ... to what we are going to propose, and they publish what we say. They also invite us to radio shows, and they publish our interviews in the regional newspapers.

“This is a small city, a small region, and it helps us, because we have a very direct relationship with the media. I think we have done a good job with the regional media. We have a very good relationship with the media. We have not fought with any media from the region, which I think is due to the position that we have this region. We have not had any problems with the official media from this region – these are not alternative medias.” – Alejandra Miller, Regional Coordinator of *La Ruta Pacífica* of Cauca.

Both women stress the importance of doing good work that earns credibility while also forging personal relationships with local journalists. Ms. Delgado acknowledges that media coverage is not guaranteed for *La Ruta Pacífica* of Santander, and that her work would become more difficult if new journalists came in and replaced the journalists she knows personally.

Additionally, both women have to make compromises in order to maintain their media relationships – Ms. Miller avoids bringing up contentious topics in order to placate journalists from the conservative city of Popayan, and Ms. Delgado makes a point of never refusing a request for an interview.

“There are some untouchable things for the media, and we have to be very careful about those issues. For example, abortion. This is a very difficult theme. They are much more open with themes such as violence against women.” – Alejandra Miller, Regional Coordinator of *La Ruta Pacífica* of Cauca.

“We have to do it, we have to work with the media, because this is how we publicize our ideas, even when it’s complicated and difficult. For example everyone knows I’m not a psychologist, but when they ask me to answer questions about couples’ relationships I do it, because it’s a way of getting attention and developing a relationship with the media. It’s a conscious decision that we have to invest the time and energy to develop this relationship with the media. We have learned that the relationship with the media is important, and we know how to move our pawns.” – Sandra Liliana Luna Delgado, Regional Coordinator of *La Ruta Pacífica* of Santander.

### **Alternative Media Coverage**

Alternative media outlets and projects are an important resource for *La Ruta Pacífica*. Alternative media are characterized as small, hyper-local, non-commercial publications or, increasingly, online-based resources such as blogs. Alternative media is not subject to the same political and editorial constraints that journalists working for mainstream mass media outlets are, and alternative media by nature tends to be critical of the status quo.

“Alternative media are much more closely linked to our organizations. Information about *La Ruta* will come out through alternative media – it won’t be hidden. We create new strategies of visibility, not only through the media but also by becoming politically influential. For examples, we



use alternative media to get together and network with other groups within the public arena so we can let the people know about our proposals.

“We trust the alternative media because they write what we actually say, word for word. They don’t cut out the articulation of our main themes. We feel good about sending them information because we know they are reliable.” – Shima Pardo, National Communication Coordinator of *La Ruta Pacífica*.

“Alternative media outlets recognize *La Ruta* much more than traditional media, and they publicize the discourse of *La Ruta* more accurately. These alternative media outlets are much smaller, much more local. Alternative media is important, but we also need to recognize the challenge that we have with traditional media.” – Olga Lucía Ramírez Ramírez, former Director of *Vamos Mujer* and former member of *La Ruta Pacífica* national coordination.

The movement has also found a foothold in international media outlets, mostly based in Western Europe, though Ecuadorian media outlets have interviewed members of *La Ruta Pacífica* in regards to unrest on the Colombia-Ecuador border. The movement is building connections with international human rights organization, has received recognition from the United Nations, and is associated with the international women’s movement *Mujeres De Negro*. These international alliances give legitimacy to the movement, which in turn provides the group with safety inside Colombia.

“For us, international media is important. It can lead to political pressure from outside, like when we were interviewed about everything that happened with Plan Colombia in Putumayo. Having that type of study gave some exposure and legitimacy to *La Ruta* at the international level. In this way, *La Ruta* can have a voice on what is happening in this country.

“This international recognition also provides safety to us when we go on our mobilizations, because the police and the armed forces don’t protect us, and we mobilize in the middle of areas of armed conflict. Having connections with international journalists has provided some security. Nothing has happened to any woman while participating in these mobilizations. Maybe we’re more recognized internationally than nationally.” – Kelly Echiverry, Member of the Regional Coordination Coalition of *La Ruta Pacífica* of Antioquia.

“Sometimes we get calls from international media because they want to know our position about the FARC or the conflict, and it’s important that we spread our information even if it’s not heard in Bogotá. We received a call from an Italian radio station, and who listens to that? The people in Italy. We were interviewed, it was translated, and we gained all these contacts of women who know the movement or have worked with the movement.

“It’s interesting that we’re sometimes covered more at the international level than at the national level. In 2011, the Mujeres de Negro worked with us, and we’ve received much more international coverage than national coverage during that time. I don’t know if this is something new or if it aligns with important themes for them. For example, we did an article and it was translated and distributed through France and Switzerland. At the national conference we had about 15 media outlets covering the event from Colombia, and 35 international media outlets covered the event.” – Shima Pardo, National Communication Coordinator of *La Ruta Pacífica*.

### **Communicating without the Media**

“We added arts performances in the street to the movement but the media doesn’t come. We give our all in the movement to try and receive attention, we use a lot of noises, like horns, but we don’t get attention from the media.” – Celmy Castro, Director of *La Ruta Pacífica* theater group in Antioquia.

When the mainstream media ignores *La Ruta Pacífica*, the movement turns to local alternative media outlets and to international media outlets. The movement also foregoes seeking media coverage altogether in favor of working on current campaigns and organizing directly with local communities.

“We don’t want to be overly concerned about getting enough coverage. We want to be in peace and know when and how to deal with the media. We’re going to invite them all to cover our events, but if they have a particular slant that isn’t very favorable to us, then that’s their editorial line. That doesn’t worry us much, we have enough to worry about with the situation of women, there’s no time to worry about how the media covers us.” – Shima Pardo, National Communication Coordinator of *La Ruta Pacífica*.

“When we do demonstrations to denounce the femicides to the government offices, they don’t pay attention to us. The words fly away with the wind. That’s a major barrier in the work that we do. But when we go to the streets, to the locals, we’re approached by the people, who pay attention to us because we’re all victims.” – Marina Zapata, Member of *La Ruta Pacífica* theater group in Antioquia.

“I don’t think the goal of *La Ruta* is get in the news, it’s our goal to reach the people in a different way. Our main emphasis is how we’ve used symbols, art, to reach the audience we want to reach. We don’t rely on the media, we go to the streets. We are not interested in negotiating our discourse with the media. We don’t care if we’re going to be in the mainstream media or not. The goal of *La Ruta* is that our message, our discourse reaches everybody. For us, communication is not just mass media, but communication is also to transcend discourses.” –Kelly

Echiverry, Member of the Regional Coordination Coalition of *La Ruta Pacífica* of Antioquia.

Different members of the movement are undertaking research projects and events that focus on core elements of the movement's missions – the rights of women victims of the armed conflict, violence against women, and the implementation of feminist language that helps shape public discourse on issues related to women.

“*La Ruta* is now doing truth commissions with women within the Colombian conflict. I am part of the peace commission that is writing a paper to be published that will be released this year. I'm working very closely with *La Ruta*. It's an independent commission that focuses on crimes against women within the Colombian armed conflict. *La Ruta* gathered more than 1000 testimonies of women across the country, victims of the conflict, of sexual abuse, displacement, of many crimes against women. Right now we are systematizing the data by charges, type of crime, effects, to understand who the aggressors were.” Olga Lucía Ramírez Ramírez, former Director of *Vamos Mujer* and former member of *La Ruta Pacífica* national coordination.

“The situation against women is very serious, in that it is manifested in a very subtle, almost unperceivable way. Because this violence starts so subtly, it increases like a snowball until it arrives at a point where it explodes into a high level of the violence. Teresa Garcia and I are conducting an investigation of subtle manifestations of violence, such as

bullying in schools. As a victim, how much bullying will you take, and how much is the perpetrator willing to hurt you? That's psychological violence, the subtle manifestation of violence. It happens constantly inside the house, where the man insults the woman, and later apologizes and says he's sorry, he won't do it again, then he does, until it reaches an unbearable level that ends in physical violent. The whole world should take a look at the subtle manifestations of violence of the patriarchy. We don't pay attention to these subtle manifestations of violence, and once they become bigger it's harder to eradicate." – Carmen Rosa Jaramillo Henao, Member of *La Ruta Pacifica* theater group in Antioquia.

"We are planning to work with the media. More specifically we are going to train new journalists on certain issues. For example, the words 'gender' and 'woman' are not interchangeable. The armed conflict doesn't affect everybody the same, it affects women in a different way. What we want is to use inclusive language. We're going to invite the media, to teach them about using inclusive language. We want them to know the organization, to know how we work, and that they likely aren't covering the news in the right way. This is a goal that several women's organizations here in Colombia have – to teach journalists how to cover the news. Here in Bogota, we are forming a group of journalists who are covering news about women.

“Let’s sit down and talk. It’s not like we’re submissive or that we’re radical feminists – don’t make generalizations without knowing us. Let’s learn together so you can inform in a better way.” – Shima Pardo, National Communication Coordinator of *La Ruta Pacífica*.

Finally, the Cauca regional branch of *La Ruta Pacífica* achieved an important political victory following the most recent local elections. However, the regional coordinator of Cauca, Ms. Miller, does not specify whether the Cauca group’s work was facilitated by the group’s close media connections in the region.

“We do different actions with two goals. Our first goal is finding a political solution to the armed conflict, and second, we want to show and make visible to society the impact of the war on the life and body of women in Cauca. This place has been the epicenter of the war; this has been one of the departments with one of the highest levels of confrontation within the armed conflict, and we always try, in all the actions we organize, to make visible these two goals. We carried out mobilizations, research, we tried to exert influence, we do political training, and we also form part of processes with alliances with other social organizations. We have a broad framework of action. We have achieved important results and recognition.

We worked in the previous elections with a candidate for governor of Cauca to try to create a Secretariat of Women in the regional government. Our candidate for the governorship committed himself, and when he won

he did it, and that's why at this moment we have a Secretariat of Women. There are very few departments in Colombia that have Secretariat of Women – only 3 or 4 departments have them. That was a result of our influence.” – Alejandra Miller, Regional Coordinator of *La Ruta Pacífica* of Cauca.

### **Findings, Part Two: Content Analysis of Colombian Newspapers**

Investigations into the media coverage of *La Ruta Pacífica* by Colombia's seven largest and most influential print newspapers and news magazines confirm the hypothesis put forth by academics and align with the experiences of the members of the movement. Coverage of the movement has been scant or nonexistent for all media outlets aside from El Tiempo, and the majority of stories about *La Ruta Pacífica* by El Tiempo only mention the movement in a passing reference (See Table One).

The principle constraint on this analysis was in data collection. I used each individual media outlet's online search tool to search for keywords “*La Ruta*” or “*La Ruta Pacífica*” to search the news outlet's archives for stories that mention the movement. Medellín-based El Colombiano and Bogotá-based weekly variety magazine *Cromos* both came up with no results after multiple keyword attempts. Further inquiries are needed to determine if the newspaper and the magazine really have not published any stories mentioning the women's movement, or if the archives are simply inaccessible.

Cali's main newspaper, *El País*, returned one result, a stories published in 2012 and thus outside the scope of this study's time frame. The story was unrelated to the



issues covered by *La Ruta Pacífica* and only mentioned the movement as part of an interviewee's professional title.

*Cambio*, a weekly current-affairs magazine published in Bogotá, changed hands in 2006 and the pre-2006 archives are no longer available on the magazine's website. This was confirmed with an email from the magazine's webmaster after I inquired. Since 2006, *Cambio* has published one story that mentions *La Ruta Pacífica* – a story about a flurry of threats against human rights activists, including threats against 27 members of *La Ruta Pacífica*. The story mentions the threats against the movement members in the opening paragraph, but the story turns its focus to other past and present threats and to the political response. The news magazine published several other stories about women working with human rights nongovernmental organizations, but the stories do not mention *La Ruta Pacífica* (See Table Four).

Weekly current affairs magazine *Revista Semana*, published in Bogotá, returned 16 records, from 2001 to 2011 (See Table Two). The archive page did not indicate that records before 2001 were unavailable via the search tool, but because the first story starts in 2001 and the movement began in 1996, it is possible the results are not complete. The average word count of the stories referencing *La Ruta Pacífica* is 1090 words per story.

Bogotá-based *El Espectador*, the second most widely circulated newspaper in Colombia, returned 19 records with an average word count of 873 words per story. This average word count is nearly as high as the average word count of stories about the movement published in *Revista Semana*, which is a magazine with a longer story format. This could indicate that stories mentioning *La Ruta Pacífica* tend to be longer-length feature stories.

El Tiempo, Colombia's principle national newspaper, offers the most complete and extensive archive of stories about *La Ruta Pacífica*. The newspaper published 87 stories about *La Ruta Pacífica* from 1997 to 2011. However, the average word count is 400 words per article, and twelve of the stories are less than 100 words, what is considered a news brief. Most of the stories only mention *La Ruta Pacífica* once, via a single quote by a representative of the movement, a list of groups related to a topic or event that includes the movement, or in a press release-type announcement of an upcoming event involving the movement.

The nature of alternative media makes a systematic archiving of the coverage of *La Ruta Pacífica* in Colombian alternative media outlets impossible. However, as more alternative media moves online the task of discovering local independent sources of information will become easier. Table Five illustrates a sample of different forms of web-based alternative medias that covered *La Ruta Pacífica*, as well as the movement's own online presence.

What makes the selected alternative media stories stand out from the stories written by the mainstream Colombian news outlets is every alternative news article or video is dedicated exclusively to the movement. The focus of each story and video is the movement itself or an event or campaign by the movement, and the language used to talk about the movement reflects the language the movement uses to describe itself and its work. This aligns with what members of *La Ruta Pacífica* said about the benefits of working with alternative media, that the messages and words of the movement are not cut short or distorted by alternative news outlets.

**Table One:**

<b>El Tiempo</b>					
<b>#</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Section</b>	<b>Words</b>
1	MUJERES DE BOLÍVAR PARA LA PAZ	11/20/97	NULL	Otros	364
2	ESCARBANDO	11/23/97	María Teresa Herrán	Otros	223
3	STOP AL AMOR SI SIRVE PARA DETENER LA GUERRA	11/24/97	NULL	Otros	954
4	MUJERES DE DECLARAN VEEDORAS DE PAZ:	1/5/98	NULL	Otros	242
5	FRANCIA DD.HH. EN COLOMBIA :	4/27/98	NULL	Otros	86
6	MUJERES CONTRA LA VIOLENCIA:	11/25/00	NULL	Política	58
7	NO PARIMOS HIJOS PARA LA GUERRA	11/27/00	NULL	Otros	299
8	PARTERAS DE PAZ EN LA RUTA PACÍFICA	12/17/00	Juliana Vergara, Juan Carlos Bermudez and Santiago Montejo	Política	365
9	PREMIO DE PAZ A COLOMBIANAS:	3/7/01	NULL	Política	63
10	MUJERES EN VÍA DE LA NO VIOLENCIA	3/11/01	Nubia Camacho B.	Otros	570
11	MUJERES SIN MIEDO:	7/20/01	NULL	Política	67
12	VUELVEN A MARCHAR LAS MUJERES	7/22/01	NULL	Política	65
13	MARCHA FEMENINA	8/13/01	NULL	Política	72
14	3.000 MUJERES MARCHAN POR LA PAZ	8/14/01	NULL	Política	380
15	LOS OTROS CALENDARIOS	1/4/02	NULL	Otros	310
16	PIDEN REANUDAR DIÁLOGOS DE PAZ	5/15/02	NULL	Otros	372
17	PROTESTA FEMENINA	6/29/02	NULL	Editorial - opinión	189
18	LUCHA DE GÉNERO	7/21/02	NULL	Política	81
19	LAS MUJERES DE NEGRO	9/8/02	Luz María Sierra	Otros	1661
20	RECHAZO A ALLANAMIENTO	10/30/02	NULL	Política	80
21	MUJERES: DE LOS SÍMBOLOS A LOS HECHOS	11/23/02	NULL	Política	202
22	MUJERES CONTRA EL SECUESTRO	1/30/03	NULL	Otros	65
23	MUJERES DE 24 KILATES	3/29/03	NULL	Otros	800
24	UNIFORMADOS, DE CONQUISTA	4/14/03	NULL	Otros	983
25	GOBIERNO PROPONE ACABAR ROSCAS EN SERVICIO MILITAR	4/26/03	NULL	Otros	1020
26	ONG SIENTEN QUE GANARON	7/12/03	NULL	Otros	415
27	RUTA DE LAS MUJERES	9/17/03	NULL	Otros	55
28	FARO	9/26/03	NULL	Otros	188

**Table One, continued:**

<b>El Tiempo</b>					
<b>#</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Section</b>	<b>Words</b>
29	MUJERES CONTRA LA FUMIGACIÓN	11/22/03	NULL	Editorial - opinión	88
30	NO A VIOLENCIA CONTRA MUJERES	11/26/03	NULL	Otros	75
31	GALARDÓN A RUTA DE MUJERES	3/11/04	NULL	Otros	87
32	DENUNCIAN ABUSOS CONTRA MUJERES	6/24/04	NULL	Otros	95
33	MUJERES PIDEN LEVANTAR EXCEPCIÓN	8/12/04	NULL	Otros	74
34	CAYÓ BIEN LA EXIGENCIA A UN DIÁLOGO CON ELN	8/12/04	NULL	Otros	299
35	PREOCUPA VIOLENCIA CONTRA MUJERES	9/27/04	NULL	Otros	351
36	MUJERES SE MOVILIZAN AL CHOCÓ	11/21/04	NULL	Otros	56
37	VIOLENTA ARREMETIDA GUERRILLERA EN CHOCÓ	11/26/04	NULL	Otros	307
38	PREOCUPACIÓN POR VIOLENCIA INTRAFAMILIAR EN SANTANDER	11/26/04	Veronica Rincon	Otros	456
39	MÉRITOS PARA MUJERES PAISAS	3/12/05	NULL	Otros	820
40	PREMIARÁN CAMPAÑA CONTRA LA VIOLACIÓN	3/30/05	Carolina Bohorquez	Otros	538
41	DOCE COLOMBIANAS, POR EL NOBEL	7/1/05	Redacción Nacional	Otros	915
42	12 MUJERES COLOMBIANAS TRAS EL NOBEL	7/1/05	NULL	Otros	212
43	EXIGIRÁN RESPETO POR MUJERES DEL CAUCA	7/23/05	NULL	Otros	142
44	Grito de mujer en el Atrato	11/27/05	Néstor Alonso López	Nación	752
45	Noticias breves de Justicia	11/18/06	AFP	Justicia	57
46	Sin autorización, se tomarán Plaza de Bolívar	11/19/06	Claudia Rubio	Nación	50
47	Agenda académica y cultural para el jueves 23 de noviembre	11/22/06	NULL	Otros	60
48	'Uribe, estás despedido', reza un cartel inmenso que 500 mujeres exhibirán en un plantón en Bogotá		Edufio Peña	Política	331
49	La Ruta Pacífica de las Mujeres recorrerá a Buenaventura (Valle)	5/18/07	NULL	Otros	175
50	116 mujeres del Valle del Cauca se graduaron en diseño y Gerencia de Proyectos	8/2/07	NULL	Otros	263
51	Piedad Córdoba cree que las Farc tienen ahora más voluntad para meterse en un proceso de paz	9/20/07	NULL	Política	1610
52	BREVES DEL EJE	11/21/07	NULL	Otros	173
53	Agenda cultural de Bucaramanga	3/4/08	NULL	Otros	65
54	Denuncian amenazas virtuales contra la Asociación de Cabildos Indígenas del Norte del Cauca	8/13/08	NULL	Nación	243
55	Masacre en Medellín habría sido provocada por ajuste de cuentas en venta de licor adulterado	9/25/08	NULL	Nación	406
56	Masacre sería por ajuste de cuentas	9/26/08	NULL	Cultura y entretenimiento	426

**Table One, continued:**

<b>El Tiempo</b>					
<b>#</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Section</b>	<b>Words</b>
57	Defensoras de los derechos de la mujer rechazan el asesinato de la activista antioqueña	9/29/08	NULL	Nación	148
58	Noticias breves de justicia	9/29/08	NULL	Justicia	61
59	Con un 'abrazo', mujeres víctimas apoyan a la Corte	9/30/08	NULL	Nación	52
60	Magdalenas por el Cauca, procesión para que el río no sea un cementerio e instrumento de muerte	11/1/08	IVÁN NOGUERA	Nación	1114
61	Magdalenas, para que el río no sea más un cementerio	11/3/08	IVÁN NOGUERA	Cultura y entretenimiento	667
62	'No violencia contra la mujer' sale a la calle este martes en el Valle	11/21/08	NULL	Nación	182
63	'No violencia contra la mujer' sale a la calle este martes en el Valle	11/21/08	NULL	Nación	182
64	'No violencia contra la mujer' sale a la calle este martes en el Valle	11/22/08	NULL	Nación	182
65	Ruta Pacífica de las Mujeres estará unida en días de liberaciones	1/31/09	NULL	Nación	657
66	Ruta Pacífica de las Mujeres estará unida en días de liberaciones	2/4/09	NULL	Nación	656
67	Taxis rosas' para las mujeres de Medellín	3/9/09	NULL	Nación	292
68	Taxis rosas' para las mujeres de Medellín	3/10/09	NULL	Otros	296
69	Exposiciones, vigilia y encuentros durante el Día de la No Violencia Contra la Mujer	11/24/09	NULL	Nación	327
70	Colombianas marcharán por el respeto a sus derechos hoy, día de la No Violencia contra la Mujer	11/24/09	REDACCIÓN VIDA DE HOY	Vida de hoy	256
71	Colombianas marcharán hoy por el respecto a sus derechos	11/25/09	REDACCIÓN VIDA DE HOY	Otros	249
72	Relato de una mujer que padeció 12 años de golpizas y que hoy invita a denunciar el maltrato	11/25/09	REDACCIÓN VIDA DE HOY	Vida de hoy	585
73	Relato de una mujer que padeció 12 años de golpizas	11/26/09	NULL	Nación	326
74	Violencia contra la mujer, en aumento	4/17/10	NULL	Bogotá	615
75	El 40 por ciento de homicidios de mujeres es cometido por su pareja	4/17/11	Redacción Justicia	Justicia	973
76	Asesinan a otra líder de víctimas	6/8/11	NULL	Justicia	257
77	Asesinan a otra líder de víctimas	6/8/11	NULL	Justicia	246
78	Tres líderes mujeres cuentan cómo es vivir bajo amenazas	7/25/11	NULL	Política	884
79	Tres líderes mujeres cuentan cómo es vivir bajo amenazas	7/25/11	NULL	Bogotá	986
80	Mujeres rechazan castigo que impuso la justicia indígena a un violador	8/23/11	REDACCIÓN POPAYÁN	Justicia	441
81	Castigo indígena de 5 años a violador enoja a mujeres	8/23/11	NULL	Bogotá	427
82	Alarma por impunidad en maltrato contra mujeres	10/21/11	NULL	Nación	350
83	Organizaciones de mujeres reprochan comunicado de Angelino Garzón	11/18/11	NULL	Nación	1078
84	Mujeres aún son vistas como un botín de guerra	11/25/11	NULL	Bogotá	370

**Table One, continued:**

<b>El Tiempo</b>					
#	Title	Date	Author	Section	Words
85	¿Será que a las mujeres nos matan porque nos aman?	11/28/11	NULL	Otros	855
86	Cada 32 horas asesinan a una mujer en Antioquia	12/4/11	YEISON GUALDRÓN	Bogotá	664
87	Legislación no favorece a las víctimas: ONU	12/6/11	NULL	Bogotá	1131

Source: El Tiempo. <<http://www.eltiempo.com/>>. (Accessed 30 May 2013).

**Table Two:**

<b>Revista Semana</b>					
#	Title	Date	Author	Section	Words
1	Movilización Internacional. Mujeres contra la guerra	9/3/01	NULL	Nación	506
2	Embarcadas en la paz	3/1/02	NULL	Nación	535
3	Mujeres colombianas reiteran frente al mundo la necesidad de su participación para la paz y la reconstrucción	3/1/02	NULL	Nación	281
4	Los mártires inocentes	3/1/02	NULL	Nación	2004
5	Las mujeres paz haremos...	8/5/02	NULL	On-line	1100
6	"La guerra no es una realidad virtual"	10/6/03	NULL	Enfoque Principal	442
7	Olga Amparo Sánchez	12/3/05	Margarita Sarmiento Osorio	Especiales	595
8	¡Las Luchadoras!	12/3/05	Mauricio Archila Neira y Diana Gómez Correal	Especiales	1792
9	La impunidad del proceso con los paras ha golpeado con mayor fuerza a las mujeres	11/22/06	NULL	On-line	1511
10	¿Qué significa el diálogo entre el profesor Moncayo y el Papa para las víctimas de la violencia en Colombia?	10/17/07	Helda Martínez	On-line	2540
11	Violencia sin sentido	11/17/07	Alejandra Azuero	Opinión	1038
12	Ruta Pacifica: Colombian Women Against Violence*	2/4/09	Andrew Willis Garcés	Colombia In the World	1904
13	Cada año matan a 1.250 mujeres en Colombia, según informe	6/24/09	NULL	Nación	128
14	"Ya descubrí quiénes son mis enemigos", dijo Ana Fabricia en noviembre del 2010	6/8/11	NULL	Nación	747
15	Ana Fabricia Córdoba: su vida fue una guerra	6/11/11	NULL	Nación	1071
16	Mujeres de Putumayo, ganadoras de premio nacional de derechos humanos	12/12/11	NULL	Nación	1239

\*English-language article linked from Semana website

Source: Revista Semana. <<http://www.semana.com/Home>>. (Accessed 28 May 2013).

**Table Three:**

<b>El Espectador</b>					
<b>#</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Section</b>	<b>Words</b>
1	Los discípulos de Luther King	1/29/08	Nelson Fredy Padilla	Paz	1731
2	"Nuestra capacidad de aguante se está agotando"	9/11/08	NULL	NULL	443
3	El paso entre el amor y la muerte	8/16/08	Mariana Suárez y Diego Alarcón	Vivier	2298
4	Una violencia que no cesa	9/23/08	Redacción Política	Tema del Día	1233
5	Repudio a muerte de líder feminista en Medellín	9/28/08	NULL	Política	367
6	Un caos ordenado	10/1/08	Rodolfo Arango	Opinión	632
7	Indígenas llegaron a Villarrica	10/23	NULL	Tema del Día	328
8	Indígenas se reunirán el domingo con Uribe	10/24	NULL	Política	297
9	"La minga de los pueblos continúa"	10/27	NULL	Política	485
10	Iván Cepeda	12/6/08	Cristina de la Torre	Actualidad	2114
11	Tras los soles del generalato	1/17/09	NULL	Judicial	1193
12	Liberación de secuestrados sería inminente	1/23/09	Redacción Política	NULL	613
13	Azote y muerte para las mujeres	6/20/09	NULL	NULL	1286
14	Gobierno pide investigar si hay policías implicados en crimen de líder desplazada	6/8/11	Con información de agencias	Judicial	695
15	Asedio a promotores de restitución	6/8/11	NULL	Judicial	862
16	Hijos de la líder de desplazados asesinada denuncian amenazas	6/8/11	Agencia EFE	Judicial	539
17	Intensifican búsqueda de asesinos de líder de restitución de tierras	6/9/11	NULL	Judicial	533
18	ONU pide al Gobierno revisar la seguridad de defensores de DD.HH.	6/9/11	Agencia EFE	Judicial	368
19	Mil y una manos negras	6/26/11	María Elvira Samper	Opinión	571

Source: El Espectador. <<http://www.elespectador.com/>>. (Accessed 12 May 2013).

**Table Four:**

<b>Cambio</b>					
<b>#</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Section</b>	<b>Words</b>
1	Crecen amenazas contra defensores de Derechos Humanos, líderes de víctimas y dirigentes de oposición	5/8/08	Información general	Información general	873

Source: Cambio. <<http://www.cambio.com.co/>>. (Accessed 12 May 2013).

Table Five:

Selected Web-based Alternative Media Coverage and Self Representation							
#	Title	Date	Author	Source	Language	Length	URL
1	Ruta pacifica de las mujeres en Chocó (2005)	12/1/05	Hollman Morris	CONTRAVÍA	Spanish	29 minutes	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rSl0FOVU9fg
2	Dos horas duró el plantón de la Ruta Pacífica de las Mujeres en Antioquia	NULL	Diana Duque Muñoz	Estudios de Género en América Latina	Spanish	345 words	http://antropologiadegenero.com/?p=1527
3	Puede cuajar una nueva oportunidad para la paz	8/7/11	Ávaro Villarraga Sarmiento	Razón Pública	Spanish	1567 words	http://razonpublica.com/index.php/recomendado/2273-puede-cuajar-una-nueva-oportunidad-para-la-paz.html
4	"Ruta Pacífica de las Mujeres" Facebook page	Continuous updates	La Ruta Pacífica	Facebook	Spanish	Continuously updated	https://www.facebook.com/rutapacificadelasmujeres
5	PLATAFORMA DE APOYO A LA RUTA PACÍFICA DE LAS MUJERES	Last updated 5/9/09	La Ruta Pacífica	Blogspot.com	Spanish	Last entry 296 words	http://rutapacificademujeres.blogspot.com/
6	Las conversaciones en La Habana: Planteamiento de la Ruta Pacífica de Mujeres	12/17/12	Cronicas de un despojo	Youtube	Spanish	11 minutes	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W E54-VkmaQM
7	"Ruta Pacífica de las Mujeres" website	Continuous updates	La Ruta Pacífica	www.rutapacifica.org.co	Spanish	Last news bulletin 255 words	http://www.rutapacifica.org.co/
8	Ruta Pacífica: Women Working for Peace in Colombia	12/1/06	Latin American Working Group	Latin American Working Group	English	674 words	http://www.lawg.org/component/content/article/76/162
9	Ruta Pacífica de las Mujeres [Peaceful Way of Women], Colombia	NULL	Cassandra Sutherland	Global Fund for Women	English	418 words	http://www.globalfundforwomen.org/impact/news/45/1558
10	Ruta Pacífica: Colombian Women Against Violence	2/4/09	Andrew Willis Garcés	Upside Down World	English	1878 words	http://upside-down-world.org/main/colombia-archives-61/1699-ruta-pacificacolombian-women-against-violence



## CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSION

### **Final Conclusions**

*La Ruta Pacífica* faces hardships in getting Colombian media outlets to cover the movement's activities, campaigns, and ideologies. However, lack of media coverage does not impede the movement's mission-driven work.

Media access for the women's movement is not universally impeded across all regions of the movement. Large, powerful media outlets based in the country's principle cities largely ignore the movement, while smaller, local media outlets based in provincial regions and alternative media outlets in all regions cover the movement's activities and campaigns reliably and accurately. In the provincial regions, strong working relationships between *La Ruta Pacífica* and local media outlets is based on personal relationships between journalists and members of the movement. Additionally, *La Ruta Pacífica* has gained legitimacy abroad and within Colombia through coverage by international media organizations, primarily based in Western Europe.

*La Ruta Pacífica* has developed media strategies to foster friendly media relations when possible and to work without any media attention when necessary. The movement has a grassroots structure that builds membership and support from local communities, and performs demonstrations and artistic projects in the street. Leaders in the movement are not opposed to more mainstream media coverage, if the coverage is accurate, and the leaders continue to invite members of the local media to events and demonstrations. The leaders of the movement makes it clear, however, that the main goals of the movement remain ending violence against women and ending the violent conflict in Colombia, and media coverage is a secondary concern.

## Areas of Further Research

This project introduces many possibilities for further research. The most natural area of further research is the expansion of this study to include more interviews with members of *La Ruta Pacífica* and to analyze more news stories.

This study compared the media experiences of the movement in Colombia's two largest metropolitan areas with the media experiences of the movement in two more remote and less populous departments. The movement has a regional branch in the department of Valle de Cauca, where Cali, Colombia's third largest city, is located. It would be worthwhile to investigate whether the Valle de Cauca branch of *La Ruta Pacífica* has a close working relation with the regional media outlets in Valle de Cauca, akin to the media relationships the regional branches in Santander and Cauca enjoy, or if the media outlets in Cali exclude *La Ruta Pacífica* from coverage in the way mass media outlets in Medellín and Bogotá do.

Conducting interviews with the regional coordinators of all nine branches of *La Ruta Pacífica* would help answer more completely the question of how *La Ruta Pacífica* utilizes the media landscape at different levels and in different places. Interviews with all of *La Ruta Pacífica*'s regional branches would allow for a comparative analysis of the media experiences of each region. A comparative analysis would be able to identify with more certainty those factors that lead to more or less media coverage in the region, which would help the movement come up with new strategies to gain more local media coverage if the movement sought to do so. Deeper research into the sociopolitical conditions and the violence levels of different regions where the movement is active

would also paint a more nuanced portrait of how *La Ruta Pacífica* navigates media use and representation locally, and whether the local context determines media coverage.

The framework of this analysis can also be applied to other organizations and movements in Colombia. There are many more women's groups, as well as indigenous groups, human rights groups, and social movements in the country that face threats, hardships, and lack of public recognition. Comparative analyses of the media coverage of different groups or movements would be edifying as well.

Finally, a claim made by academics who have studied *La Ruta Pacífica* and backed up by my literature review is that *La Ruta Pacífica* has received little attention from scholars, in either the Spanish- or English-speaking academic spheres. This is despite the fact that the movement leads thousands of women of all backgrounds to mobilizations and protests in regions across the country for pacifism while the country is in the midst of armed conflict. I call on everyone who comes across this project to continue and to expand scholarly research on the Colombian women's pacifist movement *La Ruta Pacífica de las Mujeres por la Solución Negociada al Conflicto Armado*.

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