APSR Dataverse File for
The Logic of Kidnapping in Civil War:
Evidence from Colombia

Danielle Gilbert*

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This document serves as the APSR Dataverse file for "The Logic of Kidnapping in Civil War: Evidence from Colombia." It provides research documentation and data that support the findings of this study. Because the study relies on interview testimony from at-risk human subjects, much of the underlying data remains protected by the author. Limitations on this data availability and my efforts to protect the privacy and confidentiality of human subjects are discussed below.

1 Interviews

This study's interview protocol was approved under the George Washington University Institutional Review Board Protocol # 061743 and CITI Program Certification on Human Subjects Research ID: 6345108. Over three trips to Colombia in 2017, 2018, and 2019, I conducted extensive interviews in research sites in five Colombian departments: Atlántico, Bolívar, Cundinamarca, Santander, and Tolima [see Figure A.1].

1.1 Why Interviews?

There are numerous practical and ethical challenges to studying political violence, and no method is without its limitations. To examine kidnapping in Colombia, I sought to interview former perpetrators, government officials, private security personnel, and other subject matter

*Assistant Professor, Department of Military & Strategic Studies, United States Air Force Academy

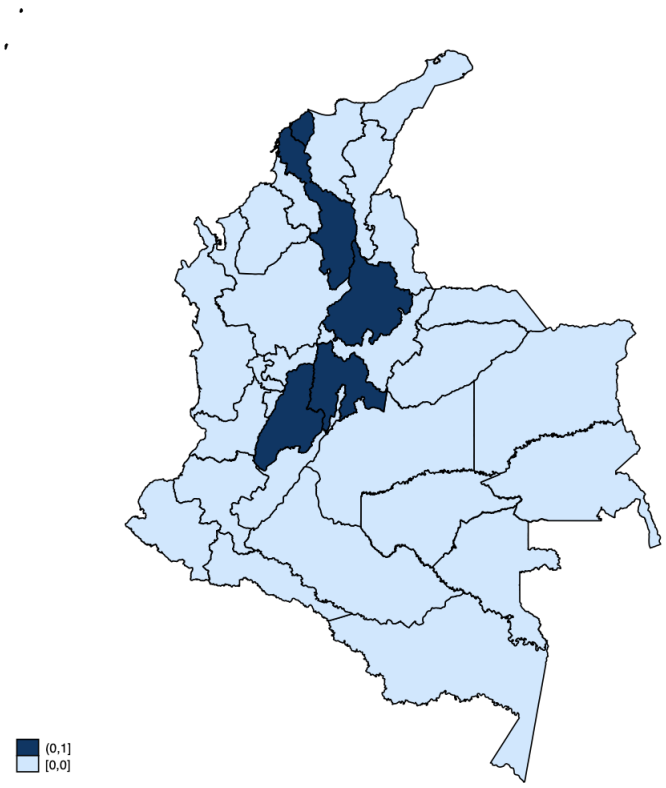

Figure 1: Colombian Departments – Fieldwork Sites

experts. There are several reasons why I conducted interviews as the data collection method for this article. One of the major challenges of studying political violence is the dearth of accurate data on individual attacks, or what we might consider "observations." This is especially pronounced for non-lethal violence, where mis- and under-reporting complicate our ability to measure the extent of complex phenomena (Cohen, 2016; Balcells, 2017; Lewis, 2017). Accordingly, large-n quantitative studies of non-lethal violence are rare. The existing large-n data on kidnapping, for example, focus either on one particular country or context (CNMH, 2013a), rely on open source material (START, 2018), or both (Milton and Loertscher, 2015; Gilbert, 2020). There are country risk ratings from risk management firms like Control Risks, and insurance companies and security firms collect their own records of kidnapping cases over the years. But there is no publicly available, cross-national dataset that captures all non-state actor kidnappings, and—because non-lethal data often goes unreported—such a dataset would be almost impossible to produce. Thus, this project is an early attempt to explore and explain a phenomenon, the extent of which we do not yet know.

As importantly, I chose to conduct interviews because I wanted to know not just that something

has happened, but *why* and *how* it transpires. Speaking to those intimately involved provides a way to understand kidnapping as a process, moving beyond correlates to explore motivation and mechanisms. Given that kidnapping violates both national and international law, it would also be difficult to study using other research methods that might help access perpetrator rationale, including surveys, experiments, or analysis of archival records. Where memoirs and public declarations exist that shed light on this phenomenon, I have incorporated them into the study.

1.2 Selecting Interview Partners

Following Cohen and Arieli (2011), I used snowball sampling as the most appropriate way to select interview partners from rare populations, such as those I wished to study. Initial contacts, including scholars, journalists, military officers, and kidnap & ransom insurance experts facilitated introductions to a wide range of security personnel, civil society actors, and ex-combatants as described below.

In 2017–2018 as I was conducting my initial fieldwork in Colombia, the FARC was in the midst of its Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) program as part of the 2016 peace deal. This timing provided opportunities and challenges. The peace process brought thousands of rebels out of the jungle and into safe houses, demobilization camps, or major cities. I could try to speak to some of these ex-combatants while minimizing risk to them and myself. In 2019, during my third trip to Colombia, I faced a new reality: The implementation of the peace process with the FARC was not going well, and the ELN was still armed and active. Coincidentally, the ELN had reached an impasse with the government over refusal to relinquish kidnapping.

In this environment, some early contacts helped make connections: a relative's friend who introduced me to a senior military official, who then helped me connect with the army and police *Grupos de Acción Unificada por la Libertad Personal* ("GAULA," the special anti-kidnapping and anti-extortion units); a journalist who connected me with a group of ex-combatants, who then shared my contact information with others; the American kidnap & ransom insurance executive who shared my contact information with Colombian negotiators; the experts at the United States Institute of Peace who connected me with scholars and policymakers in Colombia. I ended every interview with a request for more introductions. I sought every opportunity and said yes to every invitation, which often included heading to an airport at an hour's notice.

This was undoubtedly an unpredictable process with the potential for bias based on the contacts I was able to make. To the best of my ability, I sought a wide variety of unrelated sources, to limit the bias that could affect any small-n, non-random selection. To my surprise, I heard remarkably consistent perspectives on kidnapping from antithetical sources, including from the highest- and lowest-ranking ex-combatants of the FARC and ELN; ex-combatants who deserted and those who participated in the peace negotiations; scholars who spent their careers studying these organizations and officers who spent their careers fighting them. I include in the article descriptive statistics on the frequency with which certain topics to demonstrate both how consistent these findings were across subjects and that I have not cherry-picked favorable quotes. Some of the ex-combatants I spoke to were hesitant to disclose information—perhaps due to fear, guilt, or ignorance of the subject matter. On the whole, however, I found subjects exceedingly willing to talk about their experiences.

While retrospective interviews with former combatants can provide an interesting, personal, and novel source of data, they are not without their methodological flaws (Fujii, 2017). One risk comes from reflecting on the past: The distance of time and weakness of memory inevitably obscure important details and events (Metelits, 2009; Cohen, 2016; Daly, 2016). This does not necessarily imply malice or intentional misrepresentation—only that the past is viewed through a distant lens, with the ability to distort memory. However, subjects may also intentionally misrepresent information. Former combatants may wish to diminish or aggrandize former crimes, to rewrite the record in their favor. On this point, it is critical that researchers get a wide range of perspectives and stories. For example, though the primary subjects of interest in this study are former perpetrators, I address this concern by interviewing government and military personnel, scholars, NGO leadership, and several prominent former hostages. This helps construct a more complete picture, and one more resilient to potential deception, bravado, or exaggeration. Moreover, as subjects from different backgrounds corroborate the same story, it adds additional internal validity to the explanation presented.

Still, as Oppenheim, Steele, Vargas, and Weintraub have shown, ex-combatants' initial reasons for joining an armed group, including their dedication to ideological or economic motivations, affect combatants' likelihood of leaving a group and how they do so—whether they demobilize individually, side-switch, or remain in the group until collective demobilization (2015). We can expect

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics: Interview Subjects

Affiliation	**N**
Ex-combatants	
ELN	23
FARC	13
M-19	1
Multiple groups	3
Government	
Military commander	2
Police commander	2
Peace commissioner	2
Politician/ hostage	2
Private Sector	
Risk management/ insurance	9
Corporate security	7
Civil Society	
NGOs	7
INGOs	2
Victim advocates	5
Journalists	4
Total	78

that combatants motivated by ideology will be more likely to remain in the group or leave (by demobilizing or side-switching) when they believe the group has violated its ideology, including by harming civilians. As Table A.2 shows, I interviewed ex-combatants who demobilized individually, collectively, or after being captured by the state. Across these different groups of combatants, the justification for and description of kidnapping was remarkably similar. Where they differed, however, was in discussions about whether kidnapping had been a bad idea: As expected, combatants who had voluntarily left the organization individually were more likely to criticize the groups' decision to kidnap, whereas the senior FARC guerrillas who demobilized after 2016 were more likely to justify it.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics: Ex-Combatant Interview Subjects

Characteristic	**ELN**	**FARC**
Commander	4%	7%
Female	30%	23%
Demobilized individually	100%	23%
Demobilized collectively	0%	31%
Captured	0%	46%
Reintegration Camp	0%	23%
Safe House	83%	0%

Table 3: Ex-Combatant Interview Subjects

Alias	**Role**	**Organization**	**Date**
"Jhon"	ex-combatant	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia	8.4.17
"Cesár"	former commander	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia	8.8.17
"Laura"	spokesperson	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia	8.8.17
"Rober"	ex-combatant	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia	8.8.17
"Jose Luis"	ex-combatant	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia	1.31.18
"Fernando"	ex-combatant	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia	2.8.18
"Raúl"	ex-combatant	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia	2.8.18
"Jeni"	ex-combatant	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia	2.28.18
"Joanna"	ex-combatant	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia	2.28.18
"Machito"	ex-combatant	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia	2.28.18
"Jeronimo"	former commander	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia	5.22.19
"Santiago"	former commander	National Liberation Army	5.22.19
"Barba"	ex-combatant	National Liberation Army	5.29.19
"Belino"	ex-combatant	National Liberation Army	5.29.19
"Camilo"	ex-combatant	National Liberation Army	5.29.19
"Culebro"	ex-combatant	National Liberation Army	5.29.19
"Duane"	ex-combatant	National Liberation Army	5.29.19
"Erika"	ex-combatant	National Liberation Army	5.29.19
"Karen"	ex-combatant	National Liberation Army	5.29.19
"Kevin"	ex-combatant	National Liberation Army	5.29.19
"Marco"	ex-combatant	National Liberation Army	5.29.19
"Yierley"	ex-combatant	National Liberation Army	5.29.19
"Camila"	ex-combatant	National Liberation Army	5.30.19
"Daniela"	ex-combatant	National Liberation Army	5.30.19
"Ernesto"	ex-combatant	National Liberation Army	5.30.19
"Jimena"	ex-combatant	National Liberation Army	5.30.19
"Jonatan"	ex-combatant	National Liberation Army	5.30.19
"Julian"	ex-combatant	National Liberation Army	5.30.19
"Yorly"	ex-combatant	National Liberation Army	5.30.19
"Hernan"	ex-combatant	National Liberation Army and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia	5.30.19
"Luis Alberto"	ex-combatant	April 19th Movement	6.1.19
"Medardo	ex-combatant"	National Liberation Army	6.1.19
"Miguel"	ex-combatant	National Liberation Army	6.1.19
"Gerardo"	ex-combatant	National Liberation Army and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia	6.1.19

Table 4: Government Interview Subjects

Name	**Role**	**Organization**	**Date**
Alberto Mejia	General, Commander	National Army of Colombia	7.18.17
Samuel Salinas Valencia	Coronel, National Director	Military GAULA	7.26.17
Ivan Ricardo Zorro Pinzon	GAULA Coordinating Prosecutor	Attorney General of Colombia	8.4.17
Fernando Araújo	Former Foreign Minister	Government of Colombia	8.12.17
Gustavo Camargo	Coronel	Police GAULA	3.5.18
Andres Pastrana	Former President	Government of Colombia	3.6.18
Rob Saale	Former Director	U.S. Hostage Recovery Fusion Cell	12.13.18
Gerson Arias	Director, Technical Secretary	Colombian Truth Commission	5.16.19
Daniel Garcia-Peña	Former High Commissioner	Colombian Peace Commission	5.28.19
Gina Cabarcas	Director	Search Unit for the Armed Conflict's Disappeared Persons	6.5.19

Table 5: Private Sector Interview Subjects

Name/Alias	**Role**	**Organization**	**Date**
"Alice"	K&R insurance executive	(protected)	5.17.17
"Fred"	Director, Crisis Response	(protected)	9.29.17
"David"	Founder	Colombian security firm (protected)	2.5.18
Martin Burye	Security Director, Americas	Mars Global Security	2.7.18
"Simon"	Director of Operations	International security company (protected)	2.8.18
"Cristian"	Executive	(Protected)	2.13.18
Hernán Périco	Security Chief for Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, and Peru	Phillip Morris	2.13.18
Luis Mozas	Director for Security	Abbott	2.13.18
Ben Hockman	Head of Crisis Consultancy	D4C	2.21.18
Sergio Guzman	Former Colombia Lead	Control Risks	2.21.18
"Nicolas"	Chief of Security	(protected)	2.22.18
Pablo Enciso	President	Overseas Security Advisory Council	2.26.18
Alvaro Gomez	Global Security Advisor	Pfizer, GE, Exxon Mobil	2.26.18
"Jose Luis"	Chief Executive Officer	Global insurance firm (protected)	6.4.19

Table 6: Civil Society Interview Subjects

Name/Alias	**Role**	**Organization**	**Date**
Christoph Harnish	Bogotá Mission Chief	International Committee of the Red Cross	7.27.17
Olga Lucia Gomez	Former Executive Director	Pais Libre Foundation	8.3.17
Herbin Hoyos	Journalist and Founder	Voces de Secuestro radio program	1.31.18
Richard McColl	Independent journalist	Casa Amarillo	3.5.18
Victor de Currea-Lugo	Professor	National University of Colombia	5.10.19
Luis "Lucho" Celis Méndez	Advisor	Redprodepaz	5.13.19
Sergio Guarín León	Executive Director	Corporación Reconciliación Colombia	5.20.19
"Natalia"	Lawyer and advocate	(protected)	5.23.19
Mat Charles	Journalist	The Guardian	5.24.19
Ariel Avila	Deputy Director	Fundación Paz y Reconciliación	5.25.19
Alvaro Villarraga	Former Director	Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica	6.5.19

1.3 Data Limitations

There are important limitations to this study, an initial attempt to explore an understudied phenomenon. This study focuses on one type of kidnapping, in one country context, with a spotlight on two armed groups; it does not attempt to explain other incarnations of kidnapping, which may operate under different logics. It is my hope that this work can shed light on avenues for future exploration, which I hope that others and I will continue.

There are specific limitations based on the types of subjects engaged and the data collection method employed. For example, while the prior subsection considers the limitations and challenges of interviewing former perpetrators of violence, there are also limitations and challenges of interviewing government and private sector security personnel. As participants in the conflict, they have a definitive perspective they bring to bear. Like the former perpetrators, they may intentionally misrepresent information, hoping to rewrite the record in their favor. They may wish to present a story that makes the government efforts look more successful than they might have been. In interviews, I frequently heard a surprising declaration: *"No hay secuestro en Colombia"* ("There is no kidnapping in Colombia"), particularly from members of the *fiscalía* (Office of the Attorney General) and the GAULA. The most senior Colombian Justice Department official assigned to the GAULA told me, incorrectly, that there was presently (2017) no kidnapping in Colombia. Unlike the FARC ex-combatants (who claimed they did not "kidnap," but rather "retain" people), the government's statement was not a definitional one, but commentary on their perceived success at combating kidnapping in their country. For the GAULA and *fiscal*, there was no longer kidnapping in Colombia because the state had done such an effective job combating violence over the prior two decades. These officials had an interest in minimizing the recent history of violence and emphasizing their impact.

An additional risk of spending time with security personnel is that ex-combatants might not trust me. As much as possible, I tried to keep these connections separate, and sought introductions to ex-combatants through trusted interlocutors (journalists, activists, scholars). However, I was only able to gain access to the safe house with recently demobilized ELN ex-combatants through the Colombian military. Given that the military officers were my official hosts (and present on site, even if quite distant from my interview space), I imagine that might have affected who was

willing to speak with me and what they might say. I address the privacy concerns specific to these interviews below.

Last, knowing that I planned to use the interview data for scholarly research and publication, these interview subjects may have also hesitated to share any information that could benefit future perpetrators.

1.4 Interview Questions

I followed a semi-structured interview design, in which I had a flexible list of questions and topics to discuss over the course of the interview. There are pros and cons to this approach. One benefit is that it allowed unexpected paths in the conversation, as interview subjects would sometimes take the interview in an unexpected direction and elaborate on a topic I had not thought to raise. It allowed me to be sensitive to the subject's experience of the interview as well, steering away from clearly uncomfortable subjects, and toward whatever the subject wanted to discuss. One notable drawback of this approach, however, is that I cannot systematically compare subjects universally across the interviews, as I did not ask all subjects the identical questions.

I started nearly all interviews with a few questions to help make the subject comfortable before asking questions specifically related to my research. For example, I asked all ex-combatants about how, when, and why they joined their guerrilla group, and what roles they had held in the group. I asked private security personnel to tell me about their professional trajectory and the focus of their current work. I also ended all ex-combatant interviews by asking what they learned in the organization and what they have learned since demobilizing.
I divided interview subjects into the following classes:

- Class A = former combatants
- Class B = government and private sector security personnel
- Class C = other subject matter experts (academics, NGOs)

I asked questions related to several overarching topics: armed group goals, kidnapping practices, targeting, and combating kidnapping.

Group goals/ kidnapping practices (Class A)

1. What were the goals of your group? What did your group hope to achieve?
2. Why do people join your group? How did recruitment work?
3. How did your group fund its activities? Did this change over time?
4. Did your group kidnap?
5. If so, what was a typical kidnapping like?
6. Can you tell me about the work required for a kidnapping?
7. At what level (i.e. how senior) were decisions to kidnap made?
8. Was kidnapping spontaneous? Planned?
9. What kind of people were taken? What did the group demand?
10. Were kidnappings made public? Kept secret?

Similarly, I asked a set of questions to Classes B and C about the armed groups' kidnapping practices:

1. What did the average kidnapping look like when perpetrated by the FARC, ELN, M-19, or other groups?
2. How consistent were the characteristics of kidnappings?
3. What was the average ransom? How were ransom funds used?

Targeting (Classes A, B, C)

1. Who is the ideal hostage? What were important targets?
2. Did kidnapping put groups' relationship with the local populations at risk? Why or why not?
3. How did groups think about kidnapping foreigners, journalists, and aid workers?
4. Do groups treat different types of hostages differently (i.e. more violence, longer captivity, larger ransoms, depending on the hostage)?

Combating kidnapping (Classes B and C)

1. What are the differences between the security and political imperatives in combating kidnapping?

2. What were the most dangerous periods of kidnapping? Why?

3. What is the best way to prevent kidnapping?

4. What were the biggest successes? Failures?

2 Ethical Considerations for Human Subjects

There are three significant ethical considerations for conducting human subjects research with former combatants: protecting their privacy, ensuring confidentiality, and avoiding trauma. I designed my study with these priorities in mind, adhering to protecting human subjects in recruitment, consent, participation, data management, data analysis, and publishing results. All elements of this study conform to the "Principles and Guidance for Human Subjects Research," approved by the American Political Science Association Council in April 2020. [1]

2.1 Privacy

In designing the study, I took several precautions to protect human subjects' privacy. This refers to measures that ensure that subjects have control over who knows about their participation in the study. A violation of human subject privacy occurs when a subject's participation in the study is revealed.

Privacy violations related to study participation create several potential sources of risk to ex-combatants. If a third party knew I had conducted an interview with a former combatant, that could put the former combatant in danger for three different reasons. First, former combatants could fear retribution from other combatants for speaking about group behavior. Second, former

[1] Specifically, no compensation was paid to human participants; no conflicts of interest arise from the research; all sources of financial support were disclosed to the *American Political Science Review* and are acknowledged with this publication; I have acknowledged contributions to the research, including citing previous work, as appropriate. Because this project includes interview data from at-risk populations, I do not share the underlying raw interview data, prioritizing protecting the privacy and confidentiality of research subjects. In place of sharing the data, I endeavor to facilitate production and analytic transparency of the data collection process, including through the extensive appendices to this publication.

combatants could fear retribution from the public for having been involved in past violence. Third, former combatants could fear legal recourse for past action. Regardless of what an interview subject said (or didn't say) over the course of study participation, simply being affiliated with the project could cause inadvertent harm.

Therefore, across the study, I took measures to prevent identification of at-risk participants. I conducted all interviews alone to protect subjects' privacy. These interviews were conducted in Spanish, without a translator, unless the subject was a fluent English speaker, in which case we spoke in English. I took synchronous, hand-written notes in a combination of English and Spanish, and typed up the notes in English the evening of the interview.

I also worked to speak to subjects in locations that maximized their privacy while protecting my own safety. I gave subjects the choice about where they would like to meet for the interview. This was most often in parks or quiet corners of coffee shops; never in a location affiliated with the research project in any way. In the one instance that a subject became uncomfortable with the location during the course of our conversation (because he was nervous that someone could possibly overhear our conversation), we moved to a new location to continue speaking. At the ELN safe house, I sat all day at an obscured table where it would be otherwise normal for a former combatant to be; I waited for individuals to come chat with me there.

Absolutely no identifying information was recorded for former combatants at any time. Each subject is identified by a single, first-name alias of their choosing (i.e., "alias Fernando"). I also identified their organization (i.e., "ex-FARC combatant"), and where relevant, former role in the organization (i.e., "commander," "kidnapping specialist"). These are general titles that could not be used to identify any individual combatant's participation in the study.

Moreover, privacy concerns present a dilemma for informed consent; a signature on a saved document could create a risk to participant privacy. Therefore, I sought and obtained a waiver from my university's IRB to conduct oral, rather than written, informed consent with all subject matter participants—both ex-combatants and non-combatant/ subject matter expert interview subjects in categories A, B, and C above. I read a prepared and approved informed consent script to all participants before conducting the interview. At this point, all participants had the opportunity to ask questions and/or opt out of the study.

2.2 Confidentiality

Several of the precautions implemented to protect subjects' privacy also maintained their confidentiality. A violation of confidentiality occurs when a subject is connected to or identified with any of the resulting data. This would occur if an at-risk subject was linked to something he or she had said.

I protected against such violations in several ways. First, I took all interview notes by hand, so there are no visual or audio recordings of the interview subjects. I did not use any electronic equipment during the interviews. Instead, I took handwritten notes in a small notebook. These notes were written in a combination of English and Spanish—whichever language came most quickly from my ears to the pen.

Naturally, this creates a trade-off in making sure I caught subjects' words verbatim, but consideration of their protection outweighed this concern. One way to mitigate against transcription mistakes was to make sure I typed up all interview notes on the same day I had conducted the interview to maximize the likelihood that I would be able to transcribe accurately. I typed up the notes into a protected file, and I destroyed the initial copy. In transcribing the notes, interview subjects were either labeled with their name and date (if a subject from class B or C consented to my using their names and affiliations), or with an alias and date (for all subjects belonging to Class A, as well as subjects belonging to Class B or C who did not want their name used). Subsequently, all interview notes were uploaded into NVivo, in which I coded subjects and themes across interview memos. These codings were later used for organizing thematic sections of the empirical section of the manuscript. All files remain protected, and I maintain multi-factor authentication on my computer.

Moreover, the use of aliases and eschewing of any personal information attached to any interview subjects ensures that no at-risk subjects can be connected to any particular quotes. Most former combatants in Colombia are protected from prosecution, and yet, I still cautioned all subjects not to reveal any specific participation in or knowledge of past crimes. Instead, I asked them to focus on general knowledge any member of the group would have.

2.3 Trauma

Last, former combatants may experience emotional or psychological discomfort in discussing past illegal behavior or their experience in the organization. I was clear with subjects that they may stop the interview at any time or refrain from answering any question that makes them uncomfortable. During the interviews, I found that former combatants were quite eager to share their perspectives about past experiences. Rather than evincing discomfort and trauma during our conversation, they seemed to seek the benefit of sharing their stories with an outside observer. On occasion, some subjects told me they had no knowledge of certain events or forms of violence; I acknowledge they may have been telling the truth, or they may have been avoiding a subject they did not want to discuss.

2.4 Financial Support and Compensation

This research was supported by a Peace Scholar Award from the United States Institute of Peace and Minerva Research Initiative; a World Politics and Statecraft Fellowship from the Smith Richardson Foundation; a Cosmos Scholars Award from the Cosmos Club Foundation; as well as three internal university grants from the George Washington University. Due to the risks associated with participation, there was no financial compensation paid to research subjects for participating in the study.

3 Colombian Kidnapping Data

The *Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica* ("National Center of Historical Memory," henceforth CNMH) was established by public order by the Colombian Department of Social Prosperity (DPS) for the purpose of "receiving, recuperating, conserving, compiling, and analyzing material related to violations perpetrated during the internal conflict in Colombia."[2] In 2013, the CNMH released *Una Verdad Secuestrada: Cuarenta Años de Estadísticas de Secuestro, 1970–2010* ("A Kidnapped Truth: Forty Years of Kidnapping Statistics, 1970–2010"). This report provides analysis on their dataset of 39,058 kidnappings, in which the unit of analysis is the victim-incident.[3]

[2] "Qué es el Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica," online at http://centrodememoriahistorica.gov/co/contexto/.

[3] Why the unit is not "victim" or "incident" can be illustrated as follows: There are kidnappings in which multiple hostages were captured at once; in such a case, each individual hostage would be one observation. Conversely, multiple

Table 7: CNMH Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria	**Exclusion Criteria**
• Taking persons within Colombian territory	• Rape
• *Pesca millagrosa*	• Family custody disputes
• Hostage taking	• *Paseo millionario*
• Kidnappings of less than 24 hours, in which there is evidence of ransom or escape	• Forced disappearances
	• Forced recruitment

Note: The CNMH defines *pesca millagrosa* ("miraculous fishing") as "a kidnapping, generally massive, which takes place on the highways without previous planning or intelligence" (CNMH, 2013a, 8). The CNMH defines *paseo millionario* ("millionaire's ride") as "all illegal retentions taking less than 24 hours whose central purpose is committing theft. It is characterized by its short duration, not having significant planning, and not concealing the victim" (CNMH, 2013a, 8). Regarding captivity lasting fewer than 24 hours, the implicit comparison is to victims killed.

As section 1.1 suggests, there are many reasons to be skeptical of kidnapping statistics, particularly in global datasets like the GTD or in public reports from think tanks. Non-lethal violence is universally difficult to measure: Data tend to be underreported, skewed, and poorly defined. The CNMH data are not immune to these concerns: The researchers cite a lack of reliable data before 1991, changing legal definitions of kidnappings, and ad hoc missingness in the data. For example, to illustrate the challenge of defining kidnapping, the CNMH authors note that the legal definition of kidnapping and related crimes changed 16 times bewteen 1970 and 2020, including debates over parental custody law, forced disappearances, and *paseo millionario* ("millionaire's ride," previously considered aggravated theft, and since 2008 considered an extorsive kidnapping) (CNMH, 2013a). For that reason, the organization came up with their own inclusion and exclusion criteria, to produce as consistent a database as possible (see Table A.7). The researchers at the CNMH aggregated kidnapping from seven different sources over the time period in question to build the dataset, matching data to remove duplicates and verify cases (Table A.8).

While the CNMH provides data on multiple armed groups' kidnapping in Colombia, the recent investigation by the *Jurisdicción Especial para la Paz* ("Special Jurisdiction for Peace," henceforth JEP)[4] focused exclusively on documenting kidnapping by the FARC. Using Multiple Systems Es-

people were kidnapped more than once; each incident these victims experienced is counted separately.

[4]The JEP is the judicial component of the Comprehensive System of Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition created by the 2016 Peace Agreement between the Government of Colombia and the FARC.

Table 8: Sources of Kidnapping Data, CNMH

Source	Period	Victims	Variables
Fondelibertad	1996–2009	24,026	77
Press	1980–2010	15,251	111
Department of Security	2000–2010	13,088	13
Department of Justice	2004–2010	8,423	14
National Police	1998–2010	7,158	38
Sentences & fines	1970–2010	4,004	98
Interviews & publications	1970–2010	1,148	98

Note: Press sources include 15 national and regional newspapers, collected by Fundación País Libre, CINEP, the digital archive of *El Tiempo*, *El Espectador*, and *Semana*. There are some missing values across the variables within each unit of analysis. See "Una Verdad Secuestrada," (CNMH, 2013a, 8).

timation,[5] the JEP report on Case 01 released in January 2021 estimates a total of 21,396 FARC hostages between 1990–2016, the highest number of any dataset to date (JEP, 2021, 85). This is more than double the number of FARC kidnappings recorded by the seven sources aggregated by the CNMH, indicating that this phenomenon was far more widespread than any prior estimates suggest.

The JEP's estimates also demonstrate that the preponderance of kidnappings in Colombia were handled far away from the media. Only 15,251 of the CNMH's 39,058 cases came from press reports, and these include kidnappings by any perpetrator from 1980–2010. In a shorter time frame (1990–2016), the JEP estimated 21,396 kidnappings by the FARC alone, suggesting that the press know about a minority of all kidnapping cases.

3.1 Victim Characteristics

Reflecting worldwide trends, the vast majority of Colombian hostages, 97%, were local nationals. Seventy-eight percent of victims were male and 22% female, though this gender split is skewed more heavily male among FARC and ELN hostages, around 90% of whom were male. As scholars and hostage negotiators have suggested, armed groups prefer male to female hostages because of the challenging physical conditions hostages must survive in captivity, including long marches at high altitude, and the cold, heat, and wet conditions of the Colombian jungle. Within the CNMH dataset, 79% of the victims were between 18 and 65 years old (CNMH, 2013a).

[5] "Multiple Systems Estimation" is a statistical technique used to estimate the probable frequency of observations missing from overlapping dataests (see Manrique-Vallier et al., 2013).

Table 9: Armed Group Kidnapping in Colombia, 1970–2010

Armed Group	**Years**	**Presumed**	**Confirmed**
Guerrillas			
Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)	1964–2016	9,429	3,310
National Liberation Army (ELN)	1965–today	7,260	2,719
April 19th Movement (M-19)	1975–1990	556	38
Popular Liberation Army (EPL)	1967–1991	231	131
Popular Revolutionary Army (ERP)	1985–2007	137	175
Workers' Self-Defense Movement (ADO)	1974–1984	3	1
Guevarista Revolutionary Army (ERG)	1992–2008	0	0
Quentín Lame Armed Movement (MAQL)	1984–1991	0	0
Revolutionary Workers Party (PRT)	1982–1991	0	0
Socialist Renewal Current (CRS)	1991–1994	0	0
Unidentified guerrillas		328	61
Coordinated guerrillas		312	58
Dissident guerrillas		157	54
Criminals			
Common criminals (DELCO)		6,607	1,026
Organized crime		924	625
Criminal bands (BACRIM)		91	6
Narcotraffickers		72	38
Other			
Paramilitaries		2,160	377
Unidentified bands		341	331
State agents		111	73

Note: Guerrilla group years from Daly (2016); kidnapping data from the CNMH (2013a).

Given the subject of the article, we might be interested in the professional and economic characteristics of kidnapping victims. The version of the CNMH dataset that is available for public access does not have victim-level characteristics (including profession or ransom demanded/paid, by perpetrator) that would allow some granular analysis of specific kidnappers' price discrimination. Instead, the data show that 33% of the FARC's and 25% of the ELN's hostages represent the Colombian business sector.

However, I include here additional details from the CNMH that help provide a fuller picture of kidnap targeting and ransom demands, including details from three datasets on ransom payments by professional sector.[6] The first dataset includes information on the professional positions of 6,024 cases (of 39,058) for which the CNMH has ransom data; they are not disaggregated by perpetrator. The dataset only includes professional positions for which the CNMH had the information for at least 30 cases, and the ransom amounts are presented in 2010 Colombian pesos. By far the largest category included are company managers (*gerente compañía*), which represent 2,974 of the 6,024 cases; the average ransom in this group was $2,542,439,205 Colombian pesos ($675,763 in 2021 U.S. dollars), while the maximum ransom paid was $27,796,895,962 COP ($7.4 million USD) and minimum was $212,504,800 COP ($56,482 USD). Vice presidents of companies represent another 253 cases; the average ransom for this group was $2,578,397,360 COP ($685,320 USD), while the maximum was $10,000,000,000 COP ($2.7 million USD) and minimum was $349,000,000 COP ($92,762 USD). However, beyond these executive ransoms, many of the other 29 professional positions are composed of government officials, including *cabo tercero* (third corporal, 502 victims), *intendente* (low-ranking police officer, 402), *concejal* (councilor, 201), and *alcalde* (mayor, 196). Though government officials are a small minority of overall ransom kidnapping cases in Colombia, as government employees, they may have been the most likely victims to share their specific ransom data with law enforcement and conflict analysts.

The second set of CNMH ransom data is classified by victims' occupation across 213 discrete categories. In this dataset, there are 10,878 ransom observations, which again feature the frequency,

[6] In September and October 2021, I corresponded with César Caballero Reinoso, director of *Cifras y Conceptos*, a data consulting firm that partnered with the CNMH on the original kidnappings dataset and all subsequent reports, and the primary author of "Una Verdad Secuestrada." On October 4, Mr. Caballero told me that there is data that disaggregates ransom demands by victim profession, and I asked if he would be willing to share that data with me for the purposes of this publication. On October 11, Mr. Caballero shared the data; on October 15, I confirmed that I had his permission to present the data in this publication.

average, minimum, and maximum ransom paid for certain professional groups. The largest category is *trabajadores de los servicios y vendedores* (service workers and vendors), a total of 2,968 cases at an average ransom of $1,065,799,454 Colombian pesos ($283,137 in 2021 U.S. dollars), with a maximum ransom of $14,100,000,000 COP ($3.7 million USD) and minimum of $1,908,843 COP ($507 USD), suggesting that this is an extremely broad economic category. The next two occupation categories are in the agricultural sector: 1,390 *agricultores, trabajadores forestales, y agropecuarios* (farmers, forestry, and agricultural workers), and 1,312 *criadores de ganado y trabajadores de la cria de animales domésticos diversos, avicultores* (livestock breeders and miscellaneous domestic animal husbandry workers, poultry farmers). After drivers and "members of the executive and legislative bodies," the next most common category is *Directores y gerentes generales de empresas privadas* (directors and general managers of private companies), comprising 427 observations, with an average ransom of $1,962,662,359 COP ($520,988 USD).

Last, the CNMH shared a third relevant set of data that includes the frequency, average, maximum, and minimum ransom amounts for 479 different economic sectors in Colombia. Once again, it is not disaggregated by perpetrator. It includes 13,258 total kidnapping cases, with the largest category for which they have ransom data comprising *agricultura, ganaderia, caza y silvicultura* (agriculture, livestock, hunting, and forestry), a total of 2,853 cases at an average ransom of $1,072,922,050 Colombian pesos ($285,175 in 2021 U.S. dollars); followed by *comercio, mantenimiento y reparacion de vehiculos automotores y motociclietas, sus partes, piezas y accesorios; comercio al por menor de combustibles y lubricantes para vehiculos automotores* (trade, maintenance, and repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles; their parts, pieces, and accessories; retail trade of motor vehicle fuels and lubricants), a total of 2,548 cases at an average ransom of $1,067,031,885 COP ($283,610 USD). An additional 13 categories feature include between 100 and 871 victims per economic sector, while 202 economic sector categories only include one victim (including, for example: *extracción de esmeraldas* (emerald extraction), *fabricación de pilas y baterías* (battery manufacturing), and *trilla de café* (coffee threshing)). These detailed categories are then aggregated to provide the overall estimates on victims by economic sector in the CNMH's public report: agriculture, business (including merchants), and public administration and defense.

Table 10: FARC & ELN Kidnapping, Perpetrator Presumed

Variable	**Frequency (N = 16,689)**
Decade	
1970–1979	0.23% (N = 39)
1980–1989	4.22% (N = 705)
1990–1999	42.49% (N = 7,091)
2000–2010	53.05% (N = 8,854)
*Demand & Outcome**	
Ransom demand	96.80% (N = 9,172)
Released for ransom	66.84% (N = 9,495)
Rescued	13.54% (N = 1,924)
Released without ransom	10.39% (N = 1,476)
Assassinated	6.06% (N = 861)
Escaped	1.58% (N = 225)
Died (not assassinated)	0.47% (N = 67)

Note: Kidnapping data from the Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica. * Data on demands only available for 9,475 FARC and ELN kidnappings; data on outcomes available for 14,206.

Table 11: Victim Characteristics

Variable	**Frequency (N = 39,058)**
Victim Characteristics	
Colombian citizen	97%
Male	78%
Younger than 18	15%
Between 18 & 65 years old	79%
Older than 65	6%
Victim Profession	
Administration & public defense	19.30%
Agriculture	19.14%
Business	18.92%
Other	14.79%
Services	9.34%
Transportation	8.24%
Political organizations & media	7.09%
Social services & health	3.18%

Note: Kidnapping data from the Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica. CNMH data on victims is not included in the dataset disaggregated by perpetrator, but rather presented as aggregate statistics.

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