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Gender Equity in M-19 Combat, Colombia, South America, 1970-1989

R.G. Wakeland (Corresponding author)

E-mail: rgwakeland@gmail.com

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Abstract

Between 1970 and 1989 the M-19 guerrilla group in Colombia, South America sought regime change via armed conflict. Interviews and autobiographies as well as government and military observations of engagements involving weapons provided sources for a gender role analysis. The author argued that male and female M-19 individuals adopting arms participated in gender equity. Although there were statistically greater numbers of male than female combatants and authoritarian figures in combat, decisions to perpetrate armed violence were autonomous and suicidal. Women as well as men were given equal opportunity to kill and be killed. M-19 elevated anyone who carried a weapon to equal status of liberator in the model of Simon Bolívar, towards its goal of a second national liberation. A literature review presented other theories and conclusions of gender roles among M-19.

Keywords: M-19, Colombia guerrilla, gender roles, combat, war, pacifist

1. Introduction

1.1 M-19 Societal Impact

The context for the Movimiento de Abril 19 (April 19th movement) (M-19) during 1970-1990 situated it within the milieu, ambience and reality of the Colombian military, local police, drug trafficking, civilian government, the general population, and opposing guerrilla armed insurgencies. Alternatively designated guerillas, bandits, insurgents, comrades, commanders, combatants, enemy, subversive elements, and anti-socials, they caused monumental consequences among political, criminal and military sectors of Colombia. Towards their goals of creating a people's army and effecting regime change, they perpetrated violence and violently defended themselves against efforts to protect the public, demolish encampments, arrest them, and bring them to justice.

1.2 Gender Roles Provide a Profile of Organized Violence

Thus, evaluation of gender roles within M-19 had significance for understanding how they individually interacted with each other as volunteers in self-proclaimed war and armed conflict. Gender analysis contributed to a profile of organized violence. Primary sources spanning M-19 initiation to their agreeing to a ceasefire and accepting amnesty from the government in 1990 were investigated and analyzed. Interviews and published memoirs from M-19 members expressed their perspectives. Data, observations and interpretations from government, military personnel and journalists also provided primary sources with insight into gender differences and similarities. These sources indicated between the two genders described, male and female, gender parity was achieved in combat. Although there were statistically fewer women in combat than men, women were not excluded from or screened out of combat by the opposite gender. Instead, both genders participated with equity using weapons to threaten, extort money, impose power, maim, injure, capture, kidnap, kill, and to be recipients of same.

1.3 Literature Review

Previous investigations, analysis and conclusions of gender roles among M-19 focused on female gender roles and masculinity studies, as well as group and individual identities. A review of this literature provided perspectives, approaches, and conclusions. From those which derived from effects of pacification (after the 1990 amnesty), substantial pre-1990 content rendered these relevant to this review. Only incidents and memories linked to the pre-1990 time frame were considered in this review. The first, sourced from Government reports, addressed women's roles as mothers and providers for domestic needs of the group. While this was criticized as ignoring other involvements women had, it nevertheless indicated these roles existed. Nonprofit organizations which facilitated societal integration categorized all women as victims and survivors, presumably predated upon by men. This analysis was criticized as ignoring women's pro-active, willful engagement (Ortolá, 2020).

Likewise, another report focusing on the reintegration process in Colombia (including M-19) adopted similar scenarios of women primarily occupying domestic and supporting roles. Here, there were no indications of gender equality, concluded the author. Internal social dynamics restricted women's empowerment to their act of laying down weapons and accepting the peace treaty. Sources were published autobiographies, government reports, and journalist reports. In a literature review, the author included the interpretation of women as victims who needed protection upon pacification. This conclusion was incorporated into the government's responsibilities (Tovar, 2012). Other interpretations also adopted the analysis of M-19 women as victims (Ortolá, 2020).

Social scientists expanded the analysis of gender roles with relevant theories. Ortolá characterized women M-19 members as having established a new, masculine identity, incorporating the broad, previously established theory of war being intrinsically a masculine institution. This masculine identity became severed as each woman accepted the peace accord. Embedded within this cycle lay the willful relinquishment of normative standards and female gender roles upon becoming M-19 (Ortolá, 2020; Sanchez-Blake, 2002).

Likewise, divergent effects of war on the male and female warrior's bodies were accepted. Analysis of the peace agreements' language, other sources' conclusions, and interviews provided the foundation for these conclusions. Among the data was contained the profile of ex-M-19 women leaders who were threatened with their new political reality within mainstream society. They had to lower their public profile so as not to be recognized (Ortolá, 2020). This indicated predominant female M-19 leader images in public media, or otherwise widely known female leaders between 1970-1990.

Londoño explained her theoretical basis for analysis of the viewpoints of 23 interviews of Colombian female ex-combatants. Situating her study among a timeline of other gender studies, she explained prevalent concepts. One interpreted woman as antithesis to war. This image positioned women diametrically predisposed as opposites to men in relation to war and violence. Violent women departed from their natural comportment of peaceful and domestic, when engaging in combat. Men, instead, expressed virility, strength, and aggression while doing so. To contravene this prevailing stance, she asserted the women's voices will be forefront, as she sought the female self-definition of warrior (Londoño, L.M., 2005).

As an overview of her interviews (themselves not included), Londoño (Londoño, L.M., 2005) adopted theories of feminism of difference and loss of identity. In the former, the body assumes importance, and marks the indelible difference between men and women. The body becomes the phenomena of identity. Regarding identity in war, therein the body was confronted as real and symbolic. Women spoke of hardship and pain in military roles. Thus, they redefined their identity as members of the military group and lost their identity, or their identity was subsumed by the military group.

Sanchez-Blake as well pursued the guerrilla women's self-identity. Without focusing on gender analysis, she sought to allow women ex-combatants to express their own identities and interactions with M-19. Her first interviews were in 1986, followed by 1999 and 2002 interviews for a United Nations sponsored study. Three of these comprised her article. This process resulted in conclusions according to which women had to adapt masculine values, courage, strength, and will power to exist in the group. As women gave up their private, normative female identity to enter the masculine world of war, they effectively changed their gender. Further, women had sexual autonomy, as the link to a collective identity in the group raised or augmented women's self-esteem. Women advanced to leadership positions, including by way of relationships with men. However, when it came to making decisions concerning the group, the men took precedence (2002).

Anthropology theory provided the basis for an extensive gender role analysis of M-19. Based mostly on interviews taken in a government effort and database, male and female roles became obvious to the author. Here, women and men both gave up their identities and roles they had in society prior to joining. Persecution by authorities drove the adoption of self-imposed, clandestine profile M-19. Within this reality, members identified with the group at an emotional and political level. The shared culture was therefore not limited to political identity, but instead ranged into the emotional. The resulting inclusivity, if not isolation, created group cohesion as if it were a family. The armed struggle influenced not only the

combat aspect, but also permeated and influenced all thoughts, philosophies and rational of the group. M-19 was driven by collective motivations and consciousness. (Madariaga, 2006).

Other conclusions of Madariaga incorporated and defined primary gender differences. Although M-19 espoused equality between sexes, because war was intrinsically a male expression, concept and reality, women necessarily became masculine when they took up arms. They had to adopt the model of a masculine soldier. As one female ex-combatant stated: "At the beginning there was much confidence and affection, much later I came to know that there was a vertical military structure". M-19 goals were equality, plurality, flexibility, independence, and personal autonomy. However, at the same time rules guaranteed obedience and discipline necessary for a military hierarchical effort. There were differences when it came to political or military roles, but with everyday life equality was the goal. There were exceptions, as in the embassy siege, and liquor was reserved for military leaders. In addition, men dominated in interpersonal relationships (2006, p. 122).

Multiple masculinity studies applied to M-19 allowed distinction between and among hegemonic and non-hegemonic behavior and concepts in both male and female roles. Masculinity studies defined hegemonic masculine roles as a dominant and dominating relationship within a conflicted related group. This behavior took precedence over feminine and other forms of masculinity identities. War validated masculinity in a social setting, thus in M-19 laid a good locale for studying this dynamic, described as reducing value of women's traits. These traits, referred to as weak and vulnerable, were compared to men's traits as aggressive, up to and including misogyny. Other sources were cited, comprising a literature review. (Ortega, 2015).

In this analysis, feminine non-hegemony and hegemony also emerges. As noted, women alternately support and do not support the male manifestations. Interviews consisted of 3 women and 5 men, 20 years after pacification (1990) all of whom had occupied leadership positions. The author purposely deals with relationships, policy and practices rather than gender roles or gender equality. The author applied the value in relationship to extend it to geographic, purposeful, or practical endeavors, such as rural versus urban, military versus support roles, or intelligence or community organizing efforts. (Ortega, 2015).

However, notwithstanding the disclaimer concerning gender roles, the article extensively discovered and analyzed gender roles. Ortega concluded there was less emphasis on hierarchical relationships and binary gender roles were "less salient". Ortega concluded that due to comrade identity within asymmetrical warfare, and battle against the state, male hegemony became untenable. The insurgent struggle required flexibility. Ortega posited that the variant female relationship resulting from the comrade identity, in context of combat, represented an alternative female identity rather than adoption of masculinity. However, its associated traits encompassed assertiveness, self-reliance, and could not be associated with motherhood (2015, p. 17). Varying degrees of dominant and subordinate male-female relationships emerged, depending on context among various activities.

This author also identified feminine roles, and adopted methods of empiricism to discover and define characteristics which legitimized male dominance and female subordination. In

other words, hegemonies waxed and waned according to situations. Male hegemony was caused by the armed conflict, especially mobile military units, although they did emphasize emotions and a supportive group. There was a hierarchical structure in the group, but it was based on merit and contribution, and as such in military life this inequity was accepted. However, it was not based on gender, and was justified via its goal of battle for social justice. Via this scheme, women were middle level commanders, three in particular, but never 50% and never was a woman a general commander (Ortega, 2015).

Another secondary source author relevant to gender roles in M-19 interviewed three ex-combatants (all male) who participated in the demobilization process 1989-1990. While not focusing on gender roles, the study was relevant because it shared foci emerging in the above gender studies. First, its dedicated method consisted in the views and expression of the interviewees themselves. Second, it analyzed individual identity loss, and concluded M-19 members substituted M-19 group identity for their own. Further, this loss of identity became psychopathology, cured by rejecting M-19 and accepting the peace accords. Two social scientists and one journalist applied the Ricoeur self experience theory (Gordillo et al., 2021).

The authors concluded M-19 members became combatants whose goals were to engage with the enemy via a change of identity, i.e., to engage in a clandestine, subversive battle. This required creating an other self, and adhering to the rules and expectations of the group in order to carry out the cause; based on and facilitating cohesion of and with the group. This change invoked the process of eliminating the flexible, narrative, malleable identity of normal humans which derived from interactions with society, the experience of self/ipseidad identity. (Gordillo et al., 2021).

1.4 Historical Analysis of What if Any Gender Roles Existed within M-19 Combat

The literature review provided a background for this research, which focused on gender roles in combat within M-19. This research continued and added to these efforts to describe, identify, quantify, and understand whether or not gender itself and gender roles were defined and if so how they functioned. This comprised a pacifist historical analysis, seeking to understand the dynamics of violent human response to conflict. Historiographies placed the sources in political and social context, and commented on credibility or truthfulness. For example, M-19 websites espoused the group's propaganda. Further, Colombian military reports defined the group as military enemies with various nomenclature such as guerrillas, combatants, or revolutionaries. To testimonials, or memoirs, were attached the time lapse between the events and writing.

2. Methods Using Primary and Secondary Historical Records

The testimonies and interviews of M-19 members allowed them to speak for themselves. The time lapse ranged from the immediate to 12 and 20 years from incident/experience to writing. However, the longer time lapses were accepted by historians and social scientists as basis for their conclusions in the literature review as cited above. As lengths ranged from 50 to over 400 pages, a total review was beyond the scope of this paper. Therefore, from each source was selected an unedited sequence of events involving multiple person interactions in combat

and/or armed conflict to analyze. This avoided selecting incidents based on criteria to support a pre-determined thesis. Primary sources from outside the group consisted primarily of Colombian army reports, hostage victims such as diplomats at the Dominican Republic embassy kidnapping, and journalists invited to interview M-19 members. All English translations of reference citations are by the author.

Secondary sources supplied comments and analysis of events, while identifying and differentiating male and female roles. These consisted of journalists' reports, or judgments and opinions overlaid upon investigations. Secondary sources also compiled empirical data on male versus female roles in combat, without purposefully engaging in gender analysis. These data and conclusions nevertheless contributed to the overall quantification of males versus female leadership roles. No examples of third gender roles were found.

3. Historic Resources Results

3.1 Commentary on Gender Roles and Authority

Relevant secondary sources close to either the situation of combat or the combatants themselves commented on gender. In reviews of Colombian military reports over years of engagement with M-19, all the leaders of high profile campaigns were male. For example, the officers evaluated that Álvaro Fayad, and Carlos Pizarro featured prominently. These efforts consisted of seizing planes and boats full of weapons, defending territory, and attempting to form a pan-South American coalition of insurgents including Shining Path in Peru, and Ecuadorian groups. (Ugarriza & Ayala, 2017). In addition, it was concluded that Andrés Almarales directed and participated in the siege at the Palace of Justice. Here, the action was analyzed as suicidal (Vervaele, 1989). Likewise, Rosemberg Pabón Pabón was pinpointed as director of the siege of the Dominican Republic hostages, including by his own admission (Ovalle, 2004; Pabón, 1994).

However, other sources compiled evidence of women in middle level military ranks, while including value judgments and evaluations about, e.g., levels of accompanying responsibility. For example, relying on autobiographies, interviews and journalist reports, Sanchez-Blake, concluded Vera Grabe, Nelly Rivas, and Carmenza Cardona Londoño (La Chiqui) were such leaders. The latter was M-19 on-site negotiator at the hostage-taking of diplomats at the Dominican Republic embassy in 1980 (2002). Some of these and other such female leaders were described in primary sources as listed below, including their own memoirs.

Londoño's leadership role, however, was diminished, according to a captive. The USA ambassador, Asencio, recounted that Londoño was taking orders over the phone from M-19 members in jail. In addition, complaining about the replacement of the Mexican ambassador in the negotiating team, he indicated she was malleable. "We had turned the female terrorist negotiator and she was taking instructions from the Mexican Ambassador and me. By removing the Mexican ambassador you had killed our control," (Kennedy, 2017, p. 53). Pabón (1994), while portraying himself as leader, described an intermediate ring of decision makers, including Londoño and another female, La Negra (Vásquez) and squadron chiefs. This evolved into a dynamic leadership wherein Pabón delegated authority based on

situations. In addition, both were poised to form conclusions about power and leadership positions, as they spoke from the eye of the combat hurricane.

Other leadership roles were indicated by women's involvement of the Palace of Justice siege, 1985. Here, a group of 37 M-19 entered the building with a list of demands. Based on investigative reports, Vervaele concluded that two M-19 women were on the list of those released in the process of negotiations. They were taken to a nearby house. One was abducted in the middle of the night by the army and was never seen again (1989).

Military intelligence apparently was the source of tracking the involvement of another female leader, whose M-19 pseudonym was Luz Dary. This leader was interviewed in captivity by an army officer. According to this report, she joined M-19 at their rural mobile encampments, nearby Caquetá where she grew up. Joining at age 18, she learned military discipline of marching with heavy backpacks, and to handle guns and ammunition. M-19 commands recognized her combat skills and adherence to military demands, rules and regulations. M-19 then sent her to Cuba where she received communist indoctrination including listening to Fidel Castro on TV. After three months she returned to Colombia and assumed leadership roles in the Frente Sur (Southern Front). Here, she became associated with M-19 leaders such as Pabón, María Vásquez and Amanda Rincón (Ovalle, 2004). This woman was identified by the army when taken prisoner on January 13, 1984 at San Luis de Florencia as Elsy Lemus Narváez (Comando, 1992, p. 9).

Continuing combat involvement by M-19 women was recorded in various other sources. According to Asencio, at the embassy siege: "One of the female terrorists dropped a hand grenade and it rolled down the front staircase" but it did not explode (Kennedy, 2017, p. 53). Various media images show other M-19 women at the embassy (Pabón, 1994). Military records reported a female suicide bomber in the rubble of an exploded electricity energy transmission station tower. This shocked the officers, who concluded it resulted from either an alienated mental state or an extreme level of "concientización" (Ugarriza & Ayala, 2017), social change and liberation through action (Freire, 1985). The army military reported this as a tactical report explained below.

3.2 Primary Resources: Government, Memoirs, Propaganda, and Victim Accounts

3.2.1 Colombian Military Observations

Case reports of military (army) engagements between 1984 and 1986 presented dates, times, geographical location, names, identities where known, number of wounded, captured, and killed on both sides, supplies and weapons lost or confiscated, and summary of the action (Comando, 1992, pp. 7-18, 25-41, 391-403, 411-433). These occurred in the mountainous region south of Bogotá, often at confluences or headwaters of rivers serving as commerce conduits. This represented M-19 Southern Front geography. About half of the leaders were known and identified by name, whether or not they were captured or killed. These represented cells with between 20-120 M-19.

Case numbers indicated campaigns and could include multiple skirmishes, engagements, or battles with M-19. Only two battles specified no women were among M-19. Approximately

48 men and 10 women were killed (1/5 female/male ratio). This proximity to battle of the women implicated that they also were counted among the assassins of war. The wounded were not designated by gender (Comando, 1992, pp. 35, 391). Collecting evidence after battle also recorded identity status. Some carried both their legitimate state identification, together with documents indicating their M-19 name (pseudonym). Others carried one or the other. Some had none. Absence of either type was indicated by "N.N.", presumably, no name. Those with legitimate identification numbered a small percentage. Many filled the N.N. ranks, and others carried some pseudonyms (1992, pp. 7-18, 25-41, 391-403, 411-433).

Details of a few cases amplified the M-19 gender statistics and weaponry. This review reported only M-19 deaths. There were also deaths, wounded, and captured army soldiers and officers. Case 002/84 BR-9, consisted of a series of engagements, around Caquetá. A group of "50-60 subversives … possibly under command of Gloria Amanda Rincón López" fired automatic rifles in attempts to rob a bank. Another group, directed by a male, contained 120 and included women and children, armed with homemade bombs, hand grenades, and guns. A third group, also headed by a male, numbered 80 men and women, armed with guns. Continuing in the list of skirmishes, some of the commanders (all male) were known. Some dead were known with both names; others had no names. (Comando, 1992, pp. 7-21). Among these was captured Elsy Narvéaz (pseudonym Luz Dary), described above by Ovalle (2004).

Case number 002/85 BR-8 1985 October 18, 1985 (Comando, 1992, pp. 25-42) included the explosion of the electricity tower and associated female suicide bomber reported by Ugarriza & Ayala (2017). In the army report, Bertha Leonor Umbarila Benavides (María) was shot trying to escape. This detonated the explosives she was loaded with. In addition, another female, María de Socorro Duque (Rosa), and one male M-19 were killed.

In the other skirmishes, cases 008/85 BR-3, 008/85 BR-8, and 001/86 BR-3, women continued to be among the dead (Comando, 1992, pp. 391-403, 411-433). One M-19 attack involving heavy artillery contained only men. Likewise, those with no names joined those with either M-19 names, or authentic names, or both. Among the dead in all these cases, those with legal identification were only a fraction. This indicated the loss of individualism, and the surrendering of the individual to the group identity. These statistics also situated women with multiple armaments, and contributing to army soldier deaths, injury, and kidnapping.

3.2.2 M-19 Members Memoirs, Websites, Interviews

Primary sources authored by M-19 members provided history from each their own experiences and points of view. As described above, the author has chosen and left unedited a section containing events in combat or combat-support exhibiting interaction with other M-19. Those of the men were shorter and not as extensive as those of the women. This was no doubt because two, Fayad and Bateman, were killed in 1984 and 1983, respectively. They never wrote their memoirs, and thus their primary sources are limited to brief interviews and M-19 propaganda. Among the women, in contrast, all but one were living when they published their memoirs. Londoño, who died in combat in 1981, wrote her diary during her 90 days at coastal region of Chocó. Through this, she presented an immediate experience of life among M-19 combatants. All of these selected were leaders at some level or position of authority

within M-19.

3.2.2.1 Male M-19 Voices

When Jaime Bateman's plane disappeared in 1982, Álvaro Fayad Delgado assumed second highest authority within M-19. This was a self-proclaimed rank. He was interviewed by a journalist at El País, a Spanish newspaper. Although he did not balk at nor correct the question of how many men did M-19 currently have (to include other genders), he nevertheless spoke in terms of the collective "we". He invoked a collective identity, such as, "in politics we express a way of being, Colombians and revolutionaries". He seized the opportunity to explain why M-19 refused the government's offers of amnesty. They will accept amnesty, he explained, but they will not lay down arms because only via armed struggle can they oppose the government and advance their goals of democracy and fundamental social welfare (Gorriarán, 1983).

By 1984, Fayad had solidified this stance and indoctrinated M-19 rank and file at their annual conference. He called for military built up. M-19's own army was needed to achieve their political goals, and the Colombian revolution. To have a political profile, they needed to develop a military profile with an army. He continued to emphasize the collective identity of M-19. "The memory of our struggle, of our people, the guerrilla tradition in Colombia of our past four years fighting the Turbay government, remains in the memory of our people. We must create an army of the people. We need this to achieve our goals at the Southern Front. We must develop this, the guerrilla of all guerrillas, to develop decisive battles against the government, our own army, this will be the greatest challenge to the terrorist Colombian government of Turbay [president]" (Fayad, 1984). This did not discriminate between men and women and provided the recruits and context for the armed destruction in the mountains, cited above. In addition, the webpage publishing this speech posted photos of the dead. Among these included 156 men and 39 women (1/4 female/male ratio). Among the women, one died in the plane crash with Bateman. About 10 were wearing combat gear, of which two were identified in the military reports (Comando, 1992, p. 29). Whatever individuality these decedents possessed, it was obliterated in their ultimate sacrifice to the collective consciousness of the revolution. Clearly, M-19 women had equal opportunity to die.

Likewise Bateman was interviewed shortly before his death. The journalist published his unedited interview. The journalist's notes also served as a primary source, as they recorded his observations. Castro was kidnapped in an urban area walking home from work by M-19. He was first secured to a reclining car seat and then blindfolded, during his transport by M-19 drivers. At an undisclosed location about two hours from Bogotá, Bateman spoke to him surrounded by two armed bodyguards. Bateman excepted his usual protocol and allowed 36 hours for the interview. Typically, he never spent more than 24 hours in one place because he was being pursued by army. The 36 hours were motivated by Bateman's request that Castro relay a proposal to the president that they meet in person to discuss M-19 amnesty (Castro, 1980, pp. 71-71).

Castro complied, delivering a tape from Bateman to the president. He also recorded the entire conversation. (1980). Bateman was the self-proclaimed leader of M-19 when this interview

occurred, on April 18, 1982. Subsequently in 1982 after Bateman's death, Fayad asserted that the Colombian military had spent countless men and money attempting to capture Bateman, without success (Gorriarán, 1983). Bateman's own published statements were limited to M-19 propaganda, conference lectures, and brief media interviews which contained scant allusions to combat. Castro's interview was chosen because herein Bateman took responsibility, via a collective decision of unnamed leaders, for the kidnapping at the Dominican Republic embassy, the weapons theft from the military, and several kidnappings culminating in murder. As well, the interview conveyed the M-19 team effort of digging the tunnel through which the military armaments were extracted. These, together with the armed bodyguard/fugitive situation, evoked combat.

Expansion into the Southern Front as described above by Fayad drove the impetus for the arms grab. Among the 20 people who remained inside the house during construction, those who took care of the domestic scene were female. After describing them as badly educated and noisy, Bateman asserted that they were not maids ("muchachas"). Instead, they were "first level officials in the organization, with much responsibility". These women also kept up the façade of normalcy, representing themselves to the neighborhood as proprietors of the house ("dueña") who apparently liked to party. This mitigated the noise factor of tunnel excavation during the day, and therefore was appreciated by Bateman (Castro, 1980, pp. 74-76).

Among the workers constructing the tunnel, no gender was distinguished except for a male engineer and electrician who designed tunnel infrastructure and wired it. Bateman repeatedly referred to workers as "compas" (plural "compa"), guerrilla slang for "compañeros" (comrades). The team had outside collaborators. These included a male combatant and his wife whose credit card was used to buy materials and tools. They also supplied the vehicles which transported excavated dirt. In this process, they schmoozed with the army sentinels who bordered on the property and observed the vans leaving three times a day. To transport the guns, grenades, rockets and ammunition, M-19 teams alternatively arrived. These maintained anonymity and separation from each other for security (Castro, 1980, pp. 77-81).

Bateman expressed inclusion, if not affinity, for another female leader. Likewise speaking in the collective "we", he explained the reasons for M-19 separating from Anapo, a previous, non-combatant political vanguard. First, M-19 needed to progress beyond a political party, and into guns. Second, Anapo had attacked a leader ("la jefa") (the chief) María Eugenia (Vásquez Perdomo). He never identified the personnel comprising the collective leadership "we" (Castro, 1980, p. 82).

This collective leadership identity continued throughout the interview as the source of decisions for a series of M-19 kidnappings and murders. Further isolation and detachment were indicated by shifting the cause. According to Bateman, M-19 was forced to make an example of Gen. Matallana because he had detained Carlos Toledo Plata. Medrano was murdered by bourgeoise society who abandoned him and by his being a CIA agent. Finally, Escobar Santo was executed by the multinational oil company he worked for when they refused to pay his ransom (Castro, 1980, p. 82).

Augmenting these weapon infused scenes, the relationship between Bateman and his two armed security guards constructed rigid militarism. The guards addressed him as “commandante” (commander), while he called them “compas”. He explained to Castro that contrary to mainstream media, he, not Carlos Toledo Plata, was M-19 commander general (top command). A small arsenal filled up one of the rooms they were staying in: guns, automatic rifles, etc. The commander general required such, Bateman explained. The guards needed Bateman’s permission to respond to Castro when his questions invoked their memories (Castro, 1980, pp. 59, 60-71).

In this entrapment of the tomb-like mini-arsenal, Bateman alternated collective decision making and gender inclusivity with a dictatorship. In addition to insisting on his dominance within M-19 as described above, he became a supplicant at the altar of terrorism. He prayed to Castro for inter-regime communication with the president, in exchange for the journalist’s access to M-19 power, and a shot of liquor. As far as exigency, Bateman purposefully surrounded himself exclusively with men. A woman at his 36 hour hotel sufficed only to serve food (Castro, 1980, pp. 81-82).

The tunnel itself even became a symbol of M-19 extricating itself from society, parallel to Bateman’s 36-hour hotel. This manifested not only in the obvious imagery of an underground tunnel sealing out society, but also in the façade required to disguise their occupation of the house under which the tunnel was built. Castro himself sensed this paranoia, commenting that he doesn’t “know if it’s called cold blood or masochism, but it is being made evident to him that Bateman and his guards are living every moment waiting to get shot” (Castro, 1980, p. 82).

Rosemberg Pabón’s memoirs of the Dominican Republic embassy siege recounted similar M-19 isolation from society and associated paranoia and claustrophobia. Within the confines of the embassy, they searched for a tunnel to escape with the hostages. Power, authority and gender roles also exhibited throughout this event. As noted above, photos showed at least three women among the M-19 total of 11. Women and men were equally armed. After occupying the embassy with the hostages for three weeks, the combatants heard radio news broadcasts of an impending multi-national rescue attempt. They strategized to find a secret escape route. They fantasized fleeing with the hostages. They requested and obtained the blueprints for the building but found no such route. Motivated by fear, they endeavored to find one. (Pabón, 1994s).

Pabón was the recognized leader of the group. Others addressed him as “comandante”, and he responded calling them “compas”. Londoño had been assigned as negotiator and met with representatives of the hostages. In this task, in one incident she left her guard position at the bathroom. During this time, her backup neglected surveillance and one ambassador escaped through the window and ran away. After this embarrassment, Pabón called a meeting of the “chiefs of the squadrons” to brainstorm. As there were only 11 remaining combatants inside the embassy, “squadron” did not apply in reality, as it connotes quantity, and a pyramid command structure. This word represented M-19 self-definition as a military operation. (Pabón, 1994, p. 90).

As well, the brainstorming indicated Pabón delegated power sharing. After this meeting, the group consensus followed several false leads, banging on walls in the basement listening for hollow sounds. When one resonated, Pabón commanded La Negra (María Vásquez) and one male to work as a team and tear down the wall. He instructed them: “be careful, and if you meet with the army, battle until the end” (Pabón, 1994, p. 90). Here, it is obvious: men and women had equal encouragement from leaders to self-destruct for the cause.

However, the busted wall exposed no escape route. Then, a pair of men decided to further investigate for hollows. Here, Pabón further acquiesced power. Breaking down a suspect wall, they met with a concrete slab. Thus, concluded Pabón, they were trapped due to lack of proper tools (Pabón, 1994). The hierarchical breakdown did not solve their claustrophobia. Neither did the inclusivity of women and women leaders. From their collective identity as insurgents, there was no exit. The concrete of normative society encased them.

3.2.2.2 Female M-19 Voices

Among all testimonies and memoirs, that of Londoño (M-19 name Natalia) conveyed the most immediate experience. Written during her 100 days of combat in the coastal jungle, her diary survived. It was typed and published in its entirety. Photos of a few original pages were also included. Villamizar includes secondary source information with his historical notes. Forty M-19 combatants arrived from Cuba via Panama to the coast of Colombia, in 1981. Among these, five deserted (all male), seven were captured (1 female, 6 males), and 32 died (4 female and 26 male). In addition, two people with no names, presumed to be native people serving as their guides, were found dead (2022, pp. 6, 123-25, 208, 213-14, 260, 314; 2019, pp. 491-92).

After defeating M-19, the army collected arms including rifles, guns, hand grenades, rocket launchers, explosives, and ammunition. There were three commanders. Londoño acquired lieutenant status after some time (Londoño, C.C., 2022). Only one among the group had not been at the Dominican Republic embassy siege. The leaders had suggested she not join them due to a childhood wound to her shoulder which caused her chronic pain. However, she insisted, saying, “I am stronger than any wound to my health” (Villamizar, 2022, pp. 122-125).

Five men were in charge of navigating the boat and delivering the combatants. One said: “Our spirits take pleasure in the revolution. We are aware of the immense mission we are undertaking, in order to achieve it, we challenge death, but we can assure for ourselves, life for our patriots”. After delivering the combatants, these sailors returned to Panama from whence they embarked (Villamizar, 2022, p. 125).

In the time slice chosen from Londoño’s diary, her “columna” (column), marched together through the jungle, avoiding and being chased by the army, while encountering various inhabitants, houses, and ranches. They met local people, some who sold them food, others who ran from them in fear. The 40 combatants were divided and organized into three sections, emulating military formation: advance, central, and rear. One commander, Mauricio, was in charge. Inferior to his command, several captains and lieutenants were also assigned.

Periodically at night, the commander met with lieutenants to evaluate the day's activities These included the march, discipline, and achieving/reaching their functions, culminating in a self-criticism (Londoño, C.C., 2022). This emulated military protocol contained in Comando (1992), above.

In Londoño's analysis and observations, lieutenants gave precise instructions, expecting and demanding more of their combatants, and giving political direction. The captains gave political and military direction to the lieutenants, and in this way caused M-19 to be more agile and dynamic. The commander's criticism and self-criticism were fraternal and sincere. A feeling of accomplishment resulted from this camaraderie. Fortunately, it rained all night, erasing what tracks the rear column had not cleaned up (Londoño, C.C., 2022). A total of 40, divided into groups of 13-14, indicated a saturation of leaders and thus the hierarchy diffused downward.

Combat initiated with hearing shots in the distance. Upon which, Mauricio ordered battle positions. Although they lacked their lieutenant at the time, they efficiently took their positions with weapons, in an elevated location. They initially thought the shots were attacking the advance squadron, but did not wait for the shots to reach them and launched a grenade and retreated. Meeting up with the other two squadrons the next day, they learned the guards had fallen asleep, and were discovered by army helicopters. The group lieutenant had left to forage for "plátanos" (native fruit like a banana), never to return. The remaining leader saved the squadron by ordering a retreat. The missing leader was the explosives expert. During this time, three men deserted, two being allowed to leave by the watchout guards (Londoño, C.C., 2022).

This chaos and destruction inspired Londoño to reiterate her political stance and commitment. "The commanders had understood our mission, vision of combat. All combatants kept the body of the army intact, nobody ran around to save themselves however they could. We saw in the ability of the commander, tranquil and serene, equally in the captains, Alirio and Salvador, the confidence given to the troops via their commands" (Londoño, C.C., 2022, p. 369).

They heard on the radio FARC was considering an amnesty with the government. They had not become engaged in any such plan, but they thought they would respond to it with guns. "Amnesty must be total, because all the people cannot put down their arms while they are hungry, neither while there were hunger. Through all their adversity they remained and had made it to the mountains, and with more force than ever, with the people, with arms, from the mountains with power" (Londoño, C.C., 2022, pp. 369, 376). Here, Londoño adopts the collective group identity as her own. She assumes and presumes her thoughts express those of M-19 and vice versa. The capture of seven combatants, including one female, (Villamizar, 2022, pp. 213-14) implied those killed chose a suicide mission.

Another female jungle combatant was recruited by Bateman in Cuba. The ELN had abandoned her mission in Europe, and the Cuban embassy provided her a safe passage to Havana. She remained anonymous in her published memoirs. The events reviewed here began in 1982. She had already completed assignments with M-19, including logistics,

pharmacy, contact with the kidnap prison Vásquez managed, armed robbery, and spending three months in prison for distributing M-19 propaganda.

In 1982 she went back to Cuba and had training in military by Pizarro's group to participate in the expansion into rural areas. She returned to the mountains and was promoted to captain of the military forces. She set up training in how to use arms and guns. She was put in charge of the food, but she got bored. When she complained, she was given 15 subordinates and was put in charge of security (Villamizar, 2019, pp. 635).

She engaged in combat as a captain in 1984 with 15 men. At Lomagordo, she was in charge of giving orders to open fire. "The dilemma was simple, we died ourselves, or they died". They successfully defended themselves as the first line. At Yarumales, combat lasted for 15 days and nights without rest. This broke the agreement with the Belisario government. The military attacked them, but they defended themselves like tigers (Villamizar, 2019, pp. 641-46, 649-55).

After one battle, she saw through binoculars the retreat of the army. There were 100 soldiers on the ground. It gave her much sadness to see the dump trucks full of dead and wounded soldiers. She responded: "I couldn't cry, I had men under my command. Then, I should show them how I was as strong as they, that I was not inferior by virtue of being a woman. I made a grand effort so as to appear as if I had the same physical ability as they did" (Villamizar, 2019, pp. 649-58).

After this battle, M-19 commanders wouldn't let anyone leave the encampment, even to buy food. They in effect created a "cruel enclosure" as they ran short of food supplies. All they had were "plátanos" and flour. Many combatants deserted because of hunger, and they were replaced by new recruits. This experience just made her stronger (Villamizar, 2019, p. 663). With her repeated training in weapons, dedication, and obedience, she fit the definition of a professional soldier. While she observed outside reality with nostalgia, through binoculars and through hunger, she embraced her trapped M-19 reality.

Vera Grabe became a leader with responsibilities among combatants in jungle warfare headed by Pizarro. However, she never handled, launched, or fired weapons, and her responsibilities were not defined. This review of her autobiography followed her experiences in 1984 when the guerrillas were initiating occupation of settlements or towns and being pursued by the military through the jungles surrounding the valley of Cauca. After a "column" of 90 combatants had occupied, or "taken" Corinto, they could not return to their main camp for fear of being discovered by the military. Thus, they were surviving by encircling around the valley, meeting up with other encampments. (Grabe, 2000, pp. 200-02).

According to Grabe's assessment, Pizarro was being unpredictable. She did not know if they were lost or intentionally displaced, moving around to shake the pursuit of the army. Turned out it was not a good idea of Pizarro to order the attack with less equipment, as strategy changed, and they were unable to return to their main camp. They survived the night with special synthetic blankets invented by USA for the Vietnam war which insulated body heat. They shared everything equally (2000, pp. 202-03).

Grabe felt in a strange limbo, as she was introduced to the combatants as the leader "Catalina" (pseudonym), but without any troops to command. She felt disoriented because she was not tasked to carry wood, or work on a ranch, or even to do what she wanted. She felt alienated from combatants. She couldn't really integrate with them. Although she had a role of responsibility in M-19, it created a distance between them. They didn't talk to her much. They said: "we don't help the leaders, we assumed you knew everything when you got here" (2000, p. 203).

Nevertheless, the environment and presence of the column triggered a unity which Grabe recognized and participated in. "There was made one only, solid and totally inseparable complete guerilla body. … The change of mentality in order to go into combat, and in order to navigate the terrain, also translated to the combative body in its daily experiences: the major offensive capability, less so machismo criteria. … We were one all, and thus like each which looked to give the most to contribute to the rhythm and agility of the column, nobody deserted anybody. People survived by way of their skills, but also by their solidarity" (2000, p. 204).

This heightened insular identity also created a distance between the column and mainstream society. Grabe describes seeing the city lights from the surrounding hillsides. Less attractive was the prospect of cloistering themselves back into their main camp. The multiple city lights, including Cali in the distance, contrasted with this image, and appeared like a woman reclining and basking in the sun, compared to the heights and impressiveness of almost unreachable mountains (2000, p. 205).

"During the night we looked at the city with Miguel Ángel [one of the leaders, male] and asked ourselves, when would we be able to return to the streets of Cali, go to the movies, eat snacks, what the conditions would be for this to happen, it would be difficult to visualize what the changes could be, the power, to allow this to happen". In the meantime, they had to detain and exclude themselves for a while, regroup, get provisions, and look for the manner in which they would reconnect with the world, and the population (2000, p. 205).

Grabe thus appeared with privilege, where her tasks were limited to survival, and to evade notice of the army, with canned sardines and space blankets. Via these, she shared camaraderie with the combatants. However inconsequential her presence was, she embraced the M-19 identity, as if its pain and isolation validated her existence.

In contrast to jungle combat, María Eugenia Vásquez Perdomo (Vásquez) engaged in the armed struggle primarily by trafficking guns and kidnapping. The section from her autobiography reviewed presented a chronological sequence between 1977-1982, interspersed with her accompanying emotions. Beginning in 1977, she was put in charge of a prison for kidnap victims. This consisted of a basement in an inconspicuous middle class residential neighborhood. Three others, Tupamaros, came to act as guards. Two were men and the woman had a foreign accent. Two other M-19 members, male and female, were recruited to masquerade as a married couple so that large house maintained a normal profile. Everyone wore masks so nobody ever saw faces. His ransom took longer than expected but was a success (Vásquez, 2005, pp. 77-79).

At the end of 1977 she went back to work with M-19 operations group, linked to central command. They had no contact with the other militancy, but instead performed security measures. Bateman gave her a revolver, and a short wave radio for communications. She was ecstatic. In 1978 M-19 began rural activities, and developed a hierarchical structure like an army. Towards this goal, rural "mobiles" became political-military structures. At the annual conference that year, Bateman put her in charge of organizing these new mobiles. To accomplish this, she drove around in her jeep. She loved the job, which included delivering weapons, in the false floor of a jeep. Another male M-19 accompanied her (Vásquez, 2005, pp. 77-86, 87, 88-89).

When news of robbery of weapons at the army base El Cantón came on the radio, she saw the newspaper ad Carlos Toledo Plata, Jaime Bateman Cayón, and Iván Morino Ospina had signed taking responsibility. Following this, police and army arrested and jailed and tortured people they thought were M-19 members. Motivated by fear, she fled the house and rented an obscure basement apartment. Ten days later the house was raided. During the ensuing months, she lead a nomadic life, with constantly changing residences, and engaging in continuous secret meetings with unknown, anonymous connections (Vásquez, 2005, p. 90).

Subsequently, she continued transporting guns in the false floor of her jeep. She had an assigned partner, Manuel. Bateman preferred a woman driver because they were more careful and aroused less suspicion. One time, they saw a police checkpoint in the distance and turned around and went the other direction. She had a cyanide pill in her pocket. She had made the decision that if she were captured, she would commit suicide rather than give out information. During these times, she expressed her commitment to M-19 as a "renewed sense of love and urgency". With no sense of personal sacrifice or despair, she had to be hyper vigilant when going to arranged/ assigned meeting places. (Vásquez, 2005, pp. 94-95).

Vásquez was joined in her weapons transfer by Estela, who secretly left her parents' house to engage in these risky activities. During this time, she also met another M-19 female, who excelled in recruiting. In the midst of this gun-running, she acted as security and protected Bateman from his risky behavior. She and Manuel were unaware of the collapse in the organization going on at this time, during which they continued "rescuing people and weapons" (Vásquez, 2005, pp. 88-94).

Later, Vásquez and Manuel met with Fayad, who had assumed M-19 top command when Bateman was out of the country. Here, she was tasked to gather intelligence about military movements. She simultaneously, with Manuel, transported weapons to the rural settlements. She kept up her disguise by flirting with army checkpoints, a gun under her leg, and one strapped to her belt with her cyanide pill ever present. She was then put in charge of hiding Carlos Toledo, which she did in a house in the army base rural area, where she had established her alias. After awhile, in 1982, M-19 leaders set up another meeting with her, Manuel, Bateman, Fayad, Toledo and Almarales (Vásquez, 2005, pp. 94-97, 99, 100-02).

In addition to her pseudonym Emilia, Vásquez seemed adept at multiple layers of disguise. Hiding guns, hiding Toledo, hiding hostages, masquerading as a head of household and a flirt, she accomplished them all with aplomb. She was separated from her son for awhile for his

safety. The dichotomy between her real identity and that of Emilia weighed on her psyche and made her feel schizophrenic. She sought an M-19 psychologist, who routinely advised members. Avoiding the multiple M-19 disguise effects, he counselled her that the Emilia personality was too controlling, and she should separate the two. This assuaged her stress, but she continued to carry her cyanide pill (Vásquez, 2005, pp. 97-98).

4. Discussion

Concerning leader positions in combat within M-19 power structure, it is obvious that some female authority roles were inflated. I.e., as they themselves and recognized male leaders described them, such roles confined themselves to titles. Grabe would have been a role model for the Spanish scribe who accompanied the Spanish military into the Americas as recording historian. However, none such applied to the 20th century. She had no military responsibility while joining jungle treks. She recounts only combatants coming and going from their shared encampments.

Furthermore, the American ambassador at the Dominican Republic embassy kidnapping, Asencio, observed La Chiqui as superfluous, and taking orders via phone from an M-19 in jail. He described the negotiating team extensive meeting as comprised of M-19 Commander One, other diplomats, himself, and the USA state department negotiator (female). During this process, the latter was successful in also involving M-19 Commander Two, who was in jail at the time, via recorded tapes. Fidel Castro supplied the plane transport exodus, including the finest meals, Cuban beer, and rum. (Acensio, et al. 179, 182-186, 227-32).

Neither did Bateman include any examples of responsibilities conducted by the women in the tunnel excavation house. His insistence on their leadership to the journalist, Castro, paralleled Fayad's pleading to Vásquez to join the high-profile amnesty cease fire negotiations for the sake of media images. The women served the M-19 brainwashing image of an egalitarian movement for social change. Vásquez did have a team under her authority in armed urban engagement, described as militant propaganda. Here, one of her assignees was killed confronting the army, and another shot a milk delivery driver, who survived (Vásquez, 2005, pp. 190-94, 197-98). These indicated a diminished leadership reality for women, compared to verbal claims.

In contrast, the anonymous female combatant in Villamizar's report described in detail her decisions and control of subordinates in combat. Likewise, Pabón, Bateman, Toledo, and Pizarro were described by themselves, the media, and other combatants as making decisions in combat. Field maneuvers involved primarily strategies of when and where to rob, kidnap, murder, attack, defend, and retreat. This male coalition also took credit for terrorist attacks via published newspaper ads.

Ortega's interpretation of the breakdown of hierarchical command and male hegemony and binary roles in combat applied in some situations. Such power structures became counterproductive in waging guerrilla war, he posits (2015). For example, Londoño's desire to join combat at Chocó took precedence over the commanders who advised against it due to her debilitating injury. Pabón deflated the command pyramid inside the Dominican Republic

embassy in desperation to find an escape route. Women were given license to explore, and also to guard exits. Group consensus was sought in problem solving. In urban combat, Vásquez and her male partner, while taking orders via CB radio and phone, nevertheless commanded autonomy while driving the jeep transporting weapons.

However, women equally as well as men accepted male-dominated authority. The quantity ratio between female and male among combatants and dead (approximately 1/4) does not connote any coercion, victimization, discrimination against, or exclusion of women. Women were equally indoctrinated with M-19 propaganda about the effectiveness of weapons to achieve social justice and democracy. Women purposefully attended meetings and field combat as minority gender among Bateman, Toledo, Pabón, and Pizarro and other male leaders and authority.

Moreover, the suicidal nature of combat shifted responsibility from external to individual decisions. Thus, combat conveyed gender parity and equity. Woman had equal opportunity to both choose death and perpetrate violence. Military officers and law faculty both concluded M-19 combat consisted of suicide (Comando, 1992, pp. 25-33; Vervaele, 1989). The army's apprehension of prisoners indicated surrender was an option. This conveyed the specter of suicide upon those who fought to the end (Villamizar, 2022, pp. 135, 213-14).

Individual actions also embraced suicide. Vásquez calculated to commit suicide to protect M-19 intelligence, if she ever were captured. Towards this end, a cyanide pill accompanied her as a most valued possession. Another urban M-19, a male, supplied her the cyanide, from his collection which he disbursed among the group. A female urban combatant, unarmed, followed instructions to approach an army guard post and steal a gun. When she attacked him, he fought back. Responding to fire from four distant M-19 comrades, the guard then shot and killed her (Vásquez, 2005, pp. 191-92).

Combatants' elevated positions on mountain ridges as snipers protected them from attacks by an army which outnumbered them. However, strategy for engagement included decision to wait until the soldiers were closest before opening fire. They possessed as well rocket launchers and grenades, but accompanied these with pistols and rifles (Villamizar, 2019, pp. 641-49).

Bateman considered combat as an exclusively male domain. Although he accompanied women in combat and in negotiations, in his interview he claimed singular responsibility for the totality of M-19 as commander general. Although he attributed decisions to a collective "we", he considered himself as superior to all other M-19 authority. Through combat he isolated himself from society to the extent his only escape from fugitive status consisted of a meeting on foreign soil with the president.

Fayad espoused M-19 unity as the driving force of combat. He defined weapons as an extension of the whole and tools against the terrorist state. To Fayad, there were no alternatives to weapons in achieving M-19 goals. To this extent, he offered to accept amnesty as long as it did not mandate surrendering weapons. Thus, Fayad promoted gender equity in combat. Weapons conveyed savior status equally on all who carried them.

Pabón likewise invited both genders to arm themselves and die for M-19. He even delegated a portion of his authority to his subordinates. As the embassy house transmuted into a choking trap, he recognized the value of diversity.

The combat roles of Grabe and Vásquez, and thus other M-19 combatants in similar actions, can be derived through the various criminal laws in Colombia between 1970-1990. Although neither Grabe nor Vásquez fired a weapon in these memoirs, their actions were illegal under Colombia law. As they were both absolved of responsibility via their agreement to decommission weapons in accordance with amnesties in 1981, 1984, and 1989 (final), this issue does not prove them fugitives. Instead, it serves the purpose of combat gender analysis by situating and defining their involvement as combat.

Trafficking weapons such as Vásquez and Manuel accomplished, for the purpose of overthrowing the government, was illegal. It was classified as a common crime, as differentiated from a political crime in the criminal code. It carried a greater sentence of up to 20 years in prison. (Dorado, 1988). Political crimes were defined as attempts to overthrow the government with or without weapons, rebellion, sedition, seducing or to lead astray a member of the armed forces or police, to usurp a military or civil order, or causing a riot. Sentences were from 4 months to two years, Criminal code 100, 1980, Title II, Chapter One, art. 125-132, This law went into effect in 1980 in the criminal code, and reduced the penalty from 8-14 years in prison for rebellion (includes using arms) and other similar crimes. This law also excluded actions in combat, art. 127, with the exception of terrorism or other drastic acts (Criminal Code, 1980; Cuervo & Paez, 2020, pp. 118-21; Dorado, 1988).

This 1980 law effected deliberate change from the political situation beginning in 1965 with the law legalizing paramilitary militias in the countryside. This legalization responded to communist influence in labor and land rights claims mostly in the countryside. This caused so much repression that it spawned massive protests which were then prosecuted with these drastic laws. (Cuervo & Paez, 2020; Dorado, 1988).

Trafficking arms for the purpose of destroying, or attacking the government, however, was excluded, and tried instead under terrorism laws. Through all versions and changes to the political crime statute, in 1936, 1963, and 1980, trafficking arms to overthrow the government was exempted and terrorism laws kicked in. Although this interpretation was challenged in a case involving juveniles who admitted to trafficking guns for M-19, the supreme court upheld it. (Dorado, 1988; Velásquez & Berrio, 1988).

As well, conspiracy in rebellion or any of the other political crimes carried the same sentences as other political crimes (Criminal code, art. 130). Therefore, Vásquez and Manuel were terrorists, and conspired with the M-19 combatants.

Although Grabe did not traffic arms nor fire weapons, her engagement also constituted conspiracy with the combatants (Criminal code, art. 130). In addition, by her support of combatants and M-19 efforts to destroy the government, she violated art. 128, agitating for a riot. Thus, her actions and other M-19 members' similar actions equal combat for the purposes of gender analysis of combat situations.

5. Conclusion

It was within this pseudo military structure that male and female gender roles achieved equity. Shackled by weighty exigencies mandated by kidnappings, assassinations, claiming and defending territory, robbery, and fleeing from government pursuit, combatants required arms. Weapons were embraced as instrumental towards these goals. The ensuing infrastructure from trafficking weapons to holding fire until the enemy was close, and suicide missions equalized gender roles. Differences would only inhibit completion of these tasks. Except for separate male and female death lists on M-19 websites and mainstream media, military death counts sorted by male and female (where recognizable), and code names reflecting sex, military actions obliterated distinctions between male and female sexes.

As Grabe supported the battlefield camps, Vásquez vowed suicide for the cause, and Londoño shouldered her weapons, Bateman explained military pervasiveness. "The organization has funds it distributes to take care of each one's needs. The Colombian oligarchy pays us. We collect fees from businesses. Some pay voluntarily; the people pay money out of fear when I had a gun to their head. I do not live alone. I live with 100 comrades who fight for peace. I live in a military structure" (Rios, 2009). Even if female authority were exaggerated within M-19, the combat fields were gender level.

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