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An Embodied Everyday Peace in the Midst of Violence

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Abstract:

Orthodox notions of peace built on liberal institutionalism have been critiqued for their lack of attention to the local and the people who populate these structures. The concept of an ‘everyday peace’ seeks to take into account the agency and activity of those frequently marginalised or excluded and use these experiences as the basis for a more responsive way of understanding peace. Further, reconceptualising and complicating a notion of ‘everyday peace’ as embodied recognises marginalised people as competent commentators and observers of their world, and capable of engaging with the practices, routines and radical events that shape their everyday resistances and peacebuilding. Peace, in this imagining, is not abstract, but built through everyday practices amidst violence.

Young people, in particular, are often marginalised or rendered passive in discussions of the violences that affect them. In recognising this limited engagement, this paper responds through drawing on fieldwork conducted with conflict-affected young people in a peri-urban barrio community near Colombia’s capital Bogota to forward a notion of an embodied everyday peace. This involves exploring the presence and voices of young people as stakeholders in a negotiation of what it means to build peace within daily experience in the context of local and broader violence and marginalisation. By centring young people’s understandings of and contributions within the everyday, this paper responds to the inadequacies of liberal peacebuilding narratives, and forwards a more complex rendering of everyday peace as embodied.

Keywords: young people, peacebuilding, everyday peace, narratives, Colombia, social exclusion, liberal peace

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Introduction

Colombia's protracted conflict is deeply entwined in the lives of many Colombians, and so poses challenges to the manner of discussing peace. While the level of violence has decreased since the late 1990s and early 2000s, and as of 2012 there is a formal peace process underway, Colombia remains in a state of protracted conflict. Organisations, communities and individuals have attempted to build peace within their daily lives. Recognising these activities as well as the ongoing day-to-day lives of those profoundly affected by conflict challenges scholars to think about how we might talk in different ways about notions of peace beyond the statist, liberal peace that prevails in peacebuilding literature. In arguing for an *embodied* everyday peace, this article takes as central the physical presence of those who exist in the marginal positions of vulnerability and insecurity foisted upon them by circumstance. For young people, negotiating an exclusion based on age coupled with structural exclusion and stigma, the routines of everyday life can function as a profound site of resilience and resistance. Young people build peace within their everyday lives not only in perpetuating the rhythms of relationships and practices of day-to-day life, but as a complex response to institutional marginalisation: a building of forms of existence that empower individuals without reliance on a distant, disinterested state.

One highly visible feature of Colombia's conflict has been the establishment of 'informal'—mostly illegal—*barrios* or shantytown communities on the periphery of many medium and large cities. The *barrios* on the outskirts of Colombia's capital Bogota are some of the most impoverished areas of the country. With large populations of internally displaced persons, and most of the inhabitants working in the informal sector,

the lives of those who live in these communities are characterised by poverty and insecurity. Compounding this are the presence, in some areas, of armed gangs that control territory within the *barrios* to facilitate the broader drug trade in and out of the capital. Children are particularly vulnerable to recruitment by these groups, and the lives of all in the community are rendered precarious by the violence and threat posed. The state is largely absent, appearing only in the form of police or armed forces during raids seeking these armed groups. While there are some municipal and federal programs aimed at supporting occupants they are largely insufficient for the needs of the communities.

These *barrios* exist as a result of the long-running conflict in Colombia. Fought between the leftist guerrillas, the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (FARC, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia), the state, and emergent right-wing paramilitary groups; Colombia's internal armed conflict has been ongoing for more than half a century. The conflict has been fought largely in rural areas, and had a profound impact on the lives of millions of Colombians. Between 3.9 and 5.2 million people have been internally displaced and further, almost half a million have fled the country as refugees.² Almost 40% of the population live at or below the poverty line and approximately half of these are under 18.³ Death, forced displacement, threats of violence, sexual and gender based violence, disrupted livelihoods, entrenched poverty and exclusion, and inadequate access to services such as health and sanitation are just some of the suffering and loss experienced by Colombians.⁴ Young people have been

² UNHCR (United Nations High Commission for Refugees), *2013 UNHCR Country Operations Profile – Colombia* (New York: UNHCR, 2013).

³ CODHES ((Consultoria para los Derechos Humanos y el Desplazamiento), *Número De Personas Desplazadas Por Departamento De Llegada* (Bogota, Colombia: CODHES, 2010).

⁴ For discussion of the consequences of Colombia's protracted conflict, see among others: Donny Meertens and Margarita Zambrano, 'Citizenship Deferred: The Politics of Victimhood, Land Restitution and Gender Justice in the Colombian (Post?) Conflict', *The International Journal of Transitional Justice* 4

particularly affected by the conflict through recruitment by the FARC as child soldiers, loss of family members, interrupted education and lack of opportunities.⁵ As of late 2012 there are peace talks occurring between the government and FARC, yet the scepticism and doubt expressed in the broader population points to a need to interrogate what peace might mean on a more everyday level. This response to the elite level peace process highlights the way in which conflict and peace can ‘co-exist’ in people’s everyday experiences and points to a need to interrogate how people attempt to live peacefully while violence persists.

This article is founded on fieldwork conducted with young people in an informal community on the outskirts of Bogota, known as los Altos de Cazucá.⁶ Over a period of four months I spent most days in the community, observing daily life, participating in activities and classes, and conducting interviews with young people aged between 10 and 17 years of age, as well as complimentary interviews with various adults in their life. This research underpins this article’s argument for the need to further develop our understanding of a notion of everyday peace. It makes this argument for two reasons:

(2010): 189-206; Donny Meertens, ‘Forced Displacement and Women's Security in Colombia’, *Disasters* 34, no. 2 (2010): 147-S64; Profamilia, *Surveys in Marginalized Areas Sexual and Reproductive Health, Forced Displacement and Poverty 2000 – 2011* (Bogota: Profamilia, 2011); Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), *Colombia: New Displacement Continues, Response Still Ineffective* (Geneva: Norwegian Refugee Council, 2009); Lara Coleman, ‘The Gendered Violence of Development: Imaginative Geographies of Exclusion in the Imposition of Neo-Liberal Capitalism’, *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 9 (2007): 204-19; Consultoria para los Derechos Humanos y el Desplazamiento (CODHES), *¿Consolidación de Qué? Informe Sobre Desplazamiento, Conflicto Armado y Derechos Humanos En Colombia En 2010* (Bogota: CODHES, 2011).

⁵ See, among others: Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, *No One to Trust: Children and Armed Conflict in Colombia* (New York: Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, 2012); United Nations, *Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict in Colombia* (New York: United Nations, 2012); COALICO (Coalición Contra la Vinculación de Niños, Niñas y Jóvenes al Conflicto Armado en Colombia), *Recomendaciones para Una Política Pública de Reparación Integral (RI) para Niños y Niñas Víctimas del Conflicto Armado y la Violencia Sociopolítica* (Bogota: COALICO, 2008); Viviana Sabogal Ruiz, ed., *Jovenes, Conflictos Urbanos y Alternativas de Inclusión* (Bogota, Colombia: Plataforma Conflicto Urbano y Jovenes, CIVIS Suecia & ASDI, 2005).

⁶ Ethical clearance for this project was obtained from the University of Queensland’s Behavioural and Social Science Review Board on the 1st September 2010.

specifically to better account for young people's voices and experiences in peacebuilding efforts, and to conceive of a theoretical lens which is more responsive to and considerate of the ways in which fraught struggles for peace are experienced by people themselves as they move through their everyday lives. Such an effort is a theoretical and methodological endeavour. I will outline the existing framework for thinking about peace at an everyday level, particularly through the work of Oliver Richmond, before articulating how the concept can be expanded and strengthened through an attention to an *embodied* experience of the everyday, located in young people's daily movements and practices as opposed to local institutions or elites. The article will then turn to several illustrations of how this might be conceived and understood.

Before this, however, I recount here briefly some of my encounters with several young women from the community of los Altos de Cazuca. I do this here to highlight the complexity of their everyday landscapes and the myriad forms of challenges they face as well as the ways in which they recognise and respond to violences and risks in their lives. Validating the stories of young people themselves recognises narrative methodologies are a crucial tool in moving our understandings forward as academics.⁷ To express a commitment to engaging with young people's everyday lives, requires a recognition they are meaning makers and contributors to the framing and understanding of notions of everyday peace articulated in this article.

A View from the Playground

Sitting in the concrete play yard at the school in los Altos de Cazuca, looking over

⁷ Annick Wibben. *Feminist Security Studies: A Narrative Approach*. (London: Routledge, 2011). Swati Parashar, 'What Wars and 'War Bodies' Know about International Relations', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 26 no. 4 (2013): 615-630.

the high wall topped with broken glass at the haphazard houses stretching down the hillside I am struck by the precariousness of the lives of not just the children but all the occupants of the *barrio*. Sitting with me are three girls who attend the school: Rosa who is 15, Camila Andrea who is 14 and Laura who is 17.⁸ Camila Andrea has grown up here ‘on the hillside’, and Laura and her family had been forcibly displaced from the countryside when she was young. Rosa has lived in several other places before being forced to move on because of death threats made against her parents. The girls love attending school; Camila Andrea feels there is less violence at school than ‘outside’ and it gives students a chance ‘to do something different, something better with their lives’.

I ask the girls what they do when they finish school for the day and Laura immediately jumps up. ‘*Rumbaaa* [dancing]’ she says, suiting actions to words by shaking her hips and laughing before becoming aware of her surroundings and sitting abruptly. Dancing is a passion for all three girls, and they tell me they do it whenever possible, in their house, at ‘events’ organised by a local organisation and in the schoolyard. Rosa tells me though she cannot always find time for dancing because she has to help her mother by working after school. According to their teacher a lot of the students work outside of school time, even those who are 11 or 12. Child labour is illegal in Colombia and yet there are large numbers of children engaged in work in the informal sector. The fact the community of Cazuca is stigmatised as a place of danger and criminals often makes it hard for adults to gain employment—Laura tells me that her father often cannot get work if he says where he lives—and so it is a matter of family survival that children contribute to the household.

⁸ Names of all participants have been changed to pseudonyms to preserve the anonymity of those I spoke with. This process was discussed with the young people at the time of the interview.

Our conversation moves on, and as we talk about boys the girls like, and Camila Andrea tells a cautionary story of unplanned pregnancy that happened to a school mate, the violence that was worse when Laura arrived here, the limited assistance by the state, and what the girls want to do when they finish school we watch the local *buseta* disgorge passengers on the roadside near the ‘Police Van’ which sits low on the hillside ‘monitoring’ the community, and continue on its bumpy journey up the unpaved and deeply rutted dirt roads up the hillside.

Several days later we meet again to conduct the ‘proper’ interview. We’re squashed in a storage room, not much larger than a cupboard next to a classroom; somewhere we can have some privacy and quiet in the overcrowded school. We laugh at our surroundings and I ask ‘What do you think of Cazuca?’. ‘Well I think Cazuca has a little of everything,’ says Camila Andrea, ‘sometimes it has happiness, like Christmas where everyone is dancing...but on the other hand Cazuca is sometimes violent, because everyone knows there are gangs and people have... their allegiances. People also smoke [do drugs] and I don’t like these things’. The night is sometimes full of the sound of bullets being fired, which scares them all. Laura argues the police do nothing to help on the hillside and that they are only useful as ‘decorations’.

We continue chatting about the problems with the police, and the corruption of the government who are blamed for the inequality visible to these girls in their daily life. All the girls tell stories of blackmail and robbery, of being woken in the night by breaking glass, or altering paths home to avoid areas that are ‘hot’. Suddenly we are speaking of how neglect and absence of services can be a genuine risk to life:

Rosa: ... it is not good for anyone. There are people who arrive [in Cazuca] dying, almost dead...

Camila Andrea: [interrupts] they die sometimes

Rosa [continues]...grannies [*abuelitas*]... aaaiii no, it's that people, many people die because of hospitals. For example, in my case, my mama lost her girl who was two because the doctor didn't think about the drug she would have to buy. It cost [too much to afford] every time she needed it...and so the doctor was the one who killed her. How was my mother meant to save her? There are so many people who do damage to people and they don't care because....

Laura: [interrupts]...they don't have a heart.

Rosa: ... And so, my mama went crazy because of this doctor, and ooosshhh my mama hated all the time she had to go to hospital for that, it was a terrible time. She would say: my life, my money these aren't costs, but my daughter, my pain, it is too high [Rosa speaks very fast and quietly here, her comment is inaudible before becoming loud and insistent in the following] And what? For what? Still my sister is gone.

There is silence, and suddenly the discussions of exclusion and violence and the cost of going forward day to day are rendered starkly visible. At its heart the story Rosa tells is one of family tragedy, experienced as profound pain. Yet it is embedded in systems that prevented Rosa's mother seeking and accessing affordable care. The story starts with an apparently generalised comment about the embodied suffering of those arriving to the community—that people arrive very ill sometimes—but quickly became apparent that this was not generalised but a specific lived experience. Stories circulate as commonly held understandings might lose their specificity, but underpinning them all are shared understandings—intelligible to those in the community—of personal pain and loss.

Before our time is up I ask the girls what peace means to them. Laura argues that peace has to start from the top and the bottom, that peace means everyone has a better 'chance' and that everyone has to work. Rosa is sceptical of whether peace would come but believes that young people can affect the future. They decide that young people can make a difference and do things differently in their day-to-day lives, from helping with their siblings to speaking out against drug use. Camila Andrea thinks that education is the most important thing, and above all the government should pay attention to what is happening 'on the edges, on this hillside'.

The bell rings and the girls excuse themselves; they have a class to get to and I follow them out of the storage room. The shrieks of the playground quiet as students get to class and I am left looking up at the patchwork of houses and lives spread across the hillside.

These three young women display competencies in navigating, understanding and explaining their complex everyday lives. Profoundly affected by immediate violence and the structural negation of their importance in the broader context of a country in the midst of protracted conflict, these young women are not passive or uncomprehending. Rather their actions shape their everyday lives and their interactions with their community. It is within these landscapes, below the level of structures and even formal local organisations that a notion of peace is fostered that begins in and at the bodies of these young people. This article now turns to explore how this reality can be accounted for and conceived of within academic framings of everyday peace in response to orthodox paradigms of peacebuilding.

Limits of the Liberal Peace

Theoretical and methodological practices that emerge from notions of liberal peace often end up sacrificing concern for community, local needs, and everyday experience because of an assumption that the basic tenets of the liberal peace are inherently rational and universally applicable.⁹ David Roberts argues that the process of

⁹M. Anne Brown, 'Anthropology and Peacebuilding', in *The Routledge Handbook of Peacebuilding*, ed. Roger Mac Ginty (Abington, Oxon, UK: Routledge, 2013), 135-136. see also: Mark Duffield, *Development, Security and Unending War: Governing the World of Peoples*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007); Oliver Richmond, *A Post-Liberal Peace*. (London, Routledge, 2011); Roger Mac Ginty, 'Between Resistance and Compliance: Non-Participation and the Liberal Peace', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 6, no. 2 (2012): 167-87; Vivienne Jabri, *War and the Transformation of Global Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007).

liberal peace lacks a mechanism of dialogue that makes participation and inclusion sufficiently meaningful to legitimate the approach on a local level.¹⁰ Vivian Jabri argues that the language and policy framing liberal peacebuilding conceives of non-Western societies as fundamentally lacking compared with Western knowledge systems; further she argues that subjugation by conflict has been replaced by universalising practices of intervention.¹¹ This pointed critique from Jabri, and broader questions of power, representation and control, as well as recognition, participation and agency form the central pillars of most critiques of the liberal peace. Richmond argues that the liberal peace functions to ‘represent the ways donors, governments, and institutions produce political subjects or citizens *best suited* to fulfil their policies, agendas, interests, and ideologies’¹² rather than paying attention to the lived experience of actual people. In this creation of ‘best suited’ political subjects, those who do not fit within the mould of ideal citizens become hidden. As a result their experiences become negated or abstracted.

If dominant discourses inherently marginalise and silence actors who are not ‘best suited’ and find themselves on the margins, then a key task is to ask whether and how these people can be represented. It requires recognising that formal political processes and intimate personal life are neither distinct nor distinguishable. It recognises that those on the margins find their bodies centrally located in negotiations of securing the state but simultaneously their existence confounds notions of ‘best suited’ citizens and so their lived experience is ignored. Internally displaced people (IDPs) and young people find themselves in this situation, where both resist easy categorisation due to their

¹⁰ David Roberts, ‘Post-Conflict Peacebuilding, Liberal Irrelevance and the Locus of Legitimacy’, *International Peacekeeping* 18, no. 4 (2011): 411.

¹¹ Jabri, *War and Transformation of Global Politics*.

¹² Richmond, *Post-Liberal Peace*, 12. Italics added.

marginalisation and the fluidity of the boundaries of such classifications, yet their everyday lives are filled with the negotiation of violence and attempts at building peace. For young people—whose everyday life constitutes in many cases a constant transgression of the assumed ‘norms’ of childhood—the question of how to recognise their agency and embodied being within adult-centric structures that prioritise institutional stability and security is complex but crucial.

Richmond takes us some way to conceiving of an ‘everyday peace’ in arguing for a need to focus on the agency of people rather than the existing focus on the state and the associated constellation of orthodox IR concerns.¹³ Richmond defines the everyday as

...a space in which local individuals and communities live and develop political strategies in their local environment, towards the state and towards international models of order. It is not civil society, often a Western-induced artifice, but it is representative of the deeper local-local. It is often transversal and transnational, engaging with needs, rights, custom, individual, community, agency and mobilisation in political terms. Yet, these are often hidden or deemed marginal by mainstream approaches.¹⁴

An attention to the everyday, a focus on everyday politics and possibilities would offer ‘a *repopulation* of essentially “empty states”’.¹⁵ The everyday can be seen as a form of resistance against ‘institutionalism and elitism’ when they have ‘lost touch with a social contract’ according to their citizens.¹⁶ Rejecting structural attempts of coercion or dominance, this re-appropriation of ownership allows the everyday to become a site of politics in its own right.

¹³ See Oliver Richmond, ‘The Problem of Peace: Understanding the ‘Liberal Peace’, *Conflict, Security and Development* 6, no. 3 (2006): 291-314; Oliver Richmond, ‘A Post-Liberal Peace: Eirenism and the Everyday’, *Review of International Studies* 35, no. 03 (2009a): 557-80; Oliver Richmond, ‘The Romanticisation of the Local: Welfare, Culture and Peacebuilding’, *The International Spectator* 44, no. 1 (2009b): 149-69; Richmond, *Post-Liberal Peace*; among others.

¹⁴ Oliver Richmond, ‘Resistance and the Post-Liberal Peace’, *Millennium - Journal of International Studies* 38, no. 3 (2010): 670

¹⁵ Richmond, *Post-Liberal Peace*. 142. Italics added.

¹⁶ Richmond, ‘Resistance and Post-Liberal Peace’, 676.

Pushing the Boundaries of an Everyday Peace

What Richmond offers is a site in which *people* and their *embodied* experience might *repopulate* the discourse of peacebuilding. He points to the need to break down or break away from structural accounts and seek ‘emancipatory and transformative projects that are elucidated in [everyday] contexts’¹⁷. However, while this notion is compelling and engaging, it only takes us some of the way to conceiving of an everyday that can account for the actions of young people. Richmond’s discussion of an everyday peace is an important and useful conceptual tool, yet his analysis tends to reify the concept and removes it from the *embodied* world of those who experience violence, conflict and marginalisation on a daily basis. With a focus on the theoretical challenges posed by conceiving of an everyday peace there is a lack of attention on how discursive relationships between the local and other actors that are central to his everyday, post-liberal peace actually function. While Richmond invokes de Certeau and a range of other academics working on broad conceptions of the everyday, his discussions often centre on the actions of formal organisations of civil society. In this, those who question the liberal peace, demand more from it or do not fit within its framing are seen as in resistance—a term much loved by critical peace studies. Inherent in this configuration is a simplification of the notion of resistance that does not account for situations in which individuals are not rejecting or even engaging the tenets of liberal peace itself but rather are rejecting and challenging the way in which they have been marginalised in this discourse.

This critique of Richmond’s work is not to devalue his ongoing contribution to discussions of alternative engagements with notions of peace. On the contrary, his

¹⁷ Richmond, *Post-Liberal Peace*, 15.

contributions provide a valuable focus point in proposing an everyday as a site of dynamic power relations and challenges. Yet further action is required to move beyond theoretical claims to hybridity and resistance, which elide the actual bodies present in such interactions and the power structures, which shape them.

Embodiment and the Everyday

If the criticism here—both in relation to children and young people, and in relation to theories of peacebuilding in the discipline of IR—is of marginalisation, dismissal and misrecognition, then the key task is to address these fundamental concerns. Enloe is correct in arguing that ‘womenandchildren’ are conflated and located in the private homes that support masculine, public ‘citizensandstate’.¹⁸ Similarly, as discussed above, those ‘best suited’ citizens take their public place at the exclusion of those deemed unsuitable. This exclusion occurs in a practical sense by limiting marginal populations from full participation, and theoretically by creating sense-making which takes no account of the bodies within a state, instead relying on ‘virtual states’ and ‘formal’ political power. Closing off the possibility of participation is a theoretical and practical fallacy that merely makes marginalised groups *invisible* but not *non-existent*.

Feminist interventions in studies of conflict and peace in international relations are a rich resource for the tools and language to speak of the everyday. This exploration here draws strongly on the exceptional work done by scholars such as Parashar, Wibben, Sylvester and d’Costa¹⁹ who bring explicit attention to everyday lives, and ‘micro-

¹⁸ Cynthia Enloe, ‘Womenandchildren: Making Feminist Sense of the Persian Gulf Crisis’, *Village Voice* (1990), 29-32

¹⁹ Swati Parashar, ‘Embodied ‘Otherness’ and Negotiations of Difference: A Critical Self Reflection on the Politics of Emotion in Researching Militant Women’, *International Studies Review* 13 no. 4 (2011):

narratives'.²⁰ Parashar notes explicitly that the aim of much theory is to 'offer a normative framework that can help make sense of global events', yet 'missing from these kinds of macro-analyses are a variety of people and their complex emotional and bodily experiences'²¹. Sylvester contends that 'war experiences come in prosaic, profound, sickening, excruciating, and exhilarating ways' and to pay attention to this helps understand the human experience of war.²² I would extend this to be equally pressing to scholars concerned with studying peace. Particularly when conflict is protracted, and fought not on neat battlefields, but through people's daily lives. Experiences of peace are also both prosaic and exhilarating and fundamentally located in day-to-day life.

An attention to bodies, and embodied practice, destabilises the assumptions of distance, impartiality and knowing. Weiss argues 'to be embodied is to be capable of being affected by the bodies of others and, therefore, to be embodied is both a necessary and a sufficient condition for the generation of a bodily imperative'.²³ This imperative, according to Weiss, is the ethical demand for attention that bodies require of each other when occupying spaces together. Lived experience is embodied²⁴, and at its most

687-708; Parashar, 'What Wars and 'War Bodies' Know'; Wibben, *Feminist Security Studies*; Christine Sylvester, ed., *Experiencing War* (London: Routledge, 2011); Christine Sylvester, 'Experiencing War: A Challenge for International Relations', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 26 no. 4 (2013): 669-674; Bina d'Costa, 'Marginalized Identity: New Frontiers of Research for IR?', in *Feminist Methodologies for International Relations*, ed. Brooke A. Ackerly, Maria Stern and Jacqui True (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 129-52; Bina d'Costa, *Nationbuilding, Gender and War Crimes in South Asia* (New York: Routledge, 2011);

²⁰ d'Costa, *Nationbuilding, Gender and War Crimes*, 13.

²¹ Parashar, 'What Wars and 'War Bodies' Know', 624.

²² Sylvester, 'Experiencing War', 129.

²³ Weiss, Gail, *Body Images: Embodiment as Intercorporeality* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 162.

²⁴ The argument for understanding, or thinking about bodies, in this politicized sense stems largely from feminist theory and phenomenological work. Vivian Sobchack (2004: 4), for example argues that 'however direct it may seem, our experience is not only always mediated by the lived bodies that we are, but our lived bodies (and our experience of them) is always also mediated and qualified by our engagements with other bodies and things'. Weiss challenges the supposedly 'impartial' morality and politics of classic political thinkers such as Kant and Rawls by drawing attention to the particularities 'of my own body and the bodies of others' (1999: 158). This attention to the body, even when not explicitly stated, is also visible in the work of many feminist IR scholars, such as those discussed above.

mundane, day-to-day level, these embodied encounters complicate simplistic notions of everyday spaces and actions that adhere to explorations of structures or organisation. Attending to bodily engagements with space, time and people, is also a useful tool for uncovering the actions and experiences of young people who are denied access to, or written out of, formal political spheres.²⁵ It is through these theoretical frames that this article argues the need to conceptualise everyday peace as embodied.

Accordingly, to engage in an exploration of everyday peace embedded in a notion of embodiment requires the firm recognition of the structural forces that affect the lives of people in an everyday context, in particular the hypocrisies of power and challenges of insecurity. Communities that are profoundly affected by ongoing violence and insecurity cope with these risks not as something extra-ordinary, but as party of everyday life. Such conditions, however, are not endemic to these communities but caused by various factors. Poverty, social exclusion and informal means of livelihood are not inherently linked to violence, but such conditions in combination with an absent state can allow violence to manifest. Those communities most exposed to such violences become stigmatised despite the fact most residents continue to live through and between such conflicts. Knowledge created by practices of everyday life is not instrumentalised but rather is derived from ‘the experience of building, maintaining and interacting within a community’.²⁶ Everyday peace building in these communities not only perpetuates the relationships and practices of everyday life, but is a complex response to institutional marginalisation and a

²⁵ See in particular: Kay Anderson and Susan Smith, ‘Emotional geographies’, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 26 (2001): 7–10; Rachel Colls and Kathrin Hörschelmann, ‘The geographies of children's and young people's bodies’, *Children's Geographies* 7 no. 1 (2009): 1–6; John Horton, Peter Krafti, and Faith Tucker, ‘The challenges of ‘Children's Geographies’: a reaffirmation’, *Children's Geographies* 6 no. 4 (2008): 335–348.

²⁶ Audra Mitchell, ‘Quality/control: International Peace Interventions and ‘the Everyday’’, *Review of International Studies* 37 (2011): 1627.

construction of forms of existence that empower individuals without reliance on the distant, disinterested state. Most significantly, it is the carrying out of these daily, embodied activities despite ongoing violence and exclusion. It is thus conceived of here as a notion of everyday peace amidst violence.

In this insecure and complex everyday, conceptions of what is political differ radically from institutional understandings. In these contexts, made insecure by elite and structural forces, it is the interrelationships *between* people that hold communities together. The everyday is not merely 'repetitive' or 'unconscious',²⁷ but holds the potential for solidarity, resistance and creativity. Such proactive readings of the space of the everyday move beyond Richmond's static understanding, and find their origin and performance in the physical presence of people. In this way the everyday becomes embodied and spoken for through the relationships people build.

Individuals affected by conflict continue to explore ways of building peace despite ongoing violences. An embodied everyday peace amidst violence is then the ways in which people engage with ongoing difficulties and challenges of building and sustaining routines in the face of institutionalised marginalisation and disregard and which has the potential for small (but potentially radical) change while perpetuating the everyday rhythms of relationships, practices and roles. Peace, in this conceptualisation is necessarily *located*, not only within and through the bodies of marginalised people, but in and through the terrains they occupy. An account of people that begins in these places of insecurity and marginality reject reification or abstracted notions of peace and instead recognises struggles for peace as grounded, as embodied, as struggles for everyday existence. In this conceptualisation, the everyday is more than 'a space in which local

²⁷ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley, CA: California University Press, 1984).

individuals and communities live and develop political strategies in their local environment'²⁸, but to quote de Certeau, a way of seeing everyday practices as 'no longer merely the obscure background of social activity', and more than this, a 'body of theoretical questions, methods, categories, and perspectives, by penetrating this obscurity, make it possible to articulate them'²⁹. Here then, the small, creative, often taken for granted and fraught practices of everyday life carried out by bodies moving and interacting in a space and through time, become denaturalised, and as a result become the object of study but also the locus of methodological concern.

If lived experience can be recognised as meaningful and meaning-making, experience can be a legitimising practice. Widening the sphere of the political to recognise the agency of those excluded or marginalised is a commitment to the specifics of the everyday, recounted through action and voice, written into discussions of peace because the bodies of those speaking *already* figure as objects in political discourse. In this way children and young people can be conceived of, and engaged with, as crucial actors in the network of everyday relationships as they negotiate violence and insecurity and contribute to the creation of an everyday peace amidst violence.

Young People's Experiences of Embodied Everyday Peace

Nordstrom and Robben notes 'the lives of those who suffer under violence or are engaged in warfare are not defined exclusively in global political, economic, social, or military terms but also in the small, often creative acts of the everyday'.³⁰ It is in the

²⁸ Richmond, 'Resistance and Post-Liberal Peace', 670.

²⁹ de Certeau, *Practice of Everyday Life*, xi.

³⁰ Carolyn Nordstrom and Antonius C. G. M. Robben, eds., *Fieldwork under Fire: Contemporary Studies of Violence and Survival* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 6-7.

securing practices of everyday resilience and in ideas of resilience driven by exclusionary practices and expectations upon the state that understandings of everyday peace gain resonance and applicability in contexts of ongoing violence. Young people are structurally marginalised, and in large part often unable to affect broad change. Yet their experiences of insecurity, violence and risk are mediated by their ability to affect small changes in their everyday lives. These securing practices can be understood as meaningful actions towards bodily security and community endeavours for peace.

On one level practices of everyday peace can be understood as the strengthening of relationships that hold communities together, and the small, normally unnoticed practices by which young people minimise risk and support each other. While the collective space of the community is a site of risk and potential violence, it is also the most connected location for interaction and fostering debate and cohesion. Picon, Arciniegas, and Beccarra, speaking of a community near to Cazuca argue that, ‘the barrio is a space of collective life, a space of decision, opposition, and confrontation between people who share common ground and carry out activities that permanently intersect’.³¹ The way in which young people negotiate travel to and from school and use the sites and services offered by the school and local organisations are indicative of this organic, disaggregated notion of fostering peace.

The school where fieldwork was conducted existed in two sites in the community; further up the hillside was the junior school and lower down was the senior school. Sebastian (12) and Andrea (11) discussed their move to the senior school the following year. Andrea was reluctant to make the move, and when we discussed this further, she

³¹Yuri Romero Picon, Liliana Arciniegas, and Javier Jimenez Becerra, ‘Desplazamiento y Reconstrucción de Tejido Social en el Barrio Altos de la Florida’, *Revista Tendencia & Retos* 11 (2006): 16.

explained it was because she had heard stories that there was a man who waited for children outside the school and ‘violated’ them. Sebastian had heard this story as well and his older brother had told him not to walk a certain way home from school. For Sebastian and Andrea, the unspecified threat was manifested through the existence of this man. Whether or not he was an actual person was less relevant than the effect it had on these young people’s navigation of their everyday worlds. For Andrea the threat was contrasted against her fervent desire to continue to attend school and she explained to me that she would walk with her mother to school and with friends home from school to avoid the threat. Young people’s daily lives were often characterised by these small alterations to their lives; people would pass information by word of mouth and as you moved around the community this information would be shared and could result in altered routes to destinations or a halt in the progression of your journey. Young people would unite to respond to these risks and contribute to a collective sense of responsibility for other members of the community.

Young people were assisted in these self-directed efforts by the school and a local NGO, both of whom offered their physical sites for events and activities where young people could meet, play or organise. The NGO organised a range of events including setting up after-school homework centres in local houses that enable young people a space to complete work and socialise. Young people also took on responsibility for some programs initiated by the NGO and school. These small acts strengthen the horizontal relationships that exist in the community.³²

Everyday peace in an embodied sense, as discussed above, moves beyond a

³² See Helen Berents. ‘Its about finding a way’: Children, sites of opportunity, and building everyday peace in Colombia’, *International Journal of Children’s Rights*. 22 (2014): 361-84.

flattened reading of everyday spaces a fundamentally in resistance to liberal notions of peace (a critique which can be made of Richmond's reading of resistance³³). It is possible, I argue, to desire those things offered in a liberal contract, but to articulate frustration, anger and disenchantment with the denial of this obligation by those structures that hold power over your life. Many young people are not rejecting the *ideals* of liberal peace, but rather are rejecting or speaking with anger about the inequalities and inherent contradictions of their everyday life *within* these framings.

Young people also express frustration at the corruption and abandonment by the state they perceive affects their lives. They are acutely conscious of inequality and disparities, and link this to the ongoing conflict as much as the local violence.³⁴ The profound stigmatisation of the community by the broader population as a space of danger and criminality, linked with the violent intervention—in the form of raids and arrests—that characterises much of the state's engagement in the area are read by young people as a lack of commitment to building inclusive and constructive notions of peace that allow space for those on the margins, and those who are young. Paola (15) feels young people have much they could contribute particularly:

...About the insecurity and everything, to try and fix this a little. Because this area [Cazuca] is of very little concern to the politicians. It is like a tiny black dot on a sheet of paper...

Thus, young people, whose actions and beings are fundamentally located in 'everyday' practice, unaffiliated with civil society organisations or other formal modes of liberal-local engagement want or expect the things that liberal peacebuilding and the liberal state

³³ Richmond, 'Resistance and Post-Liberal Peace'; Oliver Richmond, 'A Pedagogy of Peacebuilding: Infrapolitics, Resistance, and Liberation', *International Political Sociology* 6 (2012): 115-31.

³⁴ On these children's engagements with insecurity and violence see: Helen Berents, 'Children, violence, and social exclusion: negotiation of everyday insecurity in a Colombian barrio', *Critical Studies on Security*, 3 no. 1 (2015): 90-104.

tell them they are entitled to—education, health care, respect for human rights and so on—and yet they are able to critique the actuality of experience in which structures operate to deny such things to young people in marginalised spaces. Moreover, they also articulate ways in which they can act to challenge this system or manoeuvre through it for their benefit and the benefit of their family and community. This is a reading of peace that places their bodies and actions, and the bodies and actions of those closest to them, at the centre of notions of peacebuilding—fundamentally in the everyday.

Susana's (15) comments on how she saw her future are indicative of this form of critique and self-directed action. She describes the future as a time when things could be better for her community, and locates herself in this change:

For me, the future is as we've been discussing already, that things change. Not so much for me but for everyone; say, that one day the *barrio* will be fixed, they will give houses to the very poor people... my future then is to study, finish my high school degree, have a job, further that career, help my mother forward, help my siblings because they've been left alone, or if one day my mother can't do it, I'd have to because I'm the eldest. But yes, for me my future is study now, work so nothing can interrupt my dreams. Because for me my dream is to help poor people create places so they will not go hungry, so they can study, so they have many opportunities. This is my future.

Later in our discussion, Susana expands on her friend Felipe's (16) comments on how young people can contribute. Felipe argues: 'many adults...think that because a person is small they cannot do many things'. For Susana this can manifest in direct discussions with adults in her life:

...I think that adults think we don't have the ability to fix things, or be organised, and many say 'how are you going to help fix this problem?...you aren't old enough'. And many times we have the same mentality as adults, we have a good ability to think and plan. And look, if I look for work when I am under age it is because I want to get ahead, it is because I don't want to live our life struggling...but adults often do not ask us about our abilities... For example I want to work now to help my mother.

Young people see themselves as able to contribute to daily livelihood practices, but at the same time as contributing to their community. Many young people's aspirations for the

future include accounts of how their actions will feed back to the community, in many cases formalising activities they already undertake including childminding, help in repairing houses or roads and participating in community events.

For many young people a concept of peace is bound up in tangible changes to inequality and marginalisation. This is the manifestation of their ability to recognise what they feel they deserve to have as citizens, and the critique of the reality that they exist within. Sofia (15) argues that peace is to not only have no violence but ‘have respect for rights’, while Juan Carlos (16)—a fierce critic of the government throughout our conversations—sees an idea of peace in his life as connected to social justice:

For me peace is being just, let’s say, when you have rights and when the government comes through on its promises, you know, that is a country that is just... And so for me, it is being just and fair, that is peace.

These short snapshots of young people’s more extensive comments highlight a more local, fraught and complex everyday peace than that outlined in much of the literature. This is not a complete theorization, but rather points to a way in which the everyday can be accounted for in meaningful ways. The concept of peace developed here is dependent on a notion of the everyday in which the rhythms of relationships are perpetuated but where complex responses to inchoate violence and structural marginalisation also manifest.

While young people are denied access to formal political realms and are rarely represented (rather, they are spoken *for*) in elite level peace discussions, or ignored in orthodox accounts of peacebuilding theory, they are present in the fabric of everyday life, present in and through violence and conflict. Their ability to articulate challenges and pose solutions demonstrates the importance of considering seriously ways of including them in theorising peace that starts with their bodies, moving through their everyday

lives.

Conclusions

In recognising the ‘small, creative acts of the everyday’³⁵, the concept of everyday peace that is presented here is seen as a more complex one, in which activities are carried out despite exclusion and ongoing violence: an everyday peace amidst violence. More than this, it is an embodied peace; one which sees and acknowledges those often relegated to the margins.

For Rosa, Laura and Camila Andrea, efforts to seek and create peace are not separate from the unpredictable, persistent, sometimes-heartbreaking challenges they face in their life. Their day-to-day life is composed of small moments where they respond to risks, recognise the noises of violences in the night, support their family, walk to school and find time to dance. Their engagement with their community, through friends, the school, community organisations and informal daily interactions of everyday life provides the framework for building a life for themselves that is responsive to the violence and creative in seeking alternatives.

In arguing for an *embodied* everyday peace, this article has taken as central the physical presence of those who exist in marginal positions and experience structural vulnerability. The lived experiences of young people are recognised as meaningful; an assertion that challenges how we conceive of the site of the everyday. This article has begun the work of extending the concept of an everyday peace beyond structures and institutions into the daily violences and successes of living through protracted conflict to uncover an everyday peace that commences at the bodies, and through the experiences of

³⁵ Nordstrom and Robben, *Fieldwork Under Fire*, 7.

those who live in these insecure everyday. These people are often confined to categories that are erased by the rhetoric of statebuilding and the liberal peace, which cannot account for them, even as they continue to exist.

Felipe argues 'peace is dialogue, but not only speaking because you can speak but not listen, it is dialogue with listening, and that listening to others, between people, so we don't return to the mistakes of the past...' In conceiving of an embodied everyday peace, we can hear more clearly the voices of those who are so often marginalised.