TRUSTING THE COLOMBIAN PEACE

A TWITTER ANALYSIS OF THE EFFECT OF TRUST ON CITIZEN ATTITUDES

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1. Introduction

The role of trust in the field of peace and conflict has long been viewed from the perspective of bargaining problems (Walter, 2009). In focus is the inability of warring parties, such as rebel groups or governments, to trust their opponent in (for example) situations of peace negotiations. This is usually explained either by information asymmetry, which occurs when groups have incentives to withhold information from their opponents; or commitment problems, which entail not being able to trust the credibility of the opponent’s commitment even if such a commitment is made. A feeling of insecurity and uncertainty is created (or enhanced) about whether a potential deal will be reneged upon by either party after implementation, which creates a vicious circle where groups with low trust are less likely to commit to an agreement due to a sense of insecurity – and more likely to renege on their own promise if they do (Walter, 1999; Powell, 2006).

The prevalence and destructiveness of these types of trust issues in the context of civil war are seldom overlooked, yet often miss a crucial aspect. In a globalized, internet-savvy world where citizens can share their thoughts and organize their peers with decently functioning Wi-Fi as their only tool; the lines between rebel groups, governments, and individual citizens become blurred. Citizens of a conflict nation that enjoy access to the internet and at least some degree of freedom of expression, can sometimes be regarded a third party to the conflict themselves, and their opinions about the peace negotiations equally important as those of the main warring parties. The question then, is how individual trust – in other individuals or in political institutions – affects peace-related attitudes and opinions harbored by citizens of a conflict nation?

1.1. The Colombian Peace Referendum

This study seeks to delve deeper into the question of trust’s effect on attitudes towards peace by looking at a recent case in which the body of individual citizens was explicitly converted into one coherent party, and granted a (decisive) seat at the negotiation table: namely in the Colombian peace negotiations. In October of 2016, the Colombian people were called on to vote in a national referendum regarding whether they approved of the agreement signed by both president Juan Manuel Santos’ government and its main opponent, the FARC (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia). To the surprise of the international community, the
no side – led by ex president Álvaro Uribe who had earlier tried to defeat the FARC using military force – won, by a very slight margin of 50.2 % against 49.8 % for the yes side (Landguiden, 2016). This event serves as one of the clearest examples of how important citizens’ attitudes and opinions are for peace negotiations to be successful. While not always granted such an explicit voice as in referendum, citizens through their attitudes and opinions are likely to more often than not have an impact on the success of peace negotiations and sustainability of peace: be it via acting as potential spoilers, practicing non-violent tactics, or in different ways threatening post-war legitimacy (Stedman, 1997; Byrne & Klem, 2015; Stephan & Chenoweth, 2008). The Colombian example has furthermore been celebrated as a new and inclusive way to do peace negotiations (Landguiden, 2016), and can thus be argued to be a potential forerunner for many negotiations to come.

Apart from being a clear case of citizens as conflict parties and a significant event in recent history, the Colombian peace referendum also made for a unique opportunity of analyzability, in that political debates between individual citizens trended on social media. The webpage “Brandwatch,” which compiles statistics for internet trends, calculated 508 000 mentions about the referendum during the month leading up to the actual referendum day (Guzmán, 2016). A vast majority of these happened on Twitter, where a number of hashtags were utilized, expressing clear positive or negative positions towards the agreement. This constituted a new and easy way to find individuals vowing to vote in both directions, enabling a comparison between these two “camps” to see whether the individuals differed on their personal levels of trust.

Additionally, the notion of trust is here measured by analyzing (online) behavior, which has been called for as an alternative to the more established way of asking people directly about attitudes or opinions (Glaeser et al., 2000:813).

1.2. Research Question

Theorizing about this expanded role of citizens as a conflict party suggests the need for two different types of studies. First, there is a need to further understand how attitudes of citizens in a conflict nation can affect the outcome of potential peace negotiations. Second, there is the need to understand how these attitudes come about, and why they can vary so much between individuals in the same society – which is what this study will attempt to contribute to.
The research question is therefore set to: How does social and political trust harbored by individual citizens in a conflict society affect their attitudes towards peace, and their belief that peace can be reached (and sustained)?

The theory is that the higher an individual’s general level of social and political trust is, the more likely that individual is to harbor positive feelings towards a potential implementation of peace – even if the suggested agreement is not flawless. In search of support for this, this paper fills a methodological gap of utilizing online forums to gather information about individual citizen trust, by analyzing 16 Twitter accounts in a qualitative medium-\(n\) study. A tendency towards higher trust is indeed found in the yes camp, along with some interesting camp-wide differences in Twitter activity, nationalist tendencies, and political preferences. The findings support the theory and provide an answer to the research question, while suggesting the need for further developing tools for Twitter analysis, conducting larger-\(n\) studies, and improving the empirical measurement of trust.

2. Theory

In this section, I will provide insight into the concepts presented in this essay, give a brief overview of some of the most prominent literature on trust in peace and conflict, and present a directional hypothesis for the relationship between citizen trust and attitudes towards peace, in order to provide a testable claim for the analysis. Finally, a suggestion for a causal mechanism between the two main variables will be introduced.

2.1. Social and Political Trust: A Definition

To understand why citizens’ individual social and political trust harbored is relevant to talk about in the context of civil war, we must first understand and define the concepts themselves. Social trust, often found under its more overarching parent-term social capital, entails a sense of confidence and stability enjoyed both in whole societies and in individuals, most commonly between individuals on the same “level” of society. An individual’s degree of social trust is usually based on immediate and first hand experiences with other people, and is essential for a civilized and participatory social life (Newton, 2001). However, it can also
manifest itself in the form of bridging social trust, which means trust between entities of different (perceived) leverages, backgrounds, or societal levels – for example individuals’ trust in the official institutions of their society (Ekmekci, 2014:564-566). This is where social trust overlaps with and complements the concept of political trust, which to a larger extent concerns trust between individual citizens and their political rule of law – including but not limited to institutional trust (Cox, 2009a). Political trust is obtained in a more diffuse and indirect way, depending for example on an individual’s consumption of – and access to – different media. The level of political trust is likely to affect attitudes towards democracy, willingness to uphold political stability, and perception of the society within which the individual functions (Newton, 2001).

In short, social trust mostly concerns horizontal relations while political trust accounts more for the vertical. It should therefore be noted that many sociological and anthropological studies see it fit to separate these two types of trust, as they do not necessarily go hand in hand in all types of studies or contexts. Nevertheless, I argue that for the field of peace and conflict, and specifically for what is to be measured here, the two terms are somewhat interchangeable – in that they are likely to have a similar type of effect on people’s attitudes and behavior in relation to conflict. The simple term “trust” will thereby be the most commonly used throughout this paper, and is to be understood as an umbrella term for both the social and political kind.

2.2. Previous Research: Trust in Conflict Literature

In her book “Trust and Fear in Civil Wars” (2015), Kirschner points to three observable implications for mistrust in civil war. Firstly, she argues that it may prolong wars as it prevents the initiation of negotiations – or the conclusion of a deal despite them being initiated. Secondly, even if the warring parties do come to an agreement, there is a higher risk that they fail in implementing the negotiated terms. Finally, the underlying incompatibilities may remain unresolved even if the conflict temporarily ceases, due to insufficient or dishonest communication (Kirschner, 2015:19-20).

These implications can be viewed as interpretations of what is commonly referred to as “bargaining problems,” which are a kind of umbrella term including many different obstacles to negotiating parties’ abilities to reach an agreement. On the trust-related note, such
problems include previously mentioned information asymmetry and credible commitment (Walter, 2009:253).

However, there are also other perspectives of trust in peace and conflict that do not directly regard parties’ trust in each other – but rather their trust in general. For example, Zimelis (2012) suggests that the phenomenon of “democratic peace” (interstate peace between democracies) exists because norms of trust and reciprocity in democratic nations make parties in those societies more prone to solve both intrastate and interstate conflicts in a non-violent manner (Zimelis, 2012). Furthermore, Ekmekci (2014) argues that low social and political trust causes parties to believe of their (political) opponents that they are ill-intentioned, rather than misinformed or simply of another opinion (Ekmekci, 2014). In other words, citizens’ trust in each other seems to affect not only their attitude towards opponents, but also towards conflict and violence.

2.2.1. The Effect of Trust on Individual Attitudes

Moving away from the most common notion of trust as a hinder or enabler of peace negotiations between warring parties, there is also a considerable amount of literature exploring the ways in which trust affects individuals’ decisions and attitudes in everyday life, including in conflict situations. For example, Cox (2009b) finds that individuals harboring high levels of interpersonal trust are more likely than those with lower levels to promote non-violent collective actions as alternative to violent conflict (Cox, 2009b:34). A trusting society is also shown to decrease the risk for victimization as well as promote a sense of security and communal belonging amongst citizens (Cuesta, 2009:45; Hurtado et al., 2011).

Perceived social trust on an individual level is further found to relate to physical and psychological well-being, democratic development, and increased participation in community activities (Taylor, 2016). Furthermore, Zimelis (2012) argues that a nation is a product of its citizens, and that citizens in democratic societies are more trusting, rendering them more likely to view other nations (and consequently also parties and individuals) as honest, cooperative, and benign (Zimelis, 2012).

To sum up, much speaks in favor of interpersonal and inter-institutional trust affecting citizens’ attitudes towards peace and conflict. If we furthermore accept the premise that citizens’ attitudes matter to the success of peace and stability, then testing this relationship on more cases and in new ways not only finds motivation – but becomes crucial.
2.2.2. A Gap in Research

This study will attempt to contribute to existing research about trust and attitudes towards peace in two ways: Firstly, it is one of very few studies that compares relative levels of trust and attitudes between individuals in the same nation rather than measuring citizen bodies of different nations against each other, thus filling a gap concerning trust divergence within societies. Secondly, as mentioned in the introduction, it exploits the unique opportunity of the very official online debate about the Colombian peace referendum – thus also contributing to filling the methodological gap of using social media to determine levels of trust. To the best of my knowledge, this is one of the very first studies within the field of peace and conflict that uses this type of method; while scholars of sociology and psychology seem to have done so for quite some time.

2.3. Theoretical Framework

Based on the previous research and identified gap for this field and paper, I set out to answer the research question mentioned earlier, namely: How does social and political trust harbored by individual citizens in a society affect their attitudes towards peace, and their belief that peace can be reached (and sustained)?

The aim is to, in a qualitative manner, identify whether there exists a correlation between individual trust and attitudes towards the potential implementation of peace, and – if so – why and how this relationship works.

The dependent variable for this study is therefore set to attitudes towards peace, and the independent variable is social and political trust, referred to simply as trust. Important to note is that both variables regard individual citizens rather than the more common macro-perspective of the warring parties (groups).

I believe that a positive correlation between individual citizens’ general level of trust and positive attitudes towards peace will be found, due to some key mechanisms that will be presented below.
2.3.1. Hypothesis

To facilitate the finding of potential support for the idea of individual trust affecting citizen attitudes towards peace, the following hypothesis will be tested empirically:

**H1**: The higher the degrees of political and social trust harbored by individual citizens of a conflict nation, the more positive they will be towards the potential implementation of peace.

Important to note here is that negative or positive attitudes towards peace implementation do not necessarily imply that trusting individuals want peace and distrustful individuals want war – but rather that their optimism about the process for implementation varies due to their general levels of interpersonal and institutional trust.

2.3.2. Causal Mechanism(s)

The causal mechanism believed to be at play is a combination of previously mentioned effects of trust on behaviors and beliefs of individuals. A high degree of individual trust is likely to 1) counteract insecurity regarding the parties committing to their promises, and 2) neutralize the "fear" of living side by side with former enemies. Trusting individuals can be assumed to be more confident that their neighbors will keep their (non-violent) promise and that politicians would not encourage this integration were it not safe.

In other words, the following causal chain is expected to be at work, enabling trusting individuals to view the potential for peace in a more positive light:

*High individual trust level* → Stronger belief in that parties keep their promises + Less opposed to having to live side by side with former enemies → *More positive towards the implementation of peace (regardless of agreement content)*

This chain of causality will be analyzed simultaneously with testing the hypothesis, meaning it will be present throughout the analysis, but not be the main focus of it.
3. Research Design

This section maps out the methodological pathway needed to analyze the units of analysis and to attempt to answer the research question. The research design applied is qualitative and explanatory, comparing material from two camps (divided by individual preferences regarding the peace referendum in Colombia), in order to draw some general conclusions about trust in the context of peace and conflict. The camps will be the overarching focus of comparison because all units of analysis belong to one or the other (the yes or the no camp), yet it is important to note that the independent variable varies at the individual level and not (merely) at the camp-wide level. Potential established differences between the camps are thus direct results of a larger number of individual differences, rendering the study a medium-\(n\) project. In contrast to most studies like this, the units will also be analyzed in the order of the specific hashtags used. This means that the subjects are sorted and presented by their dependent variable from the beginning, as opposed to their independent as is custom.

The method that will be used is a combination of content analysis and structured, focused comparison, both of which will be explained more in-depth. First, however, follows a brief introduction of the case selection strategy and a discussion on trust in Colombia, as well as some practical and ethical aspects of using Twitter for social science research.

3.1. Trust, Twitter and the Case of Colombia

While the Colombian peace referendum in itself is quite unique, the fact that the expression of referendum preferences became a trend on social media is not surprising – as such media has lately become an inherent part of both our private and political life (Murthy, 2013:41-42). Nevertheless, it provides a unique opportunity to analyze individuals’ attitudes towards peace without the usual necessity of personally interacting with them via interviews or surveys. Refraining from using such techniques not only saves money and time which is crucial for this (budget- and deadline-wise) quite limited project, but also enables a study free from interviewer effects or issues of survey question formulation (Teorell & Svensson, 2007:89-91). Furthermore, utilizing the stance-taking political hashtags on Twitter to identify the units of analysis led not only to finding the individuals that are to be studied, but also the operationalization of the dependent variable. In other words, the tweets containing the stance-taking hashtags clearly state these individuals’ attitudes towards the peace negotiations: which
is one of two main variables that are to be measured.

Additionally, while this study chooses to isolate the directional relationship of interest to the way that trust (potentially) affects the sphere of peace and conflict, it also draws from the opposite direction of how conflict affects trust, in its choice of case(s). That is, the choice of Colombia as the context in which these two cases (the yes and the no camp) operate is based on the notion that the absence of peace is presumed to have negatively affected the general Colombian level of trust. The Colombian conflict is commonly referred to as the longest ongoing civil war in the world, leaving behind it a deeply unequal society characterized by grave trust issues (Daniel, 2016; Ortiz-Ospina & Roser, 2016). Colombia as the context for a study on trust and conflict is therefore nothing new in itself. In fact, in the search for different variations of terms and sentences that could provide useful sources for this study, it was by far the most common case example brought up. It should therefore further be asked of the reader to bear in mind that while this study deals with differences in levels of trust between individuals within the same society, the society concerned is considered a prime example of a distrusting nation. Therefore, even if differences between the yes and no camps are found, they will only be relative to each other, and not to general levels of social or political trust in other populations. This does not constitute much of a problem for the legitimacy of the study, however, for the following two reasons:

Firstly, conflict in general tends to undermine or erode social capital (World Bank, 1999:ix), and a certain level of trust issues is therefore to be expected also from other conflict societies, which makes generalizing to other conflict nations relevant even if they do not suffer the same amount of distrust.

Secondly, the units of analysis will be selected from Twitter, a platform which can be considered to be used foremost by citizens with higher levels of social trust, as its whole idea is based on sharing information publicly by hash-tagging, conversing, and live-posting current events and opinions – oftentimes with complete online strangers (Murthy, 2013:12-13). Therefore, I argue that the selected units of analysis for this study do not represent the least trusting individuals in the generally distrusting society of Colombia, since individuals belonging to that group of citizens are not likely to express their opinions about the referendum on such a public platform. In other words, even though the selected units of analysis cannot be argued to be an exact representation of Colombian citizens, and even less so of citizens of other conflict nations – it is arguably still a legitimate selection from which to make certain generalizations to larger populations.
3.1.1. Ethical Aspects of Twitter Research

As is the case with most things concerning social media, there are no clearly defined ethical guidelines for what is accepted or not concerning online-based research. Amongst the different social media platforms, however, Twitter is considered one of the least problematic sources of information because of its non-private and very openly communicative nature. A Twitter account can be accessed via tracking a hashtag without the researcher even possessing their own account. If a Twitter user wishes to be more private, there are clearly described privacy settings available that would disable someone who is not “accepted” by the user to access that specific account. All accounts analyzed in this study are non-private accounts who furthermore utilized a hashtag adhering to a debate belonging in the public sphere. In fact, ethical aspects are argued to be considerably less problematic than they may otherwise be for online research, if the accounts analyzed have taken part of “hash-tagged conversations of major public events” (Bruns & Burgess, 2012).

For this reason, the subjects of this study have not been asked for their permission to be analyzed, but presumed to accept the occasion of such an event when signing up for Twitter and using major trending hashtags. For the simplicity of the presentation of findings, their account names will be used with the @ sign before them, but their real names or any personal information not directly useful for the study will be left out.

3.2. Case Selection Strategy and Control Variables

This study uses Mill’s method of difference as selection strategy for its cases. The method looks at cases that differ in outcome but have many factors in common, and is designed to find out what independent variable(s) may have had the ruling effect on the outcome. The researcher bases the theory on one or more specific independent variables that they believe may have made the difference (in this case trust), usually followed by a hypothesized causal mechanism linking the two variables together (Powner, 2015:124-128).

In the context of the Colombian peace referendum, the individuals of the yes and the no side are argued to have most of the potential control variables in common, in that they come from the same nation, share similar historical backgrounds (especially in being part of the same civil war), and share a language and a political situation. In fact, it is difficult to say in what (other) ways they may actually differ, since they are all randomly selected individuals.
on Twitter. Nevertheless, some other factors will be controlled for as alternative explanations. These are: location within Colombia, age, and gender. Location and age will be controlled for along with trust-related findings in the results section, provided that the individuals have shared such information about themselves. Gender, however, is stratified for already in the selection process, to ensure randomization.

The hashtags were found in a list of those most commonly used during the week leading up to the actual referendum day, and include four of those that explicitly took a stance for or against the agreement (Guzmán, 2016). Two hashtags for each camp were chosen as they express slightly different emotions, which was regarded as potentially affecting who used them. Analyzing individuals using two different hashtags for each camp is thus argued to contribute further to the diversity of the set of units. The two hashtags expressing positive attitudes are #SiALaPaz (Yes to Peace) and #LaFeliSidad (“The Happiness,” capitalizing the word “Si” in the middle which means “yes” and signals support for the agreement). Those who expressed more negative attitudes were #HagaHistoriaVoteNo (Make History, Vote No) and #ConArgumentosDigoNo (With Arguments I Say No). Four accounts per hashtag were singled out via Twitter’s “top account” function – which lists the most influential users of a certain hashtag during a certain time period (Twitter Support Center, 2016). An amount of tweets from October 2nd (the day of the referendum) and counting backwards will be analyzed for every account holder, meaning that the tweet featuring the hashtag will be analyzed, as well as a limited number of previous tweets that may concern vastly different social or personal issues or opinions. For time limitation reasons, this number is set to 30 tweets per account holder. While it may appear more fruitful to isolate a period of time instead of a number of tweets, I argue that that would be less valid of a comparison as the rate and frequency of tweeting may vary immensely between account holders.

Furthermore, to avoid reading more than 400 tweets on beauty tips or baking recipes, some tweeters that (at a quick glance) did not seem to have expressed anything political or socially relevant apart from the one stance-taking hashtag, were disregarded because they were not deemed as useful to the study. As a result of this, every account holder has a profile featuring at least some amount of political expression and opinions on social issues in Colombia. However, any directly governmentally involved politician who may have shown up (which happened, as these hashtags were also heavily utilized by campaigning insiders to gain traction for either side) was disregarded with the motivation that they could not be viewed as random citizens with individual opinions. With the same non-citizen reasons, all accounts that seemed to be run by more than one person, for example an NGO or a company, were also
disregarded. The selection of the units is random, however, as it was generated mainly by Twitter's internal ranking mechanism and then only briefly sorted through manually so as to establish a coherent and comparable set.

Ensuring that the analysis regarded somewhat politically or socially outspoken persons further helped in the potential ethical issue of analyzing someone who may not want to be analyzed – as such individuals are often aware of, or at least not averted to, the idea of being analyzed by what they say online.

3.3. Method of Analysis

The methods of qualitative content analysis and structured, focused comparison will now be presented further, and their combined usage for this study motivated.

Content analysis is argued necessary to properly discern what is to be understood from the tweets and accounts of interest. It is a type of textual analysis that seeks to establish certain patterns in the texts (in this case tweets), using either a counting or a tracing approach. The counting approach can either mean actually counting, or weighing the relative balance of usage of terms and concepts (which will here be interpreted as general language) between the units. The tracing approach, on the other hand, looks more at the overall tone and shape of the references used in the language, yet usually covers the same phenomenon over time – which is not the aim of this study. Rather, the method used here will look at language usage frequency and overall tone and message, rendering it a combination of counting and tracing content analysis. For example, the number of re-tweets and usage of certain distrust-connoted words will be counted, whereas language tone and implicit messages will be analyzed using the trace approach. Furthermore, the interest is not solely in the frequency of certain language or behavior, but also whether the reference has positive or negative connotations, for which both types of content analyses are appropriate (Powner, 2015:118-119).

To identify individual levels of trust for an account holder, a number of questions will be asked about all units; as in the method of structured, focused comparison. These will however be formulated after content-analytical measurements as mentioned above, and sorted into categories depending on the answer of the question posed.

Structured, focused comparison is structured in that it asks the same set of questions about each case, which enables other researchers to use the exact same method and model.
Furthermore, it is focused in not looking at the cases in their entirety, but rather zooming in on certain aspects of them that are deemed most important (George & Bennet, 2005:67).

The questions have been created with the aim of minimizing subjectivity by providing clear limits and using conservative coding, presented further in the operationalization section below. The prevalence of these structured, focused characteristics will likely improve the study’s validity, since it is designed to avoid focusing on the wrong things or looking at too big of a picture.

To summarize, the method of content analysis is used as a categorical guideline for formulating the structured, focused questions. The process can be divided into three steps, where step one is to answer the questions in a dyadic manner (“Yes” or “No”) for each individual, step two is to summarize the answers for each hashtag and camp, and step three is to compare the findings across camps.

3.4. Operationalizations

The most conventional way to measure trust in a population is to ask individuals: “Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or can you never be too careful when dealing with people?” (Pew Social Trends, 2007). However, since this method is neither possible nor desirable for this study, other ways to measure trust without direct contact with the units of analysis have been invented. This can be viewed as both a drawback and a perk. It is a new and largely untested way to measure trust, which has long been requested from the research community (see for example Glaeser et al., 2000:814-819), yet it is also lacking in first-hand, directly trust-related information. In other words, the measurements of social and political trust from an individual’s Twitter profile will be indirect and go via things that are theorized to indicate, or at least correlate with, levels of trust. Furthermore, if there is a lack of alternative methods of measuring trust in academia in general, there are even fewer methods suggesting how to do so via online behavior. However, in a quantitative study from 2010, Adali et al. aim to discern individuals’ social trust via their Twitter profile, by tracking the dynamical flows with which these people interact: including amounts of re-tweets and the extent to which they participate equally in online discussions and conversations (Adali et al., 2010). Such a measurement will be included here, as one of five indicators of trust. The remaining four are interpretations of different scholars’ definitions of trust, and studies on how trust affects other parts of life as well as how it is
noticeable within societies and people.

The five indicators will now briefly be introduced and motivated, and then be formulated into structured, focused, content-analytical questions available in table 1 on the following page.

To start with, (1) as in the study by Adali et al., the dynamics of tweets will be analyzed. Frequent participation in conversations as well as a recurring pattern of re-tweeting will be considered signs of high(er) trust.

Second, (2) signs of civic participation will be considered signs of high(er) trust. Taylor (2016) finds that high degrees of social trust will make an individual more prone to partake in civil society; be it by attending church, participating in some sort of club, doing voluntary community work, or partaking in collective action initiatives (Taylor, 2016).

Third, (3) attitudes and language usage towards other tweeters (in re-tweets or other) will be analyzed with focus on signs of care for others and words or expressions loaded with positive value and inclusiveness. As mentioned in the beginning of this section, the most classic way to measure trust is by asking forthright questions to a number of individuals, and there is evidence that people who do believe that others want the best for them — to a larger extent also want the best for other people (Glaeser et al., 2000). Speaking in a discourse that includes other people, as opposed to polarizing and comparing groups to each other, will thereby also be considered a result of high trust.

Fourth, (4) romanticizing or normalizing the use of violence, or in any way adhering to a violence-oriented discourse, will be seen as a sign of low trust. Zimelis (2012) and several other scholars, find that trusting individuals are more prone to non-violent solutions and more open to cooperation and compromises (Zimelis, 2012:19-20). Clear non-violent expressions or renunciations of violent events will thus also be treated as a high level of trust. If nothing either adhering to or clearly repudiating a violent discourse is found, the individual will not be coded as either or.

Lastly, (5) expressions of political distrust such as usage of words like corruption, liars, and lies will be collected and compared between the two camps. This is the most intuitive of all indicators but can also be tricky to isolate from its context, as it is likely that those who are negative towards the negotiations will express more distrust towards politicians, since the politicians currently in government are mostly positive. The indicator is still argued to be valid as long as this is kept in mind, however, especially for posts not directly related to the referendum and the Santos government. The three first points can be considered indicators of social trust, while the two latter can be seen as results of the political type.
In the findings section, diagrams containing dyadic categories for each question and each individual will be filled in for every hashtag. The categories are based on the questions in table 1 (which are based on the indicators provided above), and the answers to them can either be “Yes”, “No”, or “No Answer”. The coding is conservative, meaning that a “Yes” or a “No” signifies high or low trust. Any individual about whom there is no clear answer to a certain question will be coded as “No Answer”. For example: an individual will not be coded as not participative if information about civic participation was not found at all. They may however be coded as such if they clearly state that they do not participate or enjoy participating in relevant events. The one question to which the answer can only be “Yes” or “No”, and not “No Answer”, is that of dynamics, however, as there is no middle-ground in this category. In other words, all units of analysis will either have re-tweeted or mentioned other tweeters frequently in the 30 tweets analyzed – or have refrained from doing so.

The indicatory questions with associated code are presented in the table below.

Table 1. Indicator Codes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CODES:</th>
<th>INDICATOR QUESTIONS:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DYNAMICS?</td>
<td>Does the account holder frequently re-tweet other users’ tweets as well as participate equally in conversations with other tweeters?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARTICIPATIVE?</td>
<td>Does the account holder seem to engage in civic participation such as going to church, community work, volunteering, participating in any types of clubs of social activities?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INCLUSIVE?</td>
<td>Does the account holder use an inclusive and caring language in conversations with other tweeters and in own statements?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIOLENT?</td>
<td>Does the account holder use a language that suggests violence, talk about violence in a positive way or otherwise concur to a violence-romanticizing discourse?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACCUSING?</td>
<td>Does the user express clear distrust with politicians, call politicians corrupt or use a mistrusting language in general?</td>
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By the measurements provided here, the “ideal” trusting individual will answer “Yes” to the first three categories (dynamic, participative and inclusive) and “No” to the second two (violent and accusing) – explaining the division in the table between these sets of questions/codes. Following naturally, the most distrusting person would, then, answer the complete opposite.

3.5. Limitations and Assumptions

Before embarking on the findings section of this study, some limitations should be made clear. First, there is the issue of subjectivity in the analysis, due to the difficulty of “reading between the lines.” This may be a problem of reliability, as it could mean that other scholars attempting to conduct the same study would reach different results. Realizing this sheds further light on the necessity of transparency regarding the selection and analytical interpretation of the units of analysis, the latter for which the Appendix (starting on page 40) is argued to account.

Besides this, there is the slight issue of language. This study is conducted in English, but the main material for the analysis is almost exclusively in Spanish. All units of analysis are Colombian natives expressing their opinions and concerns in their native language, which will add the step of translating the relevant tweets to English, and may perhaps hinder or bypass certain understandings of domestic sayings and cultural twists to the way of expression. It is also a rather large set of data to analyze qualitatively, with 16 different Twitter accounts and 30 of their latest tweets to account for, which will be time-consuming. This is however deemed necessary, as it would be difficult to draw much of a conclusion with less data.

Additionally, apart from taking a long time to analyze, all 30 tweets for every single individual are not likely to be useful for the study, which may render an unusually large amount of analyzed but disposable data. This is something that may not be as recurring a problem when asking direct questions or analyzing more official documents, both defined as tactics that similar studies typically resort to. Many tweets are presumed to be of no use at all, and not all questions are expected to be answered for all tweeters – as there may be no sign of either side of a dyadic category.

Furthermore, this particular study seeks to identify individual levels or degrees of trust via Twitter rather than analyze the users’ roles on Twitter. Therefore, the communication inferences made will specifically regard aspects of the communicator, rather than those of the
text production situation. In other words, while the platform characteristic of Twitter is expected to have played some part in the ways and restrictions in which the account holder decided to communicate, its interference with (or meaning to) the text will not be of interest for the analysis. Rather, an assumption is made that the messages from the communicators (the tweets from each individual account holder) are the communicators’ actual experiences, opinions, and intentions.

4. Findings

The findings will be presented sorted by hashtags, starting with the two hashtags for the yes camp. First, a general presentation of the individuals for every hashtag including the control variables of location and age will be provided, in order to then account for their responses to the indicators of trust. A diagram containing their dyadic answer to each trust indicator question will be presented. These four diagrams will later be summarized into a table showing values for the yes and the no camp in absolute numbers as well as percentages. More elaborate answers to all questions for every individual can be found in the Appendix. The information there is not crucial for conveying the general message, but is expected to work as a tool for transparency and clarity regarding claims made in this section.

4.1. The Yes Camp

The hashtag #SiALaPaz (“Yes to Peace”) was one of the most frequently used hashtags signaling positivity towards the peace agreement (Guzmán, 2016). Amongst its “top” civilian users during the week leading up to the elections were: @lauraweins, @diany_hdez3, @ronnyruzzar1, and @pabloaristi72 (Twitter.com).

The account holders who have tagged #SiALaPaz have in common that they all come from, or at least reside in, some of the larger cities in Colombia. All four have added their location on their profiles together with profession or interests and full name; two residing in Barranquilla, one in Bogotá and one in Medellín. The users also vary in age, from young (including an underage student who wishes he were 18 he could travel to Cartagena to view
the signing of the agreement) to around 50 years of age. Their “personal descriptions” (provided in a little box with private information under their name and profile picture) range from "human rights defender," to "digital marketing lover," "political science student" and "philosopher and liberal thinker."

When it comes to the indicators of trust, they all have in common a highly inclusive language, speaking often in terms of "we the Colombians," and often tweeting about – or on behalf of – socially exposed groups. @lauraweins is a participative trans-activist, while @pabloaristi72 emphasizes words like equality and celebrates good politicians and good decisions (instead of focusing on those he does not approve of). Everyone except @ronnyruzzar has high numbers of re-tweets and participation in conversations, and two use clearly non-violent rhetoric. Finally, @lauraweins and @diany_hdez3 are both quite accusatory towards politicians and civilians with different political opinions, arguing for example that "Colombia is run by the church and prejudice" rather than the government, or that the outcome of the referendum will be the fault of those who are “too lazy to vote.”

---

*Picture: Two inclusive tweets from @lauraweins. The first one translates to: “There are those of us who have lived half of our lives in war and we cannot permit the continuance of living it. # Peace is Liberty.”
The second to: “Trans people with our lives and bodies say # Yes to Peace.”
The re-tweet is from a trans activist organization that she participates in.*
More in-depth findings for every account holder can be find in the Appendix on pages 40-42, while their dyadic answers are presented in figure 1, on the following page (21).

Figure 1: #SiALaPaz

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dynamic</th>
<th>@lauraweins</th>
<th>@diany_hdez3</th>
<th>@ronnyruzzar1</th>
<th>@pabloaristi72</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Participative  | Yes         | -            | Yes           | -             |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language: Inclusive?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language: Violent?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language: Accusing?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second hashtag for the yes side is #LaFeliSidad (Guzmán, 2016). When singling out the four individual accounts for this hashtag, it was noted that an overwhelming number of users who had tagged it were women. In choosing two of each (interpreted) gender, therefore, many women were bypassed in favor of less Twitter-influential men. The four that were finally singled out for belonging to the “top tweeters” were @lindamlucia, @xailiguaran, @haroldmurciag, and @nel_ochoa.

These individual vary more in personal description and occupation. Tagged locations include Bogotá, Barranquilla, Cartagena, and La Guajira – a department known as the home of a large indigenous population (Ferrero Botero, 2015:290-292). They are interpreted as slightly less diverse in age than those of the previous hashtag, two still at university and none seemingly older than around 40 years of age. Two describe themselves as journalists and "comunicadoras sociales" (social communicators), one as a dancer and one as a student of dentistry. The variation in tweets is greater here too – with less of an overall political focus and more of a focus on private things like music, beauty and pictures of children or pets. These tweets are also highly caring and inclusive. @lindamlucia, for example, has around ten...
tweets containing words like “love” and “friendship”, as well as several uplifting “inspirational quotes”, while more than 50 % of the analyzed tweets from @xailiguaran are re-tweets or contain mentions of other Twitter users. Furthermore, @nel_ochoa is a journalist and activist for the indigenous Wayuu people in La Guajira, while @haroldmurciag encourages “hugging a Uribista” (Uribe fan) because he is sure that Santos’ peace proposition will go through (this in June of 2016). All users are heavy on re-tweeting and conversing and there is a quite large amount of tweets containing messages of forgiveness, which is treated as a direct opposite (a kind of neutralizer) of accusatory language.

Further examples and answers for each individual of this hashtag can be found in the Appendix on pages 42-43.

Picture: Tweet by @haroldmurciag that translates as: “# Hug a Uribista, because today we say # Goodbye to War.” An Uribista is the name for someone who is pro-Uribe (the main opponent of president Santos) and while this may be interpreted as irony, the tweet is still treated as an encouragement to comfort the opponents rather than blaming them.

Figure 2: #LaFeliSidad

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>@lindamlucia</th>
<th>@xailiguaran</th>
<th>@haroldmurciag</th>
<th>@nel_ochoa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dynamic?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participative?</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusive?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violent?</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accusing?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2. The No Camp

For the no sayers in the referendum, the most popular hashtag for the month of September was #HagaHistoriaVoteNo (Make History, Vote No) (Guzmán, 2016). Some of its most influential (private) users were: @santamariauribe, @feelingmscuervo, @disgustavo, and @sanchezvpili. It should be noted here that @santamariauribe has vastly more traffic on his page than did any of the yes sayers, with some tweets reaching around 150 re-tweets. Many of the tweeters mentioned thus far seem to have considerably less traffic on their pages, re-tweets ranging from 0 to around 25. This high amount of re-tweets does not seem to have made any difference for the personal tweeting dynamics of @santamariauribe, however – as he does not participate in conversation or re-tweet others at all.

A striking difference for this hashtag as compared to the previous ones is the users’ tweeting rate. Here, the average user has tweeted around 30 tweets a week, whereas previously mentioned users were more scattered – some tweeting as little as 30 in six months. Furthermore, these individuals to a noticeably lesser extent provide information about themselves. For example, only @santamariauribe has tagged an actual location (Bogotá) whereas @disgustavo for example has tagged a made up name translating roughly to “Bad Colombia”. @santamariauribe is also the only one providing other personal information, including a link to his own webpage and the quote translating to, “I think therefore I exist”. Most of the users’ profile pictures and descriptions are less clear, giving the accounts a character of anonymity.

All four of individuals for this hashtag use a highly accusatory language, including conspiracy tweets about the yes camp buying votes, the Colombian government consisting of "terrorists," it all being US president Obama's fault, and yes sayers acting out of "bobada" (stupidity). Words like bluff, "engaño" (sort of: being fooled), and corruption are frequently resorted to, and there seems to be consensus in the argument that everything the FARC promises to do, should the negotiations succeed, is a lie. Several images of Colombia becoming like Venezuela are presented, yet most of the users use a language that is still considered inclusive in its rhetoric discourse, by for example talking about Colombians as a unitary group. Vicious language also occurs, however. One account calls the political opponents "animals who are not worth talking to," and another delivers several racist and hateful comments about Afro-Colombians, Jews and homosexuals. There are also two tweets that are considered indirect encouragements to use violence – see full information in the Appendix on pages 43-45.
Picture: Two accusatory tweets from @SANTAMARIAURIBE, translating roughly to: “The example to the new generations is horrible: Cheat, Lie, Everything is negotiable, The media decides the outcome, Kill and Triumph,” and “Santos’ government is nervous about the referendum, since the votes are bought they need transport, raffle etc., and this is not organized.”

Figure 3: #HagaHistoriaVoteNo

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dynamic?</th>
<th>@santamariauribe</th>
<th>@ayniinaa</th>
<th>@disgustavo</th>
<th>@gloriaagudeloca</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participative?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language: Inclusive?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language: Violent?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language: Accusing?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The second most popular hashtag for the no camp was #ConArgumentosDigoNo (With Arguments I Say No) (Guzmán, 2016). The following accounts are some of its most influential users: @eandreazd, @CSR115, @7diegosanchez, and @marcelaospinagomez.

Just like the second hashtag for the yes camp, this second no hashtag is considerably more diverse and allowing. Personal descriptions range from "animal rights and environmental activist," to "audiovisual director," "patriot opposing the gender ideology," and "anthropologist with an interest in rural development." Ages seem to range from young student to middle-aged professor, and two of the four individuals provide their location, namely Colombia's two largest cities Bogotá and Medellín.

The overall tone and language is somewhat more inclusive and exculpatory than for the previous hashtag, however with several notable exceptions. The same arguments about Colombia becoming like Venezuela and the media deciding the outcome are present in several of these users' feeds, which is interpreted as accusatory language, and the view of groups within Colombia is deemed as polarizing. Re-tweets and conversational participation is relatively scarce.

Generally, the closer to the date of the referendum these feeds come, the more the content is filled with words like “fraud,” “violence,” “decadence” (referring to Santos), “corruption,” “devilish,” and “lies,” accompanied by arguments such as that “respectable academics and intellectual thinkers are silenced by the media and the government”. More examples can be found in the Appendix on pages 46-47.

*Picture: An accusatory tweet from @felipecardetama translating roughly to: “#Make History Vote No (@felipecardetama has in other words used both of the negative hashtags), the FARC has been fooled, the world has been fooled and the Colombian society has been fooled by false agreements.”*
4.3. Summary of Findings

As previously mentioned, the “ideal” trusting individual would score a “Yes” on the three first questions, and a “No” on the last two. The most distrusting person would thus score the complete opposite. As it turned out, not a single of the 16 individuals adhered either to the most trusting or the most distrusting pattern. The one closest to the “trusting ideal”, however, was @lauraweins from the #SiALaPaz hashtag, while @ayniinaa and @disgustavo from the #HagaHistoriaVoteNo hashtag tied for the place of the most “distrusting.”

Between the two hashtags for the yes camp, #SiALaPaz had the most inclusive and participatory individuals, while #LaFeliSidad had the most dynamic and least accusing. #SiALaPaz had the slight “advantage” of having two explicitly non-violent subjects, but overall the hashtags were similar in levels of perceived trust in their users. The total numbers of “Yes”” and “No’s” in respective category will be presented below, adjacent to those of the no camp, to give an idea of the gap between them.

The difference between the two hashtags for the no camp was larger. Subjects belonging to the #HagaHistoriaVoteNo hashtag were overall less inclusive and more violence-
romanticizing in their use of language, whereas those who had used #ConArgumentosDigoNo used more inclusive and caring rhetoric and did not encourage violence in any form.

While these differences between hashtags are interesting and worth bringing up, they are not the main focus of comparison. Using two for each camp was rather meant to widen the selection of units of analysis and maximize randomization. The relevant comparisons are between individuals or between camps, to see if – with the measurements of trust provided here – there is a difference in the level of social and political trust harbored by those who vowed to vote yes and those who vowed to vote no.

Table 2 and 3 present these differences in absolute numbers as well as percent.

**Table 2: Across-Camp Comparison in Absolute Numbers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>YES CAMP:</th>
<th></th>
<th>NO CAMP:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No Data</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DYNAMIC?</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARTICIPATIVE?</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>(5)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INCLUSIVE?</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIOLENT?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>(6)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACCUSING?</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The numbers in this table represent the total number of individuals who have answered “Yes,” “No,” or “No Data” and those that are clearly marked out (in bold and red) signify indicators of trust. The higher the number of such an indicator, the more overall trusting the camp is deemed. In other words, there should be as many “Yes” answers for the first three categories, and as many “No” answers for the second two categories, as possible – for a camp to be considered “trusting.” As is clear from this table, the yes camp has a higher number than the no camp in all these areas. However, as is evident, there was a large number of categories for which sufficient data was missing. Therefore, in a conservative comparison where all subjects who did not answer directly affirmative or negative are counted as not having answered at all – numbers in percent for those who did answer (a clear “Yes” or “No”) become relevant for further comparison across camps.
Table 3: Across-Camp Comparison in Percentage of Those Who Answered

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>YES CAMP:</th>
<th>NO CAMP:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DYNAMIC?</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARTICIPATIVE?</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INCLUSIVE?</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIOLENT?</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACCUSING?</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It could be argued that the overall quite prevailing lack of data threatens the validity of the study, yet I argue that this is largely a result of previously mentioned conservative coding. An account that does not clearly adhere to being either participative, inclusive, violent or accusatory is not immediately assumed to not be so – but merely not to have provided the information. Table 2, which excludes all units that have not properly answered the question, finds similar results as table 1 in that all numbers that should be higher for a trusting individual than for a distrusting, are found in the yes camp. This is in line with what was expected from the beginning and presented in the hypothesis. The two tables together provide evidence of a correlation between social and political trust and the way in which these individuals voted in the peace referendum. In fact, the only category for which the percentage is the same is that of whether the subject is "participative," for which the relative number compared to how many have answered at all is constant, but the absolute number (in parenthesis) varies from three people in the yes camp to two in the no camp. The differences between the camps were especially striking for the number of tweeting individuals who used accusatory language in the no camp (all of them) than the yes camp (three of eight), and in the users’ conversational dynamics as presented by Adali et al. The total number of times that data have been lacking is somewhat higher for that of the yes side (with a total of 14 "non-answers") than the no side (with a total such number of 11). However, this difference is not considered to threaten the clarity of the results, as it is mostly located in the last two categories, where “lack of data” is argued to signify a higher degree of trust than if the subjects had scored a “Yes”, which most individuals in the no camp did for these two categories.
As for the control variables, most larger cities were tagged by individuals from both camps, and ages varied quite equally across them. Out of all 16 individuals, the oldest was interpreted to be around 50 or 60 years of age, and the youngest to be just under 18. In other words, there were no children or people over around 60 involved in the study – but the ages varied between more or less the same ranges in both camps. There was only one non-urban area tagged, however, which was done by an individual in the yes camp. Still, the rest of the yes sayers tagged larger cities, while many no sayers did not tag any location at all, suggesting that drawing further conclusions from such information may not be fruitful. Since gender was stratified from the beginning, it can be argued that none of the theorized control variables seemed to be of any systematic significance for the camp-wide difference in outcome (opinions). Other things that did vary across camps however, were that the no camp had stronger nationalist tendencies and a somewhat more hateful language, were generally more active tweeters, and provided less private information about themselves – than did individuals in the yes camp.

5. Discussion

This paper set out to analyze the extent to which individuals’ levels of social and political trust affects their attitudes towards peace, by testing the hypothesis, H1: The higher the degrees of political and social trust harbored by individual citizens of a conflict nation, the more positive they will be towards the potential implementation of peace.

In the case of the Colombian peace referendum, and with the trust measurements presented here, support for the hypothesis was found. 16 units of analysis were qualitatively analyzed, and there was a considerably larger amount of yes sayers adhering to the (by this study provided) “trusting ideals”, than there were no sayers. All but one individual from the yes camp re-tweeted and participated in conversations with other users, while only two from the no camp were coded as doing so. These two trust indicators together with that of language inclusiveness turned out to be the most fruitful indicators in terms of generating data – which on the other hand turned out to be highly difficult for the violence and (civic) participation indicators. Only a total of five people out of all 16 answered these latter questions, which generated large numbers in the “No Answer” boxes.
Including these latter measurements together with using a conservative and dyadic coding of the answers turned out to be a design that allowed for an overall large portion of missing data. Had the violence and participation indicators not been included in the study, and had the coding been less conservative by placing every individual in either “Yes” or “No” for every category instead of allowing the “No Answer” box – the results would have been even clearer. For a potential future study using the same type of method, therefore, more stable results may be reached by removing or re-formulating these indicators to something more plausible to find on Twitter, and perhaps re-coding the answers so that all accounts could fit into either category.

5.1. Case Implications

There are other implications for the results that regard carrying out this type of study specifically for the case of the Colombian peace referendum. The conflict in Colombia is often considered the longest ongoing conflict in the world, and so may not be the most representative of other conflicts. Attitudes towards the conflict are likely to be very case-specific since almost all citizens have some direct or indirect relationship to the it. In other words, the war is not (or at least did not use to be) something going on in the periphery of everyday life, but has consumed and changed everyday life for a majority of Colombia’s citizens, perhaps making it difficult to generalize any findings to other conflict nations. However, context-based differences in conflict characteristics can however always be said to be the case, and likely to have applied in one way or another to any chosen conflict. Awareness of this thus acts as a reminder to exercise caution when generalizing to non-analyzed populations. This also goes for generalizing from the 16 Twitter account holders to all Colombians who voted in the referendum, further discussed in the next section.

Another important thing to note about the case of Colombia is how closely linked attitudes towards peace are with political preferences. In almost all 16 cases, positive attitudes towards the ongoing peace negotiations were linked with liberal, pro-Santos political views, while negative attitudes correlated with more conservative, pro-Uribe values. Furthermore, clear nationalist tendencies, accompanied at times by both racist and sexist commentary, were consistently more frequent in the no camp than the yes camp. Words like bluff, lies, false, fraud, and corruption were astoundingly often resorted to for those analyzed on the no side.
While such accusations occurred also on the yes side, the overall tone there was substantially more soft and understanding.

The occurrence of these other camp-wide differences may mean that while a correlation between trust and attitudes towards peace was indeed found, the relationship is not actually causal. Instead, political preferences or nationalist tendencies may be the actual reason for the different outcomes in peace attitudes – which would render the theorized relationship spurious.

5.2. Twitter as Research Tool

Another interesting find was that the eight individuals analyzed from the no camp were almost without exception more active, more influential, and more political on Twitter, than those from yes camp. This is in contrast to the more general statistics over Twitter activity connected to the referendum provided by Brandwatch, which shows that the yes camp was overall vastly more influential and frequent on Twitter than the no camp. In fact, around 75% of all related Twitter activity was pro-peace (Guzmán, 2016). This might suggest that the noasers analyzed here are slightly less representative of the actual no camp than those chosen for the yes camp. Rather than representing the large group of Colombian individuals who voted no, they may represent a more radical and outspoken flank of the no camp – which would explain their comparably large influence and the sometimes extremely hateful discourse. In other words, the eight individuals chosen from the yes camp may be a quite satisfactory sample of the population urban people between 18 and 50 who voted yes in the referendum, whereas those chosen from the no camp represent a narrower group of particularly outspoken and uncommonly Twitter active and political individuals.

Alternatively, and perhaps more likely, this may be an indication that the Twitter selection is not an accurate representation of Colombian voters.

This discrepancy between the study-specific selection, the general Twitter activity, and the actual outcome of the peace referendum, calls forth the inevitable need to question the legitimacy of Twitter usage in social science research. Had a study been conducted trying to predict the referendum outcome by using Twitter, for example, the results would predict counterfactual outcomes.
However, since the purpose of this thesis was not to predict an event, but rather to use the already known outcome as a starting point for a psychosocial behavioral study related to complications with implementing peace – the legitimacy question is considered less urgent for this particular paper. It does, nevertheless, suggest that what is observable on Twitter does not always reflect reality, something which should be further emphasized in future Twitter and social media-based studies.

5.3. Causal Chain

The causal chain presented for this study entails the likelihood that high individual trust levels lead to stronger beliefs in parties keeping their promises as well as less opposition to the idea of living side by side with former enemies. This, in turn, is expected to lead to a more positive overall outlook on the prospects of implementing peace, which proves the prediction of the hypothesis (H1) correct. Additionally, both intermediating variables were indeed found to be at least partially in action. For example, a recurring argument in the no camp was that soldiers from the FARC would renege upon their promise and keep up the violence even though they had promised to hand over their weapons. They were called liars and not encouraged to strike a deal with. The Santos government faced similar accusations of bluffing to look good to the international community and neglecting solutions for actual peace for Colombians. While accusing politicians of bluffing and being corrupt was quite widespread also in the yes camp, such accusations seldom regarded the peace agreement or the warring parties’ commitments to peace, but rather politics in general (see Appendix for examples).

While there was no direct mentioning of the prospect of living side by side with former enemies in either camp, the exculpatory characteristic of many tweeters in the yes camp is interpreted as support for the causal mechanism in that it encouraged making personal peace with people of other opinions and learning to forgive people for their previous mistakes and faults. These recurring traits of individuals from yes respectively the no camp are regarded as support for the theorized causal chain, yet further research into the actual arguments of civilians from both sides is encouraged. The main focus of this study was to find support for the co-variance and potential causality between trust and attitudes towards peace – which proved quite time consuming. Therefore, little time and space was left to delve into the intermediate causal mechanisms, a study of which would be of great value to gather further
knowledge of what causes different individuals to harbor different opinions and attitudes towards the conflict they are in.

6. Summary and Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to investigate the correlation between individuals in conflict nations’ levels of trust and attitudes towards peace. The gap identified from previous research was first and foremost a methodological one, regarding the measurements of both the independent (trust) and the dependent (attitudes) variable. Previous studies on individual trust have almost exclusively been conducted via interviews or surveys – rather than on mere observations – and neither variable is particularly well-researched using online behavior and the communication style of the Twitter platform. The cumulative strength of this paper thus lies in its methodology more than its theoretical parts, and natural suggestions for further research emphasize using online resources to draw further conclusions.

Nevertheless, the findings section of this study did support the theory and answer the research question, thus strengthening the idea of a correlation between high trust and positive attitudes towards peace. Furthermore, what with stratifying for gender and controlling for age, occupation, and location, there is a likelihood of the relationship being at least partially causal. However, future research would do well in isolating the relationship further from other possible underlying variables, such as conflict characteristics and – for the case of Colombia – the general Uribe/Santos polarity. Even so, the findings suggest the need for policymakers of conflict nations to invest more in trust-enhancing activities and institutions in order to maximize chances for peace.

Apart from functioning as support for the general theory of how trust may affect attitudes towards peace, the findings in this study shed further light on the polarized characteristics of Colombian society – which is identified as one of the greatest obstacles for the still ongoing peace process.

The largest limitation for this study – apart from newly created and partly subjective indicators of trust – was that of time. With more time and resources, a study combining larger-$n$ quantitative measurements including more control variables, as well as a qualitative case study, could have been conducted. Such studies are strongly recommended for further research, along with widening the spectrum of conflicts and groups.
Lastly, this study has assumed that peace attitudes will affect actual peace in a nation – another phenomenon that should be further researched. In the case of Colombia, that relationship was already given, since these individual were all granted an actual voice in the peace referendum. Finding further support for the indirect effects of individual citizen trust on negotiation outcomes, however, would further strengthen the importance of studies like this one.

In other words, support for the theorized relationship and causal mechanisms was found, further enhancing notions of how trust, violence, and conflict intertwine. While a certain causality between the variables can be argued to exist, however, more and larger studies need to be done before the correlation can be isolated and properly established.

On that note, I argue that the main cumulative strength of this study lies not in these potentially causal findings – but in the presentation of a methodological alternative that is as of yet poorly explored within the field of peace and conflict.
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Appendix

Individual Responses to Trust Indicators

This Appendix contains more in-depth accounts of all 16 individuals’ Twitter profiles, complete with motivations for why they are placed in respective category in the figures and tables under the “Findings” section of this paper. The individuals are presented by hashtag, beginning with the two hashtags for the yes camp.

#SiALaPaz:

@lauraweins is interpreted, from the 30 tweets analyzed and her general profile information, as a middle-aged trans-woman from the capital of Colombia, Bogotá. Her Twitter profile signals a large political and civil engagement. The 30th tweet counting backwards from the 2nd of October is dated on September 12th and regards the referendum coming up; mentioning fear and pride as potential obstacles to peace.

Of the 30 tweets analyzed, eight consist of re-tweets or mentions of other tweeting individuals (these are, in other words, the conversations in which Laura partakes). This is defined as a high number. Furthermore, she is an outspoken trans-activist, two of her tweets featuring information about her personal participation in situations where trans-questions are publicly debated – rendering an affirmative answer regarding participation. Her overall language is inclusive, she oftentimes uses rhetoric such as “we the Colombians” and talks of female inclusion. Additionally, one tweet features a direct aversion to violent tactics, thus defined as a clear “No” in the violent language category – in saying that she cannot comprehend how some people think “plomo” (Colombian slang for bullets) is the way to create peace. Lastly, she has a quite accusatory language towards people of power, accusing several local politicians of lying and hiding the truth. Four tweets contain such accusations in different shapes. There is also a tweet about how “Colombia has become a nation where the church and prejudice have the decisive effect on society instead of the rule of law,” which is defined as accusatory and conspiratorially (@lauraweins, Twitter.com).

@diany_hdez3 is interpreted as a young woman from the (by Colombian standards) medium sized city of Barranquilla. Her 30th tweet counting back from October 2nd is dated in March 2016, meaning she is considerably less active on Twitter than Laura and many others. She is also considerably less political in her Twitter feed and more concerned about other more everyday-related things like food and image. Roughly half of her 30 tweets are re-tweets.
or direct answers to other tweeters, which naturally also puts her in the category of “high” re-tweeting/dynamics. Little of the material analyzed seems like her own words – some are selfies and other images with no text attached to them. There is no mention of any type of communal participation, nor is there any expressions regarding violence or non-violence. However, there is one tweet that explicitly takes the side of “los campesinos” (the farmers), encouraging listening more to Colombia’s farmers, and the general language and tone is inclusive and caring. Additionally, there are two tweets deemed as “accusatory,” one against politicians and one against people who refrained from voting in the referendum (the very last tweet, from October 2nd) (diany_hdez3, Twitter.com).

@ronnryuzzar1 also from Barranquilla, is interpreted as a young man, and highly political. He engages in direct conversation with people belonging to the no-side several times and is a heavy Twitter user, his 30th tweet counting backwards dated September 22nd. None of his 30 tweets are direct re-tweets but a large amount mention other tweeters, and many different other political hashtags that (as argued previously) are a way to take part of a very official debate, are used. This was not originally part of the measurements for “dynamics,” however, and so his dynamics will be treated as low. He expresses the wish to go to Cartagena for the signing of the agreement by Santos and Timocheko (the leader of the FARC) but is not allowed as he is underage. This wish is however interpreted as a sign of participation ambitions. The tweets are very inclusive, often using rhetoric such as “we must do X and X for our country.” Furthermore, there is one tweet that is counted as encouraging non-violence, in stating clearly that “we cannot go back to killing the FARC. He does not use a language than can be called accusatory, but neither does he speak very rewarding or high of enemies or politicians, for which reason this box will be left empty (@ronnryuzzar1, Twitter.com).

Finally, @pabliartisti72 is most likely (due to name and profile picture) born in 72, and so interpreted middle-aged. He is also coded as a man and has set his location to Medellin (Colombia’s next biggest city). He is a busy user, the 30th tweet counting backwards dated to September 24th. Almost every tweet is highly political, emphasizing words like equality. Pablo has an inclusive way of speaking, especially about politicians he likes, rather than focusing on the ones he does not. In other words, the tone is not only inclusive but also quite exculpatory (as opposed to accusatory). However, some tweets regard how the no side in the referendum do not have any “real” arguments. There is no sign of personal participation and nothing concerning use of violence, for which reason these boxes are left empty.
Overall, this is one of the more positive accounts, emphasizing for example the perks in the parties debating instead of fighting. One tweet is accusatory against the Medellín newspaper El Colombiano propagating for the no-side, yet the overall language cannot be identified as accusatory, but rather open and understanding of different points of views (@paloaristi72, Twitter.com).

#LaFeliSidad:
@lindamlucia is interpreted as a young female journalist/social communicator from Bogotá. Her Twitter language is very caring and inclusive. She has up to seven tweets containing words like love and friendship, many devoted to her children, and several “inspirational quote images”. She never re-tweets anyone but mentions other people, often in direct conversation with what seems to be people she knows, 8 times, rendering her re-tweet dynamic level high. She says the real problem in Colombia is corruption, not the war, which in a way could fall in under accusatory language. However, an overwhelming number of tweets have the opposite, quite exculpatory discourse. Therefore, she will not be deemed particularly accusatory language-wise, but rather the opposite. 2 tweets specifically regard how forgiveness is the way forward rather than hate or bitterness. There is, however, no mention of participation and no detected encouraging or discouraging of violence (@lindamlucia, Twitter.com).

@xailiguaran is interpreted as a young girl from Barranquilla, working as a dancer. She seems politically engaged but is not overly active on Twitter – her 30th tweet dating backwards from October 2nd is dated in early August. She is a frequent re-tweeter and conversationalist: with around 15 of the 30 tweets being either or. Many of the conversations are with the same person, seemingly friends, but there are also others – connecting back to NGO’s and other individuals. Her re-tweets include for example quotes about war, from Malala and John Lennon. She speaks in an inclusive way, using terms like; “we, the Colombians,” and has an overall caring language. For instance, in speaking up for “los campesinos” in a picture that says that 85 % of war victims are from the countryside but residents there only represent 15 % of Colombian voters, which she calls unfair. There are no signs of any civic participation or activism, however; neither are there mentions for or against violence or any accusations or claims of corruption (@xailiguaran, Twitter.com).

@haroldmurciag is interpreted as a young man, living in Cartagena, studying dentistry. His 30th tweet dates back to April, rendering him one of the less active Tweeters so far. Many tweets regard music, new songs and different programs or contests about music, and all
mentions of other Twitter users are to famous singers and songwriters. These are many, however, and so he scores a “Yes” in the Dynamics category.

He is now the third person in this hashtag who is not identified in any way in the categorizations of participation or non-violent language. However, there is an emphasis on forgiveness in several of his tweets, which makes for a clear “No” in the category of “accusatory language.” He scores three tweets as “caring/inclusive” because he encourages opponents to vote and talks in open and inclusive terms, and even has a tweet containing the encouragement to “hug a Uribista” (fan of the no side’s main advocate, Uribe). He also quotes many politicians which is deemed extra high dynamics-wise and is deemed an overall sign of trustfulness (@haroldmurciag, Twitter.com).

Finally, @nel_ochoa is interpreted as a middle-aged man working as a journalist in La Guajira (Colombia’s northernmost tip, famous for being the home of the majority of its indigenous people). Because of journalistic work – he seems to participate in a whole lot of community work, such as local political get-togethers in La Guajira. His language and actions are also defined inclusive and caring as he speaks a lot about the rights and possibilities of the Wayuu – an indigenous group known as quite discriminated against. He re-tweets and communicates with other users heavily, and there is no sign of violent or non-violent encouragement or language use. Finally, authorities and politicians are questioned in several tweets, and the word corruption is used twice, rendering a “Yes” in the category of accusatory language (@nel_ochoa, Twitter.com).

#HagaHistoriaVoteNo:

@santamariauribe is interpreted as a middle-aged man from Bogotá. His personal information includes a link to his own webpage and the quote translating to “I think therefore I exist”. He is politically engaged and a heavy Twitter user, his 30th tweet counting back from October 2nd dated to September 25th. He also has vastly more traffic on his page than what has been seen on the yes side, with up to 150 re-tweets on many of his tweets. He has an accusing tone in for example calling his own friends’ decisions to vote yes “bobada” (stupidity). There are many tweets concerning corruption, for example a video about companies in Barranquilla buying yes votes, and one about the situation in Colombia being Obama’s fault. At the same time, he has including rhetoric, always saying “us” and “we” when talking about political situations. He uses many official hashtags such as #Colexit (inspired by #Brexit), #VotoNo (I vote no), #ColombiaDecide (Colombia Decides), thus participating in the public debate – yet he hardly ever directly re-tweets or mentions another tweeter, rendering his re-tweet dynamics
There is an overwhelming use of words like “estafa” (bluff), corruption, stupidity, and indoctrination. There is also a tweet regarding the “terrorism of the state,” another one saying “it would be interesting to see the results of the referendum if Colombia wasn’t bought” (this is before the announcement of the results), one about how “the media decide the results,” and many claims of how the FARC will not keep promises such as surrendering their weapons. José shows no signs of participation or lack thereof in his tweets, but his personal information box shows that he is president of a conservative think tank called “Corporación Pensamiento siglo 21,” rendering a “Yes” in the category of civic participation. Furthermore, there is one mention of how the state “likes to kill,” which could be interpreted as a clear anti-violence statement, and no language suggesting violence in other ways, rendering a “No” in the category of Violent language (@santamariaauribe, Twitter.com).

@disgustavo is interpreted as a young man. His profile does not reveal information about location or occupation. His 30th tweet counting back from October 2nd is dated to September 9th. He has no re-tweets nor is he in conversation with any other tweeters, but rather shares his own Facebook and Instagram posts regularly. There is nothing affirming or declining civic participation, but there is much to be found for the language-related categories. The language is very accusatory and conspiracy-inspired; blaming gays, blacks, and Jews for most things that have gone wrong in Colombia and the world. The same notion of the media deciding the results of the referendum is mentioned here, and much focus is put on the future of Colombia being like its “communist” neighbor Venezuela. There are also conspiracy theories about 9/11 and how Jews seek to extinguish all non-Jewish people, as well as arguments about “homosexual perversion” encouraging pedophile action. Almost all his tweets can be said to belong to an accusatory, conspicuous and excluding category (rendering a “Yes” in accusatory language and a “No” in inclusive/caring), and there is even one tweet encouraging police to be rougher towards Afro-Colombian individuals because they “have brutality in their veins.” This last tweet is interpreted as an encouragement of violence (@disgustavo, Twitter.com).

@ayniinaa is interpreted as a woman but, just like @disgustavo, does not state neither her name nor her location or occupation. Her last tweet dates back to September 27th, and so she is a very active Twitter user. Her tweets are anti-Santos and the FARC, including sayings like “After Uribe had them cornered in the mountains, Santos brought them out and treated them like men” (referring to the FARC). This will be treated as encouraging violence or at least militarism, since “cornered in the mountains” is likely to mean trapped and ready to get rid of
(and since “treating them like men” is made to sound like a terrible crime). She is accusatory in accusing yes sayers of being liars, for example in saying that “they (the yes sayers) say they vote yes to win over FARC in democratic elections, but then they will suddenly vote for Timochenko to give him “a second chance” (Timochenko is the leader of the FARC), and “if I was an animal I would vote yes…” There is no mention of participation or not, and no direct mentions of violence or non-violence. Furthermore, she has five tweets in which she participates in conversations with other tweeters, but also one where she has screenshot someone else’s tweet with a comment by the likes of: “some people are animals and should not be answered or acknowledged online.” Since five is not particularly high to start with and comments like these can be said to be the opposite of a high re-tweet/conversational dynamics, that category will be marked with a “No.” While most tweets are straightforward arguments or thoughts, the language can still be deemed accusatory in the tone against other people (especially the yes side) (@ayniinaa, Twitter.com).

@gloriaagudeloca is also interpreted as a woman. However, this is only an interpretation of her her name and username, as there is no further information provided. Her profile picture is a symbol of a hand painted in the colors of the Colombian flag, and no occupation or location is mentioned. Her 30th tweet counting back from October 2nd is from September 28th, rendering her the most active on Twitter thus far. She re-tweets quite heavily, and participates in conversations via public hashtags. Her main focus is on what the FARC have done over the ages, mentioning their crimes often. There are several tweets about the yes side and the government lying, but also a few quite inclusive tweets with comments like “we have all been victims, we’ve all lived in fear.” In one tweet, she criticizes the UN for not calling Venezuela a country that goes against human rights, with the comment “what else can you expect from this organization.” One tweet further features the Colombian flag with an added color at the bottom (white under yellow, blue and red) and the tweet says that such a defilement of the national flag makes her even stronger in her critical beliefs. There are also several hashtags and mentions of “la patria” (the homeland), and the user is thus deemed to have nationalistic tendencies. There are no mentions about participation or violence/non-violence (@gloriaagudeloca, Twitter.com).
#ConArgumentosDigoNo:

@eandreazd is interpreted (because of her name) as a woman. Her location is set to Medellín, and her 30th tweet dates back to May. Large parts of the feed are devoted to tweets about the environmental situation and animal rights. Therefore, she is deemed inclusive language-wise with tweets like: “it’s impossible to look an animal in the eye and think my appetite is more important than their existence.” She is accusatory however, in saying things like the government will never defend the Colombians, and that the peace negotiators are incompetent. Interestingly, most no sayers analyzed so far have also been pro-UrIBE (which is often related), but she actually shares an article explaining how one need not be a Uribe supporter to vote no. She further refers to a group of no sayers that are not Uribistas, and is not actually opposed to FARC becoming their own political party, but believes that the monetary price for the transition is too large. However, she is not particularly forgiving, arguing that “the FARC cannot simply offer their forgiveness but must beg for it. The potential acceptation of their excuses is the only thing that can be offered.” She does not re-tweet nor converse with other users much, and there is no mention of violence or non-violence (@eandreazd, Twitter.com).

@marcelaospinag1 is interpreted as a middle-aged woman living in Bogotá, working as an audiovisual director, her 30th tweet dating back to the 25th September. Several of her tweets feature her participating in local meetings and fares, rendering a yes in the category of “Participation.” She has a highly accusative and distrusting tone, tweeting things like the EU removing FARC from their terrorist list being another sign of problems in the international community, the FARC lying about surrendering weapons, the negotiations not being what the media says they are, and it being a lie that poor people will have better opportunities in the future. She uses words like engaño (lie) and refers to FARC as the world’s largest drug cartel. At the same time, there are some inclusive tweets using “we” language, and a debate posted where she clearly states her respect for the yes side and democratic norms and values, and she is a heavy re-tweeter and participant in conversations with other users. There are no tweets either affirming or declining a violent or non-violent outlook (@marcelaospinag1, Twitter.com)

@FoxDiaz13 is interpreted as a man because of his name and a partly hidden profile picture. He does not state occupation or location but provides a short description of himself as a patriot who opposed gender ideology and “the tax reform” (a reform which has been mentioned by several other users and is connected with the (at the time) ongoing
negotiations). His 30th tweet is from September 22nd. He has a highly accusatory language, saying that “when those who vote yes see that Colombia turns to Venezuela they won’t admit they voted yes” and “those who vote yes will be death of my future children,” and that nothing the negotiating parties say they will do if the agreement is voted through will be true. Pablo, as several others before him, claims that the FARC is still extremely rich (which the FARC claim they are not), and that almost everything coming from mainstream media is “no cierto” (not true) or even “absolutamente falso” (absolutely false). He almost only posts videos and images with different public hashtags, with no re-tweets or mentions of other users, and there is nothing suggesting an inclination towards either violence or non-violence. Nor do any of the tweets signify inclusiveness, but rather a polarized view of groups and people and an excluding of women from public sphere (@FoxDiaz13, Twitter.com).

@felipecardetama is also interpreted as a man because of name and profile picture, his latest tweet dating back to September 26th. He does not state his location but writes that he is an anthropologist and works on a project for rural development for farmers. Felipe uses the word engañado (more or less meaning: fooled) in just about every tweet and has a highly accusative tone, yet could in a way be argued to be inclusive in saying that even the FARC have been engañado (fooled). He also encourages all people to vote, no matter in which direction. He is a heavy user of hashtags, using tags belonging to both sides to ridicule the yes side and encourage the no side. The days leading up to October 2nd, his tweets become increasingly filled with words like “fraud,” “violence,” “decadence” (referring to Santos), “corruption,” “devilish” (diabolica) and “lies,” accompanied by arguments like that the respectable academics and intellectual thinkers of the nation are silenced by the media and the government. Just like many no sayers analyzed previously, he uses public hashtags heavily but does not re-tweet or converse directly with other users. Also, there is no mention in favor or against violence and nothing suggesting any type of civic participation (nor lack thereof) (@felipecardetama, Twitter.com).