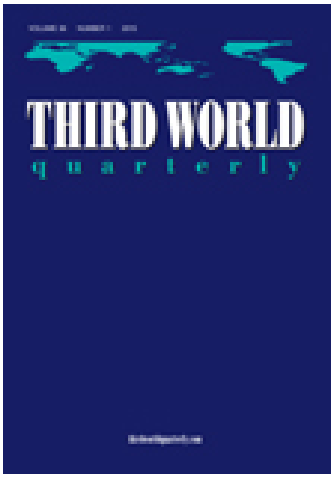

Third World Quarterly
Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:
http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/ctwq20

Teaching silence in the schoolroom: whither national history in Sierra Leone and El Salvador?

Mneesha Gellman[a]
[a] Emerson College, Boston, USA
Published online: 22 Jan 2015.

To cite this article: Mneesha Gellman (2015) Teaching silence in the schoolroom: whither national history in Sierra Leone and El Salvador?, Third World Quarterly, 36:1, 147-161, DOI: 10.1080/01436597.2014.976027

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2014.976027

Third World Quarterly, 2015
Vol. 36, No. 1, 147–161, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2014.976027

Teaching silence in the schoolroom: whither national history in Sierra Leone and El Salvador?

Mneesha Gellman*

Emerson College, Boston, USA

This article addresses the divergent cultures of silence and memorialisation about the civil wars in Sierra Leone and El Salvador, and examines the role that sites of remembering and forgetting play in crafting post-war citizens. In the formal education sector the ministries of education in each country have taken different approaches to teaching the history of the war, with Sierra Leone emphasising forgetting and El Salvador geared towards remembering war history. In both countries nongovernmental actors, particularly peace museums, are filling the memory gap. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork in each country, the article documents how the culture of silence that pervades Sierra Leone enables a progress-driven 'looking forward' without teaching the past, while El Salvador is working on weaving a culture of memorialisation into its democratisation process. The article argues that knowledge about civil war history can raise young people's awareness of the consequences of violence and promote civic engagement in its deterrence.

Keywords: Sierra Leone; El Salvador; education; history; memory; museums

Introduction

> Shortly after the war there were a few NGOs working on peacebuilding but now, nothing. The conversation is about economic prosperity. Now war is a backdrop but the focus is more on boys on the street, men without jobs. Here, people just want to move on.[1]

Joseph Dumbuya stands in the main room of Sierra Leone's new Peace Museum, which he directs, surveying a large canvas painting of a war amputee and the blank space next to it that remains to be curated. 'We have to invest in peace', he declares, even as he faces, in addition to the usual resource shortages that plague projects like this one in the global South, a society-wide culture of silence about the civil war. People ask him why they need the museum when it

*Email: mneesha_gellman@emerson.edu

will just open old wounds. They tell him, 'isn't it better to look forward and not back?'[2] Many post-conflict countries grapple with the balance between remembering and forgetting atrocities, but in Sierra Leone, thus far, forgetting dominates. The Peace Museum's creation, funded initially by the UN Peacebuilding Fund and an international NGO, the International Coalition of Sites of Consciousness, challenges this notion that the best way to deal with trauma is to act as if it doesn't exist.

Sierra Leone made headlines for its civil war from 1991 to 2002, notorious for its widespread sexual violence, recruitment of child soldiers and amputations.[3] An estimated 70,000 people were killed, nearly half the country's 5.7 million people were internally displaced, and much of the country's basic infrastructure destroyed.[4] Driving factors of the conflict in Sierra Leone included power struggles over control of diamond revenues, social unrest over unequal access to inadequate resources, such as education and sanitation, and youth disenfranchisement, as well as spill-over conflict from the war in Liberia.[5] These conflict factors persist and are now aggravated by the 2014 Ebola epidemic.[6] Although in theory Sierra Leone's regime is a constitutional democracy, in practice, democratic capacity is extremely low and, in the absence of outside donor support, it is not certain that the semblance of democratic behaviour will hold up.[7] While donor money has remained relatively stable in the post-war environment, revenue from mining operations is soaring.[8] Resource extraction gives the government funds that do not come with strings attached to democratic performance and this scenario does not foster a need for the government to engage in breaking down the culture of silence around the war.

In El Salvador, from 1981 to 1992 some 75,000 people died in the civil war between the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) and the Salvadoran state. This war is often presented as an offshoot of the cold war rivalry between the USA and the USSR, as the FMLN espoused Marxist doctrine while the state received tremendous military funding and training from the USA as part of the latter's international fight against communism. But, as in Sierra Leone, the conflict in El Salvador centred on basic inequalities and access to resources, especially land, which had historically been concentrated among a handful of elites. The Salvadoran war led to widespread human rights abuses, including assassinations, torture, disappearances, rape and the use of child soldiers, with the vast majority of the offences committed by state military and paramilitary organisations. El Salvador is heralded as a success story for post-conflict democratisation, with the FMLN's successful transition to a political party post-Peace Accords, and their winning of the presidency in 2009. Nevertheless the regime has not yet consolidated democratically, and ongoing problems with civil liberties protections persist, particularly for ethnic minorities and other marginalised groups.

Silence as a strategy of power maintenance by former perpetrators is a compelling explanation for why countries like Sierra Leone have not yet generated popular discourse about the war. Such silence has allowed former members of the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) to bury their controversial roles during the war. But under scrutiny this explanation does not bear out, as the opposition party, the All People's Congress (APC) has been in power since 2007, and could have used the change in government to deliberately distance itself from

the war legacy by fostering dialogue. Yet APC's pre-war legacy was also full of human rights violations that set the stage for the war,[9] nor did it thoroughly purge SLPP elites after 2007, in part because some were in roles that mutually benefited elites across the political divide.

In contrast to El Salvador, where ideologically entrenched practices of the then ruling Nationalist Republican Alliance (ARENA) Party were changed when the FMLN took power in 2009, in Sierra Leone, because party politics was less ideological and more driven by the complex web of resource control, the change in government appears less relevant for democratisation and discourse. In fact, party ideology and the level of actual democratisation achieved are significant predictive factors in theorizing about changes to cultures of silence. Such changes to discourse are more likely after a change in government instead of the democratic transition itself. The level of democratization is measured through evaluating civil liberties protections, especially freedom of expression. The lack of ideology in the Sierra Leonean war makes focus on the past harder to tie to contemporary political agendas, whereas the overt FMLN ideology in El Salvador makes history and memory of the war an extension of the party's populist empowerment goals.

Finally, Sierra Leone exemplifies the idea that 'progress' can be better achieved through a future-gazing approach, rather than by rehashing the past, whereas El Salvadoran FMLN leaders continually reference past struggles as part of their contemporary democratisation efforts. In Sierra Leone the idea that war violence is common knowledge and therefore does not need to be publicly discussed has contributed to the pervasive and institutionalised culture of silence. In reality only older war survivors may know what happened during the war, while those who were small children during the conflict, or born after its conclusion, participate in the silence with only community lore to expand their perspectives. In sum, differences in approach to the role of memory as filtered through the democratisation process have shaped the forgetting and remembering trajectories of Sierra Leone and El Salvador.

This article considers the impact of the cultures of silence and peace discourses in Sierra Leone and El Salvador in the context of citizen formation through formal and informal education. Even as capacity building and infrastructure projects address some of Sierra Leone's needs, I argue that the culture of silence about the war traps Sierra Leoneans in a discourse of forgetting, where the idea of 'looking forward' precludes doing so with an understanding of what caused the war and how it played out. In contrast, in 2009 in El Salvador, the Ministry of Education instituted a revision of history textbooks to include the major timeline of the war; there are several independent museums dedicated to remembering the war. Examining the divergent patterns of remembering and forgetting in Sierra Leone and El Salvador sheds light on the impact of formal and informal education sites as primary catalysts of post-conflict transformation.

Methodologically the article uses political ethnographic data from each country, as well as existing literature, media and policy reports. I spent one year based in Freetown, Sierra Leone (2013–14), and conducted more than 25 interviews with Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) employees, teachers, teacher-trainers and NGO workers, and also examined school materials and talked informally to community members about the quality

and content of their and their children's education. I also spent more than six months in El Salvador between 2008 and 2012, interviewing educators and social movement leaders, and observing memorial sites and museums. Although history and memory may be analytically separate categories that require distinct treatment, I draw on invocations of historical memory in post-conflict Latin America, where conceptually joining the past to the way it is remembered has a long intellectual and practical legacy.[10]

The article proceeds in the following order. First, I consider the relationship between remembering, forgetting and citizen formation in theory, and apply these concepts to Sierra Leone and El Salvador. Second, I examine the approach of MEST in Sierra Leone and the Ministry of Education (MINED) in El Salvador towards teaching the civil war in primary and secondary school classrooms. Third, I look to museums in both countries as alternative spaces for youth education that may contribute to breaking down the culture of silence about civil war. I conclude with an assessment of remembering and forgetting in Sierra Leone and El Salvador and argue that cultures of silence make the reoccurrence of violence more likely than does being able to discuss and learn from the past.

Remembering, forgetting, and citizen formation

Democratisation can be partially observed as political power dynamics between the state and civil society. Especially in democratising regimes the way scholars understand and measure the practice of citizenship has changed over time; citizenship continues to manifest differently under various regime types.[11] I consider citizenship as the status of a person with the duties, rights and privileges bound to a specific territory governed by a state. This draws on Tilly's definition that citizenship is contractual, but the contract is also based on vague assumptions that both citizens and states will defend if either party finds its expectations unmet.[12] The contingency inherent in such a citizenship definition is particularly salient in post-conflict democratisation contexts, where the social contract was shattered by war.

In contrast to citizens in El Salvador, where mobilisation about social contract negotiations is part of regular life, on average Sierra Leoneans have very low expectations that their government will do anything for them, and mobilisation remains correspondingly low. Rights and duties can be ambiguous;[13] in Sierra Leone the notion of citizenship is often conflated with patriotism or thought of as something that grants legal status, rather than as a dynamic pact between people and those that govern them. While in Sierra Leone the formal education sector culture of silence about war history is an extension of civic disengagement from state operations, in El Salvador, the culture of memorialisation about the war has prompted former FMLN insurgents to keep pushing for the ideals they fought for. Their goals now include history education reform along with increased rights.[14] El Salvador's more robust democratic transition has given citizens hope that their empowerment in relation to the state will increase – and with it their disappointment when this expectation does not play out.

Democracy for Tilly is not something that can be proclaimed separately from fostering effective citizenship.[15] Both Sierra Leone and El Salvador need to address how citizens are formed in the first place as part of their democratisation

processes. El Salvador has a dynamic civil society led by former FMLN insurgents, their solidarity members, as well as liberation theology-minded members of the Catholic Church. In this way Salvadorans frequently practice effective citizenship by holding the state accountable on issues ranging from pensions for former FMLN fighters to justice for civil war violence perpetrators. Elections have recently been heralded as free and fair, despite minor ongoing irregularities, and the clear distinctions between FMLN and ARENA party platforms have created topic-fuelled debates, rather than the ethnically divisive behaviours that characterise Sierra Leonean electoral politics. However, rights protections remain poor in El Salvador, and citizen consultation, especially on topics such as mining and other land-use issues, is notoriously bad.

Memory and politics

Memories contain the stories that people use to narrate their lives and play a role in how people make choices about their political and social behaviour.[16] The culture of silence in Sierra Leone has shaped the way that people talk about the war and their own experiences of it; this in turn influences the potential for collective action based on collective memory. As sociologist Barbara Misztal puts it, 'Memory is social because every memory exists through its relation with what has been shared with others: language, symbols, events, and social and cultural contexts'.[17] Although this kind of social memory can exist in many below-the-radar spaces – for example, memories pervade food preparation in eating in Sierra Leone,[18] ancestor spirit rituals,[19] or Freetown's landmark cotton tree[20] – my focus is on war memories that shape citizens in relation to states in democratisation.

Memories also play tangible roles in assimilation projects and therefore become sites of contention. For example, in textual sites such as history textbooks, certain memories are deemed official and thus play significant roles in childhood identity development and citizenship formation.[21] In El Salvador recent textbook revisions have generated forums for debate about the significance of historical memory in democratisation. Collective memories contain the ontologies and epistemologies that people use to reinforce their senses of self,[22] situated in community. These memories provide much of the material and immaterial backdrop to our daily lives.[23] In part, this is because memory serves as a symbol and people use a variety of symbols to link personal realities to communal ones across time.[24] Thus the performance of memory that war survivors enact through narratives about experiences of violence is the glue that binds historic violence to contemporary citizenship. Writing about human rights movements in Argentina, Jelin points out that memory projects are not just about documenting truth but encompass larger agendas that include infusing memory into political culture.[25] The importance of a basic democratic or at least democratising regime in facilitating the link between memory projects and politics serves here as a reminder of the unequal regime-type constraints that Sierra Leone and El Salvador face in addressing their culture of silence and dialogue, respectively. In these different scenarios, El Salvador and Sierra Leone face divergent challenges to memory and history narration that could be used to enforce political legitimacy.

Critics may counter that in fact Sierra Leone's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), created in 2000, made ample space for memory performance. Although the TRC institutionalised war memory through its comprehensive report, its process was haunted by several factors, including the purpose of 'truth-telling',[26] confusion about the roles of the TRC versus the Special Court of Sierra Leone (SCSL), and the TRC's amnesty provision. El Salvador's TRC, established by the 1992 Chapultepec Peace Accords, documents nearly 14,000 human rights abuses in its report, which was published by a UN committee in 1993. The Salvadoran legislature passed an amnesty law that covered all war-related crimes in the week following the release of the TRC report, so both El Salvador and Sierra Leone had TRC processes constrained by amnesty; however, after the truth commission in El Salvador a large part of the military was purged. The following section turns to the role of educational ministries as institutional codifiers of forgetting or remembering in both countries.

MEST, MINED and citizen formation

MEST in Sierra Leone

MEST uses class curricula, teacher capacitation and textbooks to promote the notion of moving forward by forgetting the past, thereby institutionalising the culture of silence within state-sponsored formal education. Like much of Sierra Leone's development, education sector reform is donor driven.[27] Many NGOs and international organisations (IOs) are addressing the structural problems that pervade MEST, including affordability, corruption, teacher quality and teaching resources.[28] The Education Development Partners Group (EDPG), led by donors such as UNICEF, is a forum for education sector reform where donors work directly with the government to find ways to implement donor visions.[29] MEST internalises EDPG recommendations to varying degrees depending on the suggested reforms, financial incentives to do so, and implications for the education sector.

Yet up to now MEST has not included the history of the war at any level of schooling, meaning the official curriculum includes no references to the war. No textbooks include the story of the war or the importance of post-conflict reconstruction,[30] and teachers receive no training on how to teach the war or its implications for young Sierra Leoneans. While the lack of national history in schools is recognised as a problem by some, especially at the tertiary level,[31] other challenges dominate the agenda. Teachers work in difficult conditions, from late and minimal pay to the resulting social stigma that casts those charged with forming young citizens as undesirables. More broadly schools are not seen by Sierra Leoneans as primary sites of citizen formation, but rather as centres for skills acquisition,[32] leaving real citizen formation to the family, village or tribe. But the extent to which the culture of silence is addressed in these informal venues remains unclear and is outside this scope of this article.

MINED in El Salvador

Like that of Sierra Leone, El Salvador's formal education sector suffers from over-centralisation, which hinders its ability to make timely or regionally specific reforms, and it is also perpetually under-funded. Despite these obstacles,

modest but important changes have taken place since the election of FMLN President Mauricio Funes in March 2009, when the FMLN also won a majority of seats in the National Assembly. Under ARENA leadership MINED participated in the rhetoric of memory, for example with former Director Cecilia Gallardo de Cano's introduction to the first volume of the *History of El Salvador* textbook saying, "We need to reconstruct the past…[and] enrich the collective memory".[33] This abstract acknowledgement of memory in formal education has begun to be fleshed out with new details under FMLN leadership.

The *History of El Salvador* textbook was released shortly after Funes took office, and was distributed at no cost to middle-school students throughout the country. Although it had been in development under the previous ARENA-led MINED, Funes' staff revised sections to include information about sensitive areas of national history, like the civil war, that had previously been kept to a minimum or written in highly biased language. During ARENA's nearly 30-year rule, whitewashing history textbooks to conform with the dominant political agenda was routine.[34] For example, former MINED employee Manuel Menjívar told me: 'I found some textbooks to be maybe too confrontational, including photos of massacres saying "Nunca Mas [Never Again]". "El Mozote," "Romero" are too politicized, too gruesome to be presented in texts because they are used in a political way.'[35] The idea of creating Salvadoran history books that do *not* include the infamous massacre of nearly 1000 villagers at El Mozote, or the assassination of peace advocate Archbishop Oscar Romero, both by right-wing-aligned military groups during the war, is cause for concern. Yet Menjívar admits that he personally, as a MINED employee, advocated excluding those events from textbooks.

Although Menjívar is correct that documentation of political violence may be used in political ways by people creating or accessing textbooks, this is the case for all sensitive or contested historical events. History around the world is frequently written in ways that are informed by memory and is therefore not the neutral record it may purport to be. As Guatemala scholar Elizabeth Oglesby notes, war history tends to appear in educational materials either as 'an exposé of brutality or as the triumph of democracy'.[36] But the fundamental job of history textbooks is arguably to present information about the past in as balanced a way as possible, with prompts for critical inquiry by students in a safe classroom environment. The preference for instead excluding stories of political violence from textbooks shows El Salvador's own culture of silence, which lingers even as changes under the new administration have sought to promote dialogue instead.

Alternative sites of peace education

In the face of cultures of silence non-state actors have filled in some of the gap, with, for example, NGOs facilitating special assemblies and training on conflict resolution and reconciliation throughout Sierra Leone.[37] While its initial audience is quite small, Sierra Leone's first Peace Museum opened on 2 December 2013 and is dedicated to educating people about the war and preventing a recurrence of violence.[38] The Peace Museum came about as Sierra Leone's latest attempt to address the legacy of the civil war as the SCSL, created to try war criminals, closed its doors on the same day. Following the official end of the

war in January 2002 throughout the 2000s the SCSL convicted nine people, with notorious warlord Charles Taylor convicted at The Hague and serving his sentence in the UK.[39]

Nested in the former security building of the SCSL grounds, the Museum, through exhibition rooms, a memorial garden and an archive, addresses the violence that Sierra Leoneans experienced and how that violence can be dealt with by institutions and society. The first curated room presents historical documentation about the war and its actors, including amulets and weapons of the civil defence forces. There are hand-painted peace posters by community members and photographs of war survivors, many of whom had limbs hacked off by rebels. This first room is evocative and polished, the result of Dumbuya's collaboration with an American exhibit designer using international donor funds. A second, much larger room is still bare, although Dumbuya has shelves of war-related artefacts donated by Sierra Leoneans from throughout the country that need to be sorted and curated. Exhibits must be carefully thought through to allow those who are illiterate to learn about the war through art and artefacts like paintings, photos, charms and juju items, weapons, and clothing worn by fighters, as well as an audio-visual display.[40] There are also plans to make a child-friendly portion of this second room that will engage young people, though the current Ebola epidemic has put this agenda on hold.

The memorial garden, reached by crossing a 'peace bridge', is a modest lawn covered with white flagstones leading up to a bamboo-framed tent, meant to represent the UN-funded refugee tents many Sierra Leoneans lived in during the war (and which some still live in).[41] The high concrete walls that surround the garden will be engraved with the names of the war dead, if funding is procured.[42] While the exhibition halls and the memorial garden are accessible to casual foreigners and local visitors, including student groups,[43] the third component of the Peace Museum, the archives of the SCSL and the TRC, will be more restricted. The protocol for archival access is still in development, as the Peace Museum is merely the custodian for this collection of documents, over which the Human Right Commission of Sierra Leone maintains regulatory control.[44] All public records of the SCSL and TRC are available now in both print and digital copy, while SCSL confidential records remain in The Hague. TRC confidential and restricted access records will be declassified 50 years after publication. In the long run the association of the archives with the Peace Museum reinforces the latter's status as the central site of war memory in Sierra Leone contributing to breaking the culture of silence.

Although the Peace Museum has real potential to promote war memory and history, museums are accessible to those who have the means to attend – in this case mostly to people concentrated in Freetown. However, the Museum's location in the central neighbourhood of New England on a major transportation route means that most of Freetown's population could access the Museum within 30 minutes for the equivalent of US$0.50.[45] Yet, even as researchers curating the Peace Museum collected the stories of war amputees to share in the exhibition halls and on the Museum website, people asked them: 'why do you want to open those old wounds?' Rather than seeing the war as something that needs to be remembered and learned from, the driving sense in Sierra Leone is that the war should be forgotten so the country can move on.

Sierra Leone's transition to democracy is by no means secure, and there is the possibility of a return to conflict, especially as Ebola exacerbates the daily conditions for the working and lower classes.[46] While there have been a few benchmarks of success in the formal education sector, like nearly reaching gender parity in primary schools,[47] limitations remain pressing. In this context the importance of remembering how conflicts escalated into civil war, and why such a path should no longer be an option, remains urgent. Unless families or community organisations talk about it,[48] children will grow up not realising the history of their country, nor the cost in human life that the war took. To entrench sustainable values of peace, sites of remembrance like the Peace Museum can serve a vital function in addressing this culture of silence.

Alternative sites in El Salvador

Sierra Leone's neophyte status is distinct from that of El Salvador, where the Museum of the Word and the Image (MUPI) was founded in the late 1990s in the capital, San Salvador, by Carlos Henríquez Consalvi 'Santiago'. Consalvi was the former voice of Radio Venceremos, a clandestine FMLN radio station that disbursed information during the war, and he has continued his mission of information through MUPI, which, like the Peace Museum in Sierra Leone, contains exhibits, memorials and a valuable archive of mostly war-related books, articles, photographs and video and audio recordings.

Museums, similar to textbooks, are extensions of certain power relationships that determine what information is displayed and how it is contextualised. MUPI's holdings address different aspects of the war, its precursors and aftermath, but all with the theme that information and dialogue are the key to empowerment for Salvadorans. Recent museum content includes exhibits on the life of Monseñor Romero before he became Archbishop of San Salvador, the writings of Salvador 'Salarrué' Efraín Salazar Arrué, the first Salvadoran author to address the 1932 massacre of indigenous and working class people, and women who were active in social struggles during the civil war. MUPI has also installed an exhibit on migration that discusses the motivations for heading north, the danger in doing so and the rights migrants have in the process. The exhibit links the discussion of migration to issues faced by those who stay behind, and is a powerful connection between historical topics, like the exhibit about a Salvadoran boy who joined the insurgency during the war, and contemporary factors that drive Salvadorans to take risks to potentially improve their lives.[49]

Although the exhibits at MUPI often present subaltern histories that challenge previous government whitewashing of the past, since the FMLN came to power in 2009 there has been new space to contemplate how a civil society organisation like MUPI could insert itself into the mainstream. In an innovative strategy to integrate MUPI's agenda into the formal education sector, Consalvi has negotiated MINED funding through the Department of Education in Art, Culture, Recreation and Sports for school fieldtrips to MUPI. In this programme, begun in 2011, MUPI staff put on workshops with students on a variety of memory-related topics, show audio-visual material that MUPI has produced, and give the students tours of the museum. This collaboration brought more than 1000 students from 25 schools to visit MUPI in 2013, while more than 11,000

students participated in 'Culture Day' workshops with MUPI staff who came to their schools.[50] In this way MUPI's project of remembering has become integrated into school curricula through site visits and increased teacher awareness of the topics encountered at MUPI, as well as new space for student dialogue about the war, national history, indigenous culture and the importance of memory. Although the effectiveness of MUPI's programme on the culture of dialogue has not yet been studied in a systematic manner, its multi-method approach to outreach is generating more opportunities than existed previously for students, teachers and parents to encounter new topics together and then discuss them.

While MUPI leads the memorialisation movement in El Salvador, it is not alone; there are several independently run war and peace museums in other parts of the country, especially in the former FMLN stronghold of Morazán department. These tend to be staunchly leftist martyr memorials run by former FMLN combatants and lack the larger cultural agenda that MUPI includes in its mission. The state also has established memorials that tell state-based stories about the war, while communities such as El Mozote have created independent memorials to address war-time massacres. In short, there is a plurality of voices framing remembrance according to different agendas outside the formal education sector in El Salvador. This means that multiple kinds of war memory are being represented, with location, access to resources and degree of political power shaping the visibility of each represented memory.

Museum-based competing ways of remembering in El Salvador show an active state–civil society discourse, albeit riddled with power differentials, which in turn interfaces with the memories of museum visitors to foster an engaged populace.[51] As DeLugan points out, the gap between history and memory is also the space between 'official versions of the past' and 'underrepresented understandings of the past'.[52] This tension has played out at the National Museum of Anthropology in San Salvador, which, founded in 1883, has presented problematic representations of Salvadoran culture and history even as it preserves many important artefacts. In short, it is not that museums can inherently promote dialogue, rather that, when they are independently run, their alternative narratives can stimulate a culture of dialogue that may affect citizen formation.

Alternative sites of remembrance play a valuable role in post-conflict, democratising countries as citizens strive to find the balance between remembering and forgetting that can allow them to be empowered without being tormented by the past. MUPI offers an example of the way breaking the official culture of silence and misinformation can potentially affect the next generation. The schoolchildren, teachers, and parents who chaperone fieldtrips to MUPI will come into contact with subaltern narratives that they may not otherwise have encountered. Moreover, in the discussions facilitated by the docents, they will be given a chance to practise engaging in respectful dialogue about topics which may have previously appeared taboo. Middle-school students who have visited MUPI can draw on its alternative presentation of history as they discuss the official history as told through the 2009 textbook or encountered in other kinds of media or remembrance spaces. Those in other grades can similarly use MUPI's exhibits to fill in the gaps for all the pockets of silence that pervade Salvadoran education.

Addressing the culture of silence

Education for conflict prevention in post-war contexts requires both teaching war history and facilitating conflict-management skills among young people. This may take place in the formal education sector but museums and other civil society-run spaces can also play an important role in fostering new kinds of history and memory education. In Sierra Leone the drivers of the civil war are still present as poverty, disenfranchisement and unequal access to insufficient resources.[53] In El Salvador, while drivers of conflict such as unequal access to resources, especially land, are still firmly entrenched in the social and economic order, the stronger democratisation process there makes a return to war unlikely. Nevertheless El Salvador has one of the highest murder rates in the world and a slipping state monopoly on violence as the country is racked with gang activity. In this light education reform is not the top priority, and civil society meeting places beyond museums, such as houses of worship, markets and professional organisations can play a role in expanding spaces for dialogue and opportunities for youth. However, MEST and MINED are state institutions that have the opportunity to break the culture of silence about war, and to disseminate peace-building skills like non-violent communication and anger management. If school children do not learn about the historic results of previous conflicts, there is less context for the potential consequences when their own tempers flare.

Although collective amnesia over past atrocity is a coping skill sometimes preferred over the labour of memory, remembering the past and teaching it as a deterrent to future conflict has been successful in places ranging from Germany to South Africa, where school curricula, syllabi and textbooks leave little room to doubt what a conflict-filled future would look like, based on examples from the past. The use of education about past violence as a way to forestall outbreaks of contemporary violence may function, but Sierra Leone's and El Salvador's education sectors need strengthening at many levels to take on this task. In the meantime museums and IO and NGO projects will continue to offer what they can to infuse an awareness of the war – and tools to maintain peace – into society. In the long run perhaps these projects will prompt MEST and MINED to follow suit.

Young people are best prepared to engage as active citizens that can hold governments accountable to the social contract when they know their own history. While El Salvador has a more robust history of social activism in the face of injustice, its youth today operate in a currency of fear about their own economic and physical survival.[54] In this framework many young Salvadorans integrate into gangs, making a new kind of social contract, or they become passive citizens who try to remain inconspicuous. History and memorialisation will not automatically solve these problems, but such knowledge can raise awareness about the consequences of violence.

Conclusion

In this article, I have considered the cultures of silence and memorialisation about the civil wars in Sierra Leone and El Salvador, and documented the role that sites of remembering and forgetting play in crafting post-war citizens. I have also presented ways that the democratisation context in each country has

shaped divergences in respect to forgetting and remembering trajectories. I addressed the theoretical framework of citizenship and examined how remembering citizens are better poised to negotiate the social contract than citizens who, uneducated about the past, instead forget. I then looked at formal sector education in Sierra Leone and El Salvador, driven by MEST and MINED, respectively, as case studies of institutionalised forgetting or remembering.

While MEST's forgetting maintains a culture of silence about the war, it does so amidst myriad structural limitations that impinge on even the most basic service delivery. In El Salvador MINED's release of the updated 2009 history textbook was the first of many steps needed to address the civil war in classrooms. Accounting for MEST's and MINED's limitations in fostering a culture of dialogue in the classroom, I then highlighted museums as alternative sites, where young Sierra Leoneans and Salvadorans, and their educators, may come to learn the history of civil war and its impact on society, stimulating a culture of discourse. While the reach of the museums may be limited geographically to those residing in or near the capital cities, urban migration means that such a reach is actually quite significant in the population overall. In Sierra Leone there is the possibility of creating a travelling exhibit that could take information to the districts, while in El Salvador MUPI has been taking portions of its programmes on the road, and other regional war museums offer alternative versions of history to those of the state. In the long run MEST and MINED will play a large role in deciding what kind of citizens they produce through formal education. In the nearer term informal educational projects provide space to break the cultures of silence that pervade education about war history and memory in Sierra Leone and El Salvador.

Acknowledgements

My thanks to Susan Shepler, Joseph Dumbuya, Joshua Dankoff and colleagues at the Centre for Global Cooperation Research, especially Frank Gadinger, for comments on earlier drafts. I am also grateful for feedback from fellow participants at the 2014 Georg Arnhold International Summer School on Education for Sustainable Peace at The Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research, particularly Elizabeth Oglesby. The Centre for Global Cooperation Research/Käte Hamburger Kolleg kindly provided funding for writing time during a Postdoctoral Fellowship. Any errors remain my own.

Notes on contributor

Mneesha Gellman is Assistant Professor of Comparative Politics at Emerson College, Boston. Her research interests include comparative democratisation, post-conflict reconstruction, cultural rights movements and memory politics in the global South. She is currently looking at how citizens are formed during democratisation processes in the formal education sector and in community-run spaces in Sierra Leone, El Salvador, Mexico and Turkey. Her previous research examined how ethnic minority communities use memories of violence in mobilisations for cultural rights, particularly the right to mother tongue education. Her work has appeared in *Democratization*, *Conflict Resolution Quarterly* and *Development in Practice*.

Notes

1. Personal communication with international organisation employee, Freetown, January 27, 2014.
2. Interview, Joseph Dumbuya, Director, Peace Museum of Sierra Leone, Freetown, January 22, 2014.

3. Rakita, *Forgotten Children of War*, 12–14; Jalloh, *The Sierra Leone Special Court*, 5; and Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission, *Witness to Truth*, 3–17.
4. Gberie, *War and Peace in Sierra Leone*, 2; Jalloh, *Sierra Leone Special Court*, 5; and Kaldor and Vincent, "Human Security," 4.
5. Keen, "Greedy Elites, Dwindling Resources," 67–70; Maconachiea and Binns, "Beyond the Resource Curse?" 104–105; and Gberie, *War and Peace in Sierra Leone*, 2.
6. Clark's work *Assessing the Special Court* (2014) looks specifically at the role of the Special Court in addressing the injustices from the conflict and those that are still potential drivers of conflict today.
7. William Reno, personal communication, 2014.
8. The effects of the Ebola outbreak on both donor money and mining operations are inconclusive as of this writing.
9. Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission, *Witness to Truth*, 1–2, 50, 108.
10. Oglesby, "Historical Memory," 29; and Jelin, "The Politics of Memory," 50.
11. Caraway, "Inclusion and Democratization," 443; Doorenspleet, "Reassessing the Three Waves of Democratization," 383–386; Hanagan and Tilly, *Extending Citizenship, Reconfiguring States*; Kabeer, *The Search for Inclusive Citizenship*, 3–18; and Yashar, *Contesting Citizenship in Latin America*, 35–49.
12. Tilley, "Conclusion," 253.
13. Murshed and Mansoob, *From Conflict to Reconstruction*, 3, 11; and Azam and Mesnard, "Civil War and the Social Contract," 2, 17.
14. Gellman, "Insurgents and Advocates."
15. Tilley, "Conclusion," 256.
16. Gellman, "Memories of Violence," 4.
17. Misztal, *Theories of Social Remembering*, 11.
18. Shepler, "The Real and Symbolic."
19. Shaw, *Memories of the Slave Trade*.
20. Basu, "Palimpsest Memoryscapes," 235.
21. Vakfi, *Human Rights in Textbooks*; and Ceylan et al., *Human Rights Issues in Textbooks*.
22. Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, 22.
23. Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*, xx–xxiii.
24. Eber and Neal, *Memory and Representation*, 6.
25. Jelin, "The Politics of Memory," 50.
26. Basu, "Confronting the Past?" 237–239.
27. Solomon, "Reconstruction Survey," 22.
28. Harding and Mansaray, *Teacher Motivation and Incentives*, 10; and GTZ et al., "Workshop," 11, 20.
29. Haas, "Evaluation of Unicef's Role," 10, 15.
30. Interview, Horacio Modupeh Nelson Williams, Executive Secretary of the Basic Education Commission, MEST, Freetown, January 27, 2014; and personal communication with international organisation employee, Freetown, February 18, 2014.
31. Interview, Abu Kamara, Lecturer and Head of Unit, Peace and Conflict Studies, Milton Margai College of Education and Technology, Freetown, March 24, 2014.
32. Personal communication with Susan Shepler, June 23, 2014.
33. DeLugan, *Reimagining National Belonging*, 49.
34. Such practice is standard under authoritarian regimes. Elizabeth Oglesby discusses how, even after the peace process in Guatemala and integration of war history into curricula, many aspects of the conflict were still seen as too dangerous to include. Oglesby, "Historical Memory," 22.
35. Interview, Manuel Menjívar, Director, Institute for Investigation and Pedagogic Formation, University of Don Bosco, and former Ministry of Education employee, San Salvador, March 22, 2010.
36. Oglesby, "Historical Memory," 26.
37. See, for example, Lemon Aid's Forgiveness Project, http://www.lemonaidfund.org/the-forgiveness-project.html; the Women's Forum for Human Rights and Democracy, http://www.enciss-sl.org/grants/grant-types/micro-project-grants; and Fambul Tok, http://www.fambultok.org/about-us.
38. Content documenting the Peace Museum first appeared in the online journal *Toward Freedom* in March 2013 and is reproduced here with permission. The original article can be viewed at http://www.towardfreedom.com/30-archives/africa/3486-institutionalizing-memory-the-creation-of-sierra-leone-s-first-peace-museum.
39. For details about the Special Court of Sierra Leone cases, see http://www.sc-sl.org/CASES/tabid/71/Default.aspx.
40. Literacy has increased significantly since the end of the war, from 29.3% literacy for those 15 years and older in 2003 to 38.1% by 2007. UNDP, "Sierra Leone Socio-economic Indices," 4. Nevertheless, in 2014, 43% of Sierra Leoneans over the age of 15 are considered illiterate. CIA, "Sierra Leone". There is moderate discrepancy in this figure, as not all literacy surveys capture the role of Arabic, the language of religious instruction in many communities where people may be illiterate in English or Krio but can read and write in Arabic.
41. Interview, Joseph Dumbuya, Director, Peace Museum of Sierra Leone, Freetown, January 22, 2014.

42. Anyone interested in helping with the Peace Museum's development may contact Joseph Dumbuya at slpeacemuseum@gmail.com.
43. The Peace Museum is the second museum in the entire country, with the National Museum in Freetown being the first.
44. Interview, Joseph Dumbuya, Director, Peace Museum of Sierra Leone, Freetown, January 22, 2014.
45. Depending on Freetown's highly erratic and congested traffic.
46. In a 2009 UNDP report Sierra Leone was considered to be the seventh most fragile state out of 162 surveyed countries, on par with Nigeria and Rwanda, though less fragile than Burundi, the Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Iraq and Liberia. UNDP, "Sierra Leone Socio-economic Indices," 8.
47. Personal communication with international organisation employee, Freetown, January 27, 2014.
48. Although NGOs like Fambul Tok, which has set up district-level Peace Clubs, have designed peace-based curricula, there is no evidence that these have been used with schools, but rather as extracurricular community events that, like many donor 'peace' efforts, are mainly focused on economic improvements while using peace-building language.
49. See http://museo.com.sv/es/ for details on the exhibits.
50. Salazar, "Convenio Entre Mupi, Mined."
51. DeLugan, *Reimagining National Belonging*, 107.
52. Ibid., 107.
53. The Ebola outbreak of 2014 has only exacerbated the situation by causing rising food prices, school closures and loss of employment from the expatriate, NGO and business exodus from the country.
54. The wave of undocumented youth arriving in the USA in 2014, primarily from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, reinforces the perilousness in which these young people view their own futures, and factors into their risk calculations.

Bibliography

Azam, Jean-Paul, and Alice Mesnard. "Civil War and the Social Contract." Paper presented at the Royal Economic Society Conference, Durham, April 9–11, 2001.

Basu, Paul. "Confronting the Past? Negotiating a Heritage of Conflict in Sierra Leone." *Journal of Material Culture* 13, no. 2 (2008): 233–247.

Basu, Paul. "Palimpsest Memoryscapes: Materializing and Mediating War and Peace in Sierra Leone." In *Reclaiming Heritage: Alternative Imaginaries of Memory in West Africa*, edited by Ferdinand De Jong, 231–259. Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press, 2007.

Caraway, Teri L. "Inclusion and Democratization: Class, Gender, Race, and the Extension of Suffrage." *Comparative Politics* 36, no. 4 (2004): 443–450.

Ceylan Deniz Tarba, Gürol Irzik, and the History Foundation of Turkey. *Human Rights Issues in Textbooks: The Turkish Case.* Istanbul: History Foundation of Turkey, 2004.

CIA. "Sierra Leone." In *World Factbook*. Accessed April 1, 2014. https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/sl.html

Clark, Theresa M. *Assessing the Special Court's Contribution to Achieving Transitional Justice. The Sierra Leone Special Court and its Legacy: The Impact for Africa and International Criminal Law*, edited by C. C. Jalloh, 746–769. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

Connerton, Paul. *How Societies Remember*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

DeLugan, Robin Maria. *Reimagining National Belonging: Post-civil War El Salvador in a Global Context*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2012.

Doorenspleet, Renske. "Reassessing the Three Waves of Democratization." *World Politics* 52 (2000): 384–406.

Eber, Dena Elisabeth, and Arthur G. Neal, eds. *Memory and Representation: Constructed Truths and Competing Realities*. Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 2001.

Gberie, Lansana. *War and Peace in Sierra Leone: Diamonds, Corruption and the Lebanese Connection*. Occasional Paper #6, Diamonds and Human Security Project, edited by Ian Smillie. Ottawa: Partnership Africa Canada, International Peace Information Service, Network Movement for Justice and Development, 2002. http://www.pacweb.org/Documents/diamonds_KP/9_w_africa_Eng_May2003.pdf

Gellman Mneesha. "Insurgents and Advocates: Women's Claim-making in El Salvador." In *Cuerpo, Educación y Liderazgo Político: Una Mirada desde el Género y los Estudios Feministas/Bodies, Education and Political Leadership: A Gender and Feminist Perspective*, edited by Sara Poggio and María Amelia Viteri, 37–64. Quito: FLACSO/ University of Maryland Baltimore County, Latin American Studies Association, 2014.

Gellman, Mneesha. "Memories of Violence: The Role of Apology in Turkey's Democratization." *Democratization* (April 2012): 1–24.

GTZ, DFID, U4, ACC-SL, MEYS and IIEP–UNESCO. "Workshop: Enhancing Transparency and Accountability in the Education Sector of Sierra Leone." Freetown, April 7–9, 2008.

Haas, Anna. "Evaluation of Unicef's Role as Lead Partner in the Education Sector in Sierra Leone." Unpublished paper by independent consultant for UNICEF. Final Version, July 27, 2012.

Hanagan, Michael P., and Charles Tilly, eds. *Extending Citizenship, Reconfiguring States*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999.
Harding, Jeanne Beryl, and Augustine Tejan Mansaray. *Teacher Motivation and Incentives in Sierra Leone.* Independent Report for DFID. London: Department for International Development, 2005. http://www.iiep.unesco.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Research_Highlights_Corruption/pdf/SierraLeone.pdf
Jalloh Charles Chernor, ed. *The Sierra Leone Special Court and its Legacy: The Impact for Africa and International Criminal Law*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014.
Jelin, Elizabeth. "The Politics of Memory: The Human Rights Movements and the Construction of Democracy in Argentina." *Latin American Perspectives* 21, no. 2 (1994): 38–58.
Kabeer, Naila, ed. *The Search for Inclusive Citizenship: Meanings and Expressions in an Interconnected World*. London: Zed Books, 2005.
Kaldor, Mary, and James Vincent. *Human Security: Evaluation of UNDP Assistance to Conflict-affected Countries – Case Study, Sierra Leone*." United Nations Development Programme Evaluation Office, New York, 2006.
Keen, David. "Greedy Elites, Dwindling Resources, Alienated Youths: The Anatomy of Protracted Violence in Sierra Leone." *International Politics and Society* 2 (2003): 67–94.
Maconachiea, Roy, and Tony Binns. "Beyond the Resource Curse? Diamond Mining, Development and Post-conflict Reconstruction in Sierra Leone." *Resources Policy* 32 (2007): 104–115.
Misztal, Barbara A. *Theories of Social Remembering*. Maidenhead, UK: Open University Press, 2003.
Murshed, Tony, and S. Mansoob. *From Conflict to Reconstruction: Reviving the Social Contract*. WIDER Discussion Paper 48. Helsinki: WIDER, 2001.
Oglesby, Elizabeth. "Historical Memory and the Limits of Peace Education: Examining Guatemala's 'Memory of Silence' and the Politics of Curriculum Design." New York: Carnegie Council on Ethics and International Affairs, Fellows Program, History and the Politics of Reconciliation, 2004. http://www.carnegiecouncil.org/publications/articles_papers_reports/4996.html/_res/id=sa_File1/4996
Rakita, Sara. *Forgotten Children of War: Sierra Leonean Refugee Children in Guinea.* New York: Human Rights Watch, 1999. http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/guine997.pdf.
Salazar, Joaquín. 2013. "Convenio entre Mupi, Mined y Sis Beneficia a Estudiantes de Escasos Recursos." *Diario CoLatino*, September 18. http://www.diariocolatino.com/es/20130918/nacionales/120131/Convenio-entre-MUPI-MINED-y-SIS-beneficia-a-estudiantes-de-escasos-recursos.htm.
Samuel, Raphael. *Theatres of Memory: Past and Present in Contemporary Culture*. London: Verso, 2012.
Shaw, Rosalind. *Memories of the Slave Trade: Ritual and the Historical Imagination in Sierra Leone*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2002.
Shepler, Susan. "The Real and Symbolic Importance of Food in War: Hunger Pains and Big Men's Bellies in Sierra Leone." *Africa Today* 58, no. 2 (2011): 43–56.
Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission. *Witness to Truth: Report of the Sierra Leone Truth & Reconciliation Commission*. vol. 2. Accra, Ghana: GPL Press/Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2004.
Solomon, Christiana "Reconstruction Survey: Sierra Leone." National Accountability Group, 2007. http://www.integrityaction.org/sites/www.integrityaction.org/files/documents/files/Reconstruction%20Survey%20Sierra%20Leone.pdf.
Vakfi, Tarih. *Human Rights in Textbooks*. Istanbul: History Foundation, 2007.
Tilly, Charles. "Conclusion: Why Worry about Citizenship?" In *Extending Citizenship, Reconfiguring States*, edited by Michael P. Hanagan and Charles Tilly, 247–259. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999.
UNDP. "Sierra Leone Socio-economic Indices." 2009. http://unipsil.unmissions.org/portals/unipsil/media/publications/sl_indics%20undp_nov09.pdf.
Yashar, Deborah J. *Contesting Citizenship in Latin America: The Rise of Indigenous Movements and the Post-liberal Challenge*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.