War Memories:

Using Memory to Teach Children about Sierra Leonean Civil War

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Abstract

This Capstone describes how memory develops, evolves, and functions, as well as how memory can be utilized in historical documentation and educational exhibits, by exploring the value of preserving individual, collective, and official memory of war in Sierra Leone.

Research is based on a number of studies that explore the effects of memory in the aftermath of trauma and violence. This work specifically focuses on post-conflict Sierra Leone to discuss the different types of memory that can be incorporated into educational materials. Scientific studies of the psychological effects of the Sierra Leone civil war are also incorporated, as well as personal narratives and autobiographies of former child soldiers.

This Capstone determines that Sierra Leone must preserve and incorporate each type of memory into an educational exhibit for children. To address this need, a grant proposal is also included. The grant seeks to develop a children's exhibit at the Peace Museum in Freetown. It outlines ways for the exhibit to be more inclusive and accessible to children and rural populations. After incorporating the recommendations, the Peace Museum could educate and empower Sierra Leone in an effective and valuable manner.

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Introduction

Civil war erupted in Sierra Leone in March of 1991 as the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), led by Foday Sankoh, attempted to overthrow the national government. This resulted in a bitter 11-year war that left over 50,000 murdered and about 2 million displaced (*Human Rights Watch* 1999, np). Both the RUF and the Sierra Leone Army (SLA) recruited and coerced up to 10,000 child soldiers to join the struggle (*Child Soldiers Global Report* 2008, np), sometimes even forcing them to harm their own families and neighbors.

These traumatic events left deep impressions throughout Sierra Leone, and memories formed among individuals of all ages, as well as their communities. Some of these memories have been gathered in various post-conflict reconstruction efforts, including through the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Memory can be used to recall the past and describe wartime experiences to children in Sierra Leone. However, scientists and scholars debate its formation and purpose. This Capstone explores how memory is constructed and seeks to determine the most effective way of using memory to teach Sierra Leonean children up to age of twelve about the civil war.

Defining Memory

Current literature of memory divides memory into three categories: individual, collective and official memory.

Individual Memory

Individual memory is the recollection of a personal experience. Some argue that the mind is constantly adding, deleting, and editing memories according to their perceived usefulness and significance (Schwartz 1982, 374). This automatic filtering system is important because it allows an individual to remember vital skills and experiences while forgetting less relevant ones that would only take up space or overwhelm the mind.

Others claim that memory forms as the mind differentiates a common or expected event from the unexpected or unknown (Hoerl and McCormack 2001, 140). New events that occur without precedent in the daily routine, such as outbreaks of violence, leave lasting impressions on the mind. The idea behind this theory is that specific events within a daily routine or normalized behavior become forgotten over time, because there is nothing specifically unique about the event that makes it stand out from others. One event is associated with a unique, unprecedented moment; the other event is just one instance of a normalized routine. This theory often proves true regarding long-term memory of traumatic events, since the unprecedented experience diverges from the norm. However, both theories do not account for memories that are suppressed or evolve in detail over time.

Another theory is that individual memory is a process that has a foundation in the past but is interpreted through a present lens, meaning it is constantly evolving (Lavenne, et al 2005, 5). In fact, it is "a process of active reconstructing" (Fentress and Wickham 1992, 40) because a memory is altered each time one retrieves it. For example, St.

Augustine once wrote, "When I use my memory, I ask it to produce whatever it is that I wish to remember" (Augustine 297-298, XIV). This is because individuals subconsciously select the best version of their memories, according to what is most beneficial or relevant to the present environment. This can be seen in the personal accounts of former child soldiers who discuss feeling confident and strong during village raids but demonstrate remorse and sadness in their descriptions afterwards (Hartill 2010, np).

In fact, some oral historians argue that a personal recollection is a competition between identity, memory, and history (Green 2004, 36). Recalling an event intertwines one's perceptions of the past and hopes for the future. It is possible that through the process of retrieving memories of the war, one can subconsciously reconstruct oneself (Anderson 2010, 129). This results in a skewed memory that serves as a bridge between *who one was* and *who one would like to be.* "Defensive idealization" (Dawson 1994, 67) could also occur, in which one creates an alternative self to protect from the effects of trauma and stress. This demonstrates the subjectivity within memory, because it can be altered according to one's current state of mind.

Rosalind Shaw, an anthropology professor at Tufts University, supports the theory that "memory of violence may be embodied rather than narratively articulated" (Shaw 2005, *11),* meaning that one does indeed internalize memories without necessarily showing symptoms of recollection by outwardly expressing it verbally or nonverbally. Yet regardless of how an individual processes an event, violence scars both individuals and communities, and memories of violence will be continuously provoked during the cycle of consciously remembering and forgetting (Shaw 2005, 5).

Silence can occur on an individual basis both internally (through silence or selective narration) or as a result of external factors such as group dissent, which could pressure the bearer of these memories to remain silent. Additionally, self-censorship is often embraced through silence. Yet silence does not necessarily signify deletion from memory, and one can recall a memory without outwardly expressing it (Stone 2012, 41-44). Since each individual reacts differently to divergences from the norm, there is a high variance among comfort and ability to disclose personal information, especially to outsiders like interviewers who have not gained the trust or confidence of the individual.

Collective Memory

Collective memory is the common recollection of an experience that is constructed by a group, such as community members or members of a similar age or ethnic identity. Through the interaction and exchange of stories, individual memories gradually converge into a common association that combines general elements of multiple personal accounts. This leads to group memory constructed of "meandering paths that intersect at various points" (Schramm 2011, 16). Less describes collective memory as the associations that develop between people with similar stories, often through conversation and communication (Less 2010, np). Collective memory can be useful in establishing group identity, cohesion, and camaraderie.

Some claim that the only memories that are remembered collectively by the public are those that coincide in harmony with other memories, because collective memory is a general consensus of the past (Coyle 1995, 348). Individuals then do not contribute their memories that do not correspond with the collective memory, which is

remembered more by future generations than individual memory (Green 2009, 37 and 39).

Some argue that collective memory is less factual than individual memory because as individuals attempt to associate with others of the group to develop collective memory, "the speed and accuracy of [individual memory] retrieval might be less important than developing positive social relationships, and thus accuracy may be sacrificed" (Weldon and Bellinger 1997, 1160). Others claim that there is a "natural tendency...to suppress what is not meaningful or intuitively satisfying in the collective memories of the past, and interpolate or substitute what seems more appropriate or more in keeping with [a] particular conception of the world" (Fentress and Wickham 1992, 58).

Communities often push events into the past instead of actively processing them. According to Peter van der Veer, a renowned intellect and lecturer, "the dark stories of terror and bloodshed are only memorized to be remembered/forgotten," and that people ultimately forget upsetting experiences (Schramm 2011, 8 and 11). He alludes to the fact that instead of digesting the traumatic event on its plate, a group collectively swallows the event merely to get it out of sight. Yet memories can resurface over time, which can lead to the development of collective memory as a community discusses its past.

In conflict, the strong ties that community members once cherished are destroyed, leaving fear, insecurity, and distrust in their place. In the aftermath of war, collective memory emerges as communities rebuild, communicate, and regain a common identity. Yet a challenge of collective memory is that it heavily relies on social factors, because over time, people tend to only talk about memories that they think fit into group norms or

are relevant to the group. This leads to a one-dimensional memory rather than memory that includes the whole spectrum of experiences.

Collective memory develops through a subconscious process that strives to make connections between one's individual memories and those of other community members. Through this process, one's memories are sorted into two categories: those that coincide with and support group norms and those that are unique experiences not included in other individuals' memories. During the war and in the ten years since it ended, a collective memory has organically developed among community members as they share their experiences. This serves as both a coping mechanism and a method of reestablishing common identity and cohesion among group members. As the individual strives to regain his or her identity within the group, he or she offers similar memories but refrains from including memories that are not supported by the general consensus. By focusing on a group consensus, the individuals' memories can be forgotten over time to the larger community.

Collective memory gradually forms and continues to be shaped as more contributors (members of a group with a shared experience) express or revise their individual memories. Individual memories do not have to be compete with one another for retention (Rothberg 2009, 10), meaning that multiple individual memories can coexist. Yet the blend of individual memories into a collective memory leads to a blurred representation of the past rather than vivid first-hand accounts of the experiences. Generalization via reliance on collective memory leads to desensitization among the masses, because specific emotions and experiences of individual memory are neglected.

Official Memory

Official memory is the formal, documented history of an event or experience, often commissioned by a political or investigative body. Official memory is taught to children at school, and future generations have access to the official memory through textbooks and reports. Because official memory is commissioned and published by a state actor like the government or an international organization, it is often altered to support political interests (Shaw 2005, 16).

The official memory of Sierra Leone is recorded in the extensive Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). The TRC developed out of the Lomé Peace Agreement between the rebel group Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and the Sierra Leonean government in 1999, with objectives to

> create an impartial historical record of violations and abuses of human rights and international humanitarian law related to the armed conflict in Sierra Leone...to address impunity, to respond to the needs of the victims, to promote healing and reconciliation and to prevent a repetition of the violations and abuses suffered (*Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission* 2004b, 24-25).

The TRC had three stipulations in its investigation: "truth must be known, truth must be complete, truth must be officially proclaimed and publicly exposed" (*Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission* 2004b, 80). To find this truth, the TRC's Information Management Unit interviewed children and adults throughout the country and produced a report drawn from the interviews. The TRC also created a video version and pictorial version of its findings for children, as well as educational materials to be incorporated into curriculum for various academic levels.

While the nationwide collection of interviews was a step in the right direction, it does still not represent a complete record of the truth. Because interviews were optional,

only the memories of those who felt comfortable articulating the past were included. In addition, the confidential aspect of the interviews relieved individuals from accountability, meaning that they could embellish their memories without repercussion. (*Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission.* 2004b, 178)

Unlike individual memory and collective memory, official memory is not fluid. Once it is recorded, it does not have the ability to evolve organically. Instead, a conscious effort must be taken to revise official memory, which is time-consuming and costly.

Ultimately the goal of the TRC interviews was not the preservation of memories itself, but rather the utilization of memories to determine the causes of war and best methods of reconciliation and healing. In addition, there was a general misunderstanding within communities of the purpose and incentives of participating in the interview collection process. Some community members that were interviewed were "very concerned that the government may be doctoring the report" (Bash-Taq, quoted in The Sierra Leone Working Group on Truth and Reconciliation 2006, 11). The political element of the Report could create a misrepresentation of the past in an attempt to provide hope for the country and appease donor organizations by presenting an optimistic, recovering society.

Some individuals were afraid that they would be punished for giving their statements to the TRC. Many believed that the TRC was working with the Special Court to take judicial action, though they are separate entities. According to one child, "We thought the TRC were going to take action and take us to court" (quoted in Cook and Heykoop 2010, 179). Another individual claims, "I was told by the elders that I would go to prison if I gave a statement to the TRC....I now regret not talking to the TRC. I would

still like to tell my story" (Ndomawa, quoted in *The Sierra Leone Working Group on Truth and Reconciliation 2006,* 7). Others believed that they would be financially compensated for expressing their narratives (Cook and Heykoop 2010, 180). The confusion and lack of clarity regarding the purpose of the TRC prevents its record of official memory from being completely transparent and objective in its investigation and findings.

Due to the confusion over the TRC interview process, the personal narratives gathered by the TRC do not offer a complete or unbiased analysis of the events of the war. There is a need for renewed opportunities for individuals to speak about their individual and collective memories. A new opportunity to discuss one's memories is especially important since time allows people to internally reflect on, process, and articulate memories. In addition, individuals might disclose different memories to a nonpartisan interviewer than they had previously disclosed with the TRC due to a different in environment and motivation.

Comparing Memory

Each type of memory presents certain challenges. For example, it can be difficult to verify individual and collective memories that are not supported by historical documentation, such as dated records or photographs. Typically collective memory is considered more accurate than individual memory, because a group's consensus is supported by a wider range of people.

Truth and Reconciliation Commissions battle a very difficult task in their collection of individual memory, since witnesses do not maintain unbiased, coinciding narratives. Instead, their individual memories are affected and altered by additional experiences and interactions that are exchanged between them and those around them (Lavenne, et al 2005, 9). This is a common challenge that was also exemplified in Rwanda, in which community members' personal testimonies were affected by their sense of justice and personal security (Le Mon 2007, 17-18).

Time, a central component of memory, is subjective, human, and flawed. However, establishing a time frame is important in documenting the past. This dilemma exemplifies itself in the recent controversy regarding the young Ishmael Beah, a former child soldier and author of A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier (2007), which outlines his experience as a combatant for the Sierra Leone Army (SLA). He is credited as the first person to write a memoir about child soldiering, and he offers generous insight into the perspective of a child soldier trying to comprehend life during and after the war.

While Beah's account does offer a rich and detailed account of life in the SLA, many people have criticized him by claiming that he embellished parts of the story. Most widely disputed is his assertion that he participated in the war for three years, which is supported by a map of his journeys across the country on foot, as well as detailed description of events that occurred from month to month and year to year, such as being forced to take drugs like cocaine and kill or maim villagers. However, various international journalists have accused him of deliberately exaggerating the length of his involvement, as local records and villagers' accounts assert that he must have participated in the war for only two months (Baram 2008, np).

Beah describes his village being attacked early on in the war. He writes, "The first time that I was touched by war I was twelve. It was January of 1993" (Beah 2007, 6). Yet local records show that his village was not attacked until 1995. If Beah was not recruited until after his village was attacked, this would mean that he was only in the army for a matter of months rather than years before he was released in 1996. Interestingly enough, Beah and his publicist have refused to budge; they continue to claim that there are no inconsistencies in his autobiography, and that Beah's photographic memory has allowed him to accurately recall that period's timeline of events.

Amidst the controversy, Beah still relies on his personal recollections, stating, "I have tried to think deeply about this, and my memory only gives me 1993 and nothing more. And that's what I stand by" (*Associated Press* 2008, np). In this example, individual memory conflicts with official memory because of discrepancies in recollection of time.

Sierra Leone adopted the TRC to understand causes of the war and promote healing and peace. The TRC then conducted a nationwide program to collect narratives from individuals to understand what had occurred before and during the conflict. Unfortunately this approach only appealed to the minority who wanted to openly discuss the past, since the majority of the population preferred a "forgive and forget" approach (Shaw 2005, 4). In addition, a time and monetary limit prevented the TRC from accepting every interested person's statements. Ultimately just 1,316 statements were collected (Shaw 2005, *146*).

Due to the limited number of individuals were able to tell their stories, a wide range of individual memories were left unrecorded, leaving just a "partial portrait" of the

war (*Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission.* 2004b, 83) It is impossible to develop an objective official memory out of a sample of individual memories, especially those that rely on time and special awareness, elements that are often internally muted or exaggerated due to trauma and confusion.

Individual memory, collective memory, and official memory provide unique perspectives of the past. Individual memory contains the value of personal experience, insight, and emotions, though it is very subjective and cannot always be verified. Collective memory unifies communities and presents a consensus of the shared experiences, though by doing so it can generalize and overlook specific emotions and experiences. Official memory provides a central, documented account of history that lasts throughout time. However, it presents an incomplete portrait of the war when utilized in education materials. Therefore each of these types of memory is limited in scope.

Preserving Memory in Sierra Leone

A comprehensive, age-appropriate museum exhibit that incorporates the three types of memory and continually revises and expands its memory archives could prove to be an effective way to teach Sierra Leonean children about memory of the civil war.

Sierra Leone suffers from a lack of historical institutions that provide closure by offering "good feelings" and "innocence" (Schramm 2011, 13) to encourage healing and acceptance of the past. Just one official museum and a national archives building exist in Freetown; apart from that, only a handful of memorials are scattered across the country. The country lacks a culturally relevant, formal, and permanent opportunity for children to

learn about the past while communities mourn over loss, find inspiration for peace, and ultimately gain closure.

The Group for Children in African Museums (GCAM), established in 2001, has determined a need for children's exhibits in the continent (Arinze 2011, 12). Through its efforts, various countries have developed successful children's components to their museums. For example, the Livingstone Museum in Zambia attracted so many children through a song and dance cultural competition that the performance space became overcrowded due to unexpectedly high attendance (Muloongo 2009, 4).

Memory of war and violence is often localized (Sontag 2002, 35), meaning that it is typically consolidated into a memory for communities within the region of conflict, preventing those who did not experience the conflict to emotionally connect with and learn from it. For this reason, it is vital that a nation recovering from conflict utilizes individual, collective, and official memories to preserve and promote the history of its civil war. Otherwise the lessons learned will be forgotten. Museums not only educate outside populations about the history of a region but also serve as a constant reminder to local communities that their history is real and is valuable.

Establishing a Museum Exhibit

There are many avenues available for the preservation of memory, but a museum exhibit is an effective way to teach children about the past because it can incorporate different learning styles and appeal to different populations. For example, the "Remember the Children: Daniel's Story" exhibit at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum successfully educates children about the Holocaust in an age-

appropriate manner. It was developed by multiple child psychologists and educators that prioritized sensitivity to complex and mature themes of violence and persecution. The exhibit is designed as small home in which children can walk through the rooms and learn about Daniel, a Jewish child who lived during the Holocaust. By listening to radio clips and seeing family photographs in the house, children become part of the exhibit and begin to identify with him. Children can consequently grasp the fear and insecurity of families during the Holocaust while learning its history as well. Because memories of the past are presented in an appropriate manner that appeals to children of multiple ages, millions of children visit the exhibit each year (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum nd, np).

Unfortunately museum-goers typically do not feel responsible for contributing to the historical memory of the museum (Crane 1997, 54) because they are have a passive outsider's perspective and do not identify with the material presented. Therefore the Peace Museum should encourage active participation in the preservation of memories by incorporating the narratives of individuals and communities throughout the country and establishing an interactive exhibit that effectively educates children by providing opportunities for children to listen to stories, view photos of the war, and reflect on their own families' experiences.

Museum Success

Western museum exhibits currently strive to be interactive in design (Adams 2010, 157), which means viewers participate in or contribute to an exhibit. To reach this goal, exhibits encourage viewers to look at, learn about, or participate in educational

activities. Encouraging child attendance should also be considered when designing an exhibit in Sierra Leone, because children have traditionally been overlooked as potential museum visitors (Chang 2006, 172). Some curators believe that high levels of interaction are needed to stimulate interest and learning in children, because play is vital to the formation of a child's world view (Adams 2010, 163). This means one must encourage playful interaction within exhibits to stimulate interest and comprehension in the subject.

Children learn the most from museums when they visit multiple times (Falk and Dierking 2000, 103). This is because the novelty of interactive exhibits wears off and children begin to digest concepts they indirectly grasp through play. Therefore, children should be encouraged to revisit the museum to absorb the most information from an exhibit. Adults can provide the opportunity for children's repeated attendance through field trips and family outings. Museums can also encourage attendance by offering special rates and activities for classes and families.

Crowd size and quantity of exhibits are major determinants in the amount of information a museum viewer absorbs. (Adams 2010, 161). Museum-goers can more easily concentrate when an exhibit is free from distractions that a large number of people present. In addition, a large crowd creates a sense of urgency as people feel inclined to move through an exhibit to allow for others to enter.

Within Sierra Leone, the National Vision project successfully attracted hundreds of children to the National Museum in Freetown. This exhibit was successful because it incorporated over two hundred fifty pieces of art from the national community (Cook and Heykoop 2010, 176-177). This demonstrates how institutions should establish an "active and constant process" of retelling history (Schramm 2011, 14) to effectively educate,

because the process incorporates people's own experiences and provokes emotional reactions and attachments to the themes presented.

The TCR attempted to teach children about the civil war through video and pictorial versions of the Report, as well as educational materials for classrooms. In addition, Sierra Leone was the first country to give specific consideration to children in the investigation and reporting of the conflict (Cook and Heykoop 2001, 161). However, the materials have been criticized because they are still largely incomprehensible to children (Monforte 2007, 170). For example, the children's report contains many concepts that are difficult for children to grasp, especially those that refer to sexual exploitation and violence. Though the report includes a partial glossary, terms like "sex slave" (*Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission* 2004a, 3), "rape" (*Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission* 2004a, 7), "amputated" (*Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission* 2004a,* 14) and "mutilated" (*Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission* 2004a, 22) are used but never defined or simplified. This further alienates children because it still presents too much information for young children to digest. This could be due to the TRC's attempt to create a one-size-fits-all document for children up to age fourteen, instead of creating reports that are tailored to specific age levels. Instead, an exhibit that focuses on younger children and is developed and evaluated by child development specialists could effectively teach about the past using appropriate terms and concepts.

Peace Museum Exhibit

This Capstone finds that the upcoming establishment of the Peace Museum in Freetown, Sierra Leone provides an opportunity to develop an age-appropriate exhibit and corresponding educational materials for children of all ages that utilize individual memory, collective memory, and official memory to retell the story of the civil war. For an exhibit to successfully incorporate the three types of memory, various elements must be considered: community involvement, reconstruction of identity, support for victims, community acceptance, and accessibility.

Community Involvement

An exhibit should demonstrate the fluidity of individual and collective memories and present a variety of perspectives so children can gain multiple insights into the war. Individuals must have the opportunity to continually express their memories in order to fully articulate and reflect on their experiences while sharing more with their communities and others learning about the conflict. In addition, research shows that museums are ineffective if viewers cannot emotionally connect with exhibits (Chang 2006, 176).

A special exhibit should be designed specifically for children, as they do not have personal memories of the war and will be the most influential in determining the country's future. Children are often excluded and overlooked as a target audience of historical exhibits, especially in developing countries where funding is limited and precedence is lacking. In addition to the cultural perspective that children have less to contribute (Mann and Theuermann 2001, 44), there is also a missing link within the information exchange that exists between younger and older people. In fact, overall

knowledge and comfort in discussing conflict differs dramatically between age groups (Betancourt 2008, 575). This is because often publications intended for a younger audience are actually written by adults with little contribution or consultation by children. However, children are a vital population because their perspectives will shape the future of their communities and countries at large.

Exhibits must appeal to all age groups to best promote its message of historical preservation and peace. This can be accomplished through the incorporation of visual and audio presentations rather than a reliance on text, which children tend to skip over in museums (Chang 2006, 178).

In addition, an exhibit's presentation affects the public's internalization of ideas, though the presentation itself is sculpted by the experiences and memories of the preservers (Schramm 2011, 6). Collective memory of the war in Sierra Leone is shaped not only by adults and older community members but also by the young soldiers and children that were so dramatically affected by the war. These less powerful age groups should also be incorporated into the process of memory preservation.

Reconstruction of Identity

Since history sculpts local identities (Shaw 1997, 869), communities should pay special attention to the way their history is recorded and retold. In addition, community members must play an active role in archiving local history. Without this active role, individual and collective memory will diminish over time, while the political collective memory will remain documented.

Beah's personal narrative reveals the cultural importance of age and its implications in the civil war. Because the cultural norms dictate that younger people give reverence to older people, there was an extreme culture shock when young children were given authority and responsibility as soldiers. They matured and became accustomed to being treated as adults in the war through more responsibility like leading groups of other children in battle.

Yet as soon as they were demobilized, child soldiers were expected to revert back to the previous norms of being deferential to the older community members. Their actions were also overlooked, since the community practices its expression "there's no bad bush to throw away a bad child" (Stovel 2008, 307), meaning that children were accepted back into the community regardless of their participation in the war. However, at times this approach devalued the children's sense of self-worth because they wanted to be held accountable for their actions (Verhey 2001, 8). This caused a great deal of ongoing struggle during the reunification process. For example, Beah recalls the hardships of being told that he was forgiven and not responsible for the crimes he had committed, describing how "it was infuriating" (Beah 2007, 138). Yet collective memory can overlook the children's desire to be treated like adults, which is why individual memories must be preserved.

By banding together and establishing a common historical account, communities can recover from war and reestablish a new identity. According to Schramm:

> Trauma shared by a whole community creates a potential public space for retelling. If a community agrees traumatic events occurred and weaves this fact into its identity, then collective memory survives and individual memory can find a place (albeit transformed) within that landscape (Schramm 2011, 9).

Support for Victims

In the preservation and promotion of memory, one must validate victims' experiences, regardless of the accuracy of their testimonies. There must also be continual support for victims and communities in psychological distress, which includes child soldiers and individuals who struggle to come to terms with their past.

Individual memory is subjective and can prove unreliable, because specific events affect the way one perceives and experiences time (Zimmer 2008, np). For example it is plausible that two months of continual fear, violence, and trauma was interpreted as a period of years in Beah's mind.

Regarding his attempt to recall pre-war times, he writes, "The war memories had formed a barrier that I had to break in order to think about any moment in my life before the war" (Beah 2007, 149). This demonstrates traumatic events can be deeply ingrained in one's memory and prevent one from recalling a peaceful past.

Dr. Warren Meck's research has proven that the consumption of certain drugs, especially cocaine, drastically affect one's perception of time (Zimmer 2008, np). Because drug use was commonplace among child soldiers, their individual memories could contain exaggerations or misperceptions. However, it is still important to record these memories because they demonstrate a unique perspective of the war. One former child soldier recalls his drug use before participating in horrendous violence in village raids:

> There were two options. Either I drink the palm wine or smoke the marijuana. When I was growing up, most of my friends were Muslim, so

they were preaching against the alcohol, the palm wine. I was indoctrinated not to drink palm wine. My commander was threatening me. He said, you must take this. I said please, I don't want to take this. If you refuse my command, I'll kill you. When taking this and going on ambush, you will have confidence in hearing the guns, even if you are shot, you will not know. Even if you are killed, you will not know (Hartill 2010, np).

Another former child soldier describes ingesting gun powder and pills, stating "that is what they would do when they wanted us to have mayhem days, so when we got up we could go for up to three days without stopping, just to kill... In the bush we committed a lot of atrocities. We did many evil things" (Farah 2000, np).

These circumstances could alter one's memories of the Sierra Leonean civil war, meaning that individual memory is a less credible source. For example, this could explain the difference between Beah's individual memory and his community's collective memory of his village's raid. However, the value of individual memory lies not only in its factuality but in its ability to illustrate one's emotions and experiences. Therefore individual memories should be preserved, regardless of their historical validity.

The effects of trauma unmistakably affect the formation of memory because it reveals the common results of first-hand exposure to violence, including post-traumatic stress disorder, social dislocation, and psychological problems (Betancourt 2008, 566 and 571). For example, one-third of former child soldiers self-reported symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder even years after the war had ended (Betancourt 2008, np), Yet unfortunately, the country does not contain the capacity to adequately diagnose and treat all Sierra Leoneans with these symptoms. Though there were various rehabilitation programs in place, former child soldiers too often left the war with the dark realization

that they were without families, jobs, or education and struggling with drug addictions and mental health issues.

By encouraging individuals to express themselves and address their personal experiences, they are confronting their pasts, which brings them one step closer to recovery and healing (Betancourt 2008, 14). St. Augustine offers his interpretation of memory and its healing ability:

> For without being joyous now, I can remember that I once was joyous, and without being sad, I can recall my past sadness. I can remember past fears without fear, and former desires without desire. Again, the contrary happens. Sometimes when I am joyous I remember my past sadness, and when sad, remember past joy (Augustine 297-298, XIV).

Individuals that are interviewed must be provided with sustainable access to counseling services to cope with memories and emotions that are brought up throughout the interview process. This will encourage the healing process and allow individuals to come to terms with the past and prepare for the future.

Community Acceptance

Community acceptance is central in the reintegration process for victims of war, and lack of understanding is often what prevents them from returning home (Williamson 2006, 190). In fact, reintegration is a lot more successful when the individuals sense the support of their peers (Betancourt 2008, 575).Yet collective memory of war tends to foster anger and animosity towards the perceived perpetrators (Paez and Liu 2009, 9). While justice is a motive for many people and organizations to uncover truth, memories must be accepted at face-value and not manipulated for a political goal. Instead,

individuals that disclose their participation in violence during the war must be supported and treated fairly during the interview collection process and supported in integration efforts in their communities.

This exhibit will encourage community acceptance because it embraces collective memory but also provides a platform for community members to speak out about their individual memories. The act of retelling one's individual memories empowers the individual by affirming that his or her experience is worthy of preservation. In addition, the act of retelling and remembering encourages healing, since one can express his or her experiences out loud and verbally sort through his or her past. The continual collection of personal narratives also allows the recipient to gain insight into multiple perspectives of a singular event and invites outsiders and members of future generations to understand personal experiences and emotions of the war.

Accessibility

The exhibit must be accessible to rural areas and in multiple languages. Though 61.6% of Sierra Leoneans live in rural areas (World Bank 2012, np), the Peace Museum and the National Museum are both located in Freetown. This is understandable, considering that capital cities have more resources, including funding and professional support. However, the concentration of museums and memorials in Freetown excludes the majority of the population from participating and consequently developing more insight into the war. In addition, rural populations present a specific challenge to information dissemination. For example, though the TRC children's report was distributed to different children's organizations throughout the country in 2004 and 2005,

less than 11% of children reported that they were aware of the report (Cook and Heykoop 2010, 178).

Interviews should be conducted in various rural areas, especially those that were not visited by the TRC. Each person should have the opportunity to present his or her memories to be documented and incorporated into an educational exhibit. These interviews should be recorded in one's preferred language at one's preferred location. In this way, the comfort and familiarity of the interviewee is prioritized. The inclusion of additional memories also serves to empower communities that might feel typically excluded from official memory.

In addition, rural populations are more homogenous than urban populations. This means that children of rural areas have little access to diverse people, ideas, experiences, and memories. The establishment of museums throughout the country rather than in one centralized location (Freetown) would be very costly. Instead, an exhibit should be designed specifically for its mobility. A traveling exhibit with accompanying educational materials available in local languages would effectively promote national awareness and unity by presenting common themes while demonstrating specific regional experiences.

Conclusion

Scholars describe three types of memory: individual, collective, and official. Each type of memory serves a specific purpose and has unique benefits and drawbacks. Because memory is constantly evolving, it is subjective and influenced by the environment in which it is remembered.

This Capstone concludes that an effective way to teach children the history of civil war is the establishment of an exhibit that incorporates individual, collective, and official memories. The exhibit should promote community cohesion, empowerment, and inclusion, especially in rural areas and among victims of trauma. The exhibit must be age-appropriate and appeal to children of a variety of ages.

By providing space for Sierra Leoneans to come together in solidarity and understanding of their past, exhibits that promote individual memory will shape the future of Sierra Leone by valuing personal struggles and honoring hope and perseverance. As individuals are encouraged to share their stories, the nation, as well as the world, will benefit from the plethora of new information and insight. Children will become gain a stronger understanding of the past, individuals will heal through the recollection of memories, and communities will grow stronger in unity as collective memories are vocalized and included in a comprehensive exhibit.

Recommendations

Four recommendations could be implemented to guarantee a high quality exhibit that will teach children the history of the Sierra Leonean civil war through various forms of memory.

1. *The exhibit must be accessible to rural populations.* A traveling exhibit with educational materials should be developed to distribute to rural communities so the majority of the population has access to a wide range of memories of war.

2. *There must be a renewed effort to interview community members.* Because memory is not stagnant, there is a need to continuously record memories to create the most holistic understanding of the war. An additional round of interviews will build off of the existing statements collected by the TRC, which will build the national collection of individual and collective memories.

3. *The interview process should remain politically neutral.* Individuals often provide their statements in the hopes that their perceived perpetrators will be brought to justice. However, this exhibit must focus on memory of war as objectively as possible so that children can learn from others' memories and formulate their own conclusions.

4. *Audio and visual components should be included in the exhibit.* Sounds and pictures can help children better comprehend their history. In addition, the incorporation of non-written sources will allow an illiterate audience to participate in the learning process.

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