"Like Blood is to the Body"
The Role of Teachers in Building Liberia's Peace

Doctoral Dissertation

by

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Abstract

A decade after emerging from a fourteen-year civil war, Liberia's peace and its school system remain fragile. This work explores the role, both real and potential, of Liberian teachers acting as key players in their country's peacebuilding process. Specifically, it presents a series of Appreciative Inquiry professional development workshops, combined with other methods, held in Monrovia with over seventy teachers, the aim of which was to understand how these teachers see themselves as peacebuilding actors, and as role-models for young Liberians. Drawing upon a multidisciplinary theoretical framework, this study explores how study participants may transform their teaching practice to promote peaceful gender identities and foster cooperative interaction, making schools key loci for peaceful socialisation.

This present work, in its examination of peacebuilding processes, brings together numerous bodies of literature which have hitherto been unconnected. By building new multi- and inter-disciplinary theoretical frameworks, this study explores new options for teachers as agents in creating sustainable cultures of peace. Incorporating educational and gender theory with the realm of international politics, alternative interpretations are presented for the relative failings of peacebuilding programmes in years past, and new, innovative approaches and actors proposed.

By employing emerging methodological approaches, such as Appreciative Inquiry, the core study discussed in these pages seeks to complement existing research on education in war-affected societies by presenting existing teacher-initiated practices. While the research of the role of teachers in peacebuilding is only now emerging, this study offers one of, if not the first foray into comprehending how teachers themselves understand their role in the process, particularly as role-models. By identifying and addressing key gaps in the post-war education discourse with an eye on teachers, and by identifying new avenues for future enquiry, this study presents much needed new scholarship for the benefit of both scholarly discussion, and policy advancement.

Abstrait

Une décennie ayant écoulée depuis la guerre civile au Liberia, qui ravagea ce pays pendant quatorze ans, la paix et le système éducatif dans ce pays demeurent fragiles. Cette thèse explore alors le rôle, tant réel que potentiel, des enseignants et enseignantes du Liberia en tant qu'agents clefs dans le processus de paix de leur patrie. Spécifiquement, ce texte décris une série d'ateliers de développement professionnel axés sur les réussites et les atouts (Appreciative Inquiry) tenus pour une soixante-dizaine d'enseignants et enseignantes à Monrovia, le but desquels visait à mieux décerner comment ces professionnels de la pédagogie se voient en tant qu'acteurs pour la paix, et comme modèles de rôle envers la jeunesse de leur pays. Se fiant à un encadrement théorique multidisciplinaire, cette présente recherche explore à quel niveau les participants à l'étude sont en mesure de transformer leurs pratiques pédagogiques afin de mieux promouvoir des masculinités et féminités saines, ainsi que promulguer des interactions coopératives, faisant ainsi des écoles des lieux de socialisation pour la paix.

Ce texte, par l'entremise d'une analyse des processus de formation de cultures de paix, rassemble et lie plusieurs corpus préexistants qui sont néanmoins restés jusqu'à présent en isolation les uns des autres. Se fiant à l'élaboration de nouveaux cadres théoriques tant multidisciplinaires qu'interdisciplinaires, cette thèse explore la possibilité de nouvelles options qui serviraient aux enseignants et enseignantes en après-guerre cherchant à transformer leurs pratiques pédagogiques afin de promulguer, chez leurs élèves, de nouvelles identités masculines et féminines qui sont à la fois saines et promeuvent la coopération, faisant ainsi des écoles des lieux de socialisation importants pour le développement de la paix.

Démontrant l'utilisation de méthodologies ascendantes, tel que l'Appreciative Inquiry, l'axe principal de cette recherche est centré dans sa complémentarité vis-à-vis les études préexistantes touchant l'éducation dans les sociétés affectées par les guerres, se concentrant sur les pratiques pédagogiques. Bien que la recherche dans le rôle des enseignants et enseignantes dans la promulgation de la paix est encore dans son enfance, cette thèse offre une des, sinon la première enquête visant à comprendre comment les enseignants et enseignantes se voient eux-mêmes en tant qu'agents dans ces processus socio-historiques, et surtout dans leur capacité d'être des modèles de rôles. En identifiant et discutant des lacunes clefs dans le discours de l'éducation en après-guerre, portant l'oeil spécifiquement envers les instituteurs et institutrices, et en identifiant de nouvelles questions de recherche, cette thèse propose un nouveau savoir important pour les grandes discussions académiques et politiques de cette matière.

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Any years-long undertaking such as this would not be possible in the least without the caring goodwill and support of others. I thank my family and my friends for their support throughout this process, but I also wish to highlight particular gratitude for certain individuals without whom I could not have completed this project.

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Finally I must thank my beloved Sarah, who has borne the brunt of this grand undertaking of mine, and whose support and patience have seen no bounds over the past years. I owe so much of this to you. Mille fois merci.

Preface

This thesis is my original, unpublished, and independent work. It builds upon my own prior professional experience both in the field of peace operations, particularly in West Africa, and as a certified and experienced teacher. Through this doctoral dissertation, I contribute numerous elements of original scholarship and contributions to multiple fields of study.

First, I advance the understanding of possible agency of teachers within post-war peace-building. This rests in part to an inter-disciplinary reinterpretation of key theoretical concepts such as peace itself, which is described herein as a form of cultural practice. In this process of deconstruction, I also identify new dichotomies within violent masculinity that shed light on the propagation of mass violence. Second, this study is one of the first to apply Appreciative Inquiry methodological approaches in research with teachers in war-affected contexts, as well as a means for initiating discussions on values that underpin gender identity formation. Most significantly, this study is also one of the first – if not the very first – to examine the self-perceptions of teachers as agents in the realm of peacebuilding.

The study described herein complied with the ethical guidelines stipulated by McGill University, and was granted approval by the McGill Research Ethics Board.

Jules Sisk
February 8th, 2015

List of Acronyms

AED	Academy for Educational Development
AFL	Armed Forces of Liberia
AI	Appreciative Inquiry
BFF	Better Future Foundation
CPE	Center for Peace Education
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
ECOMOG	Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group
ECOWAS	Economic Cooperation Organisation of West African States
LFF	Liberian Frontier Force
LPC	Liberia Peace Council
LTTP	Liberian Teacher Training Program
LURD	Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy
MOE	Ministry of Education
MODEL	Movement for Democracy in Liberia
MOPGEL	Movement for the Promotion of Gender Equality in Liberia
NPFL	National Patriotic Front of Liberia
NTAL	National Teachers Association of Liberia
PAR	Participatory action research
PRA	Participatory rural appraisal
ULIMO	United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy
UNMIL	United Nations Mission in Liberia
YBB	Youth Beyond Barriers

Chapter One

Theoretical Context: Peace as Social Practice

1.1 Rationale

Since emerging from fourteen years of civil war in 2004, Liberia has strived to re-construct itself while transforming gender relations (Bauer, 2009), and has diligently tried to re-build a scarred educational system (Roberts, 2011), Under the leadership of Africa's first elected woman President, this West African nation, despite progress made, still faces huge hurdles on its road to sustainable peace, most notable of which is the ongoing scourge of the Ebola virus, which, as this very thesis is submitted for consideration, still inflicts its suffering upon the Liberian people, including teachers, students, and their families. This epidemic is, however, not the only challenge faced, as Liberians must also cope with the continued legacies of war. As Benda (2010) notes, throughout the country, once classes do resume normally, these will still be

> composed of ex-rebel fighters, refugees, internally displaced persons, sexual abuse victims, and amputees. As the students enter these classrooms, they remain scarred from a life of unending conflict. All they have known in their short lives is killing and war. (p. 221)

While the challenge posed is massive, it is not impossible. However, any chance at succeeding in increasing access to quality education that promotes values of peace requires a prominent role by teachers, and as such they must receive adequate training and support in order to promote learning in their students within a difficult set of circumstances. The purpose of this research is to examine that very issue: the professional practice of teachers in Liberia as it relates to building a sustainable culture of peace through quality education. More specifically, I explore both how teachers view themselves within this process, and the policy options for supporting their success. Of the former, there is little doubt that Liberian teachers see themselves as necessary for peace. As one such teacher stated anonymously regarding the role of teachers for peace, and which ultimately gave this work its title: “Making sure that the message of peace is part of [the teachers'] daily presentation in their every days lesson. Their role is so important like blood is to the body, when the blood stoped [sic] flowing life is gone.” Yet the great challenge lies in linking this willingness with the necessary skills for success. What, exactly, does building peace entail, and what skills do teachers require to take on this task? Through this work, I hope to contribute to the knowledge-base of a new and small but growing field of study that examines pedagogical practice in war-affected societies (Weldon 2010).

I build this work on two postulates, which I develop in the first two chapters, and which form the theoretical foundation upon which my research is constructed. The first postulate is that peace is a socio-cultural practice: it is a learned behaviour that is practised and re-practised. The second postulate is that education is a key socialising force, and that teachers are therefore key agents in socialising children into behaving peacefully. Yet this socialisation is subject to innumerable variables such as teachers' own experiences and identities. As peacebuilding is a socialisation process certain questions beg asking: do teachers view themselves as agents in this process? In what way? However, before education-as-peacebuilding policy is implemented, it is essential to understand whether teachers view themselves as being players in this process, and, if so: how? Furthermore, it is important to establish what skills might be required to take on this role, and to gauge to what degree they possess them. Based on this set of premises, then, I lay out the following questions I seek to answer through this research:

Research questions

a. To what extent do Liberian teachers see a role for themselves within their country's peacebuilding process?
b. Given that the national document, *Professional Standards for Teachers in Liberia,* stipulates that the teacher "is a model of citizenship" and "a moral role model" (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 8), to what extent do Liberian teachers view themselves as such, including seeing themselves as role models for the development of peaceful gender identities?
c. To what extent do Liberian teachers see themselves as able to incorporate activities and strategies that promote peace into their teaching?

This thesis is structured in two parts to address these questions in the most efficacious manner. While simple on the surface, the questions themselves contain certain key terms and concepts that require thorough de-construction in order to be provide meaningful answers. For this reason I commit the first three chapters to clearly establishing the theoretical and contextual frameworks. Specifically, in the first chapter, I elaborate the meaning of 'peace', 'peacebuilding', and 'peaceful gender identities' in relation to these questions, and explore learning processes through which they develop. This allows me in Chapter Two to focus on the socialisation role of teachers, both traditionally, and potentially, and, in Chapter Three, to explore the specific socio-historical context of Liberia. In sum, this first part of the thesis, is a broad, multi- and interdisciplinary review of diverse sets of literature that examine and relate the relevant fields of study and practice in order to establish a firm theoretical foundation upon which such research is based, and within which it takes place. In the second part – the remaining chapters – I present how I transformed this theoretical framework into field research. I explain how I planned out and conducted intensive research work in the greater Monrovia, Liberia area. Using mixed qualitative and participatory methods, I worked with over 70 Liberian teachers to explore their views on how they might be role-models in their country's peacebuilding process. The aim of the field research was to use an assets-based approach, exploring how teachers in Liberia identify as peacebuilders, and to identify what actions they might be taking to not only view themselves as peacebuilders, but concretely take action in the classroom. I describe this process, its generated data, and my analysis and findings, in the remaining chapters. I chose Liberia as the setting both because of the particularities of its peace process, as I cover in the third chapter, and because of my professional experience in West Africa.

Background – Situating Myself as a Researcher

This research is a convergence and continuation of past professional and academic experiences. I am a trained and experienced teacher, and as part of my masters' research, I wrote a paper exploring the relationship between war and education in Angola and Nicaragua (see: Sisk, 2004). Upon completing my masters' degree, I found a position with a Canadian non-governmental organisation (NGO) that specialised in training soldiers, police officers, as well as humanitarian and development workers. The organisation's mission was to prepare such professionals for deployment into United Nations (UN)-sponsored peace operations, such as peacekeeping and peacebuilding. For over five years, I developed and facilitated courses and workshops on numerous topics related to the field of peace such as: negotiations, conflict analysis and resolution, planning, gender issues, and disarmament for training audiences that included Generals, Police Commissioners and Cabinets Ministers.

Through this work, I was able to develop a refined understanding of the essential service that United Nations peacekeeping deployments provide. However, I also became a keen student of the current system's limitations in achieving the laudable stated goal of peace. In particular, I was struck by how institutionalised the process had become, and how focused it was on the UN itself. Moreover, my sense was that peace policy was very centred, if not too much so, on questions of security. The predominant culture seems to place the military at the heart of the process, with other security groups like the police at the periphery, and beyond that periphery were "other actors", or indeed, groups to be acted upon: NGO's (often seen as a homogeneous lump), "civilians", "beneficiary populations" or "other civilian actors". Whether these were nurses, teachers, bureaucrats, or even restaurant managers was never quite specified. The sense given was that they were ancillary at best, but not part of the core of actors that matter. In fact, I even remember that during one simulation training exercise that involved military staff from some fifteen countries, they evicted staff and students from an (albeit imaginary) school in order to set up a UN military command post.

The more I examined peacebuilding as it currently exists, the more I felt – knew – that there was a fundamental piece missing. Questions that seemed obvious to ask, such as: "What is the place of schools in the aftermath of war?" and "What role can teachers play in helping societies emerge from war?" were completely absent not only in discussions, but also seemingly from thought. That was what led me to pursue my doctoral research: to help answer some of these questions, and also, perhaps more importantly, to understand why they are not an important part of the current conversation on peacebuilding. It is work that I believe essential because, as it currently operates, internationally-led peacebuilding is failing. Efforts to bring peace to war-stricken countries have increasingly seemed inadequate to meet those challenges left by violent strife. Paris (2010) articulates that peacebuilding's "record [...] has indeed been disappointing" (p. 338). However, he contends that the model need not be abandoned, but that a critical examination be made of it so that its efficacy might be improved.

My contention, and the aim of this study, is to investigate the feasibility of integrating teachers as key agents in the peacebuilding process in order to fulfil Paris's quest for increased success. However, trepidation is required. In considering the possible role of teachers, I am brought back to a Chilean documentary, *Chile, the Obstinate Memory* (Guzman, 1997) which had looked at high school students in newly-democratised Chile watch a once-banned documentary – *La batalla de Chile* (Guzman, 1979) – on the coup that had ushered in that country's dictatorship. The students were overwhelmed to have their entire history turned on its head. But what about the teachers? How might they have experienced having to teach the opposite reality from the previous day? To best mobilise teachers in times of great social upheaval, it is important to understand how teachers view themselves and their abilities. It is the starting point of reform, and it is here that I focus this study: the teachers themselves.

1.2 Redefining Conflict and Peace for Better Peacebuilding

The principal argument I present is that peace must be understood as a socio-cultural practice, namely a self-perpetuating process that requires action, and not a simple state of existence. To borrow from Bekerman and Zembylas (2012), peace should be seen as a verb, not a noun. Peace can only be built sustainably with such an understanding; otherwise, peacebuilding efforts will forever be insufficient and fall short of the mark. Moreover, my tenet is that because peacebuilding has in the past been based on little or no sound conceptual framework (Barnett, O'Donnell & Sitea, 2007), the range of actors involved in building peace has been both too narrow and at times inappropriate. In order for long-term peace to thrive in war-affected societies, new actors must be included. In this work, I make the case for teachers as key peacebuilding agents.

In the past decades, international peacebuilding efforts have focused largely on building state institutions, such as parliaments, courts and police services (Barnett *et al.*, 2007), which is necessary, but also insufficient unless accompanied by a major programme of social education that fosters the development of core values, attitudes and behaviours necessary for these institutions to function properly. As state institutions are only as effective as the individuals who animate them, they are unlikely to produce any substantial results if they lack a supporting culture. To employ a computing metaphor: peacebuilding is lacking the necessary software. Antal and Easton (2009) describe the problem as follows:

> [D]emocracy is necessarily a *social learning process;* a cumulative "apprenticeship of new behaviours and skills rooted in social exchange, collaboration and conflict resolution. No society becomes democratic overnight whatever label it adopts, and citizens do not acquire related knowledge, skill and attitudes instantaneously. The necessary social capital, institutional frameworks and personal aptitudes must be built up over time and in progressive stages." (p. 601, emphasis in original)

This chapter is therefore dedicated to de-constructing how knowledge, attitudes and behaviours are shaped, in order to better understand what makes up a *social learning process*, particularly in war-affected societies, and thus to better understand how schools and teachers "have a key role to play in preparing young people to become responsible citizens who value democracy" (Weldon, 2010). My approach is to ask two key questions that have largely remained under-examined in the literature: what type of culture – that is to say what core values, attitudes and behaviours governing social interaction – is necessary for peace to thrive? And, how can this culture of peace be fostered and developed?

My answer to these questions falls in two parts. First, I critically examine the current state of peacebuilding, both conceptually and in practice, and identify its shortfalls. Second, I define how peace is a social practice that is largely dependent on how power is exercised within a society, which itself is dependent on other cultural practices, key amongst which is gender, and the implications for peacebuilding. As mentioned above, this is also very much a multidisciplinary study. The discussions in each section of this chapter emanate from differing bodies of literature such as peace and conflict studies, development studies, feminist studies, pedagogy, history, international relations (IR) and political science. I have tried to take great care in clearly defining terms which may have different usage depending on the discipline. As will become evident as the chapter develops, the meaning of terms matters. While at first glance the scope of this discussion might seem quite broad, it is undertaken with an honest intent to avoid conducting the study in a myopic manner, disregarding the greater politico-cultural context. If a premise of this study is that the current actors in peacebuilding conduct their affairs with an overly narrow gaze, it would be disingenuous on my part to repeat the same mistake, albeit from a different vantage. For this, I require a panoramic view of peacebuilding, using carefully explained terms that promote interdisciplinary dialogue.

The first such term is conflict, the alleged obstacle to peace. Perhaps more than any, I believe the varied use of this term to be a source of great confusion and misunderstanding. Not a synonym of war or strife, I contend it is rather a necessary social driver. As soon as two or more parties desire different outcomes from a given situation, or desire finite resources, there is conflict. However, it is this very conflict which becomes the engine of change within a society (Dayton and Kriesberg, 2009; Reardon, 1993) as it forces decision-making and problem solving. Conflicts are not inherently negative, and can be resolved through many means, of which violence – or war when on a large scale – is but one. War is not a synonym of conflict. It is a course of action *chosen* by parties involved in a conflict who hope to resolve it in their favour. In order to get their way, some parties will actively select the use of large-scale, orchestrated violence [1]. It is cognisance of this reality that has led UNESCO, for example, to include in its foundational constitution the pronouncement that “wars begin in the minds of men” (cited in Mayor & Adams, 2000); with war being a chosen action, so too, then is peace.

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[1] Even if few or no deaths occur, the overt move to resort to mass violence is considered here a war, contrary to certain view points which require a certain arbitrary minimum number of deaths for a conflict turned violent to be officially considered a “war”, such as the Uppsala Conflict Data Program which requires a minimum of 1,000 battle deaths per year (http://www.pcr.uu.se/UCDP/data_and_publications/definitions_all.htm). The declaration of war or mobilisation of forces may trigger many consequences of war, such as displacement, before any shots are fired.

It is with this distinction in mind that I deliberately use the terminology of "post-war" or "war-affected" rather than "post-conflict". The choice in wording leads to three significant conceptual differences. One, that war has stopped does not indicate that the conflict which provoked it has disappeared. This contradicts a widely held conception of peace, particularly in international relations, which is dubbed 'negative' peace, or peace as the absence of war. It is common currency to find synonyms for peace such as "durable war termination" (Jarstatd and Sisk, 2008, p. 239), and every activity that follows a cease-fire is dubbed 'post-conflict'. While a halt to the violence of war is required in fostering a culture of peace, it is only a first step. Moreover, such a negative understanding is not conducive to good policy, as it leads to the promotion of 'not war' as opposed to an ongoing process, and contains the inherent assumption that the conflicts that led to the violence are resolved. That being said, in the policy arena of international relations, a halt in fighting has grown to become a hallmark of success in achieving peace as opposed to a starting point for peace, sometimes with catastrophic consequences.

Perhaps because it is the most visible, and therefore politically useful, form of policy *vis-à-vis* civil wars, bringing fighting between belligerent parties has become the preferred policy option for 'making' peace, seeing its use rise steadily over the past quarter-century (Toft, 2010). However, it is this very type of approach to peace that most often fails: Toft (2010) argues that not only is 'peace' brokered by negotiations likely to relapse in to war, but subsequent rounds of fighting will be deadlier and more violent, as the 'peace' is often used as strategic cease-fire that allows the stockpiling of weapons and re-organisation of fighting elements. What may explain this is that peace settlements involve bringing to the table the belligerent parties in a war, and attempting to appease them by sharing power between them, almost always excluding the victims of war. Those who chose violence are rewarded with access to power, thus (re)legitimising its use as a means to achieve desired results. In this sense, peacemaking policy works against peace: it focuses solely on the first step in a long journey. Second, "post-conflict" can lead to facile analysis as it would seem to imply that the violence was caused by one single conflict, rather than multiple social dynamics. As will be shown below, societies are rife with competing narratives and interests. Over-simplification of the causes of violence will invariably lead to topical or deficient post-war programmes. Finally, the third implication of conflating violent strife with conflict is that societies or countries devoid of violence are esteemed to be devoid of conflict. What differentiates peaceful from war-affected societies is *the internal capacity to transform or resolve conflicts with means other than violence*. This does not mean that violence disappears. Rather, its use in a peaceful society becomes the least preferred option for resolving conflicts, and is severely limited. In other words, peaceful societies are characterised by a pattern of choices by most[2] members that involve non-violent means to resolve conflicts. These choices are governed by certain social norms, values, beliefs, and behaviours. Peace, as I further explicate below, is a form of culture, rather than a state of existence: societies practice peace by repeating patterns of behaviour that stem from, and reinforce, certain core values and beliefs.

This distinction goes beyond the semantic: it is highly consequential in how we can approach the business of peace. If war is a choice made by parties in a conflict, then avoiding war involves two fundamental components. One, parties must have at their disposal multiple, non-violent options for the resolution of disputes, and two, parties must also prefer those options and related outcomes. Therefore, peacebuilding must accomplish dual goals. First, it must generate new options for conflict resolution or transformation within a society, and second – and just as important – it must transform attitudes and beliefs in order for those new options to be preferred. Additionally, peacebuilding must encourage new behaviour that includes those options. What then, shapes the behavioural patterns of individuals? Peacebuilding policy's current inadequacies, are directly linked to its inability in addressing these questions and stem from poor conceptual grounding.

For instance, one attempt to move beyond the aforementioned negative peace paradigm is the concept of 'positive' peace. Positive peace is built around the idea that certain institutions and processes can be developed that promote peaceful co-existence within and between societies. Fostering these in the wake of war would therefore help build peace, and it was this causal logic which led to the evolution of 'peacebuilding' in the early 1990's, with a focus on de-militarisation and democratisation (Call & Cousens, 2008; Smoljan, 2003), that is to say the dismantling of armed forces and the building of democratic and economic institutions. However, no clear definition of what 'peacebuilding' actually *should* be was ever developed[3], leaving the door open to broad interpretation. Through this door swiftly entered many development organisations, who were able to frame their core development activities as peacebuilding activities. Donor countries, for whom peace was a politically useful symbol, quickly obliged and increased their funding exponentially (Barnett *et al.*, 2007). However, the relationship between development agencies and donors quickly became distorted into a recycling of bureaucratic formulas. Goetschel and Hagmann (2009) explain that donors disburse funds based on their short-term political priorities through specific management model formulas, and to access those funds, development organisations script their activities to fit the recipes of donors. The end result has been that a 'peacevelopment' industry has sprung up, that "'black-boxes' peace into an empty shell devoid of meaning" (p. 64)[4]. Donors may not understand, or even consider, the cultural dynamics that (re)create violent conflict, and therefore promote topical solutions that may have little to no impact on the relationships, meanings and identities that support violent cultures (Cock, 2000). While the promotion of democratic institutions, for example, may be positive, they are insufficient if those populations intended to make use of them do not understand their purpose or their functioning. It is easy to forget that the model of modern democratic institutions emerged from British and continental European cultures, and reflect a specific worldview. Importing them into new societies therefore must include shifts in social practices so the institutions function as intended. [5]

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[2] Here I am speaking generally. There may be instances where violent sub-cultures exist within larger polities where violence is common place, such as certain regions in the United States. Detroit, MI for example, has over 2000 violent crimes per 100,000 people, while Virginia Beach, VA, has about 170 (FBI, 2013). I will develop this point further in my discussion on the state.

[3] For example, the United Nations (2000) in their *Report on the United Nations Peace Operations*, also known as the *Brahimi Report*, after its chief writer, ambiguously defines peacebuilding as "activities undertaken on the far side of conflict to reassemble the foundations of peace and provide the tools for building on those foundations something that is more than just the absence of war."

Positive peace nonetheless offers a welcome step toward sustainable peacebuilding. Bureaucracy and politics aside, it recognises that development activity increases the opportunity cost of violence. The more people have to lose, the more cautious they are likely to be in risking their livelihood. Alternatively, influx of wealth may create situations of winners and losers, or in other words, conflict. Therefore, unless alternate conflict-resolution is implemented, legitimised and used – all of which require shifts in behavioural patterns – the issue remains that violence may still remain a preferred option. Acknowledging the contribution of positive peace, I also feel it represents only a partial solution. What is required is for individuals to seek to resolve conflicts in a non-violent manner. Once this is a near-universal pattern only then may we say that peace has been built.

1.3 Social Scripting: Linking Actions with Power

It may seem that up to this point I have been vacillating between macro-concepts such as war, and micro-concepts, such as individual behaviour. In this section, I demonstrate how the two are inseparable, and may even present a false dichotomy. Rather, I present these concepts as being different perspectives on a similar phenomenon: much as sea water does not cease to be so when examined under the lens of a microscope, neither do large-scale human systems, such as countries or cultures become any less human simply by widening the view. Changes to the smallest units of measure will inevitably lead to changes in the overall structure or process, just as in an examination of the bonds between those units, highlighting one of the key precepts of Giddens (1984) and his theory of structuration, where he argues for a duality between the micro and the macro, between the actor and the structure: “the production and reproduction of social action are at the same time the means of system reproduction” (p. 19). In deciphering the bonds between people, the practice of power becomes very telling: examining the nature of power, and the relationships between individuals and groups of individuals, it becomes possible to de-construct larger concepts such as that of the state – the guiding construct in so much of the study and practice of politics – and re-examine the actions of states, not as abstract inevitabilities but as consequences of decisions made by specific individuals based on multiple interests such as kinship, class, ethnicity and gender. The aim is not to reduce the understanding of states to a behavioural exercise, but rather to re-insert the individual back into the discussion as the state is meaningless as a concept if not understood in conjunction with the personal motivations of those who operate it. In this study, it will be made clear with the case of Liberia in Chapter Three: how the 'state' acts is dependent on the actions and values of key individuals within specific networks of power.

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[4] Curiously, while many peacebuilding activities have been taken up by the development industry, Barnett (2008) argues that discussion of peace has not figured in the development discourse, and "almost no reference to a wider idea of peace that involves development issues" (76) exists in peace literature.

[5] In certain cases, argues Abrahamsen (2001), specific neo-liberal models of democracy and 'good governance' imposed on countries in Sub-Saharan Africa might in fact be so disruptive to clientèle networks of power that they constitute a root-cause of violence.

Though change in individual behaviour does not equate to changes in state behaviour, by changing the behaviour of individuals within a society, the behaviour of the state will inevitably change. States are run by persons, and those persons are governed by the values and mores of their society; the two are intertwined. Consequently, change on a large scale must inevitably begin in a single person – understanding that the impact of change will vary depending upon the person and how that person is positioned to exercise power. The first step in achieving this change is to understand how patterns of behaviour are shaped in the first place. If one's aim is to have individuals practice peace, as was defined, then it is imperative to examine how and why people learn to see and understand their world, and behave the way they do. Fortunately, the field of gender studies, particularly through post-structuralism, has shed much light on comprehending the shaping of norms and attitudes by examining the values that are (re)produced in the practice of gender roles. An overview of this literature is essential in understanding what shapes cultures of peace, and, from this literature, I discuss the process of social scripting to aid in shifting cultural practice toward peace.

Defining Power

To explain social scripting theory, I begin with Bronwyn Davies's (1990) description of power. Eloquent in its simplicity, she explains that power within a society is essentially the same as a game. Power refers to the rules that dictate who is allowed to play the game, the rules they must follow on the field and who is meant to watch. However, she goes one step further. Power is also manifested through norms that govern non-players. For example, if a ball goes out of play, must the spectators throw it back into the field? The game works because all involved follow the rules and norms. These are not set in stone, but rather are (re)legitimised every time they are enacted and uncontested. It is learned behaviour: by observing those around us, we imitate and reproduce the observed behaviours. This understanding of power emanates from earlier work by other theorists such as Foucault (1984), who outlined how within roles are embedded rights and responsibilities – cornerstones in the exercise of power. Certain roles may not simply be assumed unilaterally, but require acceptance by others should an individual wish to take on a specific role, including its label. Only once accepted by others, for example 'as an author', can an individual then exercise the privileges associated with that role. Power, for Foucault (1980), exists only as a practice – it is only evident once exercised, and it is only possible as a relation of force (*rapport de force*). It can then only, by this definition, exist within a complex web of relationships and via social interaction (Foucault 1997). Power therefore relies on a cycle of acquiescence (Foucault, 1980): left unchallenged, roles and responsibilities of the *status quo* remain intransigent. What Davies's model achieves is distilling the essence of Foucault's theory of power, and in a sense gives it a practical and applicable simplicity. Yet, it also leads to much more complex questions. First among these is: “Who gets to play and who is a spectator?”, and by extension, “Who is absent from the stadium, and why?”. This is where the idea of social scripting enters the equation.

The roles and responsibilities of each person at the game originate in the labels that have been assigned to them through group belonging. The labels correspond to socially defined categories such as gender, race, ethnicity, language, religion, age, socio-economic status or geographic living space. Critically, these labels organise “social life in hierarchies, mutually exclusive categories, which are in a relationship of sub/super ordination” (Confortini, 2006, p. 335). Therefore, depending on the combination of labels attached to a person, that individual may be socially expected or allowed to behave in certain ways. For example, Tom, a 21-year old unemployed Aboriginal man from rural Manitoba is expected to act in a certain way because he is a 21-year old unemployed Aboriginal man from rural Manitoba, while Mary, a 50-year old white Scottish-descendant Protestant banker from Toronto is expected to behave differently because her labels are different. What is considered “normal” for either varies because they have different assigned roles, which in turn dictates what is socially acceptable for them to do, where and when. In essence, each has a different script they are expected to follow in order to play their role. The scripts have been learned from birth, and involve every aspect of life, from speech to vocabulary to non-verbal cues, (see: Hacking, 2004; Goffman, 1967) Every time they act, the other people in their milieu – schools, as will be seen next chapter, being one of the most important of these environments – will either reward actions that are deemed acceptable for the role, or correct unwanted ones in order for the person to “properly” play their role.

Based on their role, individuals learn which behaviours they are allowed to learn and reproduce, and which ones are forbidden. As they “learn” their role, they too begin to influence the roles of others, shaping through interaction (Laws & Davies, 2000). Our understanding of this phenomenon also draws upon the work of Berger and Luckmann's (1991) work on typification: individuals' sense of reality is built largely through interactions with others. Consequently, the person's own sense of who they are is shaped through interactions and typifications, which are ways of knowing shared by groups within a time and place. Individuals construct reality and their place within it, with and for others, and develop a sense of their role within this reality. As part of this process, individuals may assess which roles are attainable (some may be unattainable, or perceived to be, due to factors such as sex, age or race) and what are the requirements are for assuming those roles, and choose to assume specific roles. They then alter their behaviours to match typifications for the role they desire. If they are successful, that is they are accepted in the new role by others, they can then 'play the game' from the new position of that role.

This is the premise of social scripting: individuals are socialised, both by others and themselves, to assume certain hierarchic roles based on socially-defined criteria. These are the roles that are ranked hierarchically, and which assign positions to individuals within or outside the “game”. This is not to say that all individuals accept their scripts, nor that they are pushed toward only one script. Rejection or alteration is possible, and will be discussed below, as are the implications. All individuals do play a role, however, either wilfully or unconsciously, and through their actions promote a specific hierarchic organisation of roles. As will be made evident in the next chapter, schools are incredibly important when the theory of social scripting is played out, and is where teachers play a key role in (in)validating specific behaviours. Schools are where young individuals are exposed to many possible roles, countless interactions and given the opportunity to 'audition' for specific roles. It is one of the most important loci of socialisation, and one of the principal avenues through which the ranking of roles is learned and maintained.

The ranking system of roles itself begins at the top and works its way down. Resting at the top of these hierarchies or roles are individuals or groups of individuals who must justify their exercise of power; they (re)create a discourse or narrative in which their own role is the protagonist, and opposing roles as antagonists. Akin to a social eco-system, individuals use their positions with the structure to their advantage, thus making it both “medium and outcome of the practices which constitute social systems” (Giddens, 1981 cited in Baber, 2007, p. 222). The act of maintaining power becomes one of propagating the particular narrative, including vocabulary and history, that supports privileged positions, portraying one's place in the hierarchy as normal or natural (Romaniuk & Wasylciw, 2010) – which again highlights the importance of schools. The maintenance of power can include transforming parts of the narrative to include particular actors in exchange for resources and support (Callon & Latour, 1981). All the while, alternate groups will also be promoting competing narratives using the tools at their disposal (for a more thorough exploration between discourse and power, see: Foucault, 1997, 1980). Depending on the circumstances, these tools may be wide and disparate, or, as will be seen in the case of Liberia in the 20th century, limited to a few key institutions. The social script defines how each individual, read character, is entitled to interact in the story. Ultimately, what becomes important is not so much the actions, but rather how they are contextualised to support the dominant narrative (Shepherd, 2008). The 'what' matters less than the 'how' and 'why'. When important acts are committed, various parties will compete to define the event in order to legitimise or de-legitimise the actor. The act of defining is an act of power: how individuals perceive their reality rests on how they are able to describe and name objects, actions and events. Those able to name hold power, as they create the reality of others (Arnove, 2009).

An example of narrative creation might include the bombing of a military outpost: one party may claim it is an act of terrorism while another may justify it as an act of rebellion against an oppressive regime. Neither party contests the act; they contest the other's description. How it is defined will at the same time define whether the perpetrator was 'allowed' to act, or whether it was against the social rules to do so. The example is particularly relevant as it deals with violence, and ties into the earlier discussion on the use of violence as a means to resolve conflict. Beyond the contest in establishing the legitimacy of the party committing the act, a second effect can result out of such a scenario: it can legitimise the use of violence, if its use is seen as appropriate to achieve goals. A third competing narrative could be the argument that while the goals of the bombers were acceptable, the use of violence as a means was not, as it (re)legitimises its use.[6] One of the consequences of such power contests is that it easily becomes a zero-sum game as it fosters either/or definitions; the premise is that the truth is wholly to one side or the other. Legitimising one's access to power also denudes others of theirs by portraying them as different, if not inferior. It is in this realm that gender comes to fulfil a critical function, as it sheds light on the process in which social categories develop and evolve.

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[6] This would fit closely with Ghandi's principle of non-violence.

Defining Gender

To best understand how roles come to be learned and perpetuated, in particular as they relate to cultures of peace and violence, I turn my attention to one particular label: gender. However, as with conflict, the term "gender" is often employed interchangeably with women's issues and frequently misunderstood and misused. While the two are related, they are not the same, nor are *sex* and *gender*. *Sex* refers to the biological differences between men and women. *Gender*, on the other hand, refers to the socially constructed roles that men and women are expected to play based on their sex. They are the duality of femininity and masculinity – what it means in a given time in place to be 'a real man' or 'a proper woman'. The two co-exist and mutually (re)define the other; changes to the definition of one invariably brings changes to the other (Zalewski, 2010, 2007, 2001; Romaniuk & Wasylciw, 2010). As such, gender is the *relationship* between men and women. As with peace, it is practised, each time (re)defining itself, and is a fluid, malleable and dynamic process. Therefore, men and women do not have a gender *per se*; they enact it. This exposes the flaw in confounding gender with women's issues: it examines only one part of the equation.

It also provides important insight on other social categories, such as race, ethnicity, nationality or religion. In the example of race, it becomes a bit more difficult to decipher, as there is no vocabulary distinction such as gender/sex. However, beyond the biological definition of race, namely of distinctions in skin pigmentation stemming from slight differences in DNA, race can also be culturally defined. It is this race-as-a-social-determinant that plays a critical role in theorising about social scripting. Being of race X is not a question of skin pigmentation, but rather of the relationship between race X and race Y or Z in a particular place and time. Is there a super-ordination? If so, what is it? The same applies to other categories. What privileges are accorded to members of a certain religion or speakers of a certain language *relative to others* in a given time or place? Put differently, if I am of race X in a specific time and place, what am I socially *allowed* to do? What must be borne in mind is that these differences are entirely socially constructed (Stewart, 2000). The term used in anthropology to describe this process is *instrumentalism*. Identities, such as ethnic ones, are the result of common traits being forged together as a tool to achieve a political advantage (Duveysteyn, 2000). Groups of individuals band together to create narratives that justify their positions or their claim to power, yet the process for shaping these identities, person-by-person, is as described above.

Gender theory has thus opened the door to a rich analysis of power. However, by focusing predominantly on the man/woman dichotomy, it may sometimes fail to take into account the importance of other social categories which may in fact be more important in certain contexts. For example, ethnicity or religion may be a more important determinant of power than gender in a given time and place. A woman of Religion X may be able to exercise more power than a man of Religion Y within a given time and place. That being said, that same woman may be at a disadvantage relative to a man of her own religion. Gender must be viewed as dependent upon and inexorably linked to the other categories. Because of its malleability and dynamism, gendered roles vary between and within cultures (Fennell & Arnot, 2008). Moreover, this also means that multiple types of masculinity and femininity can co-exist, as members of similar groups may have competing definitions of what it means to be a "real man" or a "real woman". In all likelihood, these multiple gendered roles are woven with other social constructs, such as race, class, religion or caste, each combination shaping definitions of masculinity and femininity (Zalewski, 2000; Leach, 2003). This process of defining masculinity and femininity, and promoting certain versions as the ideal becomes fundamental in shaping organisation and hierarchy. What interests this study is therefore understanding how particular forms of masculinity and femininity that either support or decay peaceful cultures emerge, and how this process might be harnessed in promoting peace.

1.4 Masculinities, Power, and Peace

Thus far, the idea of roles has been attributed to individuals who perform roles as part of a larger system. One critical question which requires answering, then, is: what values underpin or guide the system as a whole? If roles are hierarchical, who occupies the upper echelons? To investigate this issue, I turn to the field of international relations, as it presents a narrative with characters, although these might not always be individuals, *per se*. In fact, key players in the game of international politics can be concepts, or generic roles, which are then occupied by an individual. The prevailing narrative of power, according to the field, and in particular its critics (see: Shepherd, 2008; Enloe, 2000) is built around such a character: the state. The state's highest prerogative is its survival, or its security, particularly in relation to other states (Hudson, 2005; Blanchard, 2003). As will be seen next chapter with the case of Liberia in the late 19th century, this need by the dominant settler class to prove the effective military control over the entirety of its territory became synonymous with the ability to maintain sovereignty, and had an important impact on the development of certain masculinities in that country.

While states may enact various strategies to shape narratives internally, and build senses of belonging (see, for example, Curtis 1983), these actions are subordinate, or at least supportive of the survival of the state and its *grand narrative*. Consequently, a heavy premium is placed upon those roles which sustain the military apparatus of the state with the soldier thus being presented as an idealised form of masculinity. Within such a context, to be a valued 'man', males are expected to manifest specific values and virtues, such as strength, action, rationality and toughness. However, as discussed above, gender exists in a duality, if not a dichotomy. If masculinity is defined along prescribed values, then its opposite, femininity, must manifest itself accordingly. As such, the values prescribed to idealised womanhood include passivity, docility, inaction and emotion (Blanchard, 2003; Tickner, 1999). Moreover, as the security of the state relies on those attributes that are masculine, that which is masculine is more valued than that which is feminine (Peterson & Runyan, 2010). However, simply because many forms of dominant masculinity are built around military values does not mean that masculinities are necessarily militarised or violent. The transformation into violent masculinity happens through at least two different processes. One, presents Kovitz (2003), is deliberate militarisation[7]. Militaries, she argues, maintain closed cultures apart from larger society and create

> a uniform military masculinity is carefully constructed through deliberate social practice as a means of operationalising a unique mandate – waging war – through an authoritarian organization that is preoccupied with ensuring the obedience of potentially resistant practitioners. (p. 9)

The shaping of culture is possible as militaries are what Goffman (1957) describes as being *total institutions*, meaning that members of such groups are segregated from the larger culture, are seldom alone, follow fixed schedules, and are required to behave identically to each other; it is immersive and isolated culture building.

The occurrence of war is when the survival of the state is at its most precarious, and thus, when specific versions of masculinity are most prized. Consequently, and perhaps both ironically and tellingly, the more secure the state, the more space there is for non-military masculinities. At the same time, this fails to explain how and why militarised masculinities manifest themselves outside of these closed cultures. Not all those who practice violent masculinity are military personnel, just as not all military personnel adopt violent masculinities. Cultures of violence exist outside of organised armed forces.

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[7] For a comprehensive analysis of extreme militarisation, see: Dawes (2013).

(Re)Legitimising Violence

Tangentially, a second process exists through which violent masculinity is learned, namely socialisation, and in particular, socialisation through conflict resolution. Vestal (2002) makes the case that violence is a behaviour learned from an early age. Children who see violence used regularly eventually understand it to be normal behaviour. To return to Davies' analogy, they accept that it is simply the way the game is played, as they are not presented with alternate options. Thus, "[i]t is clear that in violent communities, children and their parents begin to accept violence and to expect it [...] [and] children begin to model it" (Vestal, 2002, p. 18, emphasis in original), thus inexorably creating a cycle where violence not only begets violence, but also (re)legitimises its use with every act of aggression. Eventually violence becomes a social norm, and is even viewed as the proper method to resolve conflict (Nafziger and Auvinen, 2002). Children learn violence *as* conflict resolution, as they are neither exposed to alternatives, nor the exercise thereof. More nefariously, violence may also be specifically taught or celebrated as a legitimate means to resolve conflict via institutional means, such as schools (Arnove, 1995), whose role in this process forms the crux of the next chapter.

This last point, however, also touches upon the deeper issue: the narrative contextualisation which can be used to justify, and thus buttress, the use of violence. Not only is violence used, it is justified. Based on their work on violence and masculinity in South Africa, Morrell and Makhaye (2006) contend that "[v]iolence occurs because there are discourses that legitimate it" (p. 154). In many cases, this means the discourse of gender, and in particular, defining what it means to be a man. However, this discourse occurs at two levels – externally, at a social level, and internally at a personal level. This second process, according to Myrttinen (2003), is critical as it is linked to the identity of the individual. How individuals define themselves through their actions, including how they define themselves as men or women, is of crucial importance, as it is the means through which individuals choose and justify whether or not they use violence. Two elements that weigh heavily in this equation are questions of provision and power. The ability to provide for one's family or community, leading to perceived power or powerlessness, plays an important role in how men define themselves, and what values they hold. To illustrate this, I cite two examples from Sub-Saharan Africa. In Southern Togo, Koudolo's (2008) work on masculinity has identified that the highest values in manhood are moral ones, such as honesty, amiability and dignity, followed closely with the ability to work and provide for one's family. However, he also notes that in many young urban males, a new form of "intelligentsia" or bookish masculinity is growing in importance as the economic make-up of the city demands an educated workforce. This is of import, as it indicates that economic opportunity plays a role in shaping gendered identities. This is in a sense conflict management: young men learn that an alternative to scarcity, and the potential conflict that it can incur, is to adopt a pattern of behaviour based around intellectual labour.

Conversely, Biaya's (2000) work with street youth in three African urban centres – Dakar, Addis Ababa and Kinchasa – shows that in these marginalised groups, limited economic opportunities lead to use of violence and its legitimation as a means to provide for their communities. Moreover, identities are constructed in opposition to those traditionally held in the larger community. These two studies link to the work of Morrell and Makhaye (2006) in South Africa, who assert that poverty is a strong factor in the construction of masculinity. Along with the above two examples, it is possible to speculate that this link occurs for at least two related reasons.

First, violence in certain contexts allows for the fulfilment of needs. In times of desperation, use of violence can mean the difference between life and death. *Prima facie*, this would seem to challenge views such as Leach and Mitchell (2006) who contend that "violence always has a gender dimension" (p. 7). However, as ever, the narrative construction that surrounds the act remains as important as the act itself, and it is within this act, or even before, that the gendering occurs. Firstly, the choice must be made to resort to violence. Secondly, the choice of the victim, the means, and the reason – both to oneself and to others – all are predicated on value-based choices to reinforce a particular identity and a desired portrayal of oneself to others. To be seen as tough, a provider, or unafraid, for example, all play a role in shaping identity and gender. Moreover, the use of violence as an easy means of feeling empowered is key in understanding the development of violent masculinity. While in the grand narrative disenfranchised youth may figure very low in the overall hierarchy of power, Cramer (2003) stipulates that the most felt inequalities are those at the local level: micro matters over macro. Thus, violence as a means of dominating another is powerful in its immediacy and intimacy, which might help explain why violence levels vary by community. It may also shed light on why fighting forces around the world tend to draw recruits from the less affluent segments of society.

1.5 Resolving Conflict

Conflict, as we understand it, is a competition over desired outcomes, resources, or, definitions. Johan Galtung (2010), a key figure in the field of peace studies, presents a typology of possible conflict outcomes. He argues that there are fundamentally only five possible ways a two-party conflict may be resolved:

> (1) X gets what it wants and Y nothing; (2) Y gets what it wants, and X nothing; (3) both give up their

> goals or give up everything to a third person; (4) they meet somewhere in between; or (5) perhaps with a little assistance, they create a new reality where both X and Y can feel at home. (p. 28)

However, this model is limited in its utility as it does not address the question of motivation or perception in resolving the conflict. A more pertinent model would be to focus on the approach to conflict rather than the outcome. On the one hand, a conflict can be approached competitively, meaning that there must be a winner and a loser, or at least a stalemate. This encompasses the first four types of Galtung's model. The second approach to conflict is one that is cooperative: that parties actively seek an outcome that is as favourable as possible to all. This competitive/cooperative model to understanding conflict is better suited to help this study for two reasons. First, it requires the consideration of relationships within conflict. Conflict resolution happens between humans, or groups thereof, and is therefore a very social process; as such, it can only be understood in conjunction with motivation. Relationships, including power, also help explain the choices made in the *means* of resolving conflict. Why will a party choose to include or exclude another party in a solution? Second, a typology such as this also exposes variants in the types of power. In competitive resolution, power is exclusive, is exercised *against* others, and is destructive: at the end of the conflict, one party has lost power. Cooperative approaches, on the other hand, are based on constructive or creative power. Power is used *with* others, and it is combined for the benefit of all. The natural question that arises, therefore, is why any other type of power would be used other than cooperative power? Before anything else, individuals must *want* to cooperate and invent creative, inclusive outcomes.

Inclusion and Cooperation (Conflict and Power)

The decision to include or exclude the other based on where the relationship between parties is positioned on a spectrum of sympathy-apathy-antipathy. However, this relation is developed based on historical constructs of identity that shape the aforementioned social hierarchy. This hierarchy, albeit fluid, has been built on a series of dualities which often are exclusive, and places one label morally above others. These can be religious (believer vs. unbeliever/heretic/heathen/apostate), class (proletariat vs. bourgeois), nationalistic or ethnic (any combination of us vs. them, characterised with slurs and derogatory terms of the other), or gender (man vs. woman, with use of language to belittle, or men vs. lesser men/other derogatory terms). More than just names, the labels are titles given to ideas that encapsulate values, historical relationships, and positions within the narrative. The goal of the dualities is to reduce the worth of the other, to de-humanise them, and to (re)enforce that differences are to be feared or hated (Peterson & Runyan 2010; Kirk 2008; Lee 2008; Confortini 2006). Translated into conflict resolution, individuals who abide by a cultural narrative, which describes those with whom they have a conflict as inferior, may then be inclined to reject even the consideration of a solution that advances both parties to the conflict. A 'man' (*me/us*) does not share with 'rats' (*them*).

Historically, such dualities would emerge from inequality in wealth or stature within and between societies. In order to maintain privileged positions, narratives are constructed to justify them. As challenging the narrative also challenges relationships of power, it opens the door to strife. Leaders may challenge existing circumstances – albeit perhaps for personal gain – and form new groups of followers along horizontal lines (Stewart, 2000). By exploiting nominal differences – or creating new ones – leaders convince others (truthfully, or by duplicity) that they are being marginalised because they share common ethnic, religious, regional, ideological or other similar links, creating what Cramer (2003) calls "pairings of categorical inequality" (p. 206).

However, this scenario will only likely play out if identity and power are organised along exclusive dualities. Certain practices of power can be very inclusive, and rather than highlighting differences and using these to drive wedges between people, seek to bring people together and establish a common humanity. Such a humanisation of relationships and sharing of power has been the push for women's equal rights. The man-woman relationship is one that is inescapable. Even isolated societies that have single religions, languages and ethnicities will have two sexes. If it can be accepted that two individuals that are biologically different are still entitled to equal levels of dignity and humanity, then the case to dehumanise others on less obvious grounds becomes more difficult. The argument that "we are all equal, except...." becomes harder to make[8].

Moreover, de-humanisation does not have to be a by-product of duality in discourse. Difference is only negative if it is framed as a dichotomy, or ranked against other characteristics. For example, one dichotomy that is often used in differentiating masculinity from femininity is that of reason vs. emotion (Blanchard, 2003). Traditionally, emotion has been categorised as being a feminine value, and thereby inferior to masculine reason. However, the dichotomy is a false one: the two are human faculties that need not exist nor be used in opposition. Both reason and emotion guide human behaviour, albeit in varying combinations at different times, and failure to address both in any relationship will be problematic. The dismantling of false dichotomies, where super/subordination is created on the basis of excluding others, is a critical step in promoting creative and inclusive conflict resolution.

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[8] In Canada, for example, the women's equality movement in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries further developed in the second half of the latter century to the adoption of a Charter of Rights and Freedoms that at least legally erases social divisions.

Cultures of peace are cultures that seek sympathy[9].

Predatory masculinity as a threat to peace

In other terms, for peace to thrive, love must replace hate (Freire, 2000). That is why, in such a dichotomy of love/hate, cultures tending toward hate, or those that are based on derogatory dualities, are a threat to peace. None is more so than the culture of militarised and violent masculinity.

The first important characteristic of the discourse surrounding militarised masculinity is that it assigns the role of protector to the idealised man: the soldier or the warrior. Reciprocally, the role of the woman must now become one of 'protected' (Shepherd, 2008). The tragic result of this duality is that the bodies of women become battlegrounds in war. Rape is used as means to demonstrate that the 'other' is a lesser man as he is unable to fulfil his role as protector of his woman[10]. However, a second duality must exist in a narrative of soldier as protector, and this is one that seems less discussed in the IR feminist discourse. For there to be a soldier as defender, it must be in opposition to a separate form of masculinity – one based on aggression. As gender is always contextual, so too must militarised masculinities exist in multiple forms, and express themselves differently over time and place.

If this is the case, some forms of militarised masculinity may in fact be created as a response against other, more aggressive forms of masculinity. These "involve the suppression of alternative, competing masculinities not only in others but in oneself" (Myrttinen, 2003, p. 42). Moreover, it requires the subjugation of women and femininity and its hatred and demonstrations of dominance over them (Confortini, 2006). As the core of the identity is that of being a *warrior*, it requires, by definition, acts of violence to (re)produce itself (Shepherd, 2008). For these reasons I name these manifestations of masculinity as 'predatory'. They cannot exist without violence and must therefore create contexts where violence exists in order to (re)legitimise themselves. They are cultures that impose themselves and their values upon a society with dire repercussions. Women are to be dominated, other men who practice other forms of masculinity are to be suppressed, and the use of violence is compulsory.

How these predatory forms of masculinity come into being will undoubtedly vary, but as will be shown in the case of Liberia, they are often the result of slow historical processes wrought with violence. It is this element which is of primary import for this study: understanding how such extreme and violent manifestations of manhood erupted in a time and place helps guide us in avoiding a repetition of those conditions in the future. Being able to identify that such masculinities exist, and understanding the values that lead to their emergence allows educational planners to promote practices that run counter to the development of values that underpin predatory masculinities.

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[9] Used here in the sense of moving beyond empathy and actively seeking harmony and consonance between people.

[10] The same might be applied to the inability to protect children, although until recently, they have largely been absent as a separate group of individuals. In fact, in the IR discourse, children are so commonly lumped in with women to form what Shepherd (2008) dubs the 'womenandchildren' discourse.

Gender-based violence

It is within this framework that discussion on *gender-based* violence becomes most important. Now understanding the process through which gender is constructed, and through which certain types of gender (re)produce themselves, it becomes possible to properly identify and define the concept. Violence can be said to be 'gender-based' when its use is explicitly intended to reinforce particular versions of femininity and masculinity, or to reinforce domination of one over the other. As such, it cannot simply be a synonym for violence against women. Men are victims of gender-based violence when they are systematically killed or raped by other men to prove their own superiority (Carpenter, 2006), as are boys who are beaten in order 'toughen them up'. It is not the act of violence *per se*, nor the sex of its victim, but the reason behind, and the narrative surrounding the act of violence. Moreover, as this definition entails, the violence does not have to be sexual in nature. Nor does it even have to be physical. Ostracism or verbal abuse of those who fail to perform certain gender roles is a form gender-based violence. While less visible, it plays a similar role in (re)legitimising particular masculinities and femininities. These types of acts may be committed by both men and women.

Reciprocally, each subsequent act of violence that promotes one type of masculinity at the same time eliminates the opportunity for other forms of masculinity to manifest themselves. Violent masculinities thereby reproduce themselves by eliminating the opportunity to learn alternatives. More critically, key social roles become learned based on violent models. As I explore in Chapter Three, this seems to have been the case in Liberia: positions and institutions of power were learned to be violent, and subsequently re-enacted violently when new individuals took on the roles. This cyclical pattern of proliferating violence by oppressed people seems to also have been a key insight by Freire (2000) when he postulated:

> The very structure of their thought has been conditioned by the contradictions of the concrete, existential situation by which they were shaped. Their ideal is to be men; but for them, to be men is to be

> oppressors. This is their model of humanity. (p. 45)

This process therefore underlies the fact that at least certain types of gender require violence, and that the two are interdependent and rely on each other for mutual (re)production (Confortini, 2006). Such an understanding would therefore help buttress Kirk and Winthrop's (2006) observation that where war "has broken down social infrastructures and relationships, and created contexts in which male physical power dominates and violence becomes normal, the gendered power inequities of peacetime are exaggerated" (p. 207). The outbreak of violence accelerates the reproduction rate of gender roles based on violence. This reflects Arendt's (1969) discussion on violence where she argued that power and violence themselves exist in a dichotomy: if violence rules, then power disintegrates. Thus, in prolonged periods of violence, the ability to wield and exercise power becomes greatly diminished. Again, a study of Liberia's history will lend credence to violence's destructive effect on power. If violence is used en lieu of power, power is destroyed. Moreover, the acts of violence themselves also breed hate, and thus create new "antagonistic social identities" (Cock, 2000, p. 75), and such identities will be rigidly exclusive of one another. This reinforces our understanding of peace as a dynamic process; war does not simply put a halt to a state of peace and replace it with one of war. It actively transforms and destroys the relationships and practices, such as gender and identity, that shape cultures of peace.

1.6 New Possibilities for Peacebuilding

The clear solution thus becomes to replace cycles of violence with cycles of love and cooperation. Failure to do so explains part of the failures or limited successes of peacebuilding programmes, such as in the realm of de-militarisation. While great effort and resources are placed in the removal of weapons and the break-up of military units, as well as the attempt to re-insert former combatants into communities – a process known as disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) little attention has been given to the transformation of masculinity and identity. Any process of de-militarising soldiers must involve the de-militarisation of their identity (Myrttinen, 2003; Cock, 2000) in order to limit the growth of predatory masculinities. As soldier masculinities are built around otherness and exclusivity, they remain a threat to peace if left un-replaced with more peaceful identities built around peaceful discourses. True de-militarisation must provide opportunities for all those living in war-affected societies to learn alternative non-violent ways of constructing and expressing gender identity; to learn that being a 'man' may be accomplished through acts of love and kindness.

Problematically, and paradoxically, much of the DDR processes have in the past been overseen by UN peacekeeping forces who are soldiers themselves. In fact, due to the disproportionate amount of resources that are disbursed to the military peacekeeping side of peace operations, many peacebuilding activities, not only limited to DDR, are conducted by soldiers. Indeed, in a discourse that values the man-soldier, this is unsurprising, as they are universal agents. Authors such as Ankersen (2004) argue that soldiers are "ideal candidates as peacebuilders" (p. 79), and any failings they demonstrate stem not from the incompatibilities of their role and values with those of peacebuilding, but rather that they are not properly "re-tooled". The reliance and heavy presence of armed forces in peacebuilding activities reinforces militarised masculinity (Myrttinen, 2003), and therefore must lead us to "question the logic placing the primary burden of advancing human rights on institutions that train people to kill people" (Lee, 2008, p. 60). This is exacerbated by a heavy focus on 'security', particularly in the past decade during which this topic has become the darling of donors. Countries emerging from war are feared to become havens for terrorists, and as such, more and more resources are streaming in earmarked for security institutions: military, police, border services, etc. To the detriment of cultures of peace, this focus on security (re)creates ideologised gender frameworks (Alden, 2010) that are built around "militaristic cultures that institutionalise a specific military ideology" (Alden, 2010, p. 28).

Broadly, one conclusion stemming from this gendered deconstruction of peacebuilding practices and their theoretical underpinnings is the apparent difficulty in identifying any concerted effort to transform the cultural practices that originally lead to, and were reinforced by war. Little work appears on building resilience against violence. There are attempts at working with gender; however much of this has been either focused on working with women and women's groups (see, for example, Kirk, 2004), or in the worst of cases, (re)legitimising the superiority of masculinity by promoting "add women and stir" (Barrow, 2009) approaches to gender equity, whereby women are only deemed to have agency if they assume masculine roles. As a result, the limited success of peacebuilding becomes understandable as it fails to address the core issue: peace as a cultural practice. Peacebuilding addresses symptoms but seldom the cause, and in the process, sometimes even exacerbates the cause, namely violent cultures embodied in the practice of violent masculinities. The solution is therefore twofold. One is to re-evaluate the practice of security in order to limit the (re)legitimising of militarised culture. This is a topic outside the scope of this work, but it is a challenge that must be addressed. The second solution is to incorporate additional tools into the peacebuilding toolbox that allow for the development strategies that focus on cultural transformation.

In this chapter I also identified a second difficulty in peacebuilding: bridging the gap between theoretical constructs, such as those discussed above, and actual policy and programmes in war-affected societies. However, I have also illustrated how culture is malleable, and must constantly be re-negotiated through each human interaction. Thus, in the case of cultural practice, it exists as a series of contextualised performances between individuals and must be learned. From a young age, children imitate the roles presented before them at home, at school, and in the community at large. Through trial and error, positive behaviours are accepted and culturally unwanted behaviours are corrected, ranging from the modelling of 'correct' behaviour to punishment for 'incorrect' behaviour. It is a process we all underwent, and continue to undergo as we enter different social circles. Through imitation and trial, we learn to comport ourselves to fit into social groups. Therefore, if our policy objective is to shape behaviours, we must find key loci of socialisation. Where can the practice of peace be learned?

When broken down, cultures reflect repeating individual behavioural patterns based on shared values and historical experience. Some behaviours are conscious choices, but many are unchallenged, and conform to the learned, expected norms: how to dress, what and when to eat, etc. “Cultures” are bonds between groups of individuals and then can only exist through individual action, yet collectively, they make a whole. Therefore, cultural shifts, while seemingly grand scale initiatives, are in fact the amalgam of countless individual initiatives. One perfect example is the issue of littering. Whether one person litters once does not have a great impact in the grand scheme of things. However, if thousands of people in a city litter many times a day, that city will quickly become filthy. As such, public campaigns, including those through school systems, have greatly changed the amount of littering taking place in cities around the world. Consequently, policy targeting social change must be built on this premise: that cultural shifts are the aggregate of individual changes in behaviour. Once a critical mass of individuals behaves in a certain way, this becomes the norm, and the culture is transformed. It is a slow, methodical, and gradual process.

Given the above theoretical framework, this thesis therefore takes on two very important tasks that are rooted in carefully expounded gender theory. Although they do not always appear explicitly in the chapters to come, they help guide the analysis on at least two levels. At the surface, I attempt to address an aforementioned issue: that little work exists on the building of resilience against violence. As will become clear in later chapters, I demonstrate how teachers can foster specific values through their teaching that promote peaceful masculine and feminine identities and run counter to the pre-conditions of predatory masculinity. If gender is understood as a contextual manifestation of values, then discussion on promoting certain values over others is very much a gender-based one.

On another level, this entire work is intended to challenge the dominant state- and military-centred discourse on peacebuilding by outlining the value of other, non-military actors as key players in the game, thus problematising the gendered super-/sub-ordination of actors. Part of this process has already occurred in this chapter, and involved clarifying key contentious terms. It also involves bringing together various discourses into a more cogent and holistic one. However, and most importantly, I hope to build the evidence base that shows peace as a social process, which requires cultural transformation with alternate actors performing key functions over long periods of change. To return to my earlier metaphor, this work helps shed light on how to develop the necessary software required for long-term, sustainable peace.

1.7 Overview of this Thesis

This opening chapter has already helped answer the initial research questions by developing and making sense of certain key terms contained within them. The first of these is that of peacebuilding. By re-imagining this process based on a sound theoretical conception of peace, we have created enormous space for the inclusion of new actors such as teachers. Just as importantly, this chapter, through its methodical analysis of how gender identities are formed helps identify what, exactly, might be considered 'peaceful gendered identities' as referred to in the second research question. By understanding the relationships between power, conflict and gender, we now know that such identities should demonstrate at least four qualities. One, they should be complementary rather than formed in opposition or super-ordination to other attributes. Man and woman may be different, but one should not be learned to be superior to the other, nor should man/woman of group X be deemed superior to man/woman of group Y. Two, peaceful gendered identities must take into account the need to feel like one contributes to others, such as families or communities. Three, such identities should be built around cooperation as the primary means to resolve conflict, rather than competition. This includes learning to build and share networks of power for the good of others, and not just self. And four, in cases of competition, violence must be learned as the least favourable option.

It is within this framework that I further develop the study. In Chapter Two, I explore what I believe to be an important yet underused policy option for peacebuilding leaders: schools. I explain how teachers are already the architects of thousands of daily interactions, and are thus already shaping attitudes and practices vis-à-vis power, violence, gender and authority, maintaining a regional focus on post-colonial Sub-Saharan Africa. Within this context, I elaborate how schools currently recycle existing, oppressive organisations of power, legacies of the colonial government systems, and then explore options from the literature on how to help teachers transform their pedagogical approaches so as to facilitate shaping cultures of peace. In particular, I hope to contribute to the discussion by moving away from *what* is taught to *how* things are taught. If peace is a verb, then it must be rooted in action.

Chapter Three moves the discussion from the more abstract to the specific. Based on the constructs of the first two chapters, I first provide an overview of Liberian history in an attempt to understand what forces shaped a culture in which mass violence was able to emerge. In tandem, I present an evolution of the education system in that country, its relationship to the formation of political culture, and then present an overview of the state of the education system today, including the status of the teaching profession. This chapter establishes the socio-cultural setting in which the field study of this research took place.

In Chapter Four, I turn my attention to the epistemological concerns of conducting research in war-affected contexts. In particular, I examine the benefits and disadvantages of using assets-based research as a means to isolate existing successful teaching initiatives in war-affected areas that are culturally relevant, reflective of the economic reality, and that promote the development of patterns of peaceful behaviours. At the same time, I also examine the counter-argument, namely whether Appreciative Inquiry (AI) limits the scope of discussion or downplays challenges or problems faced. I map out my methodology and research design, and I define the methods used – AI workshops, questionnaires, interviews, observations, and document review – as well as explain the relevance and intent of each method as it relates to the research questions. I describe the ethical parameters which framed the research work, lay out the types of data gathered, as well as their treatment, and conclude by discussing the limitations of my research.

Chapter Five explains in detail how I carried out the fieldwork, describing its people, places and events. I describe the setting of the workshops and interviews, build a profile of my participants based on statistical survey forms, and enrich it with data from interviews. I present how the seven workshops were carried out, the impressions I gathered, and describe the setting and process of the interviews. Throughout I dedicate time and space to critically examine how well each tool actually performed, and discuss lessons learned from the research process. This structure follows Wolcott's (2001) suggestion to clearly separate description from interpretation. The aim of Chapter Five is thus to present fact, leaving the meaning-making process to subsequent chapters.

Thus, in Chapters Six and Seven, having clearly explained and described the process through which I gathered my data, I am able to move on to their presentation and analysis. I present how the participating teachers view their role as peacebuilders in Liberia, how they see their profession, and how they demonstrated essential peacebuilding skills. Chapter Six examines the data gathered from questionnaires and interviews, and Chapter Seven presents the findings generated by participants during the seven AI workshops. Finally, in the eighth chapter, I conclude the thesis by examining the implications of my findings on the wider Liberian context, and discuss how these affect new directions for policy, practice and research.

Chapter Two

Professional Context: Transforming Teacher Practice

2.1 Schools and Socialisation

In the opening chapter, I analysed the failures of peacebuilding practices, and discussed new policy options and actors for securing sustainable peace in war-affected countries. A key conclusion was that although cultural changes are required, these must, in effect, be changes at the individual level, although repeated on a massive scale. Thus, in order for cultural shifts away from normalised violence we must find means of affecting small changes in varying orders of magnitude. This is where educational systems can play a pivotal role in the building of peace. Incorporating schools as loci of peace socialisation allows for thousands of small interactions to take place in hundreds of classrooms every single day. In this chapter, I therefore seek to corroborate statements such as Vestal's (2002) that, "[t]he institution of public education is uniquely positioned to lead the transformation from a culture of violence to a paradigm of peace" (p. 9), and Miller and Romos (1999) who state that "[e]ducation is an important part of the infrastructure of peace" (p. 1). My contention, however, is that a schooling system must be deliberately tailored to fulfil this function, and that numerous obstacles exist, particularly in the context of sub-Saharan Africa. Chief among these challenges, and one which will be discussed at length, is the position of the teacher. If teachers are to transform the actions of their pupils towards a practice of peace, do the actions of the teachers themselves need to be transformed? If so, how? And from which starting point?

In this chapter, I make the case for the central role of education in promoting and sustaining peace. I must also highlight, however, that this is not synonymous with *peace education* which is a separate field that has placed its emphasis more on peace and human rights as taught subjects in the school curriculum, and might be understood as form of secular moral education (see: Harris & Morrison, 2013; Danesh, 2011). Some, such as Bekerman and Zembylas (2012), have also problematised peace education as being over-idealistic, somewhat Western-biased, and lacking sufficient theorising. If the hypothesis that peace is something practised holds true, then we must examine the school system from the perspective that it shapes how individuals behave, and how it forms the values, relationships and beliefs that shape those behaviours. More important to peace than *what children are taught to know* is *how children are taught to be.* It is at school that children are most likely to meet and interact with individuals who display 'otherness', such as different races, religions, or ethnicities. How they learn to interact with the 'other' in school will shape how they deal with others later in life, and how they learn to deal with others in school will largely depend on the portrayed role of teachers. Teachers must therefore teach for peace by being role models, but how? The investigation of this very question therefore ties us back directly to the matter of gendered identity formations and social scripting. What roles are taught through schooling, and how do teachers shape those roles?

It is with these elements in mind that I proceed to examine what types of power and gender cultures are (re)created by schooling systems in post-colonial Sub-Saharan Africa, and what transformations to schooling might indeed, then, present education as an ideal tool for peacebuilding initiatives. Throughout, I focus on the roles of teachers, as they are the key agents within the schools; through daily interaction with children, they are the primary role-models, independent of what that role may be. While I do make mention of some of the resource and logistical challenges of re-constructing educational systems, my focus is specifically toward some of the cultural challenges involved in building a culture of peace, and shaping the roles of teachers. Since I began my doctoral studies in 2009, the field studying re-construction has grown, and others have done this topic more justice than I could afford to in this work (see UNESCO, 2011; INEE, 2011; Nicolai, 2009; Davies, 2005; Tomlinson & Benefield, 2005; Smith & Vaux, 2003; ILO, 1991). What I hope to add to the overall field of study is a better understanding of teacher beliefs and perceptions vis-à-vis their position and roles in the post-war education process, as well as exploring teacher-sourced pedagogical strategies. Moreover, I hope to represent teacher education as a form of cultural transformation.

Much of this chapter is an engagement with existing bodies of literature on teacher education, preparation and practice in the Global South, focusing primarily on Sub-Saharan Africa, and on post-war contexts whenever possible. Concretely, I am seeking to identify trends in the field that might help anticipate some of the challenges to be faced when seeking to promote teaching practices that foster what I have described as sustainable peace. I hope to establish a working definition of what quality education might look like in a war-affected society, propose what the role of a teacher might be in providing such quality education, and discuss to what degree one might expect teachers to be up to such a task. I have tried to make every effort to discuss trends as trends, and not over-generalise. The challenges in education discussed below I interpret as being widespread enough to warrant discussion, but I by no means wish to represent them as universal occurrences. The scale at which they occur is hard to calculate, will vary by time and place, and it is difficult to ascertain whether they comprise a minority or majority of cases. What matters is that they seem to occur often enough to merit discussion, and definitely warrant solutions.

Differentiating Truth from Trends

To initiate the discussion, I raise an issue here that in fact will become a leitmotiv for this study: narratives may present a version of "truth" that, although stemming from real events, may exaggerate or downplay elements, in order to make facts fit into the narrative, and not necessarily the reverse. In order to justify a narrative storyline, facts must be contextualised, interpreted, evaluated and presented in a way that supports the larger social text. As such, certain occurrences may be downplayed if they act to negate or contradict the established rules, while other minor incidents or trends might be presented as normal occurrences. Exceptions may be represented as the rule. For example, I recall at a recent conference a keynote lecturer was presenting on research they had conducted in southern Africa, and when speaking of the student experience said that "*their teachers don't show up*". A negative trend was presented as being the normal reality. While it may be true that some of the teachers may be truant some of the time, most teachers are likely present most of the time. I raise this issue because I believe a similar phenomenon may occur when studying violence in schools: if one is searching for violence – or any other problem for that matter – by teachers, one will certainly encounter it, and sometimes the impression given of education systems may be worse than they actually are, or that trends, albeit major ones, are presented as universal occurrences. Therefore, when analysing the literature on schooling challenges in Sub-Saharan Africa, it is important to keep in mind that many such articles were written from an initial line of questioning seeking to find instances of violence or poor teaching practice. My starting point, I hope, is one of accrued deference, and assumes that many if not most teachers will enter the profession with a willingness to be beneficent, and a sense of professional obligation (Vongalis-Macrow, 2006). Where the challenge may lie, however, is that the skill-level of teachers is insufficient to reach their aims. While there may exist a willingness to do good, teachers, as anyone else, have been socialised into a profession with pre-existing norms (Lortie, 1975), and are limited by their own array of tools. What was established for the resolution of conflicts that I describe in Chapter One holds true in this chapter on the capability of teachers: they are only able to choose from the skills they have learned, and these choices will be predicated upon values and beliefs acquired through various processes of socialisation, notably their own schooling, from primary through to teacher training. School cultures and teacher behaviours are intimately and intrinsically linked, as is discussed below.

2.2 The Challenges of Providing Quality Education

The main function of teachers has always been to provide an education to the younger generations. While this once might have been reserved for the children of an élite few, schools became a mass social project in much of the Global North by the early 20th century. With the wave of independence that swept across sub-Saharan Africa in the 1960s, the burgeoning nations all faced a new challenge: providing a quality education to their citizens. It can be argued that numerous countries still face many of these same challenges today, in particular those emerging from war: inexperienced governments, poor infrastructure and a dearth in educated professionals. It was in the midst of this historic context that Beeby (1966) postulated that quality in education was a complex and layered affair. For some, quality can simply mean that children are learning to read, write, and learn to know the world around them: what is observable by an inspector of schools. For others, quality also means that schools are able to prepare children for their eventual entry into the world of work in sufficient numbers at a reasonable cost, giving education an economic function.

However, a third, deeper layer of quality also preoccupied Beeby: that children learn, through school, to become part of a larger social construct, be it called the nation or otherwise. Schooling, for Beeby, should be judged on its ability to socialise good citizens who reflect a society's core values and beliefs. There are often discourses of education for democracy or peace, but the danger seems to be that the outcomes are simply assumed, such as promoting democracy, for example. This is perilous, as Harber (2002) proposes:

> [E]ducation *per se* does not necessarily contribute to democratisation and indeed much of the contemporary schooling may do the opposite. Only forms of education more consciously designed to foster democratic values and behaviours can help to further democratic processes. (p. 268)

In the case of this study, those core values and beliefs would be those drawn out in the first chapter: caring, collaborative, contributing to the community. They are those which allow peace to proper, and that emerge with the promotion of certain versions of masculinity and femininity over others. To understand what this might entail, I turn to Davies (2002) who divides the democratisation of education – she looks specifically at teacher education, but her framework can be applied more broadly – as a three-phased process. In the first, learners passively know about democracy – which would itself embed, at least nominally, a discourse of equality between sexes, races and other socially-defining characteristics. Moving to the second involves learning democratically –

actively analysing, reflecting upon, contesting and creating knowledge. Entering the third phase requires the transformation of learning institutions to include democratic processes: creation of student councils or inclusion of students in school decision making processes. In essence, it is the progression from knowing to doing to living democratic values; its end-goal is a fundamental shift in the way a teacher acts, thinks and believes.

Before further engaging the notion of democratic eduction, I feel it necessary also to pose a caveat. When I discuss education that is 'democratic', it is used as an idealised education, and not as a synonym of 'Western' or 'Northern' education. While I do focus on post-colonial Sub-Saharan, I by no means wish to imply education there is unique in having problems. The issue I wish to present is not that post-colonial Sub-Saharan education, specifically, is problematic, but that through its history, it has inherited its specific set of problems. The march of time has left other legacies elsewhere. As Kincheloe (2004) put forward: "[t]hroughout history, [...] schools have served to categorize, punish, restrict, and restrain those students who have failed to fit the proper demographic" (p.7). Without excusing or denying what happens elsewhere, what this work aims to do is understand how this particular process Kincheloe presents manifests itself in the context of post-colonial Sub-Saharan Africa with the view of finding means to change the situation. 'Democratic' education then, in this context, is one that provides opportunities for students to define, create and choose roles, rather than have roles subjected upon them.

Teachers as Agents of Change

A body of research already exists that addresses the idea of teachers as agents of change. Researchers have discussed the role of teachers as agents of change for social justice and democracy, and have sought to link the profession to moral imperatives (Ayers, 2010; Fullan, 1993). Although much of the work in this area stems from research settings in wealthier nations, and therefore relies on a teacher-education and remuneration model resourced beyond anything feasible in Sub-Saharan Africa generally (Hussein, 2006) and in war-affected countries specifically, one element that is very serviceable to this study, and which has gained traction in recent years with global debates on education is the notion that teachers must be at the centre of change, both within the school system and beyond (Purdy, 2013).

Problematically, in much of post-colonial Sub-Saharan Africa, many attempts to democratise education rarely get beyond the first phase of Davies' three-phase model. One tangible example is presented by Sharkey (2008) of a school in Sierra Leone where teachers and administrators are quite proficient in the rhetoric of democratic and gender-just schooling, and support a discourse of student empowerment. However, in practice, she notes, the same authoritarian culture, including physical and verbal abuse, that is rampant in schools throughout the sub-continent (Leach, 2003; Harber, 2002) is very alive within the researched school. This reflects a similar experience observed by Schweisfurth (2002) in a teacher-education facility in The Gambia. There is dissonance between the values purported by teachers and teacher educators, and the values they practice. The challenge is that many of the practices (but not necessarily the values) of teachers in the region are reflective of long-standing and deeply entrenched cultures. While the goals of education have evolved differently in various countries (Unterhalter, 2014), the organisation and delivery of schooling has too seldom followed suit, thereby negating views such as Kagawa (2005), for example, who argues that "[q]uality and types of education should be more important than any other aspect" (p. 499). Despite attempts at innovation, old patterns remain. Unravelling this blockage requires understanding the historical evolution of school systems from colonial times onward.

Legacies of Colonial Rule

To change teaching practices goes well beyond having teachers 'know' how to teach differently. It is necessary to undo years of socialisation in school systems that are rife with authoritarian – even oppressive – structures and practices, leftovers from a colonial past[11] (Agbenyega & Deku, 2011; Leach, 2003; Harber, 2002). At its root, public schooling was set up by European colonisers to support and justify power in the hands of selected groups of individuals, namely "the heirs of the chiefs they found most suitable to rule" (Wedin, 2008, p. 754). As such, schools sustained "patrilineal values and hierarchies and age and gender relations that reinforce male authority" (Chisholm and Leyendecker, 2008, p. 196). Through schooling, the chosen élites would receive diplomas, which 'qualified' them to be the next rulers – it created a discourse that legitimised one group's access to power, while excluding others. Education became a key "gatekeeper" (Wedin, 2008, p. 756) to power. The process most commonly used to reinforce this gate was that of the examination, originating in Europe (see: Johnson, 1977). Through the act of passing examinations, it became possible to tangibly separate ruler from ruled. Because élites would be better able to secure access to European education for their children, the likelihood of these children passing European examinations was enormously higher than any other child. This legacy of mass examination continues to this day in most of Sub-Saharan Africa, including Liberia as will be seen next chapter, thus continuing a means of recycling old power hierarchies,.

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[11] I do heed Unterhalter's (2014) monition that discussing education in the Sub-Saharan region in a broad way may detract from very different historical evolutions. What I hope to discuss here are general trends, understanding that there are likely exceptions.

The problem with such a scheme is that it links knowledge very closely with power. Central examinations are based on the principle that there is one official version of reality. Those in power name it and label it, and therefore accessing power through education can only be achieved by being acquiescent to that version, and not daring to contest it. School becomes a process of having children "read, regurgitate, recite" (Chisholm and Leyendecker, 2008, p. 197). Students are not asked to critically examine their environments, but are taught to be passive recipients of others' reality. They "rehearse being social spectators in their school lives" (Stein, 1995, p. 159). Problematically, this process also begs one question, particularly in countries torn apart by civil strife: who decides on official knowledge? (Vongalis-Macrow, 2006). The practice originated as a means of excluding large segments of the population from power, and thus the interaction it fosters between teachers and students is quite powerful, and potentially detrimental. The teacher's objective is to educate the students, but the quality of that education is measured by students' success on examinations. As such, the proficiency of teachers is measured against how well their students do. What students – and teachers, for that matter – are likely to learn is that the generation of knowledge is outside their purview. They are only allowed to know what others have deemed knowledge. Moreover, teachers, by their very presence, will have attained access to higher training due to scoring well enough themselves on prior examinations. As a result of this structure, teachers become positioned as the authority from which knowledge is dispensed, and students therefore must assume the role of an empty vessel which must be filled with knowledge via the teacher, forming a rigid hierarchy based on pre-defined knowledge. In such an authoritarian relationship, very little room is left for questioning by students, as questions about content become questions about the authority of the teacher.

It is a cycle where like-attracts-like, and those more inclined to critically question official knowledge are filtered out. Conversely, this relationship can often be compounded by other social hierarchies, particularly gender. As Leach (2003) observes, the authoritarianism in many African schools is similar to that of Victorian-era schools in the global North. Male teachers will have a doubly authoritarian relationship over girl pupils. On the one hand, they occupy a position of authority, but on the other, they are also in a position of superior masculinity/inferior femininity. Girls are therefore doubly discouraged from questioning or displaying any other behaviour than obedience and docility. This (re)legitimises power and gender discourses. The objective here is not to paint a picture of gloom but simply to give an honest assessment of how the organisation of education both reflects and recycles certain hierarchies and discourses of power. Perhaps it is because the narrative surrounding education is a very positive one that promises a world of opportunities to all that is left uncritically examined, as is argued by

Leach and Mitchell (2006), and assumed to be free of problems.

School (,) Culture and the Shaping of Identities

However, it is not solely the structure and organisation of schooling that shape and (re)produce relationships of sub/super-ordination. While examinations seem to be the primary outcome of schooling culture, they are hardly the only influence on its culture. Policy is but one variable amongst countless others, particularly those brought in by the students and teachers themselves, such as competing narratives of gender. Given that what interests us in this study is school as it relates to peace, and that we have identified gender as a key variable in this equation, the next logical step is to examine how schools figure in (re)creating these roles. Fortunately, in recent years the study of school-based practices of violence, both by teachers and students, and its relationship to gender, has grown significantly. Authoritarian cultures within schools must be (re)produced and one of the most common means to achieve the required passivity in students is the use of violence, or violent discipline, which is heavily gendered. Building upon a critical line of discussion on education as social control (see: Ball, 1990; Donzelot, 1997; Foucault, 2009, 1995), Noguera (1995) argues that schools, as they exist, were originally modelled after asylums: they are meant to control those in custody, which in the case of children includes both mind and body. As a result, discipline became a very important means of maintaining this control, as discipline, he states, is the primary public display and symbol of authority. It is therefore easy to understand why, in structures of rigid authority, various forms of harsh discipline have thrived, both officially and officiously.

Corporal punishment is one such form of official discipline. At the surface, its use (re)legitimises the use of violence, both at school and at home (Bhana, 2006; Leach, 2003), and it normalises violence in the eyes of children (Sharkey 2008). As seen earlier, schools exist within a larger cultural context and so social practices permeate between the two. However, beyond the act of violence itself, how it is dispensed and discursively contextualised plays an important role in shaping definitions of masculinity and femininity. In her work, Humphreys (2006) explains how boys and girls are expected to accept corporal punishment differently, and for different reasons. The permission to cry may be given to girls, but boys are expected to be tough, for example (Dunne, Leach & Humphreys, 2003). Female teachers may ask male teachers to dispense corporal punishment for them, as the violent act would be deemed unfeminine (Humphreys, 2006). In such contexts, the role of teachers in shaping gender in children is extraordinary.

Linked to this is also how severely teachers punish certain offences by students. By choosing how to punish different students – or not punishing, based on sex – for questions of fighting, for example, questioning authority, touching other students inappropriately or sexually, getting one's uniform dirty: all of these incidents, over many years of schooling, translate into the value systems children develop, as do how common classroom tasks, such as cleaning are unequally assigned to students based on sex. "These taken-for granted practices of schooling all too often teach children that masculinity is associated with aggression and that femininity requires obedience, acquiescence and making oneself attractive to boys" (Leach, 2006, p. 27). What this shows is that teachers, through their actions, direct children toward forming specific gendered identities that are based on specific values and which root themselves in the use or non-use of the violence. In essence, the gendered violence at the same time engenders the violence: it deliberately binds it to gendered identity. By contextualising the act of violence – corporal punishment in this instance – what children learn is that the use of violence is gender-dependent, and that there are 'proper' gendered reactions to its use. The relationship to violence thus becomes a defining factor in gendered identity construction.

Violence may also accompany sexuality. Male teachers can combine their roles of teacher with that of aggressive masculinity, leading them to abuse the authority of one role to heighten the sense of power and of accomplishment in the other. Marks of female students may be purposefully inflated in exchange for sexual favours, for example, or they may dole out corporal punishment to boys they perceive as sexual rivals (Humphreys, 2006). Through such displays, students can learn that authority may be used for self-interest, and that power may be abused. Sex is used as means of reinforcing super-/sub-ordination of multiple scripted roles. Female students learn that male dominates female, and that teacher dominates student. Again, this highlights how gendered identities may be constructed through schools, by teachers, but outside any type of official curriculum.

Perhaps the most hidden of values, though, that is transmitted via an unchallenged colonial model of education, goes beyond gender. Heugh (2010) contends that schools foster an inferiority complex in pupils by valuing knowledge, language and media that are foreign. Whereas many pre-colonial education systems existed, most of these would have been oral and aural, and in indigenous language, while colonial education was – and remains – a mostly written education in what for many if not most pupils is a non-mother tongue[12]. Not only is this system demeaning, she argues, it is also very inefficient and ineffective. She adroitly points to the success rates of European-style education in Africa over the past hundred years to demonstrate that the current model does not meet the educational needs of the vast majority of the population.

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[12] For in-depth discussion on the language of instruction in Africa, see: Chadry-Komarek (2010), Brock-Utne and Garbo (2009).

2.3 Obstacles to Pedagogical Reform

This brings us back to the key concept proposed by Leach (2006) of “taken-for granted practices of schooling” (p. 27). Despite attempts at changing educational cultures, there remain “fundamental tensions and contradictions in most countries between stated policy and actual practice” (D'Amant, 2012, referring to Kavale, 2002). If many of these practices seem so clearly undesirable, then why are they perpetuated without thought? The initial answer is that countless teachers join the profession and enter school cultures and classroom cultures that are highly rigid, and do not promote peace-sustaining values and practices. Assuming teachers do wish to develop a peace-promoting culture in their classroom, what are the challenges that hinder cultural transformation? First, there are the students – and this would be the case for any teacher. Even for new arrivals to a school their students will have expectations based on their prior teachers, and will have modelled their own behaviour accordingly. They will expect their new teacher to behave in such a way that conforms to these expectations, and may react negatively if the teacher does not behave in an 'un-teacherlike' way. If the teacher desires change, it must therefore be against existing norms and expectations. How that teacher will take this on will depend largely on will and ability.

Apprenticeship-of-Observation

Ability is closely related to the level of preparation (i.e. education, training & experience) with which the teacher will enter the classroom. While teacher education may help shape some ideas and certain practices, it is the case in many countries, such as Liberia as will be described in the next chapter, that this is a step to which many teachers did not have access, or that was of poor quality. Consequently, most teachers 'learned' how to teach through years of passive, uncritical observation of teachers during their own years of schooling – a process dubbed 'apprenticeship-of-observation' by Lortie (1975). In this theory, he argues that teaching culture is slow to change as practitioners simply replicate the teaching methods to which they were exposed - or subjected, as the case may be – unless they actively choose to do differently. In the case of teachers having received little or no training, their *de facto* teaching style will likely be that of their own teachers. Upon entering the classroom, their own expectations of the role of the teacher differ very little from those held by the students sitting in front of them. What plays out then is almost that: a play. The teacher repeats the performance they learned by observing their own teacher for many years. And, as they successfully played the part of 'student' and were rewarded through the system's set of rewards, the teachers, in fact, represent a rigid archetype within an already rigid culture. The expectations and roles continue as they are left unquestioned.

In cases where teachers have been formerly trained as teachers via teacher training colleges, this experience will often reinforce the top-down educational model, being very little different from secondary schools, with top-down approaches and very authoritarian hierarchies between teacher trainers and trainees (Lewin & Stuart, 2003; Schweisfurth, 2002). Miller & Ramos (2002) criticise the current model by arguing that

> the pedagogy of a training programme speaks deeply to teachers of their place within the educational system. A didactic, transmission-oriented programme legitimises teachers' own use of such methods. Further, it tells teachers that they are merely consumers and transmitters of someone else's knowledge. (p. 2)

In other words: teachers are stripped of the real power to name and label around them, thus their agency. These practices need to be transformed into more democratic ones so that teachers learn about shared, non-authoritarian and negotiated learning, have a chance to practice and experience it, and have the opportunity to work in an environment where they have input in the governance of the learning (Dull, 2005; Davies, 2002). Stated differently, peace-promoting teachers would more likely emerge from peace-promoting teacher preparation systems. With this, new teachers are properly equipped to begin transforming learning in their own classrooms. Even so, many countries, as Chadry-Komarek (2010) puts forward, have baulked at abandoning colonial models in their teacher education institutions, which means a premium is placed upon 'traditional' methods in the coloniser's language. Consequently, the process of teacher education will reinforce authoritarian patterns of teacher-student relationships (Harber, 2012). In instances where teacher trainees are being guided toward new forms of pedagogy, they may themselves offer resistance, as what is being taught clashes with their own pre-conceived notions of the role of teachers (D'Amant, 2012; Korthagen & Kessels, 1999).

Socialisation Dynamics of the Classroom

Once in schools, other forces continue to conspire against change. With examinations in particular, one trend in recent years that has kept them at the front and centre of educational policy in the region is the econometric fetishism among donor agencies that sees national examination scores as a key measure of educational quality, a Liberian example of which is presented in the next chapter. For teachers, and policy to their regard, this has had substantial consequences. Hartwell (2008) contends that examination pass rates, along with other indicators like enrolment ratios and completion rates have lead policy to revolve around the outputs of the education systems rather than on its desired outcomes. Funding agents are likely to disburse funds toward things that are easily counted, rather than to much more difficult-to-measure social processes, such as changing perceptions of gender. Maclure and Denov (2009) corroborate this through their observation of attempts at educational reform and reconstruction in post-war Sierra Leone: "[o]fficial preoccupation with quantitative targets – the numbers of schools built, teachers hired, and students enrolled – is overshadowing post-war faith in the overall transformative potential of education" (613). Consequently, an opaque veil has been inadvertently dropped on the inner workings of schools, or perhaps more accurately, they are ignored as the focus is solely on counting the widgets (i.e. students), that go in and come out of the black box known as "the school system", and the role of teachers in creating human relationships with their students is marginalised. Within this managerial paradigm, teachers are seen as mere inputs, alongside curriculum content, and material and monetary resources (Tatto, 2002), which also likely explains why there is a dearth of literature on professional development for teachers (Mukeredzi, 2013). Directly linked to this issue as well is the absence of discussion on teacher development and education at an international level. Organisations "such as UNESCO, ILO and the World Bank, [...] have tended to emphasise the parameters of the problem of insufficient teachers, rather than provide leadership on what the content of teacher education should be" (Unterhalter, 2014, p. 256). The process of teaching seems to be taken for granted.

2.4 Transformative Teacher Education

The challenge in war-affected societies is for teachers to lead transformative learning, yet teachers cannot lead transformative learning if they have not learned to do so in themselves, and for this to happen, they must have access to *transformative* teacher education (Kose & Lim, 2011). As such, they must learn to problematise their own teaching – meaning that if they do not view their teaching as a problem, they can hardly be expected to put it into question – and allow themselves to frame and re-frame problems (Loughram, 2002). In order to break the cycle of unwanted behaviours in the class they must begin by shaping their own behaviour differently. Yet, the transformative process must go beyond simply *knowing* how to do differently: evidence shows that student teachers who are exposed to alternate philosophies of teaching will quickly fall back on traditional teacher-centred, didactic approaches to teaching (Yost, Sentner & Forlenza-Bailey, 2000). Another example comes from

Gupta (1995), who has taken the idea of apprenticeship-of-observation one step further and argues that the lived experiences of teacher trainees may even be a barrier to teacher transformation. If they arrive with pre-conceived notions of how to teach – in her case it was a study of how to teach reading – then they may in fact dismiss what is being taught. "Their prior beliefs interfered with their acquisition of theory and appropriate instructional procedures to teach reading," she argued, and "...there is a struggle to incorporate the new ideas with their old views" (p. 359). Zeichner and Tabatchnick (1981, cited in Korthagen and Kessels, 1999), documented a similar phenomenon, 'wash out', where student-teachers promptly lost most learned knowledge of teaching and reverted to pre-teacher education teaching techniques. Again, what this shows us is that in the process of socialisation presenting new optional behaviours is only a partial solution. Telling teachers about alternate teaching methods must be coupled with a means to help them prefer and choose the alternate methods. Teachers must be transformed through their education.

Yet, troubling, Kose and Lim (2011) report that there is a pronounced dearth of research that examines the link between professional learning and transformative teaching, or just a general neglect of teacher professional development in Sub-Saharan Africa (Hardman, 2014). This echoes Tatto's (2002) earlier work that showed that little evidence existed on the impact of teacher development, particularly from developing countries, leaving the door open to “whims” (638). This scenario places countries affected by war and violent conflict in a precarious position. The challenges of educational delivery are likely to be more acute: fewer trained teachers, fewer resources, mixed age-groups and classrooms bursting at the seams as an entire generation returns to school at once (Nicolai, 2009; MacLure & Denov, 2009). This dearth, however, is not a complete absence. Multiple related fields of study can and do provide insight on the path to better transformative teacher development.

Viewing Teachers as Individuals

As a starting point, there are a few things we know about transforming teacher practice that are advantageous for this study. One, despite an overwhelming tendency to do so, teacher development should not view teachers as a homogeneous group (D'Amant, 2012; Weldon, 2010). Rather, the initial assumption – and this is not meant to be obtuse, but instead a counter to the trend of dehumanising teachers to mere functions, as discussed above – should be that teachers are individuals with histories and pre-existing attitudes, abilities and identities. With such empathy, we can re-conceptualise professional development not as a fixing of problems identified in schools, but as a means to support teachers struggling to cope with enormous class sizes and poor access to necessary resources (Hardman, 2014). By shifting such focus to build professional development around the needs as identified by individual teachers, it increases the relevance of such interventions, and therefore the likelihood of success (see: Korthagen and Kessels, 1999). Moreover, Agbenyega and Deku (2011) propose, based on their examination of teaching in Ghana, that the starting point of teacher development should be in the strengths of individual teachers. Perhaps such an approach would then help resolve a paradox identified by Perry, Chapman and Snyder (1999) in a teacher practice intervention in Botswana. They found that even committed teachers were often resistant to innovations and changes in practice as they felt they were “already doing a good job” (p. 124). While the authors go on to suggest adding incentives, such as recognition, my sentiment is that the very sense of 'doing a good job' can and should be a starting point for professional development. In particular, it begins the transformative process from a place of knowing and confidence, rather than unknowing and liminality. Rather than experiencing change as a “radical disrupting of old and familiar values, attitudes, norms and practices” (D'Amant, 2012), it helps teachers re-evaluate and re-conceptualise their own practice. This “direct exploration of their conceptions may trigger self awareness through reflection” (Mukeredzi, 2013), an important point expounded below. Building on the strengths of teachers also acknowledges and values their contribution while also potentially eliminating unwanted traits: as desired practices are identified and replicated, they can supplant poorer pedagogical work in the process.

The Reflective Practitioner

The idea of professionals reflecting upon their own work came to the fore in the early 1980's with Schön's (1983) introduction of reflective practice: the ability for professionals to face new on-the-job challenges by calling upon prior knowledge, and analysis of previous experience. While his work was not itself specifically focused on the work of teachers, it attracted considerable interest among teacher educators, suggesting that they recognize its potential for unravelling some of the “perennial problems associated with the professional development of teachers” (Munby & Russel, 1989, p. 71), all the while echoing certain philosophies espoused by Zeichner (1981). This led to a body of research on understanding and explaining what is, and how one becomes a teacher who is a 'reflective practitioner' (see: Alder, 1991; Cruikshank, 1987; Eraut, 1995; Hatton & Neville, 1995; Hussein, 2006;). At its root, what is sought is to change the relationship between teacher and student, which must inevitably begin with teachers transforming their own self-perceptions. What this might look like is described by Prinsen & Verkoulen (2002):

> Pupils have to take more and more responsibility for their own learning processes and learning results. Teachers (as responsible adults) have to assist the pupils in doing so: they are coaching the youngsters in

> their development towards more competent (independent, responsible) learners. (p. 4)

Reflective practice is intellectually and philosophically linked to the ideas of praxis, emancipatory education and social constructivism (Cunliffe, 2004), and is presented as an alternate model to what Freire (2000) described as the 'banking' model of education. At its best, becoming a reflective practitioner can be an emancipatory act (Loughran, 2002). At the root of teachers' ability to promote social change, both for their students and for themselves, are their beliefs and values. Linking their actions to their values is what allows teachers to act as agents for social change (Stuart & Thurlow, 2000). The challenge with new teachers, however is that they "frequently do not understand the importance of challenging their beliefs" (114) and "[i]n the absence of challenge, beliefs are basically unchanging" (p. 117). Teachers must therefore learn and come to know their own beliefs, learn to trace the origins of these beliefs, and then question their validity against past, present and future experiences. This becomes the first step in breaking the cycle. How does what they experience resonate with what they believe? How do they reconcile dissonance? This process can only work, however, if the beliefs themselves are allowed to be questioned. In the face of dogma, the interpretation of experience will be dictated by the entrenched belief system, rather than the two being in a dialectic relationship.

The difficulty resides in establishing new forms of behaviour. Rodgers (2002) goes back to the early 20th century writings of Dewey to elaborate four key criteria that should be found in reflective practise. One, it must make or create meaning. Two, it must be an all-encompassing and disciplined system of thought, not just an applied technique. Three, it can only happen in relation to others; it is not something that occurs only in and to the thinker. Finally, the reflection process must be underpinned by a belief or value system that places worth on the future both of self and other. What she argues is that if teachers begin to evaluate their own teaching against these four criteria then the transformation process is sure to begin. Moreover, she adds, "Dewey reminds us that reflection is a complex rigorous, intellectual and emotional enterprise that takes time to do well"(p. 844). This coincides with a similar interpretation of Dewey put forward by Zeichner and Liston (1996). More than a simple series of steps, it is an all-encompassing and philosophically-rooted endeavour: "reflection involves intuition, emotion, and passion and is not something that can be neatly packaged as a set of techniques for teachers to use" (p. 9).

Herein lies the problem with the development of teachers as reflective practitioners. It is more than a set of skills that can be taught; it implies a re-socialisation into a new set of values, a new way of knowing, and alternate means of thinking. One must almost be re-socialised into becoming a reflective practitioner. The question, *by whom*, may be partially answered in a return to Beeby (1966), and a model he presents to guide thoughts on teacher development. The formation of a modern, professional corps of teachers is a slow, even multi-generational process. His model was itself based on the comparative experience of other countries, both developing and developed. In it, he proposed that schooling generally goes through three or four stages, and that the time it takes for each society to go through each stage will vary greatly.

The earliest stage – although some societies may never actually experience it and actually begin in the second – is what Beeby called the *Dame School* phase. He called it such because in the early days of public education in his native New Zealand, as well as the United States and other countries, some of the earliest schools were run by dames, who although they had limited education themselves, and had little or no formal training, would fulfil the role of educating the village children. Because of this limited training and education, the schooling experience of the children would often be characterised by strict rote memorisation of religious or other available texts, and basic arithmetic. There is no focus on having pupils develop meaning in this phase.

Countries in the second stage have managed to train a critical core of teachers. These may not have attained any level of schooling themselves much above some secondary education, but they have been trained in delivering some sort of standardised curriculum, although this is one that is usually very content or fact-oriented. In many countries emerging from war, this stage would correspond somewhat accordingly. The third phase is one of transition as the average general level of education grows within a society, eventually leading to a corps of teachers that are both highly educated and trained. This allows a schooling system to enter Beeby's final stage, that of an education focused on having pupils not only memorise facts, but develop meaning. Most developed countries, he posited, were characterised to some degree by this type of education. What Beeby attempts to do with this model is not to provide dogma, but rather to illuminate the fact that the process is quite slow and cyclical; it can be viewed as an upward spiral. In the case of wars, it makes the process plummet somewhat, and lost time must be recovered. Also underlying the model is the notion that increased education levels will ultimately lead to changes in the culture of learning. What is of interest to us is whether or not that process may be accelerated in any way, which brings us to a second sub-field for teacher education: teachers as agents of democratisation.

The answer lies in at least two parts. The first is the issue of power. Learning *about* democracy from an outside source may present ideas that are appealing, and with which many teachers may in fact wholeheartedly agree, but it does little to transform power relationships. The teacher of democracy remains a font of 'official' truth, and therefore remains superior in the teacher-student duality. The power-relationship between teacher and student is undisturbed. For a teacher to allow the practice of democratic learning requires allowing oneself to be open to questioning, thus a possible affront to one's authority, one's status, and one's identity; it fundamentally changes the relationship between teacher and student, creating a state of 'liminality' (see: Savin-Baden, 2007) which may be frightening or intimidating for a teacher, particularly if they do not have adequate tools for coping or adapting. It is fair to assume that certain teachers do enjoy the power of their position, and refuse to transform their teaching on this basis, but I posit that perhaps the main obstacle facing teachers trying to make the leap from knowing about democracy to practising democratic learning in the classroom is less insidious: they have not learned how, as professional development in this regard is incomplete. As Lopes Cardoso and May (2009) suggest: "[o]nly teachers who feel secure after being trained will use what they have learned in classrooms" (p. 262) which relates to Leach's (2003) asseveration that values such as democracy or citizenship are more than simply topics; they are practices. As such, they must be practised to be learned, much like a sport or a musical instrument. Reading the entire canon on the piano does not allow one to play a sonata. But in the case of teaching, this metaphor is too shallow, as teachers must not only learn democratic learning processes, they must un-learn authoritarian ones, which will also by fact involve transforming their own gendered identities as these are tightly linked to how power, authority, and knowledge have been learned and rehearsed. Simply learning *about* democracy does not a democratic teacher make.

What is therefore needed is a form of professional development that allows the practice and repetition of the desired behaviours of teachers: reflection, critical engagement with knowledge, the building of caring relationships, the fostering of peaceful and positive gender identities, and the promotion of democratic activities in the classroom, to name a few. When reflecting, teachers should be encouraged to consider the viewpoints – the expectations brought into the classroom – of their students, in particular any fragments of identity, such as race, which may shape the power-relationship of that student with others (Milner, 2003). Changes, particularly for in-service teachers, can be small. Contrary to the view that reflective practice cannot be broken down into a set of techniques, as it is all-encompassing and holistic (Cunliffe, 2004; Rodgers, 2002), the view I hold is that it must commence somewhere, and is thus closer to Loughram's (2002) idea of a continuum, particularly when juxtaposed with the work of Guskey (1986, cited in Stuart & Thurlow, 2000) who contends that what one believes is predicated on lived experience; consequently, belief lags behind behaviours. While seemingly contradictory, it makes perfect sense when viewed through the lens crafted thus far. Change can be difficult, and suggestions of changes to the *status quo* imply transformations in power relations and identities. As such, the liminality in identity can be unnerving and an emotionally harrowing experience. However, as one experiences change, and fails to feel the expected negative consequences, anticipated attitudes and beliefs shift accordingly. It is the same process undergone by anyone who has ever travelled to far-off places. Trepidation and anxiety of the unknown more often than not give way to wonderment and exhilaration. But the travel has to come before the exhilaration. Exposure to new experience forces a re-evaluation of old beliefs.

The same is thus true about transformative education. In order for teachers to hold new beliefs about their roles, they must be given the opportunity to try new approaches, and in sufficient instances, to generate their own data against which they can then evaluate their existing beliefs, because, as maintains Hussein (2006): "transformative practice is possible only when teachers learn from their experience" (p. 370). In doing so they essentially eliminate the "distinction between theory and practice" (Loughran, 2002, p. 41), or at least dismantle the sub-ordination of practice to theory (Munby & Russel, 1989), as their beliefs become more and more rooted in their practice. They know from doing, rather than from being told. This active experience can then be buttressed with reflective tools, such as journals or discussion groups, but the key must be to plant the professional development, from its earliest stages, in the 'doing' of teaching, rather than the 'knowing about' teaching. The stronger the focus on practice, the more the teacher, in particular the student-teacher whose repertoire of teaching experience is limited, is able to work against pre-existing school cultures and deliver innovative classroom activities (Brouwer & Korthagen, 2005). Particularly in the case of new teachers, lack of practical experience, reinforced by reflexive practices, will see the young professional subsumed by existing norms.

> [B]eginning teachers struggle for control and experience feelings of frustration, anger, and bewilderment. The process they go through is more one of survival than of learning from experiences. Novice teachers do not feel sufficiently prepared by their teacher educators and come to view colleagues in their schools as "realistic" role models, as the people who "do know" how one should go about teaching. (p. 155)

To help young teachers succeed in helping shift school-based cultures toward more democratic, peaceful and critical environments, it might also be essential to identify those desired activities already occurring within schools, attribute value to them, and designate their originators as role-models. Innovative and democratic teachers should be involved in the professional development of younger teachers who can then reinforce in school what was delivered in pre-service teacher education.

However, one main obstacle to any type of meaningful reform is that often, as public servants, teachers are at the mercy of policy makers who may have unfair assumptions. Alvarado and La Voy (2006) make this point by highlighting that teachers are often treated as "passive subjects, who simply need to be issued instructions on how and what they should teach" (p. 4), a result of being an input in a managerial process. In this regard, teachers are de-humanised, in the sense that they are viewed not as people, who should be subject to the same principles of learning advocated for students, but as functions; they are factors, rather than actors. Moreover, the authors continue, as mere conduits for official methods and knowledge, the teachers' own knowledge, experience and innovation are under-valued and under-used in school policy. Those in positions of authority must therefore be made to understand the process of transformation, and implement policies that favour it, rather than work against it. Unfortunately, without a system in place, such as teacher education or political activity by teacher unions (see, for example: Heystek & Lethoko, 2001) to re-shape the thinking of decision-makers, positive change may come slowly. However, following Beeby's model, time would likely be the best ally. Eventually, those in positions of authority will be issued from environments shaped by reflexive culture. Other variables are also likely at play. What can only be certain is that it is a slow process.

2.5 Teachers as Agents for Peace

Beyond the practice of democratic education, and focusing on active peace promotion, another complementary strategy for teacher transformation might also see teachers engage their own views on violence. To begin, there is an important need to help teachers question violence. As Miller and Ramos (2000) contend, "[t]eachers with deep, unexamined assumptions about the inevitability of violent conflict are likely to view conflict they witness – whether in the classroom, playground, or local events – as natural and inevitable" (p. 15). This includes educating teachers to identify and report incidents of violence, and to ensure that appropriate follow-up occurs, particularly for acts of sexual violence by teachers against students (Leach, 2003). Questioning and action are key to de-normalising violence. From a policy stand-point, teachers must not only be made aware of what constitutes violence, sexual predation or other unacceptable behaviour, but must also be trained in properly reporting any such incident, and perpetrators must be dealt with swiftly in order to reinforce the heinous nature of the acts. Again, this issue links back to the potential of teachers as agents not just for change in individual character building, but also in helping re-shape values of gender in a grander narrative. Punishing sexual predation by violating teachers helps disentangle masculinity from sexual domination, and allows room for alternate, peaceful masculinities to grow.

Furthermore, the position of teachers must be critically examined. If, as Reardon (1999) asserts that “the values, attributes, capacities and skills of teachers more than national policy determine the atmosphere and the success of the school”, then it is imperative to examine what values we want teachers bringing into the school. Rompelman (2002) argues for a connectionist approach to understand education, which presupposes that all individuals are connected, and bound, to all other individuals and environments. Therefore, positive relationships between teachers, students and administrators must be promoted, and, as a result, “the foundational elements of critical democracy – social bonding, respect, caring, and responsibility – emerge” (p. 9). Again, as children learn from experience, how they view and understand the interactions between individuals at school will influence their own behaviour over time. The likelihood of children becoming caring and responsible adults is greatly increased if they spend a dozen years in a schooling system that exemplifies those values. Thus, the function of teachers as role models extends to how they interact with others in their immediate environment.

Additionally, the purpose and realm of the teacher may need to be broadened. Rather than being rulers in their classes, teachers can also be positioned to be leaders in their communities. This idea, championed by Miller and Ramos (2002) intertwines community with teacher learning. In their work with teachers in Bolivia, this approach saw teachers move from self- to community-interest as their main professional motivation. The goal here would be to devise community learning plans lead by the teacher, and on which the learning of the children could be based and contextualised. This would transform the school into an institution that empowers communities, at it would serve to validate local, community knowledge, rather than reside as an outpost that imposes that of outsiders. At the very least, it leads to honest discussion. Moreover, it has an effect on the previous discussion on quality in education and the assessment of teachers then becomes one measured beyond the class, and “efforts to gauge the quality of teacher education would be more interested in the quality of community” (7). Ideally this would translate into definitions of teachers such as that proposed by Nair (2009):

> A teacher's prime responsibility is to help students to become good human beings, motivated to fulfil their true potential not only for their own benefits but also for the betterment of society as a

> whole. Good teachers are models of peace values such as the art of listening, the humility to correct one's mistakes, assuming responsibility for one's actions, sharing concerns, and helping each other to solve problems transcending differences. (p. 5)

Another role being proposed for teachers is in helping create narratives of healing, forgiveness and reconciliation, and dismantling divisive narratives of 'otherness', such as Murphy and Gallagher's (2009) work on Northern Ireland, or Zembylas and Michaelidou's (2011) research in Cyprus. Weldon's (2010) study in post-Apartheid South Africa individualises this approach by exploring some of the professional development needs of teachers, focusing on how to cope with their own personal legacies. But when it comes to the aspect of teacher roles that is most pertinent to this study, namely teacher-student interactions in post-war classrooms, and their relation to democratic values, Weldon advises that “very little is known” (p. 362). Understanding that the classroom is often an important crossroads where multiple social issues converge and transect, this places the teacher in a most fortuitous position. The critical factor for this study is to understand what those social issues converging in the classroom are specifically.

Finally, one other change might be made that would have an immediate impact on children in post-war and violent societies: acknowledgement that, beyond formal education, schools are paramount for children to socialise amongst peers. In fact, for many, it might be their only opportunity. Thought should be placed into how this might be nurtured. Positive, caring relationships between peers should be fostered, allowing time and space for talk, as they are essential in building resilient identities (Sharkey, 2008). The real challenge with recommendations such as those outlined above is that in order to achieve success, they are ideally part of larger systemic overhaul of the education system. In fact, piece-meal change is often the reason for failures (Abd-El-Khalik, 2007). Still, one peculiarity of educational reform in post-war countries is that they present perhaps the only opportunity to conduct such a large-scale overhaul. However, as ever, power and politics must be negotiated, and cannot be divorced from existing historical legacies.

The argument presented in the latter section of this chapter has been that teachers can play a critical role in fostering cultures of peace, particularly in light of the limitations of the current peacebuilding approaches. The fact remains that teachers exist in huge numbers, and can and should be mobilised. The education system, if properly used, has the sufficient size to promote social change at the required scale (Vongalis-Macrow, 2006). Schools are shown to play a major role in the forming of identity, gender and culture, albeit not always positively.

In the wake of war, this reality should be acknowledged, and schools re-structured and teachers re-positioned in order for education systems to produce a more desirable outcome. Reardon (1999) contends that the development of teachers into becoming agents for peace and positive change must be intentional and orchestrated, as the likelihood of this phenomenon producing itself is low. As such, she argues that "the education of teachers may well be the most crucial of all intentional strategies to bring forth a culture of peace" (p. 4). The process is without a doubt a long and arduous one, and its success will be measured over generations. This timeframe, however, should not act as a deterrent.

Nonetheless, teaching remains a demanding occupation. The purpose of this chapter was therefore to build upon the theory established in the opening chapter and examine the cultural realities in which teaching, and teacher education, must take place, examining specifically how to transform the role of teachers. Understanding these trends allows us now to move the discussion to the particular context of education in post-war Liberia. In the next chapter, I explore the currents, both socio-historical and educational, that shape the cultures that meet and mix in that nation's classrooms. By examining dominant narratives and various practices, it permits an understanding of the realities faced by this study's participants, and helps shed light on the data they generate.

Chapter Three

Socio-Cultural Context:

A Brief History of Liberia, Including its Education System

3.1 Liberia at a Glance

Thus far, I have examined how violence is re- or de-legitimised through cultural practice, and how schools can be the loci of such socialisation. In this chapter, I use these postulates and examine the specific setting of my study: Liberia. I critically isolate important historical strands that helped create a cultural narrative in which countless atrocities were allowed to take place. Civil wars do not happen by accident or in a vacuum. Therefore, I first present what allowed civil war to occur in Liberia. However, I do not attempt to present an in-depth evolution of the country. That task would be too large, and would merit its own tome. Rather, what I hope to present is a stream of events that I see having formed a violence-legitimising culture, as set out in my theoretical framework. The wars of the late 20th century were the result of a slow sequence of events that eventually led to the eruption of large-scale violence. To create a culture a peace, it is critical to adopt a similarly long historical view. In the second half of this chapter, I then move to specifically discuss the evolution of the country's school system, and present its current status. Through this chapter, I hope to provide a solid representation of the socio-cultural context in which the teacher-participants of my study live and work.

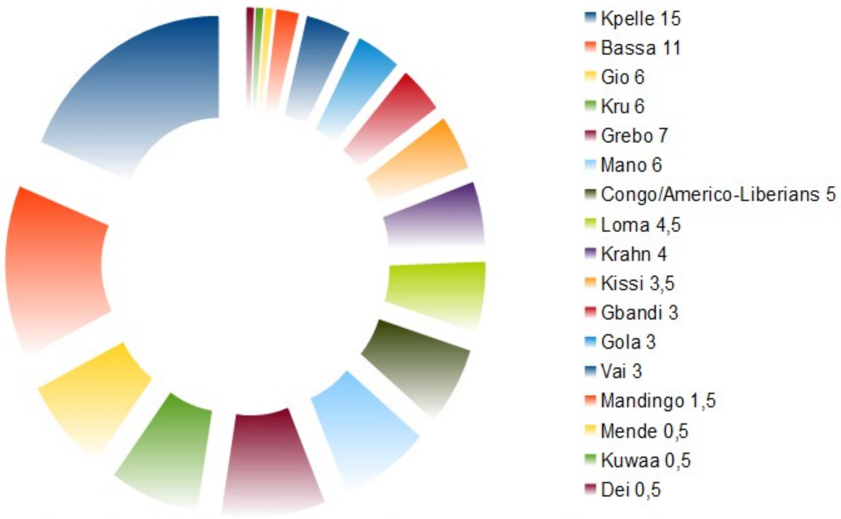

Figure 3.1 Liberian Ethnic Groups by Percentage (Approx.)

Data Source: Minority Rights Group International (http://www.minorityrights.org/?lid=5235)

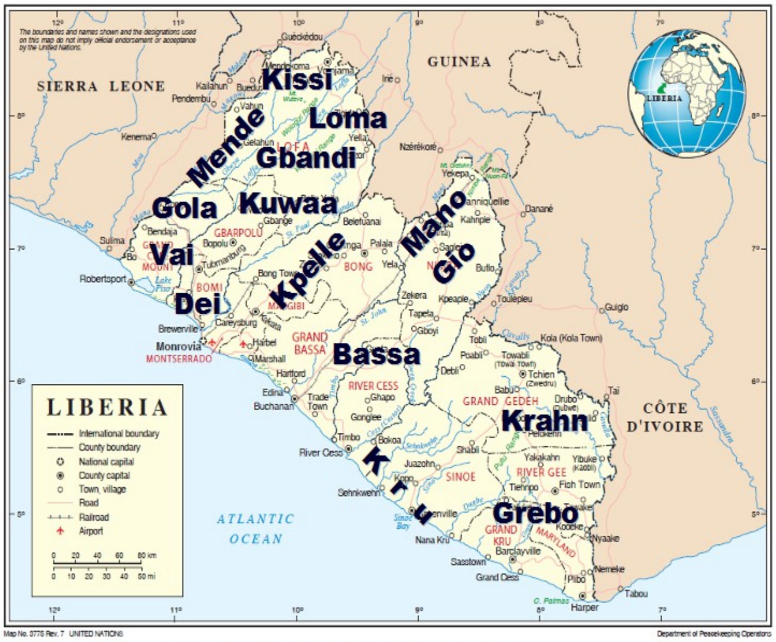
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.
SIERRA LEONE
GUINEA
CÔTE D'IVOIRE
ATLANTIC OCEAN
LIBERIA
Kissi
Loma
Mende
Gbandi
Gola
Kuwaa
Vai
Kpelle
Mano
Gio
Dei
Bassa
Krahn
Kru
Grebo
Monrovia
MONTSERRADO
LOFA
GBARPOLU
BONG
BOMI
MARGIBI
GRAND BASSA
RIVER CESS
GRAND GEDEH
SINOE
RIVER GEE
GRAND KRU
MARYLAND
Harper
Buchanan
International boundary
County boundary
National capital
County capital
Town, village
Road
Railroad
Airport
0 20 40 60 80 km
0 10 20 30 40 50 mi
Map No. 3775 Rev. 7 UNITED NATIONS
Department of Peacekeeping Operations

Figure3.2 Map of Liberia Showing Traditional Ethnic Territories
Map source: United Nations Dag Hammarskjöld **Map Library** (http://www.un.org/Depts/dhl/maplib/maps_pages/wm-africa5.htm)

Liberia is located along the Atlantic coast of West Africa, having as neighbours Sierra Leone to the North-West, Guinea (Conakry) to the North, and Côte d'Ivoire to the East. Covering 111,369 km^2, it is approximately twice the size of Nova Scotia. Administratively, the Republic of Liberia is divided into fifteen counties. As of 2010, the population Liberia was approximately four million, and is expected to reach four and one half million by only 2015, (United Nations, 2012), with nearly one third concentrated in Monrovia, making it the only major city in the country[13]. Also of note in the country's demographics is the age structure: some sixty percent of the population is under the age of twenty-five (Central Intelligence Agency [CIA], 2013). The combination of these two factors means that Monrovia is a very young and quickly growing city, and with an estimated fertility rate of 5.0 births per woman (UNData, 2013). This trend shows no immediate signs of abating. Particularly for the planning of educational services, these numbers present a challenge in and of themselves in providing classroom seats in large and growing numbers.

Ethnically, Liberia is a diverse country, and is comprised of seventeen major ethnic groups, the largest of which are the Kpelle, followed by the Bassa, Gio, and Kru. Figure 3.1 provides a break-down of each group as an approximate percentage of the total population. Of the seventeen groups, fifteen of them may be said to have “traditional” territories (see figure 2.3), although for many, these are often divided by national boundaries. The two groups without such territories are the Mandingo and the Congo, although for separate reasons. The Mandingo have traditionally been traders all throughout West Africa, and consequently are scattered throughout Liberia, where families have set up businesses. With strong ties to Guinea, the Mandingo also tend to be Muslim, and often speak French in addition to Mandingo, English and other regional languages. In fact, the Mandingo “make a virtue out of recalling their origins in other lands” (Ellis, 2007, p. 192). The Congo, on the other hand, are the most recent arrivals to Liberia, and their story is foundational to Liberia as a nation-state. "Congo" is a common term used today to describe two previously separate groups: the Americo-Liberians, descendants of freed slave settlers from the United States, and the original Congo[14], the descendants of captive Africans rescued from slaving ships in the 19th Century, and set ashore in Liberia. Over time there was much melding of the two groups, so that today they are referred to collectively as *Congo*.

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[13] The next largest city, Gbarnga, in Bong County, has a population of roughly 45,000 inhabitants, and the port of Buchanan, formerly Liberia's second largest city, now has approximately 26,000.

3.2 A Violent History

Beginning with the End

In August 2003 various Liberian military and political leaders were convened in Accra, Ghana, to negotiate an accord that would put an end to some fourteen years of fighting in Liberia that left as many as a quarter-million people dead (BBC, 2013), thus ending what has come to be known widely as the "Liberian Civil War". By varying accounts, this was the eleventh attempt to end the fighting (Pham, 2004), or even the twenty-eighth (ICTJ, 2007), if verbal agreements were to be counted. In either case, peace had been elusive, and all previous peace agreements prior to this one had failed, and were followed by renewed violence. However, in this case, an agreement was signed on August 18th, and has held for over ten years. While the failures of past attempts are many, the success of this particular attempt can be traced to three particular sets of circumstances. First, in the midst of the negotiating process the President of Liberia, Charles Taylor, was indicted by a special tribunal on crimes committed in Sierra Leone, Liberia's neighbour, during its own civil war, compelling him to resign and withdraw from the negotiations. Given that his ousting as President had been the primary raison d'être of this manifestation of insurrection (Pham, 2004), his removal was an important step forward in the peace process. Second, certain parties brutally leveraged media coverage of the ongoing fighting in Monrovia, including ordering of shelling via cellular phone, to augment their negotiation position (ICTJ, 2007). Thirdly, and this is what makes the case of Liberia unique, was a mass mobilisation of women to push for peace, which ultimately included a human barricade that locked negotiators in their meeting room until they reached an agreement (Disney & Reticker, 2008).Ultimately, the convergence of these factors led to the *Comprehensive Peace Agreement Between the Government of Liberia and the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) and the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) and Political Parties* being signed in Accra, Ghana, on the 18th of August. Most importantly, all parties have adhered to it.

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[14] The term "Congo" stems from the belief that the captives were originally from the Congo Basin area.

This agreement ended a fourteen-year period of strife. However, my interpretation is that it culminates a much longer process of cultural mixing and evolution, replete with legacies of colonialism, slavery, ethnically-rooted oppression and engrained violence. My contention is that the wars of 1989-2003 are the culmination of different historical processes that begin, at the latest, with the arrival of slavers on the coast of West Africa in the 15th and 16th centuries. I break up Liberia's history into seven phases, although the delineation is not necessarily as cut-and-dry as it might be presented. My aim is not to provide a definitive history of the land known today as Liberia, but rather to understand the evolution of the peoples within that territory to better comprehend how this society came to suffer the scourge of its civil war. While I intend to be as brief as possible, I err on the side of thoroughness to avoid any over-simplification of a unique and complex historical tapestry.

The Arrival of the Slavers (1450-1820)

To begin understanding Liberia today, one must go back at least to the mid-fifteenth century. For reasons of trade and religion, Portuguese navigators worked their way down the African coast in search of routes to India (Cliff, 2011). As they made their way down the coast they began collecting what they could along the way to bring back to Portugal to sell and sustain their venture. By 1460, they reached what is now Liberia, and soon gave it the name of the "Grain Coast" after a local spice, the melegueta pepper, also known as *grains of paradise.* However, one commodity in the region was most lucrative, and that had the most profound and lasting impact on the region: the human being. While raids and ritualised warfare would have long existed in the region, these would have been but on a limited scale, and linked closely to survival. With the arrival of slavers, Levitt (2005) makes the strong case that this ritualised warfare was fundamentally transformed. Suddenly, cultural and linguistic ties began to matter more than before. As a response to having members of their own communities stolen and enslaved, the peoples living on the coast began making deals with the slavers. In exchange for their own security, the coastal dwellers would supply the Europeans with the required slaves, pushing ever further inland, seeking people who belonged to 'other' groups. While the cultural and linguistic differences had long existed, the arrival of slavers precipitously elevated the stakes and gave birth to a new form of us/them identity. This oppositional otherness, as discussed in the opening chapter, is crucial in the development of violent cultures.

As the slave trade increased, and other European nations started competing, a veritable system of trade became established. Those groups on the coast traded slaves, gold, and ivory from the interior for European manufactured goods. These products became associated with power and prestige (Ellis, 2007), and began to be coveted deeper in the interior. In response to this increase in demand, the Mandingo, a people with a firmly established tradition in trading, began acting as the brokers in the region, bringing European goods from the coast, through the forests and up to the savannah, and returning with slaves. Until the mid-19th century, this led to a culture of "constant small-scale wars" (Ellis, 2007, p. 194) over slavery across the territory of modern-day Liberia. The trade in slavery is perhaps the greatest form of de-humanisation possible, as it renders the person into a mere commodity, on par with goats or lumber. That much of the West African region's social and political structure was forced to revolve around it for over three centuries must have shaped how the peoples of these regions developed senses of 'self' and 'other'. Understanding that a process of de-humanisation is necessary for the committal of the atrocities of war, we begin to see that the modern sense of ethnicity in this region is a by-product of the execrable slaving industry. Beyond simply moulding ideas of 'otherness', however, the slave trade also fomented cycles of violence, further contributing to another underlying pre-cursor to violent strife. As access to goods of prestige was also done through violence, it can prudently be surmised, that the development of identities became linked to power through violent actions.

The American Colonization Society (1821-1847)

Another facet of the slave trade was that it was trans-Atlantic. The tens of thousands of slaves stolen from West Africa arrived on the shores of the Americas. By the early 19th century, the United States of America was divided over the very issue of slavery. Noting developments in the British Empire, pushes for the abolition of slavery began to grow in the northern states. With the increasing number of freed former slaves, many white – mostly Southern – Americans became wary at the possible impact they might have on the stability of the slave-based industries. If these former slaves could be extricated from the country, it would be considered advantageous. At the same time, many evangelical Christians – mostly Northerners – saw the opportunity of using Christian and educated freed slaves to bring the Christian Gospel to Africa. With these two ideas in mind, the American Colonisation Society (ACS) was founded in 1816 with one goal: that a colony in Africa be formed to which freed American blacks could 'return' to Africa.

From the very beginning of the ACS, even by the most well-meaning members of the all-White cabala, the colonisation process was something done to the freed slaves, not with. Even among the abolitionists, the status given to those of African descent was lesser. This condescension is at the heart of Levitt's (2005) interpretation of the behaviour of the ACS, which he describes as "paternaltarian". In essence, for the initial years of the colony, the freed slave colonists were to be administered superciliously by white colony agents sent by the ACS, contesting the accepted, orthodox view of the founding of Liberia as a haven for, and by, freed slaves. By examining the early evolution of the colony, it becomes evident that this was a project done upon the settlers, with their input only gradually increasing over two decades. In 1821, the first ACS ship reached the site of modern-day Monrovia, at the mouth of the Mesurado River. Desperately requiring fresh water, the colonists forced the local Dei chief, at gun point (Levitt, 2005; Pham, 2004) to 'sell' them land, thus establishing the first settlement on Providence Island. Further friction led to violence between the settlers and the Dei later in 1822 (Levitt, 2005). From its initial moment, Liberia was founded on an act of violence, and as was described earlier, was founded in a region already rife with violence. As the colony expanded, still more violence ensued. The settlers waged war with the Dei and Gola in 1832, with the Bassa in 1835, with the Kru in 1838, and with the Vai in 1839-40. At the same time, treaties were signed with other groups, notably the Grebo, but these would later be disavowed or at least not respected by the settlers, leading again to war (Pham, 2004).

In addition to the colony at what is now Monrovia, five other colonies were established along the coast. These were administered by private companies similar to the ACS. As with the ACS colony, the other colonies were administered by white agents of their companies. However, as agents regularly died of disease, some settlers were eventually given responsibilities in the colonial administration, and a militia was formed comprising of settlers in order to protect the colony against attacks by indigenous populations. Expansion came both from new settlers from the US, and from people rescued from slaving ships, so-called 're-captives' and/or 'Congos' who were also put to shore in Liberia (Pham, 2004). As the colony progressed, and settlers began to assume roles within its administration, the basic paternalistic model of the colony was never challenged. The settlers imitated and repeated the patterns of governmental behaviours with which they were familiar. This included the waging of war against neighbouring groups. In essence, it is similar to the apprenticeship-of-observation that untrained teachers go through. Colonial administrators, unfamiliar with alternative approaches to government, repeat what they have observed and interpret as these 'the way' to run the colony. For American-born colonists, they were trying to re-create the social structure based on the model they knew, and that “model was the Ante-Bellum American South, and their [the settlers] was to build a prosperous Christian republic with the help of tribal hands and labour” (Cole, Gay, Glick & Sharp, 1971, p. 32). As such, a model of administration that was at its heart essentially racist, or at least condescending, was uncritically re-produced by the settlers, and culminated in 1847 with the settlers proclaiming independence, claiming the status of nation. Liberia was born, at least in the minds of the colonists. They wrote a constitution, modelled largely on that of the United States (Wilkins, 2010). However, two key differences could be found. One, it limited citizenship to individuals of African descent:

Negroes. Two, it described the indigenous population as Aborigines, not as Negroes, and thus shut out those populations from citizenship (Pham, 2004). This would be a right reserved for former American slaves, the Congos, and their descendants.

The Emergence of the Liberian Nation-State (1847-1900)

The declaration of independence was more a signal of intent by the colonists to join the ranks of other nation-states. It was not necessarily, however, a *fait accompli.* In the mid-19th century, this was a club made up mostly of European countries, along with former European colonies in the Americas that had broken away from their former colonial masters. For Liberia[15] to be considered a member, its leadership would have to make the State behave the way states were expected to behave. This was a tall order as a few thousand colonists along the West African coast formed a vastly different polity from other nations-states, both new and old such as Argentina, France, or Russia. And yet, the citizens of this first African Republic took up the challenge. Becoming a nation-state entailed at least three tightly-linked tasks, and how the government in Monrovia went about accomplishing these would play a significant role in shaping the political culture of the country, including in the shaping of relationships between various ethnic groups. To be a country, Liberia was required to establish borders, maintain the semblance of control within those borders, and, just as importantly, have these facts acknowledged by other nation-states in order to be recognised legitimately.

At the time of its founding, if Liberia were a country, it was certainly a thalassocracy: its settlements were strung along the coast, and it had little to no influence inland. To expand, the new government was required to gain control of the interior and consolidate its borders. Even early recognition by Great Britain in 1847 remained tenuous at best for the first half-century of the new republic's existence, particularly as its purported territory neighboured the British colony of Sierra Leone. As the second half of the 19th century progressed, and European interest in owning African territories increased, so too did pressures on the Liberian government to demonstrate effective control of its own soil. Liberian territorial ambitions therefore led to direct warfare – conquest, perhaps - with neighbouring groups, such as the Kru, Bassa, and Grebo, thereby institutionalising a culture of violent conflict (Levitt, 2005).

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[15] Although I use the term "Liberia" as an actor, and synonymously with generic terms such as "the government", I do this for ease of reading. However, I must reiterate that all actions taken by such "actors" are the result of decisions taken by individuals, or groups thereof.

Parallel to the precarious development of the Liberian state, other outside organisations were also active in the territory. Notably, Episcopal Church missionaries were among the Grebo, and had for a number of years been evangelising. More importantly, they were providing a European education to a cadre of élite community members. Following Levitt's (2005) argument that neighbouring groups viewed the colonists as equals politically, for the educated Grebo, they began to view themselves as cultural equals, too, in the sense that the settlers could no longer claim a moral superiority stemming from education and religion. Consequently, this new group of Grebo "were prepared to demand a place within Liberian society – or threaten to secede if they were not granted it" (Pham, 2004, p. 27). Feeling their grievances were un-tended, they mobilised an army as large as 5000 strong and fought the government to a stand-off, after having taken control of much of Maryland county. Only with American intervention, Pham (2004) stipulates – and it should be noted that the US had only formally recognised Liberia in 1862 – did the[16] Grebo finally agree to a new treaty with the Monrovia government. The patterns of behaviour in this conflict are very enlightening, as they are to be echoed again in the future. Individuals in Liberia, having gained an education, are still left out of an oligarchic government. Their frustration leads them to take up arms as a solution to their problem.

The Birth of Patronage (1900-1944)

By the end of the 1870's, Liberia had essentially become a one-party state. On January 7, 1878, James Spriggs Payne, the last Republican president, would be succeeded in office by Anthony Garner, a True Whig. That party would hold the office until the overthrow of William Tolbert, in 1980, by Samuel Doe. In 1900, the presidency was held by Garretson Gibson, and his term is worth noting as it was a relative anomaly. As a former missionary and teacher, his approach to government was focused on peaceful initiatives, such as legal education for the élite of the various groups of Liberia (Pham, 2004). However, his successor, Arthur Barclay, proceeded in an entirely different direction. Looking to quell the anxieties of Liberia's British and French colonial neighbours, he set out to demonstrate his country's ability to exercise sovereignty within its borders. His system, largely "patterned after the British colonial model" (Levitt, 2005, p. 138), comprised of two important facets. Arthur Barclay introduced a system of indirect rule in 1904, and, rather than continued reliance upon militias to fight wars, he created the Liberian Frontier Force (LFF) in 1908. This was Liberia's first standing army, or, as Sesay (1996) phrases it: "a national guard for the Americo-Liberian élite in power".

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[16] My use of a definitive article might suggest some sort of political entity but the reality is that, with the possible exception of the Grebo Confederacy of the 1870's, ethno-cultural groupings were quite loose. However, due to centuries of slaving, and now almost a century of Americo-Liberian presence and ambition, it can be assumed that these malleable groupings were beginning to matter more, if not solidifying somewhat.

Indirect rule was intended to strengthen the influence and control of Monrovia into the hinterland by dividing the country into districts, including the “ethnographic description and administrative classification” of peoples (Ellis, 2007, p. 196), and then appointing a commissioner to each. Commissioners would then use local chiefs to help govern (Pham, 2004, p. 31) with groupings of about five chiefs overseen by a paramount chief (Ellis, 2007). The implementation of indirect rule was therefore also a process of politicising ethnicity in Liberia. Whereas until then it had been cultural and linguistic, it now became the foundational characteristic in how Monrovia viewed indigenous people, and how it planned to exert control over them. Barclay's plan shows that the Monrovia-based élite was a continuation of the colony, but under non-white administration, thereby allowing one to, in fact, speak of Liberia's 'colonial' past – a very unorthodox narrative. The reasons that this interpretation might be overlooked are that the colonisers were of the same race as the colonised, and the colonisers were not an extension of an overseas power: they were carving out their own territory from that of the colonised. Furthermore, they were a weak colonial power, and are therefore difficult to compare to the mighty empires of the North Atlantic. Yet, the Monrovia élite used colonial means to subjugate the Liberian interior.

The creation of the LFF was the military facet of Barclay's strategy. If indirect rule was a means of projecting influence into the hinterland, the LFF would project raw control. More accurately, it projected a reign of terror and brutality. First, due to Monrovia's financial woes (see, for example: Dalton, 1965), the LFF was grossly under-funded. Consequently, it sustained itself thtough pillaging and rape (Ellis, 2007). Second, it reinforced legacies of the slave trade. As Ellis (2007) explains, the demographic need to recruit from the peoples of the interior meant that the culture of ritualised war, including the tactics of slave raiding, were incorporated into the *modus operandi* of the LFF via its recruits. The desired march of civilisation into the hinterland ironically led, so it seems, to an incorporation of slaving-derived violent cultures into the state apparatus. Given the small size and relative weakness of the Liberian state, including its population, the culture of the governing colonialist regime was left increasingly permeable to surrounding cultures – and specifically the violent elements thereof – as it relied more and more upon people from those groups to fill the ranks of its growing apparatus.

The same phenomenon also occurred on the administrative side of the government. For most of the cultural groups in the Liberian territories, society was organised around secret societies – notably the *Poro* for men, and the *Sande* for women – through which key social functions like conflict resolution, social hierarchy and education were administered. These societies held such great influence that by 1913, Barclay's successor, Daniel

E. Howard, introduced "government attachés to supervise the proceedings of the *Poro* […] and the *Sande"* (Pham, 2004, p. 60). The existence of the *Sande*, for the purposes of this study, is particularly interesting, as it demonstrates a tradition of organised networks of power reserved for women. In this light, the organisation of women in the early 21st century which helped bring an end to the war can be seen not as an anomaly, but as a continuation of pre-existing practices, as will be further developed below.

In 1914, Howard went one step further in disrupting the traditional social order of the peoples of the interior by requiring that paramount chiefs for all intents and purposes be appointed by the government in Monrovia. Thus, while social advancement was still possible – for men, largely, it should be noted – to a certain degree under the old traditions at a local level, any official position of stature required connections to the central government, thus debilitating the traditional avenues of advancement. The new system, however, also led to abuse as many administrators sent to the hinterland, according to Ellis (2007), started making use of the LFF to exploit the lands, and particularly peoples, for personal enrichment, and often with great brutality. Furthermore, Pham (2004) explains that through private companies set up by members of the oligarchic Congo[17] families, thousands upon thousands of indigenous Liberian men were sold into a form of indentured service from about the 1890's into the 1920's, most of whom were sent to the island of Fernando Po's plantations in slave-like conditions, drawing condemnation from the global community (see: League of Nations 1931). If possible, what is even more startling was the reaction of the government to the report. The inquiry itself was at the behest of the US government, following requests originating from chiefs in the interior. As a retaliatory measure, the Liberian government executed nine of these chiefs by hanging (Pham, 2004).

This type of activity helped solidify in the minds of Liberians that the state apparatus was a tool for personal enrichment, and that the use of its security forces for profit-seeking ventures, even by means of exploiting the population, was legitimate. These actions would sow the seeds of future discontent, and more importantly, would help shape the idea of what is "normal" behaviour for state leadership. Just as Lortie's apprenticeship-of-observation theory helps inform us how, *ceteris paribus*, teachers learn to teach by being taught unless they are actively challenged in transforming their practice, then so too must a similar pattern hold true for states. How future governors govern will largely stem from how they were themselves governed. Failure to be given alternate models will mean that, and perhaps especially so in the case of governmental coups or revolutions, without an alternate governance model, usurpers of power will likely re-enact the only roles they know.

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[17] Used here in the broader sense, encompassing both Americo-Liberians and the descendants of captive-slaves.

The Tubman Era (1944-1971)

As the 20th century progressed, so too did the evolution of the Liberian state. One noticeable trend was in the length of tenure of Liberian presidents, the apex of which was reached by William Tubman. He was the chief executive of Liberia for almost three-and-a-half decades during which time he built "probably the most extensive patronage machine the [West African] region had ever known" (Ellis, 2007, p. 213). If anything, this trend for presidencies to become ever-longer with each successor demonstrates a concentration of power in the Office of the President, and, as we shall see below, in the person assuming the role of the president as well. Again, as the Liberian state grew, and as more and more indigenous Liberians became absorbed in actual national life and organisation, my contention is that such trends helped shape the perceptions of what was 'normal' regarding the Office of the President. If all that had been known or seen by Liberians was an increasing centralising and personification of power in the hands of one person, then it would inevitably lead future holders of the office to behave in a way they believed to be normal. They would play the role of president as they understood it, and they understood it by what they had lived.

A second social phenomenon that had also been occurring, and this from the beginning of the colony, was a process of *mestizaje* between the Americo-Liberians and the Congo (see: Pham (2004) for a full discussion on this process) at first, and then eventually between members of this group with those of indigenous peoples. Through social and political integration, a process of cross-cultural pollination occurred within the patronage networks similar to that of the LFF. Congo arrivals were 'taught' how to be proper Liberian men or women, which in fact meant a certain Americanisation. Gender values of 19th Century United States were guiding the formation of idealised gendered roles in Liberian society. This cultural morphology is critical in understanding the development of the political culture in Liberia, and is at the heart of Ellis's (2007) overall thesis. Before the invention of Liberia, the various secret societies, such as the *Poro* and *Sande* had been the cornerstone in social organisation, and formed the basis of religion, politics and law in the hinterland. Originally banned, by 1913 the government realised the political value of such systems and attempted to rein in rather than eradicate them. However, a second, more secretive and exclusive tier of societies for men, known predominantly as leopard or crocodile societies, remained forbidden, and even became the targets of crack-downs by the LFF. The leopard societies, Ellis (2007) contends, are important because their practices were linked to murder and ritualised cannibalism. In order rise to the upper echelons, important sacrifices had to be made, such as killing one's own child. With their prohibition, these groups had to push their activities even further underground, and many of them soon transformed into groups of assassins. Part of their ability to do so, continues Ellis's argument, depended on the cosmological worldview of the inhabitants of the interior. The world was composed of spirits, and all living creatures have one. However, the spirits are divisible and can move from one creature to another. As such, the leopard men, in the eyes of believers, took on the spirits of leopards, and would commit murders not as men, but as human vessels inhabited by leopard spirits. Because organs were considered to hold the spirit, explains Ellis, sometimes the rituals entailed the eating of the organs of the person or animal.

As members of various communities entered the patronage network of the state, they did so with a belief system that held that power had to come with some sort of sacrifice. However, as the growing pre-eminence of the state disrupted and made redundant many old power structures, some key practices, now detached from their original context, were carried into the exercise of power in the Liberian state. Among these was that of ritualised murder. Originally, the murder was of someone dear and near to the murderer, as it was thought to legitimately be a sacrifice in order to achieve an elevated status. However, by the mid 20th century and beyond, it was the act of murder – any murder – and sometimes even ritualistic cannibalism that led to a dark sub-culture in Liberian politics. Those seeking advancement would use murder as a form of sacrifice, although the relation of the victim to the politically-motivated individual no longer mattered: “the traditional limits placed upon [violence] had been removed” (Ellis, 2007, p. 260). An industry of so-called 'heartmen', who dealt in body parts, even emerged. The practices became so pervasive that by the end of the 1970's, it reached even the highest echelons of the True Whig party. In 1979, Allen Yancy and James Anderson, two sons of leading party members, were convicted and executed for ritualised murder. What Ellis demonstrates is how the evolution of the Liberian state produced a hybrid, that while inspired by the European model actually incorporated many cultural practices of the various colonised groups, foremost among which was the infiltration of a practice of violence stripped of its original narrative purpose and counterweight. Again, we see another thread in the Liberian cultural tapestry that helps us understand how violence was viewed as a legitimate, culturally vetted political option.

A third social development might be described as the Westernisation of Liberian society, or at least its de-Africanisation. As the reach of the state increased in the hinterland, exponentially so with the construction of road networks, and the political clout of chiefs decreased, more young Liberians began to view a Western education as a means to enter the Monrovia-centred patronage networks. The presidency of Tubman is often seen as the apex of the clientèle state in Liberia. Actually from the city of Harper, not Monrovia, he built new networks of loyalty by giving the right to vote to women in 1945 and to indigenous people in 1946. He also increased government revenues hugely by allowing Liberia to become a port of convenience and collecting massive sums from ship registrations. These revenues he then used to expand the civil service and have more people under his patronage (Pham, 2004).

The key to securing new civil service jobs by Liberians was often having received the classical Western education, as it firstly demonstrated a learning of the good manners expected of the Liberian aristocracy, whose cultural roots still remained in the US, and secondly, and perhaps most importantly, it also meant having command of the English language. The traditional education, through Poro and Sande societies, was starting to lose its meaning, and 'modern' education was seen as a means for advancement. However, this also created inter-generational tension within families, as old values clash with new ones, such as documented by Cole et al. (1971) during their work in Kpelle communities in the late 1960's. Referring to some older students, they stated that:

> The very fact of their being in this high-school shows their separation from traditional Kpelle life. These students grew up within Kpelle culture, but left it to enter a new and different world. They look at both worlds as persons who belong to both, and yet do not belong to either. (p. 54)

In worse cases, the youth may develop antipathy toward their originating culture. They might come to view their family as lesser. “They look down on the uneducated country person and apparently accept many Western stereotypes concerning so-called primitive life” (p. 55). Education as a means for advancement in such circumstances is only valid if there are employment opportunities at the end of schooling. In the early days, as the economy expanded and jobs were plentiful, it was certainly a preferred path (Pham, 2004). Yet, as the economy began to stagnate, particularly in the 1970's during the presidency of Tolbert, jobs became more and more scarce. Education as a means of advancement became an increasingly less attractive option.

The patronage network was not only one of pork-barrelling and employment linked to educational achievements. While building roads and the civil service, Tubman also built up a robust and ruthless state security and repression apparatus that allowed him to control dissent with brutal efficacy, outlawing opposition groups, and cracking down on opponents, building upon a system set up by Barclay (Levitt, 2005). While for some, the Tubman years are fondly remembered, Ellis argues otherwise: “The country was run by an élite that was at best patronising, at worst brutal, arrogant and insouciant” (p. xxv). Violence, intimidation and repression were common currency in the methods of governing, and it goes without saying that these, too, became understood as normal in the act of governing, at least if left critically un-examined. Again, the model of government through which generations of Liberians were socialised was one which legitimated violence as an acceptable political practice.

The Westernisation also seems to have significantly transformed gendered ideals, and, as a consequence, the economic opportunities of women in particular. Examining specifically Grebo society, Moran (1990) noted the development of a dichotomy: 'civilized' versus 'native' individuals and its impact on gender. To be 'civilized' in Grebo society means to have adopted the dress and lifestyle of the Liberia élite, which is itself deeply imbued with values from the United States of the mid-19th Century, as opposed to 'native' Grebo, whose lifestyle tends to be more traditional. The impact of becoming 'civilized', Moran argues, is particularly hard-felt by women: as the role of the ideal woman in the 'civilized' household is to rely upon the man as the primary breadwinner, access to financial independence, through farming and selling at the market (both traditional responsibilities of Grebo women, and still acceptable to 'native' women), or other labour, is lost. It is against the rules to assume this particular role. As a result, the civilised Grebo woman must rely upon her husband, but if he is unemployed, sick, or dead, she is condemned to poverty.

The Tolbert Presidency (1971-1980)

The inherent problems in the Liberian political system eventually came to a head with Tubman's successor, William R. Tolbert. As his main order of business, Tolbert, who hailed from Bentol in Montserrado County, and had been Tubman's vice-president for twenty years, sought to de-Tubmanise Liberia and construct a new, more modern network. However, he failed grossly, as his transformations lacked both resources and expediency (Pham, 2004). Another explanation to Tolbert's failure is given by Johnson (2004), which, while complementary to the previous, also bears closer resemblance to the theoretical framework laid out thus far: that Tolbert was constrained by being a product of the very system he was trying to change: “[L]ike his predecessors [he] was born and bred in a value system and political culture that was not only allergic to change, but was ossified by historical and organizational norms that inhibited critically reflective learning and action” (p. 54). In other words, even though Tolbert wanted change, he did not have the adequate skills or tools at his disposal to enact the desired change – similar to a teacher wanting to innovate in a classroom. Unable to do so, he reverted to known patterns into which he had been socialised.

By 1979, the Tolbert administration was suffering, and riots broke out as he tried to raise the price of rice, the main food staple of Liberians[18]. A cycle of protests and arrests ensued, political opposition parties were outlawed and elections postponed. Critically, Tolbert had called upon neighbouring Guinea to provide troops for protection, causing great insult to the rank and file of the army (Pham, 2004). Then, on April 12th, 1980, the course of Liberian history was irrevocably changed. Seventeen non-commissioned officers of the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) (the LFF's new name since 1961) stormed the presidential palace in the wee hours of the morning, and killed Tolbert as he slept.

The Doe Years (1980-1989)

The putsch leader was a young Krahn master sergeant named Samuel Kanyon Doe. Doe was issued from the ranks of the AFL, which, unsurprisingly, was structured along socio-cultural lines. Most of the officers were of Congo stock, while indigenous, mostly uneducated[19] men made up the rank and file, leaving them even more unprepared than Tolbert to run a country. Perhaps from frustration stemming from inability, acts of violence quickly escalated. Then, "[l]acking coherent social, economic and educational policies..." to use Johnson's (2005) candid description, "...the Doe regime sought to rule by intimidation, fear and the brute use of force" (p. 54). What Doe also did was imitate previous patterns of government by building new patronage networks. Rather than opening the state apparatus to all Liberians, thus shattering the century-and-a-half old hold on power by the Congo elite, Doe simply re-directed the networks of patronage toward his own Krahn kinsfolk. As part of this process, the Congo-heavy officer corps of the AFL was purged, and replaced with Doe supporters. Also, to ensure his popularity with his troops and patrons, civil servants and military personnel were granted a substantial increase in salary (Pham, 2004)

Beyond the regime of repression led by Doe, two particular series of events merit discussion, as they greatly help understand how the civil war would eventually unfold. The first was that Doe made a pact with Mandingo leaders. The Mandingo, a culture of traders, had made well from Tubman's building of roads into the interior; they had settled along them and opened businesses (as did Lebanese traders). Consequently, this strengthened the wariness that other Liberians traditionally held of Mandingo – who are Muslim – as 'outsiders' (Advocates for Human Rights, 2009). In exchange for a share of profits derived from trade, Doe offered protection to the Mandingo, included members of that community into his patronage network (Pham, 2004), and recognised them officially as a 'Liberian' ethnic group (Ellis, 2007) thus further politicising ethnicity.

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[18] A common Liberian saying is "that if a man has not eaten rice today, he cannot say he has eaten".

[19] Not one member of the coup, Doe included, had completed their high school (Pham, 2004).

The second set of significant events in Doe's presidency relate to General Quiwonkpa, the commanding officer of the AFL, and a member of the Gio community of Nimba County. Despite some initial advancement under Doe, he was soon dismissed from the AFL. Fearing for his safety, Quiwonkpa fled the country, along with numerous supporters – including Prince Johnson, who will become important later in this story – some of whom, in 1983, launched raids from Côte d'Ivoire into Nimba County against government installations (Ellis, 2007). This sparked retribution on the part of Doe, who sent in Krahn-dominated AFL units who were "given free rein to loot and burn villages" (Pham, 2004, p. 84), creating animosity between these two peoples based on the personal animosity between two individuals. Following a rigged election in 1985, Quiwonkpa then attempted a coup, but was "arrested, castrated, and beaten to death, his dismembered body being displayed openly" (Pham, 2004: 84). Then, Doe amplified violence: a new campaign was initiated in Nimba County, and over 3000 Gio and Mano civilians were massacred (Pham, 2004). Yet, the state of affairs in Liberia continued to deteriorate. As the population grew ever faster, the economy also sank, creating a double scythe that cut the living conditions of the average Liberian from above and below. Opposition mounted and repression increased.

All the while, a former member of Quiwonkpa's patronage network, Charles Taylor, had fled Liberia in 1983 with an estimated $900,000 in embezzled funds. Taylor, of Gola descent, had originally been educated as a school teacher, and then in the US as an economist. On Christmas Eve, 1989, Taylor and his National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), slipped across the border and began their war against Doe. This Sergeant-Major, who had "turned the social distinctions in which the Liberian state had its roots into major political cleavages at lightning speed" (Ellis, 2007, p. 66), would soon see what dreadful consequences his term would have on the people of Liberia.

The Civil War (1989-2003)

The next fourteen years of Liberia's history would be even more brutal. A series of personal vendettas and quests for power and status by a few individuals would unleash waves of mass violence known as the Liberian Civil War. By 1989, cultures of violence were rife in Liberia, especially in the political arena. Murder, torture, coups, executions and guilt by association or kin were common currency. As the old indigenous systems had disintegrated, they were replaced by a new state system that increasingly relied on ethnicity as an important distinguishing feature; there had been an artificial manufacturing of 'us' and 'them'. The civil wars that now commenced were not necessarily caused by the historical development of the themes discussed in this section, but they certainly created an environment conducive to it. With the arrival of Taylor drugs, alcohol, children[20] vulnerable to psychological manipulation, and automatic weapons were added to the mix, and hell was unleashed upon the Liberian populace.

Taylor's army quickly grew as it made headway. He recruited heavily among Gio and Mano youth, which led to backlashes by Doe, which again led to more recruits for Taylor (Pham, 2004). As the growing army progressed, they lived off the land, fuelled by drugs and alcohol, and raping and pillaging as they went. It is estimated that between 10 and 20 percent of Liberian women were victims of sexual violence during the war (Cohen & Hoover Green, 2012). By the end of July, the NPFL had made it as far as Paynesville, a suburb of Monrovia. Nearly 600 Gio and Mano refugees in the city of Monrovia, including Taylor's father, sought refuge in St. Peter's Lutheran church. Doe ordered their massacre. In retribution, NPFL began targeting Krahn and Mandingo civilians that crossed their path. Ethnic-based violence simply spiralled out of control.

New armed groups emerged, while existing ones splintered. Foremost was Prince Johnson forming a Gio-heavy Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL) which arrived at the outskirts of Monrovia and laid siege to the city. By this time, West African states had decided to send in an intervention force: the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG). Requiring the use of the port in Monrovia which Prince Johnson controlled, ECOMOG soon became friendly with the INPFL leader. For unknown reasons, Doe, on September 9th, made his way by convoy to the ECOMOG base to meet with the force leader, but was ambushed and killed by the INPFL in ECOMOG headquarters.

By February 1991, the AFL, NPFL and INPFL reached an agreement, but within a few months a new group, the United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy (ULIMO), comprised of AFL officers and Mandingo and Krahn soldiers, appeared with the intent of ousting the now leader of the country, Charles Taylor. Fighting began again, and Taylor lost control of over half the country, forcing hundreds of thousands into displacement. Neither the continued presence of ECOMOG nor the Cotonou Peace Agreements of 1993 abated the violence. In the North, in Lofa, a Loma-centric group called the Lofa Defence Force began attacks against ULIMO. ULIMO itself split along ethnic fissures with a faction of Krahn becoming ULIMO-J, called so for its leader, Roosevelt Johnson, and a Mandingo faction named ULIMO-K, after its leader Alahaji

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[20] The International Labour Organisation (2005) reports that 15,000 children, of whom many were girls, fought in the Liberian war, representing some 37 percent of all fighters.

Kromah.

The war, though it had ethnic dimensions, was not an ethnic war. Liberians had been taught to think ethnically, and this mode of thought was exploited during the war. The war had been about acceding to the halls of power, but in a hybrid cultural context where centuries of violence and dismantled cultural values were coupled with personal ambition and greed. There was a tradition where idealised masculinity was equated with prestige and power, and for a long time, war had been the means of achieving this end. For a time, a Western education became a means of climbing, but then as jobs became scarce, a reversion to known – I hesitate to call them traditional as they had lost any form of cultural roots – methods of accessing to power took over: ritualised violence and warfare. However, the rules that governed warfare changed, or even disappeared, and that meant that alternatives needed to be found. The warrior re-manifested itself as an idealised manhood, albeit in a perverted form. It is also interesting to note that within this violent arena gender transformations also occurred. When discussing the participation of women in fighting forces, one narrative that appears revolves around the notion of women as victims. An oft-cited reason for women becoming fighters is for personal safety or security (ILO, 2005). Linked to this is also one of revenge; any Internet search for the terms "Liberia Female Soldier" (or similar) invariably leads to various manifestations of an August 2003 Associated Press report on a female militia Colonel whose *nom de guerre* is *Black Diamond*. In this narrative, which Cohen and Hoover Green (2012) problematise, the female soldier is herself – as was her family – a victim of sexual violence, and her band of female fighters seeks revenge. The more interesting narrative for the purposes of this study, however, is somewhat counter to the idea of woman-as-victim. In a 2005 ILO study which asked female soldiers why they joined, a very common answer the research found was one of wanting to prove equality. Many female fighters, it seemed, wished to adopt the role of warrior with the intent of demonstrating the ability of women in traditionally male roles. In actuality, this challenge to the male warrior has survived the wars and continues within the current AFL with its female members (see: AFRICOM, 2010).

Charles Taylor, for all his brutality, also gives the impression that more than most, he understood the Liberian psyche. Given the relative ease with which he was able to achieve his goal of displacing Doe – although at immense cost to countless others – he seems to have created a model that others tried then to re-create. By using brutal force, Taylor legitimised it as a means to achieve power. As new groups emerged, and were then subsequently included in the more than dozen attempts at armistice, the process sent a clear message to those interested in becoming rich and powerful that the Taylor method worked. By the mid-1990's, Taylor struck a deal with the Nigerians, the main contributors to ECOMOG, and even as fighting continued, the Abuja Accords were signed, thereby rewarding most faction leaders with roles in the new tentative government. The Abuja Accords soon collapsed, and Abuja II was then signed, leading the way to an election. In July 1997, Taylor won the presidency with three-quarters of the vote against a fractious and disorganised opposition (Pham, 2004).

Once President, Taylor's governing methods quickly incorporated the worst practices of Liberian politics. Purging the AFL of the Krahn, he stacked it with his NPFL veterans. He also organised his own private army, which he euphemistically called his Anti-Terrorist Units (ATU), which eventually became larger than the AFL (Pham, 2004). Many of the ATU members were demobilised (child) soldiers from Sierra Leone's civil war, one that Taylor had fostered and supported (Ellis, 2007). Repression increased, as did inflation, crime, and ritual killings (Pham, 2004). Life for the average Liberian was truly a miserable existence. By 2000, Taylor's enemies coalesced around the sole objective of removing him from power. LURD, and then Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) were born. The former attacking out of Guinea, and the latter out of Côte d'Ivoire, the balance of power began to shift. With attacks coming from all directions, Taylor's forces slowly began to be pushed back toward Monrovia by LURD, and Buchanan by MODEL. In a grotesque defensive strategy, Taylor began forming a ring of IDP camps around Monrovia, as thousands came flooding into the city, fleeing the advancing troops, overwhelming a city already unable to cope with the throngs of displaced people.

The Peace (2003-)

In April of 2003, the women of Liberia had had enough, and began waging a campaign of non-violent protests for peace. Dozens, then hundreds of women – both Christian and Muslim - began spending their days at a sit-in at the fish market by the airfield, and organised a sex strike, denying their husbands intercourse until there was peace. Led by Leymah Gbowee, the women protested every day until on April 23rd, they were granted an audience with Taylor at the presidential mansion, where he then agreed to attend peace talks in Accra (Disney & Reticker, 2008). Gbowee followed Taylor and the other warlords to Accra, and, as we have seen, pushed the negotiations along. For six weeks, the warlords bandied about, not reaching any agreement, while all the while the violence in Monrovia was intensifying. Tired of waiting, Gbowee mobilised her group of women to barricade the negotiators inside, and within two weeks, a peace agreement was signed that still holds more than eleven years later.

What the actions of these groups of women reveal is that what has thus far been discussed as evolutions in Liberian culture over the centuries seems to have been concentrated in particular segments of society. The sheer numbers of displaced individuals demonstrate that the overwhelming majority of Liberians – including the majority of men – were uninvolved in political competition or violence. If anything, the insidious culture of murder, rape and orchestrated mass violence was the result of select sociopathic[21] individuals. By using the suffering of others for their gain to demonstrate their 'strength', Liberia in effect suffered from an outburst of predatory masculinity. The slow disintegration of traditional narratives, and their replacement by inadequate ones left the door open for opportunistic, self-serving individuals to impose a new narrative, exploiting youth in particular, and having marauding children build identities around their own leadership. It took a competing, non-violent narrative to finally bring the atrocities to a grinding halt.

However, if the argument that this explosion of mass violence reflects a convergence of various socio-historical currents, then we must also look at the leadership role of women in the peace process, not as an accident but as a reflection of other socio-historical threads particular to the Liberian tapestry. There are several key realities that help understand how and why the women's movement may have been able to mobilise so effectively in the end-days of the war. First among these is the *Sande*. This sodality – or its equivalent – had been a prime enculturation institution present in numerous Liberian societies for generations (Dunn, Beyan & Burrowes, 2001). As a consequence, it created a mechanism through which women were used to organising, and this for social and political purpose. This has included having women directly or indirectly occupy positions of chieftancy, form councils of elder females, and even see veto power of decisions of male councils (Fuest, 2008). Thus, for groups of women to organise themselves was not something foreign or different – it emanated from existing cultural practices. Within the Monrovia élite, moreover, there was also a subset of Liberian women who were traditionally highly educated[22] (Bauer, 2009), and thus in a position to help transform mass mobilisation and leading a sophisticated political movement, as well as initiate dialogues with both key domestic and international actors.

Following the peace accord was the implementation of a United Nations peacekeeping force: the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), through the passing of UN Security Council Resolution 1509. It was given the mandate of supporting the ceasefire agreement and transitional government. It oversaw a sometimes difficult disarmament programme, and helped organise the elections in 2005 which saw Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Africa's first elected woman Head of State come to power. Even though most evidence is corollary, it would seem that it was sustained mobilisation by women's groups, both through the initial campaign, and through the subsequent run-off, that Johnson Sirleaf won (see: Bauer, 2009). UNMIL also saw the deployment of 14,000 blue-helmeted soldiers deployed across the country, and thousands more bureaucrats and aid agency workers flood into Liberia – although most are based in Monrovia.

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[21] I use that word deliberately: I know not how else to describe persons who would deliberately engineer death and suffering on such a grand scale for such personal, petty reasons, such as better positions within the new government (see: Disney & Reticker 2008).

[22] In the early days of the Doe administration, nearly one third of university teachers, for example, were women (Fuest, 2008).

In the years since, the Johnson Sirleaf administration has tried to re-build the country as best as it can. However, entrenched cultures of graft and corruption, the elimination of which has been one of Johnson Sirleaf's declared goals, amongst other issues, has meant that progress has been slower than hoped for, particularly by everyday Liberians. Although the president was re-elected in 2011, this was in part due to the boycott of the elections by some opposition parties. That being said, signs of improvement can be seen: roads are being built and paved, markets are bustling, and while criminality is still an issue at night, a general sense of security seems to be had. Within this context, gendered roles are still in flux as well. Fuest (2008) argues that even though the war cost all Liberians dearly, with a particular toll paid by women, opportunities on the far side of war are also appearing for Liberian women. For example, she notes how many women have opened up businesses in town in the interior after so many Mandingo families were forced into displacement. The group which seems to have had the most difficult time readjusting to times of peace, however, seems to be the women who are ex-fighters. Often, they are without kinship or networks, and must resort to prostitution or other means for survival. What is most clear, is that no single narrative can explain the situation – good or bad – of women in Liberia today. While it is possible that some transformations in gender roles may be reversed, it seems likely that the position of women in Liberian society has permanently been altered by the war and subsequent peace.

Yet, as I write this, an outbreak of Ebolavirus has torn into Liberia, killing thousands and potentially de-stabilising a fragile political situation. The difficulty in assessing the current state of Liberia is that it has been a relatively short time since the end of the war. While a decade might seem substantial, it must be juxtaposed against the destructive two-and-a-half decades that preceded it: the dying days of the Tolbert administration, the Doe years, and finally the fourteen-year civil war ravaged an already fragile state. Between the late-1970's and the Accra peace accords, hundreds of thousands of Liberians died and even more were displaced. Crucially, most of the more educated ones, ergo often wealthier ones, left the country, creating a wealth- and brain-drain. While peace may attract some back, others are likely to stay in their current countries of residence, having built new lives over the ensuing years since their departure. My purpose here is therefore not to evaluate post-war progress, but to try and present an honest assessment of the scope or magnitude of the task at hand. Given the tragic series of events that gave rise to the wars of 1989-2003, I must agree with Ellis (2005) who states boldly that Liberia "can only be reinvented" (p. xxvi). It is for this reason that I turn my attention to the one domain which I believe has been left out of the larger peacebuilding process, and which desperately needs integration with the other sectors, in order to best create a multi-faceted process for sustainable peace.

3.3 Educational System overview

In August of 2013, many of the news outlets in the Western world reported with shock and consternation that not a single student had passed that year's national examination (see: Smith, 2013). While many arguments and explanations were tentatively given, the analysis seemed to fail in its grasp of understanding the context from which those Liberian students were coming. Only by reviewing the state of the system does it become possible to make sense of the results – which I don't interpret as a failure, but rather a very logical expression of what is and has been.

Evolution of Education in Liberia: From Many to One

When the ACS founded its first colony, the indigenous peoples of Liberia, like all societies, had their own system of learning. In fact, many may have had different parallel systems, which can be understood as either implicit or explicit learning. For the idea of implicit learning, I draw upon the work carried out by Cole *et al.* (1971) among the Kpelle, Liberia's most populous group, during the 1960's. In their study, they saw that for most technology-based learning, such as the planting of rice, clearing of fields or the construction of huts, no specifically constructed moments of teaching existed. Rather, "children learn more from observation than from situations specifically designed to transmit information orally" (p. 39). What occurs, however, is that children will subsequently practise the skills, and the researchers even noticed them critiquing each other in their ability in the practised skills.

One consequence of such a culture of learning, noted Cole *et al.*, was that there was hence no tradition of verbalising problems. Therefore, even though problems are regularly encountered and worked through, and one assumes that many of the problems in cyclical activities such as farming are repetitive, that the Kpelle men learned to solve them by observation and imitation, but not by discussing it. Consequently, this cultural phenomenon must be considered when applying pedagogical approaches that require verbalising and discussion of problems – there might be a cultural impediment to the approach. The learner may understand the problem, and even be able to solve it, but may be predisposed to not discuss it, and even wishing to do so, may not have learned how to adequately verbalise his/her thoughts.

However, as the ethnographers highlight, there is another completely different strand of traditional education within the Kpelle culture, and, by extension, many other regional groups' cultures, that are explicit and rely upon language. In fact, they are rooted in the notion that power is derived from language. While what might be dubbed work-related skills were assumed to be implicitly learned – or even absorbed – through passive observation, and those skills more directly related to community life and interactions were explicitly taught. Matters of cultural history and ancestry among the Kpelle, and some key values, are transmitted through story, song and proverb. As one young Kpelle interviewee told Cole *et al.*(1971): “I suppose my grandmother and elders of our family taught us these not only as songs and stories, but also for their significance in our daily life, in order not to be greedy, not to be jealous, not to make trouble, and not to boast” (p. 52). For the proverbs, these are expected to be learned by all, but their use is reserved for the elders. In fact, it is considered ill-mannered to express proverbs towards your own elders; proverbs are meant to trickle down, in a manner of speaking. It is not uncommon for venerable members of a community to speak almost entirely in proverbs, a type of speech Cole et al. recorded as “deep-Kpelle”. The manipulation of language, and the use of proverbs, is closely associated to knowledge, which is itself viewed as a high source of power.

A major institution in the learning of proverbs, social links, and the rules of interaction for about half of the Liberian populations in the past, the Kpelle included, were the secret societies of the Poro and Sande, specifically through their 'bush schools'. In the past, bush school could last months, or even years (Butcher, 2010). The primary purpose of the bush schools was to initiate boys and girls into the necessary life skills required for manhood or womanhood, to the point that if they had not been initiated in one of the societies, they were “simply not considered part of adult society” (Ellis, 2007, p. 225) – in essence, they were mandatory rites of passage, much like a formal school education might be today in Canada. Specific trades, such as blacksmiths and medicine doctors, might have their own secret societies with their own bush schools, as well, to initiate new generations into those art forms (Cole *et al.*, 1971). Ellis (2007) describes the role of the bush school as follows:

> In the forest, young initiates live in special village where they are instructed in the ritual knowledge of their community and educated in their duty as men. In particular, they are taught the virtues of discipline, courage and obedience, rather like in an old fashioned English public-school. (p. 224)

The Sande schools, for women, would have covered some of the same, but would have a less political focus, as women would not be expected to play a similar role in public life as men. The site of the bush schools could often be at sites of special spiritual significance, such as a waterfall (see: Butcher 2010). It was thus through these institutions that much of pre-Liberian society in the region organised new generations into learning their scripted roles. However, as interactions became evermore frequent with the agents of the Liberian state and with Christian missionaries, these institutions began to fundamentally be altered as well (Ellis, 2007), just as the roles themselves began to be transformed. By the mid-20th century, as Cole et al. (1971) worked in Kpelle communities, this transformation was already visible, and bush school was relegated to a few months over the summer (Ellis, 2007). As one Kpelle man explained in the 1960's:

> Without hesitation I would say that the Poro and Sande bush schools in general terms have lost their former meaning. They are no longer performing their traditional function: to prepare the individual to be adjusted economically, socially, religiously, and even physically to his society. (cited in Cole *et al.* 1971 p. 53)

What this signifies is that the glue that held together the old social fabric was slowly disappearing. Kpelle culture specifically, but Liberian culture more widely, was in full flux as old customs and institutions were being pushed head-on by incoming institutions and cultures: modernity, nation-states, and Christianity. The primary tool in this push was a Christian, Western model of schooling. Ultimately, the traditional structures, practices and narratives of power were also in flux and the alternative education system offered a competing set of values, and access to new organisations of power. While eventually the State of Liberia would take over – or at least attempt to – the delivery of education, in the initial years it was religious organisations that led the push, and with fervour and zeal. The age-old education that socialised children based on the community's values was supplanted by a new system that socialised them into new patterns of being.

From the onset, there was little compatibility between the education offered by missionaries and the social reality of indigenous Liberian. For instance, the curriculum offered at the College of West Africa, founded by Methodist missionaries in Monrovia in 1839, consisted of "algebra, Bible history, English literature, French, geometry, Greek, history, Latin, music, physics, political science, psychology, rhetoric, zoology, and a course called "General Knowledge in Quotation"" (Pham, 2004, p. 58). The aim of such an education was not to meet the needs of indigenous peoples as they saw them, but rather to help fulfil the goals behind Liberia's founding itself: civilise and Christianise the peoples of Africa. As the Liberian state expanded, as seen previously, this education was extended to the families of indigenous élites to help bring them into the cultural orbit of the Americo-Liberians. By the 1920's, political development among African-Americans in the United States also meant that, through the auspices of the National Baptist Convention, a number of black American missionaries, the majority of whom were actually women, were arriving in Liberia to spread Christianity and American values (see: DeLombard, 1991). What is interesting to note, however, according to DeLombard (1991) was that these African-Americans carried with them very similar ideologies regarding Africa and Africans as white missionaries had at the time. If anything, this attitude would have helped cement perceived dichotomies between Congos and native Liberians.

Another approach to Westernising was a process of apprenticeship. As Pham (2004) explains, the scheme began principally with newly arrived freed captive slaves, the original Congo, but was also later extended to indigenous Liberians as well. The non-Westernised individual would be placed in an prescribed position of tutelage with an Americo-Liberian settler, who received a stipend in exchange for providing the apprentice training in a trade, such as blacksmith, trader or otherwise. Women were taught Western home-making skills, and a particular form of American femininity was promulgated. In the process, it was expected that the apprentices would learn English, become Christian, and at the end, critically, the Congos would be granted citizenship. Ultimately, to be accepted into Liberian society – meant here as that created by and for Americo-Liberians – was to be educated, Christian and Anglophone.

The impact of Western-style education through the Liberian territory was significant in many ways. As previously highlighted, it gnawed away at old institutions and challenged existing values (Cole *et al.,* 1971). It also stripped some men in particular of avenues for social advancement. In the traditional Poro system, the more a man acted as an instructor at the bush schools, the higher he could claim placement with the community's social echelons (Ellis, 2007). With the desuetude of the Poro over decades, this track was slowly removed.

However, the collision of cultures also had unexpected benefits, as well. Perhaps the most exceptional example is the development in the 1830's of an indigenous written language among the Vai peoples (Stewart & Hair, 1969). This script, which was a set of symbols for the consonant-vowel combinations of the Vai language was invented by one individual[23], and its adoption quickly spread across Vai society, and was, by the last decade of the 19th century, integrated into the affairs of Vai secret societies.

The reach of the Western-style system was however relatively limited until the mid-20th century. Until then, it had been relatively limited to the Congo/Americo-Liberian community, and some elite cadres of various indigenous communities. Nonetheless, the educational landscape began to change rapidly. One occurrence was the arrival of the Firestone school system. As part of a massive land lease agreement for rubber plantations, the American Firestone company was required to provide educational services for the children of its plantation labourers. Even greater change came from added government revenue due to merchant marine and open door economic policies of the Tubman years. Within a few short years, the national education budget ballooned from $59,000 to some $2 million by 1959. As more schools were built and the education system expanded, so too did classrooms fill. Primary enrolment rose from about one-third to three-fifths between 1960 and 1980, while secondary enrolment grew tenfold from 2 to 20 percent in the same time period (Pham, 2004). When juxtaposed against a growing population, this increase is remarkable. As the state expanded, it drove up demand for persons educated in its own system. For those at the fore of this push, they were in an advantageous position. However, for those coming in their wake, positions were filled, and the supply of educated individuals, ergo competition for ever-decreasing posts, was growing exponentially. At some moment, there occurred a tipping point where the utility of a higher western education decreased. Many individuals then found themselves having an education that did not deliver on expectations, yet that had come at the expense or sacrifice of traditional community expectations. Moreover, during this time many issues with the public school system that continue to exist today began to be visible during this period of growth. In their description of the schools in rural Kpelle communities, Cole *et al.* (1971) tell of overcrowded classrooms headed by under-paid teachers delivering “rigid and often irrelevant curricula [in] ill-equipped schools lack[ing] textbooks” (p. 49) and where parents are indifferent, and often linguistically unable to support their children's education.

Education in the Post-War

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[23] Tusherer and Hair (2002) theorise that because there were Americo-Liberians of mixed Cherokee descent, contact between these Cherokee, who also have a similar script for their language, and members of the Vai, is a likely catalyst for the genesis of the Vai written language.

Perhaps the Tolbert administration was the apex of the Liberian public education system. The Doe years were marked by absolute mismanagement of all government services. By 1989, only 40% of girls and 60% of boys were enrolled in primary school (Ministry of Education, 2005), a decline of ten percent over that decade. After Doe the wars came, destroying much of what was left. The impact of those fourteen years on the schooling system was enormous. Physically, between a quarter and a third of school buildings were completely destroyed, and many others were vandalised and looted (IIEP, 2011). Socially, however, the cost was even greater. Beyond the countless teachers who fled or were killed, leaving a gaping hole in the teacher corps, "as much as an entire generation of children ha[d] missed the opportunity to go to school, while many school children were abducted into fighting forces" (IIEP, 2011, p. 30).

As peace came to the nation, this dual problem caused an enormous conundrum. Thousands of uneducated youth began streaming back to schools, seeking to make up for a lost education, at the same time as children of school age were making their way to the schools as well, while those available and able to provide that education were at their scarcest ever. Most importantly, not only was this occurring in the context of peace, it was also in the context of the newly forged Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which promised universal access to primary education. An all-time high demand for schooling was meeting an all-time low supply, and it was doing so with heightened expectations.

For the past decade since the end of the war, despite evident effort, the Government of Liberia (GoL) has struggled to meet its MDG commitments vis-à-vis educational delivery, and the current state of the education sector is quite difficult to sketch, with the single biggest reason being the unavailability of any robust data (Tsimpo & Wodon 2011). Nonetheless, by trolling various sources, sufficient information may be gleaned to at least begin constructing a profile of the current state of education in the country. Since 2007, the GoL laid out its Liberia Primary Education Recovery Program (LPERP), which consists of eight components: "Infrastructure Expansion and Improvement", "Instructional Materials and Curriculum Development", "Teacher Development", "Accelerated Learning Program for Overage Students", "Advisory, Supervision and Assessment Services", "Strengthening Education Sector Governance", "Organizational Capacity Building", and "Institutional and Implementation Arrangements for the Program" (Government of Liberia, 2007), which was supported by a $70.6 million budget over three years (IIEP, 2011). However, anecdotal evidence shows that the allocation of some of these monies were donor-driven, and subject to donor wants rather than the perceived needs of the Liberian Ministry of Education (MoE). Specifically, I recall a presentation given in March 2011 at the Ottawa launch of UNESCO's Education for All Global Monitoring annual report, of which the theme that year was conflict in education. Invited to speak was a former Deputy Minister for Planning, Research, and Development for the MoE in Liberia. During this presentation, he recounted a series of difficult negotiations he had with donors over the re-construction of schools, which would fall in the first component of LERP. The donor – USAID in this case – had budgeted a fixed amount to build a specified number of schools based on a common architectural design plan. The problem he saw with the design plan, however, was that they did not show any space allotted for a staff room: the schools would only be classrooms. In order to have the schools built with space that would allow teachers to meet, plan, and prepare, a deal was struck where a new design would be adopted, but fewer schools would be built. The somewhat incredulous speaker explained how certain elements that would have been taken for granted in schools in donor countries were not considered in the reconstruction process, or if they were, they seemed to have been viewed as luxuries.

Part of the problem would likely rest in what was highlighted in the previous chapters' discussion on the bureaucratic measurement culture: in the context of the MDGs in particular, the goal of donors has been a race to get 'bums on seats'. Success in universal primary enrolment is measured in numbers, not necessarily in the much more difficult-to-measure aspect of 'quality' education. *Ergo*, with a limited budget for educational building construction, the best way to meet the desired measure of success is to maximise the number of classrooms built. This way, the donor countries may boast of building *x* amount of schools, allowing *y* amount of children to attend class. However, the goals of the Liberian government would differ, as their objectives are also focused on the long-term. The process of building an education system must take into account the elements required for providing a schooling experience that is of the highest quality possible. This anecdote helps illustrate the magnitude of the task faced in what might be called the re-construction of the education sector, or simply the 'construction' of the education sector, if we consider that, having seen the pre-war data, universal primary enrolment was never achieved in the pre-war years. Therefore, the war was a setback in an incomplete process. What the overall available data do tell us of the education sector in the country is that the GoL still faces a steep climb in providing quality education to its population, and for many reasons.

The first issue is capacity. Of Liberia's 4 million or so inhabitants, some 1.22 million are children or youth of primary and secondary school age, but of which 389,259 were out-of-school, split evenly between boys and girls (2012 data in: UNESCO, 2014b). In school, boys were slightly more likely to be enrolled than girls (106.8% gross enrolment Vs. 97.8% enrolment, 2011 data in: UNESCO, 2014b). To serve these children, the GoL, through the MoE disbursed 2.8% of GDP on education in 2012 (UNESCO, 2014b), largely through the public school system. Unable to meet demand, the public system is also paralleled by a very strong private one, particularly in urban areas. Using available 2007 data from the Core Welfare Questionnaire Indicator (CWIQ), Tsimpo and Wodon (2011) noted that public schools tend to service the poor and/or rural children. In the cities, the better off the families, the more likely they are to send their children to private schools, so much so that in 2007 private schools accounted for 63% of all primary enrolment in urban areas, and 65% in secondary schools. Interestingly, girls were more likely to attend private schools than boys. Perhaps as important as the rural/urban divide is the rich/poor divide in school attendance. As the researchers noted, the higher the income bracket in which a family finds itself, the more likely they are to send their children to private schools – the deduction that can be made here, then, is that the quality of public education is of a meagre level, and therefore, as they are able to do so, parents send their children to private schools which they view as providing a better schooling experience.

At least in Monrovia, anecdotal evidence would suggest that private schools have been proliferating at a faster rate than new public schools, an impression also given by Shepler (2011): “It is our sense that in Liberia there are many more private schools” (p. 210). During my time there, the reasons I heard for the growth of the private school sector differed. One reason was altruism: seeing the inability of the GoL to build sufficient schools quickly enough, citizens were building schools in their communities to help provide educational opportunities for the children. Profit was another reason. Particularly given the demographic trends in the country, and the legacies of war on the schooling population, there is a constant demand for school places, and thus entrepreneurial individuals build schools as business ventures. Linked to this phenomenon, I was told that churches were beginning to build schools as they were then eligible for preferential tax benefits (I was unable to verify this), and were then also more likely to receive funding from abroad – particularly American church groups. Although this evidence is anecdotal, it certainly represents at least a partial truth. What can be assumed to be certain, at a minimum, is that the motivations behind the founding of the various private-sector schools will vary, and so too will their quality. Speaking with the director of one private school, owned by an NGO, he was worried that there were too many private schools appearing, and that the quality of education was very poor. His solution: greater oversight by the MoE in implementing and enforcing standards of quality. This trend reflects a greater one on the continent (Lewin, 2007), with a key feature of the Liberian experience being that state-funded public schools dominate rural areas whereas urban Liberians, Monrovians in particular, are more likely to send their children to private schools (Siaplay and Werker, 2013).

One of the difficulties in assessing any type of quality in Liberian classrooms is that the student population is very diverse and in constant flux. In 2006, for example, Tsimpo and Wodon (2011) report that “only 15 percent of students in the first year of primary school were of the right age (six to seven years of age), and half the students were between 11 and 20 years of age” (p. 3). By 2012, this trend had not noticeably subsided. In my discussions with Academy for Educational Development officials, a US-based NGO with the USAID contract for training Liberian teachers, I was informed that the average age of a grade 2 student was 12 years of age. The impact of such demographics is complex, particularly in the social dynamic created in classrooms. Classmates can be of very different levels of maturity, and thus 'appropriate' curriculum content becomes difficult to identify: easy reading exercises that may work with younger children, for example, may prove to be infantile, thus perhaps demeaning, to older students. Alternatively, in the case of girls, for example, many are completing primary school already of age to marry. This may act as a deterrent to attending secondary school. Finally, school conditions themselves might deter students: under-paid and under-trained teachers, as will be discussed below, as well as a near complete absence of books and other materials (IIEP, 2011) do not make for a rich schooling experience. At the same time, changes in values, particularly in urban areas, may seem to be promoting the education of girls in particular. Fuest's (2008) work reveals that “some parents of various and religious backgrounds indicated their perception of educated girls as equal if not more valuable assets of the family than educated boys, recognizing that women had proven to be better economic providers than men.” (p. 217). While on the one hand this want to invest in girls' education is a most welcome shift in attitudes, it is also quite disconcerting if it stems from lowered expectations for boys. If boys are viewed as future vagrants, then, in part, the socialisation of these boys toward that future may be self-fulfilling. Challenging long-standing norms of femininity, and pushing for girls' education is required, but so too is a similar challenging of existing norms and behaviours of masculinity. If men are failing as providers, what steps, then, can be taken? This very issue lies at the heart of the research work presented in the remainder of this thesis. A better future for women requires new versions of masculinity conducive to that better future, and these must be deliberately planned and taught.

The above multitude of factors has led some to see a looming crisis in the Liberian schooling system. Although the gross enrolment rates have been above 100% many years (UNICEF, 2013), there is fear that initial successes may lose momentum. Unless education quality increases, UNICEF (2013) estimates the number of children “at risk of dropping out” (p. 12) will increase, and as many as two-thirds of school-aged may find themselves out-of-school in the coming years, with cost and availability of places seeming to be critical factors in the equation

(Tsimbo & Wodon, 2011). A lack of parental ability or willingness, or lack of parents altogether, are also exclusion factors, as is the size of a child's family (UNICEF 2014). Although, one might speculate that the issue of cost is also related to quality: if families see schooling as a high-value venture, they might, at least in some cases, make more effort or sacrifices to ensure continued enrolment. However, if schooling and teachers are to play a role in building peace, having two out of three youth out of school limits the impact of this institution. Perhaps, the role of teachers in making school a meaningful and worthwhile experience becomes more crucial than ever.

3.4 Teachers in Post-War Liberia

Within this complex dynamic is the role of the teacher. As the generation of children left out of schools by the wars joins the current generation in the classroom, the task of educating them falls upon the shoulders of Liberia's teachers. Having briefly sketched a profile of the school environment and the context of schooling, our final piece of analysis here turns to understanding the make-up of the country's corps of teachers, as well as the process set up for preparing them for their careers.

The first glaring problem with teachers is that there simply aren't enough of them, and, of those that are in the classrooms, too few have received adequate preparation, and in many, motivation is low (IIEP, 2011). According to a USAID (2009) *Assessment of the Liberia Teacher Training Program*, there is a shortage of some 16,000 teachers in the country, which current programmes, *ceteris paribus*, will be unable to fill. The need, however, may increase before it decreases. One disconcerting fact about teachers in Liberia is their age; according to an IIEP (2011) report, two-thirds of the country's teachers are over forty years of age, and a full third above fifty. This logically reflects an education system where no new or very few teachers were trained for a generation – teacher supply has to make up for fifteen years of strife. Thus, unless new teachers are put into play soon, the retirement rate will surpass the recruitment rate. The GoL has attempted to remedy these problems in a variety of ways, but with varying degrees of success. The first significant step in addressing the need for more qualified teachers has been to make pre-service training free for teachers in exchange for two years' service teaching. However, to understand this programme, it is best to explain the teacher certification process in Liberia[24]. The most basic qualification is the "C" certificate, which is offered by the MoE through Teacher Training Institutes. It is a ten-month intensive programme, admission to which is a series of tests, and at the end of which there is a qualification examination. Upon receiving the “C” certificate, teachers are qualified to teach from kindergarten up to grade 6, and is the certification that the MoE is providing for free as it seeks to meet its MDG goal of universal primary enrolment. Further education allows a teacher to earn a “B” certificate, or an “A” certificate, which allow them to teach at the junior secondary school (grades 7-9) and senior secondary levels (grades 10-12), respectively.

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[24] The process as described here stems from my notes of conversations had with ADE and MoE officials in June 2011, and the University of Liberia Teachers' College in March 2012.

Interestingly, there might actually be a ready supply of “C” certified teachers in Liberia that is not in the classroom. During the war, the International Rescue Committee worked in refugee camps in Guinea to train Liberians as teachers, and had their programme certified by the Liberian MoE as equivalent to the “C” certificate. Shepler (2011) explains a research project where she and a team traced Liberian (and Sierra Leonean) refugee teachers back to Liberia, in hopes of finding out if they had continued in the teaching profession and found that “there is not a shortage of trained teachers in [...] Liberia, though there is a shortage of trained teachers in classrooms” (p. 216), concluding that training yet additional teachers might be a squandering of funds. Looking at the previous age profile of teachers, it would make sense that a 'lost' or 'ghost' generation of trained teachers exists in Liberia, yet for a variety of reasons, is out of the classroom. Reconnecting with these people and enticing them back to schools might be a worthwhile policy option.

Yet another reason this might be an explored option resides in current exam performance of teacher trainees. “B” and “A” levels require the passing of the University Entrance examination, which, as was noted earlier, saw a 0% pass rate in 2013, meaning that under the current circumstances, new initiates to those programmes, which are in fact Bachelor of Education programmes, would be on hold. The biggest impediment to exam success, as well as for admittance to the “C” certificate programme, is language ability. ADE officials responsible for teacher candidate recruitment lamented the low levels of English reading and writing skills of prospective teachers. Although many hold pre-requisite qualifications, notably a high school diploma, the screening process for recruitment found that most candidates' skill level in literacy was closer to what might be expected from a grade 6 student. While this is an unfortunate situation, it is also almost inevitable for at least two reasons.

The first is that Standard English, and particularly written Standard English, is quite different from commonly spoken Liberian English. Beyond variants in vocabulary, which in Liberia often means the inclusion of archaic words, such as 'rogue' in lieu of 'thief', or local neologisms, such as 'butter pears' instead of 'avocado', the biggest impediment to successful literacy in Standard English is the detachment between spoken Liberian English and the accepted writing conventions of Standard English; there is a tremendous gap between sound and symbol. As Cole *et al.* (1971) explained, and as can be noted by any non-Liberian Anglophone, it is common for Liberians – and particularly those outside the traditional Congo élite – to drop the consonant sounds at the end of words. For example, the sentence "The white man eats a butter pear" would be spoken as "The why ma ee da budda peh". As a result, Liberians, logically, would write the words as they speak them, but the problem is that they do not speak the way it might conventionally be written. The exams, therefore, essentially measure the candidates' ability in a quasi-foreign tongue. For many, even Liberian English would be the second language.

The second possible reason for poor performance might also be lack of practise. Writing, as any other skill, may suffer atrophy if left unused for too long. In the case of individuals having received their high school diplomas before the war, and then having to live through the war either displaced or abroad and not making use of those skills, might mean that although they were once acquired, they have receded. Recalling Beeby's notion of education systems as an upward cycle, perhaps the standards must be re-considered, at least for teachers of the younger grades. So long as the teachers have sufficient skills to teach basic literacy, this might temporarily suffice, if those teachers are given support to upgrade their own skills at the same time. Policy dialogue should consider the question: "What is the minimal possible requirement to teach each grade?"

If teachers do make it to Teachers College[25] however, they do have the option of joining one of two departments: primary or secondary. In these programmes, there is a marked shift from the content-heavy "C" certificate training to more emphasis on the practice of teaching. In a conversation with the Associate Dean, he explained that more and more, the emphasis of the programme is to help teachers become positive role models. Teachers, he argued, must go beyond content and mind their way of speaking and of behaving both in the classroom and outside the classroom to help the students say: "*Yes, I want to be like this person because that teacher has a very good relationship with others".* To achieve this end, certain courses now focus on role-play and mock teaching, so that once teachers are in the classrooms, they are better prepared with a variety of possible scenarios. These courses are buttressed by methods courses and strategies for cooperative learning. As of 2012, there was also a push to incorporate courses on conflict resolution and child development into the curriculum. What is evident is that for the few teachers-in-training who make it to the Teachers' College, they are meeting an environment that is seeking to transform the traditional teaching culture. The problem, however, is one of critical mass.

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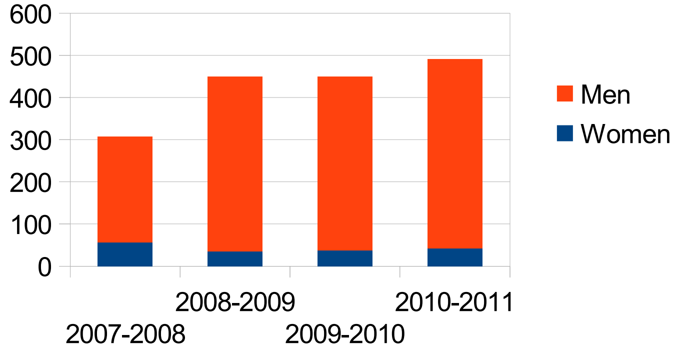
[25] Previously at the University of Liberia, central Monrovia, but now in a new, Chinese-built campus near Bentol, about a half-hour outside the capital.

To address the issue of motivation, there have been attempts at increasing the monthly salary of public school teachers. However, there are numerous cases of teachers not receiving their salaries, in some cases the GoL being two years in arrears (Gono, 2013). Part of the inquiry process with this study is therefore to understand what keeps teachers motivated under these difficult circumstances, as money is only one of many. One such non-financial source of motivation, or de-motivation in this case, affects women teachers directly. Given that many young men, meant here as males in their late teens and early twenties, are currently still enrolled in all levels of schooling, one disturbing trend is the behaviour of some of these toward female teachers. One AED staff member explained how some young men view their teachers as potential sexual partners, and thus increase the bravado in class, with various students trying to compete for the non-educational attention of their teacher. This arrogant behaviour is then copied by younger boys, and a very negative, bully-ish culture is created in the classroom. Other factors deterring women teachers include assignments far from home, particularly to rural areas, and a lack of adequate housing (Stromquist, Lin, Corneilse, Klees, Choti & Haugen, 2013). As a result, many women are leaving the profession.

Figure 3.3

NTAL Cohorts, Sex-Segregated Data



The overall sex breakdown of teachers is in Liberia is difficult to ascertain given the vast number of private schools, but at least in the public sector, as measured in the membership of the National Teachers Association of Liberia (NTAL), it hovers around one quarter[26] of its 12,000 or so members, although looking at recruitment trends, this fraction is likely to decrease rather than approach sex-parity. Over a four-year period, as shown in Figure 2.4, there has been a decline in newly-certified members of NTAL, both in absolute and proportional terms. While in 2007, 56 of 307 recruits were women, representing about 18%, within four years this had dropped to 42 of 490 recruits, or some 8.6%. When asked help explain this trend, the President of NTAL explained that the current scheme for training and deploying teachers required a great deal of mobility on the part of teachers. First, there was a need for candidates to move to the location of one of the Rural Teacher Training Institutes, located in Kakata, Montserrado County, and Zorzor, Lofa County, and then be assigned to a public school somewhere in the country. Because transfers can be very difficult on families, the teaching profession has limited appeal to women with families. It is possible that many women teachers are at work in private schools, although participation rates in this study would show a similar proportion. NTAL has had difficulty recruiting amongst private-school teachers, as their membership is discouraged by proprietors. NTAL is also working with the Firestone school system.

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[26] The NTAL numbers were quoted to me directly by its president during a meeting with her in June, 2011.

The original issue about the national exam where no student was able to pass it in 2013 comes as little surprise once even a summary glance of the education system as a whole has been gleaned. While the harsh criticism delivered by The Economist (2013), who plainly stated that "[e]ducation in Liberia is a mess", their shallow and facile analysis of the situation based on the scores of one cohort, that "[n]one of the country's 25 000 university applicants passed this year's entrance exams after administrators switched to a fair admissions system based on real marks rather than bribes and family connections" (2013, p. 50) misses the wider picture completely. In a country where an entire generation lost out on schooling when its teachers left or were killed, it is unreasonable to hope that building a new education system, all the while addressing the consequences of its absence, would take less than a generation in the very best of all possible scenarios, which nobody would be naïve enough to claim is the case for Liberia. The current state of education in that country is deeply tied to many other social dynamics, of which bribery and family connections are but two.

What can be stated with certainty is that genuine effort has been shown by the Johnson Sirleaf government. Education seems to legitimately be one of its top priorities, which, given her status as Africa's first elected women head of state also shows promise for changing broader gendered narratives. However, the political situation upon which all else is hinged remains fragile, and, as this very work is being finalised, an epidemic of Ebolavirus continues to spread in the country, the consequences of which are not clear at all. The demographics seem to be increasing the supply of students faster than the GoL is able to increase the number of adequately-prepared teachers. For those already teaching, many face extremely challenging circumstances with little pay, little support and few resources. And yet, despite all of this, Liberian children are learning, and despair is not an option: it is hard to imagine long-term peace in a modern Liberia without a functioning education system. To assume it is broken is not an option, and teaches us little. A better read is that it might not all be working well, but some things are functioning, some of the time.

What this analysis of Liberia's history, as well as the development of its education systems demonstrates is the complexity that exists due to the multiple layers of Liberian society. Echoes of colonialism and the slave trade still resonate in how the education system is formed, and how closely it is linked to the shaping of political life. What teachers in particular must face is the triple task of making learning engaging for students, while they themselves are lacking in resources and motivation, and all-the-while navigating the emotional and psycho-social legacies of the wars brought into the classroom by both their students and themselves. It is with this thought in mind that I proceed to the next chapter. In it, I present the methodological construct of my study in such a way that it allows us to answer the question: What are Liberian teachers already doing, at least in part, that contributes to quality education and a long-term culture of peace? What they lack in resources, do they compensate in resourcefulness? Having firmly established the theoretical, professional and socio-historical contexts of the study, it is now possible to elaborate an epistemological framework that allows teachers to explore innovative pedagogy, and options for professional development that begins with their own lived experience.

Chapter Four

Methodology: A Description of the Research Methods and Setting

4.1 Re-Interpreting the Research Questions

This chapter marks the beginning of the second part of this thesis: a field research project investigating how Liberian teachers view themselves as agents in their country's peacebuilding process. Making sense of this field work must include an understanding of the contextual and theoretical frameworks laid out in the first three chapters. Returning to the original research questions for this study, namely:

a. To what extent do Liberian teachers see a role for themselves within their country's peacebuilding process?
b. Given that the national document, *Professional Standards for Teachers in Liberia,* stipulates that the teacher "is a model of citizenship" and "a moral role model" (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 8), to what extent do Liberian teachers view themselves as such, including seeing themselves as role models for the development of peaceful gender identities?
c. To what extent do Liberian teachers see themselves as able to incorporate activities and strategies that promote peace into their teaching?

it is possible to see that the questions contain very complex concepts that required careful deconstruction. The first chapter presented a critical examination of peacebuilding as it has been practised, as well as its relation to different manifestations of gender, and offered alternatives for future incarnations. In that same chapter, understanding the idea of 'roles' as fluid, socially negotiated processes was also put forward. At the end of the chapter, I also outlined four qualities of gender identities that would qualify as being peaceful: that they do not put masculine and feminine in opposition; that they allow help and kindness toward others as meaningful acts of identity construction; that both masculinity and femininity be based on cooperative conflict resolution; and that violence be learned as the least favourable option. The second chapter added to the overall theoretical understanding, and investigated how roles have been, and can be modelled by teachers through schooling practices, working either with or against other societal and institutional dynamics. Additionally, I investigated the types of activities and strategies that teachers might use to promote cultures of peace. Finally, in the third chapter, the overview of Liberia's history and education system helped frame the socio-cultural context from which Liberian teachers emanate, and within which they are expected to be role-models and promote peace. In sum, the three first chapters helped reveal the full meaning of the research questions, thereby facilitating the choice of strategy for answering them.

In this chapter, I describe my research plan, including methodology as well as its epistemological rationale. In particular, I describe and explain my use of Appreciative Inquiry as primary methodology, and evaluate its strengths and weaknesses. AI is a participatory, assets-based research methodology with a particular ethos. I then describe and discuss my choices of research methods. Chapter Five I reserve for a narrative description of how the research plan was actually administered, including discussions of locales and interactions with research participants. I do not, however, present my data with my description, as I save that discussion, including interpretation and analysis for the sixth and seventh chapters. Underpinning this entire study, however, are lessons taken from the initial chapters on the need for placing teachers, and recognising their individuality, at the centre of this work. The investigation of teachers' roles, practices and perceptions is inherently political, as *what* our research will tell us is inseparable from *for whom* our research is: knowledge is never neutral (Harding, 1991). The theoretical framework in Chapter One demonstrated the links between knowledge and power, and these are fluid and negotiated. Therefore, any epistemological endeavour must demonstrate complete cognisance of this fact. Researching the role of teachers in the peacebuilding process must take into account that the social reality of these teachers is one that is constructed, both by them and those around them, and is linked to the exercise of power in both the specific context of the intervention and the wider social context (see: Byrne, 2011).

4.2 Defining the Researcher-Participant Relationship

By considering the socially-constructed nature of knowledge and its relation to power, the first step in choosing an appropriate methodology is understanding my relationship with the research participants. Hermann (2001) articulates that a researcher never ceases to be a person, particularly in research contexts within violently divided societies: affect always enters the research process: “Simply by being members of the human race, researchers of a conflict become part of it” (p. 79). The conflict exists within the web of relationships of that society, and in order to research it, researchers must invariably enter that web. Who, how, what, when and why we research is dependent upon our relationships within that social web. Consequently, any research must be socially situated – it cannot be escaped – and results in knowledge that is neither neutral, nor impartial (Kapoor & Jordan, 2009; Harding, 1991; Lather, 1986b). In essence, what matters is the web itself: how it is constructed, how it is seen to be constructed, and how it changes over time.

By the same standard, because we are human, we have an obligation to work toward helping others. We must assure that the knowledge we construct through research does not (re)legitimise or (re)enforce modes of knowing that are oppressive, or that support de-humanising discourses. In the case of this study, the aim is to limit any legitimising of educational practices that promote violence or hinder the development of cultures of peace. Tradition in qualitative studies would argue that research must advance emancipatory theory and empower those with whom the research is conducted. (Lather, 1986a). Consequently, research evolved from being *on* individuals, to being *for* and *with* individuals, creating the family of 'participatory' research methods. While the exact definition of what constitutes participatory research can be vague and ever-changing (Frideres, 1992). it generally implies research that actively includes the researched person or groups in the generation of knowledge.

A Genealogy of Participatory Research

The lineages of participatory research are numerous (Jordan, 2009; Lange, 2009) and many of the various methodologies form a spectrum which may overlap (Chambers, 1994). Chambers (2007) outlines examples of methodologies such as the various manifestations of participatory action research (PAR), participatory rural appraisal (PRA), participatory learning and action, and reflect-action, and while these methodologies may differ in practice and theory, at their root they all share – or at least should, as will be discussed below – common core principles. Chief among these is praxis: that research must link theory to practice and reside in social action, by and for the marginalised segments of society – understood here both in a local and a global sense. In the words of van Vlaenderen (1993):

> Participatory research aims at the development of a critical consciousness of the people involved in development, an improvement in their life conditions, and a transformation of the social structure in which they operate. (p. 100)

As a result,

> researchers using interpretive and participatory methods are making unique contributions that not only generate new knowledge but that can also potentially benefit the participants in these studies through increased self-knowledge, empathic relationships, and positive social change. (Brydon-Miller & Tolman, 1997, p. 804)

Given the political activist roots of participatory research, which is itself linked to anti-colonial and Marxist theories (see Freire, 2000), the focus on emancipatory aims is understandable. However, questions about participatory approaches come from different sides. Frideres (1992), for one, critiques the naivety of some participatory researchers who assume that “all participants have equal knowledge about reality” (p. 9), despite the fact that skills such as critical questioning and abstract thinking are faculties that require development, and as such will be practised to greater or lesser extents by various participants. To counter this, however, Foley's (1999) more generous view is that the act of participating in the participatory research may in fact help participants make better sense of their own learning, and acquire new means to better express it. In either case, expression may be amplified as seen in various innovative research methods, explicitly intended to facilitate the expression of participants, via various media, such as art, film, theatre or photography (for example, see: de Lange, Mitchell & Stuart, 2008), or the re-invention of existing approaches, as in ethnography (see: Wolcott, 1997). The main purpose of many of these methods is to invoke the voice, or stimulate the production and sharing of knowledge of research participants all the while helping them to critically (re)examine the world around them. At its base, then, the purposes of participatory research are very similar to those of transformative teacher development seen in Chapter Two: promoting a critical examination of one's situation.

Jordan (2009) brings forward another warning, this time about the misuse of participation in research, and the nefarious co-opting of the process by individuals or organisations who wish to use the rising legitimacy of participatory methods for their own gain. While at their core participatory methodologies are meant to be politically empowering, they have been 'neutered' of their emancipatory aims (Kapoor & Jordan, 2009) when they are reduced to mere methods. The tools of participatory research have been separated from their underlying moral or philosophical linchpin. It is politically expedient to declare something as 'participatory' as it legitimises within a democratic policy discourse. In essence, participation has the peril of being used as a euphemism for subtle orchestration.

To this I would contend that a process of validation be borrowed from the legal field to protect against the co-opting of participatory methods for wrongful purposes. Just as actions can be judged not only according to the *letter* of the law, but also against the *spirit* of the law, so too must the researcher demonstrate how and why participatory approaches are used for the participants. The onus must fall on the researcher to demonstrate the extent to which they went to create a subject-subject (Buber, 1987) relationship between themselves and participants. This echoes what Holland, Renold, Ross & Hamilton (2010) concluded - that the level of participation is in fact secondary to the attitude of the researcher within the process, which is critically important for this current investigation. As discussed earlier, teachers, engaged in a learning process with students, will shape its outcome by nature of their attitude. As research is also a shared learning process, the same must hold true.

> It is more important to pay close attention to *how* participation is enacted (at a range of levels, including participant-participant, participant-researchers, [etc.]) than to focus in on *how much* participation was achieved. Meaningful exchanges, where individuals and groups have choices in what they wish to share, with whom and in what way, would seem to be at least as important as ensuring that participatory mechanisms are in place" (Holland *et al.* 2010, p. 373)

As Gallacher and Gallagher (2008) assert: "Good research practice cannot be reduced to ingenious techniques, planned in advance and carefully applied" (p. 513). If knowledge is socially constructed, then it emerges from relationships – the quality of knowledge must therefore depend on the quality of relationships.

In particular, knowing how fragile social webs might be in times of post-war recovery, we must be mindful of how our mere presence may alter dynamics, even unwittingly, within the researched community. To this effect, research must then absolutely include certain elements or values, first of which is self-examination by the researcher. We must be able to identify our own starting point for research (Harding, 1991), including a recognition of one's position vis-à-vis those people we are researching. Does our identity in relation to theirs place us as insiders or outsiders relative to the group? This positionality will affect – to varying degrees - if and how we are able to gain access to the communities or organisations with which we desire to work (Fernandes, 2004). Acceptance can be the make-or-break factor, particularly with groups wary of outsiders: perception and trust will affect the level of truth, openness and frankness in any discussion (Albert, 2001), and therefore, the trustworthiness of the data collected (Hermann, 2001) – an important factor, as I will discuss below, in the choice of methodology.

Problematising Empowerment

How we approach research participants is therefore deeply connected to attitude. Gallacher and Gallagher (2008) question that looking to 'empower' participants may in itself be problematic because, "[t]he very notion of 'empowerment' implies that, without aid and encouragement from [...] participatory methods, [participants] cannot fully exercise their 'agency' in research encounters." (p. 503). This highlights a mostly unquestioned epistemological bias that views the activist-researcher as intent on leveraging their position for the betterment of the participants. A more cynical view might even argue that there is a hidden paternalistic/colonial/condescending undertone in the narrative of empowerment. Or perhaps a messianic one? I would not go so far, but I do raise the issue that certain assumptions might be left ensconced. If the starting narrative is to empower, are participants oppressed or marginalised by our saying so as researchers?

4.3 Appreciative Inquiry

Assets-Based Approaches to Research

Problematising the narrative reference-point of the researcher also changes the options of the researcher. If our starting point is research that empowers, the assumption is that participants are deficient in that department. However, if our starting point is to understand the role of our participants within a web of power, we are left with different research options, as the goal is not to empower, *per se*, but to transform its exercise. Assets-based research seeks to move away from "focusing on a community's needs, deficiencies and problems" (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1996, p. 2). As Kretzmann and McKnight (1996) contest, the negative image such research paints of communities will only represent a partial truth of the community's reality, but often come to represent the entire truth, a point I also made reference to in Chapter Two. As such, community members come to view themselves in this constructed reality as being deficient, unable to help themselves, and thus reliant upon outside help. In other words, they are made to feel powerless. To avoid this pitfall, Kretzmann and McKnight argue that the goal of research should be to focus on identifying the individuals, institutions and actions within communities that are making positive change, and to support those initiatives. The result of such a process is therefore not one of empowering communities, but recognising and legitimising the power that already exists, thus proposing an alternate narrative of communities that are capable.

One example of research that has shown such transformation in the narrative of power is the work of Denov and Gervais (2007). Using grounded theory, they researched the situation of girls in Sierra Leone that had been associated in some form or another with the Revolutionary United Front, an armed faction during that country's civil war. By starting from a vantage point of asking these girls (some now women) to tell their own stories, what came to the surface was that although they face many challenges, the girls have developed resilience and resourcefulness. While in difficult circumstances, these girls exercised power. This corroborates Lange's (2009) theory that leadership for change arises organically within communities. The likelihood of identifying such leadership increases, and therefore so too does being able to invest in it, both economically and socially. Assets-based approaches seek these leaders out specifically, and thus lead precious resources to be directed to known successes.

In the case of post-war education, an assets-based approach therefore seems to make great sense. In contexts rife with problems and resource shortages, a narrative which dominates the literature on the subject (Unterhalter, 2014) (see, for example: UNESCO, 2011; Nicolai, 2009; ILO, 1991), alternative perspectives may offer much-needed insight. The aim of much of the exisiting literature has been to bring to the attention of policy makers and donors the epic and oft-neglected task of re-building schools in the wake of war. The topic is therefore presented in a context of advocacy, and in a form more adapted for economic planners than pedagogues. Consequently, it boasts little relevance for day-to-day classroom experiences. Success stories might however help inspire innovation and momentum. Asset-based research would seem a likely welcome complement to the knowledge and evidence base. While teachers do not work in ideal conditions, highlighting deficiencies is not only "misleading and inappropriate" (D'Amant, 2012), but awaiting those ideal conditions is a fool's errand – children are in school now, and the more local, socially and economically relevant options that might be garnered to accelerate recovery, the better. Moreover, I hope to also bring to the fore one poignant reality: that despite all the challenges faced, children are learning. In the case of this study, what interests me is to what extent teachers in Liberia view themselves successful at promoting learning and peace in their classes.

Defining Appreciative Inquiry

This brings us back to my particular approach to this study, AI. I have chosen it as I hope it helps nuance some of the discussion on education in war-affected societies, and acts as a sieve through which one can capture positive activities even in the most difficult of circumstances. AI is also particularly appealing because it is built around the notion of relational practice (Cuyvers, 2010), and seeks to explore what positive relationships lead to positive learning and growth, both in individuals and in communities. It falls in sync with the previously laid-out theoretical framework on peace and power. AI is a participatory approach (Cram, 2010; Messerschmidt, 2008; Lehner & Hight, 2006), but one that is strengths- or assets-based, and emerged in the last two decades of the 20th Century as "sharp contrast to the problem-solving approach to change" (Subramanian, 2003: 103). While originally developed as a strategy for organisational reform (see: Cooperrider & Srivastra, 1987),, it has since evolved and branched out (Bushe, 1999); it continues to be used in organisational re-structuring, but has also become a tool for research, particularly that with an action orientation, its practitioners criticising the traditional deficit or problem-based research models (Tschannen-Moran & Tschannen-Moran, 2011). While some of the processes and ethos between research and change management are shared, my focus will be predominantly on its use and limitations as a tool for the researcher.

The first step in understanding AI is examining its genesis. It emerged as an alternative to problem-solving models in organisational development that tended to be modelled on medical practice; these were felt to create a sub-text of sick or ailing organisations (Finegold, Holland & Lingham, 2002). To compound this, focusing on what does not work can quickly bog down any initiative and bring change and organisations to a paralysis (Cuyvers, 2010). An oft-used expression found throughout much of the AI literature is that negativity sucks the life out of attempts at transformation. As Cuyvers (2010) aptly remarks, "[l]ists with problems do not motivate people. On the contrary, people need to gain energy somewhere to deliver efforts which are necessary to change" (p. 44). The major contribution of AI is to place affect front and centre in human change processes, filling a huge gap, as exemplified by Rompelman (2002): "Although our culture acknowledges that emotions exist, it, historically, has not placed great value on the importance of emotions in learning." (pp. 3-4). Acknowledging that people *feel* is necessary in understanding how they act.

As a research methodology, AI, was first used in the field of management studies, which explains, according to Messerschmidt (2008), why the bulk of the literature on AI is in that field. However, AI seems to have found practitioners documenting organisational change in new fields, such as nursing and health (Moody, Horton-Deutsch & Pesut, 2007), and education (Tschannen-Moran & Tschannen-Moran, 2011; Cram, 2010; Lehner & Hight, 2006; Ryan, Soven, Smither, Sullivan & Van Buskirk, 1999[27]), particularly where it comes to shaping school culture. In development studies, AI has also gained ground with researchers, where it competes with the previously mentioned PAR and PRA as a combined “rapid development, research and training tool” of choice (Messerschmidt, 2008, p. 454). Most interestingly, a good deal of the development literature on AI examines the cultural melding of traditional societies with modern institutions (Messerschmidt, 2008). Consequently, there is a growing corpus on the subject to help frame and guide new users of the research methodology who may wish, as is my case, to employ AI in new settings. Particularly useful is that AI does have both a set of five underlying interacting principles and a cyclical model of action that form the crux of this approach. I begin by examining the principles.

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[27] Ryan *et al*. in fact claim to be the first to ever apply AI to a school setting.

The first, the *simultaneity principle* asserts that “[i]nquiry is intervention. Change begins with the first question we ask and the questions we ask determine what we find” (Finegold *et al.*, 2002, p. 237). Furthermore, these findings determine our subsequent actions (Cuyvers, 2010). Thus, in the case of working with teachers, the first step in promoting critical reflection is by the posing of questions – that simple act is necessary to initiate any transformative process.

Number two is the *constructionist principle*, which assumes that organisations or cultures are comprised of individuals who construct their own reality (Cuyvers, 2010; Cram, 2010). Knowledge is built through relationships, and so what we know and how we know are dependent upon our relations with others. It is therefore impossible to look at understanding transformational processes within organisations or communities – which for the purposes of this work can be construed as schools or districts, neighbourhoods or villages – without knowing the individual and collective stories of the people that make up the group (Cuyvers, 2010). In AI, it would therefore be impossible to ask one to 'forget the past' as who we are as a group is that very past. It made us as much as we made it.

The third principle is the *poetic principle*, which asks us to see organisations – used here on in interchangeably with 'community' - not as structures, but rather as texts to be interpreted (Finegold *et al.*, 2002), that is “written and re-written by people inside and outside” (Cuyvers, 2010). Thus, from a research perspective, positionality remains fluid, and can vary even vis-à-vis different research participants. As highlighted by LeCompte and Schensul (2010), we, as individuals "may simultaneously occupy different and contradictory positions” (p. 31). As with any power relation, the effect of our race, gender, nationality or any other determining characteristic is situational. What may play to our advantage in one context might hinder us in another. As researchers, “[p]ositionality & situatedness are measures of privilege or disadvantage; people tend to position themselves so as to maximise the amount of power they can exercise over others" (p. 30). Thus, in an AI context, the research process itself transforms interpretations of actions past, present, and future, as researcher and participants continuously create and re-interpret their discussions.

The fourth principle is about the future: the *anticipatory principle* predicates that how we envision what happens next strongly influences what we do now (Cram, 2010). The fifth and final tenet of AI is the *positive principle*, which, in a way, underpins the other four. This principle promotes the idea that by posing positive questions, we will foster positive attitudes, and promote positive change (Cuyvers, 2010; Cram, 2010). The narrative that drives our actions stems from the original question asked. This is at the core of AI: by setting out to appreciate existing strengths, and seeking new goals, it changes the discussion. Lewis and Van Tiem (2004) recognise that while this approach might seem counter-intuitive, as it seems to mask or ignore problems, resistance to its ethos may also stem from cognitive dissonance: problem-solving approaches are so common that approaching issues from another perspective places individuals in a state of liminality.

The AI Cycle

AI is not solely a theoretical platform, however. Beyond principles for thought, it also allows the researcher to enact them in a four[28]-stepped process dubbed the four D's: *Discovery*, *Dream*, *Design* and *Delivery*; it offers a cycle to help the researcher promote and understand the transformational process being studied (Finegold *et al.*, 2002). The cycle is usually enacted in the form of a facilitated or moderated workshop (Messerschmidt, 2008) although it can also be paired with interviews (Ryan *et al.,* 1999). Incarnations vary among practitioners.

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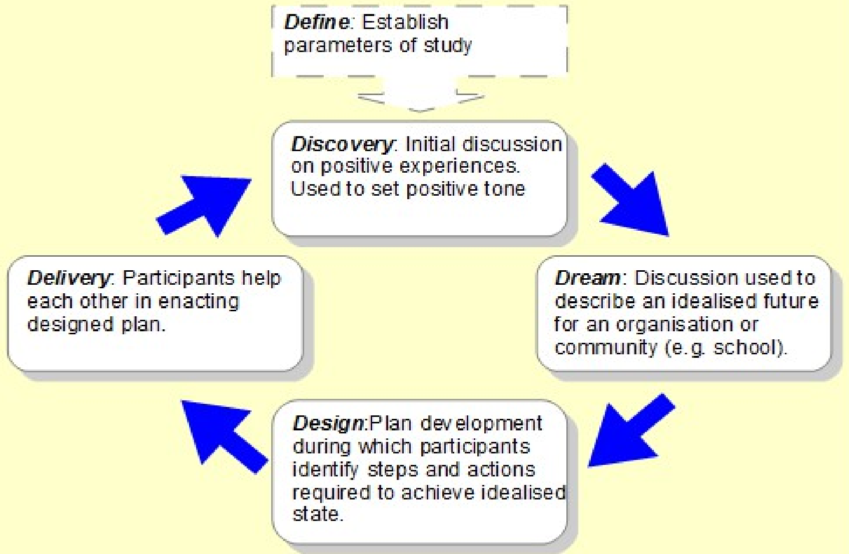
[28] In some cases, an initial fifth 'D', *Define*, is included. This phase is the establishment of the parameters of the study (Lehner & Hight 2006).

The Discovery phase is intended to set the right tone for the research. Participants are asked to recall and recount stories of past successes. Importantly, this process links participants to their memories, which, as is supported by Hampton (1995), is what lies at the root of our motivation. For work with teachers, this would involve recalling past events such as why they became teachers; meaningful learning moments they experienced themselves; or days in the classroom that left them wit profound feelings of joy and accomplishment. By sharing these experiences, participants identify the strengths upon which the community can build by focusing on what works. This phase has also been shown to be used independently. In her work with African NGO leaders, Michael (2006) constructed individual interviews in which discussions with participants focused exclusively on past successes. This strategy was intended to maximise the single encounter the researcher would have with each interviewee, and, as organisational change was not the end-purpose of the research, the entire cycle was unnecessary.

4.1 The steps of the Appreciative Inquiry workshop cycle


Define: Establish parameters of study
Discovery: Initial discussion on positive experiences. Used to set positive tone
Dream: Discussion used to describe an idealised future for an organisation or community (e.g. school).
Design:Plan development during which participants identify steps and actions required to achieve idealised state.
Delivery: Participants help each other in enacting designed plan.

In a standard cycle, however, once a positive frame of mind is established, participants are then asked to usher in the Dream phase. Here, participants are asked to collectively construct an idealised future, such as, "What type of ideal schooling experience would you like for your children or grandchildren?" or "How would you like to see this school in two, five, ten or twenty years?". The methods in this phase, as in the other four, can vary (Cram, 2010), but the goal is to imagine how the organisation "might look in the best of all possible circumstances" (Calbrese *et al.*, 2010). Once the idealised future has been imagined, the Design phase sees participants identify what actions they themselves can take to help bring the imagined future to reality, which includes how they are to support one another, thus instilling a sense of responsibility and mutual accountability. This leads to the Delivery (also called 'Destiny') phase which is to go and enact the design. If the 4D cycle is implemented multiple times, the Dream session in subsequent iterations may call upon participants to recall successful experiences in enacting their original design, thus reinforcing the desired transformations. As a long-term model for transformative teacher education, it holds promise, at it would seem to a process of praxis by initiating a spiral of action and reflection.

Advantages and Limitations of AI

Having elaborated the mechanics and philosophical underpinning of AI, the issue of its suitability remains. As with any methodology, for AI's advantages there are invariably trade-offs and limitations. Perhaps the greatest strength of AI rests in its being a very affect-based approach to research. Human emotion plays a critical role in its utility. Engaging participants in discussions on their own past successes, and their opinions about idealised futures leads to at least five perceived benefits. One, it can help the researcher convey respect and an honest desire to learn from the participants, and by the same stroke, limit any power games that might occur (Michael, 2006). It helps build a human I-thou connection as discussed above. Two, the building of such a relationship fosters trust, and therefore the validity of the data collected (Cunningham, Riverstone & Roberts, 2005). With trust comes honesty, and participants are seen to be more open in their discussion. Three, also favourable to validity is the sense in participants that they are authentically participants in the process (Flor, 2005), as the inquiry focuses on their experiences. In longer-term studies, AI has also been shown to increase morale levels (Messerschmidt, 2008) and shift the locus of motivation for transformation from external to internal (van Vuuren & Crous, 2005). Finally, AI is also highly generative (Bushe 2011) and productive: participants quickly engage in the discussion and talk at length about the subject at hand (Michael, 2006), producing ample data.

When it comes to assessing the limitations of AI, the task becomes somewhat more difficult, however. AI is based on a positive outlook, and its communities of practitioners have lagged in critically analysing the methodological approach. As Messerschmidt (2008) argues, many of the practitioners are “almost evangelical” (p. 455) in their approach to AI, and, consequently, “There are lots of reports of all the “good” and “positive” things AI has done, but virtually no evaluations of its long-term effectiveness and results.” (p. 463) The dearth of criticisms of AI is itself interesting. A cynical read could be that its practitioners have blinded themselves to negativity, and while there may be some practitioners who are also linked to positive psychology movements (Messerschmidt, 2008), these would only represent a small part of the practitioners, particularly in the academe. A more fulfilling and generous explanation might therefore be found in its constructivist roots. Ironically, AI emerged as a solution to perceived problems in the problem-based inquiry model. As it is still in its infancy, especially in the researcher's toolbox, its proponents are still in a 'selling' phase, lauding the approach in order to establish legitimacy. As it evolves, more critiques will emerge, some limitations can be identified.

Perhaps the biggest criticism of AI is that it is, in fact, overly positive. In the worst of cases, ignoring problems and focusing solely on strengths may disregard existing power dynamics within groups or communities, and failing to address these (Michael 2006; Lewis & Van Tiem 2004). Just as the 'participatory' label may be co-opted and used to justify political power-plays, so too can AI be disingenuously deployed, a situation I personally went through once in an organisation for which I worked. If AI is used for long-term transformation, then it depends on honest support from leadership levels in the community. Any gains, such as morale boosts, may be irreparably reversed, as expectations are mismanaged. As it is an affect-based methodology, if mishandled, it can be emotionally damaging for participants.

Another key limitation to AI is the cost in time and labour to adequately practice the methodology, particularly if the research involves multiple cycles of the 4Ds (Messerschmidt, 2008; Moody *et. al*, 2007). As it is generative of ample data, sets of these may become overly large and unwieldy (Bushe, 2009). Parallel to this, the data type generated can also be problematic, depending on the type of study undertaken. Messerschmidt (2008) warns of an "over-reliance on stories alongside a dearth of other sources of data" (p. 462), which may then skew researchers toward "*the fallacy of misplaced causation*" (p. 462, italics in original). This limitation is less relevant to this particular study, as the goal is to seek out exceptions to trends, not explain patterns of causation. Nonetheless, as will be described below, additional research methods are used in complement of AI in order to vary and enrich the data available for analysis.

A third set of limitations revolve around the practitioners themselves. If not careful, the positive, forward-looking ethos may in fact be a detriment. One of Michael's (2008) fears was that it might give participants initial impression of naiveté on her part as a researcher who is not quite in touch with the reality of the situation. Also, AI depends on a particular skill-set and mindset on the part of researcher and research assistants/facilitators, which can be difficult to find (Bushe, 2009). Going into this study, I luckily had numerous years of experience facilitating various workshops; without this experience, I do not think AI would have been feasible.

The important point is to reserve one's zeal and accept that AI does have limitations, even if many remain unreported. Healthy scepticism, to use Messerschmidt's words, remains de rigueur: while promising, AI is not a panacea. Perhaps by accepting it for its purpose, then AI becomes most useful, and this, succinctly explained is that "[t]he AI process is best understood as strategy for initiating micro-level reform within a single school, reform that is both affective and analytical" (Ryan *et al.*, 1999, p. 167)

Given the context in which the research takes place, it is also essential to raise issues regarding participatory research more broadly. Mohan (2006) warns that, when working in and with other groups, that while at the surface discussions may seem to lead to harmonious consensus-building, there may also exist inner-group politics to which the researcher is not privy. Consequently, while 'participant' findings may seem to emanate from the group as a whole, they may in fact be a reflection of a select group. Juxtaposing this issue onto AI dynamics, the problem may become even more complex. Bushe (2011) stipulates that the very notion of 'positive' may not be universal but contextual. Within a given group, the same experience may be interpreted as positive by some, and negative as others. Although Bushe is looking more specifically at AI as applied to organisational change, his warning is heeded, and delineation needs to take place between having participants discuss personal experiences as positive, versus having groups of participants discussing collective experiences as being positive. In the long-term, application of AI without critical counter-weight may also be quite problematic. Grant and Humphries (2006), for instance, propose that organisations or systems that focus solely on strengths may grow to be imbalanced, using a metaphor of plants growing lopsided to reach a single source of light. The use of AI, from what little critical examination currently exists of it, may be ineffective if unaccompanied by some form of deeper critical reflection. Failure to do so may result in flawed or even unrealistic expectations.

Perhaps the greatest risk in the use of AI specifically, but also other forms of celebratory or participatory research rests in their potential to manipulate emotion for given goals. The facilitator-cum-researcher, by asking questions in a certain way, wields great power, as this research technology allows them to shape the narrative of the group within which they are working. Understanding that AI originated as a change management tool, it must be understood as originally being a means mobilised by particular individuals within an organisation to change culture and practice within it. It is, at its root, a group behaviour modification technology, though seemingly this is overlooked by many practitioners, which is itself reminiscent of an observation made by Corrigan and Curtis (1985) relative to school systems: little attention is given to their role as structures of political power, albeit of organisations of relatively different sizes. Corrigan and Curtis are focused on the development of national political culture, but since we have established in the first chapter that macro- and micro- level behaviours linked and form different spaces of a continuum or spectrum, their point is very germane to this discussion.

That AI and participatory methodologies are technologies designed to alter patterns of behaviour is not, however, necessarily a bad thing – in the case of this study, modifying the practice of teachers in favour of certain pedagogical practices would indeed fit this description. Nonetheless, while AI practitioners focus on its positivity, it is not a benign technology. Perhaps one of the biggest worries, particularly given its emphasis, uncritical over-emphasis on positivity rests in AI being an effective tool in the manipulation of emotion for garnering support of otherwise unwanted change, or used to mask otherwise very dire circumstances. It can easily be co-opted for political gains, much as other participatory methods, as discussed above (i.e. Jordan, 2009). AI's apparent legitimacy as a 'positive' tool may also be its Achilles heel which reduces the likelihood of its practitioners to examine its use critically, both by themselves and by others. AI must be scrupulously deployed and critically examined by the researcher, and alternate investigative methods should be used in order to ensure that critical issues be not ignored or glossed over, or that critical reflection, as attempted by Grant and Humphries (2006), be integrated into the methodology, and not used nefariously.

4.4 Designing the Fieldwork

Taking these matters into consideration, for the purposes of this study, AI seemed appropriate if used in conjunction with additional data-generating research activities. As will be seen, the field research was tailored to help minimise some of the issues highlighted above. Having discussed at length the core epistemological orientation and methodology of this study in a more abstract fashion, I now move to describing the research design. I present how my AI workshop was constructed, as well as the complementary research methods. To help the reader make sense of it, I also include a narrative description of an initial fact-finding trip I took to Monrovia in June 2011 to contextualise the study in time and place. What is presented in this chapter is strictly the research design, but not its delivery. I hope to present the study as it was intended, and then will proceed in the next three chapters to describe what the study looked like in practice, what data were garnered, and what they mean.

Selection of Research Site

LeCompte and Schensul (2010) consider that successfully carrying out research in a compressed setting requires the researcher to “be somewhat familiar with the field settings and/or cultural context” (p. 122). Having worked significantly in West Africa over a number of years, I became comfortable working within its tapestry of cultures. Particularly as a bilingual Canadian, it gave me the opportunity, if not privilege, to interact in two widely-used languages, due to the history of British and French colonial rule, but without having the stigma of “coloniser” necessarily attached. Given my interest for educational delivery in war-affected countries, and given the unfortunate recent past in many countries in the region, I decided to focus on this part of the world to conduct my research. I finally settled upon Liberia for two distinct reasons, which I admit are purely arbitrary. One, as described in Chapter Three, its peace process evolved quite differently from that in other countries, and its people had elected Africa's first woman President. It seemed as if a different dynamic might be at play, and so I reckoned that if teachers were to be playing a role in peacebuilding anywhere, it might just be Liberia. Two, although I had worked with Liberians, I had never actually been to Liberia, and so I thought this would be a tremendous opportunity to go and learn from and about it.

Timeline of Fieldwork

The selection of Liberia, however, left me with the issue that I was going to go conduct research in an unfamiliar site. To offset this, I planned to add an initial fact-finding mission where I would go, establish contacts, and lay the ground work for an eventual longer stay where I would be able to conduct research effectively and efficiently. In this section, I describe in detail the process and outcome of this first trip which directly led to the research design ultimately described below, and used in 2012.

Fact-Finding Trip: *June 15-22, 2011*

My first trip to Monrovia was a one-week reconnaissance in order to establish contacts, build a network and prepare for the eventual field research. In preparation for this trip,I called upon my own professional networks in the field of peacekeeping in order to secure contacts ahead of time, with the intent to make my short time there as productive as possible. This section is heavier on description, as the results of this trip were highly influential in giving the field research trip its shape and structure.

My initial contact on the ground was through a consultant with whom I had worked who was quite heavily involved fundraising for a Greater Monrovia-based non-governmental organisation (NGO) named the Movement for the Promotion of Gender Equality in Liberia (MOPGEL). This was an NGO that had originally been founded in a refugee camp in Ghana during the Liberian Civil War, and its founders had transplanted the organisation back to their home country at war's end. MOPGEL's activities were quite diverse. Based in Paynesville, a large suburb on the Eastern end of Monrovia, the NGO ran a small centre which offered computing classes, and of which they hoped to convert a part into a medical clinic. In the adjacent lot they were building a school, but at the time of this trip, it was well behind schedule and the budget well over-spent. The official at MOPGEL had found me accommodation at a small guest house the organisation had for visiting volunteers. It was quite modest, lacking electricity and running water, and was situated some 40 minutes away from the city centre by public transportation (traffic permitting). The arrangement I had with the organisation was that I would pay US$250 for accommodations, which covered both my week in Monrovia, and my subsequent 2-month stay the next year for conducting the field research. However, in the interim, the head of MOPGEL emigrated to the United States, and my contact with the organisation was lost, as was my secured accommodation for my return.

Through another former colleague, I was put in touch with a staff member at the Liberian UNICEF team. Through this contact, I was able to meet members of their education team, and establish contact with the Minister's office through which I arranged a meeting with the Associate Minister, the Honorable Musu Dixon-Badio. It should be noted that at this time, my intended research design involved the use of telecommunications (radio, cellular phones) for delivering teacher development programmes aimed at developing long-term cultures of peace and democracy in the classroom. Much of the conversation revolved around this proposed project. However, over the course of the conversation the Minister did mention that there were no conflict resolution programmes in schools, and that the idea of strengthening the counselling role of teachers – meant in the sense of increasing their ability in this sphere – would really help.

Another contact I established on the ground stemmed from a literature review I had conducted on education in Liberia. I had come across an article written by one Vonhm Benda (see: Benda, 2010) who had written of the work his organisation, the Center for Peace Education (CPE), did in helping teachers become peace educators, counsellors and in training students to be peer mediators. His email address was included in his article, so I wrote him a message, introducing myself, my research interests and my itinerary of travel to Monrovia. He responded by saying that he would like to meet, but would be out of the country at the time of my sojourn, as he now resides in the US. He did, however, give me the contact information for the director of his NGO in the Monrovia Area, as well as the contact information for a friend of his who ran another NGO, the Better Future Foundation (BFF).

Once in Monrovia, I made contact with CPE's director, and arranged to meet him in Brewerville, Virginia Township, approximately 12 kilometres North of Monrovia. We were able to meet at Pamela Kay School in Redhill – which I didn't know at the time, but this school would play host to some of my workshops during my next trip - and converse for over an hour, during which time Mr. Cooper, and a colleague of his gave me an overview of the CPE's programmes, and discussed some of the issues the teachers with whom he worked faced in the classrooms. In a strange twist of fate, during the hour or so car ride from Paynesville, where I was staying, to Brewerville, I had been trying to reach the director of the BFF, by phone, but the person on the other end of the line told me he was out of the country. However, the driver I had arranged for the week, suddenly asked me if I was trying to reach "Ah-kway" (whose name I had been pronouncing "Ar-koy"), handing me the very person's business card. I laughed when he told me he knew him well. I thought that was the end of it, though, but, three days later, coming back from my meeting at the MoE downtown, my driver suddenly stopped the car and said to me: "there's Arkoi, there". As such, we both got out of the vehicle and the introductions were made. We agreed for me to come meet him at the school his foundation ran on Peace Island in the suburb of Jacobstown, on the north-eastern side of Greater Monrovia, off Somalia Drive, which acts as a type of ring road around the city. This chance encounter would turn out to be, as will be described in the chapter on the main study, one the most fortuitous in my life. At the meeting at the BFF's New Hope Academy, I was able to converse with Mr. Arkoi, who, after listening to my schemes of radio-based education, which he stated would be responsive to the challenges faced in the country, he began to elaborate on some of those challenges, including the legacies of failed DDR programmes, and his organisation's main focus: the engagement of youth into the country's development, peace and democracy processes, which includes the running of a youth centre adjacent to the school. We agreed to stay in contact, and I then returned to prepare for my departure the next day.

One final contact that I pursued during my fact-finding mission was with the American non-profit organisation AED – the Academy for Educational Development – which held the USAID contract for running the Liberian Teacher Training Program (LTTP). I came upon this program while walking in downtown Monrovia, being shown my way around by the other Canadian who was living at the guesthouse. In the Mamba Point sector of Monrovia proper, a neighbourhood where many United Nations and NGO buildings are clustered around the US Embassy, we walked by a compound with a sign that announced the "Liberia Teacher Training Program", along with a phone number, which I noted down and called. The people at AED were incredibly welcoming, and I was able to schedule most of a day's worth of meetings with various staff members. Much of their information, as with that garnered from meetings with the local NGOs, was invaluable in helping build the educational profile of the country I present in Chapter Three of this work. Critically, it was also this organisation that gave me a copy of the *Professional Standards for Teachers in Liberia,* which then helped me shape my second research question. Unfortunately, what I did not know about the organisation at that time was that part of AED's South Asia programs were under investigation by USAID (Hedgpeth & Boak, 2010), and by the end of 2011, they were essentially dissolved and its programmes absorbed by another large US-based NGO named FHI. Though I subsequently tried to re-contact the individuals I had met at AED, these contacts went cold.

Research Design Considerations

Upon my return, I tried to secure additional funding for my field research. Unfortunately I was unable to do so, and therefore had to use funds from my general SSHRC fellowship, along with personal funds, to finance my main trip to Liberia. In an era of budgetary constraints, large sums for long-term studies is increasingly difficult (Jeffrey & Troman, 2004)to secure. Consequently, new "compressed" approaches to research, particularly in ethnographic studies (see: LeCompte & Schensul, 2010; Berg 2007; Jeffrey & Troman, 2004) are being tried and tested to fit this new reality. As described, "pure" AI is a long-term, cyclical process aiming sustained cultural transformation within an organisation, and, arguably, such a project would have been the ideal path for this study. However, as resources did not permit for such an endeavour, I adapted and followed the opinion of LeCompte and Schensul (2010) that "[r]esearch design should always be formed in the context of available resources" (p. 183).

Having thus to balance research needs with financial reality, I settled on a feasible series of participatory workshops, questionnaires and interviews. For this purpose, I budgeted for a possible five-to-six weeks *in situ* for collecting data. For this trip, as my previous accommodations were no longer available I was able to find alternate accommodations much closer to the city core, and made daily use of public transportation which was highly economical. Without going into the details at this point, as it is the very focus of the next chapter, what is important to note here is that this compressed time period of five weeks was adequate given my initial fact-finding mission the summer before. Arriving with a network already in place meant that it was possible to begin running workshops very soon after arrival, and to maximise the collection of data given the limited timeframe.

Beyond the question of resources, creating a hybrid methodology also helps solve another issue. In extension to having to answer my research questions themselves, my theoretical and epistemological frameworks have inserted parallel goals– or at least installed conditions – into the research that must be respected. The first of these goals is that by taking on an assets-based line of inquiry, this researcher is at the same time challenging what "everybody knows", to use Wolcott's (2001, p. 36) phrasing, about education and teachers in war-affected societies. By pursuing appreciative lines of inquiry, I hoped to show through success stories in what is otherwise quite a bleak field of study. What is more, using methods from AI in such a context for the first time – at least to my knowledge – in this process gives birth to a second parallel goal: to analyse its applicability and usefulness in such a context. Understanding that AI has arisen from a much different social reality, I am in fact taking a risk by importing and applying them to the work of teachers in Liberia. Part of this research in fact becomes an assessment of methods used; it is partly a meta-research, and requires extra diligence on my part.

4.5 Research Tools

While AI allows me to answer my research questions, it does so only partially, and as such, I am called upon to make use of other methods for this study. To complement the AI component, I also made use of more traditional tools in the qualitative researcher's kit: questionnaires, interviews, and field notes of observations. Particularly for the first research question, seeking to understand Liberian teachers' perceptions, the use of written questionnaires was chosen, albeit with caveats. Cognisant that with written questionnaires, particularly with participants for whom Standard English may not be their mother tongue, there is a danger that the decoding of the questions will vary greatly, and thus affect how closely they answer to the intended meaning (Peterson, 2000). For this reason, the questionnaire I constructed followed Peterson's (2000) guide to make it as brief, relevant, specific and unambiguous as possible by limiting it to four short open-ended questions. For the interviews, these were semi-structured, and meant to deepen and nuance topics covered in the AI workshops.

Most of the participant data was generated in scheduled half-day workshops, which meant an allotted time of some three to four hours. Each workshop began with an introduction in which participants were explained the nature and purpose of the study, were explained their rights as participants, and asked to sign a consent form. The second step was to have participants complete a four-question questionnaire, and then we proceeded to an affirmative-inquiry workshop. Interviews were scheduled and conducted with individual participants, usually following the workshops. Each method is described below, although what is presented is strictly an outline of the planned process. The details of the plan's implementation, its difficulties encountered, revelations and learning moments are clearly exposed in Chapter Five, with a presentation, interpretation and analysis of the findings in Chapters Six (questionnaire and interview data) and Seven (workshop data).

Questionnaire

The first method used was designed to address the first research question directly, namely to what extent Liberian teachers see a role for themselves within their country's peacebuilding process. For this. an anonymous written questionnaire (See *Appendix A*) that asked the four following sets of questions was administered. Acknowledging the limitations of this tool, as discussed above, I chose this method for a couple of reasons. One, it is easy to administer, particularly with large groups of participants. As such, it allows to collect a relatively large amount of data in a short period of time. While analysis is time consuming, this can be done once out of the field. Two, as will be garnered by the actual questions below, the written questionnaires also allowed to ask straightforward questions that directly allow me to answer my first research question. As a complement to the AI workshops, they presented an efficient option.

The questions covered were:
1. *Think of peace in Liberia. Now think of the different professions that you know (examples: doctor, lawyer, journalist, teacher, police officer, soldier, politician, merchant, builder, engineer, etc.). What professions do you believe have the biggest role to play in building a peaceful Liberia?*
2. *Think of your own community. What professions do you believe have the biggest role to play in building peaceful communities?*
3. *What role do you believe teachers can play in building a peaceful Liberia?*
4. *What role do you believe you can play in building a peaceful Liberia?*

Each question was written on top of a half-page sized text box, in which participants were free to write as much or as little as possible. The questionnaire was administered first, principally because I sought to capture the participants' perceptions of the role of teachers in the peacebuilding process before this theme was explored through the AI workshops. Capturing it at this point would minimise the amount of bias my own research would play into their answers.

The first question has the participant consider peacebuilding as a national-level process, then seeks to elicit the placement of teachers within this process, and has them do so based on their own understanding of “peace”, as none has been provided. When the questionnaire was administered with the first group of participants, no parentheses with examples were given. However, when this first group responded "teachers" nearly unanimously, I added the parenthetical list in order to limit any bias participants may have from my having just explained, in my introduction and discussion on ethics and consent that my research was clearly about "teachers in the peace process in Liberia". The use of plural was also deliberate to elicit multiple responses, if possible.

The second question, while similar to the first has the participant consider the role of the teacher at a more local level. Given my own theoretical concept that large-scale cultures of peace are an amalgam of countless small patterns of behaviour, I was interested, through this question, to see whether the concept of peace has fluctuating or different meanings for the participants, and whether there is variability in their perceptions of the role of teacher as either macro- or micro-level actors.

In the third question (on the top of the reverse side of the questionnaire),participants are asked directly about the role of teachers in peacebuilding, contrary to the first two which were more open-ended. The assumption given in this question is that teachers might have some form of role to play, and I hoped to elicit from participants what they believe this might be. In other words, questions one and two hint at asking: “Do teachers, amongst others, have a role?” while the third question asks directly: “How do teachers contribute to the peacebuilding process?”.

The final question, while phrased almost exactly like the third, seeks to investigate whether or not the participants view themselves as having a role to play in building peace that may not be associated to their role or identity as a teacher. Through this contrasting question I hoped to uncover whether there is a sense of agency tied to the position, title or role of teacher, or whether participants see other avenues for peace outside of teaching.

AI Workshop

As AI is usually conducted using facilitated workshop formats (Messerschmidt, 2008), I did the same, albeit in a modified form. Each workshop began with participants first completing the questionnaire described above and dealing with their perceptions of the teaching profession's role in Liberia's peace process. Then, the remainder of the workshop was divided in four phases: Discovery, Dream, Design, and Delivery. The segment below serves merely as a description of the planned activity, devoid of critical analysis. A de-construction and thorough description of its application is discussed in the next chapters.

The *Discovery phase*, as per the AI model described above, had the participants reflect upon and share positive teaching and learning experiences. Questions used included:

- *Recall a time when you finished teaching a class and were left feeling particularly happy and proud, and your students were also happy and engaged. Describe that moment. What did you do differently that allowed this to happen?*
- *Recall and share a positive learning experience from sometime over the course of your life – sometime you learned something and enjoyed doing it.*

- *Recall and share a specific example of when you feel you acted as a good role model, and as such helped a student become a better person.*

For this phase, the discussion was always structured as a "think-pair-share". This allowed each participant time to reflect upon their answer, and think it through both mentally and by talking it over with a colleague, before sharing with the group. I recorded shared answers.

The goal of the discovery in this phase was threefold. One, it was designed to help set a positive tone for the remainder of the workshop; by discussing positive learning and teaching experiences, it helps guide the participants to be energised about their teaching. On the other hand, it also helps model critical reflection upon their craft as teachers. By not simply recalling positive experiences, but also trying to identify what allowed the experience to occur helps the participants analyse their practice and take lessons for future use. Finally, the modelling of "think-pair-share" for the discussion – and a subsequent discussion at the end where I briefly described its structure and use – gave participants the opportunity to acquire another tool for their repertoire of teaching skills.

The *Dream-Design-Delivery* phases entailed having participants discuss an idealised future and developing strategies for it attainment. During the opening workshops the participants broached two different themes.
In one small community school, located in Monrovia's second largest slum, the discussion was based around envisioning an idealised future for that community, and to describe how they would like to see it in twenty years. Conversely, the initial theme for the other workshops dealt with the construction of gender identity. Leach (2006; 2003) and Humphreys (2006) among others, have made a strong case for the role of schools in the development of gender identity, including through teacher-pupil interaction. For this reason, having teachers critically reflect about how they have shaped gender identity, and how they can shape it in the future, was a sine qua non of this study.

However, gender can be a very difficult subject to discuss, particularly in a cross-cultural setting. Luckily, I recalled a conversation I had many years ago in Mali, with a Senegalese woman who facilitated gender awareness workshops for West African military officers. She had said from her experience that there are two ways of approaching the topic of gender with men: If one is to talk about "women" in general, then more often than not the result will be a discussion around stereotypes and misogynistic posturing. On the other hand, for a different perspective, she explained, talk about their daughters, for the expectations applied to them are altogether different, and it is possible to have a much more sincere conversation. And so it was with this advice in mind that I structured the Dream segment by dividing the participants into groups of six to eight and asked each one of the two following questions:

a) Imagine you have a 20-year old daughter, and she brings home a man she says she is going to marry. If you could choose the ideal son-in-law, the perfect man for your daughter, what would he be like? Describe him and list his characteristics.

b) Imagine your daughter at the age of forty. She is a proud, independent and successful Liberian woman. What does that mean? Describe her and list her characteristics.

Participants would then share their answers from the Dream segment, and then we would turn the discussion to what they, as teachers, could do to make this idealised future happen, thus going through a hybrid *Design-Delivery* phase. In the case of the gender activity, we discussed the fact that perfect sons-in-law and successful daughters do not materialise from nothing, but must be brought up to be so. What can we as teachers do to bring out the desired qualities in our students, and reinforce them? What can we do to strengthen our community?

On two occasions, follow-up workshops were held for returning participants. As such, there was the opportunity to delve deeper into some of the themes uncovered during the Design discussions on issues of gender, yet still using the 4D model used in prior workshops. I will return to these two workshops in the next chapter, as they require data from the initial workshops for understanding. However, they did follow the same pattern and structure.

Interviews

All workshop participants were also invited to participate in an interview. Participation was completely voluntary, and eleven participants chose to participate. All interviews were semi- or loosely-standardised, meaning they followed roughly the same pattern, built around core questions, although these were often re-worded for enhanced communications (Berg, 2007). In all instances, the interviews were conducted after the participants had already participated in a workshop. As we had already had interacted, both researcher and participants were not strangers, and a bond – albeit small – was formed. With the luxury of more time, it would have been nice to have multiple interviews, as increased conversation would have meant increased trust, deeper understanding and richer or thicker data sets. However, as discussed previously, the compressed nature of this study did not allow for this to occur. All interviews were recorded on a digital voice recorder, and were transcribed using a word processor. As will be described in greater detail in subsequent chapters, the mood for the interviews was generally relaxed. In each instance, a more isolated area – either an empty classroom or a courtyard – was selected for the interview. Chairs were usually placed at the corner of a table so that interviewer and interviewee were able to face each other without the formality of sitting directly across from one another.

The first two questions were linked to the initial path that led the participants to teaching:
1. Why did you become a teacher? Or: When did you decide to become a teacher?
2. Once you decided to become a teacher, what steps did you then take to make that possible?

The purpose behind these questions was threefold: one, it helped me, as a researcher, understand the initial motivation guiding the participant to become a teacher. Particularly given the challenges of facing the education system in Liberia, understanding what led participants into the profession would help inform much of the other data collected. Two, and this applied particularly to the second question, understanding the path taken to become a teacher in Liberia would help contrast lived experience from the official teacher training policies set out by the MoE. Three, the underlying theme of these questions is that of "teacher as identity"; by linking the profession to identity, the goal of the questions is to understand the process of transformation initiated by the participants themselves. Importantly for the first research question: Is this identity as teacher linked to the concept of peacebuilder?

3. What motivates you day-to-day? What keeps you teaching?
This question is intended to both build upon, and contrast with the second question. I was interested in knowing whether motivations have changed, and how. Moreover, motivations can be viewed as sources of resilience in difficult contexts. From a policy standpoint, understanding what keeps teachers teaching is crucial. A second purpose behind this question was to see whether teachers' motivation was linked to the peacebuilding process.

4. How would you describe your strengths as a teacher?
5. What are the skills you'd like to further build and develop?
6. If you were offered any type of professional development, what type of professional development would you like to have?
These three questions were meant to see how teachers perceive their role. In their answers, I was seeking whether or not they discuss issues related to peacebuilding, being a role-model, issues of gender, or conflict

transformation. While general, these questions had the potential to address issues arising from all three of my research questions.

7. What are some of the biggest challenges to being a teacher in Liberia today?

The challenges to an education system will vary based on perspective. Part of the purpose of this question was simply allowing the teachers the opportunity to be heard. Beyond this, how participants answer this question may also trigger other thoughts or feelings about the motivation, position, and role of teachers. In essence, it sought similar information as previous questions, yet approached the issues from a different angle.

8. Describe a good day teaching. Because there are good days, and there are bad days. What to you constitutes a good day teaching?

This closing question was linked to my third research question. By discussing positive classroom experiences, it might be possible to unearth what behaviours or strategies lead to such positive experiences.

Field Notes

In order to help make sense of the data gathered by other methods, I kept observational notes of my experience in Monrovia. The goal of these notes was to help give description and context to the process that surrounds the workshops and interviews. The observational comments about the workshops themselves are both notes taken in the moment, and reflections taken after the fact. Given that I had positioned myself as facilitator of the workshops, it was difficult for me to also play the role of observer. This is why for much of the workshop data I relied on that generated by the participants themselves, and captured on paper. Given the compressed nature of this study, it made for a very immersive and intense experience on my part, and therefore my notes are my reflections upon this process, and played a key supporting role in my corpus of data. In the next chapter, I also elaborate on contextual data gathered in my field journal.

4.6 Data

Treatment of Data

All data collected was systematically coded in at least two cycles (Saldaña, 2009), while at the same time ensuring an "iterative process of moving back and forth between empirical data and emerging analysis" (Brantz & Charmaz, 2007, p. 1). With all data sets, using my theoretical construct as a reference, I approached my analysis from the view point that "data don't speak for themselves. The cognizant other (the researcher) engages data in a conversation" (p. 37). In this particular conversation, I sought to understand to what degree teachers' perceptions of their role(s) reflected what I outlined as being consequential in developing cultures of peace. Therefore, my treatment of the data was partly to assess my own theoretical construct.

Conversely, I remained open to indications that might contradict or alter my own theoretical framework. By actively seeking patterns, significant silences and indications of symbolic interaction (Wolcott, 2001; Berg, 2007), my treatment also sought to expose any new theories that might be contained in the data themselves. To aid in this venture, I accumulated the memos I drafted to myself – which ranged from digital word processor files to notes on scraps of paper written down while taking my dog for a walk, and I included these as secondary data (Saldaña, 2009), as they document my analytical process. I gave initial thought to applying grounded theory to the analytical phase, and while some of the core values of grounded theory-building may inspire my process, the inability to pursue a cycle of coding and collection (see, for example: Hood, 2007), and the fact that my research is already too steeped in gender and peacebuilding theory would preclude it from being labelled as such. As with much of this research methodology I have adopted a hybrid approach as is appropriate for dealing with a very complex issue.

To address the various data types specifically, I worked with the data from each source somewhat differently. For the questionnaires, I transcribed the hand-written answers into word processed documents and printed these out. I then physically cut the answers with scissors and organised them into clusters on large flipchart paper, based on themes in the answers. Being able to physically manipulate and move the data allowed to easily and effectively (re)sort and (re)arrange the data. I did this for each of the four questions. Once cogent clusters were assembled, I pasted them into place, and tried to identify linkages between, and patterns between and within the themes, as well as identifying any missing gaps in the patterns.

The decoding of workshop data was a bit more cyclical and ongoing, and a large part of it happened while in the midst of the actual field work. Advantageously, workshop data also benefited from an additional layer of interpretation by the participants themselves – small groups were asked to capture their discussions on poster paper and then recount their opinions to the plenary group. Consider, though, that I was also an active participant in the workshops themselves, and was processing the information as it was coming in, *live*, unlike the questionnaire data which I had the ability to go over in private surroundings. However, and most importantly, I needed to interpret initial workshop data in order to build successive workshops, a process upon which I will elaborate further in the next chapter, as I describe the administration of the study. As such, initial workshop data fed the design, and facilitation, of future workshops: some of the workshops came from the specified needs of the participants themselves, which reflects the cyclical nature of AI as a methodology. As well, as the workshops were learning experiences for me, they invariably helped me become more adept at playing the role of facilitator in this particular cultural setting. Having collected the chart papers created by the participants, however, meant that I had textual evidence for subsequent decoding.

In a similar vein, initial analysis of interviews was immediate. Given the experiences shared by the interviewees, they progressively helped deepen my understanding of the context from which, and in which the participants play the role of teacher. As such, some of what I learned inevitably made its way back into my designing and facilitating of the workshops. Moreover, as I interviewed more teachers – and facilitated more workshops – my understanding of the social language and context increased, which meant that my understanding of the data was in constant flux. That being said, as the interviews were recorded, I also had the opportunity to work with captured primary data after the fact, meaning I could go back to earlier interviews and re-analyse them with accrued experience, acculturation and knowledge. In this process, I analysed the interviews first interview-by-interview, and then question-by-question, in order to identify any themes that ran through individual interviews, and then across interviews. Again, I tried to identify linkages between, and patterns between and with the themes, as well as identify any missing gaps in the patterns. Throughout the entire analytical process, I referred to my notes to help contextualise and give nuance to my interpretation.

Selection process for workshop participants

Participants taking part in the study were voluntary and self-selected, and were recruited through a combination of convenience and snow-ball effect (Berg, 2007) due to circumstance. I arranged initial workshops through the CPE, BFF and Kids Foundation – all of which run programmes in schools - as well as through the Liberian Scouts Association. I attempted, also, to organise workshops through the MoE, particularly in the counties, but these were unable to come to fruition during my limited time in Liberia. Open invitations were sent out through these organisations' networks, and the leadership helped me find venues for hosting the workshops. Until the day of the workshops, I had no idea how many participants to expect.

The snowball effect came when some teacher-participants went back to their school and discussed the workshops with their principals and colleagues. My last workshop was held by such a principal, he of Prince of Wales

School, who invited me to put on a workshop as a professional development opportunity for his teachers, and that of another nearby school. On another occasion, one workshop also had teachers participate who had been informed by their own employer – the Associate Dean of the Teacher's College, who also owns his own private school, and whom I had interviewed about the Liberian teacher education system – and been encouraged to attend. Overall, the participant teachers came from schools from quite different parts of Monrovia, and can be judged to represent a decent cross-section of Monrovia-area teachers.

I had also attempted to schedule one or two workshops outside of the Monrovia area, but due to time and resource constraints, this was not possible.

4.6 Positionality, Situatedness and Ethical Considerations

Particularly within the theoretical framework of power established for this thesis, discussion of positionality and situatedness are paramount as they "are measures of privilege or disadvantage; people tend to position themselves so as to maximise the amount of power they can exercise over others" (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010:30), or, that the balance of power or authority between researcher and participant is unequal, and measured by a number of variable factors which individuals try to play in their own favour. That being said, this very maximisation does not necessarily have to be one of exercising power over others. Recognising one's own advantage can lead the researcher to leverage these advantages to facilitate a participatory research project for their own benefit, as well as for the benefit of the participants. The motivation of the researcher is key, and I have a choice as a researcher in how I try to position myself.

Following the logic of LeCompte and Schensul's argument, however, we must also assume agency in the participants. Consequently, the flip side of this argument is that participants will also try to make the most of the research opportunity. While I present an opportunity for participation in my study, in which I design intended benefits for the participants, such as professional networking and discussion of pedagogical skills, I must also assume that each individual participant has his or her own motivations, and is able to construct personal advantage from the situation in a way that I do not know. From this understanding, my obligation as a researcher is thus to allow enough flexibility in the research process so that the participants may gain a hand in shaping the process for their advantage, albeit not at the expense of the researcher or other researchers. In a sense, what I am trying to create in my microcosm of a study is an example of the cooperative and productive power paradigm elaborated in Chapter One as being essential for cultures of peace. The critical question that arises, however, is "How?".

One step is to foster a relationship with the participants that minimises "otherness". On the surface, a Caucasian Canadian Male is quite different, and easily identifiable within a group of teachers in Liberia. It might be argued that I have a near insurmountable etic view in this cultural context, as I am clearly an outsider (Berg, 2007). However, as a researcher, I have the choice of how I decide to engage the participants in my research. If my starting point is in the dichotomies, than, yes, my positionality is very problematic. However, my approach in this research is to find commonality with the participants and build my relationship from a more workable vantage.

My strategy to position myself as an emic participant in my conversation with participants was to engage them as fellow teachers, and in conversations about teaching success. Understanding that "[a]n individual may simultaneously occupy different and contradictory positions" (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010, p. 30), I chose to put forward those that were most favourable for positive encounters. As such, the defining element of my relationship with teachers that I put forward was that we were colleagues; members of the same profession. By appealing to this commonality I sought to establish a level playing field, by assigning similar characters in the study, and limit any type of artificial hierarchy that might arise from the application of differing labels for researcher and participants. Moreover, as I interacted with participants, and was able to develop relationships, I must also argue that the emic-etic divide did subside. This echoed strongly with Michael's (2006) experience in quickly building positive relationships through appreciative discussion. This strategy, however, is only a starting point. Good intentions are not a preventative, and as much as I may try to create a horizontal relationship with my participants, I also recognise that outside our common 'teacherness', my lived experience and theirs differs widely. Working with a population that has experienced a war of the magnitude and brutality such as Liberia's means that the potential always exists to unearth difficult pasts and painful memories.

Evaluating the potential risks and harms of the study, one choice I made to minimise such occurrences was to deliberately steer conversations clear from the past, particularly because I am not necessarily equipped with the skills to manage such discussions on traumatic events. Choosing AI as a cornerstone of my methodology was therefore both deliberate and strategic: it serves as a means of curtailing potential harms, as it aims to foster a cooperative, optimistic and positive discussion amongst participants by focusing on the future, and on existing agency. While there always exists a risk of evoking negative emotional or psychological responses, even in such a discussion, the focus and tone of AI-structured discussions are such that this becomes much more difficult. For instance, it is an assets-based research, meaning that it is intended to focus on a community's strengths (in this case teaching communities), rather than to discuss problems. Such an approach renders the research more politically benign, as it is not intended to identify causes or blame for problems. There is always a remote possibility that lauding the efforts of one particular individual in a community may be misinterpreted by others, but, again, this should be minimised.

To further minimise the risk, another solution has been to make explicit that voluntary withdrawal is allowed at any time by participants. To make this clear, all participants, at the beginning of their first workshop were given a document covering the Facts of the Study (Appendix B), which was read out loud as well, and were given a consent form (Appendix C) to read and sign. I took the time to explain each item, stressing the voluntary nature of their participation, their ability to withdraw from the process at any time, as well as issues of privacy and confidentiality. For those participants electing to partake in an interview, a second consent form (Appendix D) was also provided to be read and signed. I took the time to go through this form with the interviewees individually. All participation was absolutely voluntary, and participants were not paid for their participation. However, I must note that I did provide light refreshments, such as juice, fruit and biscuits at all events, and some participants did receive a small stipend, never more than the equivalent of two or three dollars to cover travel expenses to and from the workshop. At all times, I tried to be as open and transparent about by intentions and process as I could. Given I had no hidden agenda, I had no intention of engaging in subterfuge, even if unintended. Having presented the above arguments before the McGill Research Ethics Board, I was awarded a *Certificate of Ethical Acceptability of Research Involving Humans* on February 20, 2012.

Another angle of positionality, however, is that of the vulnerability of my research, and its complete dependence on the goodwill of the partner organisations and the participants. Without their cooperation, I would have been unable to collect any data, or share in the rich learning experiences that the encounters turned out to be. If anything, the fact that I was able to deliver the workshops, that participants returned for multiple iterations, and that I received unsolicited invitations to conduct further workshops was an indicator that there was something beneficial in the process for the participants.

4.7 Validity and Reliability

As with any research project, issues of reliability and validity need to be addressed. In this case, the use of multiple research methods was a deliberate choice to ensure triangulation between them (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1989). The backbone of this study is of course the AI methodology, which relies on workshops for the generation of data. By accepting Walker's statement that "[w]hat the researcher learns [...] depends on the quality of his interaction with his subjects [sic]" (p. 13), the source of reliability in AI stems from the type of positive interaction it generates. As the discussions generated are not about deficiencies, practitioners using the approach have found that participants are far less defensive than in problem-based interventions, as they are less likely to feel targeted or like scapegoats for existing challenges (Michael, 2008; Cunningham, *et al.* 2005). The tone of conversations subsequently allows for improved inter-personal relationships between participants themselves, and between participants and researchers (Tschanen-Moran & Tschanen-Moran, 2011). What AI ultimately generates, through the forging of positive relationships, is a quality of sincere dialogue that is based on trust and honesty in the research environment, allowing a candour research-practitioners of AI have seldom seen develop so expeditiously via other approaches (Michael, 2008; Bushe, 1999).

Tangentially, AI's positive environment also combines well with its participatory nature. As Flor (2005) notes, "the validity of the AI approach to learning and change is rooted in the fact that participants play an active role in the entire process" (p. 86), which also includes, as mentioned above, multiple layers of data interpretation by the participants themselves. By using think-pair-share, it allows multiple opportunities for participants to consider and evaluate their own stories before they even make it to the researcher. As well, by paraphrasing, and having participants answer questions from one another, which includes lengthier small group work sessions (Dream-Design phase) that follow the think-pair-share (Discovery phase), it ensures yet another layer of validity as the data is both generated and vetted by the participants themselves.

The drawback to the positive culture fostered by AI is that it might tend to skirt around more difficult conversations that might nonetheless require addressing. This is where additional methods are required to both triangulate the AI data. In the case of this study, the additional methods chosen, namely questionnaires, interviews and observations addressed this need. The questionnaire, despite the difficulties that might arise from being a written medium as addressed above, was also anonymous. This therefore allowed an opportunity for participants to disclose more contentious issues, should they chose, without fear of judgment by the researcher. Another advantage of the questionnaires, as well as the interviews which were recorded and transcribed, is that they offered an alternative to the AI workshops insofar that the words of the participants were captured verbatim. By transcribing both, and being able to re-read them multiple times, I was able to become immersed in the data, allowing an intimate familiarity with it (D'Amant, 2012). In the case of the interviews, an ideal situation would have been to have held repeat interviews with participants, in order to build deeper relationships and explore themes further (see: Seidman, 2006). However, as the circumstances of this study did not permit this, I have relied on verifying validity across multiple interviews. Still, as the interviews themselves were on the heels of the AI workshops, I am confident that the goodwill built by these carried over into the interviews and allowed for a level of candour by participants not normally found in initial interviews. Corroboration of this can be found by returning to the recordings, transcripts and identifying diction and syntax (Seidman, 2006) that allude to authenticity and sincerity of the interviewees.

Ultimately, I believe my own attitude toward the participants also helped greatly in the process. By integrating myself into the community, albeit for a short period of time, and observing and interpreting my surroundings, I was able to help socially contextualise my field research as it progressed (Walker, 1985). Most importantly, I am confident that I was able to ensure that participants could “understand and make meaning” (Seidman, 2006, p. 24) of their participation in my study, and, as discussed previously, use it to their advantage either personally or professionally. In combination with the triangulated methods, I believe these factors ensured that this study represents a valid and reliable picture of the multiple ways teachers in Monrovia understand themselves as agents within their country's peacebuilding process.

Chapter Five

Carrying Out the Fieldwork: A Narrative of Research Activities

5.1 Delineating Between Description and Analysis

In the previous chapter, I described in full the design of the study, the process that lead to its formation, as well as a comprehensive discussion on its epistemological and methodological underpinnings. With this chapter, I move away from the theoretical/methodological and planning aspects of the study and present how the different methods were applied in practice, as well as some of the challenges encountered in their administration. The purpose of this is to give a narrative of the experience of conducting this study. By following a chronological order of events, I describe the context in which the study took place, and give an account of the research activities that make up the study, such as the workshops and interviews. I have deliberately reserved the findings of the research for the next two chapters, save for a few exceptions where it facilitates the narrative flow. I base this decision on Wolcott's (2001) advice, as he strongly encourages one to "[s]tart with a straightforward description of the settings and event" (p. 31) and then

> proceed with analysis that keeps it distinguishable from the descriptive material on which it depends [...] [o]therwise readers may feel that they are being bounced back and forth like Ping-Pong balls when each new element of description is subjected immediately to heavy handed analysis. [...] Once you turn to analysis, any additional descriptive material ought to be immediately relevant to the account as you are developing it. (p. 34-35)

I appreciate that there are sections in this chapter where the reader will be left wanting for descriptions of findings, but I deemed a vacillation between the descriptions of various AI cycles, their outcomes, multiple data-sets and further field observations would produce too dense and complex a text. Furthermore, once I do move to analysis, it is my hope the reader will also have a fuller contextual understanding of the data. It is for these reasons I have focused the attention of this chapter on the narrative description, being able to then move to describing and interpreting the questionnaire and interview data in Chapter Seven and the AI workshop data in Chapter Six.

When conducting this type of study, particularly in a compressed time frame, everything that one does while on the ground is in some shape or form research. However, it is unwieldy to describe every moment of five weeks. To help tease out the relevant information for the reader, I propose to make a distinction between active/deliberate research on the one hand, and passive/incidental research experiences. By active, I mean those times set aside specifically for data collection, such as AI workshops, the accounts of which make the bulk of this chapter. However, much of what was experienced outside the workshops also helped strengthen the researcher's contextual understanding of the workshop and interview data. As such, a section at the end is dedicated to describing some of the incidental research experiences that formed part of a larger overall immersive cultural learning experience. I present select experiences, as well as secondary active research experiences that I deem were invaluable in helping me create the most meaning of my key data sources: workshops, interviews, and questionnaires.

5.2 Initial Phases

I arrived in Liberia in the late afternoon of February 22nd, 2012. Through a screened-membership online Google group dedicated to expatriates living in Monrovia, I was able to sub-let a room in a small bungalow in the Old Road neighbourhood. My landlord/flat mate was a Liberian civil servant, but he travelled frequently, so it was an ideal situation. The next two days were spent getting myself set up: picking up sundries, finding a cellular Internet provider, calling contacts on the ground to let them know I arrived in town, and to start

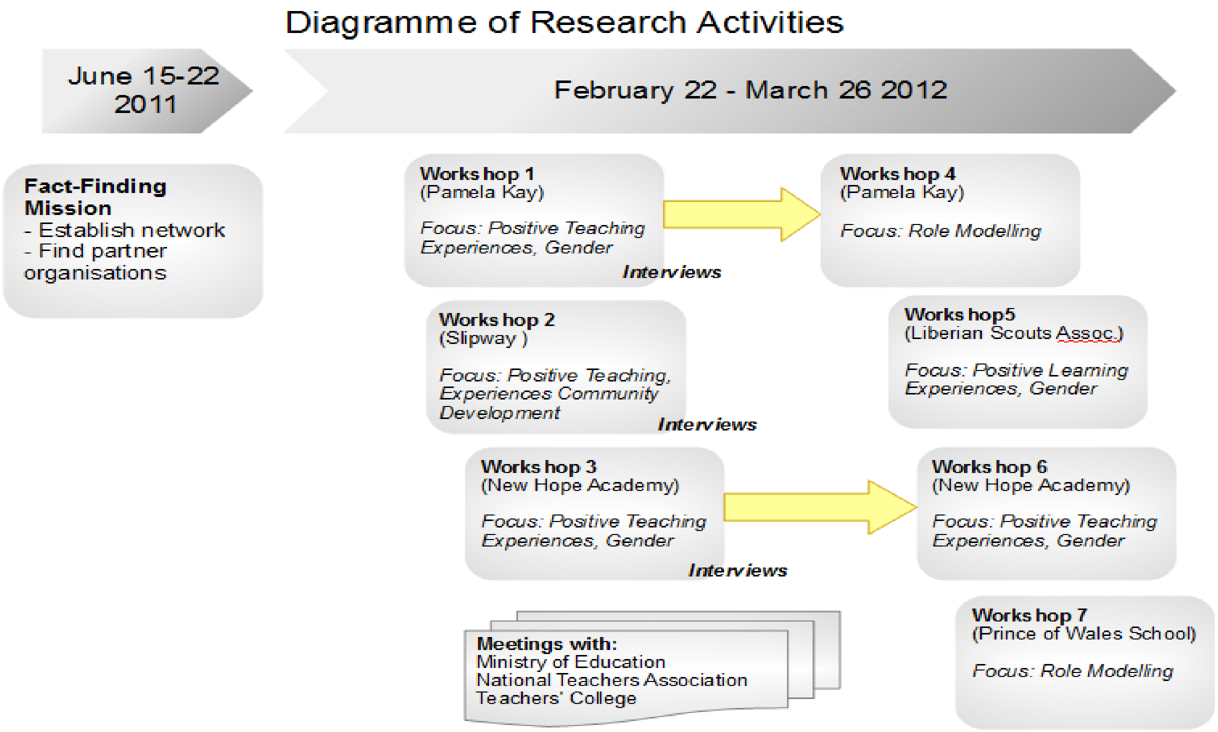


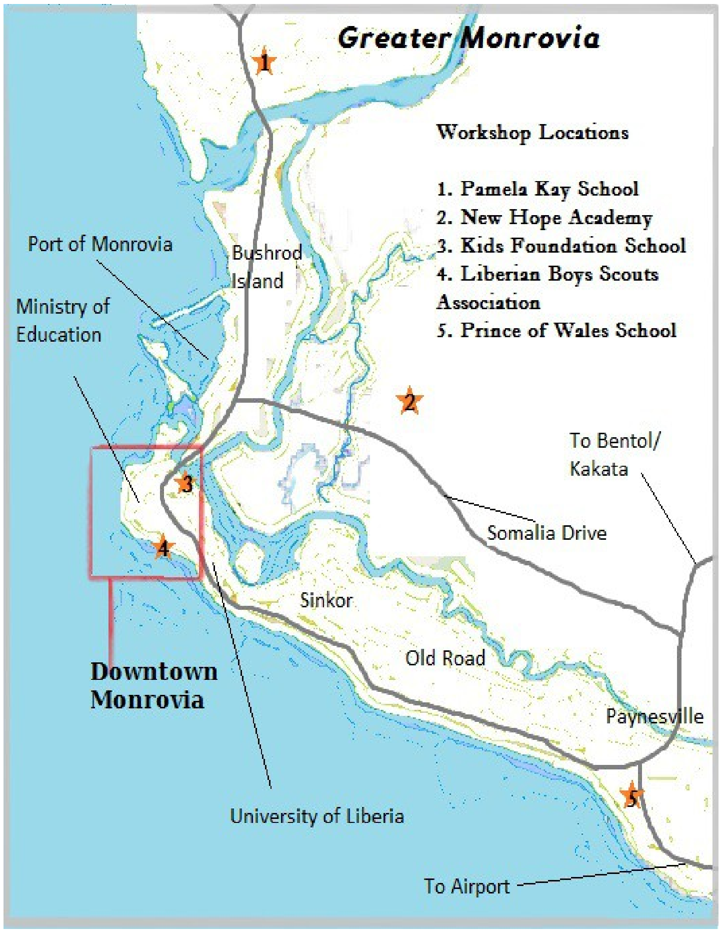
Diagramme of Research Activities
June 15-22 2011
February 22 - March 26 2012
Fact-Finding Mission
- Establish network
- Find partner organisations
Workshop 1
(Pamela Kay)
Focus: Positive Teaching Experiences, Gender
Interviews
Workshop 4
(Pamela Kay)
Focus: Role Modelling
Workshop 2
(Slipway)
Focus: Positive Teaching, Experiences Community Development
Interviews
Workshop5
(Liberian Scouts Assoc.)
Focus: Positive Learning Experiences, Gender
Workshop 3
(New Hope Academy)
Focus: Positive Teaching Experiences, Gender
Interviews
Workshop 6
(New Hope Academy)
Focus: Positive Teaching Experiences, Gender
Meetings with:
Ministry of Education
National Teachers Association
Teachers' College
Workshop 7
(Prince of Wales School)
Focus: Role Modelling

scheduling events, and amassing the necessary materials for running workshops.

On the 25th of February I was invited to attend the inaugural lecture of a new lecture series hosted by the Better Future Foundation (BFF), one of the NGO's with which I had met in the previous June visit, for Youth Beyond Barriers (YBB): an organisation designed to help its youth members develop leadership skills in peace, development, and democracy, in Jacobtown. The lecture was held at the recently-built YBB hall, a larger cement-block structure with a large common room of around fifty square metres, and with two medium-sized office rooms in the back. With a large, open double-door, and six large windows, along with white-painted walls, it was a large, open, and inviting space. On this particular occasion, some five rows of chairs were lined up and filled with mostly youth; young men and women in their late teens and early twenties were here to hear the guest speaker.

I was fortunate that day that guest lecturer was Reverend Emmanuel Bowier, the former Minister of Information, Culture and Tourism during the presidency of Samuel K. Doe. The fortune was in the nature of his presentation. He focused his discourse on the idea of defining what it means to be Liberian, going over the histories of migration of various groups to Liberia. His main thesis was that in order for Liberians to forge a new peace, they must all recognise that all Liberians – that is to say all the different ethnic groups – came to Liberia from somewhere else. Accordingly, all Liberia is for all Liberians. He closed his talk with other challenges to peace, notably the demographic youth bulge, as well as the importance of knowing history and being responsible for one's future. The greatest danger, he warned, was of Liberian youth "not wanting to know": wilful ignorance. While not a direct part of my described study process, the opportunity to spend the day in such an immersive environment, and to receive a terrific lesson on the demographic history of the country by a masterful story-teller meant acceleration in my acclimatisation in Monrovia. Culture is always better understood when experienced. This was the first of my significant incidental learning and research experiences.

By the 27th, telephone calls and emails began to bear fruit. I was able to meet with the Principal of Kids Foundation School in Slipway, as well as with an Education Planner at the Ministry of Education. He arranged a short meeting with the Associate Minister of Education. I received assurances that I would be put into contact with the Rural Teacher Training Institute at Kakata, Margibi County, that I could be put into contact with a couple of schools, and that perhaps a meeting with the Minister could be arranged - all opportunities that might have played out given a longer stay in-country. Unfortunately, one of the trade-offs of conducting research within a limited time frame is that one must make the most of the opportunities that arise while on the ground, and build the research around them.


Greater Monrovia
Workshop Locations
1. Pamela Kay School
2. New Hope Academy
3. Kids Foundation School
4. Liberian Boys Scouts Association
5. Prince of Wales School
1
2
3
4
5
Port of Monrovia
Bushrod Island
Ministry of Education
To Bentol/ Kakata
Somalia Drive
Sinkor
Old Road
Downtown Monrovia
Paynesville
University of Liberia
To Airport

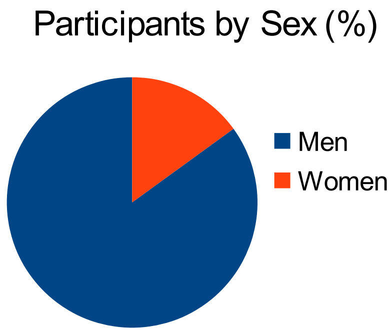
Another opportunity was a trip to Bentol, approximately forty-five minutes outside of Monrovia. The head of BFF invited me to go and watch the regional sitting of the *National Dialogue on the Future of Liberia*, also known as *Vision 2030*, being co-chaired by one of his YBB alumni. This was part of a series of such discussions where county delegates were brought in to share with the President, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, and other members of Cabinet, what their communities hoped for Liberia over the next twenty or so years. In a sense, it was intended to be a form of AI on a national scale: it was a process of future visioning, and developing action plans based on this desired end-state. Again, having the privilege to sit in on such an event was both fortuitous and edifying. I was in fact able to use *Vision 2030* numerous times as a culturally-relevant reference with workshop participants as a means of explaining my research process.

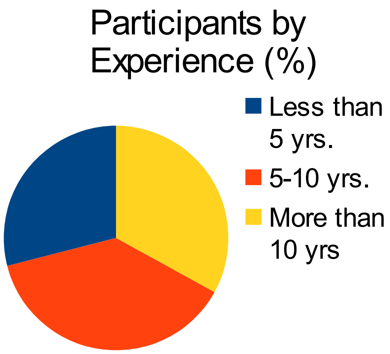
5.3 The AI Workshops

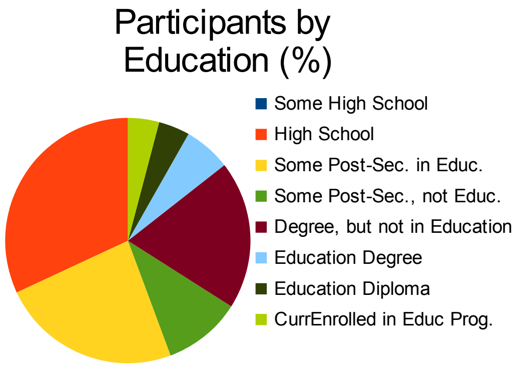
By March 5th, the beginning of my second full week in Monrovia, the phone conversations, which became face-to-face encounters were coming to fruition and workshops were being scheduled. On the Monday, I spent most of the morning following up with the MoE, and with Save the Children, with whom I had also met the week prior. However, that afternoon, I received two unexpected – or at least unannounced – visits from directors of the BFF and the CPE. The BFF director informed me that he was expecting about twenty-five teachers on Friday afternoon, the 9th, for me to have a workshop, and the CPE informed me that he had a organised a workshop for about fifteen teachers at Pamela Kay School in Red Hill, for Wednesday the 7th. The rental fee for use of the school would be US$20, and that each teacher should receive LD$300 (approximately US$4) to help pay personal transportation costs. I also then confirmed a meeting with the teachers on the Thursday at Kids Foundation School in Slipway.

Participant profile

Before describing the workshops themselves, I here take the time to describe the participants that joined in the study. To help draw a sketch of my workshop groups, I administered a voluntary and anonymous questionnaire that asked for their sex, the number of years experience teaching, as well as their highest level of education attained (Annex B). There were a total of 72 educators who participated in the workshops, all based in Monrovia, and in surrounding towns and townships. Almost all were teachers, save four who were Scout leaders and involved in the education sector through that youth movement. Of those participating *teachers*, 48 agreed to complete the profile questionnaire. Given the reasonably high response rate of over two-thirds, the information gathered reflects to an acceptable degree the profile of the participant cohort that participated in this study, and by extension an acceptable representation of the diversity of teachers in the capital and vicinity. It should not be read, however, as a profile of Liberian teachers as a whole.







Of the responding participants, 15% were women and 85% were men. The level of experience was relatively evenly distributed, as 29% reported having less than five years teaching experience, 38% reported having between five and ten years teaching experience, and 33% reported having more than ten years experience. One of the implications of these numbers is that the majority of teachers participating in the study were new to the profession since the end of the war, which seems to run counter to some of the national data seen in Chapter 3, although many teachers, though new to the field, may be coming from other professions.

Finally, the third question had participants report their highest level of education achieved. The largest cohort, at 31%, reported having completed high school. It should be noted that no teacher reported having completed only “some high school”, which was an option. The second largest cohort, at 23%, reported having “completed some University/College studies in Education” while 10% had completed “some University/College *in a field other than Education”*. A large portion, 19% had a university or college degree in a field other than education, while only 6% of responding teachers had a university degree in education, and 4% reported being currently enrolled in a university programme, with the same number reporting having a *diploma* in education. One participant reported as being a certified electrician. Given the overall description of teachers in Chapter Three, we see a reflection of national trends in this participant pool: as a whole, they are reasonably well-educated, but not necessarily trained as teaching professionals. However, as with any statistical information, stories of lived lives hide behind numbers, and these I describe in Chapter Six as I recount teacher histories that were told during interviews.

Workshop 1: Wednesday, March 7th, Pamela Kay School, Red Hill

The first workshop was held in a classroom at Pamela Kay School in Redhill, Virginia Township, approximately 20-30 minutes from downtown Monrovia. Present for the workshop were sixteen teachers, some of whom are affiliated with the Center for Peace Education, while others are teachers from Pamela Kaye and other schools. Two were primary teachers, the rest were high school. As each arrived, the director of the CPE made introductions. My sense was that the soon-to-be participants were curious about the upcoming workshop, as they most likely had little idea of what it might entail. That a Canadian doctoral student was conducting research at a school in Red Hill must have struck many as peculiar.

The school itself is a large compound and is located across the street from a large, modern, reverse-osmosis water bottling and bagging plant owned by "Aqua Life". The school is quite typical of Liberian schools, where the classrooms are built as a perimeter around a central courtyard. The workshop itself was held in a small classroom, which had rows of bench-desk furniture and a large blackboard at the front of the room. There are no electric lights: natural light comes through the door and a half-open wall on the right side (if you are a student, facing the chalkboard) and ornamental holes that function as windows/vents on the left side of the classroom. As it is largely open, it also somewhat noisy. Car, motorcycle and truck traffic associated with the water plant can be loud at times. The school itself has, I was told, a reputation for being a good school, and has a population of many hundreds of students. However, the day of the workshop they were scarce as most of them were either in the auditorium writing exams, or at home studying. With all expected participants present, we beganthe workshop. I describe the doing of this first workshop, clearly identifying the individual steps in order to help delineate how and when the different research methods were used.

Step 1: Ethics forms

We began the workshop with the University-mandated discussion of ethics, including the signing of consent forms (Annex C). While I had hoped to cover this in about fifteen minutes, it took about half an hour. Beyond taking up a significant amount time, I also sensed increased anxiety: by having the participants read long documents, with subtitles regarding risks, and the very notion of "ethics" itself, made the participants, ironically, feel more ill-at-ease about participating than when they had first arrived. Being unexpectedly asked to begin signing what appear to be legal documents seemed almost to arouse suspicion, or at least confusion. I had tried to present it casually, but this actually seemed to cause dissonance; participants demanded more time to methodically scrutinise the document, which, given the context, was a fair and valid thing. The lesson I learned quickly here was to approach it as matter-of-factly and succinctly in as professional a tone as possible, which ultimately served me well in future workshop iterations.

Step 2: Questionnaires

Upon reading and signing consent forms, participants were then asked to fill out the questionnaire (Annex D), which they did promptly. At this point, a certain fatigue, or a lowering in morale was starting to show in participants; they had come for a workshop, and had spent the last hour essentially doing paperwork. I must say that I was feeling quite apprehensive at this point. I therefore called for a break, and served up some refreshments that I had acquired: juice, tea, coffee, cookies and fruit. A few minutes of socialising over food is always a good energiser in workshops. People, teachers included, learn better when fed. I took this opportunity to mingle with participants, asking them about their classes, and answering questions about my stay thus far in

Liberia

Step 3: AI-structured discussion

After the break, I led the participants in an AI-format discussion, divided in four phases: Discovery, Dream, Design, and Delivery. For the *Discovery phase*, I had the participants reflect upon and share positive teaching and learning experiences. I started the discussion by asking participants to think back to the last time they left a class beaming. I asked them to remember a time when they finished a class and they were happy, and their students were engaged and energised about learning by asking them: "*Recall a time when you finished teaching a class and were left feeling particularly happy and proud, and your students were also happy and engaged. Describe that moment. What did you do differently that allowed this to happen?*"

I structured the exercise as a think-pair-share, meaning I allowed participants a minute or two to ponder the question, then asked them to discuss their answer with a partner. As would be the case with most of the instances where I ran this activity, conversations rapidly gained momentum, and the noise level in the room rose significantly. Laughter was common and participants were visibly engrossed in their conversations, which I let go for about four or so minutes, after which I had to end them. Participants were asked to share their answers in a plenary discussion, which was done to a captive audience. Pedagogically, the think-pair-share process allowed each participant time to reflect upon their answer, and think it through both mentally and by talking it over with a colleague before sharing with the group. Affectively, it helped break the ice and reset the mood of the group. In my first foray into AI, the methodology seemed to work as advertised. I recorded the stories shared by the participants in my notes, and I present them in the next chapter.

From my perspective as a researcher, this discovery phase had had three goals. One, it was designed to help set a positive tone for the remainder of the workshop, which it accomplished. By discussing positive learning and teaching experiences, it helped guide the participants to be energised about their teaching. Two, it helped model critical reflection upon their craft as teachers. By not simply recalling positive experiences, but also trying to identify what allowed that experience to occur, this helped the participants analyse their practice and take lessons for future use. Finally, the modelling of "think-pair-share" for the discussion – and a subsequent discussion at the end where I briefly described its structure and use – gave participants the opportunity to acquire another tool for their own repertoire of teaching skills. The goal of setting a positive tone was quickly achieved.

The *Dream-Design-Delivery* phase of the structured discussion entailed having participants discuss an idealised future and developing strategies for its attainment. It was through this segment that I was able to establish an essential link back to my initial theoretical construct about building peace through transformed gender identities. I divided the participants into two groups and asked one group to describe the ideal son-in-law, while the other I asked to describe a daughter who had achieved all the hopes and aspirations you might have for her. As explained earlier, Leach (2006; 2003) and Humphreys (2006), among others, have made a strong case for the role of schools in the development of gender identity, including through teacher-pupil interaction. For this reason, having teachers critically reflect about how they contribute to gender identity, and how they can shape it, was a sine qua non of this study. Yet, as gender can be a difficult topic to discuss, I framed it based on my experience working in West Africa with gender experts, as described in the previous chapter. I structured this segment by dividing the participants into two groups and asked each one of the following questions:

a) Imagine you have a 20-year old daughter, and she brings home a man she says she is going to marry. If you could choose the ideal son-in-law, the perfect man for your daughter, what would he be like? Describe him and list his characteristics.
b) Imagine your daughter at the age of forty. She is a proud, independent and successful Liberian woman. What does that mean? Describe her and list her characteristics.

When I presented the activity I was met with some furrowed brows, but not of anger. Rather, I sensed they were somewhat puzzled, but as they had just had a positive discussion, they were willing to see where I was leading them, and they obliged my request, although admittedly with a slight degree of scepticism. Participant groups first discussed these questions and recorded their answers on poster paper, then shared them with the plenary group. I then turned the discussion to what they, as teachers, could do to make this idealised future happen (thus going through a hybrid *Design-Delivery* phase). I framed it around the premise that perfect sons-in-law and successful daughters do not materialise from nothing, but must be brought up to be so, which at that point seemed to make remnant doubts evaporate. I asked participants: “What can we as teachers do to bring out the desired qualities in our students, and reinforce them?”. In groups, they discussed this with a certain degree of vigour, and wrote their answers on poster paper, which are described and analysed in the next chapter.

With this, the workshop wrapped up, and I then spent time thanking my hosts and participants, and issuing small transportation stipends. A few of the teachers lingered, and volunteered to be interviewed. With my first workshop successfully completed, I made my way back across Monrovia.

Workshop 2: Thursday, March 8th, Kids Foundation School, Slipway.

Nestled under a cliff between downtown Monrovia and the banks of the Measurado river, Slipway is the capital's second largest slum neighbourhood (after West Point) and, as its name implies, follows the road that once lead boats to launch. At about the middle point of that road, one finds Kids Foundation School. It is a small community school that has been set up by one of its residents to cater to the children of the neighbourhood. When I arrive at the school, near noon, it is still in session. The principal and founder met me outside, and asked me to wait until students are dismissed. He offered me a chair, and I sit on the concrete porch at the school entrance. While I wait, numerous neighbourhood children start to gather around and examine the foreigner waiting outside the school. These are children that are neither enrolled at Kids Foundation, nor even the overpopulated Slipway public school at the entrance to the neighbourhood, which the principal informs me has classes averaging over 150 students. Class sizes at Kids Foundation, by contrast, are limited to about forty or fifty. It is privately-run, and charges very low school fees in order to allow children to attend who would otherwise be out of school. The school itself is the lower floor of a community hall. Once the children are dismissed, I enter. It consists of one large room, in which classes are divided by makeshift dividers constructed of wooden poles, rope and tarpaulin. This, in effect, creates three separate "classes". On either side of the large room are smaller rooms that act as classes for the older grades. The school only offers primary education.

After a few minutes, six of the school's teachers – one for each grade – join me in the main classroom, and we arrange some of the students' desks in some form of circle and we begin the workshop. Again, I follow the same steps as in the first workshop. First, we began with the informed consent process, and again it is slower – or at least it seems to be slower – than I would have hoped, but after about twenty minutes all teachers were comfortable with the documents and had signed them, and then we moved on to the questionnaires, which they also duly completed. Following the questionnaire, we proceeded with the AI-structured discussion.

Once again in the Discovery phase, I opened by having teachers recall a time they were left happy and energised about their teaching. Using the think-pair-share format, I asked them to discuss a particular lesson they remember fondly, and to discuss with their partner what they believed they had done differently to elicit this experience. Participants then shared their answers in a plenary group discussion. I should note that both the owner/principal and his wife are also teachers in the school, and so were part of this small workshop. It is possible that their presence may have had a transformative effect on the answers of the other teachers. However, given the positive nature and tone of the conversations, such dynamics were not evident within the group, and the overall quality of the discussion, as well as the level of congeniality, were quite high. Again, the group dynamic was similar to that of the previous session, although, with a smaller group perhaps slightly more subdued. In the sharing segment, however, participants again seemed to take in the stories with a professional interest. Teachers seldom know what others are doing in their classrooms, so receiving insight on others' success stories can be a professionally rewarding experience.

Following the opening phase of the workshop, we moved on to the Dream-Design-Delivery segment. However, given the specific nature of this school and its place within a small, tightly-knit community, I opted to try a theme different from that of gender identity formation in the classrooms. Taking a cue from Cuyvers (2010), who applied AI to community-development initiatives, I changed the focus of inquiry from the classroom to the neighbourhood. My rationale was at least twofold. One, I hoped it might shed insight on how teachers view their role and responsibility beyond the classroom. What is the overlap between teacher, community member and responsible citizen? Does teacher, in this context, imply some form of community leadership [see, for example, Miller and Ramos (2002)]? Two, the change in question was also a methodological experiment. I was curious whether AI can be more conducive for conversations along certain thematic lines as opposed to others, or within certain contexts. As AI is a newer methodology, many questions remain about its long-term validity and applicability, and it is only through varying its usage can its usefulness and robustness be assessed.

Therefore, with these two factors in mind, the question I posed this group of teachers was: “Imagine Slipway in twenty or thirty years as an ideal community for you and your family to live in. Describe the Slipway you would like to see your children and grandchildren live in.” I divided the participants in two groups of three, and each wrote out lists of how they envisioned their community in a generation. From there, I facilitated a conversation whereby we first combined the two lists into one, and then proceeded to identify how they, as teachers in that community could contribute toward each desired outcome, and strengthen their community. The one peculiar interaction to note in this workshop was that one participant at one point insisted that I provide direction on what was needed for the community. He said that I should know as I was the one leading the workshop. Although I clarified the purpose of the workshop and my role within it, this interaction highlighted pre-conceived notions that at least one participant had about the directional flow of knowledge. That the knowledge rested within his school community was not immediately accepted as a premise.

Workshop 3: Friday, March 9th, New Hope Academy, Jacobtown.

Jacobtown is a growing suburb of Monrovia where even just ten years ago would have been little but wetland. One of its communities is Peace Island, located off of Somalia Drive, Monrovia's main artery north of the Measurado River, connecting Paynesville to the port. Peace Island is a community recently settled by Liberians from multiple counties, having migrated to the capital since the end of the war. As a result, it is ethnically and linguistically diverse, with both sizeable Christian and Muslim communities. The YBB centre itself, as described previously, is built next to the New Hope Academy, also run by the BFF, which is by far the largest structure in the community of Peace Island, and located at its geographical centre.

I arrived at the YBB centre shortly after noon, and began the arrangements for the workshop. The numerous chairs from the lecture series the week before had been replaced with large wooden tables, which I then arranged with the help of some New Hope Academy staff into a circle arrangement. Soon, teachers began to arrive, and by the time we began at 12:40, there were twenty-five participants congregated around the various large tables. This workshop proceeded much in the same way as the first one in Red Hill. The first fifty minutes were dedicated to the introduction of the study, followed by the completion of the consent forms and the questionnaires. The BFF also generously provided a lunch of rice and potato greens, two Liberian staples. After this meal, I led the participants through the 4D cycle of AI, opening with positive teaching experiences, and moving on to the activity on idealised futures for daughters and sons-in-law. Despite the larger group, the workshop ran remarkably smoothly, and by the end of the afternoon the participants went on their way. The dynamics were quite similar to those of the first workshop. If any scepticism arose regarding discussions of gender, they quickly made way to deep conversation. While some of the answers presented differed, they did not create division. Rather, as various groups presented ideas other groups had not, nods of agreement were common.

Interviews

Some of the participants from the workshop had volunteered to participate in interviews. As the other participants left, I was able to use the YBB hall to sit and converse with two teachers, one at a time, while the other one waited outside. With late afternoon sun washing into the hall, it was a relaxed and quiet atmosphere. I was able to place my digital audio recorder on the table between the interviewee and me, and I was able to hold the two interviews. In both cases the impression I had was that the interviewees were pleased to have someone hear their stories, but with the second interviewee it seemed he was just as interested in interviewing me on some of my views. Once I had completed my list of questions, I asked him if he had any for me. He did, and we continued conversing for a solid ten minutes. I had evidently made the man feel at ease, either through my own interview, or through the workshop, or perhaps a combination of both.

Workshop 4: Tuesday, March 13th, Pamela Kay School, Red Hill.

On the following Tuesday, I returned to Pamela Kay School for a second workshop. Again, this workshop had been arranged through the CPE. For this second workshop, however, and for reasons still unclear to me, they had only extended the invitation to CPE-affiliated teachers. This signified that there would only be six teachers at this workshop, as opposed the sixteen at the previous one in Red Hill. While it would have been preferred to have as many of the original participants take part in this second workshop, six was still a reasonable number. I arrived a bit early at the school as I had been in communication with some of the teacher-participants over telephone about the possibility of conducting interviews. By arriving early, I was able to schedule two interviews before the start of the workshop. With both interviewees, we sat in one of the empty classes with the commotion of the water-bottling plant in the background. Perhaps as both interviewed and interviewer were cognizant that the hour of the workshop approached, answers for some of the questions were a bit concise, although still sincere, and punctuated with laughter. Scheduling interviews against the clock is not something I repeated.

For the workshop, one advantage of a second-cycle in AI research is that the consent-related paperwork was already complete as was the questionnaire, so it was possible to jump right into the workshop, which we did. The format for this discussion was quite similar to the previous one; however, it was also its extension. As will be made clear in the next chapter, one of the common themes that had arisen in the conversation on gender roles, as well as its direct reference in the second research question, was the issue of teachers as "role models". While discussing the importance of promoting positive femininities and masculinities in the classroom, the notion of being a good role model had come up in both the first and third workshops, but what that actually meant had not yet been expounded. My own research objective for this second cycle of workshops thus became to understand how these participant teachers understood their role as role models.

Before continuing with my description of the third workshop, I must however take a moment to describe a very revelatory set of incidents that occurred in previous workshops. In my introduction to all groups of participants, I always made reference to the *Professional Standards for Teachers in Liberia* document from which I had drawn inspiration for my second research question. However, in all workshops, none, or at least very few, had ever seen or heard of this document. An unintended benefit of the workshops for the teachers was therefore to be acquainted with some of the policy regulations to which they were accountable. I therefore made an extra trip to the print shop to have extra copies made of the document, and ensured that all locations where I ran workshops had some on hand for future reference. It was thus within this framework of teachers-as-role-models that I delivered the second AI cycle workshops.

For the Discovery segment, I asked participants to "recall and share a specific example of when you feel you acted as a good role model, and as such helped a student become a better person." While still generating very rich and interesting answers, this question – perhaps because it is somewhat more abstract and less affect-rooted – did not seem to deliver the same emotional response as the original Discovery discussion on positive teaching. That being said, it did set a good tone and was closely linked thematically to the remainder of the three D's. After this Discovery opener, I then had the teachers do the following exercise, in order to further de-construct the notion of "role model". Drawing from data from previous workshops and interviews, I designed an activity that would help them elaborate on various elements of being a model of previously brought up roles, as well as discuss some related issues I chose stemming from theoretical construct.

In preparation for the workshop I had prepared five questions on poster-sized paper, and placed these at different points in the room, along with a couple of markers for each sheet. I then divided the teachers into three groups assigned each group to a poster. Every few minutes I had the groups rotate, so that those who had just answered the first question would move on to the second, the second to the third, and so on. Each pair would review the question and already-written answers and add to the list. We did this until all groups had seen all questions, thus generating five lists. The five questions were:

- *What can I do to better involve parents in my students' education?*
- *What are different methods I can use to help children/youth solve conflicts in a peaceful and constructive manner?*
- *How can I help my colleagues become better teachers?*
- *What are ways of showing to my students that I love them and care for them?*
- *What activities can I do that help students learn and practise good morals/values?*

After the lists were completed, as most participants had only seen snippets of each list, we went through them collectively. While perhaps not being an orthodox version of the Dream segment in the AI cycle, this activity certainly did fulfil the same purpose: it helped the participants describe an idealised set of interactions within and around their school communities, and delved into concrete means of achieving these stated ends.

The final exercise of this workshop targeted the Design phase. I asked the participants to draft lessons that focused on helping students build good morals/character, such as those drawn on the list, while at the same time promoting other elements of the curriculum. As an example, I presented a lesson idea to use with children that involves children going out and being challenged to each pick up 10 pieces of *dirt* (the Liberian English word for litter) around the school. Then once the dirt had been collected, students would be asked to sort it based on different properties, calculate what fraction each portion represents, etc... The math activity would then lead to discussions on the importance of keeping the community clean, the need to wash our hands after handling dirt, etc... The point I emphasised was that teaching things like caring for your community's cleanliness also invited many other curriculum-based elements. I challenged the teachers to develop their own.

The teachers worked in groups of three and, in about 20 minutes, (which was short, but time was pressing) produced two contrasting but interesting lesson plans that did in fact meet the desired goals. Each group shared their lesson with the other and they discussed the merits of each. For the Delivery segment, teachers were challenged to enact the plans within their own classroom. Following the workshop, I was able to conduct another three interviews. However, as Pamela Kay School is situated in a much busier and noisier setting than the YBB, conducting them here was a bit more difficult. That being said, the participating teachers were happy to oblige, and seemed keen to share their stories.

Workshop 5: March 23rd (AM), Scouts of Liberia Headquarters, Mamba Point

At the time of conducting this study, my wife was a sitting director for the board of directors of Girl Guides of Canada. As a side-project during my time in Monrovia, I established contact with both the Guides of Liberia and the Scouts of Liberia, to find out more about how those organisations had gone about re-building themselves following the civil war. I had the privilege of meeting and conversing with the Chief Commissioners of both organisations, as well as visiting their headquarters. It was during my meeting with the Chief Commissioner of the Scouts that he asked me if I would be open to holding a workshop for some of his leaders. Many, he said, were teachers, and all were educators, albeit in a non-formal schooling environment. I agreed.

The workshop was held on the morning of the 23rd at the Scouts headquarters. It is a long building, situated in a residential sector of Mamba Point, just a few blocks from downtown Monrovia. We had scheduled for it to begin at nine, so I was somewhat disconcerted when I showed up at quarter-to and there was no sign of activity at the Scout building. As nine-fifteen rolled around, I began to panic. Normally I would have been more relaxed about flexible schedules, but I also had another workshop scheduled that afternoon all the way across the city in Jacobtown. Finally, people began to show up and we were able to start the workshop shortly after nine-thirty. The workshop took place in the meeting room, which was mostly taken up by a very large table surrounded by chairs. It was an ideal setting for nine participants and a facilitator.

The workshop followed the same structure as all the others. It began with an introduction, a discussion around consent forms, and the filling out of questionnaires. However, by this time, I had developed a thorough-yet-streamlined approach, and the forms were explained and completed expeditiously. I varied the Discovery think-pair-share slightly, given the audience – not all were teachers, though educators – and asked participants to describe a positive learning experience from sometime over the course of their life – sometime they learned something and enjoyed doing it. It yielded interesting results, yet perhaps due to its relative vagueness or overly broad scope, it did not have the same emotional impact as the question regarding positive teaching experiences. We then went through the Dream-Design-Delivery activity on fostering positive gender identities but focused largely on being positive role models for boys, given the nature of the organisation. The dynamic in this group was interesting as it was obviously a group of individuals who collaborated often – as can be expected given their membership to the same organisation. What was interesting to watch was the that some of the stories being told were nonetheless new ones that colleagues had not heard, and full attention was given during group sharing discussions.

Workshop 6: March 23rd (PM), New Hope Academy, Jacobtown.

As soon as the workshop with the Scouts ended I gathered up my things, found a taxi and made my way across the city to Jacobtown. The YBB centre was unavailable that day, so we set up shop in one of the classrooms of New Hope Academy, directly next door. The classrooms there are slightly bigger than those at Pamela Kay, and have higher ceilings. With white-washed walls, they are much more open and bright, but the basic look of them is pretty much the same. For this workshop there were nine participants: five returning from the first workshop held at YBB, and four new teachers. The new arrivals had heard of the workshop from their employer, the Associate Dean of the Liberian Teacher's College who also owns his own private school. I had met with him a couple of days earlier – the details of which I will go into below – and when I explained my research to him, he said he would send some of his teachers to the next available workshop. For the four new initiates, I went over the terms of the study, and asked them to sign the consent forms, which was the most expeditious this process had been to-date. I then initiated the 4D cycle, using the same format as the second workshop at Pamela Kay.

Participants began by sharing stories of a time they had been good role models, and had had a positive impact on someone's life. Following this, I broke the participants up into small groups, and had them rotate and answer the questions on the poster papers I had prepared in advance. The one modification I made to the activity was to prepare seven questions instead of the original five. In this session, participants, in groups, took turns adding answers to the following questions:

1. *How can I better work with parents to improve my students' education?*
2. *How can I help my students to resolve their disagreements without violence?*
3. *What can I do to help my colleagues become better/more confident teachers?*
4. *What can I do to help my colleagues help me to become better/more confident teachers?*
5. *What can I do to help my students help me become a better/confident teacher?*
6. *What are some ways of showing my students that I love and care for them?*
7. *What are activities I can do with my students that help them learn and practise good morals?*

The variance in the number of questions has two reasons. In the first iteration of the activity, the third question was in two-parts, so I separated the two and gave them each their own sheet to answer (questions 3 and 4). The fifth question in this iteration was an extension of these two previous questions that asked teachers to consider the teacher-pupil relationship as inverted, and to reflect upon how they may learn from their students. As participants made their way from poster to poster, most groups would read the question, take a moment to read and ponder the existing answers, often accompanied by pointing to some of them and highlighting them to their partner, and then adding their own contributions. Naturally, as the activity progressed the reading of already written answers took up a larger share of the rotation time, although in a few instances groups had to be ushered along to the next poster as they had not yet come up with a contribution to the list, but wished to do so.

What is worth noting in this workshop was the transition in the demeanour of the newly-added participants. When they arrived, there was a certain shyness or hesitance about them. They had come at the behest of their employer, and likely had little advance knowledge. Yet, by the middle of the list-creation activity they had been fully integrated into the group. I cannot attribute this phenomenon to any single factor, but I imagine a combination of the open demeanour of returning participants and the level of trust built up in the group played a definite part.

The activity unfolded as planned, and the participants once again finished by developing lesson plans that incorporated both curriculum content and some of the values or actions brought out during the previous activity. Following the conclusion of the active section of the workshop, the four new participants kindly stayed longer to complete the questionnaire. While they were in the classroom doing this, I took the opportunity to conduct two interviews outside in the school courtyard. Upon handing in his questionnaire, one of the new participants asked if he might also be able to share his story by interview - a request to which I happily obliged, and listened to him calmly recount his harrowing path into becoming a teacher.

Workshop 7: March 26th, Prince of Wales School, ELWA Junction.

At the end of the second workshop in Jacobtown, one of the participants – and interviewees that day – told me his brother owned and ran a school near SKD stadium, in a neighbourhood known as ELWA Junction, so named for the road that connects to Tubman Boulevard, one of the capital's main arteries. He asked if there might be a possibility that I might put on a workshop for the teachers of that school, and for some from a neighbouring high school. It would be on Tuesday the 26th: the morning of the day I was flying home. Of course, I accepted the invitation.

I arrived at Prince of Wales School early in order to meet the principal, and prepare the necessary items for the workshop. Since there was some time, the principal gave me a quick tour of the school and grounds. Unlike Pamela Kay and New Hope, Prince of Wales was not built in a square compound format. The fields around the school were quite open. In fact, a large segment in the back of the property was dedicated to a garden, where bananas, potatoes and other staples were grown to feed both students and staff. The inside of the school itself was also different. While having smaller classes, which were also a bit darker, they were also very literacy-rich classrooms. All sorts of visual anchors and colourful posters adorned the classroom walls, and it made for very inviting classrooms.

The principal had asked me if I could centre the workshop around the topic of student-centred learning. In preparation for this, I had transcribed some key passages from the *Professional Standards for Teachers in*

Liberia document that referred to student-centred learning onto poster paper:

1. i) ...promote self-responsibility in learning

2. e) ...makes learning enjoyable and challenging

g) ...uses student-centred methods, extra-curricular activities, sport, play and drama to enhance better learning and child development.

h) ...is able to make learning relevant and meaningful to students and relate it to their everyday lives by using real-life stories, local examples, materials, aids and resources.

3. d) ...ensures active participation by all students in the class [through individual, pair and group work]

e) ...creates a positive atmosphere

5. a) ...contributes to the life of the community.

The workshop itself was held in a new building that was still in the process of being built. It was a long, roofed shell of a building, and the outlines of doors in the wall indicated that it would soon be home to at least three separate classrooms, once dividing walls were built. For the purposes of this workshop, however, it was open, airy, and ideal.

The teachers of Prince of Wales School were soon joined by teachers from the neighbouring high school. We began the workshop in regular fashion by covering the ethical guidelines, signing consent forms and completing the questionnaire. I then proceeded to ask participants to think, pair, and share a positive learning experience they recalled from their past. After this, given the specific nature of the workshop, I brought out the poster papers I had prepared on student-centred learning, and we discussed the meaning of each item, thereby offering an alternative twist on AI as a professional development methodology. While imagining an idealised future may be very effective and worthwhile, very often the idealised future may have to materialise within a given policy reality. Using policy guidelines as a starting point as we did here, and imagining their best possible manifestation, may be an interesting proposal for linking policy to practice.

From this common understanding of the policy guidelines on student-centred learning, I then asked participants to develop lesson plans for their own classes that would incorporate student-centred learning practices. These were developed, shared and discussed. By this time, I had to head back to my residence to pick up my luggage and head to the airport.

5.4 Additional Meetings, Interviews, & Research Activities

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, however, not all learning key to this study happened within the structured research activities. Some of the earlier key passive research moments have already been described above, such as the trip to Bentol, and the guest lecture by Rev. Bowier. In this section, I focus on other activities that filled the days between workshops.

Navigating the Ministry of Education (Various Dates)

In the core of Monrovia's downtown, on Broad Street between Mechelen and Randall streets sits the MoE building. The sidewalk in front of the building is packed with all manner of vendors: used books, photocopy-makers, drinks, cookies, electronics, newspapers and shoe-shiners. Combined with the noise and air pollution of the downtown traffic, it is a loud and busy atmosphere. The building itself has an open lobby through which many people shuffle to and from the stairs. On the multiple occasions that I had meetings, I would wait in this lobby, which is a bit more quiet, and I would read a newspaper, standing.

Once inside the building, few, if any, electrical lights are present, so there are many dark swaths of corridor that must be navigated. Along the wall, up one of the stairwells, there is usually a queue formed – although I never have the opportunity to find out what for. One of the cultural means of navigating through the bureaucracy, I quickly discovered, is through personal referrals. On at least two occasions, I was able to daisy-chain one meeting after another by having the person with whom I had just spoken bring me to another colleague's office and introduce me to them. I must say that I was overwhelmed by how welcome I was, and how the various MoE staff members made time to answer my questions, or to provide me with the documentation I was seeking. One of the meetings which had taken me some time to arrange, but finally proved to be fruitful was with the President of the National Teachers' Association of Liberia (NTAL), Ellie Varfley. During my meeting with her, I was able to receive vital information on the state of the teaching profession, in particular on trends in recruitment and retention, as presented in Chapter 3. It also shed light on the relationship between NTAL and the Johnson Sirleaf Government.

Returning to the emic-etic discussion of the previous chapter, I believe this was a situation where clearly being an outsider gave me added traction in my pursuits. I am quite certain that I would not be able to schedule a meeting with Ontario's Associate Minister for Education on short notice, and have them pull out their cell phone at the end of the meeting to give me phone numbers from their personal contacts. The deference I was given – which was undue, I truly believe, but certainly welcome – was humbling. As a foreign Caucasian researcher, I believe I was allowed privileged access, although it is difficult to ascertain the reasons or motivations of others, which I am sure varied. What was clear was that I was in a privileged position, and I did certainly take advantage of fortuitous situations to advance my study – although this should not be misconstrued as taking advantage of individuals. Sometimes, my ease of access even left me bewildered[29]. By its very nature, Liberia is a complex country in terms of race and culture. Recognising the advantage one might have is important, as is the obligation to not abuse such circumstances, but perhaps just as importantly for the researcher not to assume to know the motivations guiding the treatment by others. To make such assumptions that 'I am being treated in *x* manner because I have *y* trait' will most likely be both reductionist and wrong. What I learned was simply to be graceful, and to focus on my own research, and if I were able to reciprocate hospitality received, to do so.

Building a Network

By milling about the MoE on several occasions, meeting many different people, and experiencing the physical surroundings in which they work, it helped me develop a sense of the corporate culture that governs public education in Liberia, even with the limited exposure. Moreover, it was also an excellent exercise in network building. A very common phrase to hear during meetings was: "You should talk to...". I would then be given names and numbers to call, if not be introduced directly. One lesson I quickly learned was to not be timid. As soon as I was able, I would follow up and either call or send an SMS text message – a very common means of communication – to the new contact introducing myself, indicating from whom I had received their name and contact details, and then hopefully setting up an appointment to meet.

While fruitful, this was also a time-consuming venture. Replies, understandably, often took time, and then when communication was established it might be a few days before openings in schedules would coincide. I also tried not to book too many meetings in a day – two or three at most – as there always seemed to be many variables, such as other meetings and traffic, which meant I had to build a significant buffer between appointments in order to avoid accidental overlap. The result was much time spent waiting. That being said, my network within the city seemed to build exponentially, and during the last two weeks I was becoming busy with meetings, on top of workshops.

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[29] One such occasion occurred during my initial fact-finding mission in 2011. My Canadian guest-house flatmate and I were trying to simply find a city map of Monrovia. On our way back from downtown to Paynesville, we were passing by the Ministry of Tourism building. We entered, hoping there might be a map to be had, and within ten minutes we were being ushered in a deputy minister's office to be met. Although we never did get a map, we were given a warm reception and were able to have many questions answered.

One such meeting was with the Associate Dean of the Teachers College. Through a contact at the MoE, I had received his name and contact information. After some back and forth, I was able to meet with him at his office at the University of Liberia campus. As we sat down to talk, I quickly found him to be a gold mine of information. He was quite interested in my research, and was keen to have pre-service teachers from the college take part as participants. However, this meeting between us was taking place on the afternoon of Wednesday March 20th, which was six days before I left, including a weekend, and I already had two workshops booked on the Friday. Wednesday was too short notice, and we tried for perhaps Thursday, but there was the additional hurdle that the students were currently scattered as the College itself was in the process of switching campi, from the University of Liberia Campus in Monrovia to a new campus about a half-hour outside the city on the road to Kakata. Had I been in country even two more days, it would have been possible to hold an additional workshop for pre-service teachers, and give an added layer of depth to the study. However, in this case, time was not on my side.

A Tale of Two Interviews – March 17th & 18th

For reasons of efficiency I tried to pair up interviews with workshops by holding them either before or after those events. In some instances, however, this was not always possible, so I tried to arrange an alternate time to meet the interested participants and hold the interview at a time and place convenient for them.

In one instance, a teacher from Slipway indicated that he would like to give an interview, but that he had other obligations after the workshop. I therefore agreed to meet him on March 17th at the school in Slipway, for which he arranged to have the key. We settled in, began the interview, and after a few minutes he began to relax. Even reviewing the transcript later on, the answers given become much less formulaic, and the conversation takes on a more natural feel. It actually turned out to be the longest of the interviews. Having it occur in a different time and place seems to have allowed the interview to be its own thing, and was highly productive. As a burgeoning researcher, this was an important lesson to learn: by separating data collecting methods, they may individually yield more, or more interesting data.

However, this process also led me to another lesson to be learned. The next day, I had scheduled with another teacher to meet and hold an interview with her, this time in Red Hill. In the early afternoon, I hopped into a taxi and travelled from my accommodations in Old Road to Red Hill. As Sunday traffic is very light, even by my standards I was early. I made it to the gate of the Pamela Kay compound, and knocked. There was no answer. I sent a text to the participant to inform her that I had arrived, and that I was waiting. And I waited. Some half hour after the stated meeting time I tried calling her, but the phone was turned off. Perhaps, I thought, church had run late. All this time, the family that ran a small soda-pop kiosk opposite the school and had seen me before, seemed to begin to wonder what I was doing there. As did the dozens of families who walked past me on their way home from church in their Sunday best. I waited for two hours. Each new family I saw coming my way gave me hope that it might mean my participant was coming. She never did. I tried following up with phone calls. I was never able to reach her. This expedition to Red Hill had cost me a return fare across town and a fruitless afternoon. That being said, it also taught me that as with any set of appointments, there can be no-shows, and we have to adjust accordingly. Perhaps the lesson is that researchers need a day of rest, too.

Talk Radio – March 19th

On the morning of the 19th, I received a call from the director of the BFF who was wondering if I would be available to join him that afternoon to partake in a talk radio phone-in show called "Afternoon Conversation". One of the rules I had learned as a Rotary Exchange Student in Argentina was "never refuse an invitation", so, once again, I arranged to meet for another unscheduled but welcome stop in my study. I met the director in Sinkor, at a Chinese restaurant, which was across the street from the radio station, and also had air conditioning. When he met me we went across the street and settled into the radio booth.

The theme of the programme that day was the state of the nation's education, and the director of the BFF was invited to speak on behalf of private educational delivery. It was very edifying to hear his perspective. He argued that while the government did not currently have the capacity to ensure its commitment to universal enrolment, it fell upon the private sector to pick up the slack and provide schooling opportunities for those unable to access the limited public system. However, he argued two points. The first was that not all private delivery was equal, and it still fell upon the State to ensure that privately-run schools met minimum quality standards. The second argument he made, which I found very innovative, was that as it becomes able to do so, the State could begin to insert government-trained and paid teachers into the private schools until they essentially become public schools. It would be a private-to-public transition rather than the more traditional or common public-private partnership.

The host then invited me to describe a bit of the research I was conducting in Monrovia, which I did, and then he opened up the phone lines. Most of the callers had questions or comments for the director of the BFF, but of note was that two separate callers were interested in knowing if I was going to be able to take my workshops out into the counties. While I explained that I was unable due to resource constraints, the point I understood from the callers was that professional development opportunities, and by inference the quality of education in general, were much lower once you left the capital. Other topics raised by callers included the proliferation of private schools, their low standards, and their inability to even cover the basic curriculum. Moreover, given that the majority of schools were private, not public, schooling, argued one caller, was too expensive for most Liberians.

While a deviation from my research plan, this experience again helped shed insight into how Liberians experience their nation's educational system, or, as some insinuated, lack thereof. An hour spent in a radio booth helped add yet another nuanced layer of context to the overall study. More broadly, though, these short vignettes all help paint a larger picture of a living city with many facets to which teachers are all connected. Just as education, or even schooling does not happen in a vacuum, so too do teachers live with one foot in the classroom and one foot in the world at large. The more I reflect upon it, the more it strikes me that in order to understand the teacher; one cannot only look at one shoe. The experiential researcher views shoes as a pair, and can only make sense of what takes place in the classroom if he or she understands what happens outside it. While active research is essential, it lacks full meaning unless accompanied by reflection-infused passive experiential research.

In all, the five weeks spent in the Monrovia area generated a tremendous amount of data, both through structured participatory activities, such as the workshops, and through an immersion in the local culture, and daily interactions. As a whole the process reinforced one of the key lessons drawn in the second chapter: that of critical reflection. While it might be easy to treat each method and each data collection event as its own finite occurrence, the richness of research as a learning experience lies in constantly trying to connect all the events together. As workshops and interviews progressed, it was necessary that they also evolve. Critical reflection upon the research process is a catalyst for adaptation, and adaptability invariably leads to more meaningful experiences for research participants, thereby also strengthening the core validity of the entire process. Reflection upon process and findings is also what generates new knowledge and tests theory.

In the next two chapters, I proceed to this very task, analysing and de-constructing the collected data, filtering them through the analytical lenses carefully crafted in the first three chapters of this work, and contextualised by the narrative description provided here. I begin in Chapter Six with the questionnaire and interview data, and then turn my attention to the AI workshop data in Chapter Seven, concluding with recommendations and implications in the final chapter.

Chapter Six

Findings 1: Analysis & Interpretation of Questionnaire and Interview Data

Having constructed a complex theoretical frame, and described at length the data collection process, I now move to present the study's findings. While there are three distinct data sets, their creation was much more fluid. To facilitate analysis and interpretation, I have separated them into two chapters. In this chapter, I examine the data collected first from the written questionnaires, and then de-construct the data stemming from the interviews. Presenting these first will also help better understand workshop data analysed in the penultimate chapter. With the questionnaire and interview data, I hope to deepen my understanding of teachers' self-perceptions as role-models and as actors within the overall peace process.

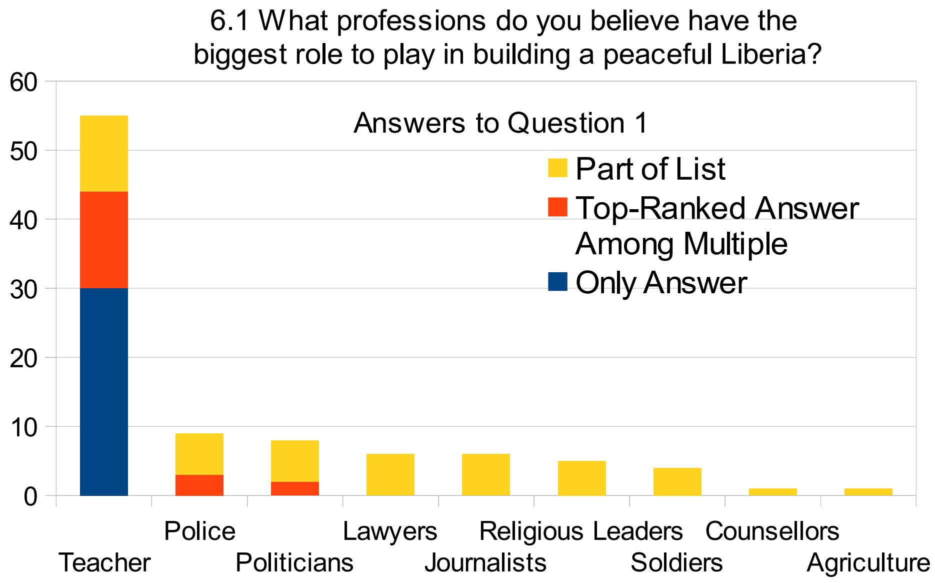
6.1 Questionnaire Findings

The questionnaire was anonymously completed by 72 participants. As described in Chapter Five, it was composed of four questions. In this section, I go over the results of each question individually, first presenting a more general synopsis of the answers given, followed by a description of themes found in the data. Given how the participant base was selected through targeted convenience, as well as snowball effect, any quantitative analysis given here is strictly as it relates to the data collected, and I do not purport it to be statistically representative of the larger Liberian teacher corps. Even so, quantitative analysis of the questionnaire data does offer an efficient way of identifying, *prima facie*, significant trends in the data. I should again note that I deliberately had study participants complete the questionnaires as the first activity of the study, immediately following the introduction and signing of informed consent forms. My intent was that by doing so it would allow me to capture participants' views before their participation in the workshops, which might alter their perspectives or influence their answers.

On a general level, one interesting point the questionnaires revealed was the broad range in ability or willingness to write. By examining the length of answers, and the language used, it is evident that some participants were very at ease with the written format, while the tool was less suited for others (I provide examples of both thorough and sparse completed questionnaires in Annex D*)*. In this case, the sacrifice in quality of language would be a fair trade-off for the anonymity provided by the questionnaire, but in other circumstances, relying on other non-written methods might be more advantageous.

Question 1

The first question asked participants to list and explain which professions they believe had the biggest role to play in building Liberia's peace. Of the 72 completed questionnaires, the overwhelming answer to this question was "teachers". Some fifty-five respondents cited the teaching profession as fundamental to peace. Of these fifty-five, thirty listed only "teachers" as an answer, and fourteen, while including other professions in their answer, still ranked teachers as foremost in importance. Amongst the other professions cited, the most common were the police, with nine references, including thrice at the top of respondents' lists; politicians, referred to eight times, including, twice as top answers; lawyers and journalists each were selected six times; religious leaders five times; soldiers four, though always as part of lists, and never cited as the most important; and counsellors and "agriculture" each receiving a mention. The only two professions, aside from "teacher" to be listed as stand-alone answers were "journalist" and "politician".


6.1 What professions do you believe have the biggest role to play in building a peaceful Liberia?

Themes

a. Teachers

While there was overwhelming agreement by respondents on the importance of teachers as professionals involved in building peace in Liberia, there was also a variance in explaining why. As the questions were relatively open, respondents were free to answer as they saw fit. Yet, despite this, certain themes emerged within the various answers.

The largest grouping of answers fell into a more generic camp which saw teachers as inherently good because they educate, which in and of itself was presented as positive. Teachers "*moulding minds*" was a common saying, as was having "*impact*" and giving knowledge. While significant in their numbers, and attributing significance to the role of teachers, these answers did not provide evidence of deeper reflection on the nature of that role beyond that of being agents in education. Whilst reflecting a sense of agency as a virtue of their role as teachers, it does not necessarily imply personal agency is promoting peace. The second most prominent among emerging themes was that of the foundational role of teachers, meaning that the other professions require teachers for their existence. Teachers, a dozen respondents argued, provide the foundation upon which all other peace-building professions build, and from which they come. In the words of one respondent: "Teaching profession has the biggest role because doctors, lawyers, police, soldiers, politicians, even the statemen's professions are been taught by teachers." Again, what power teachers seem to demonstrate is in helping students fit into existing roles, but not necessarily challenging existing norms.

While perhaps one of the most explicit, other respondents answered in a similar vein, and with more direct links to the process of peacebuilding:

> Teachers are the foundation in stabilization of any nation. They are also resoviours [sic] of knowledge that will prepare students for a peaceful society. Therefore, when teachers are poorly prepared, he/she damages the very foundation for peacebuilding.[30]

Most interesting is the added notion that quality in teaching does factor into the relationship between peace and education, as well as conduits for knowledge and narrative. What can be insinuated from this respondent's perspective is that the teacher is not necessarily a benign being. Poor teaching may have a detrimental or adverse role to play in the peace process. This line of thinking was reflected by a few of the respondents, most of whose answers also fell in the "foundational" theme, and could be classified as a parallel or sub-theme of "teachers as role models". The answers that fall into this category were those which placed an emphasis on the behaviour of the teachers – that is to say that the value of teachers in building peace rests not in who they are but rather what they do:

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[30] Quotations in this section were collected anonymously.

> If you look at the definition of a teacher, is someone who guide, nurture and train people in various skills or professions. So if the peace process begins in classroom, with the involvement of teacher, it will be very easy to get the message across.
>
> If teachers are peaceful in their profession, people (learners) that learn from them will also be peaceful. Remember that impression without expression cause depression. That is you give out what you learned. And if the teachers are peaceful, they will teach learners to be peaceful.

At least one teacher attributed the power of teachers-as-role-models by the intimacy of the student-teacher relationship: "Teachers are the second immediate guardians of the children that goes to school". This sentiment was echoed and extended by another respondent who argued that teachers' influence stems partly from their ubiquity, and their social standing. “They” this respondent stated, referring to teachers, “are the ones that meet children from all walks of life. (2) Children build their confidence – their teachers. (3) Teachers are role model to the children. (4) Teachers meet children parents and have influence on parents.”

A consciousness is evident, at least among some teachers, of their real and potential agency in the peace process, especially where it comes to serving as role-models for up and coming leaders in all professions, as well as on the parents of children. This foundational theme implies that quality education is essential for higher quality services from all professions, but also requires quality and mindful action by teachers themselves. There is an understanding, at least intuitively, that peace is something that is practised, and that is learned. However, while this view is found amongst participating teachers, as indicated by their answers, they also seem to represent a minority, at least in expressing this sentiment.

That being said, a second parallel theme in about ten respondents' answers revealed a view of teachers as professors of peace – that is to say as individuals who share peace as something that is “known”, but not necessarily “done”. Within this sub-set of answers, the governing idea was that an educated mind is a peaceful mind, or that war and ignorance were intimately connected; it accepts given norms and knowledge passively. As purported by the respondents' answers, there is a linear correlation between education and peace, and thus more education must, by definition, equate more peace, seemingly independent of the content of the education. Again, this accepts the role of teacher as a beneficial conduit for knowledge within a wider network. This differs from the role-model view, in which teachers are agents in a transformational process linked to unwanted behaviour. The teacher's role is that of positive example for change. The views expressed in the education-as-a-path-to-peace (E2P) theme, on the other hand, would seem to hold the view of the teacher's role as one of filling a void; education is not a process of transformation, but rather one of instruction: "I believe teaching profession has biggest role to play in building a peaceful Liberia because when you are educated you always think positively, you can't even dream of destruction."

> To begin with, I must be frank and open that the teaching profession is a noble profession I do believe have the biggest role to play in building a peaceful Liberia. Reasons is that if a nation refused to educate it's people that nation is bound to fall; why? Because that nation people lacks knowledge and understanding. So the people of any nation that lacks knowledge will perish. Knowledge is power.
>
> I do believe that no community can be developed in the absent of peace and the only ways people understand the concept of peace building is through education. The three basic core values of development: Sustaining self-esteem and freedom from servitude can be buttressed by peaceful atmosphere. People must know the importance of peacebuilding through the classroom so that they can inculcate that with the community people.

The nuance is that these answers reflect more of a broadcasting model of education than an edifying model, yet at the same time also fit in with this work's theoretical construct, particularly as outlined in this response: "[...]because after war people people need to be educated so as to understand how to live as brothers and sisters within their country". In order to practice peace, people in a society need to know more options beyond violence when faced with conflict, and must prefer to choose those non-violent options. The relationship between the "E2P" and general "foundational" answers, and the "role-model" answers is therefore one that might be best understood as being on a continuum; increased knowledge leads to increased choices, which should hopefully lead to changes in behaviour. It is the role of teachers as role-models, however, that is the crucial bridging element between having options and choosing them. Those teachers who view peace as something that is known can therefore be encouraged and trained to move up the spectrum to understand and "do" peace as an active practice.

Before moving on to respondents' views on other professions, I must also highlight one outlier in their view of teachers' role, where they related the role of the teacher to the specific subject of history:

> The teaching profession has the biggest role in building peaceful Liberia. According to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's, TRC, report about root cause of the Liberian civil conflict, it traced the cause to the history and the founding of the modern state of Liberia. The TRC recommends the rewriting of the Liberian history and be taught in all schools. I believe with this recommendation teachers can be the best agents of change in the enlightenment of the minds of young ones in class and in community.

This answer is of interest because it seems to be the only one that reflects the role envisioned by Murphy and Gallagher (2009) mentioned in Chapter 3. It touches upon another important element flagged in the opening chapter as crucial for peace: the overall narrative. If Liberians are to undergo the process of humanising those vilified in the past, then the potential of teachers in helping create a new narrative that supports mutual trust and caring among citizens of various political leanings and ethnic affiliations is one that warrants future investigation.

b. Politicians

Second in frequency, "politicians" as an important profession in building Liberia's peace also presented an interesting phenomenon. It was the only profession to also be cited as being detrimental to peace: "But the politician do not help the people, but create problem by means of lieing to people." Politicians were seen to have a role in their ability to exercise power, which might then be either positive or negative, particularly in creating cultures of corruption. To wit:

> I think politician have the biggest role to play in building a peaceful Liberia because they have influence on the citizen of Liberia either to use their tactics, tip or influence to convince people to either remain peaceful or bring or cause violence. Liberia is a poor country so people may easily be influenced by money.

Thus, while highlighted by respondents, it was done so with trepidation. While politicians wield the potential to play an important role, their ability or willingness to exert this potential did not seem to be a certainty by respondents. This is interesting as it reflects questioning of certain key roles – or at least the individuals occupying those roles – linked closely with the state within the overall narrative.

c. Police Officers and Soldiers

Given the discussion in the first chapter on the primacy given by IR literature to the security sector in the process of building peace, I kept a keen eye on how respondents in this study might view the role of security sector professions, if any, within their country's peace-building process. Any answers that related to security sector professions I coded as “SSR” (security sector reform), and of the 72 respondents, ten made some mention. One respondent discussed the role of security in general - “I think the best way of a lasting peace in Liberia is first to have a good security system set up and after a good educational system, with this believe I think Liberia as a Nation can have a lasting peace.” - while the other answers mentioned “police officers” and/or “soldiers” as professions with a role to play. Of those two professions, “police officers” figured much more prominently. Only four mentions were made of soldiers, and then only as inclusions in lists. The only descriptive explanation of the role of soldiers in building peace was found in the following list:

> (1) Lawyer – making good judgement (2) Journalist – broadcasting peace messages (3) Teacher – Teach the importance of peace (4) Police officer – settle argument in a peaceful manner (5) Soldier – Help to keep the peace by protecting it citizens (6) Politician – dialogue with each other in finding positive answer to solve problem.

The role of police officer appears twice as often as soldier, and is placed at the top spot of lists on three occasions. However, as with politicians, the role of police officer also seems linked, at least by one respondent, to corruption: “The police take care of us, police officers are good to building peace but if you not have money, you can't build easily.” However, an alternative interpretation might be that the clauses of police and requiring money are grammatically linked, but were conceptually different in the writer's mind. In this second case, then, what the respondent argues is that on the one hand, police officers are good agents in building peace, but that wholesale peace also requires economic development. In either case, this statement, along with most others regarding security sector professions alludes to a more negative view of peace, namely safety from violence. One particular comment, however, did place “police” and “soldier” at equal footing with “teacher” by stating that “[o]f all the listed professions, I believe that teachers, police officers and soldiers have the biggest role in peace building process. The reason is very simple. The listed professions deal with changing an individual totally from bad to good." Unfortunately, there is no elaboration on how this change takes place, and the contribution played by each profession, yet at the same time, it links peace to behaviour, a sine qua non outlined in the first chapter.

Beyond a few additional outliers – doctor, engineer, agriculture, "Love and unity among Liberian citizens", and "team working" - it would seem that with a variety of explanations as to why, a large majority of respondents concurred that "teachers" were the most important profession in the peacebuilding process in Liberia. Given the large margin by which they chose this profession it is clear that at least they view a role for themselves as agents for peace in their country. However, it is also worth considering different reasons which may have affected their choice of teacher over other professions.

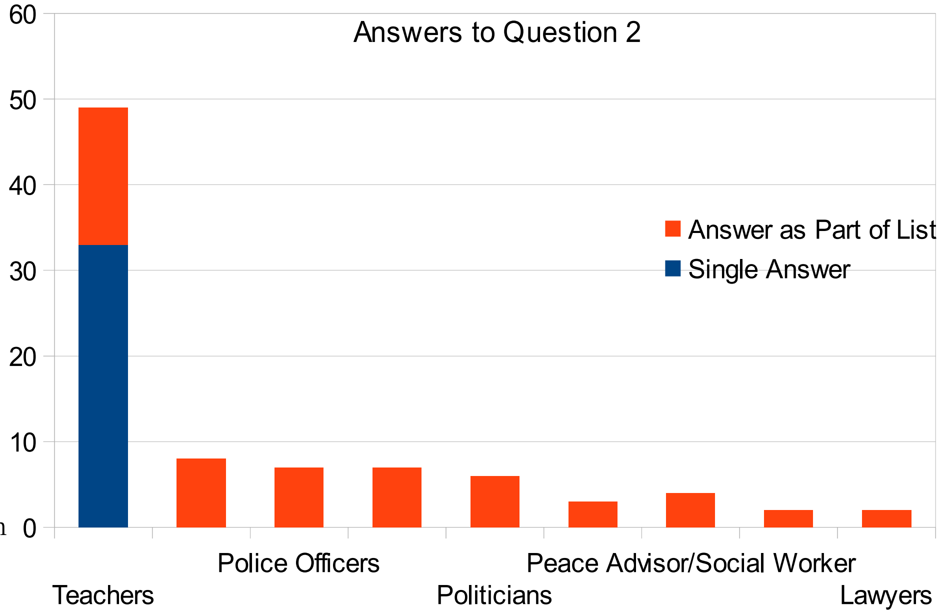
The first is simply that as teachers, there is an increased likelihood that they will give a heightened importance to their own career path. This is only natural to view value in one's own position and efforts, and as such creates a bias toward selecting "teacher" as an answer. Perhaps future research could help better narrow this bias by having teachers rank various professions, and explain their reasoning, en lieu of the more open questions posed in this questionnaire. Another avenue of inquiry could be to administer the same questionnaire to targeted groups of other professions. Would seventy lawyers view their own profession as the most important? Or seventy journalists? Or engineers? The data gathered only from this first question already leads us to new paths of research.

However, as with any other descriptor, "teacher" is only one of many held by the respondents themselves. Their identities are much more layered and complex than merely their profession. Therefore, it is incumbent to seek alternative explanations for the preponderance of participants selecting "teachers". One speculation I make is that contrary to those outsiders involved in peacekeeping policy and research, or in the peacevelopment industry, Liberians themselves may have a longer-term view of peacebuilding as a process. Consequently, the time-scale consideration involved in their answering the question is much longer-term than that considered in the IR literature. The foundational view of teachers as being responsible for the re-building of all other professions would seem to corroborate this theory. Peacebuilding is a multi-generational process and teachers are a conduit of continuity in that process, with their role evolving as it unfolds. A fair number of respondents, it would seem, have taken the long-view of peace. Where future inquiry might be interesting would be to see if teachers problematise the roles as they currently exist, or how they have existed in the past. If teachers view their role as foundational, how might they seek to transform existing social roles for the future?

Question 2

The second question asked essentially the same as the first, but at the community level, linking macro-level concepts of peace with the micro-level. Given the theoretical construct of these two elements being different ends of a spectrum, it is essential to investigate both ends. As with the first question, the majority of respondents gave "teacher" as their primary answer, although this majority was slightly slimmer, with forty-nine respondents giving that answer, of which thirty-three included no other profession. The difference is made up by a broader list of alternate professions. Common to the first question, police officers (seven), politicians (six) and religious leaders (eight) are listed again, but, significantly, new professions also appear: community leaders (seven), doctors are identified by three, and a related set of professions – peace advisor, peer-mediator, social worker, and counsellor – were chosen by four respondents, and "parents" were selected by two respondents. Notably, lawyers only received two mentions as being significant for peace at the community level, and soldiers received no direct mention, although one mention is made of the SSR programme, and in relation to schooling:

6.2 What professions do you believe have the biggest role to play in building peaceful communities?



> It is important to note that after the war, the government sponsored the SSR program which was intended to bring back school dropped out into the classroom. This program made our communities crime free.

Themes

While once again respondents selected “teachers” as the most important profession for peace – this time at a community level – the reasoning behind the answers and the descriptions of the possible roles is quite different from the answers given in Question One.

a. Relationships with children

To begin, the most significant theme in the first question, that of teachers as being the foundation of other professions, almost disappears completely. In the second question, only two respondents' answers describe teachers' role in this light. What emerged in answers, however, was an accrued importance placed on the relationship between teachers and students. Where the mention of students or children was quite sparse in the first question, more than one in five of teacher-related answers viewed the teacher-child relationship as crucial to teachers' role in building peaceful communities, although the descriptions vary. In one instance, the respondent distinguished teachers from other professions when dealing with children as they are deemed to have a specialised set of skills:

> A teacher can also play this role because he/she is capable of telling a child the importance of education and respect for their community even though people from other areas of occupation can make an impact to life of the youth and elders but a teacher will be able to do more because he knows how to convince people.

As this response entails teachers can hold a privileged position in working with children for future benefit. This notion seemed to be the preoccupation of two other respondents, whose answers also elucidate on peace as being a longer-term goals: “ if our boys or girls are not educated or taught, the community as a whole will have problems” but which faces difficulties due to demographic pressures: “85% of the dweller[31] are student”.

While the actual statistic might warrant questioning, what is clear from these answers is that at some teachers are mindful of the demographic youth bulge faced by Liberia as they see it everyday. They live in communities filled with youth and children, and they see the difference first-hand between children fortunate to go to school, and those without access to such opportunities or structure. The shift in themes within the responses, I speculate, can in part be explained by the tangible nature of peace within a community as opposed to a more abstract notion of it at the national level.

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[31] Liberian English term for *resident*.

b. Leadership

It is also perhaps why parents suddenly figure within the responses, as do teachers' relationships with them. Again, given that the community is a more tangible context than the country as a whole this second question seems to have pushed respondents to examine the concrete role teachers can play a bit more closely. Consequently, what starts to emerge are the position and role of teachers within the community. One such role is to work with parents to ensure that children are enrolled in, and attend school. As one respondent explained: "I believe the role of community is to unite [. T]eachers still play a role of communities by telling the members to sent there children to school." This comment touches upon a much larger theme that emerged in this second question. Teachers, according to several respondents, have a role to play in community leadership, echoing what Miller and Ramos (2002) saw in their work in Bolivia. Teachers' position as educated citizens gives them a certain cachet and due respect within their communities, and even more so outside Monrovia. As explained by two separate respondents:

> Because it is through teaching other people in the community that people are able to live peacefully among one another. For example in rural Liberia, a teacher serve as judge between students/pupil in parent, secretary for towns/villages where they are assign and also serve as role model for children to follow.

> [T]he community also depends on the teachers. For example, in the interior parents take complains to the teacher in order for the teacher to discipline their children. Parents feel that teachers know everything, likewise the students. They sole believe in their teachers than their parents.

The implications of such a position are profound. The most difficult-to-reach teachers in the country are also those who might have the ability to affect the deepest change, given their privileged social position. While this particular study was unable to make it out to rural areas, this finding would warrant future investigation. The role of 'teacher' seems to be one that is highly regarded, and is given a great position in the legitimising of knowledge, and this presents an important potential in policy-making options. To what extent do rural teachers hold such sway within their communities? Do they recognise it? To what extent do they leverage this position to promote the development of cultures of peace within their community? Conversely, what is the level of community leadership available to teachers in more urban environment? In contexts where more residents are educated, does the teacher have the same level of influence and/or respect?

Part of the answer to this last question rests in other answers provided. More prominent not just in number but in depth of explanation, is the peacebuilding role of religious leaders, as well as community leaders and elders, partly because they have a "majority of followers", or networks of influence. Given this position, one respondent highlighted the need of religious leaders in particular to act as positive role-models:

> In my mind, religious leaders are the light and need to shine that others may follow. If religious leaders are involved with violence, and practices that are unhealthy for our society or communities. Then we will experience lack of unity in the communities which will end up being chaotic.

Overall, eighteen responses dealt directly with leadership in one shape or another as being essential for peace in the community. There also seemed to be a distinction between politicians and leaders. The latter were described favourably with terms such as "community leaders", "Elders" or "counsellors", and were associated with "traditional methods" (i.e. Palava-hut discussion). On the other hand, politicians, when described, are done so in an ambivalent or cautiously measured manner:

> From the onset of things, politicians have succeeded in dividing people in the various Liberian communities. They have the biggest role to play in community because either they were once teachers or have been molded by teachers. The struggle to get public offices has no boundary by the politician here. They use divisive languages and misinterpret historical facts and people with fallacies. So, to have a peaceful community, they should play vital role as stakeholders because of either their political powers or moral powers.

In this comment, the politician is described as a potentially important player for peace, but also a potential obstacle. Most importantly, the politician is still viewed as exercising the true power of shaping narratives – including the use of 'divisive language'. They are portrayed here as successful fabricators or manipulators of knowledge. Yet, one of the variables, to understand the inference made by the respondent, is that the quality of politicians relies upon the quality of teachers – that teachers are responsible for the moral rectitude of the political class. The conclusion to be drawn, then, is that leadership begins with leadership demonstrated by teachers, and the question begged is how best to help teachers succeed in this task. This lies at the heart of this study: teachers, through action, shape how their students will behave in the future.

c. Police officer

To continue on my targeted analysis of responses as they relate to the security sector, it is important to underline two items for this second question. One, as mentioned above, the “soldier” as a profession does not figure in any answer for peaceful communities. My own experience working with peacekeepers makes me wonder to what extent UN soldiers have any presence or visibility within communities, or to what extent they are seen to be effective agents of peace. On the other hand, if the term soldier was only applied in respondents' minds to soldiers of their own country's armed forces, their absence from discussions on peace within communities might be understandable.

The second, more interesting trend, however, is the specifying of the role of police officers in building peace. While the number of references to police is roughly the same as in the first question, what stands out are the numerous descriptions of police as conflict mediators, such as: “In my own community I believe that the police officer will have the biggest role to play in building peaceful communities. Because in case of some conflict the officer will be able to handle that case” or “The police officer – peace builder b/w two or more persons” amongst others. Without knowing if the police referred to here are UN police, members of UNMIL, or Liberian police, or a combination of both, it is encouraging to see that police officers are seen to be contributing positively to resolving conflicts within communities through action. This differs from the view of teachers who 'tell' about peace, or bring it about indirectly through the act of education. Helping teachers view themselves as having the same agency as police in matters of conflict resolution, or being their partners in a community could go a long way in helping transform the profession. One avenue for future inquiry might then be to what extent police officers and teachers can work together in increasing the knowledge and adoption of alternate conflict-resolution practices.

d. Outliers

Outside of the large categories, a few other answers warrant highlighting, the first being doctors. It is interesting as at least three respondents view a direct link between health and peace, one of whom saw a lack of doctors within her/his community as a key obstacle to peace. What intrigues me about this notion is that the delineation of knowledges upon which the academe is structured, as are policy circles for that fact, would most likely never associate peace policy and health policy together, keeping them quite separate. However, in an understanding of peace in which one is free from violence, or early death, and one in which one is able to pursue economic and educational opportunities, none is feasible in a sick body. That three separate teachers view doctors as essential to peace leaves me to consider how holistic and multidisciplinary the research of peace really ought to be.

A second set of outlying responses were curious because en lieu of professions the respondents offered behaviours as key to promoting peace in their communities. "We need to be an example in a good community" said one, while others promoted cooperation, sharing love, and respect. The understanding of peace reflected in these responses is that peace is a collective endeavour, not necessarily reliant upon certain professions, but by the actions of constituent members of a community. "In my communities we must all come together as to understand what best to meet our needs."

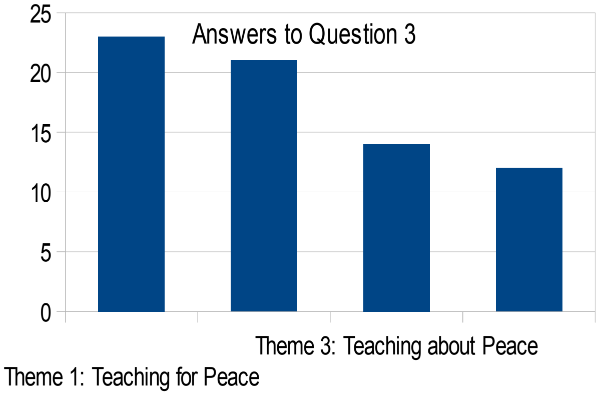
Comparing Questions 1 and 2

The contrast between the responses provided for the first and second answers is very revealing. In previous chapters, I had explained the rationale that, given my theoretical concept that large-scale cultures of peace are an amalgam of countless small patterns of behaviour, I was interested, through the juxtaposition of questions regarding peace at community- and country-levels to see whether the concept of peace has fluctuating or different meanings for the participants, and whether there is variability in their perceptions of the role of teacher as either macro- or micro-level actors. Clearly it has. By having participants re-consider the original question, and re-contextualising peace as something within their actual habitat – the communities in which they live, love, learn, work, and play – the meaning and consequences of such a concept as peace are much more palpable. As such, the answers given to the second question address specific behaviours and relationships much more than in the first, and provide many interesting pathways for future investigation.

Also interesting in the analysis is the absence of any mention of NGO's, community organisations (save for councils of elders) generally, and women's organisations more specifically. Whilst these are often key players in the peace narrative of donors and the academe, they are notably absent in this discussion. Part of the explanation might just be the focus of the questions toward professions, which conceptually blocked out such organisations. At the same time, it is worth mentioning their absence, particularly given the preference of such "grass-roots" organisations among donors. Perhaps it reflects cynicism on my part, but I do find it remarkable that none of the professions involved in the peacebuilding cycle – or what I dubbed peacevelopment in Chapter One – such as civil servants or NGO workers was worth even one mention among over seventy participants. Broadening and varying the sample size for this questionnaire would be interesting to see if this disconnect persists beyond professional and geographical boundaries, and if so, why? Also absent from the answers was any type of gender-specific answers or even language, including the pronouns. Professions were discussed as 'they' and when discussing children, the words 'child', 'student' or 'youth' were always used, save in one instance where 'boys and girls' was used.

Question 3

6.3 What role do you believe teachers can play in building a peaceful Liberia?



With this third question, I asked participants directly how they viewed teachers within the peacebuilding process. This question and the fourth were more open-ended than the previous two, and therefore were a bit less straightforward to categorise as similar roles often appeared with different names. That being said, in this third question, it was possible to cluster most responses around three large themes. The largest cluster, at twenty-three responses, was also the most basal. This cluster featured the most, yet shortest answers that saw the role of teachers being to teach. For example: “The great role teacher can play in building a peaceful Liberia is to educate the young people for their future” or even more simply “By educating the Liberian people.” The responses in this cluster are unfortunately difficult to interpret as evidence of respondent teachers viewing themselves as key agents in a larger peacebuilding process outside their immediate work of teaching in schools. However, while the largest cluster, it represents only a plurality of answers, with the remainder of replies falling into two other large thematic clusters. Twenty-one relate by discussing “teachers practising peace”, while fourteen deal with “teaching about peace”. Another dozen responses fall outside the thematic clusters, but individually contribute other possible roles for teachers in building peace.

Themes

a. *Teaching about peace*

The first of the significant themes to be examined is that of teachers acting as vehicles for peace to be known. The responses in this group presented a conceptual view of peace as a subject that can be taught and learned. Language used tended to favour words or expressions such as "to teach about", "to tell", "message of peace", "talk about" or "giving to students". The respondents in this group definitely view themselves as agents in the peacebuilding process. How they view it, is to pass on a corpus of "peace" knowledge that is essential to them, for ensuring that the following generation knows how to live in peace. The role of the teacher is, as one respondent eloquently explained[32] is "[m]aking sure that the message of peace is part of their daily presentation in their every days lesson. Their role is so important like blood is to the body, when the blood stoped flowing life is gone". Peace, equated here to a living organism, coincides very well with the idea presented in the initial chapter of peace as a verb – they both require animation or action. The teacher, for this respondent, is the conduit for nourishing and growing peace. However, another element comes to play in this category as well. Some teachers showed concern not just students knowing about peace, but also what and how they know about other subjects, and the role that knowledge can play in (re)/(de)constructing narratives that lead to strife. For example, one teacher viewed part of their role "*to dispel misconceptions*", which shows a teacher's potential in the shaping of knowledge and narrative. In this simple answer, the teacher's power is shown. Others were concerned with the role of teaching history:

> Teachers can play a role by talking and teaching every student about Liberia before and Liberia today. Liberia before was very peaceful and good to live in but Liberia today is very bad due to war and hard ship. As teachers we have to container talking and making the student and children in our home to know that Liberia need to be peaceful.

Again, we return to the role teachers can play in helping shape how their students see the world around them, understand it, and shape their identity based on the narrative strands presented by teachers. To name and explain the world is the work of power, returning to Chapter One's discussion of Foucault. While much focus may be on pedagogical approaches as elements in quality education and education for peace, what is deemed knowledge, and how it is validated through the classroom remains crucial. Teaching about peace helps place non-violence as an important part of the larger narrative, and this must be of value.

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[32] It is from this quotation that I drew the title of this thesis.

b. *Teachers practising peace*

This second cluster, which might better be conceived as a cluster of related and/or overlapping clusters, sees respondents describe the roles of teachers in building peace as active practices. Instead of vocabulary like "to teach", as used in the previous cluster, answers here use words related to the self or relationships, such as "to be", "to play" or "to serve".

At the heart of this thematic grouping is the notion of teachers as role-models. This modelling of roles runs a wide gamut that begins from the very general:

> The role that I believe a teacher can play in building a peaceful Liberia are to be a guide and help to those who they are put in charge of. The should live in honest/productive live that those that they are building up follow their good examples.

To be a good role-model and a good teacher, in this sense, is very demanding as it requires a wholesale commitment. The teacher is not just a role-model in the classroom, but in all aspects of life. This is a sentiment echoed by multiple respondents.

However, being a good role-model can also have a narrower meaning, according to other respondents. On the one hand it can mean that teachers monitor their own use of language and attitudes, by being "religiously tolerant" and by trying to "avoid the use of divisive language". On the other hand, a view of teacher-as-role-model held by some respondents dealt directly with the resolution of conflicts. "Teachers have to serve as an example in finding solution to a conflict in their schools and communities as large.". In this sense, teachers must act as mediators – which would then have an impact in the training offered to teachers were they expected to take on this role generally.

Yet another perspective on teachers modelling good behaviour given by one respondent actually involved what teachers should refrain from doing.

> I think teachers need to provide the right education that will foster peace and not get involve with corrupt acts that will, in a few distance future, be copied by the very students. Teachers need to be trained well and taught the [ethic].

As a sum, these answers demonstrate that many teachers are acutely aware of the impact their behaviour - both negative and positive – can have on the education of their students and of their community members. Beyond conduits for knowledge, which is important, as mentioned previously, these teachers also recognise that what and how they do things are lessons to be learned, and that they can only expect from others as well as they are willing or able to do themselves.

This same sentiment seems to found in a somewhat overlapping cluster of responses which equates, to varying degrees, the teaching profession to parenting. Perhaps the strongest argument made in favour of this role was by one respondent who stated:

> In postwar Liberia, teachers are not only teachers but as well substituting for parents. Parents in postwar Liberia are neglecting their roles and functions, leaving all to teachers. This is due to the fact that most of Liberia social structures, particularly the family were affected by the war, ie broken families and homes.

This insightful comment is very reminiscent of Kirk and Winthrop's (2006) discussion on the breakdown of "social infrastructures and relationships" (207). By being positive, loving and caring role-models, teachers therefore become important agents in building new, peaceful relationships and identities with their students. To add support in this venture, one of the key attributes of peace-building teachers, according to four respondents, is to exemplify love and respect toward their students – which itself might be another means of describing parenting. Simply put, by one respondent: "Teachers should set an example since teaching has to do with care and love. In building a peaceful Liberia teachers will have to treat all students equal and speak to them with respect." Perhaps, in its simplicity, this is the strongest example showing that some teachers intuitively understand their role in building a peaceful society. Children that are shown love and respect, and for whom care is shown will more likely to emulate this behaviour. At best, when faced with conflict, one would assume that the preferred method of resolving it would be through finding solutions that address the concerns of all parties, or at the very least, seek to avoid harm.

c. Outliers

Given that the open-ended nature of this question led to many response possibilities, it is of no great surprise that many interesting isolate or mini-cluster answers were also given by respondents. If a theme can be found among some of these responses, one might be the advocacy for the teaching of alternative subjects. Suggestions made by respondents include economic development, human rights and history, which was framed by respondent as follows:

> Teachers can play a role by talking and teaching every student about Liberia before and Liberia today. Liberia before was very peaceful and good to live in but Liberia today is very bad due to war and hard ship. As teachers we have to container talking and making the student and children in our home to know that Liberia need to be peaceful.

To interpret this, one role of the teacher would then be to help students critically analyse their reality as part of an ongoing and malleable process – help students create their own narrative. What this teacher seems to wish is that children who live in precarious and difficult times must know that a different Liberia is possible as it was once different, reasserting the potential not just in relaying knowledge, but in creating too. In essence, the role advocated for teachers here seems to reflect Freire's (2000) notion of *conscientisaçao:* students can only become engaged citizens if the believe change is possible.

Two other outlying responses focused in on the education of girls, although from different angles. One respondent discussed the need for teaching "the youth of Liberia, especially our girls, in moral excellence & decent dressing and student should also be able to learn and do what they are [taught]" which leaves me uneasy. While my interpretation might err, I read this passage as advocating a strong urge to make girls fit into tightly scripted gender roles, and to be subservient, rather than agents. The second response related to gender, however, leads to a bit more optimism. This second respondent argued for "[t]raining the youths who are often vulnerable during crisis period. Teaching women who are carers of children to enable secure a peaceful society." It is an interesting response as it first addresses the need to deal with youth, and recognises their precarious position. Then, it clearly gives a strong role to the agency of women in building peace. However, it also contains two other possible messages. On the one hand, "women who are carers of children" may imply that a woman's agency comes from being a mother. On the other hand, it may also abrogate men of their responsibility to also be carers of children. Without trying to be over-analytical or critical, I still take time to de-construct this comment as it exhibits a sub-text of gender-based expectations regarding the roles of men and women. Yet, I also believe that the sentiment of the respondent was to clearly advocate for a stronger role for women in building Liberia's peace, and this role is dependent upon the active participation of teachers, as well as reflective of the peace process in that country. Such passages reveal one of the biggest limitations in written questionnaires: we are left to interpret what is written as-is, and without opportunities for clarification.

One final pair of answers also requires comment, and are perhaps among the most telling and interesting of all responses. They differ dramatically from the others as they do not address the roles teachers can play insomuch as they highlight the obstacles posed before teachers, which might placate their ability to serve as agents in the peace-building process.

> In Liberia, the teachers must be the educator of the country. We need to have some assistance as to improved our educational sectors. The promotion of the feature of the country depend on us to give the right guide lines as to have a civilized country. I also ask that we need some assistance as to promote our teaching ability, and as we may look up to see a peaceful Liberia;

and

> Teacher can play in a peaceful building Liberia when the following are addressed in both public and private schools. -Government to pay teachers equally without taking some [locally?] better and alter?/other? not better. -Government to pay subsidy to private and mission schools. - government to be able to build public schools in all communities mainly in Monrovia and its environ. - By training teachers and providing laboratories and libraries in public schools.

Through such statements, these teachers expose that while there might be a will to take on the role of peacebuilder on the part of teachers, the situation of these education professionals is often woefully inadequate, leaving a gap between what teachers hope to do, and what they are actually able to accomplish. In this, I actually see a good sign – recognition of one's own limitations is often an excellent first step in finding means of rectifying these. From a policy standpoint, what this would imply is a need to engage teachers to help identify areas of need, and promote ownership of the solution-generation process. Some, such as salaries, are the purview of the Government, while others, such as professional development and school resources can be tackled at the school and community levels.

Taken as a whole, respondents demonstrated a wide and rich array of possible roles teachers can assume in building peace, with the majority of respondents going beyond simply seeing the role of teacher as educator. Some teachers seem to favour the role-model approach while others tend toward teaching peace as a corpus of knowledge. Concern for a peaceful future, rooted in concern for the students seems to be an overarching theme. The majority of teacher-respondents seem acutely aware of their potential and/or active role in building peace in their country. What needs to be further explored, however, given the concerns of at least two respondents, is to what extent they are sufficiently equipped to take on that role effectively.

Question 4

Of the four questions, this last one was the most open-ended. In contrast to the third question which asked respondents to consider the role of teachers in building peace, this question sought to understand how teacher-participants might view their own personal contributions to peace in their country, while allowing them to potentially include dimensions of their identity that are separate from their role as a teacher. Consequently, this question produced the widest array of responses, with no single theme encompassing the majority of responses. That being said, a few themes did emerge within participants' answers, the three largest of which each comprised of around fifteen responses.

Themes

a. *Being a good teacher*

While all references to "teacher" were stricken from the question, seventeen responses – the largest thematic group – revolved around the idea of being a good teacher as the most potent contribution to building peace. Perhaps some of this emphasis is residual from the remainder of the questionnaire. Given that the three previous questions focused on the role of teachers, it is possible that some of the answers stem from a pre-structured mindset. However, it is also just as likely that for these respondents, their assumed agency for peace through their teaching is a strongly-held tenet, even after having considered multiple options. Evidence of such analysis is exemplified by one answer:

> I do believed that I can play many other roles such as: lawyer, activist, administrator, police officer and teacher of which I have already done apart from being a police officer and a lawyer. But among all, I will prefer "Teaching" as the best way forward for me to build peace in Liberia my country.

For this group of respondents who answered “teaching” as their most important role, the primary reason given tends to be a variant on the education-leads-to-peace theme that was found in previous questions. Strengthening the learning in children and youth is seen as inherently building peace, and is explained in various ways, such as: “The role of teaching – because teaching help people learn many things” or “I believe as an class-room teacher to help Liberia be a [violence-] free country by impacting education in my citizen to reduce illiteracy rate.”

Within this first thematic group, however, there also appeared a sub-set of responses which viewed teaching less as a linear process than a cyclical one. The role proposed for teachers was less one of imparting knowledge and more one of “empowering” the next generation to learn. As one respondent explained: “The role I can play in building a peaceful Liberia is to [train] young people to live with in the communities and be a able to understand.” Therefore, beyond telling children to “know” peace, what this teacher views as his/her role is to help children develop social and critical thinking skills, both essential in educated citizens.

b. *Incorporating peace into teaching practice*

Tangential to the first thematic grouping of responses, a second teaching-related role emerged among six respondents. The difference with this second role, however, was that it proposed an enhancement on the traditional role of teaching by actively incorporating the teaching of peace within their pedagogical practice. While the first, larger group viewed their role as teachers, this second proposed an augmented teaching role. What this group of answers suggests is that additional effort is required by teachers in order to promote peace, by creating a “peaceful atmosphere” in the classroom, and even dedicate time to the task:

> For me, I am already serving as a guardian councilor as a teacher. Most often I take five minutes of my class time counciling students on how to be more responsible as well as those good values that breed a peaceful community and society at large

and “The role that I can play in building a peaceful Liberia is to make sure to use 10 min. of my time in the class every day to talk about peace”. What is evident here is that returning to *status quo ante bellum* is not an option for the profession, and that as Liberia's recent history has severely altered this nation's evolution, so too must teachers in the classroom allow their practice to evolve and adapt to this new reality.

c. *Advocating for peace*

A third thematic group emerged in the answers to this final question that saw respondents approach their role as educators more broadly or liberally. In thirteen of the responses, the role foreseen was one of advocacy for peace, sometimes in direct relation to education:

> I believe to publicize education in building a peaceful Liberia. In that, I go around the communities, towns, villages, cities or counties to acknowledge those who are not willing to go to school. Also, those who have the minds or are attending but not serious, I should advise them on the importance of education that will make us a peaceful building nation

with others being more general: "I can play a role in building a peaceful Liberia, by initiating programs that will enable citizens to know that they are human beings (productive). Respecting others, living by rules and also knowing others problems as well", or more simply: "I am a [peer] educator and a teacher so I am able to persuade my friends, families and students." What is important to surmise from this line of responses is that they demonstrate a clear willingness to actively engage in actions – from discussion to programme organisation – believed to contribute to peace. Moreover, these responses also move the locus of agency out of the classrooms and into the community at large. Within these responses, we detect a sense of such an agency, and tentative means of exercising it.

d. *Being a role-model*

The third-largest cluster, at thirteen responses, was also one that we have seen in previous answers: that of being a role-model. However, the distinction in this final question is that this role is extended outside the classroom. To promote peace, it is important to demonstrate wanted behaviours as they relate to both private and public life. For private matters, one respondent stated: "[i]n building a peaceful Liberia, I as Liberian should learn to treat my brothers and sisters with love and care. I should also learn to forgive those that [went]against me." From this perspective, the process of healing and forgiveness must begin somewhere, and this respondent feels it must begin with him/her. Only by practising forgiveness does it become feasible to expect it from others. While seemingly a small matter, it does coincide with this work's theory of peace, whereby cultural practice is an amalgam of innumerable small acts. However, some respondents also saw their responsibility as role-model fall more within the spectrum of public life. In particular, there is a cognisance of possible contradictions between what is taught, and what is seen. Recognising the privileged position some teachers hold within their community, one respondent made clear the need to exemplify the behaviour he/she expects from others: "Per my profession, I need to exhibit good moral conduct. I cannot be a peace-maker and very bad in conduct. I must be able to share those good values. I have learned to help build up others." This was a sentiment that was echoed by other respondents, as well. Moreover, some went beyond this, and described the need to exemplify positive civic behaviour, as well:

> The roles I can play: 1. Exhibit peaceful behaviours in my community. 2. Have interest in the well-being of others. 3. Exercise my political votes in the national votes of Liberia and not self. 4. Help keep the environment clean. 5. Promote peaceful dialogue and not conflict.

In fact, the notion of "being a good citizen" was one that seemed to permeate the role of teacher-as-role-model, and in four cases, was actually the focus of the response. Separate from the fourteen "role-model" answers, this distinct thematic grouping saw respondents see being a "law-abiding citizen" as their most important role to play in building a peaceful Liberia.

e. *Community Leadership, Non-Violence*

In some cases, respondents viewed their role in the community as more than being a positive role model. Echoing a theme that emerged in earlier questions, seven responses evoked a responsibility of teachers to act as leaders within their communities, and in particular play the role of advisor or conflict mediator. As one respondent explained: "To help educate the youth and elders, to respect each other universal and constitutional right, build a gender violence free society and how to settle community dispute." The theme of violence found in this particular response was also a thread which linked it to another group of responses in which the participants saw their role in eradicating the culture of violence that exists within segments of Liberian society. In fact, some of these violence-related answers fall into previously mentioned categorisations, as well: advocacy, role-modelling, and/or peace education, such as: "To stop violence. To stop cheating. To stop stealing from one another. If we stop all these things Liberia will be a better place." What they have in common, beyond the theme of dealing with violence, is that they are also more multi-dimensional. Of the four questions, this last one was the most difficult to encode. My speculation is that this stems from the nature of the question, being the most personal. Talking about the self is multi-dimensional, so thematic clustering is more difficult due to a high degree of overlap. As each respondent's sense of agency is dependent upon so many unique combinations of factors, trying to identify one's agency within a social process such as peace building can be challenging to identify, and even more so to describe. Thus, answers provided have tended to be much more layered and nuanced, and, consequently, more enriching for the study, as they offer deeper insight into the opinions and views of participants.

One response that was particularly rich to de-construct was:

> The best role I can play in building a peaceful Liberia is to stay away from any form of violence that will cause trouble. Also encourage other to stop during what might lead to trouble. To encourage people to learned or be educated, because if you are educated, you will not be carry away by what politicians or other will say or tell you. Since I am a teacher, I will make others to be aware of the danger of not being educated. If you are educated you will not involve yourself in any ugly or negative things for example: demonstration without police clearance.

The response given here belies an astute understanding of politics. 'Education' here is presented not simply as knowing, but the ability to know differently. The educated citizen, for this teacher, is able to critically dismantle what is presented by the politician. Being non-violent will emerge as a choice, born of reason. In this context, then, the teacher is not a mere conduit of knowledge, but one who extends his/her agency to the student, and helps them build their own understanding, and to choose other than violence.

f. *Outliers*

Another consequence of the open-ended nature of this question means that there are completely unrelated outliers in the answers. Two themes in particular stand out as they were absent in the previous three questions, but demonstrate different forms of perceived agency. The first new role to appear in two answers, is an economic one. While the privileged position of teachers has been discussed from an educational and prestige perspective, the idea of leveraging economic advantage is a novel one:

> If I have little fund by assisting one or two student(s) to get in school because when you find more students been educated they will not be fool to go and fight war because they themselves will no that war

> or fighting is not the way out.

or, as alternatively presented: "By helping the community members in any other work, and by helping them with some money, food and water." What this viewpoint demonstrates is that the agency of teachers in nation-building is not reserved for the classroom. In OECD countries, the pension funds of teachers' associations are amongst the largest financial investors. The Ontario Teachers Pension Plan (OTTP), for example, holds a $129 billion dollar portfolio of investments (OTTP, 2013). Given Liberia's process of physically re-building its infrastructure and economy, these two comments leave one to ponder how the collective financial clout of teachers might be put to use in supporting national re-construction. If pension plans are developed and invested nationally, industries can grow, and said growth can allow for further investment into public education. It is a long-term process, but a cyclical one. Even small investments by teachers now can play a large role in increasing the opportunity cost of violence and future strife. This type of initiative would qualify as a national project for peace, as advocated by Blagojevic (2007).

Less concrete in its effectiveness, however, was a second outlying theme that is worth mentioning – that of religion, brought up by three respondents. Two of these answers dealt with proselytising. Their view was that peace could be achieved by an accrued sense of religiosity, and the answers seemed to equate God and peace as almost synonymous: "Believe should tell other about God word When they know the important about God they will be able to build a peaceful Liberia." Given my own lack of insight into theological matters, I leave further deconstruction of this to others more aptly-suited. However, I believe the need to analyse the third comment from this cluster of religious-themed answers: "I will pray for God to insure peace in Liberia". Without downplaying the need for hope, hope without action is not very conducive to achieving desired outcomes. On my side, I hope that the sentiment underlying this particular response was not one of resignation, but I am also consoled by the fact that if it does reflect a sense of helplessness, it was only one of seventy-two, yet it most likely reflects the deeply religious society that is Liberia. By that measure, a sense of agency and purpose in the long road to Liberia's recovery is alive and strong within its teachers.

6.2 Interview Findings

The third method for participant-generated data was the conducting of interviews with participants. In all, I had the opportunity to interview eleven participants, one of whom was a woman. On average, interviews lasted twelve to fifteen minutes, but one longer interview, which I mentioned in the previous chapter, lasted over half an hour. These interviews were an opportunity to give nuance to some of the questionnaire and workshop data by describing the personal journeys that led the participant to and through the teaching profession. By having participants describe their motivation to become teachers, the steps they took, and the positive and challenging experiences faced, my intent was to gather information that might help paint a more human portrait of the teaching profession, although multiple interviews with each participant over an extended period of time, which was not feasible, would have likely led to even deeper insight. In this section, I present the interview data organised around the different questions posed, while highlighting overarching themes and linking the data to that collected with the previously-described methods. I must acknowledge that the interviews were perhaps a bit shorter than I would have anticipated, but I believe this is largely due to their scheduling after workshops. For many, if not all participants, the workshops themselves would have been following a day's worth of teaching. Interviewee fatigue may have been a factor, as well as my own level of experience in conducting this type of research activity. Ideally, lengthier interviews would have provided a richer set of data. Were the interviews the primary data source of the study, they certainly would seem lacking, but, as a support and complement, I believe they have proven more than adequate for this study.

Becoming Teachers

I began the interviews by asking teachers about how they came to work as teachers. The participant profile presented in the previous chapter showed that the participants were quite varied in their levels of education and experience. What the numbers drastically fail to convey, however, is just how different the paths that led to these different statistics truly are. For example, one participant was an accountant. He recalls that one day, while in a taxi, he started quizzing some youth sitting next to him. He was shocked by what he considered their lack of basic knowledge, so he left his job and started a school as a matter of civic duty. Another participant became a teacher following the death of his father during the war. His father owned and operated a school, and the participant said he was compelled to continue his father's work. One participant became a teacher as a means to earn currency while living in a refugee camp in Sierra Leone, similar to those described by Shepler (2011) in Guinea. However, he learned to love his work, and continues to teach having returned home. This serendipity was echoed in another interviewee's story. While studying medicine to become a nurse or doctor, teachers started asking him to become a teaching assistant, and that was how he discovered he had '*that gift of teaching*', and from there he enrolled in a Rural Teacher Training Institute. Yet another teacher, from a rural village, admired his teacher as a child, and studied to become one in 1978; he continues to teach into his seventies. What we can glean from these snippets, if anything, is that while the levels of official qualifications in the classrooms are low, and a skills-gap certainly exists, a great depth and breadth of experience, as well as the level of dedication, are present, and can prove tremendous resources in rebuilding the profession in Liberia if tapped adequately. Moreover, even within such a tiny sample size, there are virtually no similarities taken to enter the profession, re-emphasising the individuality of each teacher.

If policy is based solely on numbers, it strips the humanity from the teaching corps. It is paramount that policy makers, and donors, become aware of how much some teachers have gone through to be where they are. Other than will and determination, individuals who have assumed the role of teachers have sought out typifications to best learn how to enact the role. Rather than be derided for not meeting certain standards they should be given every opportunity and support possible to meet them – and to help bring a certain levelling to the profession nationally. Again, I go back to the theme that has developed over the course of this research: it is as important to view what has been achieved as what is still lacking. While the skills gap may be evident, the enthusiasm and dedication of teachers might be the greatest advantage in overcoming this gap. In fact, most of the teachers interviewed have taken it upon themselves to bridge that skills gap. By enrolling in Rural Teacher Training Institutes, to taking workshops, to completing intensive teacher training programmes offered by NGOs in refugee camps the interviewees have all demonstrated their ability and willingness to grow professionally and to seek the qualifications necessary to improve their practice.

Sources of Motivation

I was then curious to find out what kept teachers on the path of being a teacher: where did they find their motivation? For a good many, what kept them energised was seeing former students find success, and the feeling that they had contributed to that success. As one teacher recounted:

> My motivation is to transform the youth. The young people. When I teach the young people and tomorrow they become educated, and they go to school when they've graduated, and they see me 'Oh! Mr. _____! This is our teacher!' They usually introduce me to other people so I feel proud. I feel proud to meet my former students. Yeah. They always respect me, and give me their courtesy. I feel proud. (E.C., Male)

Within this explanation is another sentiment, however, of also being a respected member of the community, echoing some of the questionnaire responses. Being a teacher affords a certain status to which participants seem proud to hold, and which is important to be recognised by policy-makers. That teachers have a sense of belonging, and are accorded an important role is a core motivator for some, and therefore protecting the respect of the profession can pay dividend. The sense of contribution, as discussed previously, is essential in the construction of positive identity; that it be done through non-violent means promotes a peaceful one. The way one interviewee explained his locus of motivation:

> When you are a teacher, you are well-known: students know you, people, parents know you, you are well-known by the nation. So long as a teacher imparts knowledge to a student, and that student goes to a high level tomorrow, they will remember you, and I always enjoy that. (J.B., Male)

The sense of self, here, is clearly related to the building of the positive self in others. One way the Government of Liberia seems to be addressing this concern is by ensuring that ample scholarship opportunities are available for those seeking certification as teachers:

> ... the Government of Liberia has given teachers scholarships to go and advance themselves. And that I see it as a motivation, and this is why I'm making use of that so I can go to the University of Liberia, and immediately after obtain my BSc degree. I am going to have my Master in Education. Mm Hmm. That is a great motivation of the government of Liberia. And I appreciate that. (J.G., Male)

While other sources of motivation were also mentioned, such as encouragement by peers or the sense of civic duty, it is notable that neither salary nor money was brought up as a source of motivation. Although moves have been made to increase the salaries of teachers, these are not overly-lucrative jobs. From the answers given by participants, it is the impact of the work that keeps them going, even despite sometimes difficult economic circumstances. Again, it becomes important to highlight these sources of motivation as many of them are not-necessarily linked to financial resources – but neither should they be read that salary is not important; overly low wages may outweigh the benefits of non-financial incentives. Thus, in creating policies that seek to retain teachers in service, looking at salaries is only part of the equation. Understanding what else keeps teachers teaching, even in the absence of adequate salaries, can help create cultural motivators in maintaining a committed and dynamic educational workforce.

Self-Analysis by Teachers

The next series of questions in the interviews had teachers take stock of their own abilities and describe what they viewed as their strengths and weaknesses. The answers that emerged were largely undistinguished; in many instances, the strengths of one teacher were the cited weakness of another. For example, the issue of classroom management came up both as a strength and as a weakness. One teacher saw it as his *forte:*

> Usually, nowadays, if you see some teachers when they are in the class, they are not able to manage their class. But when I enter a class, uh, I am able to manage a class. Because when they see me, first of all I am 72, they know I am 72, but when it reaches time for a lesson, they know, and everyone they are quiet and they are participating, so I feel proud of managing my class. (E.C., Male)

While another his foible:

> What I would like to develop more as a teacher is classroom management. The reason is that Liberia is just from out of war, and the children are traumatised, very traumatised, and they need to be de-traumatised, and you notice that when you are in a classroom, you notice that children they behave very, very bad – some, actually the majority they behave very bad, and they need to be de-traumatised, to be frank. Mm-hm, so, classroom management is where I want to be developed in that area. (J.G., Male)

The reason underlying that teacher's want of improvement was a theme also found in many of the other answers given by the participants. The sense given is not necessarily that they lack the particular skills, but that these skills are insufficiently strong for the current educational situation. The number of children in the classes, the emotional baggage caused by the wars and their repercussions, the difficult financial situations of the children's families; all these are making teaching a more challenging task than normal. On the same topic of classroom management, however, it is also interesting to note that the only female interviewee described her weakness as “discipline”, which in part reflects the view of Humphreys (2006) where discipline tends to be a reserve of the male teacher's domain.

One teacher, in discussing weaknesses, was finding it difficult to complete proper assessment of students' work mostly due to the volume of work it entails:

> But when it come to my weakness, score, to mark – score. [...] To, to, to quiz, examine, test, to tabulate, Because I'm in the school, and it's overpopulated, our class have about 100, 60's, 80's, a,b,c, a, b, and not under a single school, but two schools. [...] So I find it very difficult when it comes to that area. (M.G., Male)

This becomes particularly revealing for the development of educational policy, including teacher preparation. The first instinct might simply be to administer written tests as it is the easiest way to generate marks for student reporting. However, if the teacher is to be an agent in the peacebuilding process, and that the school is seen as a place for democratic or peaceful socialisation, then reinforcing the culture of the test would be counter-productive as it would likely promote a broadcast model of teaching. Careful consideration must therefore be applied to developing effective yet efficient means for students to demonstrate their learning progress to their teachers, particularly in highly-populated classrooms. Teachers must be prepared not for an ideal view of the classroom, but its actual reality which includes overpopulation and a high ratio of students with special needs. Beyond a logistical issue, the overpopulation of classrooms also creates a core challenge to the very nature of a peace-building education system. If education is a relational process, then building meaningful relationships with scores of children at a time becomes nigh impossible. Perhaps one strategy is for teachers to help students build meaningful and strengthening relationships among themselves, while emphasizing their own position as role-model. Seemingly, in such circumstances, this role becomes exponentially more important. As direct behaviour moulding becomes more arduous with each additional child, then the ability to positively yet indirectly shape student interaction by being a positive role-model appears to gain ground as a preferred strategy.

Professional Development Wish List

The next part of the interview was asking what type of further professional development they might like, were they given *carte blanche*. In their wishes, participants wound up falling into three thematic camps. The first of these was seeking specific skills, either to use in the classroom, such as evaluation methods, or to be able to pass on to their students, such as vocational skills, including sewing and tailoring. For those seeking immediate teaching-related skills, one participant stated that they wanted to learn to draw. On the surface, this seems as convenient addition to a teacher's repertoire of skills, but as this participant explained it, in this context it might prove to be essential to effective teaching. As he described:

> Well, what one of the participants talk about, he draw the...picture, gave the picture of the teacher, he teaching, ok so, we have the picture and books that we cannot simplify to the level of the children then I feel we can build from that to our own teaching on that. (E.M., Male)

What this comment brings to the surface is that in the absence of available visual resources, such as posters, or picture-books, the only means of illustrating stories or science lessons or anything for that matter, might be by the hand of the teacher. By ameliorating one's basic skills in drawing, a teacher might then be able to increase their ability to explain by creating compelling and understandable visual aids for the benefit of the students.

The second theme, and the most prevalent, was interviewees wanting content-related professional development. For example, interviewees expressed a wish to improve their grammar, or to do an MA in agricultural sciences, chemistry or biology. This focus on content or subject-focused professional development can be interpreted in at least two ways. Perhaps teachers feel inadequately prepared to deliver the curriculum content to their students, and would like to seek remedial help in increasing their own knowledge base. Or, by first choosing content as professional development rather than improving their teaching skills may, to a certain degree, reflect a certain lack of self-awareness as a practitioner. This brings us back to Lortie's (1975) apprenticeship of observation. If teachers are never taught to know the meta-teaching skills, how can they be expected to identify gaps in their own, and thus seek remedy? Ironically, it would seem that for teachers to seek meaningful professional development of their own teaching skills would itself be predicated on the existence of prior training. In other words, teachers must learn to learn. After initially divulging the desire to learn more about a certain subject, in certain interviews I re-framed the question to ask specifically for skills, and at that point I was usually able to obtain an answer more oriented toward the amelioration of personal teaching ability. Yet, to consider: teaching skills are so intimately linked to identity and personality that absence of critical self-awareness can also be a deliberate choice, as it is not only critical self-reflection about one's teaching skills and habits, but about one's own being.

Only in one instance did a participant immediately cite personal characteristics as the locus of desired improvement, as shown in this exchange:

> Question - So, if you were to look at yourself as a teacher, what would you say are your strengths as a teacher, and what would you say are some areas where you think you are not so strong and you would

> like to improve?
>
> Answer – My strength lies in reading, as a teacher I read a lot, my weakness is in discipline because (laughs) unfortunately, yeah.
>
> Q – And so, if you want to keep developing as a teacher, and building your skills, what are the skills, what are the skills you'd like to further build and develop?
>
> A – (Without hesitation) I want to build my critical thinking skills – these I want to build. I want to think critically, I want to know how to analyse, how to, yeah, the pros and cons of things, I really want to be able to sort them and make a judgment, I find myself weak in that area.
>
> Q – And how do you think you could accomplish that?
>
> A – Um, by going through, uh, I will go through different kinds of workshops, and listening to other teachers, now coming from [inaudible] teaching critical thinking, I mean I find it interesting I know by the help of God I will be able to cope with it. (V.S., Female)

Ironically, by seeking help in developing critical thinking skills, this particular teacher has already demonstrated herself to be a reflective practitioner (see Cunliffe 2004; Jay & Johnson 2000). Having identified a foible allows her to actively seek means of transforming her practice to achieve the desired result.

The third theme regarding professional development wishes by the interviewed teachers was less related to improving skills or knowledge, and more related to improved working conditions. For instance, it was deemed incumbent upon the government to ensure the provision of necessary learning materials; teaching without books or curriculum is not possible, regardless of the training received. This is a major challenge that needs to be addressed:

> Yeah, today there are several challenges, like textbooks for our students, both students and the teachers, these are really lacking. We have to start collecting scripts, going to other places to buy scripts, scripts and other different different things because this is a private, young institution. The money might not be there to buy the textbooks, to distribute it to all of the students, these are some of the impediments, not only to this school – we must go to other schools. So that then we copy books, and take notes and come back. But they don't have that vivid description. You know the materials, the textbooks, they can go on their own [engine noise] everything. Apart from that, we have copy-only books, and they are culpable and at times they make lot of mistakes, [inaudible], jump over lines and other things so the quality can

> not be there. So it's a greater challenge, too, on the part of the student. And even school administrators, you know, all around the country. (R.T., Male)

Challenges

This last excerpt also acts as a segue into the next line of conversation had in the interviews. On the surface, it may seem that I am abandoning the assets-based tone of the AI workshop. However, I thought it important to give teachers an opportunity to share their view of the challenges faced by their profession. From the policy-maker's perspective, too few teachers, or under-qualified teachers might be seen as the primary challenge. For the teachers already in the classroom, their challenges are much more immediate and intimate. Unsurprisingly, the majority of challenges described by the teachers have to do with the children they encounter in the classrooms. While Liberia has been concentrating its efforts to reach EFA targets of universal primary enrolment, this seems to have come at the expense of quality educational services. Attempting to provide every child a seat in class has led to over-crowding, and to many children moving through the schooling process without necessarily being educated. Therefore, this increases the burden on teachers in the system as the students lack the necessary precursory learning:

> ... some of the biggest challenges is now our children, the learning skills is really not competitive. The children are weak-minded in the sense that their foundation, most of the children's foundations are not really built. They don't have phonetics in their language, they don't know how to really spell, so these are the challenges and they don't know how to write, they can't compose anything for you to understand: always run-on sentences, you can't even understand one spelling, so these are the challenges that you need to work on: their reading skills, their spelling skills. (V.S., Female)

Compounding the relatively weak performance of many students is the difficulty surrounding managing behaviours in the classroom. One participant eloquently described the challenge as he saw it:

> You know, most of the students in Liberia they grew up during the civil war. And all during the civil war, these children learned a culture of violence. They don't know that it's good to behave well. That it's good to be respectful. Because they were not around in the pre-war days. Liberia was a peaceful country. People from the West, people from Africa, from the sub-region they used to come to Liberia because of the tranquillity and the peace. But our children, now, they grew up hearing the sounds of guns, seeing

> people being tortured, so it's a very serious challenge to transform these young people that only know violence. Just violence. In the classroom they apply violence. Out of the classroom, in the community, in their homes, they always engage in violence. So it's a very serious challenge. That's why some of us, like for me I decided to do peace education. To help our students. To change their behaviour. To do away with violence, and learn peace so that we can apply peaceful skills in Liberia. For Liberia. (E.C., Male)

As the reader will also have noticed, this teacher also demonstrates commitment and the willingness to take it upon himself to address the problem he sees. This shows that there are teachers, despite the enormous challenges face, who are actively engaging a younger generation and trying to guide peaceful behaviour in their interactions. They recognise the permeability of spaces, such as the classroom, and that behaviour and values both inside and outside are dynamic and malleable. This attitude demonstrates a high degree of hope, and should be brought to the fore as an example of good citizenship, and exemplary role-modelling. Just as importantly, there is recognition of peace as learned behaviour, and thus not as a by-product to be taken for granted. Recognising that it is learned lends credence to the role of teachers in helping children learn such peaceful behaviours.

However, the view expressed by another participant reminds us that teachers are not the sole actors responsible for the education and upbringing of children. His view is that parents are not being held to account, and must assume their responsibilities:

> [W]e need [...] the parents to also put in time to bring up the children. Stop sending the children on the street to sell. Send the child to school, and also follow, to make sure they all reach school. But not only when they're in school, to also get someone who'll be a study-class teacher for them. (J.B., Male)

This goes back to some of the data collected in the questionnaire regarding a need for a greater partnership between teachers and parents; there is a need to extend networks through which teachers can exercise and build power. In parents and other community members, they have allies in promoting peaceful behaviours in their students. However, one of the dangers of demographic youth bulges, particularly in a war-affected context such as Liberia, is the increased propensity for young, un- or under-educated youth, whose period of key socialisation occurred in tumultuous times, to have children of their own. It becomes difficult to expect that all parents will be able to promote or support their children's education as it is something they never knew themselves, not having had the benefit of positive typifications themselves. If socialisation involves the reproduction of learned behaviours, then how can parents who never went to school, never did homework, never learned to be punctual, or never learned to study effectively, amongst other skills, be expected to pass these on to their own children? Beyond the school, social policy needs to investigate building new cycles of learning.

What is seemingly beckoned as a policy solution is the need for a parent education programme of some sort. Teachers may engage parents and build relationships, yet the burden of educating both parent and child cannot be placed upon the sole shoulders of the teacher. Different programmes of mass education, such as through mobile technologies, or radio, for example, could help support parents in turn support their children make their way through school.

One key reason to focus attention on parents, and to help alleviate some of the burden teachers are feeling, is to acknowledge the perception that salaries for the profession are low given the amount of work to be accomplished. One quarter of interviewees cited poor pay as a challenge to the education sector. Government-paid teachers earn $USD125 per month, while private school teachers may receive as little as seventy or eighty. In a country with inflationary pressures from thousands of expatriates living on international salaries, the standard of living offered by such wages is low. The current figure of $USD125 does include a twenty-five dollar increase, as of 2013, implemented by the Johnson Sirleaf government, and the situation may be a bit better than when the interviews were conducted. Nonetheless, particularly for teachers in the private schools whose pay tends to be lower, much of what was shared by participants is more likely than not still applicable.

However inadequate some participants might have considered the earned wages, others have realised its relative attractiveness to the more destitute. What is exposed is a tangled mess of issues linked to the profession and money. On the one hand the want for the steady pay given to teachers is attracting individuals to the profession whose motives are primarily pecuniary:

> The government is trying now to, let's say, give increased teachers' salary, but quite frankly most of those people that are now entering or maybe having the opportunity is because they don't have anything to do, not basically because they love the teaching field or have the love to train or teach the Liberian children. They only enter the field because they think there's no other means to survive. And if we have people that is only going into the classroom for just for survival, then of course I feel that the future of our children is in danger. We need to take a serious note of that. (W.N., Male)

What this teacher fears is that the motivation to provide quality education is absent, and therefore the level of instruction in the class will suffer, creating a more difficult task for those teachers who are there to pursue a profession. Want of professional development, long-term commitment: these are likely to be absent if the majority of teachers are in the classroom predominantly as a financial venture, although this may be a generalisation of a trend. Worse is that such a mindset leads to a culture of graft and corruption, and the overall status of the profession – a key motivating factor identified previously – begins to fall into disrepute.

What the teachers in these interviews are telling us, however, is that they would welcome tighter oversight by the MoE on the quality of teaching and school standards. With the proper mechanisms in place, two different participants argued, progress could be made. One put the emphasis on hiring practices and credentials:

> I'm making some requests to the Ministry, that we need a system that will do away with bribery, we need a system that, let's say, qualified teachers will be employed instead of maybe employing people on interest. Where there are other schools around us, teachers seek employment through interest: if you know me and I'm your brother, you'll employ me instead of what I know. So we need to put all these things away and look at the credentials, what someone can do in order to employ them. (B.P., Male)

The second interviewee showed deep concern for the impact on the overall future of the country should no remedial action be taken.

> ...school proprietors and principals will not actually take teachers seriously and take the best out of teachers. They will just want to put any kind of teacher in the classroom [...]We are backwards when it comes to national exams, and most of the time we get our results and it's very poor. Majority of our students fail in the exams and I think basically it's because of our instructional methods, and those that we entrust with our children's education. And if we can have the rightful people trained, and have the right mechanisms to monitor them, evaluate them, and make sure that they're in class on time and leave on time, I mean I think we'll get the best of our students – not that the students are bad but they lack the teachers, who are there for their own personal gain. (W.N., Male)

What the interviewed teachers are illuminating is the complexity of numerous intertwined issues. Policy-makers must necessarily take note, and try to adopt an over-arching and multi-disciplinary approach that at least tries to understand how different issues link up. As seen here, just the issue of salaries affects hiring practises, exam performance and the overall social status of the profession, amongst probable others. Understanding the inter-connectedness of separate areas should be a guiding rule when formulating educational policy. Teachers, students, curriculum, schools, pay: they are all connected. In dealing with such issues, however, the greatest danger may be in decision-makers, such as the MoE, to generalise problems. If problematic trends amongst teachers become viewed as universal occurrences then the consequence will be that all teachers become viewed as problematic. This would result in alienating potential allies for change within the teacher corps, and de-motivating those teachers who are professional and ethical. Caution in addressing difficult issues is paramount.

Teachers as Role-Models

Beyond discussing the challenges, the interviews were also an opportunity to go deeper regarding some of the topics addressed in the questionnaire. Specifically, I sought to have teachers expand upon how they viewed themselves as role models, and how they viewed their role in the peacebuilding process. Unsurprisingly, the common theme from the questionnaire, that of teachers being foundational, was mentioned by a third of interviewees, such as expressed by one: “my work become the foundation upon which the nation have to be established. So I see my role as a very tough one.” (M.G., Male) Again, this view demonstrates a view of teaching by its practitioners of the profession being the well-spring from which the future of the country flows. The belief seems deep-seeded that without a strong corps of teachers, a strong nation is not possible.

However, the interviewees were also quite keen on sharing their experiences as role models, and that how they presented themselves to the students mattered:

> What I see as an important role as a teacher is to love your students, to guide your students, to give them the best material, and that's your role as a teacher, because you are a role model, and the children, they are copying from you. (J.G., Male)

Most particularly, many of them expressed that their own success, and that of others, depended upon their own frame of mind. For example, when asked to describe a good day teaching, the most common way to answer was to state that a good day began with oneself. In the two following excerpts, two different teachers explain this same sentiment, although with some nuances.

> A good day, it should first begin with myself. [… I]f something is preying on my mind, I should put it aside, and come to the classroom and teach the lesson, and also, if I teach the lesson if the students respond to me, I feel happy. If they interact together in a peaceful manner, I feel comfortable, I know I am doing something. But if I come with a vexation, what happens? [...] I will not have a good day. So my good day should first begin with me at my house [...] So as a teacher I should be able to control my emotion. (J.B., Male)

> [A] good day in class is first of all I believe my good will start with how I begin my day. If I begin my day with prayers, and motivation from my home, my day will be good in school. But if I come to school sad, or I am worrying about how I go about my day, then my day won't be good. So I believe I begin my good day from home. So I come to school, I am motivated, I am happy, my children will be happy, so whatever mood I put myself in, the children will be the same, if I am sad, they will all be sad, they will take it from me that day, but if I am happy, they will be happy, take something to how I see. That's my experience: so I try to be the best that I can. Even if I am bothered at home, I am troubled, when I come, I make fun of them, I try to let it go, so that they will be able to cope with the lesson. That's how I begin my day. Sometimes. (V.S., Female)

In the first excerpt, the role of emotion is linked to one's own ability to deliver the lesson. The resulting positive interaction from the students then allows him to feel at ease. His preoccupation is to control his emotion so that it does not interfere with his ability to do his work. What he feels the children respond to is his teaching, which is dependent on his emotional state. In the second excerpt, the link between the teacher's emotion and that of the students is direct. Depending on her mood, this teacher feels that her students will mirror theirs. For this reason, she tries as often as she can – the word 'sometimes' at the end seems to imply that this is not always an easy task – begin her day in a positive mindset.

In both cases, the teachers are clearly demonstrating an attempt to model positive behaviour through their own personal demeanour. It is evident that they recognise the affective side of learning, both in themselves and in their students. So, while affect-based training for teachers in Liberia is limited at best, as was relayed to me by one NGO-worker involved in the LTTP, the principles of affect-based education are at least intuitively understood by some members of the teaching profession. If moves were made to implement training on the role of affect in education, what these interviewees demonstrate is that the starting point for such training need not be an assumption of *tabula rasa*.

When addressing their position as role models, some interviewees went further than merely demonstrating positive emotions. What seemed to matter was how students were engaged directly, and how respect and love were given to them. Going back to the discussion above on the relationship between parents and teachers, I present below yet an alternate viewpoint. In this case, the interviewed teacher proposed that before parents are brought into the picture the students themselves should be engaged:

> [Y]es, as a teacher if you find out a student is going down low, maybe not coming to school in time, sometimes miss school, they come one or two times a week, you contact the parents, you go to the parents, you first have the teacher call the student, ask that 'what is the cause you're always coming to school late or they are not coming to school?' You should first know their view. And when you know the view of the child it will maybe be the parents' fault. Then you, as a teacher, you go to the parents, and find out from the parents why this child is always coming late or why the child is not waking up. Then the parents may tell you – from the child, then from the parents – then you and the parents can break in line to see how best to bring that child up. (J.B., Male)

What this perspective demonstrates is the willingness of the teacher to give agency to the student in the learning process. Rather than assuming that the child is to be acted upon by authority figures such as teachers and parents, the teacher here engages the student directly, and helps them both define the problem and construct a solution. If the parents need to be part of the solution, then they are brought into the conversation. By engaging the student in such a manner, the teacher is helping them act out, thus practising, the behaviours of a responsible citizen. They are actively socialising the student.

Another example of such socialisation, and perhaps my favourite anecdote from the study sees an interviewee share a story where he used love and caring to deal with a disruptive student.

> Well, you know we – in dealing with violent students there was a time when a student was very violent, to the extent that a complaint came to me. A teacher could not continue his lesson in the classroom because that student was very rude to the teacher, he was disturbing everybody, so they came to me they

> said “oh, Mr. ______, please support the instructor. There is a student that is behaving very, very violently in the classroom” So when I entered the classroom, I chose not to yell at the student, I just commented (whisper) “get out”. So I walked to him, and patted him on the back. His name is George. I say: “George, can you please walk with me? I want you to calm down. Can you please just walk with me?” so he shuffled along, and he followed me. He came to my office, I tried to talk to him, to tell him to listen to the teacher that when there is a problem when the teacher tells you to leave the classroom, the first thing you do is to leave the classroom. If there is anything that you want to say, you can put your hand up and approach the teacher. So I felt very proud, because he was already violent in his behaviour, so if I applied violence it would have exacerbated the situation. So for that time I talked to him and since that time he behaves well. So I was happy because the disciplinary committee was about to expel him. So from my intervention, from the manner I intervene, today he is in the school, he is one of the most behaved students in the school. (E.C., Male)

In this vignette, the interviewed teacher demonstrated an incredibly astute and caring approach to dealing with the student. Rather than seeking punishment or retribution, which he duly recognises would have reinforced the violent behaviours, the teacher showed care and concern for the student. He viewed the person and not the act, and helped George better understand what his options for behaviour were, what the consequences might be, and understand why violence might not be the preferred choice. Had he used violence to subdue George's violence, it is difficult to imagine what different life outcomes might have faced the boy. Yet, returning to social scripting theory, what occurs in this vignette is even more profound. By approaching the student in such a manner, the teacher allowed George to exchange his role of “bad student” for a completely different one (see: Laws & Davies, 2000). The teacher severed the link between the boy's violence and his identity, and presented George with the opportunity to re-construct how he views himself in a manner which does not rely upon violence. This is perhaps as pure an example as possible of peaceful gender-identity construction by a teacher.

Overall what the teachers were able to convey in the interviews is that although they come from very different, and in some cases very harrowing backgrounds, they are bound together by a common dedication and commitment to improving the possibilities of advancement for their students. Although faced with numerous challenges, they as teachers attribute an important role to their position, and seek to be positive role models for the children in their classrooms. Due to the different paths taken by each teacher, most will have different motivations, and see their career paths further develop in different directions. However, the stories recounted do show that there is a good deal of effort and goodwill at play, and that these would be best harnessed, supported, and maximised in re-building a strong, caring corps of teachers.

Chapter Seven

Findings 2: Analysis & Interpretation of Appreciative Inquiry Workshops

In this chapter, I interpret the data generated during the various workshops. How to adequately present these data, however, is a bit more difficult than it was with the questionnaires and interviews. Whereas those two methods had questions and answers that were relatively well-delineated, each workshop was unique in its evolution, had numerous steps and discussions, and was characterised by multiple small-group conversations. For this reason, I have tried to organise the data based on thematic discussions, meaning some of the data sets emanate from multiple workshops, while others from just one. Furthermore, I will also try to contextualise the origin of certain workshop themes and discussions. As AI is a cyclical approach, two workshops were second-cycle, meaning they had return participants, and that they were designed as extensions of the initial workshops. Consequently, the data generated during these second-cycle follow-up workshops can only properly be interpreted following the analysis of initial workshops. This constraint only really applies to the Dream-Design-Delivery phases of the workshops as the initial activity in the AI cycle, the Discovery phase, is more of a tone-setting process than an actual part of the cycle.

7.1 Thematic Discussion: Recalling Positive Teaching and Learning Experiences

In the AI model, all workshops begin with a *Discovery* phase. The purpose of this initiating stage is to activate positive memories of success in order to foster an optimistic mood. In this study, I also had two additional goals: to stimulate critical reflection upon teaching practices, and to model the "think-pair-share" pedagogical model. I structured discussion around one of the two following questions:

- “Recall a time when you finished teaching a class and were left feeling particularly happy and proud, and your students were also happy and engaged. Describe that moment. What did you do differently that allowed this to happen?”

- "Recall and share a positive learning experience from sometime over the course of your life – sometime you learned something and enjoyed doing it."

The separate questions were for two reasons. In one of the workshops, which was held for leaders in the Scouts of Liberia organisation, some of the participants were not teachers. Therefore, asking to reflect upon personal learning seemed more appropriate in that case. However, the second reason for having alternate questions also stemmed from my own experimentation as a researcher to examine the efficacy of different questions – albeit related in topic – in generating different types of data. As this is a newer approach to research, better understanding its strengths and limitations is essential to its development and refinement. This latter line of experimentation did show results, as the quality of the data seem to vary greatly based upon the question the participants discussed, with the generation of more interesting and pertinent answers – pertinence measured here against the search for examples of innovative or positive teaching practices – coming from the first question asking the teacher-participants to recall instances when both they and their students left the classroom energised and enthusiastic about their learning. From these discussions, many themes emerged.

Theme: Learning & Play

One theme I highlighted was that of *play.* Many teachers remarked that having fun, or "*making jokes*" with their students, helped build a strong rapport, and gain the students' attention. One teacher's story recounts how she gave up on trying to explain an activity to the children and simply joined them in playing the game. She said that by putting herself in the students' shoes, she was better able to understand learning from a child's point of view. In a phonics lesson, one teacher played a game whereby he wanted to give the letter M a nickname. He asked students to find all the words they knew that had the sound M in order to find a good nickname, and helped them build the symbol-sound association. The emergence of this theme demonstrates that through personal experience, participating teachers recognise the affective side of learning and the need to invest emotionally in the process. In this case, with children, the effective affective strategy which the teachers identified was to incorporate play as a pedagogical tool. It also demonstrates a willingness by teachers to exercise their power with, rather than against their students – energy here is focused on helping the children learn, not making them learn. Returning to the point made in Chapter Three that beliefs follow experience (see: Stuart & Thurlow 2000), having teachers recognise such experience is fertile ground for future professional development.

Theme: Empathetic Learning

A second theme that emerged in participants' answers was one of *empathy.* For many teachers, their most memorable and rewarding teaching memories were linked to making strong emotional or personal connections with their students. For example, one teacher was reviewing a term's work with his class. He felt he was talking to an empty room and felt alone, receiving no response from his students. When it came time to give out grades, most of the students had performed quite poorly. He asked them what the problem was, and they talked. By understanding the children's frustrations, he was better able to help them, and they subsequently performed much better. Another teacher was having trouble with a group of children who simply showed no interest for school. He therefore decided to try to re-frame what he was teaching around "*modern-day*" situations with which the students were familiar. The students responded well, and were much more engaged in their learning. In particular, the teacher felt he reached one student who really began to show interest in his studies. Similar to the issue of play, the teachers here sought to establish a connection with their students, albeit more intellectual than emotional in this case. Teachers in these examples demonstrate a willingness to re-construct their own understanding from the vantage of their students, in order to help them make sense of the new information being taught. They are only able to help the students make sense of the subject by first understanding what makes sense to the students, thereby demonstrating a willingness to help students construct their own knowledge in the process.

Theme: Participatory Learning

A third theme that arose was the use of participatory learning, particularly with the aim of making it relevant for the students. On the topic of the four linguistic groups of Liberia, one participant assigned, as homework, that his students find out from which group their family came from. The next day, the 2nd grade students were excited and curious to know to which groups all their friends belonged, and were surprised to find that the most came from Kwa-speaking groups. The teacher said that the students were engaged, demonstrated curiosity and laughter, and were keen to learn more about the languages of Liberia. This type of lesson, if well-managed, is quite interesting. While it does have students expose otherness to each other, it is done so in a manner which frames it as a positive attribute. The students are described as being positive regarding diversity, and in a culturally rich country such as Liberia, this is a necessary attribute for sustainable peace.

One of his colleagues was teaching his students about the five senses. He asked the children to bring to school the next day things that had taste, which they did - particularly many types of fruit. The teacher cut and shared the different fruit, and the children tasted and discussed the various sensations such as sour and sweet, leading to a high level of mirth amongst them. The next week, the teacher asked the children to bring items that made noise, for the study of the sense of hearing. Pots, cans, many things were brought and children experimented in making different sounds to hear, with the teacher asking them to listen and describe. In a similar vein, a third teacher had children collect sticks, and used these as manipulative aids to assist in basic counting and arithmetic. In a sense, this use of participatory learning at its best combines in part the two previous themes while also demanding more involvement on the part of the students. Again, it demands students to invest themselves into their own learning, while relating the subject to lived experience.

Theme: Differentiated Learning

A fourth theme in finding teaching success – which is invariably the feeling evoked by the participants – is that of differentiated and adapted learning. A number of teachers shared stories of working individually with specific students, and altering their own methods in order to help the students progress and build their confidence, be it by making extra time outside of regular hours, helping parents find a tutor for the child or reviewing material with weaker students.

It is significant to note these examples of memorable and joyous moments from these teachers' careers reflect many of the "best practices" of good teaching: affect in teaching, learner-centred teaching, and the use of manipulative and teaching aids. The difference is that the teachers themselves recognise the power in these approaches – they have seen the results of their use for themselves. The challenge is therefore not one of trying to teach these to the teacher, but to increase their frequency and routinise them – they need to become typifications of the profession. The problem is not one of inability, but rather one of infrequency, and the reason they stand out in teachers' minds, is likely that even for the participants these events are exceptions rather than the rule. However, given that they were created by teachers who have seen the results for themselves, the targeted goal of professional development should not be to teach teachers about these methods, but to support them and encourage them to reproduce these classroom strategies with added frequency. That "teachers in post-colonial Africa don't use learner-centred methods" is thus a fallacy. They do use them, but could, and should do so more often. What teachers need is institutionalised support and encouragement to experiment, learn and share.

A second, alternate *Discovery* phase question was regarding a positive personal learning experience that produced a more mixed result in its usefulness. On the one hand it brought to the surface that most positive learning experiences revolved around activities or topics they enjoyed, and, perhaps tellingly, outside of school. In fact, it was while at camp with the Boy Scouts that one participant realised he was able to learn outside of school, and is today a Scout leader. Intellectually separating schooling from learning may be a very useful exercise for teachers, in particular if the goal is to help them break out of the cycle set by the apprenticeship of observation. Critical practitioners of the pedagogic arts must be able to draw inspiration from all aspects of life in order to create rich learning opportunities for students, and themselves.

Rarity of Teachers as Role Models

Perhaps the most important item to highlight is the infrequency of teachers in the stories. When they do appear, it tends to be for a particular instance or act, rather than sustained learning experiences. For example, one participant explained how her love of Liberian history stemmed from one teacher's ability to make it relevant. Another participant explained how her path to becoming a teacher began when her own teacher had asked her to prepare and teach a lesson in class. In essence, by being allowed by her teacher to enact this role, the participant chose the path to take on the role permanently. However, one participant explained that his teacher would give the rattan (rod) to students who were late for school, which taught this particular participant to become punctual, and he now uses the rattan to enforce punctuality with his class. Finally, there was one participant who shared a story of a learning relationship with a teacher – but who played more the role of mentor. As a boy, he attended mission school and there was a man who he subsequently describes as being “like a Scout Master”. He taught the participant to swim, fish, to find young toads in the evening to use as bait. By swimming, he lost his fear of the water.

These four stories which place teachers at the centre of positive learning experiences were however the minority of answers shared. Consequently, one must take a step back and consider the implications of teachers having had so little meaningful impact on the majority of participants. Secondly, it should be noted that this reference to the rattan was the only mention of corporal punishment during the entire study, even though in some schools I clearly noted the presence of the objects. Teachers, by these accounts (save one), do not associate violence with good teaching and learning. It is most revealing to note that in a study seeking success stories in education, only one small anecdote emerged extolling its virtues. If it is a common practice among teachers (Dunne, Leach & Humphreys, 2003), then the great paradox emerges that although it is used as a tool, it is not linked to positive teaching and learning by any teacher in this study save one. Perhaps, then, a good strategy for the elimination of its use in schools is not only to focus on programmes of interdiction. If teachers can be lead to the realisation of violence's ineffectiveness in the teaching process, they might then also actively seek alternative classroom management techniques. Beyond seeking to remove the practice from the classroom, good policy would also help replace the unwanted behaviour. If knowledge of ineffectiveness is generated by the teachers themselves, likelihood of success would be higher.

Taken as a whole, the answers shared by participants to either question in the *Discovery* discussions on positive memories of teaching and learning were truly enlightening to the researcher. In every instance they provoked enthusiastic conversation between participant pairs, and produced rich insight on how the participants interpreted and expressed their views on this topic. It proved to be an effective means of soliciting good data on positive classroom interaction, and many of the lessons recounted could easily be shared widely and applied in classrooms across Liberia. Methodologically, having learned that the question itself seems to play an important role in the quality of data produced, this lesson is one ear-marked for future use.

7.2 Thematic Discussion: Community Development

In the initial AI workshops, two separate topics were broached. For the workshop with the staff of Kids Foundation School in Slipway, the focus of the workshop was community development, as explained in the previous chapter. This would be an approach closer to previous AI work conducted by Cuyvers (2010). The aim of this phase of the workshop was to have the teachers in this community school first describe an idealised view of their neighbourhood in which their children and grand-children would live (*Dream* phase), and then discuss what they, as teachers, might be able to do to help make this future happen (*Design* phase).

Upon completing the *Dream* discussion on a best-case scenario, the sketch provided by participants of their idealised community did not reveal any surprises, as it presented a set of wishes which could be reasonably expected from any community: more young people earning university degrees and becoming professionals, better sanitary conditions and health care, better economic opportunities, and better infrastructure – in this case more paved roads. As one group described it, they wanted Slipway to "*graduate from this stage to modern society*". When prompted to elaborate on the meaning of 'modern', they described it as *"inclusive", "education", "better buildings",* and *"health care*". It is worth highlighting that the first word used to describe modernity in this case was one which implies peace, social belonging, and a limit on the importance of divisive social categorisations. Perhaps this stems from Slipway's position in the heart of the capital, but future inquiry would be interesting whether there exists a larger correlation in the minds of Liberians between modernity and a pluralistic society.

Education as Key to Development

Notwithstanding, and perhaps unsurprisingly given the make-up of the participant group, education occupied a position of high priority amongst the preoccupations of the participants. In a future Slipway, "*there will be more educators, doctors, masters and BSc holders. As compare to this present when in fact 10 BSc can not be counted in our community.*" When asked how they as teachers might be able to promote this outcome, participants discussed the need to uphold the importance of their school within the community. More importantly for this study, they also highlighted the need to seek more professional development. My understanding is thus that teachers are seeking to upgrade their skills in order to, not only to provide a basic education, but one of sufficient quality that allows their pupils to continue their own learning and attain professional standing. This civic mindedness and desire for self-betterment are hallmarks of reflective practice, and are therefore positive signs. The challenge rests in bridging the gap between desire and opportunity.

In promoting the other community goals, participants agreed that stronger health science classes might have a more immediate impact on the health and sanitation practices within their community. For economic development, it was interesting to note that one of the proposed actions was for teachers to invest directly into local businesses. This echoes the same line of argumentation seen in some of the previously-mentioned questionnaire data, and highlights the non-educational but very real avenues teachers have for agency in community and national development. As actors, teachers have the capacity to build large networks and provide access to numerous resources. Having had the discussion on community development with this group of participants, it became clear that many more conversations could be had over time to help refine ideas and action plans, and to monitor their implementation, as well as to incorporate other members of the community. AI's potential strength, as made evident by this single workshop, is in its cyclical approach and its ability to constantly return to desired outcomes. Still, this one-off workshop also gave participants a chance to consider the potential impact of their role outside the classroom, and to link their actions to real-life outcomes.

A final point that is important to note was a structural silence that made its way into this workshop. Through my facilitation, I did not deliberately bring up issues of gender when discussing the community's development. Despite women being part of the participant group, however, discussions specific to the position of women, or any gender-related issues did not emerge during the conversation. The idealised community was discussed in a gender-neutral way. I cannot speculate as to the reasons why issues did not surface, but it is worth noting.

7.3 Thematic Discussion: Being a Positive Gender Role-Model

For the initial workshops at Pamela Kay and New Hope Academy, as well as at the Liberian Scouts, the issue of gender was put front and centre of the discussion. As the *Dream* phase is about imagining an idealised future, I asked participants, as described in Chapter Five, to present their idealised future for their daughter, either for her, or in her choice of spouse. For sons-in-law, participants were asked to draw a list of those characteristics they would prefer to see in that family member. Following intense discussions in small groups of about six participants, lists from each group emerged bearing the characteristics of successful daughters and ideal sons-in-law. I begin with a review of the data about the latter.

Preferred Core Values

Participants in the various workshops were relatively consistent in the types of characteristics they might seek in an ideal son-in-law. Most common were "*hard-working*", "*educated*" - even specified as "*quality education*" in one instance – and "*loving/caring*". Also frequent were qualities relating to being honest/earnest, having good character/moral conduct and being economically well-off. Interestingly, only one mention was made to physical attributes, and that was strength, and only then in relation to being a hard worker, indicating at least a partial association to the presence of manual labour. The preponderance of moral or ethical characteristics is quite revealing, and demonstrates the importance that socialisation can play in shaping masculinity. Despite the widespread culture of violence among young males that can be found in segments of Liberian culture, none of the characteristics associated with dominant and violent masculinity were listed as desirable in ideal sons-in-law. This therefore highlights an important paradox: particular traits, while preponderant, are not desirable, and vice-versa, and this draws us back to the discussion in Chapter Three on the potential lowered expectations placed upon men. If the skills of men in certain areas seem to be deficient, how can these be remedied? This would point to a parallel research path: Who are the agents socialising some young men to be violent? Who is driving the (re)production of this culture? Why are some boys growing up to eschew responsibility? Who is defining this manhood? To maximise the potential of teachers as agents for peace, it might well be worth understanding who it is they need to replace, rather than simply work against at cross-purposes.

While half of participants were discussing idealised sons-in-law, the other half conversed on the best future they could envisage for their daughters. As with the group dealing with boys, the most frequently mentioned factor was a good education. In fact, one group went so far as to specify that in the best of scenarios, their daughter would be a university graduate. However, another attribute accorded to girls by all groups – but only to boys by one, it should be noted – was that their daughter should be "*God fearing*", which, from the best of my understanding means in this context that they are actively practising religion (most likely Christian, yet there were Muslim participants in at least one workshop), and that they "*obey God's Law*". Tangential to this, one group chose to place "obedient" at the top of their list for the ideal outcome for their daughters. Obedience is a traditional value with strong roots in Poro and Sande societies (Ellis, 2007), but it is interesting that it only surfaced in discussing the moral education of girls, and not boys.

Contrasting Idealised Masculinity and Femininity

Having raised the prior issue, it is also interesting to note other similarities and differences. One commonality was the high frequency of "hard working" used for the daughters, as well. Instilling a strong work ethic seems to transcend gender boundaries, and again may be related back to a core virtue of more traditional values of non-Congo Liberians. Also, curiously, while loving/caring appeared on all lists for boys, it appeared on none for girls. Given that these are often labelled as 'feminine' attributes, their absence from the lists for daughters is quite intriguing. Perhaps one explanation is that they are assumed to be inherent amongst women. Yet at the same time, one group idealised their daughters as being "*benevolent*", which they explained as "allowing their children to be kind" which, using the same logic, would imply that this is not an assumed trait in women. Still, that loving/caring was deliberately placed on so many lists as desirable for young men highlights how role-specific gendered attributes truly are. What is traditionally attached to femininity (i.e. the role of nurturing mother) is seen by these various groups of teachers – both men and women – as being important in men intimate with their close female relatives. I find this problematises the entire idea of gender-based characteristics, as such traits are more closely related to social roles, which have strong gender dimensions. I highly doubt that asking for the attributes of an ideal soldier would see loving/caring make the list. This therefore makes me cautious to not conflate gendered role and gender itself. Understanding how to properly delineate the two is a matter that will require deeper inquiry.

Returning the qualities assigned to daughters, two others were listed for women, but not for men worth noting are that "*she should be a patriotic citizen*", and that she should "*own property(ies)*". Again, using the logic that items placed on the list somehow differ from expected or assumed norms, and are therefore worth writing, the addition of these two attributes would seem to indicate the will for accrued political and economic participation or opportunities on the part of daughters in the future.

It is important to reiterate that the answers provided issued from a mixed-sex group. In this case, the data presents a view mediated by a discussion that included both men and women – the case could certainly be made that alternate answers could have been derived had discussions been held in single-sex fora. Consequently, the data presented here represent ideas that have been moderated by both male and female teachers. Part of the reasoning behind this approach was that women made up a significantly smaller proportion of participants, while, at the same time, the exact ratio was un-knowable until the moment of each workshop. For planning purposes, it was more feasible to expect mixed groups, in case single-sex groups was not possible. Parallel, as gender is a negotiated concept, having mixed groups helped create idealised definitions of masculinities and femininities that were themselves less gender-dependent. Both men and women had the opportunity to discuss what they believe boys and girls should become as men and women in the future. An objective of the workshop was therefore to stimulate meta-cognition and discussion on self-perceptions of gender, and have the opportunity to take in alternate understandings in a non-confrontational environment. During presentations to the plenary by small groups, both men and women were chosen to present the results of their group's conversation, and no significant difference was noted in what answers were presented, or how they were shared.

Role of Teachers in Constructing Gendered Identities

Having had the various groups share the results of their small-group discussions with the plenary group, the next step of the exercise, the *Design* phase, was to discuss how to enact this desired future. As a segue, I asked participants if such characteristics appear automatically, to which, after a moment of pondering, they agreed they wouldn't -Unless teachers took action in the classroom in helping develop these attributes in our students, we could not expect such fine young gentlemen to materialise before our daughters, nor could we expect success from our daughters were we not to adequately prepare them. Having sketched out what type of man they would most like to see their daughters marry, and having described an ideal future for their daughters, it was now incumbent upon the participants to discuss how they might alter their teaching practice to help bring into being these idealised archetypes

When describing what they, the participants, could accomplish as teachers to promote the desired qualities in their students, many of the answers hinged upon the transfer of knowledge. For instance, to promote wealth, teachers should "*teach about personal saving*"; to have students be serious, teachers should "*teach them how to be consistent, focused and dedicated to duties*"; or "*teachers should installed* [sic] *discipline*" without going into any great detail of the 'how'. To promote hard work, it was suggested in one of the workshops that assigning independent work might be good, as would be to recognise and reward hard work, not just good test results. In some instances, however, more concrete actions were described. In the case of promoting good moral conduct, one participant stated that the important part was to practice what one preached. In his case, he saw it necessary to "*cut down on social life*" because, as a young professional man, he needed to set a responsible example within his community. This answer is telling as it critically touches upon two important points discussed so far. First, this teacher clearly defines the role of teacher as extending beyond the classroom walls, and into the community. Second, this answer is rooted in modelling action, and not simply telling children what to do.

There were many answers given that did discuss actions in the classroom, but were also too general to spur immediate actions. These answers included "*promoting religious tolerance [and] gender equity*", "*respecting cultural values/principles*", "*give justice*", "*be tolerant*", "*be an example*", and "*show concern for the child well being*". While these are all inherently good things for teachers to do, they do not in and of themselves describe any specific behaviour that teachers can implement in the classroom. To phrase differently, if one were to ask what any of these actually look like in the classroom, they would be very difficult to describe. Rather than discard these data, however, my strategy was to use them as the basis for the next cycle of workshops. As I will describe below, I designed the second round of workshops, held at Pamela Kay School and New Hope Academy, with the intent of expanding upon the vague yet potentially interesting responses provided in these workshops on gender.

Punctuality as Model Behaviour

Conversely, not all answers provided were as nondescript. The question of respecting time came up, and was an action upon which the participants agreed was both important and feasible. In fact, this is an item which would come up again in future cycles and interviews. If the teacher expects students to be punctual, then they must be punctual at all times. Students will learn from what the teacher does. Seemingly trivial, punctuality encompasses elements of respect for others, and it is a good example of a small and easy change that, when repeated thousands of times by thousands of teachers may begin to create a cultural shift. That the issue of punctuality also arose during a discussion that was nominally and purposefully about gender is also telling. It helps validate the theory of social scripting presented in the opening chapter of this work as it demonstrates how gender is built through actions, even small ones, and forms part of a much larger tapestry of interwoven practices. If discussions about gender are largely about power, then so too are those about time, particularly when contextualised with narrative. While lack of punctuality can simply be an indicator of poor organisational skills, it can also be an outward indicator of the value placed upon relationships and other people. Being late to a meeting, or to teach a class in this case, is an attempt to create a relation of super/sub-ordination between teachers and students, by conveying the message that the other must wait, as I am more important. By being punctual, the teacher demonstrates how to convey respect for others in an indirect but clear manner.

While at the surface this seems to have little to do with gender, the relationship between the two is subtle, but becomes more clear when we remember that gender identity is always intertwined with other factors such as class, ethnicity, profession or age. Alone, being punctual is a minor issue, but when viewed as a carefully scripted behaviour chosen to publicly enact a specific version of masculinity, for example, it becomes quite telling. As with violence, it is not the act itself, but how it is enacted that matters. If a dominant male teacher uses tardiness as a form of (re)enforcing his position of authority over his students, the act of being late becomes a carefully planned scene to portray a specific version of aggressive, dominant masculinity. Reciprocally, if a kind teacher also is punctual, these two attributes blend together in the shaping of another type of masculinity. It is a subtle lesson, which when repeated dozens or hundreds of times over a child's school career, begins to shape ideas around authority and manhood. It is the relation or juxtaposition of one repeated act – in this case punctuality – with other attributes that is so very revealing. This analysis is an extension of the relationship between violence and gender, which can be much more evident, into more minute details, which can in the aggregate also have a significant impact. The focus on this particular issue of punctuality is interesting because instead of using the body to leverage power and authority, as is the case with violence, it leverages time. Moreover, it opens the door to new investigations of how other seemingly routine acts may in fact represent subtle cues in gendered image construction.

Punctuality and a few examples notwithstanding, the depth of the answers collected in this, the *Design* phase of the workshop, sometimes lacked the depth of critical analysis for which one might have hoped. I attribute this to at least two reasons. One, it was the last segment of the workshop, meaning participant fatigue may have been a factor. Secondly, given that the initial reading in of the study, and the completion of the consent forms took much longer than anticipated, it also meant that there was less time to go into depth or detail in these plenary group discussions. Setting a brisk pace with a large, tired group may not be the most conducive environment for deep analysis. Nonetheless, the data were sufficiently rich to act as seed for second-cycle workshops which gave the opportunity to further explore the topics topically addressed in the first cycle, thereby exposing both a weakness and strength of AI: it generates good superficial data quickly and positively, but more substantive discussions may require multiple cycles, hence more time and resources.

Integrating Community Values

Beyond this, however, the activity itself was well received, and prompted vigorous discussions amongst the smaller groups. It is hard to capture the thought process of a group, or to record multiple simultaneous conversations while trying to facilitate them by prompting further discussion through questions or observational comments. As an initial workshop topic, it provided an effective way to engage participants on a potentially difficult subject while revealing numerous topics for future workshops. In retrospect, perhaps an alternative or complementary way to deepen and enrich the conversation about being a role-model for positive gender identities would be to have participants more directly link the conversation to traditional values found from their community and discuss how to integrate these into the classroom. Diame (2013), for example, explains the benefits of integrating four traditional Wolof values into the classrooms of Senegal in hopes of enhancing student achievement. By promoting the values of *kersa* (decency[33]), *fulë* (self-respect), *muń* (endurance) and *jom* (hard work), Diame argued that it helps students because these terms resonate with the values taught in the home. Not just a Senegalese problem, this perceived divide between school and home/community values is also identified elsewhere. Antal and Easton (2009) noted that in Madagascar and Sahelian West Africa, "knowledge gained in the classroom tends to remain in the classroom, and students must engage in energetic code-switching when moving between the school and the "real world" outside" (p. 609). Helping teachers link school and community values might therefore be of enormous benefit for students, helping them see schooling as more directly relevant, and therefore of greater value. Moreover, it would assist in bringing parents into the scholastic education of their children, as the arbitrary line between education in school and at home becomes more difficult to define. Parents and teachers become more natural partners in the education of the child, which is currently not the case in poor communities particularly, as observed in South Africa and Zimbabwe by Mukeredzi (2013). If teachers are to become role-models in the wider community, which is a function being advocated by this study based on the research provided, then working within the values framework, using known references and language, might greatly help facilitate this process. Finally, integrating more traditional values into the professional dialogue might also be of great benefit for the teachers themselves, especially newer ones, as it would create less of a disruption and dissonance between their own 'home' and 'school' values (see: D'Amant, 2013).

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[33] The translations given here were explained as the closest approximate words in English. They do not fully reflect, however, all the cultural nuances of the Wolof word.

In a sense, what Diame proposes is a very powerful tool for the de-colonisation of the education system in Senegal; it carves out room for exercising and validating indigenous values and practices as part of the education system. Given the opportunity to conduct new workshops with teachers in Liberia, it would be very interesting to deepen the conversation along these lines. By having the teachers discuss how to be a positive role-model within the context of traditional values, it might help to also tap into other teaching traditions that could be applicable in the Liberian classroom. Moreover, to return to Kirk and Winthrop's (2006) observation that where war "has broken down social infrastructures and relationships" (207), such an avenue might show promise in mending said infrastructures. Additionally, by having teachers from different backgrounds share, compare and contrast their own culture's values in a forum such as an AI workshop, it might lead to mutual learning and trust. By understanding each other's core values, and noting common trends, it shows promise as a tool in the peacebuilding process.

7.4 Thematic Discussion: Recalling Positive Experiences as a Role-Model

The advantage of using a cyclical methodology such as AI is that it is an ongoing process. As questions arise in initial cycles, it becomes possible to use them as the foundation of future discussion. Consequently, while the discussions from initial workshops remained largely at the general level, some good ideas were spawned. By this time, I had also administered a fair number of the questionnaires, and these too had highlighted certain issues that seemed to require further elaboration. Amalgamating these data, and bearing in mind my second and third research questions in particular, I designed the follow-up workshops to fill in the missing gaps. While many mentions had been made, both in questionnaires as in workshops – and some mention in interviews, too, by this point – of the idea of being a *role-model*, or a *good example*, much of the discussion had remained at the theoretical level. Nobody disagreed that it was important to be a role-model, yet few participants had given practical examples of what this might look like. Follow-up workshops seemed opportune to delve into this. Secondly, the workshops could also serve as an opportunity for participants to consider how they themselves might put into practice some of the ideas addressed in the group discussions.

The workshops began in typical AI fashion: with *Discovery*-phase questions. Having the benefit to learn from previous workshops' experience, I opted to have participants discuss positive role-model experiences from the perspective of the initiator, as opposed to the receptor. The question posed, intended to solicit positive memories, and again discussed using the “think-pair-share” model, was: “Recall and share a specific example of when you feel you acted as a good role model, and as such helped a student become a better person.”

Role-Models and the Mundane

One answer to this question that was common, and which was already discussed above, was the issue of punctuality. As one teacher explained, respecting time is important: if you expect the students to be on time for class, you must be diligently punctual yourself, such as with tests, especially. Another teacher saw personal presentation as being important. His example of being a positive role-model had to do with how he dressed. The story he told was how he would wear his trousers at the waist, and then some of his students began to copy his manner, which then led to discussions on “dressing for success”. The emphasis on dressing may also reflect a wider regional philosophy. In Mali, for example, it was explained to me that people may spend disproportionate shares of their income on clothing, as dressing well is a sign to others that you respect them and wish to present yourself accordingly. While this might not be the case in Liberia, the issue of clothing and appearance does have deeper implications on relationships and power than personal preference. It is an outward and public display of values, chosen by the person, or dictated by social norms.

Modelling Roles through Relationships

Not all answers fell into the category of the more mundane, however. Many, if not most, seemed to associate being a positive role-model with building strong relationships, particularly with and among students. One teacher, a woman, felt that kids relate their problems to her. She explained she shows respect, caring and kindness to the children, and they, in turn, trust her and share their problems with her. More importantly, she sees children be more concerned with each other, and share their problems with each other. They also show concern for teachers, and ask when they believe something might be wrong. This particular example thus corroborates the theoretical view held in this study that relationships are shaped through the process of socialisation, and that children emulate the examples place before them. If this teacher's perceptions are accurate, then it gives great hope to the power of schooling in shaping cultures of peace – but only if teachers themselves provide the appropriate behaviours to be copied. If thousands of teachers did as this one teacher has, and develop cultures of caring in thousands of classrooms, the long-term impact on a society could be quite profound.

Another teacher recounted how he makes a point of publicly forgiving students – meaning in front of the class – if he is in the wrong. He tries to "*lead the way in forgiveness*". "If *you want students to learn to forgive each other or teachers*", he expressed "*you must yourself be willing to forgive"*. Again, this teacher demonstrates how simple it can be to model desired behaviours in the classroom. While a single instance will make no difference, thousands of teachers modelling forgiveness thousands of times over years is sure to shape how their students learn to deal with being wronged and managing relationships.

This comment sparks an interesting set of questions that can be raised in future work with teachers: How do you incorporate forgiveness in your class? How do you ensure its sincerity? It also strikes a very important chord in a society dealing with a legacy of violent atrocities. At some point, forgiveness needs to enter the equation when dealing with the past, and this is an issue only recently emerging in the teaching literature (see Zembylas and Michaelidou, 2010). Justice has its limits, and a continued cycle of revenge and retribution will only lead to more suffering. If children are socialised from an early age to recognise and value forgiveness as a valid option, and as an alternative to anger, it can go a long way in fostering resilience against violence.

One teacher's story in this *Discovery* phase discussion, while not a specifically about being a role model, dealt with his approach to classroom management. His particular system has to do with assignments. If children fail a quiz/test, he gives them an assignment as a second opportunity to learn the required subject matter. Most often, the students are successful in this second assignment. As well, if a student is disruptive in class, this teacher's strategy is to ask the child to leave the class, and to only be re-admitted once that child can adequately explain why they believe they were asked to leave the classroom. In both cases what the teacher seems to do is to place the responsibility for the desired behaviours squarely on the shoulders of the students. If they are willing to learn the required material, they are given that opportunity; they are rewarded for persevering and meeting the desired outcome. The same is true for the disrupting students: if they are able to identify what they did that was wrong, and replace it with what is expected and respectful of the remainder of the class, then they are allowed to rejoin the group.

Role-Model and Colleagues

Not all the participants referred to relationships with students. A few of them discussed trying to model behaviour in their colleagues as well. At faculty meetings, one teacher said there was discussion of how children respond to the different subjects. The teacher said that some colleagues did not seem to care whether the students were interested or not. He emphasised that his role was to lead the way by being professional, knowing his subject thoroughly, showing interest in it and conveying that interest to students. He said he tried always to model timeliness, for example. All teachers should present themselves in a certain way, which he explained as being professional and a master of your craft. Another teacher relayed how he helped his colleagues shift from carelessness to caring. He told how there had been a problem with student truancy on Thursdays and Fridays. His plan thus became to encourage all teachers to schedule important lessons on the last two days of the week. Students, realising that they were missing crucial lessons ceased skipping school those days. Consequently, attendance improved. Although not truly an example of being a role-model, per se, this vignette exposes an ingenious way of solving a problem. Rather than formally punishing the students for missing school at the end of the week, the means of correcting the behaviour is to increase the opportunity cost of not attending school. Understanding that the stakes involved in truancy are now higher, the students actively choose to attend, rather than face the real consequence of academic failure. This vignette serves as a fine example of creative problem-solving. It also continues to demonstrate the various spheres of influence a teacher has outside the classroom. Teachers may influence students, parents, the community at large, but also each other.

While providing interesting anecdotes, this round of *Discovery* think-pair-shares did not yield as rich a variety of stories as I might have hoped. Perhaps what I misread in the initial workshops was not the locus of agency of the act (whether it was done by or upon the participant), but by how deep the question connected emotionally with the participants. Only by writing this now do I recall the words of Dr. Dan Offord, one of my own role-models who once said that often, in life, the people we try the most to help take away little from it, yet those upon whom we have the biggest positive impact, we may never even know. I am quite confident that the issue was not one of comprehension of the question by the participants: the answers provided were detailed and pertinent to what I had asked, and the way these questions were answered provided a sense of engagement on the part of participants. If they did not see value in the question, that sentiment was hidden by the enthusiasm with which all were willing to share. My sense is that the question itself was misdirected, and I should have asked it from an alternate perspective. The data I sought were reliant upon the proper question being asked (see: Bushe, 2011), and I may have missed my mark. Perhaps it would be wise in the future to have participants talk about their own role-models, and have them explore what made them so. It might be that these teachers are strong role-models for people of which they are not even aware. As AI is a newer methodology, and I a new practitioner, these are considerations that only become obvious *post-facto*. However, noting them and acting upon them are important parts of the learning process.

7.5 Thematic Discussion: Exploring Role-Model Strategies for Teachers

Even with the nature of many of the answers to the *Discovery* question, a positive tone was nonetheless set, and provided a good platform for the subsequent activity. Moreover, it must be noted that not having to go through the paperwork of the first cycle also meant that it was possible for both facilitator and participants to jump into the activities with heightened vim and vigour. Having explored past positive experiences, the next task was to idealise what teachers as role-models might resemble. In order to achieve this, I had prepared ahead of time large poster papers at the top of which I had written seven questions:

1. How can I better work with parents to improve my students' education?
2. How can I help my students to resolve their disagreements without violence?
3. What can I do to help my colleagues become better/more confident teachers?
4. What can I do to help my colleagues help me to become better/more confident teachers?
5. What can I do to help my students help me become a better/confident teacher?
6. What are some ways of showing my students that I love and care for them?
7. What are activities I can do with my students that help them learn and practise good morals?

All seven questions reflected desired outcomes – ergo, the *Dream* criteria met – previously identified by participants. For example, there had been previous mention of the need to involve parents in their children's education, and for parents to work with teachers. The goal of this workshop was therefore to turn my previous question of "what does that look like?" back onto the participants, and I had the participants, in pairs or threes, answer all questions. One of the aspects of this method is that while it provides relative anonymity to participants in their providing of answers, the ability to segregate data based on sex or other attributes becomes unfeasible. Below I discuss key themes that emerged in the participants' answers.

a. The Parent-Teacher Relationship

The first question was an exploration of how teachers and parents can better work together as partners in children's education. Many of the answers provided by participants could thematically be linked to better structure and communication surrounding the students' learning. Teachers, according to participants, should make the effort to meet and know the parents, and keep them abreast of their children's academic performance – paying close attention successes and failures - and behaviour. Participants also seemed to suggest that parents should take on greater responsibility in the children's learning, something they might not already be doing. To achieve this, the lists generated in the workshops suggested that teachers encourage parents to (or inform of, if parents do not already know) the need to follow up on their children's homework, join parent-teacher associations, attend meetings, monitor note books and ensure that children make it all the way to school in the morning, on time. As well, parents should be encouraged to ensure their child has the necessary academic materials. On their part, teachers should also incorporate parents in "*cooperative decision making*" on issues of behaviour with the parents of affected children.

While the suggestion of ensuring academic materials are provided is linked to the financial resources of the parents, all other suggestions would be relatively easy to implement: they rely on a little added effort aside from goodwill on the parts of adults for the benefits of the children. What they imply, however, is that the level of involvement of parents in "school" learning is low, and could be increased. Returning to Diame's (2013) suggestions, the building of a relationship between parents and teachers as allies in supporting the education of children can hopefully go a long way in ensuring accrued student performance and retention.

b. Conflict and Students

The second question saw participants ponder how best to help students learn peaceful conflict resolution. The impetus for this question was to break down a recurring answer from earlier workshops and questionnaires that saw teachers seeking to help "resolve conflict in a peaceful manner". While a laudable goal, it is also quite vague, and the objective of this question was to de-construct this idea into more identifiable actions.

From the workshop with CPE-affiliated teachers, it was evident that these participants had already received some training in this very question. At the top of the list for this question was actually a four-step process for students to follow when faced with conflict. First, students must "*stop/quiet down*" or "*calm down anger*". Second, the teacher must "*inquire/investigate*", meaning they find out what caused the conflict between the students by listening to both sides of the issue, and then third, "investigates" by asking neutral third parties who might be able to provide information. Finally, the teacher helps students *"come up with a win-win solution*" so that the conflict is resolved to the benefit of both parties. Coupled with this process is the idea of training peer mediators so that fellow students may guide their own classmates through this conflict resolution process, and serve as role models. Other answers provided by the group suggested increased "*empathy for others as human*" and a "*willingness to accept positive change*". It is an interesting model as it also reflects what a fair judicial process might look like, which is based on similar procedures and principles. Returning to the analogy from the first chapter, such an approach would seem to help build the necessary software for a country's democratic institutions. Also interesting is how the term 'conflict' was automatically interpreted as being a problem which required a solution, as opposed to a situation of violence. I flag this as it might represent a disconnect and therefore potential misunderstanding between policy-makers in war-affected societies who use the word interchangeably with violence, and those living in the war-affected society. Mismatch of terms may create cognitive dissonance, or impede dialogue.

I present the data from this specific CPE-affiliated group as they contrast significantly from those accumulated during the other second-cycle workshop, which was held in Jacobtown. In this second workshop, the teachers – as far as I know – had not received training similar to that offered through the CPE. The teachers from the first second-cycle workshop had all completed, or were in the process of completing, a 400+ hour course on promoting peace and conflict resolution (see: Benda, 2010), which translated into specific answers to the posed question. While not 'bad', the answers provided by the second group remained very broad and did little to elucidate on how best to manage conflicts in the schools, signifying a major gap between desire and ability. The answers provided by this second group included "*Loving one another",* being a "*responsible teacher", "Showing the danger of violence"* or to "[g]*ive examples and punishment of violence".* There was one suggestion to *"[s]et up channel of conflict resolution",* but again, there was no elaboration.

The difference between the two groups seems to show that training in this area can, and does make a difference. While all the participants involved have a will and a similar general sense of how conflict in the classroom needs to be managed, what the CPE-affiliated teachers have is an accumulated set of skills and techniques at their disposal to actually take on the task. It would be like asking a lay-person and a trained carpenter how to fix a broken piece of furniture. While the layperson may correctly identify what is broken, and have a general idea of what might be needed to fix it, the carpenter can immediately set to work and fix it effectively and efficiently.

c. Teacher-Teacher Relationships

The third and fourth questions both dealt with how teachers interact with their colleagues. In essence, what I was investigating through these questions was how participants thought they might foster cultures of learning with their fellow teachers. Interestingly, the discrepancies found between the answers of the two groups were not present for this question. Generally speaking, most answers were quite common sense, and can best be summed up by one of the statements, which was to "*share experiences and love with colleagues*". Participants seemed to agree upon seeking help when needed, as well as providing suggestions or support, and doing so in "*a professional manner*". This included suggesting future training for colleagues that might be useful, while demonstrating a willingness to learn from others, and to accept mistakes. A theme of humility seemed to underlie many of the answers, while another that came across was that of building good working relationships with colleagues, and increasing communications, such as by having meetings. The major question arising from these answers, however, is to know to what extent these sentiments are enacted. As seen with discussions on democratising education (Davies, 2002; Schweisfurth, 2002), there is often a gap between the values expressed and the practice of teachers. It would be worth investigating school staff cultures to better understand to what extent these are cultures of learning and sharing.

However, not all responses were so rosy. An interesting anomaly did appear amongst all the positivity. One participant wrote of the need to "*cutill* [curtail] *bribary* [sic]". This comment brought to the surface an issue that was hitherto unmentioned, but is commonly known – it comes up in casual or 'off-the-record' conversations – but until now had not been discussed, even in the anonymous questionnaire. It is hard to speculate as to why it emerged at this point, but perhaps that this was a second-cycle workshop, and some trust had been built that the workshops were becoming a safe environment in which to discuss more taboo subjects. Given that this particular issue was not the focus of the workshop, and that time was, as always, a precious resource, it was not possible to follow this tangent and explore it further. However, its appearance is noteworthy, and demonstrates it to be a preoccupation of at least some teachers. Again, we go back to the debate of rules versus trends. While bribery may be rampant in Liberia's educational system, when the actions of some come to be portrayed as the rule, it becomes very difficult to identify how pervasive it might actually be. That some teachers accept bribes may soon be discussed as "teachers resort to bribery", and then all teachers are viewed as corrupt and on the take. When a comment like the one above does make itself seen, it indicates that there are teachers who are concerned about the trend, and are seeking ways of reversing or eliminating it. It tells us that the portrayed "rules" are merely trends, and countless unknown teachers are working against it.

d. Caring for students

The next questions dealt with the relationship between teachers and their students. In essence the responses provided were simple, and sought to humanise the relationship between the two. To begin, participants wrote that they should demonstrate the behaviour they expect in their students, such as treating all equally, accepting mistakes, to avoid any displays of hubris and to accord respect to all. Upon their own shoulders, the participants – both men and women – also argued teachers should get to know their students, including their problems, and periodically provide small gifts and play games. These, amongst other things, would help "*provide a good atmosphere of learning*".

One particularly interesting answer was to "*make [students] know their own values*". While no further elaboration was given, it does indicate that for one mixed-sex group of teachers, a healthy teacher-pupil relationship required a good level of emotional development on the part of the student. If children are not given the opportunity to know themselves, and to develop their own identity, then they are at a disadvantage in relationships with authority figures. This comment, if I read it correctly, seems to indicate a holistic view of education. It also represents an opportunity for students to construct their own knowledge. Teachers here are allowing their students the power to construct their own knowing of the world around them.

That this theme itself arose from initial teacher responses is perhaps one of the more encouraging findings of the workshops. Promoting a culture of caring toward – and by process, amongst – students, helps create a culture of cooperation and thus resilience toward more aggressive and competitive behaviours. If children are socialised into being sympathetic and caring as being one of their default actions, then one of the basic building blocks of democratic culture takes form, particularly if it is built into both ideal versions of masculinity and femininity. In alternate models where caring is the domain of the feminine, and masculinity is built as an opposition to femininity, then antipathetic behaviour must be practised in order for boys to become men. However, if caring is built as a core virtue of both genders, then acts of caring, as exemplified by teachers and reproduced by students become an avenue for boys especially, to construct and manifest positive, peaceful versions of masculinity.

e. Good Morals

The last question sought clarification on the issue of teaching students to "practise good morals". Surprisingly, many of the answers for this question revolved around play: games figured prominently on the lists created in both workshops, although the first workshop seemed once again to provide more specific activities. For example, the lists included jokes, riddles, spelling bees, 'playlets', singing and sporting activities. One particular activity which was suggested was to have students do role-plays/dramatic plays where they act out scenes demonstrating good moral character. Beyond these activities, though, many other answers once again remained at the level of generalities, such as promoting respect, love and caring, or "*teaching them to be law abiding*". I think what lacked in this exercise was a step where "good morals" would have been identified and defined first, and then appropriate means of fostering them individually would have been easier to determine. Such is, however, the nature of such workshops: they are learning opportunities for both participants and facilitators. As they evolve they become more refined, and the nature and phrasing of questions discussed become clearer and more conducive to learning for all parties involved.

7.6 Thematic Discussion: Pedagogical Practices for Peace

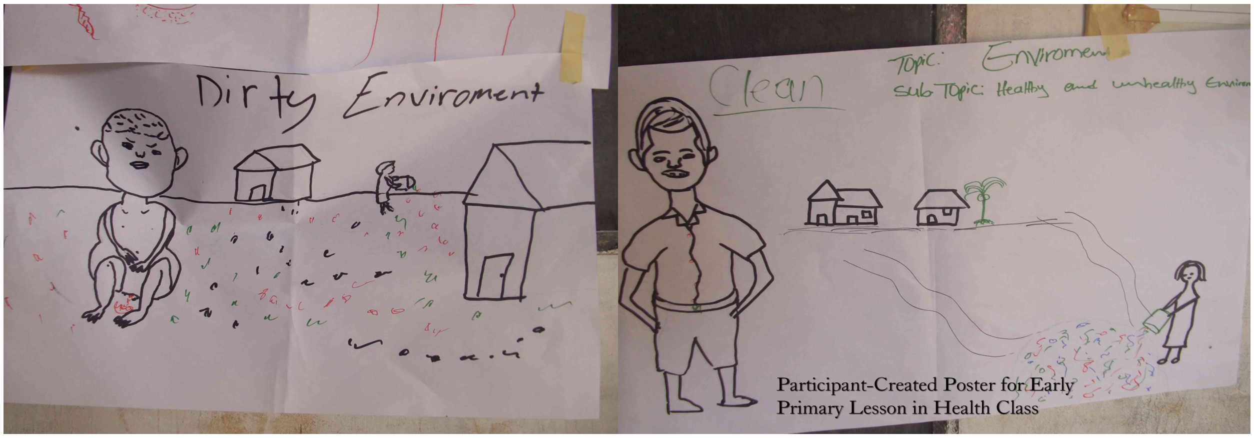
Having identified many actions and characteristics of good role-models, the final step of the two second-cycle workshops, as well as the bulk of the workshop to Prince of Wales School teachers, was to translate these actions into practical activities that can be applied in the classroom. To achieve this, participants were asked to design lesson plans that simultaneously incorporated the promotion of peace-promoting behaviours while allowing students to learn a requisite subject from the curriculum. Participants worked in small groups of two or three, and were given approximately twenty to thirty minutes to develop the lesson plans. They were encouraged to work with partners who taught similar grades, and to develop lesson plans that they would be able to use in their own classrooms. The goal was to create a learning activity that was engaging and promoted active learning amongst students. As an example, I presented a lesson idea that combined environmental studies/health education and mathematics for elementary-level children, described in the previous chapter. Using this lesson as an example, I asked teachers to develop their own lesson plans. The resulting lesson plans were quite varied and revealing. The lesson plans ranged from the simple to the more complex. Some demonstrated a strong knowledge of lesson planning principles while others less. The lesson plans covered a broad range of topics across all grade levels.

Examples of Learner-Centred Lesson Plans

At the elementary level, one of the simplest lessons presented was the use of the popular local children's game of Lappa (or Lapa). The game involves the children, forming a circle, taking off their footwear and placing them in the centre of the circle. One child is chosen to go into the centre. The teacher then instructs that child to arrange the shoes in a pattern, such as by twos or threes. However, while trying to do this, the other children in the circle are throwing a ball at the arranger, who must accomplish the task without being hit by the ball. The teacher presented the game as multi-disciplinary as it incorporates counting by intervals (mathematics), exercise, (physical education), associating with others (social studies), and observing rules of the game (civics). In its simplicity, this lesson plan showed how the proper delivery of even a children's game can be a rich learning opportunity.

A second interactive and multi-disciplinary lesson plan presented would see the students make a staple dish called *Jollof* rice. Presented as a science lesson focusing on the topic of 'mixture', the objective stated: "At the end of this lesson/act. Students willingness (a) learn to work together as a team, (b) appreciate one another, (c) learn to share". Students were asked to collect the ingredients for the recipe, namely rice, oil, peppers, salt and meat, which they would then make into the final meal. Following the presentation of the lesson to fellow workshop participants, the discussion that ensued revealed further curriculum topics that could also be incorporated into the lesson. More advanced mathematical concepts such as proportions and budgeting, for example could be taught and/or reinforced by having students calculate how much of each ingredient was needed, what the price would be to procure the ingredients, and to calculate the share owed by each student. Thus, while the teachers in question had selected their lesson based on cooperative learning objectives, a further examination of its structure revealed more opportunities for rich and authentic learning.

Not all lessons presented were necessarily as multi-disciplinary. Some were more single-topic focused, but very engaging nonetheless. One group of three elementary school teachers prepared a lesson for first-graders on 'Unhealthy Environments'. As part of their lesson they created three posters. The first showed a dirty kitchen, with dishes on the ground, and insects crawling and flying around. The second poster showed houses with garbage strewn about everywhere, and a dirty-looking child doing his/her ablutions in the middle of garbage-littered field. The final poster showed a well-presented child juxtaposed against a scene with a woman putting garbage in a pile down a path from houses far in the distance. The lesson involved showing the children what an unhealthy environment might look like, as well as its effects. The final poster was meant to show what a healthier environment might look like, and how it leads to healthy, happy children. Given that the lesson, although clear in its objectives, was very uni-directional in its delivery method, I asked the participants if they might have ideas of how to make it more participatory or engaging for students. After a brief discussion, one teacher suggested setting up a mock kitchen in the classroom, but to set it up in an unhealthy manner. Then, children could be asked to come and 'fix' what was unhealthy, such as removing food from the floor, placing garbage outside, etc... This, it was agreed, would be easy to organise, and would be very enjoyable for the children as well.



Participant-Created Poster for Early Primary Lesson in Health Class

One idea for a lesson that came up repeatedly in different groups was that of organising a field trip, although to different places with different purposes. One variant was a walk in the community to discover the various flora that inhabited the immediate environment. Teachers would "*ask students to come out and see the difference kinds and colours of plants*" and have them answer a series of questions such as: "*How many kinds of plants they saw? How many colors each kind has? What are the needs of plants to grow? What the plants can do for humans?*" This simple activity was aimed at an elementary-level class. For secondary-level students, the field trips were more ambitious ventures. One group presented a plan to bring students to Providence Island, a small island in the Mesurado River estuary, just opposite the banks of Slipway in Monrovia and site of the original ACS colony, while another group planned an excursion to Kpatawee Falls, in Bong County, some four hours away. The objectives for the trips were quite similar: to gain travel experience, and to experience first-hand rather than be told of Liberia's historical or natural heritage. Budgeting as well was presented as a learning opportunity.

Upon having presented their plans, however, I asked the teachers how they intended for the students to relay their learning from these potentially enriching experiences. The initial answers were to write a report, but upon prompting, new ideas began to emerge, as well, such as preparing a digital photo montage with explanations by students who might have telephones with camera, or to create an artistic work, such as a drawing or poem, or even to create a tourist-type brochure where the students would have to show and explain the highlights of the visit. What the discussion revolved around, was helping the students make the most sense of the experience, and giving them different ways of thinking and understanding what it was they were visiting.

The high frequency of field trips as an option for teachers is interesting on many levels. One, it seems to reveal an underlying belief that rich learning opportunities can, and do exist outside the classroom. Given the material realities of the average Liberian classroom, it is wise for teachers to realise the enriched learning opportunities to which they have access once they leave the classroom setting. Similarly, it indicates that the participants in question also feel free to extend the educational environment to other areas. The field trips were presented as being part of the natural order of things, meaning that these teachers are open to alternative forms of educational experiences for their students. This openness is good news for those seeking innovation in teaching practice. It is also insightful as it demonstrates a view that the teacher is not necessarily the primary font of knowledge: learning is not necessarily tied to the teacher-student subordination model. This transformation of the relationship between teacher and learner is key in education for democracy, as explored in Chapter Two.

The examples of lesson plans presented thus far were among the highlights. Some other lesson plans presented featured less ingenuity or enthusiasm than demonstrated in those above. For example, one group presented academic quizzing as a means to promote democratic or peaceful practices in the classroom, yet without elaborating as to how, while another promoted attending chapel service. While there is nothing inherently wrong in these activities, they did not seem to reflect the path taken by the workshops to that point, and paled in comparison to the aforementioned examples. Moreover, they do not put into question the traditional teacher-student hierarchy. Without a better understanding of participants' own pedagogical trajectory, however, it might be that these examples were in fact major shifts in their personal pedagogical thinking. Transforming pedagogical practice requires entering very liminal spaces (see: Savin-Baden & Tombs 2010), and it is unreasonable to assume that transformations are anything other than slow and incremental. Methodologically, what they do show is that AI has strength in more longitudinal studies, both stimulating and tracking shifts in values and behaviours over time.

One last lesson that was presented and is worth mentioning has less to do with its actual content than with the conversation it sparked amongst the CPE workshop participants. The lesson itself sought to teach students about adjectives, but by doing so having them "*use adjectives to describe people and situations in a peaceful manner so as to avoid the eruption of violence or conflicts in their and others' environment*". To achieve this lofty goal, the teacher would first define adjectives, and then have students identify the adjectives in sentences written on the board. Where the discussion emerged, however, was in what constituted adjectives that describe "people and situations in a peaceful manner". Examples provided by the presenting group included:
"*a. James is the most popular boy in our community.*
b. Jeremy is the best kickball player of our community team."

The rationale for this was that by describing these students in such a way you were highlighting their best attributes, and making them feel good. However, participants from other groups began questioning this view. The counter-argument presented was that by describing students in such ways you were creating a hierarchy in the class, and were showing bias as a teacher. The presenting group retorted that these were facts, and so by expressing the truth, you were encouraging students to be honest. If Jeremy is the best kickball player, why would you deny it? The exchange went back and forth with no real or decisive outcome; both sides to the argument remained unmoved by the other. What was interesting to watch, however, was the process of this discussion unfolding. It was done in a very respectful and calm manner, with little to no interruption and due deference given at all times. Had students been present to witness it, it would have been an excellent learning opportunity, as it exemplified conflicting opinions discussed in a peaceful way. While earlier in the session the CPE-trained educators had shown to have an accrued knowledge on conflict management, this particular exchange seemed to indicate that the additional education they received also seemed to have an impact on their actions as well.

In all the lessons presented, little emphasis was placed on gendered roles, although a few hints surfaced in how the lessons were presented. In the grammar lesson, other examples provided were to describe one boy as 'the most handsome' or one girl as 'the most beautiful'. When the same rationale presented vis-à-vis kickball playing is applied to these 'truths', it presents beauty as an objective, measurable quality. This demonstrates that certain gender ideals are conveyed through the school system, albeit unconsciously, through seemingly unrelated topics such as grammar. This comment is not intended to impugn the presenting participants in any way – the remainder of their presentation demonstrates a great deal of thought and concern into promoting key democratic values, such as honesty. What I hope to show is that gendered messaging slips so easily and stealthily into the teaching process, by way of the aforementioned hidden curriculum, that it often goes unnoticed, even by senior teachers (both male) such as those in this example. In contrast, however, the posters on sanitation discussed above, seem to present an alternative gendered discourse. In the first poster, which shows the sick boy, the person in the background dumping garbage in the middle of the field is possibly a man, but definitely of indiscernible gender. However, in the poster showing a healthy environment and the 'right' way of disposing of garbage, the person doing so is clearly a woman. Interestingly the group of teachers that prepared theses posters was single-sex female – the choice to show a woman responsible for a healthy environment shows a positive gendered representation. Intentional or not, gendered values, this time positive ones, are passed along to students in a subtle but real manner.

Exploring the Potential of AI's Cyclical Nature

Overall, AI proved to be an interesting and productive form of participatory research, and shows potential as an excellent complementary tool in the researcher's kit. As used in this study, it fulfilled many of the conditions for participatory research laid out in Chapter Four. One, the AI workshops definitely did seek to help participating teachers develop a critical consciousness of their views and of their professional craft, which will lead, in the long term to “a transformation of the social structure in which they operate” (van Vlaenderen, 1993, p. 100). Two, they helped make “unique contributions that not only generate new knowledge but that can also potentially benefit the participants in these studies through increased self-knowledge, empathic relationships, and positive social change.” (Brydon-Miller & Tolman, 1997, p. 804). Three, given their orientation toward professional development for the participants, the participation in the workshops gave teachers the opportunity to build meaning about themselves, their learning and their practice, which is Foley's (1999) main criterion for participatory research. Consequently, it allows one to firmly place AI as a participatory method, although with a caveat: that its success, as exemplified in this case, was dependent on the use of other research methods. The workshop activities allowed issues to be discussed that might have otherwise been more difficult, and thus helps present a fuller portrait of teaching in Liberia. Yet, in isolation, such workshops would undoubtedly present a skewed – if not falsely rosy – image of the state of the profession.

The great potential identified here for AI is its use as a professional development platform. Particularly with this version of the design phase, AI shows itself to be a potentially useful tool for teacher skills growth. Unfortunately, given time constraints, it was not possible to follow up on these lesson plans with a third cycle of workshops. However, were a similar opportunity to arise it would be a tremendous occasion for teachers to share how the implementation of their plans – the *Delivery* phase - went with their students. They would be able to share what went well (D*iscovery*), and work on learning from and improving their lesson plans, and developing new ones. Based on their experience, they could identify where they might like to improve (*Dream*), and then work with colleagues to design and implement (*Delivery*) better lessons. In essence, what would occur is a regular cycle of structured lesson preparation that promotes a critical reflection on one's own teaching practice. AI could serve as a very good model for ongoing teacher professional development, particularly if integrated with complementary processes such as teacher circles (see: Frisoli, 2014). Two caveats would however likely be the need for official time allocation, and a mechanism for the injection of novelty into the process in order to keep things fresh and engaging. The advantage of such a model, however, is that it requires little financial investment, yet directly addresses improvements in the quality of teaching. It may not be a fast process, but it would certainly yield positive results over time.

Taken as a whole, the data produced by the participating teachers demonstrate at the very least an awareness of many of the key principles necessary for building peace, as explored in the initial chapters of this work. Moreover, the rich discussions fostered by the AI model brought to the surface a willingness by the teachers to improve their craft. Contrary to impressions one might develop from problem-focused literature, there seem to be very interesting things, or at least their potential, happening in Liberian classrooms. While scarcely generalisable to the whole of the Liberian teaching force, what the data tell us is that what is currently being generalised as truth about teaching practices are in fact trends, and many of the participants to this study seem ready, willing and able to buck those trends. If anything, the lesson stemming from the stories told in the workshops is that while ideal teaching and learning experiences seem to be occurring, their frequency is too sporadic and isolated to have a noticeable social impact. However, they offer seeds of hope, and a solid platform for future professional development.

Chapter Eight

Summary, Conclusions & Implications

8.1 Summary

This study began with a rather straightforward line of enquiry. Having noticed the absence of teachers as predominant actors in current approaches to peacebuilding, I set out to investigate to what extent the responsibility of building sustainable peace might be put upon the shoulders of teachers, and, as importantly, to what extent teachers might be willing to accept this responsibility. To generate answers to this query, I focused on one war-stricken country, Liberia, with the hope to gain insight on how teachers experience the burdens of war in their classroom, and how the feel they might help steer new generations away from strife. What emerged from this initial query, however, was that it was much more complex issue. The chapters of this thesis reflect the evolution of this investigative process, which culminates here, with my attempt to answer my research questions to the best of my ability, using rich and diverse data collected along the way.

My investigation began, as expounded in the first chapter, by seeking to comprehend the seeming failure of contemporary peacebuilding programmes (Paris, 2010). I remarked that what was most lacking were initiatives aimed at changing cultural practices so that societies have a better internal capacity to transform conflict into positive outcomes, rather than descend into violence. In order to achieve this, however, actors need to have access to alternatives to violence, and to prefer those options. Without changing preferences, old patterns of behaviour will remain, including violence. The issue is that such patterns are rooted in larger narratives from which individuals, including those in power, develop their identities, and justify their actions. An examination of the literature across several disciplines showed that a large part of this narrative, and consequently individuals' identities, is built around values and versions of specific, often militarised masculinities (Shepherd, 2008; Hudson, 2005; Blanchard, 2003; Tinkner, 1999). When some of these masculinities become predatory, violence within certain groups becomes a preferred method for resolving conflicts. At the same time, these masculinities are the by-products of larger social narratives, in which competing values create a specific social context within which gendered identities are constructed. Certain versions of masculinity and femininity are prized over others within the narrative, and specific actors and actions are re- or de-legitimised. Consequently, in the wake of war, promoting new versions of masculinity and femininity within individual identities becomes essential, in order to foster those values which promote non-violent, cooperative conflict resolution. Yet, crucially, while cultures are a macro-level concept, they are in reality an amalgam of innumerable individual interactions, and change in culture must hence be at the level of the individual.

This continuum linking macro-level problems with micro-level interventions, understanding both these phenomena more as different ends of a continuum then separate concepts, led me in Chapter Two to explore how schools might be used as key loci in initiating mass changes in individual behaviour, attitudes and beliefs, or put otherwise: cultural shifts. Through this examination, I narrowed my analysis onto the role of the teacher. In this portion of my study, I also investigated what current cultures were being reproduced in and through classrooms in post-colonial Sub-Saharan Africa, and how these might be an obstacle to peace. I focused much of the discussion on the cycles of socialisation from which teachers emerge, and in which they continue. One such process was Lortie's (1975) apprenticeship-of-observation, a solution for which is the promotion of critical practice in teachers. Such practice, however, relies upon transformative teacher education, which has shown to be quite challenging in the past for cultural, political and economic reasons. From this understanding of the state of the profession, I presented a short history of Liberia, examining the various forces which help explain the mass violence in the last decade of the 20th century. I highlighted how certain historical narratives were conducive to the emergence of predatory masculinities within the governing classes of Liberian society. The mass violence that tore apart the country was the result of networks of power and advancement disappearing, while violence, which has a long history in Liberian politics, was no longer constrained by previous social restraints, which had either disappeared, or become so corrupt and perverted that they in fact accelerated its use. As a consequence of the ensuing civil war, I presented an overview of the precarious condition of Liberia's education system today, examining the environment in which teachers must operate.

At the onset of this work, I posed three questions to help me achieve my aim of understanding the possibilities surrounding the inclusion of teachers in the peace process, namely:

> a. To what extent do Liberian teachers see a role for themselves within their country's peacebuilding process?

b. Given that the national document, *Professional Standards for Teachers in Liberia,* stipulates that the teacher “is a model of citizenship” and “a moral role model” (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 8), to what extent do Liberian teachers view themselves as such, including seeing themselves as role models for the development of peaceful gender identities?

c. To what extent are Liberian teachers able to incorporate activities and strategies that promote peace into their teaching?

It was only through the discussions of the first three chapters, however, that I was able to properly dissect the meaning of key question terms, such as role models, and gender, and peaceful gender identity. With this firmly in hand, I proceeded, in the fourth chapter to construct an appropriate research methodology that would allow an adequate investigation of these questions, while at the same time reflecting the values I identified as necessary for transformative education. Also, having discerned that the post-war education literature might be neglecting success stories, a secondary aim for this study emerged to also identify current initiatives that teachers have already enacted in the classroom. With this broadened rationale, I settled upon AI, a new and evolving approach, as the main methodological framework, while also buttressing it with other methods such as a written questionnaire, interviews, and field observations. In the fifth chapter, I described how I was then able to apply my research plan and conduct a five-week study in the Monrovia area, working with over seventy different Liberian educators. From this research experience I produced multiple data sets which I carefully analysed and interpreted, and presented in Chapters Six and Seven.

In this final chapter, I take the data as a whole to address the research questions directly. Moreover, as this study was in and of itself an evolving learning process, new issues and questions arose over its course that also require clarification. Thus, I divide this final chapter in four parts. First, I address some over-arching issues that overlap with all three questions. Second, I discuss my findings for each of the three questions individually, and discuss implications. Third, I then take on new questions that emerged as I worked my way through the research process at various stages: design, planning, and data gathering, analysis and interpretation. Finally, I discuss what I view as being critical methodological, theoretical and policy considerations, as well as possible avenues for further work.

8.2 General Remarks

Overall, the data collected for this study have painted a portrait of a challenging yet dynamic profession. What more is clear is that, just like with any other social descriptor, 'teacher' does not represent a homogeneous set of values, beliefs and behaviours. Rather, even in the modest sample of participants to this study, those bearing that label showed themselves to be an incredibly diverse group with varied and rich stories. Levels of experience and education both spanned very broad spectra.

One item that warrants discussion, particularly in its absence, is that in the process of discussing the peacebuilding efforts over my two visits to Liberia, in workshops and interviews with teachers and education-sector workers, was any discussion on ethnicity, save for one comment by an interviewee. This structural silence around the issue would seem to corroborate those views put forward by many students of the war (see Ellis, 2007) or even participants in the peace process (see Gbowee, in Disney & Retticker, 2008). Although there were clearly ethnic dimensions to the conflict, which, as was argued here were artificially contrived and exploited, the wars in Liberia were not 'ethnic' wars. The only discussion of ethnicity came during an interview when one interviewee told that since he was a kinsman to Samuel Doe, by simple relation he had to flee the country at the outbreak of the war. Thus, that ethnicity does not figure prominently in the peace discourse in Liberia is encouraging: the cleavages of the war have hopefully not led to the growth of a deep 'us' and 'them' mentality. If grievances continue they are more personal than group identity-based, and that offers a window of reprieve. This absence also illustrates that the field of education in post-war settings needs to be mindful of the various types of wars, both inter- and intra-state, that exist. Pedagogical interventions emerging from certain types, such as Murphy and Gallagher's (2009) work on inter-sectarian reconciliation in Northern Ireland, may have limited applicability to wars such as Liberia's, which even though bloodier, might be of a less sanguine nature. The cultural narrative in which the violence is embedded may be very thick, or very thin. In the case of Liberia, it might even be that the sudden eruption of mass violence is in fact due to a dissolution of the historical narratives that held violence in check. The resulting difference for schools and teachers, then, is not necessarily to transform old narratives, but to build new ones, or prevent negative ones from taking root. It can also be viewed as somewhat encouraging from a policy perspective, as it actually reduces the already heavy burden upon teachers: Liberian teachers do not have to play the role of mediators of competing and conflicting histories and narratives.

However, what the Liberian experience does show us is how such 'otherness' *can* be created, and *was* exploited. The danger is that even though in everyday terms these factors are of limited import in everyday life, they can be exploited in times of crisis. A potential and crucial role of education in building peace, then, can be to serve as a psychological prophylactic; by helping youth develop critical thought then they will hopefully be able to de-construct and reject recruitment pitches by warlords that rely on pathological versions of masculinity. Moreover, if youth have identities that rely upon peaceful means for self-assertion and a sense of group belonging, narratives that appeal one to hurt the other will be much less convincing and attractive. Key in critical thought is the ability to understand contextual narratives, thus put into question the motives of those in power, exposing the sociopathic and leaving them marginalised.

Liberia's experience also shows us that the rich tapestry of teachers in any country can also be viewed as such rather than as a homogeneous body, echoing a trend emerging in the literature to avoid stereotyping teachers (see: Unterhalter, 2014). Given the varied backgrounds, it becomes more important than ever to avoid one-size-fits-all approaches to teacher development, such as those whose structure is didactic and focused on *knowing* how to teach. Teachers in post-war Liberia approach the profession from many different avenues, and therefore must be given the opportunity to adapt their existing skills and apply them to the *doing* of teaching. Being taught theory and being exposed to new methods are still indispensable, but their use is also of limited worth if teachers never have an opportunity to practice them. If teachers are to be part of any peacebuilding solution, they must receive adequate support in building the necessary skills through sustained cycles of practice and reflection. Good teacher training policy should reflect this, and provide professional development with flexibility and numerous entry points.

Overall, I am very cognizant that the nature of the responses stems directly from the questions posed, and the way in which they were posed. As is the underlying principle of AI, the question posed dictates the eventual answer. While different nuances may have been garnered from alternate lines of questioning, or different formulations, I am confident that the responses provided by participants very much reflect their views and opinions, as the questions posed were fair and straightforward. One limitation in developing any formal theory stems from the data themselves. Following Stern's (2007) recommendation that one's sample group composition should be informed by the data, mine told me that the situation of teachers in the greater Monrovia is different from that of teachers in other regions of the country. As a consequence, any theory emerging will at best be substantive and relevant to educators in the capital, but also leads to pursue additional research in the counties. As was revealed through interviews, questionnaire answers, and my participation in a radio phone-in show, there is a danger of two very different educational paths developing in Liberia: one in the city with more teachers and resources, and one in rural areas which struggles even more to deliver basic, let alone quality education, and yet where teachers may be better poised to act as community leaders. The long-term effects of such a bifurcation require close attention.

8.3 Answering the Research Questions

a. *To what extent do Liberian teachers see a role for themselves within their country's peacebuilding process?*

If teachers are to play any part in their country's peacebuilding process, the first *sine qua non* of their participation is their willingness to engage, and this willingness is linked to their perception of agency. If teachers did not even see themselves as potential actors in the new Liberia, then any discussion on their engagement would be a non-starter. However, according to this study's participants, the overwhelming opinion – with surprising vehemence – was that their profession is ideally placed to play a role, and that they, as teachers, are willing to take on this task. The teachers partaking in this study view their role rather broadly, but the depth of the role varies.

When discussing their role within the narrative of peacebuilding at the country level, participants very much discuss their agency not as individuals, but as persons occupying the 'role' of teacher within the larger narrative. By virtue of occupying this role, the most common function understood by these teachers seems to be one of educating the next generation, with the role therefore being more indirect in the peacebuilding process. For a large segment of participants, the key role of teachers is to build the foundation of society: if other professions such as lawyers or politicians are to be successful, it can only be subsequent to having received a good education from good teachers. This foundational role, however, can also be plotted as one end of a larger spectrum, which in effect, mirrors levels of critical analysis of the question. At the shallower end of the spectrum, and where the majority of answers resided, was the notion that teachers help others to know, and by the virtue of knowing, others will be peaceful. If education leads to peace, then by being a key agent in the educational process one also becomes, *de facto*, a key agent in the peace process. For a smaller group, another element was added to the conceptualisation of the role: that peace is a state of affairs, or at least something specific that can and should be taught, but it is something to be *known*. Finally, participants showing the deepest level of analysis demonstrated an understanding that the role of the teacher in building peace is to serve as a role-model, with the hope of helping students *be* peaceful, as opposed to simply knowing about peace.

This sliding scale becomes a very useful tool in planning teacher development in matters related to peace, as it might also act as a good parallel barometer for understanding the depth of critical self-analysis teachers have learned in relation to their own teaching. In fact, it strongly reflects the three phases of democratic education presented by Davies (2002) and discussed in Chapter Two. To view oneself as a role model requires a high degree of self-awareness and reflexivity. By plotting training options along such a spectrum, with the view of helping teachers move toward increased reflective practice, to it becomes easier to plan progression toward critical self-reflection, and provides the multiple entry points discussed above.

As actors at the micro-level, teachers seem to re-examine their roles somewhat. Perhaps because discussions of peace at the community level touch upon less abstract notions, and relate to more mundane experiences, the teacher-participants highlighted the importance of members of their profession in building relationships with parents and children, and maximising on the social capital of their position to act as leaders within their communities, something that has been seen to be successful in other contexts in the past (Miller & Ramos, 2002). If part of the larger peacebuilding process is to strengthen democratic values and citizen participation, then perhaps schools would be ideal loci to begin de-concentrating power and dismantling once and for all the patronage networks that have dominated Liberian politics for the past century. Many interesting models for school governance exist, and perhaps among the most successful in community-governed schools are those seen in the Brazilian city of Porto Allegre (see Wampler, 2004; Hatcher, 2002; Gandin & Apple, 2002), which would help accentuate the community leadership role of teachers. As shown in Chapter Three, the Liberian government élite have had such an Americo-centric and colonial view throughout their country's history. It might therefore be time to begin looking in other directions for policy options that might be better matched to Liberia's context.

What is evident from the multiple answers given, with those from the questionnaire in particular, is that homogeneity is very rare in perspectives and practices. Therefore, when answering our research questions we must be careful to avoid the pitfall of generalization, which was the impetus for selecting AI as a methodological approach in the first instance. It is impossible to authoritatively state that Liberian teachers as a group view themselves as actors in the peacebuilding process. However, we can certainly say that some definitely and clearly do, but also for many different reasons.

b. *Given that the national document,* Professional Standards for Teachers in Liberia*, stipulates that the teacher "is a model of citizenship" and "a moral role model" (Ministry of Education 2007:8), to what extent do Liberian teachers view themselves as such, including seeing themselves as role models for the development of peaceful gender identities?*

Unexpectedly, asking this question also created a role for me of being a conduit of official policy. A most surprising and telling component to this answer was the ignorance[34] of almost all participating teachers relative to this document. It was a document that was provided to me by members of the American AED staff in 2011, in hard-copy format, which I then carried with me to all workshops. From the first workshop, where it became obvious that none of the teachers was familiar with the document, I made multiple copies at a local print shop and left copies at all subsequent workshops for future reference. The only outside mention made to the document was during the meeting I had with the Assistant Dean of the College of Education, who knew about it by virtue of having facilitated the workshops that led to its creation. If anything, this experience illustrated the disconnection between the official tracts of teacher education and preparation and the teachers already working in the classrooms. It clearly demonstrates a need to ameliorate the flow of information – particularly critical policy documents such as the *Standards* – from out of the Ministry and into the schools. If teachers in the Monrovia area are this cut off from the MoE, it is hard to imagine what contact schools in rural areas must have, especially those in the private sector.

Moving beyond this issue, however, the answer to how Liberian teachers view themselves as role models is that they do perceive themselves as such. How they enact this perception is a bit less clear. That the teachers view themselves as role-models is one thing, but more important is to what extent are they able to be said role-models, and how they do it, and herein lies the complexity of this question, particularly as it relates to matters of gendered roles. On the surface this question seems rather simple. However, a de-construction of its key terms in the first two chapters has shown that modelling gendered roles is a very complex and multi-layered affair. Roles reside within larger social narratives, require the navigation of often-conflicting values and are learned through slow processes of socialisation, in loci such as home and school. Through this process, it was possible to discern four qualities of peaceful gender identities. Someone's gender identity may be considered peaceful if their sense of masculinity or femininity is not super-/sub-ordinate to the other gender, but rather complementary. A strong sense of self can be gained by exercising power with, rather than against, others. Conflicts are resolved as problems to be solved through cooperation, to minimise the number of potential losers, and maximise winners. Finally, violence is not understood to be a legitimate means for achieving goals. Thus, by understanding how teachers can foster these qualities, they contribute to the overall formation of peaceful gender identities in their students.

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[34] Ignorance is not meant here in any pejorative manner, but purely in the sense of 'complete absence of knowledge'.

Seen through this lens, initial workshop discussions on gender values in the classroom were very fruitful in challenging stereotypes of masculinity. That *loving* and *caring* were seen as essential qualities in close male relatives helps in fact show how the value of gendered roles depends on time and context; they are circumstantial. However, perhaps a parallel might also be drawn with a finding from the first question: as participants moved from abstract levels of discussion such as the country to their community, the increased intimacy of the question left them to reconsider the role of teacher and propose different avenues for agency. The same seems to hold true with this question on gender. As the discussion becomes more closely linked to their immediate lived experience, the more answers also seem to deviate from larger narrative descriptors, and begin to demonstrate heightened nuance. Perhaps it is because the conversation shifts from de-humanised archetypes to actual people that different forms of reflection are engaged. The lesson to be drawn here is that gender-themed discussions, although stemming from theory, may be most revealing if residing in the less abstract.

From this starting point, moreover, using AI to discuss idealised gender roles also proposes new avenues for research. While much of the literature on masculinity investigates its more violent manifestations (e.g. Myrttinen, 2003; Kovitz, 2003; Cock, 2000), much less attention is paid to how alternate forms take shape (see: Koudolo, 2008). Judicious use of assets-based methodologies would be opportune for understanding how to promote alternate, peaceful forms of masculinities, and their corresponding femininities, as a means to limit the appeal of more violent or predatory forms, as well as potentially transform the socio-cultural context from which they emerge. By sometimes equating masculinity with violence, or at least focusing so much on violent and military masculinities that discussion of peaceful forms is eclipsed, the danger is that we take these peaceful masculinities for granted, or lose sight of them. When they start to decay or transform, they do so in obscurity.

In this study, light was shed on how such peaceful forms of masculinity may be cultivated. The first lesson learned in this process was that it cannot easily be separated from other socio-cultural threads. The manifestation of positive gender traits takes place in acts such as punctuality, or performing acts of caring to individual students. The values highlighted as being desirable in young men are not particular to this demographic, but they need to be practised by them in many subtle ways. It is this subtlety that seemed to be the difficulty in identifying concrete actions that can be applied in the classroom. We need to better understand that gender has outward manifestations, but also hidden values, as well as links to other forces. Unearthing what these are, and how they intersect can only help us become better teachers. Perhaps most importantly for promoting cultures of peace is the need to detach gendered labelling of behaviours. Attributing violence to masculinity conversely strengthens the linking of its opposites, such as caring or love, to femininities. While specific behaviours may have been prescribed to various genders, what peace-promoting education in fact requires is the fostering of certain behaviours, and the disappearance of others, regardless of the sex of the student. Sharing, cooperation, caring or other such practised values should be promoted in all students, just as violence should be discouraged in all students. While promoting peace must take gender dynamics into account, it should in fact be a de-gendered process as peace rests in eliminating super-ordinated dualities.

For promoting peace in the classroom, evidence of good work exists – the CPE-affiliated teachers, for example, were very interesting in their philosophy and approaches. It is not surprising, as these teachers share two common characteristics that others may not. One, they underwent extensive additional training in developing their craft, and through role-plays, discussions, seminars and active peace work within their school communities they have refined a set of skills that helped transform them into practitioners that are aware and mindful of their position as teacher, including their behaviour. Second, these teachers also had the motivation to independently become peace-education-trained teachers, meaning that they show an exceptional level of dedication to their profession. The positive side of this is that these teachers clearly demonstrate that it is possible for members of the professional to acquire the necessary skills to become positive models for youth, even in contexts such as post-war Liberia. Critically, their experience also seems to show that it is not only the actions of the teacher, but the ethos and sentiment behind the action, that help shape the peaceful values. As with violence, the contextualising of actions helps make them peaceful. Practically, the inherent problem of their experience, however, is one of scalability: they are active in 6 schools, and had to undergo rigorous training. Still, examining how the CPE administers its programmes with an eye to expanding them or reproducing them elsewhere in the country might shed light on policy options that are based on success, and reflect the local context.

More generally, however, what can be said of teachers acting as role models, including in the shaping of positive gender identities, is that many good intentions were recorded during interviews and workshops, such as the willingness to promote values of caring and loving in boy pupils, or the modelling of empathy. The impression given, however, is that many of these were exceptional rather than routine behaviours. It can therefore be ascertained that teachers view themselves as role models, and have demonstrated knowledge of many good strategies for enacting this stature. The next challenges would then be to have the good ideas shared, enacted and routinised; by encouraging the practice and reflection of specific actions and skills over long periods of time would help slowly make behaviours teachers themselves describe as positive become common practice both in the classroom and in the community at large. The participants to this study were very cognizant of the sway they may have over children and adults alike by virtue of their profession – the objective should therefore be to encourage them and support them in developing the necessary skills to make full use of this position. Many teachers might be doing incredibly positive things some of the time without even realising it – by supporting critical reflection, we might help them learn from their own successes, and promote virtuous cycles of professional learning.

c. *To what extent are Liberian teachers able to incorporate activities and strategies that promote peace into their teaching*?

To answer this third question in short form would be to say that many, perhaps even most teachers do, or are able to incorporate peace-promoting education into their teaching. It is not something, however that they are *used* to doing: they do not do it automatically or habitually. To more fully develop this answer we must return to our discussion from Chapter 2 where we connected activities and strategies that promote peace to democratic practices in the classroom, learner-centred pedagogy that engages the students and stimulates critical reflection, as well as critical reflection on the part of the teachers themselves.

The AI workshops and interviews brought to the surface evidence of child- and learner-centred pedagogy in Liberian classrooms. Although representing exceptions to the rule, the teachers themselves recognise its value in enhancing their students' educational experience, as many examples emerged as an answer to a solicitation of best teaching experiences. This is quite telling, and therefore also partially contradicts the popular assumptions or generalisations made that teachers in Sub-Saharan Africa are entirely reliant upon didactic approaches to teaching. If attempts at reform in the past have failed, perhaps the fault was not on the part of the teachers, but on the part of the policy implementers. Rather than begin teacher practice reform with a perspective that the teachers do not know about student-centred learning, perhaps this AI venture has taught us that by asking the right questions, we can help teachers identify existing student-centred, positive pedagogy in their own practice. The policy implication is therefore immense. Teacher professional development ceases to be an issue of implementing new teaching practices, and becomes one of enhancing and expanding existing ones. Many teachers inherently know that engaged students are learning students, and many have discovered methods of achieving this goal by happenstance, but have struggled with making it routine. How their teaching might be improved is by being introduced to, and encouraged to use – repeatedly – additional methods that complement their array of teaching tools. To use an approach of "if you liked the results of that, maybe try this..." is a much more human approach – and arguably more productive - than telling professionals what they are doing is wrong and trying to correct them. Most, if not all teachers must be doing something right, at least on occasion. One of AI's general contributions has been to approach change while trying to minimise issues of control, a lesson worth investigating when working within traditionally hierarchical structures like the education sector. Recognising current successes in teachers and helping them expand reflects the same principles of good learning that is expected in the teachers' practice vis-à-vis children. Therefore, by using this approach for professional development we not only expand on positive existing teaching practices, we also provide a scaffolded model for the teachers that shapes their behaviour, and becomes reproduced in the classroom.

Even the data collected here reflect, at best, ideal circumstances; the vignettes shared in workshops and interviews do not necessarily represent the everyday behaviour of participants' teaching practice. However, this was not necessarily the objective of this study, either. What we sought to unearth were examples of good teaching – meant here as teaching that supports student learning while fostering values and behaviours conducive to cultures of peace and democracy – and demonstrate that trends in education are simply trends, and not steadfast universal truths. In reality, this study takes up Wolcott's (2001) challenge to put into question what "everybody knows" (36) about teaching in post-colonial Africa. This study does demonstrate that a level of pedagogical ingenuity does exist, even on a small-scale, and that teachers are discovering through personal experience that teaching and learning can be a positive, enjoyable and enriching experience rooted in care and love for the students. Having identified this, the next challenge is therefore to help those teachers increase the frequency of such experiences, share them with colleagues, and have such practices routinised, so that new trends in teaching and learning become noticeable on a large scale.

When combined, the research involved in answering these questions has also helped advance knowledge in numerous and important ways. The first such contribution has been a reinterpretation of peacebuilding based upon an understanding of peace as a dynamic process, and the construction of a multi- and inter-disciplinary theoretical framework. By clarifying this key, albeit hitherto convoluted term, the actual goal of peacebuilding becomes easier to identify, and thus, work towards. A consequence of this reinterpretation is that it challenges traditional approaches to what has been called peacebuilding, yet opens the door to new and varied ones such as teachers. In the process of reinterpreting peacebuilding, this work also linked together different similar-yet-isolated discourses, and provides clarification for often competing definitions of terms, such as gender-based violence, conflict, and refined a social scripting theory which can hopefully be used to bring together various conversations which need to happen jointly. Complex and layered challenges such as post-war recovery must not be the sole realm of one field of study or another; accordingly, a common language with common understandings of key terms must be used by all involved. Furthermore, another disconnect between those who theorise, plan, and pay for peacebuilding operations on the one hand, and those who live through the process on the other seems to have been unearthed in the examination of timelines. The participants to this study often discussed the building of peace via processes that take several generations, such as the raising children into roles of leadership. Yet, as the discussion of peacevelopment highlighted, funding cycles for peace-focused activities are often short, and few resources are invested in tasks that are not quick and easily reported upon. How to convince funders to adopt a long view of the peacebuilding process is essential.

Theoretically, this work also greatly advances the study of gender and conflict. By building on the work of Zalewski (2010) and Carpenter (2006) in particular, I have identified specific forms of militarised masculinities as being predatory, and issuing from certain socio-historical contexts. By examining the case of Liberia, I was able to trace the evolution and transformation of cultures of violence into the manifestation of one such version of predatory masculinity. By understanding how such violent cultures can erupt, it allows both warning signs to be identified and remedial or preventative measures to be taken.

Having established a space for teachers within the field of peacebuilding, this thesis also becomes a seminal work in understanding how teachers view, interpret and understand themselves as agents within this process. While the research of the role of teachers in peacebuilding is only now emerging, this study offers one of, if not the first foray into understanding how teachers themselves understand their role in the process, particularly as role-models. Previous works may have examined teachers' potential as agents for peace, and agents of change, but this study breaks new ground by seeking to understand how that agency is perceived by those on the inside. Beyond extending avenues of research, this work also has deep policy implications as it gives educational decision makers a firmer grasp on the possible expectations and motivations of teachers in post-war environments.

8.4 Addressing New Concerns

As this study was in itself a learning process, several new issues came to the fore as it progressed. One observation I made in the process of finding groups with which to work was that it was much easier to deal with small organisations for such a small-scale research. This is a seeming paradox as I was in fact studying a large-scale process. However, I venture that most smaller organisations will also be less rigid in their operation, and this flexibility allows for the easier establishment of person-to-person relationships. Tangentially, what I also noticed in my search for partners in my study was that the closer I was to teachers, the faster things seemed to move and be organised. Working with the MoE or with international NGOs, who are dealing with competing demands and obligations, the process moved too slowly, and I was unable to secure any workshops through those organisations. However, approaching schools or local teacher organisations directly, such as BFF, Kids' Foundation or CPE, organising workshops and mobilising teachers was quite easy and quick. Part of this explanation might be that given the lack of INSET professional development opportunities, any chance at securing some are acted upon swiftly. For the researcher, then, perhaps the most important lesson learned is to try to build networks as close to the target participant group as possible. The more layers between you and them will mean precious time lost navigating the levels of authority.

The use of AI workshops proved to be a rewarding undertaking. Experimenting with the types of questions discussed led to various degrees of reflection and discussion. With additional practice over time it is certain that much refinement is possible, and that workshops can become even more enriching and rewarding experiences for both researcher and participants. For a first-time use by a beginning researcher, I confess I was pleasantly surprised by how much data were generated, and the quality of that data. Yet, careful thought must also be put into crafting questions that elicit memories of specific experiences, and not vague sentiments. While AI can generate positive discussions, a second, but not necessarily secondary goal should be for productive discussions as well.

Also evident was AI's major strength in being a cycle of progressively more meaningful workshops, and my biggest regret is not having had the opportunity to do third-, fourth-, or even fifth-level workshops and beyond, deepening the conversation every time. Multiple cycles allow taking generalities and continuously break them down until one finds specific topics or actions which can serve as the basis of future professional development lessons. For example, from the need for peaceful schools, we narrow down to helping students deal with conflict to finally helping students become peer-mediators. This last one is something for which professional development would be useful: teachers can tangibly be trained the steps in setting up a peer-mediation system in their school. Resources and strategies exist precisely for this type of activity. The AI cycle helps teachers better articulate their own professional development needs by structuring conversations in such a way that it does not feel threatening, as well as stimulate teacher innovation and practice; feeling secure allows the taking of risks. I am certain, as with anything else, that this process can also be mishandled, but if its principles are followed, this can be minimised. As a tool for action research by and with teachers it shows great promise and potential.

When conducting AI research, the gender-related questions seemed to fare better than the community-related one. One possible explanation is the smaller group limited the scope of the conversation. However, one other hypothesis might be that discussing an ideal community may implicate too many variables outside the purview of teachers' abilities. How to foster positive gender relations within a classroom is immediately possible, and therefore more tangible for teachers to discuss, and apply. Also in relation to the gender discussion it might be beneficial to incorporate other tools, such as body mapping as a way of stimulating conversation further, as might be other research methods like photo voice, collages on portrayals of idealised gender roles, video, or theatre. The basic workshop model works, but there are many possible avenues for improving and diversifying it to maximise its appeal and ability to engage. For community-related discussions, perhaps visual aids like photos or and actual map of the community might be of value. However, the purpose of the workshops, and the intended beneficiaries should be considered when designing them: what is good for university research may differ from locally-owned teacher professional development initiatives.

Beyond simply research, a cyclical AI model with teachers would be a beneficial means of approaching professional development, and furthermore fulfil the condition set out in Chapter Two regarding change in beliefs being led by changes in behaviours. The best way to promote critical reflection is to have a professional that models it, and discusses it openly. It is the only way to incorporate the experiential and affective elements required – not just simply discussing it as an intellectual pursuit. As teachers practice and experience alternative pedagogical methods, the less disarming these become, and eventually become normal, if not preferred. Cyclical models, such as these could foster the necessary dialogue between theory and practice – praxis, essentially – that is fundamental in the reflective practitioner. Moreover, it also helps isolate and leverage non-financial loci of motivation. By understanding what keeps teachers motivated despite all the challenges faced may help buy time while other measures take effect. Perhaps that is the biggest advantage of AI, and most linguistically self-evident. As its name implies, AI acts as an affirmation for teachers: it gives them a chance to discuss with colleagues and feel proud of their accomplishments. The nature of teaching means that colleagues, despite working mere metres from each other, never have a chance to know each others' practices. As a positive forum, AI serves as a means for teachers to appreciate their colleagues' and their own innovations and successes. It changes relationships, and helps build new narratives, both individual and collective.

8.5 Limitations

When working with innovative methodologies, there are always limitations, and this study is no exception. As with many other participatory approaches to research, it is relatively new and still requires scrutiny (Gallacher and Gallagher, 2008). Only time and experience will lead to its refinement and ultimate trustworthiness. For the workshops, one key issue that I raise is one flagged by Muwanga-Zake (2009) regarding cooperative research with groups is that over-collectivism in participant research may mask certain voices and impose anonymity. That is to say, that within discussion groups, certain participants may "participate" more than others, and their views are presented as those of the group. While this might be true of any group endeavour, I tried to remain vigilant during my facilitation, and sought to assure that input was given by all members of the workshop. This meant roving between groups, monitoring interaction, keeping track of the more and less loquacious members of each group, and prompting discussion from the more quiet individuals – all skills developed with years of facilitation and teaching experience.

Another limitation of the study might also be that data generated is so community-specific that its use for other contexts is drastically limited, and precautions should be taken by the researcher depending on the context. In particular, my sample, while being diverse, would be more reflective of Monrovia, and not necessarily Liberia as a whole. Furthermore, the caveat remains that this was a self-selected sample, and therefore not necessarily representative of Liberian teachers as a whole. However, as one of the goals of this study, including through its methodology, is to find exceptions to larger trends, generalization or extrapolation is not necessarily the prime concern. Rather, while acknowledging the potential bias of the sample, what matters is whether or not it generates relevant data that challenges assumptions.

Any conclusions reached in this work will be somewhat limited. Given the innovative, and even experimental nature of this study it is certain to raise as many questions as it answers. However, as it is designed to be open-ended, it incorporates this very assumption, and allows the possibility to investigate these. Without being authoritative in its findings, the aim is to be informative for future inquiry and policy, and form the basis for further research. Within its own paradigm, this research relies on a rich tapestry of intersecting data sets that allow for triangulated responses to the posed questions. It also serves as a new line of inquiry into which, and against which old assumptions can be laid bare and re-examined. It allows for a starting point that although not all teachers practice democratic teaching, at least some do, some of the time, as was documented by Schweisfurth (2002) and in the long-term, as part of a larger-scale participatory action research project, not only identify what positive transformations are occurring in teachers' practice, but also accelerate it.

The use of AI allowed an easy, non-confrontational way to broach the almost-always sensitive topic of gender. By taking a positive approach it allows participants to feel at ease and discuss the matter – but the danger is that the discussion may remain superficial. While AI creates a safe space for discussion, it can also limit the level of liminality that participants experience: they are not necessarily obliged to engage what should in fact be a difficult conversation. It would seem necessary that although AI might help bring trust quickly to a certain level, it cannot accelerate entire conversations, and these still require time and strengthening of relationships. While the data gathered on gender views in this study do represent a good starting point, and help participants quickly present *idealised* gender roles, progress after this initial success slowed down. What the AI workshops found was the surface of many, many layers of the values and practices that make up gendered roles. Consequently, what is presented here is not conclusive, but at least unearths new avenues for future enquiry, and presents a new approach for initiating topics on difficult topics. In the future, it would also be interesting to know if there are gendered biases engrained within the AI technology. As it is applied more often, examining whether the sex of the facilitator, of the participant groups (mixed versus single-sex), and the combination of these two factors has an effect on the data produced. Is it gender-sensitive? Or personality-driven?

This question also helps place this study within the broader realm of participatory research as many of the limitations or questions about the process fall upon an examination of the relationships of those involved in the research process. So much of my confidence in the research stems from my own understanding of how it evolved, and how participants related to the experience I constructed. While I have good previous experience as a facilitator off learning events, this was my first major foray in the realm of facilitator-as-researcher, and, as such, I appreciate that the reader may question some of my methods, and I recognise that there has to be a level of immaturity in my approach. These, I am confident, will evolve with time and experience. What I hope will be recognised was my genuine desire to embrace the guiding principles and ethos of participatory research: I attempted to create a research process that was reciprocal for both myself and the participants. On my side, I was seeking to better understand how members of my profession were coping with very difficult circumstances. For the participants, my aim was to provide a forum where they could exchange pedagogical ideas and strategies with colleagues, and give them an opportunity to cogitate on their own practice. In particular, I hoped to help them validate their own experiences by creating an opportunity for them to share it, either with me or with their Liberian peers, and thus contribute to our overall understanding of the teaching profession. In this, I feel I succeeded.

8.6 Implications and Recommendations

The focus of this study was on the re-emerging formal school sector, modelled upon the traditional Western schooling system. However, it would warrant to also re-evaluate traditional schooling systems, such as the Poro and Sande systems, and identify elements that might be worth incorporating into the mainstream education system. In particular I refer to some traditional values that used to bind social interaction. If the fabric of Liberian society has been torn, and networks broken down, there is a need to help new, resilient ones. The lesson learned from the past in the cultural evolution in Liberia has been that certain activities and rituals were separated from their grounding moral code, which had dire consequences. However, the opposite process might be worth considering: that key peace-promoting values endure, and that new social practices be enacted that allow these values to regain currency and relevance in an increasingly urbanised and globalised Liberia. The war may have caused disruption to prior social structures and patterns of behaviour, the possibility exists that many negative or unwanted patterns can actually be more easily replaced by new ones as the context that kept the old ones alive no longer exist. In essence, this is building a culture of peace.

Another mention must also be made of the situation for teachers in rural Liberia. From every indication given during this study, their situation is even more complex and precarious than for those in the greater Monrovia area. Further exploration of their views and experience would be warranted. If the position of teachers in rural Liberia is as distinguished as participants to this study led to believe, and given that much of the fighting forces during the war were recruited in rural areas as the armed groups advanced toward Monrovia, then additional action-oriented research is direly needed outside the capital.

Upon reflection, there are many lessons to be learned from this study on how we view peacebuilding, who is involved in that process, and how they are prepared for that task. To begin, if teachers are to become key peace building agents, there should be a public information campaign to that effect – that teachers are not only teaching children to read and write, but are helping shape values of peace for the nation's future. If peacebuilding efforts are to be undertaken by new sets of actors, these agents would benefit from added prestige and legitimacy. Moreover, it might help teachers in some of their educational functions, as well, if these can be separated. For example, campaigns to encourage parents to build relationships and partnerships with teachers and schools, and to view schools as community hubs would help better position teachers in their role of leadership. Also, promoting community improvement projects with and through teachers and schools, would also serve this function.

One other key finding was the questioning of where, exactly, the agency of teachers in peacebuilding resides. Beyond the interactions in the classrooms, or even as leaders in the community, discussion in the literature has overlooked the potential economic agency of teachers, such as the use of pension funds as drivers of economic investment. Teachers are viewed too often as economically weak, dependent upon low salaries, but there is nothing to stop teacher associations from helping educate their membership in investing for retirement, and establishing mechanisms that allow this. To use an analogy: the rain can only fill a bucket one drop at a time. Individual actions such as teaching an interactive lesson or one teacher investing in a local business seem small, but organising collective action can quickly build momentum and affect change on a large scale. Moreover, this finding also sheds light on the failings of previous peacebuilding models: they fail to examine aggregate effect of micro-level actions. By maintaining narrow views of narratives involving macro-actors, these discussions lose sight of the fact that societies and cultures are comprised of thousands and millions of individuals. Peace lies in understanding and shaping why these individuals choose to behave in peaceful or violent manners.

Perhaps the most revealing academic aspect of this study was increased understanding of the exercise and practice of power by analysing issues of governance through a lens of teacher cultural practise, and applying the principles of the apprenticeship-of-observation to how individuals come to govern is highly enlightening. How cultures of governance are simply replicated by uncritical imitation could help shed light on developing better peacebuilding policy. By breaking down artificial barriers between the various fields of study we quickly see that what is 'known' in one sector of the academe can lend new meaning when applied to new contexts. Approaching this study in a multidisciplinary fashion added much volume to the end-result. Yet, I am also confident that it produced invaluable insight, and charted new options for research, policy, and practice that would have remained hidden otherwise. Multiple conversations are taking place regarding peace and education, yet seldom, if ever, do those participating in these seek to hear what others are saying. I hope this work provides a bridge that links some of these various discussions and generates new ones.

One issue to arise from this work which has implications at both the theoretical and policy levels regards our understanding of gender and education. Given the emergence of gender from feminist theory, much of the enacting into policy of this theory has been in increasing the access girls have to school, and making schools safer for girls. What this study has demonstrated is that we are now at an understanding of gender where we can push the relationship between gender and education further. The long-term impact of more girls going to school could be much deeper if more work was also done with boys. By helping boys grow into hard-working, caring and peaceful men would open up great social space in which educated girls might operate. Gender, in reality, rests in the relationship between men and women, and intersects with countless other determining factors. Policy that looks at 'gender and education', therefore, must interpret this much more broadly than simply being education for girls. Gender-based education policy that looks at allowing girls to become educated and independent must also focus on creating a masculinity that is compatible with the new ideal of femininity. Failure to do so will invariably cause a social tension, the manifestation of which is difficult to predict. There are wonderful models of masculinity within each society that allow both girls and boys to grow up and be educated, proud, and happy. The goal should therefore be to help teachers bring these symbiotic ideals out in their students.

Beyond this, new avenues for research were also identified that would greatly help build the knowledge base in this inter-disciplinary field. How do members of other professions see themselves as actors in the peacebuilding profession? How can we use these understandings to help the various professions work better together? Would mentorship programmes for new governors in post-war countries help break the apprenticeship-of-observation-type cycles of poor governance we have seen in the past? What might such peacebuilding interventions look like? Are sustained, cyclical AI workshops or their derivatives a viable model for teacher professional development? If so, how? Outside of schools and homes, what are key socialising agents that promote the development of violent values and behaviours in boys and young men? How might these be transformed? Is there a divide in the perceptions of rural and urban teachers vis-à-vis their perceptions and expectations of agency as peacebuilders? All these are questions warranting exploration, and for which this study offers a good point of departure, particularly as a basis of comparison.

From a methodological point of view, I would be remiss to not provide a de-construction of my experience using AI. As Messerschmidt (2008) has highlighted, its practitioners too seldom avail themselves to critiquing it. As a stand-alone approach to research in the education sector, AI is limited. Its reliance on anecdotal evidence may present skewed realities that are overly optimistic. However, I believe when used in a context such as here, to act as a counterweight to established orthodoxy, this very quality of being story-driven actually makes it a powerful tool for adding much-needed nuance, prudence and humanness into what can otherwise be a sterile, numbers-based conversation. It is an ideal complement, and a useful tool for any researcher to have. In particular, using a policy document as a starting point may offer new and interesting ways of implementing reforms. By having practitioners imagine what the best possible implementation of specific guidelines might be – such as being role-models – it can transfer the locus of ownership toward the practitioners, and help increase the chance of success. The caveat, however, would be that the policies in question promote certain responsibilities, rather than be prohibitive in nature.

Philosophically, this work also gave me an important revelation. In the first chapter, I looked at the process of dehumanisation and the creation of the 'other'. Yet, having immersed myself so deeply in this question for so long, and having experienced a situation where I was able to overcome what should have been absolute 'otherness', I realise that in constructing such otherness, one does not dehumanise said 'other', but rather oneself. Dividing the world between 'us' and 'them' involves a limiting or shutting down of our own ability to love and empathise – the very things that make us human. Thus, by promoting a humanising approach to education, we foster these very faculties.

The one definitive conclusion that can be drawn from this study is that teachers clearly wish to partake in the building of a peaceful Liberia. Yet this must be weighed against another truth: that teachers already are, and will continue to be agents of socialisation. The issue is: "What type of socialisation?" If teachers are willing to exercise their agency in building cultures of peace, they must be enabled to do so and the gap between desire and ability must be closed. If it is not, teachers will continue to shape norms and behaviours in children, but perhaps in counter-productive directions. The task at hand is monumental, and although many teachers are highly motivated, that zeal is not always supported by all the necessary skills.

What this study hopes to contribute to the overall discourse on peacebuilding is a more refined understanding of what peaceful cultures actually are, and how they come into being, or are eroded. In the centre of this process, I hope to have furthered our understanding of the role of teachers, both real and potential. In doing so I have attempted to create a discussion that incorporates many emerging fields of study and methodologies; my goal is to generate new knowledge and expand the evidence base, and, perhaps most importantly, highlight new questions and avenues of research and stimulate growth in the study of education in war-affected societies. As a consequence of this research I believe I have also identified in AI a potentially useful model for upgrading the skills of practising teachers so that they may best fulfil their potential in building a peaceful future because "[t]*heir role is so important like blood is to the body".*

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Annex A – Participant Profile Questionnaire

Teacher perceptions of agency within Liberia's peace process

Researcher: Jules Sisk, PhD Candidate, Faculty of Education, McGill University, Canada

Statistical Information

The following information is being collected solely for statistical purposes. It will not be associated with any names. It is intended to give context to the rest of the information collected. Please answer only those questions you feel comfortable answering.
For each question, circle the letter(s) of the answer(s) that describe(s) you the best.

1. What is your sex?

a. Female
b. Male

– How many years of teaching experience do you have?

a. Less than five
b. Five to ten
c. More than ten

– What is your highest level of education?

a. I have finished some High School
b. I have a High School diploma
c. I have completed some University/College studies in Education
d. I have a College/University degree/diploma in Education
e. I have some University/College *in a field other than Education*
f. A College/University degree/diploma *in a field other than education*
g. Other: ____

Annex B – Consent Forms

Informed Consent Form – Workshop Participants

Researcher: Jules Sisk, PhD candidate, Faculty of Education, McGill University, Canada (email: jules.sisk@mail.mcgill.ca tel: 0880893508)

Supervisors: Drs. Claudia Mitchell & Steve Jordan, Faculty of Education, McGill University, Canada (email: claudia.mitchell@mcgill.ca, steven.jordan@mcgill.ca)

Purpose of the research: This research is intended to better understand how teachers in Liberia see their roles as participants in the peacebuilding process, and how they act based on those perceptions. The goal of the research is to hopefully identify activities and strategies that promote peace that are already being practiced by Liberian teachers, and to help promote and share these. This information is to be collected through short questionnaires, workshops with teachers, and one-on-one interviews with individual teachers.

I am conducting this as part of my university studies in Canada. With what I discover during this study I intend to write many documents which may include:

- My doctoral thesis.
- Articles for academic journals.
- Short papers that recommend policy changes based on the successes highlighted during the research. These policy papers may be shared with the Ministry of Education and the National Teachers' Association in order to show some of the innovative work being carried out by teachers.
- Proposals for funding in order to conduct more research with and for teachers.

What is involved in participating in the workshop: How we discuss the future shapes how we will act. The purpose of the research workshop is to help teachers imagine an ideal future, and discover what role they can play in creating that future. The workshops are designed to encourage positive dialogue among teachers, and to promote professional values and relationships. For the purposes of this research, I will be taking note of how the workshop discussions evolve, as well as recording the final decisions made by teachers. I will also act as a facilitator of discussions by asking questions, assuring the inclusion of all opinions in the discussion, and seeking clarification of certain topics.

The first workshop will begin by having all participants answer a short, anonymous questionnaire.

For my research, I may wish to include some of what is said during workshops in my study. I will attempt to attribute this anonymously (e.g. “one workshop participant said...”), but, if for any reason I would require to be more specific, I would only do this under the following circumstances:

1. If I have your permission. You may, at any time, tell me that some or all that you say is to remain confidential and not appear in the study. I will absolutely respect your wishes.
2. I will only use your name with your permission, and will not divulge you as the source of the information without your permission.

3. I will will keep all information safely secured through password protection (for electronic materials), and under lock and key (for physical materials) in order to protect your confidentiality. As well, I will organise all information by number, and not by name.
4. I will not share the information with other organisations without your explicit permission.
This is a purely voluntary participation in this research and you may, at any time, withdraw as a participant from the research.

How much time will participation require?

- Agreeing to participate in this study would require a commitment of at least two workshops in a one month period.
- Each workshop is intended to last about 90 minutes.
- The first workshop may take a few extra minutes, as the questionnaire, to be filled out at the beginning of the study takes about 15 to 20 minutes to fill out.
- With the agreement of workshop participants, an extra 1 or 2 workshops may be added, for a total of 3 or 4 workshops.

What are the benefits of participating in this study?

Participating in this study allows you to take part in rich professional development activities by sharing you teaching experiences with colleagues, and learning from theirs in a respectful, positive environment, and help improve your teaching practice, and stimulate a learning community with fellow teachers. Secondly, the research findings can be shared with a wider group of teachers, and help their professional development as well.

What are the risks of participating in this study?

There is always a risk of discussing topics which may make us feel uncomfortable at times, but, hopefully, the design and facilitation of the workshops will minimise this.

I have read the information above and the Facts about the Study and

I understand what the study is about. ____YES _____NO

I agree to be participate in the workshops. ____YES _____NO

I understand that the questionnaire is anonymous ____YES _____NO

I agree to answer the questionnaire. ____YES _____NO

Signature: ______________________________ Date: __________

Name: ______________________________

Researcher’s signature: ______________________________ Date: __________

If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights or welfare as a participant in this research study, please contact the McGill Ethics Officer at (+1) 514-398-6831;

Informed Consent Form – Interview Participants

Researcher: Jules Sisk, PhD candidate, Faculty of Education, McGill University, Canada (email: jules.sisk@mail.mcgill.ca tel: 0880893508)
Supervisors: Drs. Claudia Mitchell & Steve Jordan, Faculty of Education, McGill University, Canada (email: claudia.mitchell@mcgill.ca, steven.jordan@mcgill.ca)

Purpose of the research: As described in previously signed workshop participation consent form.

What is involved in doing the interview: Because success in teaching is so often linked to the life experiences of teachers, knowing some of the life stories of teachers may be of great significance for this study. For this reason I may wish to include some of what you may say during the interview in my study. However, I will only do this:

1. If I have your permission. You may, at any time, tell me that some or all that you say is to remain confidential and not appear in the study. I will absolutely respect your wishes.
2. I will only use your name with your permission, and will not divulge you as the source of the information without your permission.
3. I will will keep all information safely secured through password protection (for electronic materials), and under lock and key (for physical materials) in order to protect your confidentiality. As well, I will organise all information by number, and not by name.
4. I will not share the information with other organisations without your explicit permission.

This is a purely voluntary participation in this research and you may, at any time, withdraw as a participant from the research.

Will the interview be recorded? Yes, but only with your permission. I hope to record the interview only for my own personal use in writing the study. I will transcribe the audio recording. I may want to share segments of the written transcripts in published material but I will not publicly play audio recordings.

How much time will participation in the interview require? Participation in the interview would require about 1 hour above and beyond participation in the workshops. This may be scheduled at a time and place convenient for you.

What are the benefits of participating in this study? Participating in this study allows you to take part in rich professional development activities by sharing you teaching experiences with colleagues, and learning from theirs in a respectful, positive environment, and help improve your teaching practice, and stimulate a learning community with fellow teachers. Secondly, the research findings can be shared with a wider group of teachers, and help their professional development as well.

What are the risks of participating in this study? There is always a risk of discussing topics which may make us feel uncomfortable at times, but, hopefully, the design and facilitation of the workshops will minimise this.
I give my permission to be identified or quoted in the report. ____YES _____NO
I give my permission to be audio-taped during the interview. ____YES _____NO
By signing below, I agree to take part in an interview for this study.

Signature: ___________________________ Date: __________
Name: ___________________________
Researcher's signature: ___________________________ Date: _________

If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights or welfare as a participant in this research study, please contact the McGill Ethics Officer at (+1) 514-398-6831; deanna.collin@mcgill.ca

Annex C – Questionnaire (Blank)

Teacher perceptions of agency within Liberia's peace process

Researcher: Jules Sisk, PhD Candidate, Faculty of Education, McGill University, Canada

Questionnaire – Professions and Peace

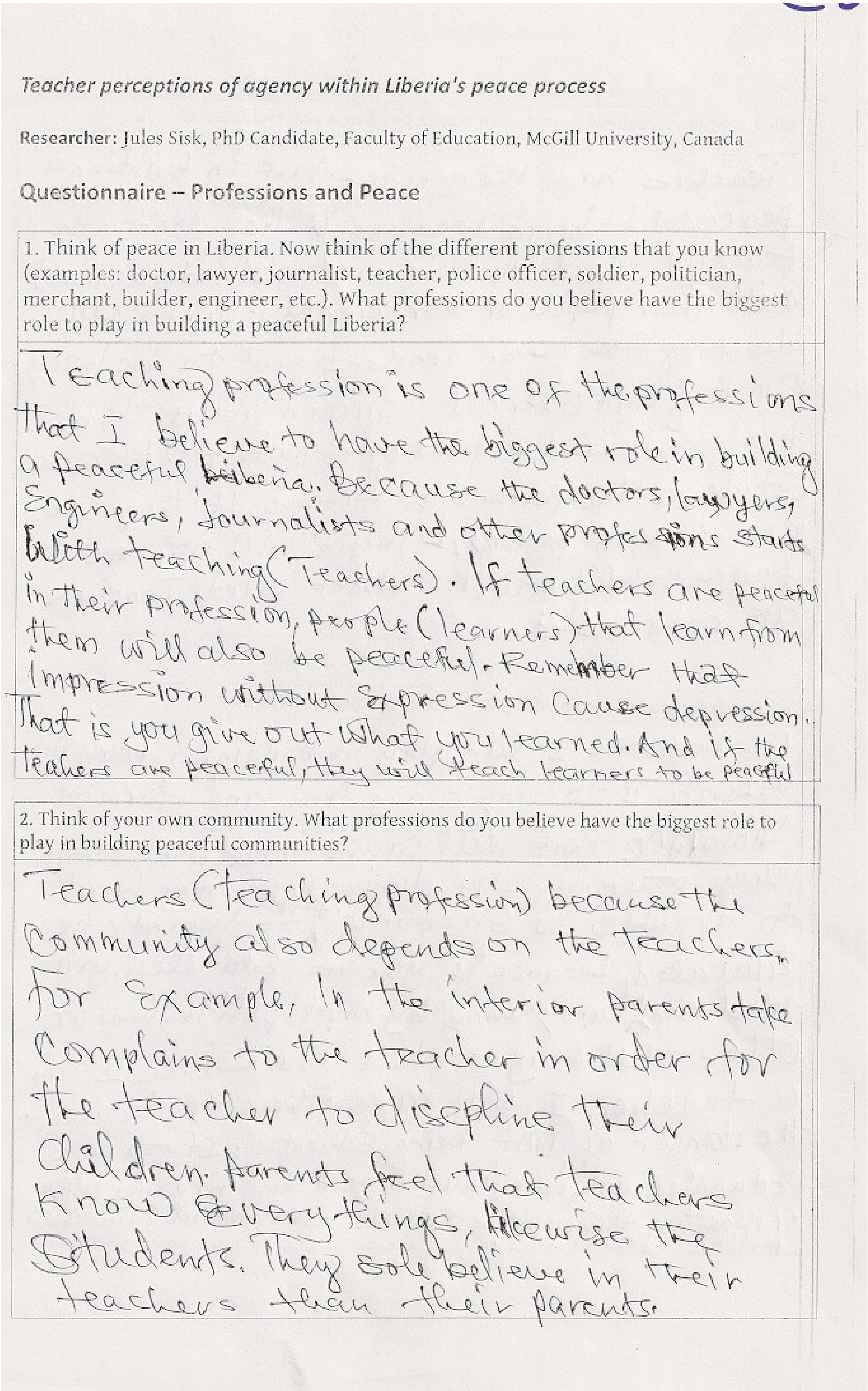
1. Think of peace in Liberia. Now think of the different professions that you know (examples: doctor, lawyer, journalist, teacher, police officer, soldier, politician, merchant, builder, engineer, etc.). What professions do you believe have the biggest role to play in building a peaceful Liberia?

2. Think of your own community. What professions do you believe have the biggest role to play in building peaceful communities?

3. What role do you believe teachers can play in building a peaceful Liberia?

4. What role do you believe you can play in building a peaceful Liberia?

Annex D – Questionnaire (Completed Examples)



Teacher perceptions of agency within Liberia's peace process

Researcher: Jules Sisk, PhD Candidate, Faculty of Education, McGill University, Canada

Questionnaire – Professions and Peace

1. Think of peace in Liberia. Now think of the different professions that you know (examples: doctor, lawyer, journalist, teacher, police officer, soldier, politician, merchant, builder, engineer, etc.). What professions do you believe have the biggest role to play in building a peaceful Liberia?

Teaching profession is one of the professions that I believe to have the biggest role in building a peaceful Liberia. Because the doctors, lawyers, Engineers, Journalists and other professions starts With teaching (Teachers). If teachers are peaceful in their profession, people (learners) that learn from them will also be peaceful. Remember that Impression without Expression Cause depression. That is you give out What you learned. And If the Teahers are peaceful, they will teach learners to be peaceful

2. Think of your own community. What professions do you believe have the biggest role to play in building peaceful communities?

Teachers (Teaching profession) because the Community also depends on the teachers. For Example, In the interior parents take Complains to the teacher in order for the teacher to discepline their children. Parents feel that teachers know Every-things, likewise the Students. They sole believe in their teachers than their parents.

8)

3. What role do you believe teachers can play in building a peaceful Liberia?

Teachers have the greatest task in building a peaceful Liberia because if they don't use peaceful words in their actions (interactions) with their pupils or learners, the learners will also copy from them. Teachers need to be loving, caring and overall concern about their profession and pupils or students. Because students the future of Liberia, if they are not taught peace, ~~L~~ Liberia will not be peaceful Liberia. In other word, Teachers are role molded.

4. What role do you believe you can play in building a peaceful Liberia?

The best role I can play in building a peaceful Liberia is to stay away from any form of violance that will cause trouble. Also encourage other to stop during what may lead to trouble. To encourage people to learn and/or be educated, because if you are educated, you will not be carry away by what politicians or other will say or tell you. Since I am a teacher, I will make others to be aware of the danger of not being educated. If you are educated you will not involve yourself into any ugly or negative things for example: demonstration without police clearance.

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Teacher perceptions of agency within Liberia's peace process

Researcher: Jules Sisk, PhD Candidate, Faculty of Education, McGill University, Canada

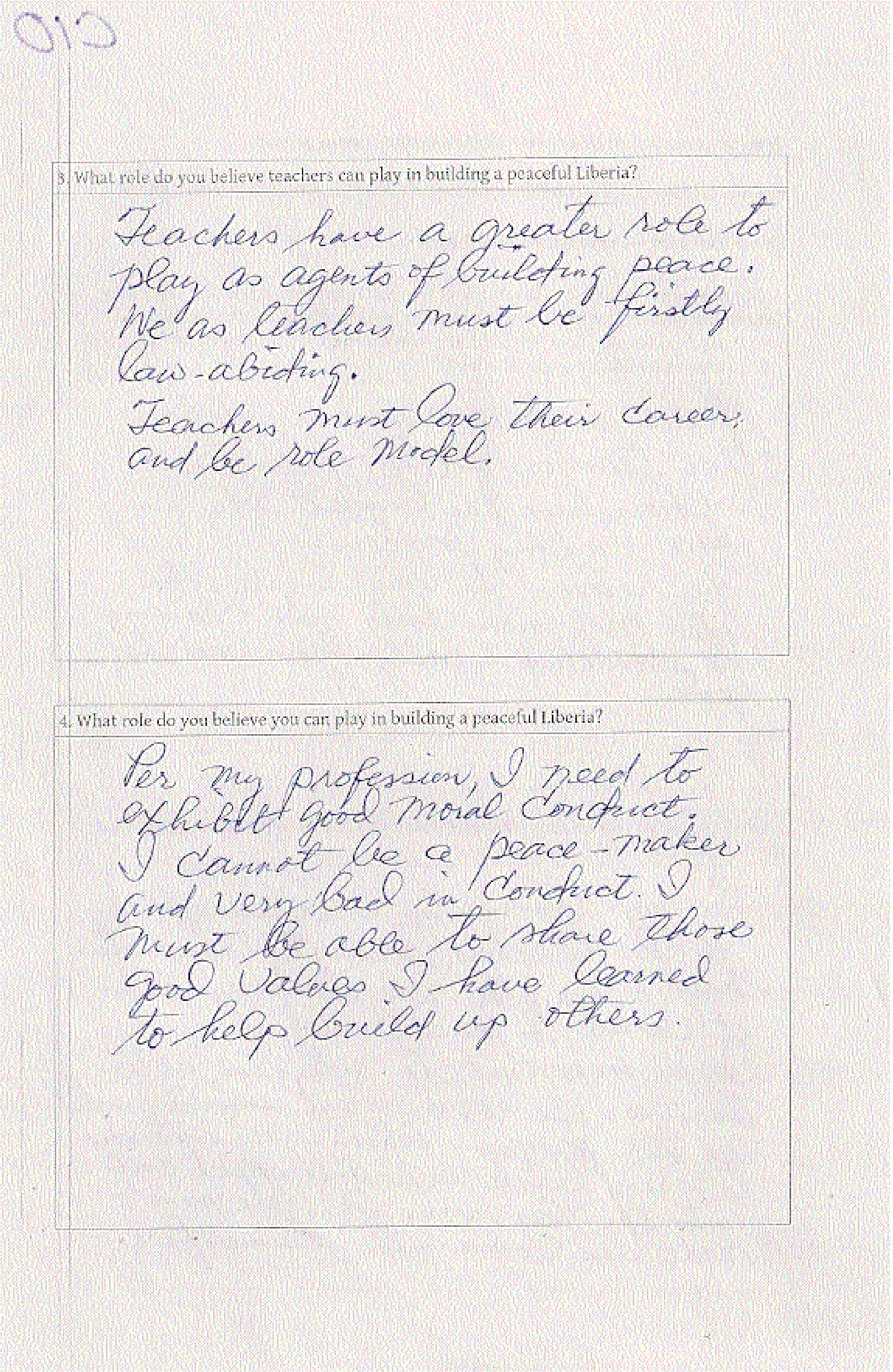
Questionnaire – Professions and Peace

1. Think of peace in Liberia. Now think of the different professions that you know (examples: doctor, lawyer, journalist, teacher, police officer, soldier, politician, merchant, builder, engineer, etc.). What professions do you believe have the biggest role to play in building a peaceful Liberia?

Of all the listed profession, I believe that teachers, police officers and soldiers have the biggest role in peace building process.
The reason is very simple. The listed profession deals with changing an individual totally from bad to good.

2. Think of your own community. What professions do you believe have the biggest role to play in building peaceful communities?

In my community, I believe the pastors, teachers, security apparatus have a greater role to play when it comes to peace building.
It is important to note that after the war, the government ~~initiat~~ sponsored the ASR program which was intended to bring back school dropped out into the classroom. This program made our communitie crime free.



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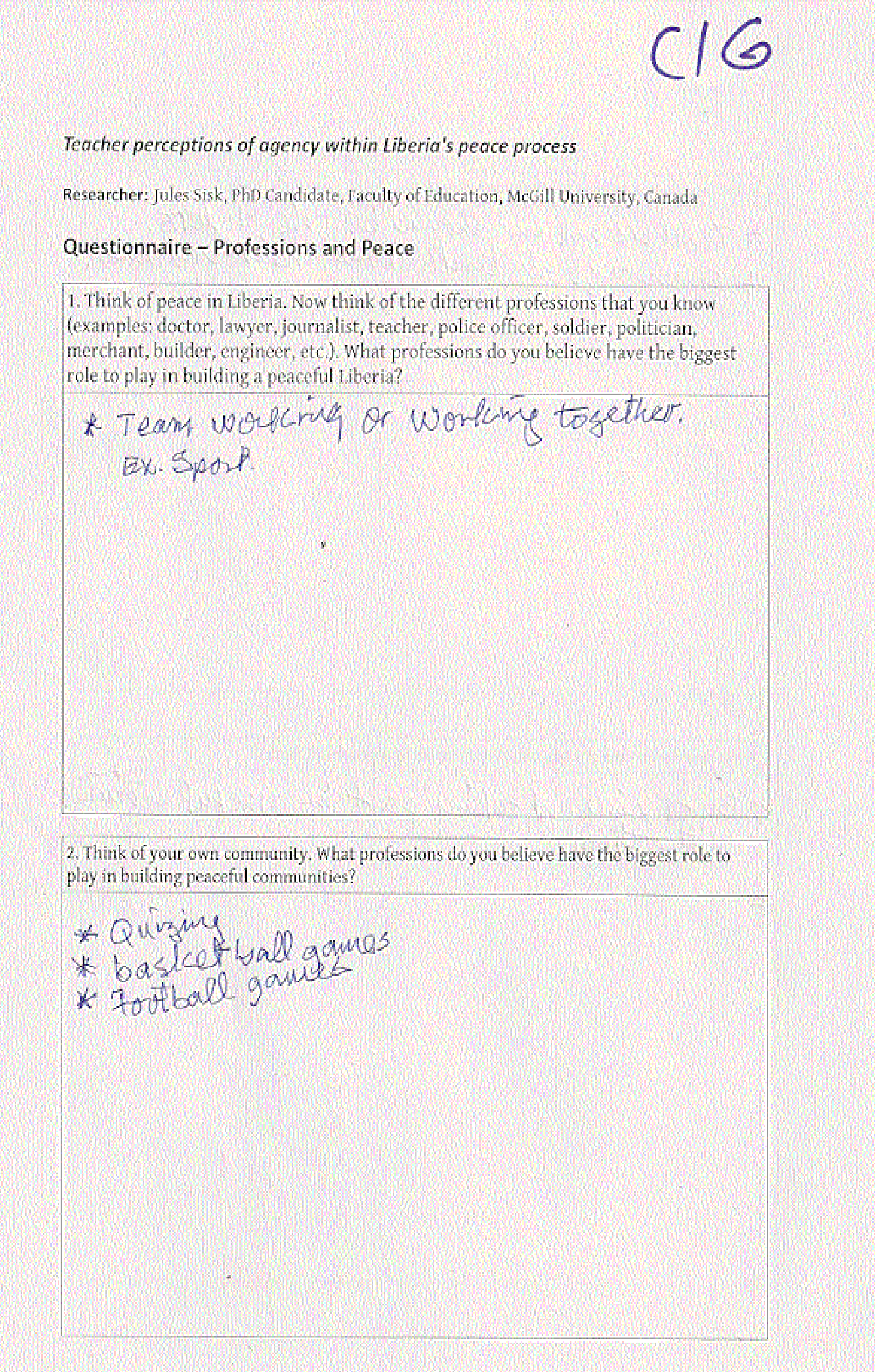
3. What role do you believe teachers can play in building a peaceful Liberia?

Teachers have a greater role to play as agents of building peace. We as teachers must be firstly law-abiding.
Teachers must love their career, and be role Model.

4. What role do you believe you can play in building a peaceful Liberia?

Per my profession, I need to exhibit good moral Conduct. I cannot be a peace-maker and very bad in Conduct. I must be able to share those good Values I have learned to help build up others.



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Teacher perceptions of agency within Liberia's peace process

Researcher: Jules Sisk, PhD Candidate, Faculty of Education, McGill University, Canada

Questionnaire – Professions and Peace

1. Think of peace in Liberia. Now think of the different professions that you know (examples: doctor, lawyer, journalist, teacher, police officer, soldier, politician, merchant, builder, engineer, etc.). What professions do you believe have the biggest role to play in building a peaceful Liberia?

* Team working or Working together.
Ex. Sport.

2. Think of your own community. What professions do you believe have the biggest role to play in building peaceful communities?

* Quizing
* basket ball games
* Football games

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3. What role do you believe teachers can play in building a peaceful Liberia?

* Teachers are and should be role models.
* Encourage students about their feature.

4. What role do you believe you can play in building a peaceful Liberia?

* By talking and taking part in useful activities with them.

*

Annex E – Core Interview Questions

1. Why did you become a teacher? Or: When did you decide to become a teacher?

2. Once you decided to become a teacher, what steps did you then take to make that possible?

3. What motivates you day-to-day? What keeps you teaching?

4. How would you describe your strengths as a teacher ?

5. What are the skills you'd like to further build and develop?

6.If you were offered any type of professional development, what type of professional development would you like to have?

7. What are some of the biggest challenges to being a teacher in Liberia today?