



**Remembering Wartime Violence  
Experiences Of Teachers And Students From  
Secondary Schools In Bogota.**

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***Julian David Bermeo Osorio***

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Members of the Examining Committee:

Helen Hintjens

Dubravka Zarkov

The Hague, The Netherlands  
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***Inquiries:***

**Postal address:**

Institute of Social Studies  
P.O. Box 29776  
2502 LT The Hague  
The Netherlands

**Location:**

Kortenaerkade 12  
2518 AX The Hague  
The Netherlands

Telephone: +31 70 426 0460

Fax: +31 70 426 0799

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## List of Acronyms

CNMH	Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica (National Centre for Historical Memory)
CMPR	Centro de Memoria, Paz y Reconciliación (Centre for Memory, Peace and Reconciliation)
CNRR	Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación National (Commission for Reparations and Reconciliation)
CHCV	Comisión Histórica del Conflicto y sus Víctimas (Historical Commission on the Armed Conflict and its Victims)
DDR	Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration
ELN	Ejército de Liberación Nacional (Army of National Liberation)
FARC-EP	Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – Ejército del Pueblo (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People’s Army)
IEP	Institute for Economic Peace
GMH	Group de Memoria Histórica (Group of Historical Memory)
GPM	Group of Popular Memory
SED	Secretaría de Educación Distrital (Bogotá’s Secretary of Education)
TJ	Transitional Justice

## **Abstract**

This study is about the experiences of teachers and students in the production of memory about past violence, and how they struggle to articulate these memories with present concerns and their expectations about the future. In doing this, they rely on some social discourses such as learning lessons from the past which has the potential to offer a better future free from violence and other social problems, an idea commonly attributed to the philosopher George Santayana (1905). To find information about this I conducted research where the voices of the participants are highlighted, and their ‘framings’ of the past related to dominant ideas and a range of literature about collective remembering. The goal is both to explore experiences, and to reflect on theorising about the role of the past and of memory construction in the lives of educative actors. One of the key findings is that when they refer to aspects of the past, these actors do so to relate this to their present politics of everyday life. In consequence, it is shown that memory interrelates with the past, the present and the future and can be described as walking a thin line between these three temporal dimensions. Those interviewed also considered that their work could contribute to sustainable peace, but also insisted that structural violence required reforms beyond a peace agreement, to tackle root causes of social injustice, by reducing poverty and exclusion. The contribution of this research brings the voices of these relevant social actors to the forefront with the understanding of the contradictions, which impose an unusual context where the production of memory has to coexist with different forms of mutually reinforced violence.

## **Relevance to Development Studies**

Violent conflict is observed as a barrier to political, economic, and social development. Also, it can be said that overcoming violence requires certain conditions of development and for this reason development has become an integral part of peace operations. From this perspective, it can be said that the members of formerly divided societies can come together in pursuing the dividends of future development. This however, is not always the case; groups may fail to settle present conflicts because earlier grievances remain unresolved. Where the past involves memories of devastation among large sections of the population, social amnesia is promoted as a guaranty for the social stability. Opponents are urged to switch from debating past wrongs to developing future plans for reconciliation. However, accounts of the troubled past are maintained, revived, and promoted in variety of ambits through practices of teaching, commemoration, and symbolical representation. One of the questions that arise is how can societies arrive at an understanding of the past and be able to envision a common future together? From the experience of teachers and stu-

dents, at schools in Bogota, involved in practices of collaborative remembering, this study provides evidence that the acknowledgement of the past in the midst of the conflict is relevant if socio-economic and security triggers of violence are tackled simultaneously.

## **Keywords**

Education, memory, collective remembering, violence, armed conflict, peace, Colombia, Bogota.

## **CHAPTER 1. Introduction**

### **1.1 Defining The Research Problem**

The paper seeks to deepen the understanding of the production of collective memory about war violence under transitional settings and peacebuilding processes, like those operating in Colombia whilst the armed conflict is still active. More specifically, it is interesting the way teachers and students attribute meaning to the past, the present, and the future by remembering war-violence within the formal system of education.

At a time when the Colombian Government has been implementing institutional efforts to formulate collective memory, a growing social mobilisation around memory has taken place. Precisely where settling accounts with the past is at issue, the production of “official” memories from the state can be subject to dispute by societal forces what unleashes political and social struggles for memory (Jelin, 2007:139). The educative communities have not remained unresponsive to such process, and their members have started taking action.

The research that I conducted was precisely concerned with the practice of secondary school teachers, from public schools located in Bogota who have organized their students into groups of “collaborative remembering” (Weldon, Mary Sue cited in Wertsch, 2009: 119) whose members work together to recall information about events from the past. The cases considered, differ greatly in terms of pedagogical approaches and didactics. However, all of them declare a manifest aim to represent what went on under the armed conflict exercising memory.

I was familiar with some of these experiences holding a position at the Bogota’s Secretary of Education (SED). Given the political and social climate, I noticed that this kind of pedagogical experience sparked enthusiasm not only among those participating but also the institutional interest of replicating them. However, due to their early stage of development, I could observe that mostly, they had not been researched. Thus, the pedagogical, social and political repercussions of these initiatives remain unknown. It can be partially explained by the fact that school dynamics restrict the possibilities for advancing in processes of critical reflection, systematisation of results and production of knowledge. Therefore, there is a lack of empirical evidence and consequently theoretical refinement and clarification.



The study of memory and the practice of memorialization have experienced significant growth in the past years. So much so that different academics speak of a “memory boom” (Blight, 2009). It has been notorious the attention given to the processes through which collective memory is forged and transmitted. Rather than being spontaneous, memory is distributed among members of the society, mediated by shared cultural tools and placed within different arenas between the “public” and the “private” space (Ashplant, Dawson, and Roper, 2000). The confluence of these elements imparts dynamism to what seems a static concept such as memory. In the reality, it constitutes an active and continuous process that occurs at any place and any point of time, which would be better referred as “collective remembering” (Wertsch, 2009; Roediger, Zaromb and Butler, 2009).

In light of these considerations, peace talks continue and official measures of memory are implemented as part of a larger transitional justice scheme. In Bogotá, a “field of public representation of history” (Johnson and Dawson, 1982) is in the process of being configured, partly through pedagogical practices grounded in schools oriented to the production of collective memories of the armed conflict.

However, direct and structural violence permeates schools, at varying levels of intensity, and disrupts the temporal linearity between the past, the present and the future. Under these conditions, teachers, and students face a relevant question regarding their practice: why is memory needed as a collective practice when violence is still an immediate experience? If the knowledge of past occurrences matters, it does not constitute the entire pedagogical motivation among them. Therefore, remembering is certainly not about the past but the present and future. In this regard, teachers and students have to justify why remembering should be privileged over forgetting. For that reason, they commonly invoke the premise that the knowledge about the past avoids the repetition of violence in the future. Far from being an easy task, it pushes them to deal with the contradictions that result when such a frame is set against present and historical evidence. The persistence of violence and injustice gives the appearance that the problems of the past refuse to go away, and thus the desired future never will arrive. Nevertheless, teacher and students maintain the enthusiasm and resist giving up their assumed compromise with memory.

To provide an insight into the struggles teachers and students face in their attempt to make sense of the violent past to advance in the construction of peace and the transformation of violence and injustice I proceed as follows. First, in Chapter 2 providing a description of the methodological strategies applied to have access to the experience of a “purposive” sample of teachers and students from their voices. Then, I reconstruct the experiences of collaborative

remembering from which I obtain the empirical evidence. In Chapter 3, I review some theoretical sources within the field of memory studies to first, interrogate the concepts of memory, collective memory and collective remembering. Posteriorly, I deal with the politics of war memory and commemoration looking for alternative accounts through which address the experience of teachers and students who are carrying out processes of collective remembering in the minds of the armed conflict. Also, I present reasons why I adopt framing as a tool for the analysis. In Chapter 4, I articulate the main findings of the research, discussing a commonly invoked frame that informs the intentions and motivations expressed by my interviewees. I observe that the idea of learning from the past in order to shape a better future provides an initial rationale to advance in the work of memory. In Chapter 5, however, I show how this frame loses its initial potential when is contrasted with the present circumstances and future expectations. Finally, from the participants' perspective I conclude by saying that the production of memory should be concomitant with an extended notion of peace that embraces not only overcoming the armed confrontation but also the transformation of the contradictions that lie at the root of the conflict.

The results of this research can serve the teachers and students to strategise their practice as producers of memory in the public sphere in recognition of the contextual constraints. The presented findings also can inform the process of decision making in terms of educative policy, more exactly when programming strategies on memorialisation, peace building and reconciliation may involve the participation of the school communities. Furthermore, to some extent, this study can contribute to filling gaps in pedagogical practice and academic research on the ways the past acquires meaning through the practices of history teaching and collective remembering. Especially, regarding the peculiarities of the Colombian context where the conflict remains active and at the same time unflagging efforts to build peace are undertaken.

## **1.2. An Unusual Context To Memorialize The Armed Conflict**

Currently, while holding peace talks with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia– People's Army (FARC-EP) and parallel exploratory talks with the National Liberation Army (ELN), the Colombian Government has been implementing measures of transitional justice (TJ) for almost one decade. In this sense, Colombia represents an unusual case because “a peace process and the application of TJ mechanisms, when no obvious transition has occurred, have been intensively debated” (García-Godos and Lid, 2010: 488). The question of how to deal with the past to build a different future, as the basis of a sustaina-

ble peace, or as Andrew Rigby (2001: 19) puts it “envisioning of a common future together” has been placed at the core of the public debate. In turn, a series of institutional reforms have been made in order to come to terms with the past through the implementation of ambitious schemes that encompass disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) of former combatants, retributive justice, truth-seeking/truth-telling, land restitution, victim reparations, among other measures.

In 2003, the Colombian Government headed by then President Alvaro Uribe and the leaders of the United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (AUC) negotiated the disarmament and demobilisation of the members of these groups (MAPP/OEA, 2004: 4). This process was carried out within a legal framework- Peace and Justice Law that came under criticism from national and international bodies. The claim against was that the judicial mechanism led to the denial of crimes committed by the Self-Defence Forces and other illegal groups. Subsequently, this law was declared unconstitutional by Courts leading to its reform and the subsequent inclusion of mechanisms for holding accountable those committing war crimes, truth telling and preserving the historical memory of the armed conflict (Centro de Memoria Histórica, 2009: 21). Regarding the latter, it was created the Group of Historical Memory (MH) to inform about the reasons for the emergence of the armed groups from 1964 onwards. Among other results, this group produced recommendations of public policy, extensive written reports and audio-visual materials, with nationwide circulation (Centro de Memoria Histórica, 2009: 22).

In 2010, there was a change in the government. Juan Manuel Santos, Uribe’s former defence minister, became president. He proclaimed his commitment to advance extensive reforms to address issues of land and victims’ rights, as a part of a more comprehensive conflict resolution strategy (International Crisis Group, 2010: 13). In this respect, in 2011, a significant advance was made with the approval of the Victims and Land Restitution Law- Law 1448. This law was expected to execute the reparation of approximately four million victims of the armed conflict and hand back land to displaced peasants. In its chapter IX, the victims’ law referred to measures of satisfaction that the state had to create to advance in the reconstruction of the victims’ memory (Colombia, 2011). In compliance with this disposition, the National Centre for Historical Memory (Grupo de Memoria Histórica: 2013, 3) was created, inheriting the functions of the previous Group of Historical Memory formed by the previous government.

Later on, President Santos decided to open official peace talks with the FARC-EP. Within this framework, the parties have agreed on a five-fold agenda. Donna Pankhurst (1999: 241) says that a common challenge in a peace settle-

ment is to find concepts and structures to ensure a minimum type of justice acceptable to all the key players. Although the last word has not been said on this subject, there is evidence of some consensus on the need to incorporate mechanisms to uncover the truth and to expose it to public opinion. In this respect, the government and the FARC-EP jointly designed a Historical Commission on the Armed Conflict and its Victims (CHCV). The purpose of such an arrangement was to provide inputs about the causes and the impacts of the conflict to be considered by the negotiators. As a result, in February 2015, the Commission released a report, made up of a selection of essays about the causes and the evolution of the internal armed conflict, written by 12 Colombian Scholars (Comisión Histórica del Conflicto y sus Víctimas, 2015).

Therefore, in Colombia, increasing institutional efforts have been directed to formulating collective memory and establishing justice. Or in the words of Enzo Traverso (Cited in Garcia Ruiz, Alicia: 2010) implementing policies on memory as deliberate public interventions into the representation of the past. Elizabeth Jelin (2007: 138) defines these interventions as a multi-layered process since “One type or set of policies cannot solve or close the accounts with the past. Rather, the unfolding of one policy sets the stage for others”. In this respect, Jelin (2007: 138) mentions that archives, commemorations, and territorial markers are some of the areas where centralised state memorialisation take place. As evidence, the recent creation of national and local centres for historical memory can be observed. Similarly, the 9th of April was officially decreed the date for the commemoration of the armed conflict’s victims. Also, shortly, a National Museum of Memory will be built in Bogota.

However, societies where settling accounts with the past is at issue, the production of “official” memories from the state can be subject to dispute. As it is also suggested by Jelin (2007, p.139) societal forces may be in the position to unleash political and social struggles for memory. In Colombia, according with Gonzalo Sanchez (Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 2013: 13) over the last two decades, a growing social mobilisation around memory has taken place. As the response to continuous impunity and systematic attempts to denial/forgetting of violence in the midst of the armed confrontation. From this perspective, it can be said that the production of memory is a phenomenon that not only occurs linked to the action of central state institutions.

In contrast, it can be the effect of the agency of certain society organizations and local communities, in the course of everyday life. But not without difficulties, Sandra Rodríguez (2009, 42-43) says that in Colombia, the bulk of the population dismisses impunity and only conceives nominal recognition to the victims. Moreover, the social movements that for example vindicate victim’s memory along with a systematic work of legal support, psychosocial care, re-

search and advocacy are overshadowed by the media and at the same time disqualified and even criminalized by the state. Monica Alvarez (Individual interview, 28/08/2015) from the Centre for Memory, Peace and Reconciliation (CMPR) points out that remains a generalized problem in the Colombian society “where people are not ready yet to value the experience of the victims, as a valid source of social knowledge from which is not only possible but also necessary to learn”.

Even though some educative communities have not remained unresponsive to the social mobilisation around memory. At public and private schools there are teachers, students and parents doing their bit, through a variety of pedagogies, inside and outside of the classrooms. Jiménez, Infante and Cortés (2011, 309) give account of how in Bogotá, since 2005 and onwards, memory as a topic and as a pedagogical device has been gaining space within the formal system of schooling. These authors attribute this occurrence to the practice of teachers, at a time when the Colombian society largely discusses truth, justice, and reparation.

In this regard, the production of memory at school as well as in the larger Colombian context cannot be dissociated from the peace process and the application of TJ mechanisms when no obvious transition has occurred and the armed confrontation continues at varying levels of intensity.

## **1.4. Research Questions**

### **1.4.1 Main question:**

Taking examples from three schools in Bogota: How do teachers and students experience and shape their social production of memory about the armed conflict while the violence continues at varying levels of intensity?

### **1.4.2. Sub-questions**

- How do teachers and students remember the violent past when the violence remains active in the present?
- How do teachers and students of the studied examples frame memories of past violence?
- What are the main potentialities and concerns that teachers and students perceive regarding how practices of memorialisation can inform their present and even their future?

## **1.5. Objectives**

### **Theoretical objective**

To articulate concrete examples from Bogota with the international literature to deepen the understanding of the connections between memorialisation at school and broader processes such as the implementation of transitional justice and peacebuilding reconstruction.

### **Social objectives**

To provide teachers and students with the opportunity to work through their own experiences and to create greater awareness of their own learning what can help them to strategise future actions in the field of public production of memory.

### **Policy objectives**

To inform decision-making processes over education policy with regard to curriculum, pedagogy and practices of memorialization and peace, taking as reference the pioneering experiences and the self-reflection of teachers and students.

With this set of questions and objectives in mind, I entered into communication with 4 teachers and visited the schools where they worked in Bogota to personally dialogite with them about their pedagogic initiatives. Also, I held different encounters with a total of 23 students of secondary to discuss about the significance of the work on memory in their personal lives. A total of 23 students (13 female participants and 10 male participants), with ages ranging from 14 to 19 participated in the three sessions of group interviewing. In addition, I interviewed officials from the CNMH, the CMPR and the SED (See Annex 1 Chronological account of the interviews carried out). In the next chapter, I describe with detail the process through which I obtained the empirical evidence and that constituted the base for the posterior analysis.

## **CHAPTER 2. Operationalising The Research Strategies**

### **2.1. Data Collection Methods And Participants Selection**

In trying to make sense of social reality, from a qualitative stance, according to James and Busher (2012: 179), researchers engage in practical activities of generating and interpreting data to answer questions about the meaning of what their participants know and do. With the purpose of understanding how is the experience of teachers and students in producing memories of Colombia's armed conflict, at their schools in Bogotá; I decided to conduct individual and group interviews with them, based on the assumption that interviews are means of systematic inquiry to obtain a rich, in-depth experimental account of particular aspects of people's lives (Fontana & Frey, 2000: 646). Also drawing from the idea that research on education is the construction and reconstruction of personal and social stories where learners and teachers are storytellers and characters in their own right (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990: 2)

I opted to focus my inquiry on teachers and groups of students. On the one hand, Teachers can be memory makers, since their testimony provides tangible alternatives to official history, resisting the need for uniform truth. Similarly, teachers who use lived experiences can engage students in interpretative acts and create spaces for the practice of dialogue and dissent. On the other hand, secondary school students such as the ones that were interviewed are part, according to Pennebaker and Gonzales (2009, 173), of the age group-between 13 years and 25 years- through which historical memories are largely retained and passed on.

Based on the presupposition that we live in a social world characterised by the possibilities of multiple interpretations (Yanow, 2000:5), I conducted individual and group interviews, to capture a diversity of views and opinions among different educative stakeholders. I faced the challenge of conducting all of them in a short period of three weeks, from August the 11th until September the 2. Although I had already started the contact with the teachers before traveling to Bogota, it was only after I arrived there, over the first week, that I could arrange dates to undertake the interviews. So the first week was a period to solve logistic matters and to refine the instruments. Regarding the latter aspect, I had the opportunity to present the questionnaires and to get feedback about them from different readers. Between the second and the third week of my staying in Bogota, I conducted a total of 9 interviews (See Annex 1 Chronological account of the interviews carried out).

At first, I made use of my previous experience working for Bogota's Secretary of Education and contacted the teachers Diana Paola Fique (School Alfonso Reyes Echandia) and Carlos Arturo Charria (School Los Robles). Former colleagues from Bogota's Secretary of Education referred the other two teachers: Arminio Vargas (School Manuel del Socorro Rodriguez) and Yuletzky Gómez (School Orlando Fals Borda). Due to the lack of time, it was not possible to select a broader and perhaps more representative sample. However, the final sample can be regarded as a "purposive", which offers the opportunity to learn. In this respect, Stake (1994: 243) points out "potential for learning is a different and sometimes superior criterion to representativeness".

The four teachers convened led a memory exercise, in four different schools, located in diverse areas of Bogota-Suba, Bosa, Rafael Uribe and Usme each with singular political, economic and social dynamics. Also, the teachers varied in terms of their backgrounds, years of experience and pedagogical intentions. All these factors allowed me to expect contrasting points from diversely located educators, with a common interest in memory practices.

The teachers were charged with constituting the groups of students to be interviewed. They were given with sufficient autonomy; but they were however asked to consider three basic requirements. First, that the groups were among 4 and 10 students (not less or more); second, that the students were willing to participate in the group interview; and third, that the students were active participants in the on-going exercise of memory. Whilst organising the groups, the teachers mentioned that they used additional criteria in the selection of students. First, they selected the more vocal students. Additionally, the teachers went for those students with ownership of the project.

As a method, the scope of the interview can be the understanding of an individual or a group perspective (Punch, 2013: 114). However, in this case, the way of proceeding with the individual interviews was different to the group interviews with the students. The interaction with the teachers started with a "grand tour question" (Cousin, 2009: 63) that allowed interviewees to talk generally about their current pedagogical practices at the same that led the way for the discussion. With the students, an icebreaker activity was adapted to get them familiar with the range of topics to be addressed. This space gave them the opportunity to share personal memories, which aroused a feeling of connectedness among the participants.



Despite the differences, the questions addressed to teachers and students were formulated trying to keep a similar thematic base<sup>1</sup>, in order to preserve some comparative elements between the answers obtained from both segments of participants. In all cases, the participants expressed their willingness to be recorded. As far as was possible, the recording of each interview was entirely transcribed to consolidate the data set for posterior analysis.

Before advancing in the interpretation of the findings, due to the scope and objectives of this study, I opted for going in depth into two out of the four cases documented: “Tabusclan” at the school Alfonso Reyes E and “Journey through the geographies of horror” at the school Manuel del Socorro R. In both cases I had access to the contrasting perspective of teachers and students. This objective could not be totally accomplished for the case of “School Museums of Memory” at the school Los Robles, since not contact was possible with the students because they were not attending classes by the time that the procedures of data collection were implemented. Additionally, “Tabusclan” and “Journey through the geographies of horror” define violence as a common object of their memory work whereas; in the case of “Kunturi” at the school Orlando Fals Borda violence was identified as an issue that had been addressed only partially. However, I will use the data collected about “School Museums of Memory” and “Kunturi” in some cases considering the pertinence.

## **2.2. Sites Of Research And Experience Profiles**

The experiences of remembering on which I focus the analysis take place in two different public schools: School Alfonso Reyes Echandia and School Manuel del Socorro Rodriguez. The former located in Bosa, southeast zone of Bogota; and the later in Rafael Uribe in the mid-eastern zone of the city. Bosa and Rafael Uribe share some common characteristics. Both localities are densely populated and suffer from high levels of social-economic segregation (Secretaría Distrital de Planeación, 2013: 13). The main part of the population living in these localities belongs to the lowest socio-economic strata (Secretaría Distrital de Planeación, 2013: 12). The combination of these characteristics has an impact on people’s living conditions and opportunities. As Hedman, Manley, van Ham, and Osth (2013: 197) conclude residing in poverty concentrations may influence individual outcomes such as school performances, employment,

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<sup>1</sup>The subjects discussed during the individual, and group interviews regarding the participants’ experience in collaborative remembering were: 1 Dynamics of violence and peace in the context; 2 Notions of memory and the past; 3 Pedagogical intentions; 4 Historical events; 5 Resources/means; 6 Interaction with other actors; 7 Learning outcomes; 8 Responsiveness; 9 Impinging factors; 10 Recommendations.

and earnings, among other relevant aspects of what people can do and be in the course of their lives.

<b>Sites Of Research And Experiences Of Remembering</b>			
<b>School</b>	<b>Locality</b>	<b>Neighbourhood</b>	<b>Experience of remembering</b>
Alfonso Reyes Echandia	Bosa	San Pedro	Tabusclan
Manuel del Socorro Rodriguez	Rafael Uribe Uribe	Santa Lucia Claret	A journey through the geographies of horror

### **Tabusclan. Action Research At The Service Of Memory**

The project started in 2010, by the teachers Diana Fique and Ella Ramirez who had the motivation to prove that it was possible to produce knowledge in the field of social sciences, from the School Alfonso Reyes Echandia.

Initially, it involved students in grades 9, 10, 11 in the research process from the initial design of the project through data gathering and analysis, applying social research methodology. The first approach to memory was through the identification of heritage sites in Bosa.

In 2013, on the occasion of the peace talks between the national government of Colombia and The FARC, teachers found it relevant to adopt an approach to explore the memories of the conflict. So the students with the guidance of the teachers started to document emblematic events in Colombia's armed conflict. The results obtained were presented in an event hosted at the school. However, the event seemed to be too formal to sensitise the assistants. For this reason, the teachers decided to explore an alternative option to convey their message. They found that the dance teacher Liliana Saavedra had developed an interesting exploration around the body, and they got realised that they could deal with the aesthetic dimension of the memory through the scenic arts. The conclusion was that the research process had to result in an artistic performance.

As a consequence, two ambits of work, research and scenic arts, have been consolidated, in what today is known as the group of memory "Tabusclan". All

the students in grade 10 and 11 are welcome to join the group. The only requirement is that they have to complete all the activities proposed by the teachers. Some of these activities take place during study hours while the others require additional time. As the spaces for communication at the school are sometimes are restricted they have used a group on Facebook “Ciencias Sociales Alfonso Reyes” to keep in touch.

Tabusclan has gained certain recognition thanks to the performance “The boy who went to the war” which is a mix of music, video and dancing. It represents how historically, the armed forces and the armed groups to fight the fratricide war that has been disputed over the last six decades in Colombia have recruited young peasants. The performance has been displayed at the Centre for Memory, Peace and Reconciliation (CMPR) and different universities and schools.



**Figure 1.** Performance "The boy who went to the war" presented by the Group of Memory Tabusclan at the CMPR.

With this project, the school Alberto Reyes Echandia has been awarded different prizes in pedagogical innovation. In August 2015, the teachers Diana, Ella and Liliana were invited to present their experience with Tabusclan in the frame of the III Latin-American Congress in Social Sciences organised by FLACSO (Latin American School of Social Sciences).

### **A Journey Through The Geographies Of Horror**

The Teacher Arminio is a mature man and a very enthusiastic speaker, who had no problems in commenting that after 18 years of experience it was not too late to change his way of teaching social sciences at the public school Manuel del Socorro Rodriguez.

Such idea came to his mind for different reasons: the places that he visited, people that he met in apparel with his personal life. After visiting the Centre for Memory, Peace and Reconciliation, and becoming a member of a collective of critical thinking, he became familiar with the notion of social memory and its pedagogic potentialities. So the teacher Arminio concluded that he could contribute to the reconstruction of Colombia's memory from his role as a schoolteacher.

As occurs in a laboratory, he is still making decisions and adjustments over his experiences of remembering, although the intention is clear to create a "field of sensibility" where the students can have "an alternative view of what they listen and observe about the country's reality". He uses as references, cases from Europe and Latin America that students have already studied in previous years, but in this opportunity they adopt the standpoint of the victims and survivors, from whom testimony is possible to reconstruct what happened. Therefore, The Holocaust and the military dictatorships of Brazil and the Southern Cone become examples from which the students can comprehend the violation of human rights and international humanitarian law committed in the midst of the Colombian armed conflict.

The students from grade 9, 10 and 11 who attend the social sciences and ethics classes are carried through these diverse "geographies of horror" thanks to "the testimony of those who died but whose voices remain preserved in the form of films and literature". A wide range of materials accompanies the teacher and the students in this journey: *The Diary of a Young Girl* (Frank, Anne. 1959); *The Rutka's Notebook* (Laskier, Rutka. 2008), the *Open Letter From a Writer to the Military Junta* (Walsh, Rodolfo. 1977), *Guerra, Memoria e Historia* (Sánchez, Gonzalo. 2003), *Salvador Allende* (2004) documentary film directed by Patricio Guzmán, and *Estadio Nacional* (2003) documentary film directed by Carmen Luz Parot, to name just a few. Most of these sources were not available at the school. Therefore, the teacher had to buy them and others were accessed on the Internet.

Nicole one of the students who participated in the group interview added, "With the teacher Arminio we work on the basis of study guides and workshops at class that help us to analyse texts and movies to understand the causes and the consequences of the conflicts but also to discuss solutions".



**Figure 2.** Students from grade 10th and 11th involved in the experience of remembering at the School Manuel del Socorro Rodríguez and who participated in the group interview (25/08/2015).

The students recognise the relevance of Teacher Arminio’s initiative; Andres Felipe expressed “As students, we should assume the reconstruction of our common memory, even if we have to challenge the prevailing social amnesia”.

By the end of year, teacher Arminio’s goal is to create an art gallery to exhibit the materials that his students have produced at the class as a way to represent their work on memory.

## **CHAPTER 3. Conceptual And Analytical Framework**

### **3.1. A Growing Field: The Scope Of Memory Studies**

The debates about the status and function of memory have been in incessant expansion. Susannah Radstone (cited by Grainge, 2003: 1) indicates that a contemporary resurgence of memory's valuation has led to an explosion of academic interest. Notably the late 1980s and early 1990s had been recognised as the decades when the codification of the field loosely known as 'memory studies' began to happen (Sturken, 2008: 73). The multiplication of erudite knowledge in this matter has been accompanied by the state-sponsored and highly commercial heritage tourism. In the words of David Blight (2009, 246-247), it has contributed to the commodification of memory and the growth of one of the largest industries of entertainment in the world. In the words of Jay Winter (2012, 65), the "memory boom" that took off in the late twentieth century has to be seen as the result of "a complex matrix of suffering, political activity, claims for entitlement, scientific research, philosophical reflection, and art". Hence, the variety of impulses, disciplines, agents involved in this boom has resulted in an excess of terms and ideas that overlap, conflict or simply appear unrelated not only in academic publications but also in mass culture.

Therefore, James Wertsch (2009, 118) considers that any attempt at trying to fit these competing notions into a tightly conceptual framework would end in failure. For this reason, this section does not constitute an extensive exhaustive review of the field of memory studies. Instead, it intends to set the theoretical and conceptual basis for further analysis, outlining the trajectory of some notions and debates, which are crucial regarding the purpose of this research. Firstly I explore the concept of memory to enter into the debate on collective remembering of wartime violence. Secondly, I discuss the differences among the approaches to analyse the phenomenon of collective remembering of war. And finally, I put to consideration the role attributed to the school system by existing accounts at educating about the violent past.

### **3.2. First Move: From Memory To Collective Remembering Of Wartime Violence**

David Blight (2009, 238) suggests that almost nothing renders us as human beings as much as our unique capacity for memory. Despite the conclusiveness of Blight's sentence, Pascal Boyer (2009, 3) legitimately asks, "What is a memory for?" And his answer is that the past only affects us through its consequences for present circumstances. Then, Boyer describes memory as a func-

tion to process information about specific past situations that individuals encountered to organise fundamentally current and future behaviour (Boyer, 2009: 4). The question formulated by Boyer needs to be added to a new one: when does memory as individual function become included into a social group process? Boyer affirms that there is evidence that among groups, in the same way that occurs with individuals, the memory operates in present time thanks to an interest-driven mechanism of appropriation over the past. Such asseveration is in line with the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1992, 224) for whom “collective memory reconstructs its various recollections to accord with contemporary ideas and preoccupations”.

However, Wertsch (2009, 118) draws attention to the diffuseness of some analogies between an individual and a group dynamic, as in the case of personal memory and collective memory. For him, group memory requires more than an individual faculty that at a certain point transcends individuals’ minds. Alternatively, Wertsch (2009, 120) suggests an “instrumentally distributed version” of collective memory, in the sense that it involves active agents or agents of remembering and instruments that mediate remembering like cultural tools. Similarly, in the words of Jan Assmann (2011, 210) the past “... has to be always processed and mediated” to what he adds “This mediation depends on semantic frames and needs of a given individual or society within a given present”.

At the collective level, the accent put on mediated action makes preferable “to speak of collective remembering rather than collective memory” (Wertsch, 2009: 119). Roediger, Zaromb and Butler (2009, 138-139) argue in favour the use of collective remembering since it refers to a more dynamic process along which different perspectives and reconstructions to represent the past come into contention, in social and political spheres. In contrast, the notion of collective memory is used to refer to a static set of knowledge about the past shared by a specific group.

Collective remembering is seen as an incessant process. At any point in time, according to the members of the Group of Popular Memory (Johnson and Dawson, 1982: 207) diverse agents enact different representations of the past with the potential to affect “the field of public representation of history”. Nonetheless, higher points of contestation and negotiation can be expected when societies experience major changes, such as those periods in the aftermath of an occurrence of mass violence. Alexandra Barahona de Brito (2010:364) stresses that memory making after violence is qualitatively different from that which occurs in times of peace and normality. Additionally, Barahona de Brito (2010: 365) says that the transition regime to address the violent past marks the beginning of a new step in what are always on-going memory

cycles. Such periods are marked by a “central dialectic” that according to Nytgodien and Neal consists in “... a desire to repress or deny what happened, as well as a perceived necessity to proclaim or speak loudly about the terrible events that occurred” (2004: 467).

Rotondi and Eisikovits (2015, 13) comment regarding the prevalence of "memory assumption" or the strong and widely shared belief which holds that the past political violence must be dealt with to effect social reconstruction. Similarly, Daniel Levy (2010, 18) suggest how and what societies around the world remember today, mainly but not exclusively the transitional societies, falls significantly on a “memory imperative”, a set of political and normative expectations for the handling of past injustices which came out of the horrors of the World War II and more specifically the Holocaust. Following this argument, Bickford and Sodaro (2010, 77) comments about the emergence of a new paradigm has spread around the world, thanks to the proliferation of new forms of commemoration linked to the prevention of violence and atrocity in the future. As a result, in recent decades, the struggles by which different groups try to install particular war memories at the centre of the public space have turned into a intense phenomenon termed by Ashplant, Dawson, and Roper (2000, xi) as “Politics of war memory and commemoration” that I develop more in depth in the next section.

### **3.3. Top-Down Or Bottom-Up? Approaches To War Remembering And Commemoration**

David Blight (2009:244) asserts that the violence experienced by the last past five generations constitutes the new and most determining engine of memory. For him, the potency and visibility reached by memory are inextricably associated with the sheer scale of violence occurred over the twentieth century and the subsequent interest to commemorate it. The inextricable relationship between memory and war and the resultant phenomenon of war remembering has been observed from differentiated approaches. According to Ashplant, Dawson, and Roper (2000: 7), the study of war memory has been based on a “state-centred” perspective or a “social agency” perspective. One tradition has been developed with independence to the other which has turned them into unrelated alternatives.

On one hand, the state-centred perspective emphasises the primacy of this political institution in the definition of narratives about what is remembered and what is forgotten to constitute collective identities in the present. Usually, the work of Eric Hobsbawm and Benedict Anderson are used as key references to



support such a viewpoint. Hobsbawm (1983) is predominantly concerned with the invention of traditions for the national purposes in continuity with a suitable historic past. According to him “plenty of political institutions –not least in nationalism- were so unprecedented that even historic continuity had to be invented, for example by creating an ancient past beyond effective historical community (1983: 7).

In a similar way, Anderson (1983: 6) draws attention to the fact that “Nations have to be invented where they do not exist” in this sense nations are eminently “imagined political communities”. Anderson (1983: 201) asserts "having to 'have already forgotten' tragedies of which one needs unceasingly to be 'reminded' turns out to be a characteristic device in the later construction of national genealogies" and he adds “the nation’s biography cannot be written evangelically, “down time”, through a long procreative chain of begettings. The only alternative is to fashion it “up time”. This fashioning, however, is marked by deaths ... to serve the narrative purpose; these violent deaths must be remembered/forgotten as “our own”. With this purpose, Anderson (1983: 201) notes, “a vast pedagogical industry works ceaselessly” to force the young citizens to remember/forget the hostilities, which are essential for a narrative of identity.

On the other hand, the therapeutic understanding of memory explains the work of remembrance performed by the agencies primarily in function of overcoming the trauma. Telling and retelling the stories from the past is needed for healing the wounds. To the question, how does it happen? An expected answer from this paradigm would be that “The work of mourning is a shared human impulse and knows no national boundaries” (Ashplant, Dawson, and Roper, 2000: 8). Giving an account of the universalisation of mourning after the First World War, Jay Winter (2014: 37) recognises that politicians set out certain lines. Nevertheless, war memorials were all over Europe because of the need among mourners to create “... a substitute tomb, a place in front of which to mourn”. Consequently, winter highlights the prevalent role of local communities by saying that “what’s extraordinary is how democratic commemoration was, and how much life there was in civil society to create forms that were separate” (Winter, 2014: 37). When remembering and memorialisation are observed as civil society’s enterprises, in contrast, as Bickford and Sodaro point out “the nation almost vanishes as an object of interest, as protagonists focus on, for example, the victims and their experiences”.

When framing the issues of war memory and commemoration Ashplant, Dawson, and Roper (2000, 9) observes a false dichotomy between the “top-down” and “bottom-up” approaches provoking a detrimental effect on the current state of the matters. The accounts centred on the national commemorative

practices organised by the state, usually conceive groups and individuals as subjected to the national memory in the particular state to which they belong. Such vision result in a simplistic outlook since it assumes that people adhere to the official version of the past that is available, without considering that the appropriation of events requires complex individual processes whereby people located historical events in relation to they own life stories (Boyer, 2009: 10). Furthermore, the social agency approaches offer the idea that war memory is in possession of those individuals, military or civilian, who have experienced war. This ignores the fact that mourning activity in civil society does not take place in a vacuum but in the context of official meanings and understandings, which influence the terms under which remembering and commemoration are carried out. Valentine Daniel's (1997, 309-10) actually observes that the Nation State promises to comfort the wounded through the language of recovery and restoration with a marked orientation towards the past.

With the purpose of overcoming the restrictions imposed by the approaches discussed above, Ashplant, Dawson, and Roper (2000; 15) suggest a "more nuanced and mediated model". It takes into account the struggles through which diverse individuals and social groups try to give public articulation and recognition to certain memories. Furthermore, the same authors mention the importance of recognising that these struggles are advanced throughout differentiated instances such as narratives, arenas and agencies. In their opinion, the analysis of war memory and commemoration from this model helps to clarify "its politics, by specifying social groups, via what agencies, are the promoters of a particular narrative addressed to which arenas" (Ashplant, Dawson, and Roper, 2000: 17). Such models accommodates efforts of the national state as much as it accommodates more informal agencies, including veterans' and victims' organisations that bring together individuals and mediate between them and more formal institutions in articulating war memories.

However, Kamila Szczepanska (2014, 15) comments that it still could be more inclusive at incorporating a larger number of civil society actors also relevant in defining how the past should be remembered. Hence, Szczepanska also suggests the inclusion of those with "personalised interpretations" of the war acquired for example via formal or informal education, but not necessarily through a personal experience of war. This can be the case of the teachers and students that participated in this study who underpin certain understandings of the past and the war without have been necessarily directly affected by war violence.

### 3.4. The Place Of The School In Remembering War Violence

Despite the relevance that collective remembering with respect to war violence has acquired in recent years, Elizabeth Cole (2007, 115-116) claims that education, more exactly history teaching, has been neglected from the academic reflection. While the idea that the representation of the past matters is often invoked in societies of intense need of peace, justice, democratisation and intergroup reconciliation, little has been said about the ways that young people learn about the past and the content of what they learn. Still, it is possible to find some pieces of work that explore connections between war, history education and memory in deeply divided societies.

On the whole, the articles found were published in the second half of the 2000s decade. Almost all of them adopt the case of a specific country including a wide range of examples: Rwanda (Buckley-Zistel, 2009; Freedman, Weinstein, Murphy and Longman, 2008), South Africa (Dryden-Peterson and Siebörger, 2006), China (Zheng Wang, 2008), Israel (Podeh, 2000), Cyprus (Papadakis, 2008), Hungary (van Iterson and Nenadović, 2013), the former Yugoslavia (Hoepken, 1999), and Chile (Magendzo and Toledo, 2009). There is only one cross-study referred to about China, Japan, and Korea (Otsuki, 2011). Notwithstanding the singularities, these articles broadly fall into the state-cantered paradigm as discussed in the previous section.

Generally speaking, this reference literature addresses the issues of memory from the side of history education. Thus, work on the past occurring at the school is assumed to be a by-product of the study of history, an academy subject fixed in the overt curricula “the manifest curriculum of formal education” (Cole, 2007: 120). In his case study about China, Zheng Wang (2008: 783) remarks that in the education system “the powerful link between collective memory and history is particularly salient.” However, the relationship between history and memory is caught up in an unsettled dispute, in the words of the French historian Pierre Nora (1989, 8) “The gulf between the two has deepened in modern time” since they represent oppositional ways to represent the past. According to Roediger, Zaromb and Butler (2009, 140) in contemporary thinking it has been considered that “history aspires to provide an accurate account of the past, even when that record may reflect poorly on the people being represented. In contrast, in collective remembering, the past is often tied to the present, so that a person’s self-identity and group identity are buoyed by glorious past history of the people”.

To throw a bridge across the “contemporary gulf” between history and memory, Wertsch (2009, 125) observes “... it is often difficult to categorise

accounts unequivocally as either one or other” instead “... they are typically a mixture of both ways of relating to the past”. In the same line, Blatz and Ross (2009, 224) comments that for example history as studied in the classrooms is not totally impartial, despite how it reveals an aspired standard of objectivity “... these histories reflect a bias to report the past in a way that confirms current preferences, goals, and beliefs”. As the formal systems of schooling carry the imprimatur of the state, the history taught within consequently is assumed as a mirror of such political influence.

For instance, Freedman, Weinstein, Murphy and Longman (2008: 685), in exploring the links between larger political processes and decisions about teaching history in Rwanda, express "our study suggests that teaching history cannot be divorced from the state's goal of building a national or civic identity. The teaching of history, therefore, remains subject to government policies that dictate the curricular content and pedagogic practices." Similarly, Wang (2008, 783) states as his article's main objective the exploration of “... the state's political use of the past and the function of history education in political transition and foreign relations”. In the case of the Post-Yugoslav republics, Wolfgang Hoepken (1999, 218) points out that the reforms introduced since the early 1990's did not lead to “an educational system that was free of excessive influence of state authorities or immediate political repercussions”. Therefore, taking as reference the examples of the Balkans as well as China and Rwanda, the educational system is represented as an appendix of the central state, which is used instrumentally to spread the war memories manufactured by the state's agents, with the primary goal of enhancing national identity and the legitimisation of the nation-state's interests and its policy.

A surprising commonality among these articles is that educational stakeholders such as teachers and students are subject to scarce focalisation, using the words of Maaïke Meijer (1993: 376) “who sees, who speaks-and who is seen and spoken of”. Instead, the attention, at the moment to conduct analysis, is driven mainly towards textbooks. In order to understand the representation of the Palestinian refugee problem within the educative system of Israel, Elie Podeh (2000: 66) adopts printed materials as object of study arguing that in the context of building a collective memory “none of the socialisation instruments can be compared to textbooks”. Yiannis Papadakis (2008, 128) proceeds in a similar way by examining the representations of nationalism and national identity displayed by official history schoolbooks in Divided Cyprus. Although it is true that collective remembering requires the mediation of “cultural tools” such as books, it also involves the participation of active agents (Wertsch, 2009: 119). While printed materials are important teaching aids and also could be a privileged “source of information for collective memories” (Roediger, Zaromb and

Butler, 2009:142), they do not automatically supplant teachers and students' agency.

Exceptionally, in the case of Rwanda, Buckley-Zistel (2009, 42) makes an episodic reference to the agency of some teachers, who despite the 10 years moratorium on history teaching imposed by the national government, persisted in teaching this subject at the expense of being taken to court accused of "inciting hatred." In the case of post-apartheid South Africa, Dryden-Peterson and Siebörger (2006, 394) through an ethnographic study probe the role of history teachers as memory makers when they make use of their testimony as a pedagogic tool. In a similar way, Magendzo and Toledo (2009), from a representative sample of teachers and students, highlight the dilemmas that they faced when teaching and learning about the violations committed by the military regime during the 70's in Chile.

In conclusion, the prevailing approach identified in the reviewed literature provides a nearly exclusive focus on the state in which the education was taking place, and on education serving to political purposes defined from the top, reaffirming the political establishment and its power. Nonetheless, it seems a distant account from the reality perceived in light of the schools that I visited in Bogota. On the contrary, to the idea that the schools are mere automaton reproducers of discourses from above, the interviewed teachers expressed that even though they stuck to national policies, they held a high degree of flexibility in determining the pedagogies and the contents of what their students learn about the past.

In contrast, it also was observed that the experiences in collaborative remembering at schools were not necessarily dependant to history education as generally assumed in the literature. In fact, since 1984 by means of the National Decree 1002, history as an autonomous discipline in the overt curricula has been absent, or, at best, integrated into the broader area of social sciences. Such circumstance was continued and deepened by the implementation of the General Education Law (Law 115), which in turn established that history education integrated with geography, politics, economics and philosophy were mandatory, and for the same reason the schools were in the duty to reorganizing the curriculum and the programs in order to teach them in adequate times and spaces (Ministerio de Educación Nacional). However, Carolina Guerrero (2011: 103) notes that arguing interdisciplinarity the reform introduced by the Law 115 acted to the detriment of comprehensive historical knowledge. In this regard, the interview teachers commented that the lack of a curricular space intended to the autonomous study of history and therefore the past may pose some challenges for their work on memory, which partially have been resolved adapting curricular times from other subjects for instance ethics and religion.

Furthermore, they have explored alternative spaces outside the school, including virtual ones such as Facebook.

In addition, teachers and students commented that printed materials such as schoolbooks were barely used in their classrooms and complementary activities since the publications available in the market did not satisfy their interests. Instead, they manifested that commonly used materials were those produced or adapted by them. In this respect, it is important to clarify that the state in Colombia does not systematically produce textbooks to be distributed at the public schools because it is a private sector activity. At this respect, Sandra Rodriguez (2009, 24-25) comments that the educative reforms in the last decades have turned pedagogy into an instrumental knowledge, and the publishers that produce schoolbooks have taken advantage of such opportunity to offer teachers and students the curricular contents required by government institutions.

In consideration of the interest displayed by the cited studies in the educational system as arena for the production of collective memory, especially through historical education, the involvement of the teachers and the students is conspicuous by its absence. Although they provide insight into how the politics of memory operate at the macro-level of the national state; they lose track of the daily doing memory in the classroom setting. Given that, it would be just fair to make some academic space for hearing the often-ignored voices and the experiences of teachers and students as educational agents of memory making. This purpose is consistent with the claim made by Elizabeth Cole (2007, 137) "In addition to the work that academic researchers can contribute to this field, voices from the classrooms are crucial to hear in order to better understand the experiences, needs, fears and hopes of both students and teachers in transitional, post-violence as they prepare for the future in the shadow of difficult past."

Altogether, this literature review exemplifies the idea of Robert Moller (2001, 12) that "there are many ways to chart the memories of war". However, in recognition of some empty spaces left by previous studies, I find it appropriate to anchor the following study on the trace of narratives that according to Ashplant, Dawson, and Roper (2000, 16) constitute one of the distinguishable aspects of "the politics of war memory and commemoration". Following these authors, the work of remembrance is "formed in relation both to personal experience and to pre-existing narratives". Moreover, close parallels can be drawn between the narratives as one of the elements that serve to the articulation of memories, Wretch's assumption that collective remembering implies the mediation of cultural tools (2009, 120), and the dependency on semantic frames as suggested by Assmann (2011, 210). From here on out, I will focus on analysing

the way that teachers and students of the studied examples frame memories of past violence.

### **3.5. Moving Towards Analysing Teachers' And Students' Frames**

From an expanded conception of the politics of memory, according to Ashplant, Dawson and Roper (2000, 14-15), individual experience regarding war remembering is always framed within dominant narrative forms and genres. They respond to the political and cultural concerns of those endeavouring to extend or modify current regimes of memory. In this sense, collective remembering is mediated to a great extent by cultural tools such as semantic frames.

A valid question before going further may be what is frame? According to Robert Entman (1993, 54), a frame essentially calls attention to some aspects of reality while obscuring other elements. Therefore, it is basically about selection and salience, "The frame determines whether most people notice and how they understand and remember a problem, as well as how they evaluate and choose to act upon it". In daily life, according to Entman (1993, 52) frames are manifested through, "the presence or absence of certain keywords, stock phrases, stereotyped images, sources of information, and sentences that provide thematically reinforcing clusters of facts or judgments".

As a whole, culture might be defined as a set of frames that are displayed in the discourse and thinking of most people in a social grouping. In this sense, as also expressed by Entman, (1993: 53) "The culture is the stock of commonly invoked frames" This idea is reinforced in his way by Stuart Hall (1997, 18) who sustains that 'we belong to the same culture' because, "we share broadly the same conceptual maps and thus make sense of or interpret the world in roughly similar ways ... Because we interpret the world in roughly similar ways, we are able to build up a shared culture of meanings and thus construct a social world which we inhabit together".

Relatedly, Goffman (1992, 22) observes that "social frames" encoded a "lively agency", which in turn can be described as "guided doings". These doings assist the evaluation of the actions undertaken by the agent based on different standards such as relevance, plausibility, efficiency and safety, among many others. Polletta (1998, 139) agrees that frames have the potentiality to set the terms for action providing an initial rationale or, "belief that the situation is not immutable and that we can change it".

Although Entman (1993: 55) points out “the power of a frame can be as great as that of language itself”, Polletta and Kai Ho (2006, 3) notes that frames are not infallible, and the context defines frames’ plausibility and impact. Moreover, frames’ capacity is allegedly dependent on clear, not ambiguous, specification always present under conditions of “loose structure” (Polletta, 1998: 139). Goffman (1992, 22) observes that when an action is blocked “compensatory effort” is required, and the agent is likely to evaluate several frameworks even opposite ones. Here “motive and intent” come into play and help to select which of the various social frameworks of understanding is to be applied.

According to Goffman (1974, 10-11) frame analysis, first and foremost should examine “the organization of experience”. Given the interest of this study, I find appropriate to identify and interpret the frames that my participants commonly invoked at reflecting on their involvement in collaborative remembering. Such frames may be based upon “templates of remembrance derived from wars of the past” (2000: 53) but also upon different meanings people associate with conflict-related concepts particularly the concept of peace reflecting “the narrative colored interpretations of current situations” (2006: 168). With this purpose in mind, I pay especial attention to the ways the experiences recounted through the interviews are shaped in interaction with shared cultural tools that not only contribute to define the way to relate with the violent past but also how to face current challenges in terms of the building of peace and the transformation of violence with repercussions in the future, as I demonstrate through the following chapters.



## CHAPTER 4. Memory Production: Walking The Thin Line

This chapter explores the production of wartime memories within the experiences of remembering studied. More specifically, when the violence is a persistent element in the present, and it is not perceived that it will have an imminent end in the near future. Initially, I put up for discussion how the significance of the past converges with current concerns and future desires, expanding the temporality under which collective remembering operates. By way of that, I highlight the way teachers and students narrate their experiences throughout the present and the future and not exclusively the past, in alignment with a variety of projects of collective remembering that have emerged worldwide in the last few decades. I suggest that both students and teachers “walk a thin line” (the expression is my own) between violence in the past, the present violence and an uncertain future. Furthermore, I emphasise how they are faced with two sets of challenges. On the one hand, they share the belief that lessons learned from the past can result in non-repetition and hence suggest a more promising future. On the other hand, a sense of disillusionment about the future arises from the belief that prevailing present structures will not allow for transformational social change. The frameworks that shape participants’ accounts about the violent past, the use of memory and the building of peace, come to light precisely at such points, and not without contradictions.

### 4.1. Back To The Future? Expanding Memory’s Horizons

Pascal Boyer (2009, 3) says that memory is certainly not about the past but about present and future behaviour. For him human beings “... learn about the past mostly to the extent that they can extract from past situations what is not unique about them, and what will be relevant in the future” (Boyer, 2009: 4). This was certainly the case among my research participants. The past as a school subject can be a “very hard row to hoe” (Cole, 2007: 131) since it may not always be compelling for students, because of its inherent backward-lookingness. The students no less than the teachers when talking about their experiences in collaborative remembering, expressed their appreciation for the past, however, which was also represented as a potential source of knowledge, instruction and inspiration for changing both the present and the future. Shirley (Group Interview, 24/08/2015) highlighted the multiple possibilities offered by the past:

“The past inspires transformation... we change because we get to realise that we did things wrong in the past. Things do not have to remain as they were before; we can change them”.

In fact, teachers and students, in the warmth of conversation, avidly made mention of a wide range of historical details, dates and characters. A striking finding, however, was that they did not do that mainly to prove their knowledge about the course of events but rather, to navigate the everyday politics of their current lives which implies the development of visions that lead into the future. In this respect, Andres Felipe (Group Interview, 25/08/2015) noted that “these histories may belong to the past, but they are a reflexion of the present that has not concluded yet”. Precicelly, Jonathan Boyarin (1994, 2) in reflecting on space, time and the politics of memory notes that the past and its representations imply “more complex ways than a model of points on a straight timeline permits us to imagine”; and thus the need to reconsider the “pre-conceived notions of dimensionality” from which it is assumed that “time is a one dimensional and irreversible phenomenon”. According to Pierre Nora (2002, 6) memory shatters “the unity of historical time, that fine, straightforward linearity which traditionally bound the present and the future to the past”.

From the words of the young and adult participants, memory does not exclusively reside within the confines of the past, since it transcends separate temporal dimensions, jumping forwards and backwards. The intersection between the past, the present and the future is well expressed by Ricardo (Group Interview, 25/08/2015) for whom:

“...The present is constituted by the past, and similarly the present will constitute the future. According with that idea, our actions always are going to have an effect in the present but also in the future, no matter how insignificant they are”.

In line with this thinking, Sebastian (Group Interview, 25/08/2015) goes further suggesting the inextricable link between past and future when he sharply states:

“A country without memory is a country without future” he adds “I consider that all our historical tragedies should drive us to make something better with our future.”

The thoughts of the young students concur with what Gutman, Sodaro and Brown (2010, 1) identify as a change of focus on the study and practice of memory. Traditionally, a common idea about collective memory was that it reflected a bias to report the past in a way that confirmed current preferences, goals, and beliefs, which Blatz and Ross (2009, 224) denominate as “presentism”. Although this vision gave account of the effect that the present had on the view of the past; Gutman, Sodaro and Brown (2010, 3) note that it left the future unaddressed. Instead, they point out that the influence of the past

on how the future is imagined and vice versa, nowadays is getting increasing attention. Therefore, it is not that farfetched to think that memory carries in parallel with retrospection and presentism a sense of “futurism” as I will argue is the case of the memory groups under my consideration.

At this point, however it is pertinent to reconsider the work of Ashplant, Dawson, and Roper (2000: 13), which draws attention to the necessity of exploring the sense of the past among certain groups, like those at the schools, in relation to wider cultural forms since it is often the latter that supply the terms by which the former are thought through. It necessarily implies to consider, within a wider context and not in isolation, the shared assumption among teachers and students that what they learn about the past is “usable” to develop their future.

#### **4.2. A Privileged Frame For Memory Work: Learning From The Past, Bettering The Future**

How and what societies around the world remember today, according Daniel Levy (2010, 18) falls significantly on a new paradigm of commemoration that has spread around the world, mainly but not exclusively in transitional societies, thanks to the proliferation of new forms of commemoration linked to the prevention of violence and atrocity in the future. However, recognising the existence of a new paradigm of memorialisation does not entirely answer why do strategies for remembering, taking place in remote contexts, including those in Bogota’s schools, repeatedly proclaim “If we don't remember the past, we are destined to repeat the same mistakes in the future” What is it that sustains that consensus around the potential of memory as a deterrent to future violence? Is there, perhaps, something else operating underneath?

Regarding causes that imply collective action, such as these cases of collaborative remembering, Francesca Polletta (1998, 140) argues that for their involvement, participants require frames that potentially can supply a clearly interpretable rationale by representing the possibility, necessity, and efficacy of the action if it is taken. In fact, Bickford and Sodaro (2010: 68) suggest that social and political actors as part of the “new commemorative paradigm” frame their agendas under the idea that “by confronting the past, they will be able to make real and concrete contributions to building a better future”.

The presence of such a framework can be accessed through the pages of influential academic literature that has strongly informed processes of decision making on transitional justice, peacebuilding and post-war reconstruction. For example, Prescilla Hayner (1994, 607) in her comparative study of truth com-

missions argues that “Leaving an honest account of the violence prevents history from being lost or re-written, and allows a society to learn from its past in order to prevent a repetition of such violence in the future”. In response to those who tend to think that a little forgetfulness might be in order when the past has received excessive attention or threats to hinder efforts to move forward, Elizabeth Kiss (2000, 71-72) notes: “... so unacknowledged injustice can poison societies and produce the cycles of distrust, hatred, and violence we have witnessed in many parts of the world”. In these sense recognizing the worst of the past, is not only possible but also indispensable to prevent a future doomsday scenario.

Knowledge and prevention seem to be then the X and Y of an equation that inevitably results in a better future. This formulation “that has such a firm hold on our imaginations today” according to Bickford and Sodaro (2010: 77) is eminently modern and rooted in the enlightenment way of thinking. In this respect, Thomas Cushman (2010, 527) argues that the reason why a vast number of people believe that the worst behaviours of human beings such as genocide are preventable and why they mobilise thinking that such behaviours may change; is because of the pervasiveness of “the prevention discourse” which in turn is embedded in the Kantian and Cartesian ideas that human knowledge inherently leads to improvement since it allows the prevention of the occurrence of undesirable social circumstances. Hence, more knowledge of the social reality betters the capacity of human preventability. Cushman (2010, 527) adds that this discourse has become evident in virtually every field of human experience “it is an ideology which pervades the liberal project of modernity and the social sciences which are part of that project”. Education and collective remembering the two ambits that articulate this study are not the exception in this respect.

In education, preventability can be traced back to the pedagogy of John Dewey who led the progressive educational movement at the end of the nineteenth-century and whose ideas have persisted in various forms to the present. In particular reference to historical knowledge, Dewey (1973, 277) said “... is not the study of heroes, but an account of social development; it provides us with knowledge of the past which contributes to the solution of social problems of the present and the future”. According to Ilan Gur-Ze’ev (2001, 316-317) Dewey’s words clearly materialise the reliability on humanist education and its associated potentialities: the enhancement of human capacities, the triggering of social change and the prevention of the undesirable.

Regarding collective remembering, seemingly distant in time from Dewey but not discursively, the designers and proponents of the new memorial paradigm, as Bickford and Sodaro (2010, 78) note, are recognising more and more the

centrality to educate younger generations with the hope that they work to prevent violence in the future. As a manner of example, in The Netherlands, the Anne Frank House Museum (2015) established to spread knowledge of Anne's life and ideals has strengthened its commitment to the development of educational programmes and products in order to "raise young people's awareness of the dangers of anti-Semitism, racism and discrimination and the importance of freedom, equal rights and democracy" (website).

The orientation toward the future prevention of the undesirable and unacceptable is not absent from the current policy of memorialisation in Colombia. The actions in progress were conceived in concordance with the principle of "Non-repetition." For instance, the National Centre for Historical Memory (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2015: 12) makes clear that "to break the cycles of violence, particularly teachers and students have to understand, identify, verbalise and discuss what has to be left behind to reach a peaceful future".

Along the same lines, Sebastian (Group Interview, 25/08/2015) commented:

"Not long time ago, the teacher Arminio told us: those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it. If we don't recognise the harms that have been made over the last decades, then we are at risk of repeating them."

In this respect, teacher Arminio (Individual Interview, 20/08/2015) mentioned, "in the light of the war and the conflicts, the school has to be empowered to produce alternatives for no repetition." Ricardo (Group Interview, 25/08/2015) reaffirms the point "Our lack of conscience condemns us to repeat our errors in a cycle. The more we forget, the more we harm ourselves".

Similarly, teacher Diana (Individual Interview, 18/08/2015) commented:

"In the future, students from the school can potentially be involved in the armed conflict if for example after finishing school they are forced to comply with the mandatory military service."

From this perspective she adds about Tabusclan the memory group that she leads "rather than the exhaustive study of the history seeks to awake students' knowledge about the influence of the violence in their present and future lives". Likewise, Bryan Steven (Group Interview, 24/08/2015) reaffirms this intentionality at the moment of explaining his motivation as a student to participate in Tabusclan "If we don't remember the past, we are destined to repeat the same mistakes in the future".

Overall, these participants' answers illustrate elements that were iterative over the course of interviewing that may well be summarised under the famous sentence once expressed by the American philosopher George Santayana (1905, 92) in his book *The Life of Reason* "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it" holding that "This is the condition of children and barbarians, in whom instinct has learned nothing from experience". In the long run, as the authors Ashplant, Dawson, and Roper (2000: 16) comment, in the attempt to articulate the accounts of the past for which they advocate, people draw on the language of wider discourses, even in the case of oppositional accounts. By recognising this, I do not seek to mean that teachers and students are passive receptors of ready-made discourses. Instead, as Assmann (2011, 210) explains the efforts to remember the past have to be "processed and mediated" by the means of "semantic frames".

The stock phrase learning lessons from the past to have a peaceful future serves as an "initial rationale" for teachers and students since it not only promotes the cognition of wartime misdeeds but also gives grounds for optimism about their ability to make real and concrete contributions to building a better future, as Juan Manuel (Group interview, 25/08/2015) one of the young students expresses: "we have a great potential ... As we are the owners of the future, we want to build it without the risk of repeating the mistakes". However, giving sustainability to such a frame is not an easy task. As I explain below within the current context the participants have to face dilemmas and confront their beliefs to persist with their fight against forgetfulness.

## CHAPTER 5. Reframing The Work On Memory

Frames have the capacity to convince people "that they have the power to change their condition" (Polletta, 1998:140). However, they demonstrate to be effective under stable conditions, and for the same reason such capacity is thrown into question under conditions of "loose structure" for instance like those prevailing in wartime, which so utterly transform physical and mental maps. Hereafter, I discuss how the violence of the present disrupts the assertion that learning lessons from the past will result in countering the perpetuation of violence in the future. Furthermore, the initial optimism is mitigated when the participants from their lived experience reflect about the negative burden carried by social-historical structures such as poverty, inequality and exclusion left out of frame but essential when it comes to building peace. Finally, teachers and students explore interrelated concepts such as structural violence and positive peace, in which they find encouragement to reconcile with the memory imperative.

### 5.1. The Problems Of The Past And The Present Refuse To Go Away

Between the past and the future, the present stands as scenery for the current violence. This circumstance not only interferes but casts doubt upon the sense of making memory about the violent past. Usually, memory is invoked in relation to past, addressed in the way that L. P. Hartley (1953, Prologue) brings forth in his novel *The Go-Between* 'the past is a foreign country: they do things differently there.' In other terms as if the past were a distinctive space where things were done differently in comparison to the present. The common object of memory among the studied experiences is violence. Notwithstanding, violence in Colombia and in Bogota is not a foreign country and for the same reason the past is neither; since violence remains as a persistent element not only in the broader context but also in the lives of these teachers and these students.

So why is memory needed when violence is an immediate experience? One answer can be to disperse the attention to the future to practice what Eisner (2011, 895) calls "prospective remembering" which is a form of remembering that compels the past into the present and the future. Nevertheless, in the words of David Lowenthal "the future is really nothing but a slightly normative fantasy" (1985:4) and the question for the present and how to deal with it is a reality from which the teachers and the students cannot easily escape.

Some authors have problematized if it is even possible to talk about memory in a country like Colombia. For example, Daniel Pécaut (2004) point out that within the Colombian context, persons are forced to recall memory to account for the present. In doing that, each new event replaces the earlier events. Simultaneously, the spatial frames collapse since people are forcibly displaced; and the armed protagonists due to their changing nature remain undefined by the civilians. The author explains that as a consequence of these interferences, newly learned information impedes the recall of that previously learned, which can be taken itself as a suppression of memory, hence the impossibility of memory.

Bogota, the city where the research is conducted, is usually conceived being outside the conflict. It is commonly assumed that the Colombian conflict is a problem confined to the rural areas. Politically speaking it is not convenient to sustain that the political and economic centre of the country remains as a territory under the military dispute of irregular groups (CODHES, 2014: 37). However, such discourse unveils the dynamics related to the conflict that compromises the city, especially peripheral areas like those where the visited schools are located. Over the course of the interviews, the teachers, and the students indicated that they felt that they were not exempt from the dynamics of the armed conflict or its effects.

In general terms, the participants mentioned a set of situations that they perceived as a threat to their right to life and personal security. In all the cases, the sale and consumption of psychoactive substances, thefts as well as physical aggression came up as significant problems. Also, they commented how often these actions took place near the schools, in public spaces especially those lacking facilities and infrastructure and how local gangs were responsible for committing such actions. In some cases, it was mentioned that the local gangs were linked to major criminal groups, which in turn were the appendix of paramilitary and guerrilla groups. In one of the group interviews, the students commented that they were familiar with the cases of youngsters that had been recruited by some of those groups. One of the students (Group Interview, 24/08/2015) commented:

"In the place where I live (Soacha) there are armed groups and for them it is easy to recruit young men because they have no other opportunities. It would be different if they had education and job opportunities"

Precisely, recruitment at the hands of the military and the other armed groups has been one of the issues that has inspired more reflection, or at least among teachers and students from the School Alfonso Reyes Echandia. The performance that they have assembled "The boy who went to the war" represents



how historically children and youngsters have been snatched to make them fight the fratricidal war. In describing the armed conflict Jessica (Group Interview, 24/08/2015) said that it:

“...Has been about Colombians killing themselves. When a military kills a guerrilla member or vice versa that person is killing someone with the same blood”.

In addition, the students recognized that forced recruitment potentially might threaten them. In this respect, Brayan Steven (Group Interview, 24/08/2015) commented:

"We are due to comply with the mandatory military service. In doing that, there is a big chance for us to get involved in the armed conflict. In this way, we may become armed actors"

The perceptions expressed by the participants correspond to information provided by officials. The Presidential Commissioner for Human Rights (Observatorio de la Consejería Presidencial para los Derechos Humanos, 2014: 209) notes that the urban character of Bogota makes the dynamics of violence associated with the armed conflict substantially different and consequently the performance of the guerrilla groups, mainly the FARC and the ELN, as well as the paramilitary groups and crime organizations is also distinctive. The same report points out that Bogota demands a detailed analysis since it constitute an “strategic corridor” for the armed groups (Observatorio de la Consejería Presidencial para los Derechos Humanos, 2014: 210). The Office of the Ombudsman in Colombia (Defensoria del Pueblo, 2013) suggests that after the process of demobilization of the paramilitary groups, Bogota became scenery for the reproduction of guerrilla groups and the emergence of other illegal structures such as "Los Rastrojos" and the "Aguilas Negras". Such groups operate directly or through the action of smaller gangs that already existed in some areas.

Teachers and students also have the perception that over recent years, there are increasing numbers of students whose families arrived to the neighbourhood and then to the school, mostly after having been displaced. According to with the teachers, people affected by the armed conflict's violence at school remain mostly underestimated, since most of them prefer to stay anonymous as a way to ensure security, hiding their pasts. In fact, forced displacement is a massive phenomenon that has continually increased in Colombia, to a large extent, linked to the exercise of control over strategic territories by the armed groups (Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 2013: 71). Since 1996, at least 6.499.042 displaced persons have been officially registered (Unidad para la Atención y Reparación Integral a las Víctimas, 2015).

Furthermore, displacement has become the victimizing fact with more recurrence in urban areas, Bogota being the second largest recipient of displaced population. In 2012, about 371.000 persons reported in this city that they had been forced to leave their dwelling place (Unidad para la Atención y Reparación Integral a las Víctimas, 2013: 28). As a result, according to CODHES (2014, 42) of the actions taken by the armed groups, Bogota has lately become an exclusively a receptor of displaced population and has started experiencing the expulsion of the population that moves from one neighbourhood to another. In turn, in many cases it implies a re-displacement of the previous victims of displacement, and thus their re-victimization.

## **5.2. Confronting Present Dilemmas**

Against this background, teachers and students tend to moderate their optimism regarding the potentialities of memory over the present and the future due to the difficulties imposed by the on-going armed conflict. According to Sandra Rios (2015, 12) societies where the conflict has not reached a closure, such as in the case of Colombia, represent a contested terrain for the construction of social memory, which in turn may ignite the ashes of violence. Precisely, among the greatest challenges that teachers and students have to face Cole and Barsalou (2006, 14) count the insecure environments in which educative actors feel unsafe to address controversial subjects related to the nearest past.

The school therefore, is not exempt from the contradictory dialectics described by Nytagodien and Neal (2004: 467) between the denial of what happened and the necessity to speak about the ugliness of the past, with the singularity that the conflict persists without having reached a closure. Teacher Arminio (Individual interview, 20/08/2015) noted, “the school may be subject to rivalries since what is taught may contradict the interest of those who are in confrontation.” Whereas Ricardo (Group Interview, 25/08/2015) reflected that “the truth of what happened is not convenient to the powerful for whom is convenient to keep the war”.

When teachers and students were asked about the modalities of violence present in the context and the limitations that it imposes under their work on memory; the response was that it is a factor that should not be neglected. Besides, they expressed they have to face what Magendzo and Toledo (2009, 451) termed as ‘moral dilemmas’ in reference to “the tensions, conflicts and contradictions” that often emerged from the lived classroom experience. More precisely, in regards to recent history related violations of human rights, teachers and students must respond to questions such as, “What should I do? How

should I respond? Or how should I behave?” (Magendzo and Toledo, 2009: 451). These kinds of dilemmas were more notorious when, for example, the teachers talked about the concerns as to whether and to what extent the life experiences of students affected by violence as victims or ex-combatants should be capitalized on as pedagogical opportunities, or whether they should remain unknown.

In this respect teacher Arminio (Individual interview, 20/08/2015) commented:

“There is the case of two students, at grade eleven. These students came from the countryside. They were displaced to Bogota by armed groups and now are studying next to the other students... How can their stories be a source of learning for the other students? These students may tell the others that the violence that they experienced is comparable with the violence of the other human beings whose stories have been studied throughout the use of books and films.”

Teacher Diana (Individual interview, 18/08/2015) made a comment in similar terms:

“I have the intuition that the testimony of other students or members of their families that have suffered the violence in their own flesh could be a powerful means of learning. But the question is how to articulate these testimonies to our teaching practices without doing harm? How to avoid re-victimization? In doing that we would need psychosocial support that is not available at the school now”.

Teachers and students agree memory production at school requires the convergence of different sources of knowledge that does not necessarily fall within the categories of formal academic knowledge. Decades ago, the members of the Popular Memory Group insisted on the need of expanding the idea of historical production well beyond the limits of “academic history-writing”. Johnson and Graham (1982: 207) claim, “we must include all the ways in which a sense of past is constructed in society. These do not necessarily take a written literal form. Still less do they conform to academic standards of scholarship or canons of truthfulness.”

Teacher Arminio (Individual interview, 20/08/2015) addressed the contemporary debate around, on one hand, academic historiography and memory; and on the other, official and popular memory:

“The memory of the armed conflict should not be institutionalized by the exclusive action of a closed net of researchers and historians. What is going to happen with the memory of the citizens? The school has to develop its own devices to decentralize the production and dissemination of the social memory. There is a crucial question: are we going to keep looking at the memories of the

victims as past events? Or should we make these stories lively testimonies that can be mobilized through the lives of students? The objective should be promote an encounter between the students and the survivors to break with the model of teaching the official history, in which everything has been said, and there is no option except for them to memorized.”

Relatedly, the students commented about the importance to nurture their work on memory through the interaction with different parties that had been involved in the armed conflict to understand their views and also to reconstruct memory from different perspectives:

“We can refer to the books or any other sources, but definitely the best source of information for our learning are those who actually lived the events: the victims, the ex-combatants” (Hervey, Group interview: 25/08/2015).

Bryan (Group interview, 24/08/2015) referred to the significance of the experience when a group of victimised women visited the school to hold a pedagogic dialogue with the students:

"Last year, I met Maria who visited our school with other women, she came from the department of Antioquia. I am never going to forget her. She told us the story of her son. He was a student; a member of the school government, and one of the armed groups killed him because they did not like his leadership. They killed him to prove to the people's town they should not challenge the armed group's authority. After I heard Maria's story I identified with what had happened to her son"

Despite the potentialities to involve the students to the work on memory through the survivors' testimony, the teachers observed the difficulties to establish an open dialogue with them and with other non-academic actors from outside the school. The teacher Yulety Gomez (27/08/2015), from her experience leading the Workshop Kuntury at the school Orlando Fals Borda, observed: “the school, as other social institutions privilege and legitimate certain types of knowledge related to formal disciplines, excluding other types of knowledge seen as non-conventional”. In this respect, Monica Alvarez from the CMPR commented that this is a generalized problem in the Colombian society, “where people are not ready yet to value the experience of the victims, as a valid source of social knowledge from which is not only possible but also necessary to learn”.

Teacher Diana took her concerns further when she even questioned whether they should maintain their efforts in promoting the acknowledgement of the past; or instead, should they direct their efforts to provide an answer to current issues such the micro-trafficking of drugs that in turn generates violence, crime

and insecurity that affects the school and the students more directly. She (Individual interview, 18/08/2015) asked:

"What should we do when the emphasis of our project has been on political violence? How should we address the most immediate problems besetting the school without losing focus nor scarifying our responsibilities with the present on behalf of the past?"

Therefore, the problems of the past are intertwined with the problems of the present, and both refuse to go away, causing dilemmas and a shadow of doubt over the future for teachers and students as it is shown in the next section.

### **5.3. The Uncertainty Of The Future And The Complexities Attaining Peace**

Despite the capacity to imagine the future according to our desire, whether as a form to restore or as a form to resist the past; there is a temporal boundary for our experience as "we can only perceive earlier events, never later ones" (Le Poidevin, 2015). According to Lowenthal (1985, 3) the future as well as the past is physically inaccessible but still "they are integrated to our imaginations". The same Lowenthal (1985, 3) however indicates, "Most images of times ahead are hazy and uncertain". In the same vein, Nora (2002, 438) argues we "are utterly uncertain as to what form the future will take". Furthermore "The airy and insubstantial future may never arrive; man or nature may destroy humanity" (Lowenthal, 1985: 4).

In that order of ideas, nobody can be assured that the future will turn out as hoped and expected and for the same reason whether learning from the past to prevent repetition does indeed work. As pointed out by Bickford and Sodaro (2010, 82) the measurement of such worldwide consensus is impossible: "all we need to do is look at the history of the twentieth century to have serious doubts as to whether genocide or other mass crimes can be prevented or even stopped." They add: "it is important to consider whether never again is indeed a plausible goal for memorials to be set and whether this new memorial paradigm might 'work.'" (Bickford and Sodaro, 2010: 82). Moreover extremely antagonising personal and collective memories can foster future violence.

Although George Santayana (1905, 92) argues that "progress" depends on "retentiveness" of the past experience, one may be tempted to ask to what extent the participants can rely on the past to organize the present and to project the

future. A historical perspective does not offer an encouraging prospect. The past six decades have been all about bloody war. Besides, in the recent years peace has been nothing but a broken promise after failed attempts of peace negotiation. Even more, the historical dynamics of the armed conflict and its repercussions are out of consensus and still are object of contestation by antagonistic political and social sectors. The present also does not offer a better picture. The recognition of the armed conflict's dynamics operating in the immediate context and the way in which it imposes important dilemmas, gives the participants enough reasons to question if transforming past violence and conflict into future peace is somehow possible or if the future will be one of continued violence.

Thus, the violent past not only refuses to go away but also muddies the future. For instance, Jessica (Group interview, 24/08/2015) expressed her discontentment saying:

“Having lived always in the middle of the conflict makes us feel sceptical about the real possibilities to have peace. We have got used to the politicians who for the elections promise peace, but so far we have not seen the results”.

Dionel (Group interview, 24/08/2015) also casts his doubts about the real possibilities of peace:

“The war has been used by those governing as an excuse for social problems such as poverty, which they are unwilling to deal with effectively. If a peace agreement is signed they are going to have no reasons to justify their inaction”.

People associate different meanings with the concept of peace, as in the case of other socially constructed concepts. In this respect, Biton and Salomon (2006, 168) observe that of particular interest are the ways in which societies in conflict differentially understand the concept. It is expected to reflect “the narrative coloured interpretations of current situations”. From the perspective of my participants, it can be drawn that peace does not only means absence of direct, physical violence linked to war. Beyond the physical violence carried out by the armed actors, teachers and students mention a broader set of situations, which they relate to their own lives.

Johan Galtung (1969: 168) says that violence must be broad enough to include its most significant varieties to prevent that unacceptable social orders can still be compatible with peace, and thus his commitment is to redefine both. As a point of departure, he rejects the exclusive use of the narrow concept of direct or personal violence, executed by someone and associated with body injury, infliction of pain and killing as its main expression, under the argument that “If this were all violence is about, and peace is seen as its negation, then too little

is rejected when peace is held up as an ideal” (1969, 168). Instead, he suggests the inclusion of structural violence defined as the one that is “built into the social structure and shows up as unequal power and consequently as unequal life chances” (1969, 171). Usually, structural violence has effects, often unnoticeable, of denying political, economic and social rights, undermining the human dignity of people suffering from it.

By extension, for Galtung (1969, 183) peace not only means the absence of direct violence (i.e. “negative peace”) but also the absence of structural violence (i.e. “positive peace”) also referred to as social justice, which in turn is the condition of egalitarian distribution of power and resources. Such a notion of peace is pretty much in line with peacebuilding after deadly conflicts defined by Miall, Ramsbotham and Woodhouse (1999: 56-57) as “the attempt to overcome the structural, relational and cultural contradictions that lie at the root of conflict to underpin the process of peace-making and peace-keeping”.

The students from the group Tabusclan expressed that having grown up in poverty, exclusion and violence conditions have, in one way or another, prescribed their opportunities. Regarding his personal experience, Dionel (Group inter-view, 24/08/2015) said, "I think that my aunt was a victim of a violent act. She was young, but she died for the lack of medical treatment” David (Group inter-view, 24/08/2015) said:

“Because of the war we have no access to a better education. With a higher quality of education we would have more chances to be admitted into the public universities ... so in this way the war has affected us negatively”

Furthermore, to the extent that the comprehension of causes and effects of violence increases in complexity among the participants, their understanding of the ways in which violence may be transformed is also affected. For instance, in reference to the current peace negotiations between the national government and the guerrilla groups, one of the students put into perspective the need to integrate elements of social justice in preparing the end to the armed conflict:

“ If we want to deal with violence and bring it to an end, it is necessary to treat its multiple facets. It is not enough to demobilize the armed groups, and it is also important to offer equal opportunities and access to human rights.” (Bryan Steven, Group interview: 24/08/2015).

The recognition of structural issues such as poverty, inequality, and exclusion in respect to the possibilities of achieving peace anytime soon, but does not mean that the students are giving up on their commitment. The participants find the way to reconcile themselves with the “memory imperative” and persist

in remembering to diminish reliance on violence and contribute to the building of peace. After all, there are other ways in which peace can assume a positive form (Barash and Webel, 2013: 9). In the same way Galtung (1969, 167) sustains the term 'peace' shall be used for social goals and these goals may be complex and difficult, but not impossible, to attain. Together with the institutions and structures that encourages the creation of positive peace, The (IEP) Institute for Economics and Peace (2015, 11) mentions the need to recognize the importance of societal attitudes that influence how people and groups cooperate in society to address violence.

In this regard, the participants mentioned the development of certain attitudes in accord with positive peace which does not necessarily gives salience to the structural elements of the concept, but they find relevant to their everyday lives such as the promotion of mutual respect, harmony, horizontality, and tolerance, among others.

Mariana (Group interview, 1/09/2015) synthesized well such perspective:

“At the class and the workshops, we conclude that in Colombia there is war but I ask myself what can I change? It is then that the sentence once said by the Colombian sociologist Orlando Fals Borda comes to my mind: “we cannot make changes at the macro-level,” we cannot change Colombia, but we can start from the micro-level: participating in the school projects, transmit what we have learnt”.

Students like Brayan (Group interview, 24/08/2015) recognize these deep personal and behavioural changes:

"I used to be like a runaway train, no one could stop me, and I did not care to stop, even if I could hurt someone; but since I became a member of Tabusclan I have changed a lot ... now I do care about people".

Ricardo (Group interview, 25/08/2015) comments that thanks to his involvement in the project on memory at his school: “I have noticed how many wars have been the result of people’s intolerance. It has made me more aware of the importance of tolerating those around us”. Teacher Diana (Individual interview, 18/08/2015) highlights how her project has contributed to create a horizontal relationship: "The students have constructed an image of me, as a teacher with whom they can talk at any time."



## CHAPTER 6. Final Reflections

Through this study, I wanted to understand more about the production of memory, and how teachers and students experience and shape their social production of memory about armed conflict. At first, I referred to the literature about how collective memory is formed and transmitted, and I found that the school as an institution plays a crucial role. Formal education is recognized as a suitable mechanism through which young generations are socialized within inherited common historical narratives to preserve the cohesion among the members of the nation-state and to make it a sustainable project across time.

Surprisingly and against all my predictions, in respect of production of memory, educative stakeholders such as teachers and students were almost absent. The literature that I have the opportunity to review gave me the impression that at local schools, people automatically do what the official textbooks and curriculums dictate. From that perspective, memory appears as revealed truth with the imprimatur of the state, blindly taught and learnt at the classrooms. Certainly, cultural tools such as books and other objects mediate collective memory. However, it also depends on the involvement of active agents of remembering.

With these ideas in mind and with the intention to fill the gaps recognized in the literature, I visited some schools in Bogota where conscious efforts have been taken to recall information about events from the violent past in Colombia, turning it into a daily learning experience. I had opportunities to hear the voices echoed from teachers and students, who not only shared their pedagogic experiences but also through their stories gave me access to their lives. Before arriving at the schools, I assumed that the experiences I was going to hear were built on representations of the past based on the reference to long-distance dates, periods and remarkable names associated with historical characters. However, this was not exclusively the case; I noticed how the past referred in the first person and directly related to the personal experience, including episodes occurred at home, in the neighbourhood, and at the school.

To a great extent, those who I had the chance to interact who invoked the past, necessarily were transported to the future and back to the present, stressing the idea that memory is not exclusively about the past but about present and future behaviour (Boyer, 2009: 4). Consequently, the experiences about collective remembering were often recounted through a non-linear temporality through which the past is not perceived separately to the present and the future but integrated.

Initially, I suspected the testimonies I collected from my fieldwork were not going to transcend the level of intimate anecdotes that could become part of a

bigger narrative. However, people interpret the world in similar ways (Hall, 1997: 18) and those involved in producing war memories to articulate their experience in the public field of memorialization appeal to these ideas (Ashplant, Dawson, and Roper, 2000: 16). Precisely, the application of frame analysis allowed me to identify those wider forms that supplied the terms by which the participants shaped their production of memory. Over the course of the interviews, the collected answers illustrated iterative expressions with a sense of universality.

Over and over, teachers and students in one form or another in order to make sense of the actions that they had taken, implored the sentence “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it” (Santayana, 1905: 92). This widespread idea draws from the modern certainty in human knowledge, urging us to prevent the future repetition of undesirable circumstances, as in the case of violence, by acknowledging the past experience. Implicitly, it presupposes the past is represented as clearly distinguishable from the future, and also the present, as if the past were a “foreign country” where things are done differently (Hartley, 1953: Preface).

However, I could observe that the production of memory by the participants is comparable to walking through an intelligible line between the violent past, the violence in the present, and a future that does not warrant a break with the cycle of violence even though the on-going peace process. The violence assumes new manifestations that shook the everyday life of the school and its members warning of the restrictions that impose the remembrance of war when conflict remains active. Under these circumstances, the belief in the strength of memory to build a better future becomes shakier and unstable.

The larger context introduces obstacles to the commitment assumed by teachers and student against forgetting. The own structures of the formal school system also intervene. In addition to the absence of times and space within the official curriculum, a series of dilemmas arise. They have to avoid reopening the wounds of the students affected by the armed conflict, especially as a consequence of the forced displacement when addressing the troubled past. In addition, they have to struggle with the pedagogical intention to integrate into their projects different sources of knowledge and the rigidity of the school at accepting the validity of non-academic knowledge as the one that comes from the life experience of victims and perpetrators in the middle of the conflict.

Finally, it is important to stress the experiences included in this study assume an especial connotation in the national context of peace negotiations. About the possibility to transform past violence and conflict into future peace, the participants critically reframe their practice on memory recognising that the knowledge from the past only makes sense if the structural contradictions that

lie at the root of the conflict and persist are recognised and consequently intervened from a perspective of positive transformational peace.

As a final remark, it is important to note that the sample from which the empirical evidence was obtained cannot be considered a representation of the entire universe of memorialization in Bogota. Therefore, the drawn conclusion cannot be taken as conclusive. However, the experiences highlighted shed significant light on the struggles for memory that highly motivated individuals sustain within a specific arena for memorialization such as public education. More than producing generalizations, the intention was to bring the voices of relevant social actors, whose perspectives are not always well articulated to the forefront of debates as society transitions from war to peace. Since they have to face the contradictions imposed by an unusual context where the production of memory has to coexist with different forms of violence, which are mutually reinforced, they offer an informed knowledge to which they could make considerable contributions.

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## ANNEXES

### Annex 1. Chronological account of the interviews carried out.

Date	Place	Interviewee	Data set
18/08/2015	School Alfonso Reyes Echandia. Bogota, Colombia	Teacher Diana Paola Figue	100 minutes of interviewing recorded in a magnetic format. 15 pages of transcripts.
19/08/2015	Teacher's residence	Teacher Carlos Arturo Charria	120 minutes of interviewing recorded in a magnetic format. 16 pages of transcripts.
20/08/2015	School Manuel del Socorro Rodríguez. Bogota, Colombia	Teacher Arminio Vargas	80 minutes of interviewing recorded in a magnetic format. 11 pages of transcript.
24/08/2015	School Alfonso Reyes Echandia. Bogota, Colombia	Students members of the research and scenic arts group "Tabusclan"	125 minutes of interviewing recorded in a magnetic format. 15 pages of transcript.
24/08/2015	National Center for Historical Memory (CNMH)	Tatiana Rojas Roa Pedagogic team	25 minutes of interviewing recorded in a magnetic format. 4 pages of transcript.
25/08/2015	School Manuel del Socorro Rodríguez. Bogota, Colombia	Grade 10th and 11th student.	92 minutes of interviewing recorded in a magnetic format. 11 pages of transcripts.
27/08/2015	School Orlando Fals Borda. Bogota, Colombia	Teacher Yuletzy Gómez	73 minutes of interviewing recorded in a magnetic format. 11 pages of transcript.
28/08/2015	Memory, Peace and Reconciliation Centre	Monica Alvarez Coordinator collective knowledge management team	90 minutes of interviewing recorded in a magnetic format. 12 pages of transcript.
1/09/2015	School Orlando Fals Borda. Bogota, Colombia	Students members of the Knitting Group "Kunturi"	80 minutes of interviewing recorded in a magnetic format. 9 pages of transcript.